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IMPLICIT BIAS AND THE PUSHBACK FROM THE LEFT

JERRY KANG*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, the mind sciences have provided remarkable insights about how our brains process social categories. For example, scientists have discovered that implicit biases—in the form of stereotypes and attitudes that we are unaware of, do not consciously intend, and might reject upon conscious self-reflection—exist and have wide-ranging behavioral consequences.¹ Such findings destabilize our self-serving self-conceptions as bias-free. Not surprisingly, there has been backlash from the political Right. This Article examines some aspects of the more surprising pushback from the Left.

Part I briefly explains how new findings in the mind sciences, especially Implicit Social Cognition, are incorporated into the law, legal scholarship, and legal institutions, under the banner of “behavioral realism.” Part II describes the pushback from the Left. Part III responds by suggesting that our deepest understanding of social hierarchy and discrimination requires analysis at multiple layers of knowledge. Instead of trading off knowledge, for example, at the cognitive layer for the sociological layer (or vice versa), we should seek understanding at each layer, and then interpenetrate the entire stack.²

I. BEHAVIORAL REALISM ABOUT THE MIND SCIENCES

“Behavioral realism” is a nascent school of legal thought advanced by legal scholars and psychologists. Broadly speaking, it seeks to naturalize the law by making the law more continuous with modern understandings of human

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1. A substantial body of scientific literature documents implicit bias. For a review, see Kristin A. Lane, Jerry Kang & Mahzarin R. Banaji, *Implicit Social Cognition and Law*, 3 ANN. REV. L. & SOC. SCI. 427, 433–35 (2007).

2. This approach is consistent with the one recommended by Steven Pinker. See STEVEN PINKER, *THE BLANK SLATE: THE MODERN DENIAL OF HUMAN NATURE* 70 (2002) (calling for a “hierarchical reductionism” which is not about replacing one field of knowledge but about connecting and unifying different levels of analysis).

decision-making and behavior.³ More specifically, behavioral realism is driven by new findings in the mind sciences. When some new scientific consensus emerges, behavioral realists compare that new understanding to the folk psychology embedded in the law.⁴ When the gap between the two is sufficiently large, behavioral realists ask the law to take account, by either changing or providing some transparent explanation why it cannot.⁵

To take a concrete example, consider what Professor John Powell identified in this year's Childress Lecture as the modern rewriting of more classical assumptions about discrimination. In what he calls the Enlightenment understanding, individuals were presumed to be fully transparent to themselves.⁶ Given this view, any behavior (e.g., "I'm passing over this resumé") that turned on some individual's social category ("The name on this resumé is Lakisha, not Emily, so I infer that the applicant is Black") would be known to the individual as such.

But the modern evidence of implicit social cognitions undermines these classical assumptions. We may, in fact, be passing on that resumé because of race but without explicit knowledge or purpose.⁷ Deciding precisely what to do about such discoveries in the form of preventative policy, doctrinal interpretation, or statutory reform is, of course, bedeviling. But for a behavioral realist, sticking our heads in the sand about the new science is not an option.

II. BACKLASH

A. *Backlash from the Right*

Recent scientific discoveries have deeply upset the Right.⁸ Here's why: the Right's Fundamental Belief is that we already live and compete in a meritocratic, color-blind, gender-blind, social category-blind, market-based tournament. In this tournament, there will always be winners and losers—

3. Linda Hamilton Krieger & Susan T. Fiske, *Behavioral Realism in Employment Discrimination Law: Implicit Bias and Disparate Treatment*, 94 CAL. L. REV. 997, 1000–01 (2006).

4. See Lane, Kang & Banaji, *supra* note 1, at 440.

5. See *id.*

6. John A. Powell & Stephen M. Menendian, *Remaking Law: Moving Beyond an Enlightenment Jurisprudence*, 54 ST. LOUIS U. L.J. 1035, 1039–46 (2010).

7. See Marianne Bertrand & Sendhil Mullainathan, *Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination*, 94 AM. ECON. REV. 991, 1006 (2004); Dan-Olof Rooth, *Implicit Discrimination in Hiring: Real World Evidence*, 2007 INST. FOR STUDY LAB. 1, 1 (2007).

8. See, e.g., Gregory Mitchell & Philip E. Tetlock, *Antidiscrimination Law and the Perils of Mindreading*, 67 OHIO ST. L.J. 1023, 1026 (2006); Amy Wax & Philip E. Tetlock, *We Are All Racists at Heart*, WALL ST. J., Dec. 1, 2005, at A16.

that's precisely the point of the competition. Losers will cry foul, but they are viewed as simply whining about the bad results of a fair game. Under the Right's Fundamental Belief, everyone already enjoys equality of opportunity, and the losers are only complaining about losing.⁹

Two lines of research have been gnawing away at the Fundamental Belief. Auditing studies performed by behavioral economists have demonstrated that identical candidates receive disparate treatment as a function of merit-irrelevant social categories. These findings have been made in various domains, such as call-back interviews,¹⁰ apartment rentals,¹¹ and even writing submissions.¹² The second line of research comes from Implicit Social Cognition, described above,¹³ which provides causal cognitive mechanisms for such disparate treatment. Through hundreds of experiments in laboratories, scientists have measured something called implicit bias and demonstrated that it predicts behavior, at least on the margins.¹⁴ Coupled together, the audit studies and Implicit Social Cognition findings threaten the Right's Fundamental Belief. Worse, they do so using precisely those rigorous and quantitative techniques that the Right demanded when dismissing victim accounts about discrimination as mere anecdote.

B. *Pushback from the Left*

The backlash from the Right is predictable because the science provides greater evidence that we live in an unjust world, in greater need of reform.¹⁵

9. Of course, this is meant to be a stylized exposition of the Fundamental Belief. I take it that almost no one believes this absolutely and would qualify the tenet at least partially.

10. See Marc Bendick, Jr. & Ana P. Nunes, *Discrimination in the American Workplace: Findings and Research Opportunities Using Paired-Comparison Testing*, ___ J. SOC. ISSUES (forthcoming 2010) (observing that employment auditing studies have revealed discriminatory behavior by "20% to 40% of employers").

11. See, e.g., Stephen L. Ross & Margery A. Turner, *Housing Discrimination in Metropolitan America: Explaining Changes Between 1989 and 2000*, 52 SOC. PROBS. 152, 165–69 (2005) (reporting audit results that showed net discrimination against African Americans and Hispanics in the rental markets).

12. Emily G. Sands, *Opening the Curtain on Playwright Gender: An Integrated Economic Analysis of Discrimination in American Theater 1* (Apr. 15, 2009) (unpublished undergraduate thesis, Princeton University) (on file with Department of Economics, Princeton University).

13. See Lane, Kang & Banaji, *supra* note 1, at 429.

14. For a readable summary of the research demonstrating predictive validity, see Jost et al., *The Existence of Implicit Bias is Beyond Reasonable Doubt: A Refutation of Ideological and Methodological Objections and Executive Summary of Ten Studies that No Manager Should Ignore*, 29 RES. IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR 39 (2009). For a meta-analysis of 122 research reports, see Anthony G. Greenwald et al., *Understanding and Using the Implicit Association Test: III. Meta-analysis of Predictive Validity*, 97 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 17 (2009).

15. For further discussion of the Right's reaction, and its invocation of a "junk science" rhetoric, see Jerry Kang & Kristin A. Lane, *Seeing Through Colorblindness: Implicit Bias and the*

But there has also been pushback from the Left. It would be an exaggeration to call it “backlash” because the scientific findings generally support a progressive agenda.¹⁶ But deep concerns lurk about deploying science and committing to behavioral realism. The anxiety is connected to the distrust of what John Powell calls the Enlightenment model. The pushback comprises two key elements: a rejection of scientific exceptionalism, and an accusation of reductionism.

Rejection of Scientific Exceptionalism. Behavioral realism obviously banks a great deal on the special role of science. It supposes that “the causal processes of the real world exist and operate independent of what we know or think about them, and that the scientific method provides one of the best ways of understanding those causal processes.”¹⁷ Some on the Left, including philosophers of science, sociologists of scientific knowledge production, and cultural studies commentators might question this reliance on science as naive or unsophisticated. Indeed, they may be suspicious about the call for “evidence” and “data” and quantitative techniques, which they view as objective-sounding covers for ideology or politics.

Accusation of Reductionism. Even if a critic accepts the value of science (either for its empirical success or ability to discover reality), she might still be uncomfortable with bodies of science that situate “racism” and “sexism” and other –isms inside individual brains. Picking this unit of analysis is seen as reductionist because it fails to capture the bigger picture, in the forms of “institutional,” “structural,” or “societal” racism. By contrast, other methodological approaches with a larger unit of analysis such as the “group” or “culture,” are touted as better-suited to illuminate the problems of social justice, with attention to history and power.

These critiques sounding in scientific exceptionalism and reductionism are sincere and important but mostly miss the mark. To explore how and why, I start with a concrete example.

Law, 58 UCLA L. REV. (forthcoming 2011), available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1633071.

16. Jerry Kang & Mahzarin R. Banaji, *Fair Measures: A Behavioral Realist Revision of “Affirmative Action,”* 94 CAL. L. REV. 1063, 1117 (2006) (“Unwarranted discrimination exists here and now: it can be documented through scientific methods . . .”).

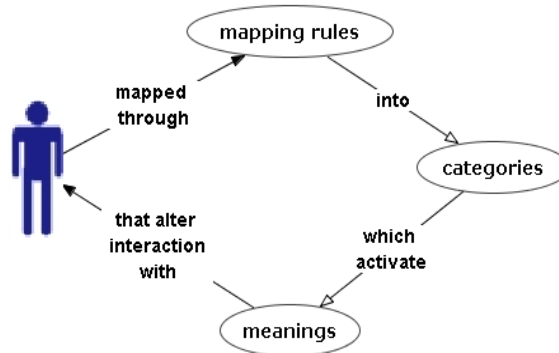
17. *See id.* at 1065.

III. TOWARDS INTERPENETRATING INSIGHTS

A. *Racial Mechanics Model: An Example*

It is a staple of Critical Race Theory to say that “race is a social construction.”¹⁸ In other words, race is not self-evident biology or taxonomy. But this important general insight is somewhat vague in the particulars and invites conflicting interpretations and applications. For instance, what is *not* a social construction?¹⁹ Even a hammer is produced by society, through technology and market mechanisms that can be analytically unpacked and unmasked. Also, is there nothing “biological” about race? After all, isn’t a person’s racial category inherited from her parents?

To help grapple with such complexities, I have proposed a model of “racial mechanics” that provides a simple, social cognitive articulation to the mantra that “race is a social construction.”²⁰ That simple model focuses on a bilateral interaction between a “perceiver” and “target.”²¹ Upon encountering a target individual, the perceiver classifies that individual into a (1) racial category according to relevant (2) mapping rules provided to us by culture and any specific rules relevant to the context.²² Once that mapping is performed—typically instantaneously—a set of (3) racial meanings is activated that alters the way that the perceiver interacts with the target.²³ Here is the diagram:²⁴



18. See, e.g., Cheryl I. Harris, *Equal Treatment and the Reproduction of Inequality*, 69 *FORDHAM L. REV.* 1753, 1762–63 (2001); Ian F. Haney López, *The Social Construction of Race: Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice*, 29 *HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV.* 1, 27 (1994). Much of this draws from the sociological work of Michael Omi & Howard Winant. See generally MICHAEL OMI & HOWARD WINANT, *RACIAL FORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES FROM THE 1960S TO THE 1990S* (2d ed. 1994).

19. For a relevant description of such social constructions, see generally IAN HACKING, *THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHAT?* (1999).

20. See Jerry Kang, *Trojan Horses of Race*, 118 *HARV. L. REV.* 1489, 1497–1502 (2005).

21. *Id.* at 1499.

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.*

24. See *id.* at 1500.

To say that race is a social construction is to say that all three core elements: the racial categories, the racial mapping rules, and the racial meanings are all constructed by social and historical practices, and not predetermined by some deity or genetics. First, the racial categories change over time and as a function of politics—just consider how the Census has counted “race” differently over the centuries.²⁵ Second, the mapping rules are also dynamic—consider how and why, in 1854, the California Supreme Court classified the Chinese as racially Indian or Black in order to prevent them from testifying in court.²⁶ Third, consider how the racial meanings associated with a particular category can rapidly change—e.g., for Asian Americans, debased laborers working on the railroads (mid 1800s) to yellow peril (1940s) to model minority (late 1960s).²⁷

My model is social cognitive in that it emphasizes the basic and fundamental cognitive act of categorization of human beings into social groups. It is an *implicit* social cognitive model because it emphasizes the automaticity, lack of self-awareness, and situated nature of the racial mechanics. Finally, it is proffered as a useful articulation of the axiom that “race is a social construction” because it isolates three distinct ways in which we might mean the point: that the categories themselves are constructed; that we map individuals and entire groups of people into the categories that we have constructed; and that we attach certain meanings (stereotypes and attitudes) to the categories that we have constructed.

B. *Comfort on Scientific Exceptionalism*

The basic idea that our brains function by classifying objects into categories is not very controversial, neither to the Right nor the Left. What is more controversial is that we might do the same to human beings (not just objects), by grouping them into social categories. Still more controversial is that this categorization might function automatically and implicitly to influence our behavior.²⁸

25. For example, in 1977, the federal government shifted from four major racial categories (American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black; and White) to five (American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and White). See U.S. Census Bureau, *Racial and Ethnic Classifications Used in Census 2000 and Beyond*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/racefact.cb.html>. Notice that Pacific Islanders were split out of the Asian or Pacific Islander into its own separate category with Native Hawaiians.

26. *People v. Hall*, 4 Cal. 399, 399 (1854).

27. See, e.g., Keith Aoki, “*Foreign-Ness*” & *Asian American Identities: Yellowface, World War II Propaganda, and Bifurcated Racial Stereotypes*, 4 *ASIAN PAC. AM. L.J.* 1, 18–44 (1996).

28. See, e.g., Mitchell & Tetlock, *supra* note 8, at 1107–15.

It is this last, most controversial point that is being “proved up” by the science, to the consternation of those who believe that colorblindness already reigns. When someone suggests casually, without scientific evidence, that unconscious racism infects everything that we do, many people’s reactions are deeply skeptical. They retort, “What do you mean by ‘racism’? What does it mean to ‘infect’? How much, and under what circumstances? Why is it that I can’t observe it in myself, even though I can observe other aspects of my mind and body? Aren’t you just complaining because you lack merit?”

In response, one could use language and arguments derived from nonscientific domains, such as literature, Freudian psychoanalysis, or religious faith. But as a descriptive matter, such arguments will not be very persuasive to the skeptic in modern America. By contrast, language and arguments based on “science,” as regularly practiced by 21st century scientists tenured at research universities, pack a more persuasive punch.²⁹ Again, I am merely describing the brute fact that scientific evidence culled through standard hypothesis-testing procedures deploying modern statistics and published in peer-reviewed journals is considered to be the “gold” standard for policymaking, including legal reform. Accordingly, if the Left wants to be pragmatic about its agenda, it seems sensible to pay attention to what science says. This is not to recommend putting all eggs in the scientific basket, but it is an argument not to abandon it altogether.

In emphasizing pragmatics, I am not staking out a purely instrumentalist position that would, for instance, forsake science the moment it became politically convenient to do so. Instead, to repeat, behavioral realism relies on the notion that “the causal processes of the real world exist and operate independent of what we know or think about them.”³⁰ This notion underscores a sort of metaphysical modesty that recognizes that when the tree falls in the forest, it makes sound even if there are no human beings around to hear it. In other words, there is a reality “out there” regardless of whether sentient beings are around to perceive it. Those who reject this position will obviously be irate at any form of scientific exceptionalism, however mild.

But this metaphysical modesty may mask an epistemic presumptuousness,³¹ about science somehow being able to discover “reality” or “truth.” After all, what does it mean to claim “that the scientific method provides one of the best ways of *understanding* those causal processes”?³²

29. See Kang, *supra* note 20, at 1496–97.

30. See Kang & Banaji, *supra* note 16, at 1065.

31. I borrow the “metaphysical modesty” and “epistemic presumptuousness” turns-of-phrase from the very accessible lectures by Professor Jeffrey L. Kasser. See Jeffrey L. Kasser, *Popper and the Problem of Demarcation*, in *PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE* 2006, at 6, 6 (The Teaching Company Course No. 4100, 2006).

32. See *id.* (emphasis added).

This question raises the difficult realism versus antirealism debate within the philosophy of science literature, upon which I remain largely agnostic. I am most interested in science's ability to achieve what Miriam Solomon calls "empirical success."³³ In other words, behavioral realists believe that science is "one of the best ways of understanding [causal] processes" in the sense that it increases the likelihood of empirical success, in terms of prediction, explanation, technological manipulation, and prevention. Whether such empirical success is *caused* by some correspondence to "reality" or "truth" is hard to prove (and one that practicing scientists rarely consider). Some such correspondence is my intuition; however, I am happy to concede it as a hunch. Perhaps this agnostic stance on the realism versus anti-realism debate will decrease anxiety, at least for some, about scientific exceptionalism.

Finally, although it goes without saying, I should underscore that behavioral realism rejects the naturalistic fallacy. That which "is" says very little about that which "ought" to be. For example, the fact that stereotyping is easy and natural says nothing about its normative attractiveness in various domains of social life and law.

To summarize, behavioral realists are scientists, lawyers, and legal scholars asking the law to account for new discoveries about how human beings think and behave. Their stance towards science reflects metaphysical modesty and pragmatism: because science has produced substantial empirical success, it has been granted greater deference than other forms of knowledge in policymaking contexts, and reformists should recognize this fact. Finally, in the context of discrimination, evidence-based accounts of disparate treatment are compelling even to those who are skeptical about first-hand narrative accounts of victimization, which tend to be dismissed as subjective and self-serving.³⁴

C. *Comfort on Reductionism*

The other foundation of Left pushback is reductionism.³⁵ The complaint is that any cognitive approach locates "racism" in the heads of specific perpetrators. This perpetrator model, it is said, analyzes racism as the misfiring of neurons in a few pathological individuals, which badly

33. See, e.g., MIRIAM SOLOMON, SOCIAL EMPIRICISM 16–17, 27–29 (2001).

34. Again, I do not want to seem too naïve. Even findings supported by a substantial body of experimental science can still be dismissed as "junk science" that is ideologically motivated. See, e.g., Mitchell & Tetlock, *supra* note 8, at 1067–72.

35. See generally Ingo Brigandt & Alan Love, *Reductionism in Biology*, STANFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY (May 27, 2008), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reduction-biology/> ("The basic question of reduction is whether the properties, concepts, explanations, or methods from one scientific domain (typically at higher levels of organization) can be deduced from or explained by the properties, concepts, explanations, or methods from another domain of science (typically one about lower levels of organization).").

mischaracterizes what is really going on. Instead, if we picked a larger unit of analysis, we would be better able to see things like institutional, structural, and societal racism—and not be constrained to individual pathologies.³⁶

I am sympathetic to this criticism, and some of the earliest seminal writing in Critical Race Theory emphasized the deep limitations of a “perpetrator perspective” model of discrimination.³⁷ Yet, this complaint commits an either/or fallacy. The deepest understanding of any process such as racialization comes from multiple levels of analysis that can and should be integrated together. Consider the various units of analysis one could use to explain something like “racism”: the neuron, brain, person, family, group, firm, institution, system, structure, culture, society, or history.³⁸ When terms such as institutional, structural, or societal bias are well-defined and operationalized, there is no reason why they cannot be integrated with Implicit Social Cognition into the fullest understanding of how multiple causes, at multiple levels, contribute to social inequalities. The fact that implicit biases may influence interpretation of ambiguous behavior, for instance, conflicts in no way with various economic and sociological models of inequality inertia.³⁹ To the contrary, they add an additional explanatory layer to the deepest understanding of persistent inequalities among social groups.

As a concrete demonstration, consider again my simple model of racial mechanics. In that social cognitive model, I pointed out that the racial categories, the racial mapping rules, and racial meanings are all socially constructed. Although the science of Implicit Social Cognition is extremely

36. See, e.g., David Wellman, *Unconscious Racism, Social Cognition Theory and the Legal Intent Doctrine: The Neuron Fires Next Time*, in HANDBOOK OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC RELATIONS (Hernán Vera & Joe R. Feagin, eds.) (“[S]ociological understanding of unconscious racism avoids . . . conceptual pitfalls” and can “provide a far more potent critique of the intent doctrine than social cognition neuroscience.”).

37. See Alan David Freeman, *Legitimizing Racial Discrimination Through Antidiscrimination Law: A Critical Review of Supreme Court Doctrine*, 62 MINN. L. REV. 1049, 1052–57 (1978).

38. See Richard M. Ryan & Edward L. Deci, *Self-Regulation and the Problem of Human Autonomy: Does Psychology Need Choice, Self-Determination, and Will?*, 74 J. PERSONALITY 1557, 1571 (2006) (explaining that everything can be described from the “molecular to molar”). According to Ryan and Deci, the goal is to pick the best level of analysis, which “captures the variables most relevant to what is to be explained and that is most relevant for effective interventions.” *Id.* at 1572.

39. See, e.g., GLENN C. LOURY, THE ANATOMY OF RACIAL INEQUALITY 23–30 (2002) (discussing self-reinforcing stereotypes); Michelle Adams, *Intergroup Rivalry, Anti-Competitive Conduct and Affirmative Action*, 82 B.U. L. REV. 1089, 1117–22 (2002) (applying lock-in theory to explain the inequalities between Blacks and Whites in education, housing, and employment); Daria Roithmayr, *Barriers to Entry: A Market Lock-In Model of Discrimination*, 86 VA. L. REV. 727, 742–49 (2000) (providing overview of lock-in theory, drawing on antitrust law and concepts).

useful in providing compelling evidence that racial mechanics take place automatically, typically without self-awareness, that body of science tells us little about how and why the Census pulled out Pacific Islanders from the racial category of Asians.⁴⁰ Social cognition tells us little about the political economy that drove adoption of the rule of hypodescent (one drop Black blood),⁴¹ a racial mapping rule that maximized “property” in the form of human slaves. Social cognition tells us little about how the Federal Communications Commission came to define “public interest” for broadcasters in a way that had the unintended consequence of increasing negative racial attitudes.⁴² This is not to say that the social cognitive model explains nothing. It explains a great deal, and most importantly, provides the most potent response to the presumption that we are all already colorblind. But this level of analysis cannot function alone, and it needs supporting analysis from above and even below. What we need is interpenetration, across all the layers of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I remind the Left (including myself) to avoid disciplinary parochialism, especially when it betrays a poor understanding of another discipline.⁴³ Of course, there may be opportunity costs. For example, behavioral realists might be distracting attention and resources from other methodologies, such as literature, cultural studies, sociology, history, and psychoanalysis.⁴⁴ Whether there is a net benefit in insight can only be

40. Terrance Reeves & Claudette Bennett, U.S. Census Bureau, THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES: MARCH 2002, available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p20-540.pdf>.

41. See, e.g., Neil Gotanda, *A Critique of “Our Constitution is Color-Blind,”* 44 STAN. L. REV. 1, 23–27 (1991) (discussing rules of hypodescent).

42. See Kang, *supra* note 20, at 1545–53.

43. The sharpest disagreement I have with Wellman’s sociological analysis is his claim that “biases are fixed.” See *supra* note 36. To the contrary, implicit biases are quite malleable. I also disagree with Wellman’s claim that a scientific model of bias destroys agency and thus moral or legal accountability. It could, but it doesn’t have to.

44. See, e.g., Ralph Richard Banks & Richard Thompson Ford, *(How) Does Unconscious Bias Matter?: Law, Politics, and Racial Inequality*, 58 EMORY L.J. 1053, 1120–21 (2009) (making this criticism). Banks and Ford’s critique may actually not come from the Left. On the one hand, it seems to be from the Left because it suggests that nearly all of the implicit bias findings should be seen really as evidence of explicit or conscious biases that are simply concealed successfully. See *id.* at 1065–68. Indeed, talk of merely “implicit” biases is criticized as a sugar-coated palliative. See *id.* at 1103–10. On the other hand, their critique could be from the Right since it adopts the same “junk science” rhetoric, see *id.* at 1110–13, with the attendant list of politically correct “thought control” bogeymen, see *id.* at 1118 (fearing pharmacological cures that treat bigotry with a “rainbow-colored capsule available by prescription”); *id.* at 1119

answered after the fact. One way to gauge the worth of the investment is to see how much more the science (as compared to other forms of progressive discourse) upsets the Right.

This symposium is dedicated to the remarkable life work of John Powell. Part of the specialness of his mind and work comes from a willingness to interpenetrate the layers of knowledge, across methodologies and levels of abstraction. He is best known for his work on institutions and structures, but he is no foe to the recent findings in implicit bias. Instead, he vigorously seeks synthesis, synergy, and full understanding, which is always helpful in doing the right thing.

(comparing implicit bias approach to re-education camps and “polic[ing of] thoughts”). Maybe they’re so Left that they came out on the Right.

