**Tuesday January 03, 2017**

**Against Empathy: Yale psychology professor says too much emotion leads to bad moral decisions**

From: http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-january-4-2017-1.3919635/against-empathy-yale-psychology-professor-says-too-much-emotion-leads-to-bad-moral-decisions-1.3919638

**Paul Bloom** says empathy is a capricious feeling that plays on our prejudices.

By empathy, the Yale psychology professor does not mean kindness or generosity, but the process of putting yourself in someone else's shoes as a moral guide.

In his book [*Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*](https://www.amazon.com/Against-Empathy-Case-Rational-Compassion/dp/0062339338), Bloom argues empathy, as an emotion, often leads to bad moral decisions.

"It feels great, but given the nature of our minds, [empathy] leads us to bias decisions, to enumerate decisions, and often, cruel decisions," Bloom told *The Current'*s host **Anna Maria Tremonti**.

Bloom says empathy speaks to our unconscious biases, which should have no role in guiding moral decisions.

"The temptation of empathy is to make the problem go away for the person immediately — and who this person is depends on what they look like and what they seem like."

'Racist biases show up tremendously in who we feel empathy for.' *- Paul Bloom*

Bloom says empathy cannot be felt for more than one person — meaning we tend to prioritize the particular over the many when making empathetic decisions.

"It's because of empathy that people care more about a little girl stuck in a well, than they do about climate change."

In some circumstances, empathy motivates people to do things that actually make the world worse.



Empathy for Alan Kurdi, the Syrian boy whose drowning made international headlines in 2015, mobilized many to call for military interventions in Syria - which was arguably a poor moral decision, says Bloom. (Tima Kurdi/Facebook)

As an example, Bloom refers to the [Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/20-children-among-dead-in-connecticut-school-massacre-1.1134782), in which 20 children were killed. In an empathetic gesture,  people from all over sent teddy bears and toys to the grieving community, but eventually this became a burden as residents had nowhere to put the offerings.

The parents asked for the donations to stop, but the public refused.

"It's a simple example of the difference between wanting to make the world a better place, and really helping people, vs. feeling empathy and wanting to scratch that itch."

But all is not lost.

According to Bloom, compassion is an all together positive strategy for making a difference.

"There's a lot of experiments looking at empathy and compassion, finding that not only do they activate different parts of the brain, but that when you feel compassion you're actually better able to help. You enjoy helping, because you're not suffering along with people."

And with less of an emotional toll, Bloom says compassion allows for more consistent giving.

'A lot of people in helping professions, doctors, nurses or first responders, burn out — they have to drop out.  The best people care about others, but they don't feel their pain.' *- Paul Bloom*

### Wednesday January 04, 2017

# Parks Canada's free entry raises ecological impact concerns

From: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-january-4-2017-1.3919635/parks-canada-s-free-entry-raises-ecological-impact-concerns-1.3920483>

Bringing in new visitors is exactly what Parks Canada hopes to achieve by offering free Parks Canada Discovery Passes.

Issued to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday, the passes give Canadians and international visitors free access to all national parks in 2017.

Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to take advantage of the offer.

But some conservationists believe all that traffic could come at too high a price for the parks' wildlife, leading tourists to trample on the very nature we need to preserve.

'Things are not running well enough to take this big influx of people' *- Ben Gadd, author of "Handbook of the Canadian Rockies"*



Cars line up outside the east gate to Banff National Park. (CBC)

Others say this initiative will encourage a new appreciation of the natural world that may guarantee a healthy future for Canada's parks.

"The greatest threats to the park system is not the visitors," says **Faisal Moola**, director national of the David Suzuki Foundation.

"The threats are the impact of climate change, and the unbelievable amount of infrastructure and development happening within and on the borders of the national parks."

"Over 82 per cent of us live in cities and suburbs, and we are increasingly becoming disconnected from the biological richness this country is blessed with," Moola continues.

"It's through experiences that we fall in love with nature — and if we fall in love with nature, we're going to be much more willing to actually fight for nature."

*This segment was produced by The Current's Sarah Grant and Samira Mohyeddin.*

### Sunday January 08, 2017

# The link between young men who join gangs and young men who join terror cells

From: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thesundayedition/american-hypocrisy-on-russian-hacking-why-young-men-an-over-the-phone-book-club-bach-and-anti-semitism-1.3919404/the-link-between-young-men-who-join-gangs-and-young-men-who-join-terror-cells-1.3919406>

In the days after the devastating Paris terror attacks, an all-too-familiar picture of those responsible for the carnage emerged. The attackers [ranged in age](https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2015/nov/16/men-who-attacked-paris-profile-terror-cell) from 20 to 31. The ringleaders came from a neighbourhood in Brussels called Molenbeek.

It is a place that has become, in many ways, synonymous with the idea of radicalized young men. Many residents are second-generation immigrants, growing up steeped in anger and alienation and rejected by a dominant society that views them with fear and treats them with suspicion.

[Changes in employment and educational prospects for men] make for a certain intense experience that groups like ISIS, for instance, or street gangs are experts in dealing with. They have a unique ability and skill in being able to see young men struggling with this new world that they're growing up in and recruit them. And yet our public schools, our police, our politicians, our media, are almost giving up this fight. We're retreating from that battleground. We're saying, we don't talk about men...We are leaving a space here that is being filled by destruction.  *- Jamil Jivani*

It's a feeling a young Canadian lawyer, community organizer and professor named Jamil Jivani knows well. Anger and alienation are familiar forces in the lives of young men he knows.

But in his neighbourhood — Toronto's Jane and Finch — the young men join gangs, not terrorist cells.

Jivani is currently writing a book called *Why Young Men?* about the parallels between troubled young men who participate in local tragedies like shootings, and troubled young men whose acts of violence seize international attention. After the Paris attacks, he spent three months in Molenbeek, the Brussels neighbourhood where many of the attackers grew up, talking to people about common solutions to the challenges facing young men in Molenbeek and young men in his own community.



Jamil Jivani is a lawyer, professor and community organizer in Toronto. (Wim Van Cappellen)

Jivani grew up in Brampton, Ontario. As a young man, he struggled in school, and early negative experiences with the police had a profound impact the way he viewed his place in society. He says he grew up believing he lived in a rigged world, and it was only after he realized that he would have to be responsible for helping to support his sisters that he started to change his life. He went on to get a law degree from Yale University, and today — at age 29 — he is a visiting professor at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University in Toronto.

Jivani is also a community organizer in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood in Toronto, and the founder of the Policing Literacy Initiative. He spoke to Michael Enright about why it's so easy for gangs and ISIS leaders to recruit young men, the parallels between police carding and stop-and-frisk policies in North America and police responses to terrorism in Europe, and how to empower young men to think differently about their masculinity.



Jamil Jivani speaks to Michael Enright about the links between young men who join terrorist cells and young men who join gangs. (CBC)

### Sunday January 08, 2017

# Battle for your happiness: frugality vs extravagance

From: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/spark/340-mindfulness-frugality-and-the-future-1.3907000/battle-for-your-happiness-frugality-vs-extravagance-1.3907017>

After the excess of the holiday season with all the overeating, over-gifting, over-decorating, and overdoing it, you might find yourself thinking about living a little more simply.

Why not? After all, the virtues of frugality and simple living have been praised for, oh, a couple thousand years or so of philosophy. But if frugality and simple living is so good for us, then why can it be so hard to practice? Maybe the advice of those ancient philosophers who favoured frugality is ready for an upgrade.



Emrys Westacott

[Emrys Westacott](https://sites.google.com/site/ewestacott/) is a professor of philosophy at Alfred University in Alfred, New York. In his book [The Wisdom of Frugality: Why Less is More -- More or Less](http://press.princeton.edu/titles/10821.html), he takes us on a trip through the the ancient and modern views of frugality.

"What makes you happy? Well it's mainly the simple things," says Emrys "It's living in a good community, it's doing the kinds of things you like to do, not having to work too hard, and enjoying the simple pleasures, particularly good company and good conversation."

But in the book, Emrys also takes a look at the pros and cons of an extravagant outlook.

"For many people, life is rich and life has lots to offer but some of those things cost money," he says. "If you want to travel around the world, if you want to see great concerts and go to museums, then you may have to spend money to do that."

But he also notes one could argue that a lot of what we consider important culture, are actually testaments to extravagance. He cites Renaissance Italy as an example: "Anyone who goes to Italy probably sees things like the artworks in Florence, the sculptures of Michelangelo and all the rest of it, well those things cost money."