

Preface

The essays in this volume are a bit unusual for me. First of all, they are written in the style of scholarly articles (although they are not in fact scholarly articles at all, as I will explain shortly). Furthermore, these essays introduce only a little in the way of new ideas, covering much the same ground as my previous writings, especially the most recent work, *Autistic Rhapsody*. When I had finished *Autistic Rhapsody*, I thought that I was done, having in that book gathered, summarized, and connected almost every concept I had ever had regarding the topics of human behavioral modernity, intelligence, autism, evolution, and so on. There really did not seem to be anything else for me to say.

But apparently I was not done—and thus here we are.

I think what has compelled me to go on is a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the current state of the scholarly world, a dissatisfaction that has been gnawing at me over the years and which I believe needs to be more widely felt and addressed. At first glance academia and research have never been more booming. Formerly the domain of a handful of eccentrics and recluses, the scholarly world today employs millions upon millions of established professionals, easily recognizable both by their requisite credentials and by their prodigious outpourings of words and statistics. The number of academic journals has multiplied over the past several decades to the point of now being nearly countless, and the number of published articles has been increasing exponentially across nearly every field. And the number of citations and co-authors within those published articles...well, oh my! Let us just say that if you are a scholarly professional who has not been cited at least five hundred times by mid-career, then you are clearly failing in your academic and collegial efforts. Grants, stipends, awards, fellowships—these too have been mushrooming by leaps and bounds, with the success of scholarship today measured not just by number of citations but also by the accumulation of dollars and euros snagged for one's respective institution. The graduate schools are brimming with would-be hopefuls, some of whom will unfortunately—albeit necessarily—become part of the grist that feeds the system, but others of whom, if they behave and follow the rules, will eventually be invited to join the vested collective, adding yet one more layer to its ever improving girth. Have little doubt about it, the scholarly world today is not just a bustling enterprise, it is also a well-oiled and gargantuan machine.

But there is something clearly amiss with that machine, for in the annals of history I doubt there has ever been so much effort expended at producing so little. Oh, sure, if you are totaling words, confidence intervals, and obsequious references, then the scholarly world today is now full to overflowing. But if you are totaling useful human insights, then the scholarly world today has become as bankrupt as any other Ponzi scheme. To see this, one need only hearken back to the days of Einstein, Darwin, Heisenberg, Maxwell, Cantor, Turing—a time when the scholarly world was minuscule by way of comparison to its current range, and yet that minuscule world managed to produce a long list of valuable and revolutionary understandings, understandings that literally changed the course of human existence and human endeavor. Now judge what has been happening over the last fifty years or so, a period of time during which the academic and research communities have enlarged by several orders of magnitude from their former days. Have the insights *also* been enlarging by several orders of magnitude? In fact, the number of useful human insights, far from increasing, have actually been *decreasing* by several orders of magnitude across that time. Ask yourself, have any ideas or concepts emerged over the past half century or so that can compete with the impact of relativity, evolution, quantum theory, computation, and so on? I cannot think of a single thing. And ask yourself, has any illustrious professor emerged from today's scholarly mass who might be

deemed worthy of inclusion alongside that list of brilliant names from above? I cannot think of a single soul. Despite all the heat and hubbub emanating from its current expanse, the most salient fact about the scholarly world today is that it has gone bust.

I consider myself rather blessed, because I have never been a part of that scholarly world. To it, I am merely an insignificant outsider, which is a mutually agreeable arrangement. This is why these essays, although written in the style of scholarly articles, cannot be considered as actual scholarly work. To begin with, their author does not possess the requisite credentials—I have never paid the necessary post-doctorate dues. Furthermore, I have not attached to these works the names of many co-authors, those well-connected colleagues who might prove useful in easing entry past the more truculent publishing gates. And the citations I have chosen to include within these articles...well, oh my! Let us just say they are entirely inadequate, both in number and in their failure to pay proper homage to the more prominent and trendy figures from the relevant fields. Indeed, a good many of these citations, far from being meant to curry favor, are intended exclusively to tease and to shame. In addition, these works do not follow the standard and prescribed form, their sub-headings and line of discussion geared more towards cogency than conformity. And finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, these works do not give due deference to any popular and prevailing views, indeed just the opposite, unabashedly wielding a sledgehammer against nearly every conventional notion to be found within the topics of human behavioral modernity, intelligence, autism, evolution, and so on. Many things might be said about the essays in this volume, but the one thing that cannot be said is that they are examples of modern scholarship.

So why have I bothered? Why have I made the effort to write essays in the style of scholarly articles? I guess the short answer to that question is that I have done this to prove a point, the point being that useful human insights can still be presented outside the scholarly world, outside the stifling restrictions of requisite credentialship, authorship multiplicity, citation back scratching, and intellectual conformity, with a further point being made that it has been the insistence upon these odious practices that has been the source of the scholarly world's current state of bankruptcy. But you need not rely upon the essays in this volume for the making of that point (time can sort out whether that would make for a reasonable choice). Instead, consider this. Arguably the most important and influential scholarly work ever to have been penned was a paper submitted to and published by the journal *Annalen der Physik* in the summer of 1905, a paper entitled *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies*. There are some unusual things to note about that paper. For one, it contains not a single citation, obsequious or otherwise. Two, the paper has only one author, and furthermore, that author is not a well-credentialed and well-connected physics professor, but is instead a twenty-six-year-old patent office clerk. And in keeping with that author's humble line of employment, the form of the paper is not that of a scholarly article, even by the looser standards of that earlier day, but is instead written in the form of a patent application, something with which the author must have felt more at home. And finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, the paper gives nothing in the way of fawning deference to the prevailing scientific views of that day, indeed just the opposite, choosing to ruthlessly smash every one of those views into little tiny bits. I shudder to think how such a paper might be treated at the editorial hands of the academic journals today.

There will still be useful human insights—the truth always must out. But it can be expected that very few of those insights will emerge anytime soon from the scholarly world, too entangled inside its ever enlarging chains. This means that by necessity such discoveries will fall to the insignificant outsiders, those less numerous souls not constrained by elitism, collusion, and convention, those eccentrics and recluses free to follow their individual acumen wherever and however that acumen might lead. Who knows, one day there might even be found some useful human insights in the form of a volume of essays written in the style of scholarly articles.