



## Episode 1,773: There Are Only Two Genders, and Other Things You Can't Say in America

Guest: Debra Soh

**WOODS:** I hate to start off with the question everybody asks you. I mean, there are probably four or five questions you get asked over and over. And I actually pride myself on asking questions that the guests don't normally get asked, but on a topic like this, I really do just want to hit the basics. And I want to start off with why you chose *The End of Gender* as your title.

**SOH:** That's a good question, and I'm glad you asked me that, because there has been quite a bit of confusion, I would say, around the title. So I chose that title to speak to the fact that science denial and denial of biology is impeding our ability to understand gender. And because of that, I foresee the end of our understanding of an accurate definition of gender. That's what the title is referring to. Some people, when I first announced the book, some people were quite upset and saying, what do you mean by that? Are you saying that gender doesn't exist, or that gender has no tethering to reality or to biology, or that it's based purely in self-identification? That is not what I'm saying. I'm actually saying the complete opposite of that. And I think if anyone goes — well, definitely if they read the book, they read any of my columns or see my appearances, they'll know that that's what I'm speaking to.

And so I took a science-based approach with this book to debunking nine different myths. These are some of the most prominent myths about gender that we are seeing perpetuating in our culture, things like the idea that young children with gender dysphoria should transition, that biological sex and gender are spectrums and socially constructed. These are all myths, that social justice belongs in academia, that there are no differences between transgender women and women who were born women. And so I listed all these nine myths on my website. If your audience would like to see them in the table of contents, they can go to [DrDebraSoh.com/book](http://DrDebraSoh.com/book).

**WOODS:** Okay, Debra, D-E-B-R-A. I'd like to go a bit out of order, because I want to start in probably with the one so many people want to start with, which is number three: there are more than two genders. Because I can't imagine what it's like being on a college campus now, but in the early 1990s, absolutely nobody was suggesting that they were more than two genders. There were crazy things going on on campus, but I didn't encounter that. So this is as new to me as it is to anybody. And everybody, I mean everybody across the spectrum would have just naturally said that there were two genders. Now the view is that there is a great many of them. It's not even clear that everybody agrees on the precise number. But what they do agree on, people who do claim that there is a wide variety of genders, is actually that if you reject this idea, you are rejecting science. So they actually seem to think that science is on their side. Now, is there anything to that?

**SOH:** No, science shows that there are two genders. Gender is binary. It has become very much a mainstream view that there are multiple genders, that there are at least three, that there are hundreds or potentially an infinite number, which is not true. And it's quite alarming, I would say, because at last count 10% of millennials identify as a third gender, which is to me, a large number of people, when this is not something that is backed by science. And I have no issue referring to someone by whatever pronoun they would like me to use. My issue is when people start saying, as you mentioned, that the "newest science" backs up this idea when it doesn't.

So gender is determined by biology, and this is the case for trans and intersex people, and biological sex is also binary. So as a result, there are two. I mean, if you look at something like people who are transgender and identify more as the opposite sex than their birth sex, if gender was not binary, what are they identifying – how does transitioning work? What are they transitioning to and from? But what you see now is when people refer to the term *transgender* or the so-called *transgender* umbrella, they're referring to people who are a third gender as well, which to me is totally nonsensical, because now it's this idea that if your gender fluctuates throughout the day or over time, that that means you are not male or female. I think at the core, what they're referring to is the idea that yes, for most of us, we may feel differently over our lifespan with regard to how masculine or feminine we feel, but that doesn't mean that we have to be categorized as something different. And I think for masculine women or feminine men or people who are different or gender non-conforming, you can still be one of the two binary sexes. It doesn't mean that you should be – to me it's a more regressive view to say just because someone is gender atypical, that they're not really a man or a woman.

**WOODS:** Right. Right, right. Now, it seems to me that there are two ways they could go with this. So one would be arguing from science, as they've tried to do, and say that there's scientific evidence backing up a multiplicity of genders. But failing that, it seems that you could fall back on a radical subjectivity and say, look, I don't care about your scientific studies. All I know is what I feel, and I don't feel comfortable. Even though I'm in a man's body, my every instinct is female. Every instinct. The way I want to live and dress and act and the interests that I have. Or even more than that, it's that I don't really particularly feel like either one of these, and so I would like people to acknowledge that I feel a bit disembodied, so to speak. I think that's what they're – and they're trying to say that we ought to be tolerant and accepting of this, but you're saying that's different from saying that they belong to a different gender.

**SOH:** Yeah, I'm totally in favor of society being accepting of people who may not fit into typical or expected gender roles, but I don't think we need to completely reconceptualize what it means to be male or female to facilitate that acceptance. And my sense is that people who want to go to the science and claim that science backs up their views, I mean, like you're saying, you don't need to have science on your site to advocate for this. But they do that because I suppose it will add some legitimacy to their claims. And we do see scientists who actually will agree with this, because wokeness has infected academia. It's infected even scientific disciplines. And I would say a savvy academic knows that if they go along with this and start producing work, even, that is in alignment with this political agenda, that's going to help their career. That's going to help them move forward.

Because what you see on the flip side of that, as I talk about in the book, any academic who goes against these particular narratives pays a really heavy price for that. I mean, they get

shamed. They get mobbed. In some cases, they get fired from their institution. Their work gets pulled. Their professional and personal reputations are ruined. So there really is less of an incentive to be honest about what the science says and a greater incentive to go along with whatever the fad is at the moment.

**WOODS:** I'd like to say something, if we can, about your own background, because it does seem relevant here. You chose not to go into academia, even though you do hold a PhD. And I think that that probably was a wise decision. I'm sure you don't regret that. But I'd like to know about, first of all, what made you decide not to go into academia, in case it isn't obvious. But secondly, something about your background, because people might assume, knowing nothing about you, that you would write this book because you're trying to vindicate social conservatism.

**SOH:** [laughing] No, not at all. And I think anyone, as you mentioned, who knows anything about me would probably say I'm definitely not a social conservative. So in terms of why I left academia, I do not regret it one bit. I made the decision to leave because the political climate had become so hostile to legitimate science. And it's only gotten worse. I finished my PhD three years ago, and it's only gotten so much worse. And for me, the tension came from wanting to write an op-ed about gender transitioning in children, and I wrote about the scientific literature showing that this is not a good idea, and that the best way forward for these children with gender dysphoria – so they identify more as the opposite sex and their birth sex – it makes more sense for them to wait until puberty, because they are likely to outgrow it. They're more likely to grow up to be gay in adulthood and not be transgender.

So I wrote this op-ed as I was finishing my PhD, and I waited about six months to publish it. And I, after much discussion with my mentors and colleagues, realized that my decision came down to staying quiet and staying in academia or publishing it and probably having to leave, because there's no way that I'd be able to stay because of the public backlash. So I chose to publish it. And I now have worked full time as a journalist. My first book has come out. And I have more freedom to write and speak about the scientific literature accurately than I would have if I had an academic affiliation, 100%. And I think that really is an indictment in terms of where academia is currently.

And in terms of me as a person, I've always been, I would even say I was in favor of social justice. A couple years ago, I was very progressive. I'd still consider myself to be progressive. I still call myself a liberal. But for some reason, when you talk about gender or the science of gender, there's so much denial of science coming from progressives, that when you do that, people immediately assume you must be on the right. And I have no issue with conservatives. I know many of my friends and colleagues are conservative. But me personally, I just – I mean, I used to write a column, a weekly column for *Playboy*. I grew up in the gay community. I've always been very much in favor of gay rights. So I think it probably is a bit disorienting for some people. But again, I'm just about the science. There are plenty things I write about and that I say that upset people on the right and upset people, it doesn't matter where they are on the political spectrum.

**WOODS:** Yeah, so you don't feel like people on the right are kind of, I don't want to say using you, but you know what I mean? That you're dealing with people who on other issues you might really not want to do interviews with. Does that bother you at all?

**SOH:** No. I mean, that's a question that's come up. People have been asking me about that, how I feel about that. At the end of the day, I'm about defending the science, and I am perfectly happy to talk to people who may disagree with me about a myriad other issues. I think for people who say that I'm being used by conservatives, it's a very lazy and easy way for them to try and discount what I'm saying instead of actually engaging with my argument. And I would also say, okay, if that's how you feel, then why is it that I would say the vast majority of liberal media outlets refuse to have me on? They refuse to acknowledge this book. For the most part, I'm thinking in terms of — I've had maybe two progressives who have had me on their show, and I'm super, super thankful to them for that. But for the most part, people do not want to engage. So I mean, there's only so much those of us can do. At some point, this message needs to be heard, and I'm willing to talk to anyone about it. But for the time being, it seems people who are more right-leaning or libertarian are the ones who are willing to engage with me.

**WOODS:** Let's talk about gender as a social construct. Now, I can understand somebody saying that certain social expectations of men and women have changed according to time and place, but I think they jump from that to say that the whole idea of gender is a social construct. So how do we separate out and understand these two different things?

**SOH:** Right, so anyone who defends biology as I do is often called a biological essentialist. And people claim that we say that biology is the only thing that matters, and we don't take culture or society at all into consideration. So I do definitely agree that socialization or culture plays a role, but it cannot override biology. And in terms of gender, biology dictates — so we'll say, okay, society may dictate what is masculine or feminine, but what someone personally gravitates toward is dictated by biology. So the example I use in the book is something like a shaved head. Most people with a shaved head are men, and so for a woman who has a shaved head, she's likely going to be more male typical, but that stems from her biology in terms of exposure to prenatal testosterone. So it's not as though this is purely socialization, that this is completely arbitrary. Well, some things in culture are somewhat arbitrary — say, color preference, things like that. But whether you gravitate toward what's considered masculine or feminine is dictated by your biology.

**WOODS:** So what's the problem? If somebody thinks gender is a social construct, so what? What are the consequences of that view?

**SOH:** Well, it's not accurate. And actually going back to your last question, I want to emphasize: even for people who are gender dysphoric, who identify more as the opposite sex than their birth sex, it also, for many people depending on their reasons for the way they feel that way — and I go into that more in the book — there are different presentations of gender dysphoria, but the mainstream narrative is being born in the wrong body or having the wrong brain sex for your body. And there is some truth to that, and that also goes back to the prenatal environment.

But with regard to why it's harmful to pretend that gender is a social construct, we see how there are so many initiatives, so much time and money being put toward policies that are not useful. I talk in the book about, in 2017, how James Damore's Google memo came out and people were very upset that, to say the least. I wrote a column for *The Globe and Mail* defending the science he cited in that memo. And if we pretend that the reason why we don't see a 50/50 ratio in STEM or science and math disciplines is because purely of sexism, then a lot of money and time is going to be wasted in trying to recruit women into these disciplines,

when on average, I would say most women — and the science backs us up — most women find other disciplines more interesting. And I don't think there should be anything wrong with saying that. And to me, pretending that men and women have to be the same in order to advocate for gender equality and equal opportunities for men and women is wrongheaded. And it's also sexist, because it's ultimately saying that women need to be the same as men in order to receive equal treatment.

**WOODS:** I would tend to think that some of the people who believe what you describe as myth number two, that gender is a social construct, also tend to be the sort of people who perpetuate myth number eight, about gender-neutral parenting.

**SOH:** Yeah, absolutely. They go hand in hand to some degree. It's almost like that ideology gets them at a certain age, and then as they progress through life, it just does not change. So they become parents, and then now they're pushing this on their children as well and treating it as though their parenting is the sole determinant of whether their child is going to be gender typical or atypical. And again, it comes down to biological influence. I say for parents, just be as accepting of your child as possible. Love them, and it doesn't matter whether they are typical or atypical.

**WOODS:** With regard to myth number five, which is children with gender dysphoria should transition, I've heard a lot of people critical of this idea say once a person reaches a certain age, then it's up to that person, whatever they want to do. But as long as they're below that certain age, it's ridiculous and even child abuse to have them begin the so-called transition. But then the response that comes to that is that it's much easier on the body to start the transition process early, and if you do wait that long, you're going to make it much harder on the person and you're going to make the person's life even more miserable. So what's your thought on this?

**SOH:** I'm in favor of transitioning for adults, because research does show that that can help adults with gender dysphoria. And I think at that point, you have the mental capacity and emotional maturity to make that sort of a decision. Children do not have that capability. And all of the research literature shows that the vast majority of kids with gender dysphoria outgrow those feelings by puberty, so it doesn't make sense for them to transition prior to that. And so I understand this argument in favor of blocking puberty and getting them on the track of transitioning earlier to prevent the otherwise irreversible changes that are associated with development, but what's going to happen if it's not the right choice for them is they're going to change their mind, and they're going to have to then live with the potentially irreversible side effects of those interventions.

And people will frame it, activist groups and some medical professionals even will frame this as a social transition is harmless. So if the child just changes their name, either cuts their hair or grows their hair long, changes their clothing, that they can change their mind at any point. But from a research perspective, this is associated with the child then going on and undergoing medical interventions, as well. And also, people underestimate how difficult it is for these kids. When they're receiving so much praise and attention for transitioning even socially, how do you go back from that and tell everyone in your life and all of your peers, essentially, and the teachers and doctors that you made a mistake and that you were wrong? So I mean, it's a very strong narrative, I really feel for the parents, because the parents are being told that if their child does not transition, they are at a high rate of suicide, which is not true. And I go into all the research literature explaining why that is the case.

**WOODS:** That's interesting. I hadn't known that till I read your book, by the way, because I believed it too.

**SOH:** Right. I mean, it's a very powerful narrative. And chapter five I wrote really for the parents who have asked me over the years for my advice, and I opened that chapter with a conversation I had with one parent in particular whose child was on puberty blockers and he approached me after an event. And I never feel like I can really say to parents what they should do, because I feel, number one, it's not my child. I've never met the child in most cases, and I don't know that parent. And parenting is such a personal thing, I don't feel it's my place. But this was one comprehensive resource that I could offer to parents to say, if you are facing this. And it's been really amazing and appalling to me. I have parents reaching out to me from all walks of life all over the world, telling me that this issue is affecting them and their families, and it's really quite sad and horrifying.

**WOODS:** And in particular, as you say, the social pressure on parents is just overwhelming, for parents who give a darn what other people say. And of course, in the entertainment world and everything, there's really only one way you're allowed to think about it. It's unbelievable how we went from this is not an issue at all to now there is exactly one way to think about it and you are borderline subhuman if you don't agree with that one position. That seems to characterize the way, unfortunately, people who hold these sorts of views treat the other side. It's not like we're having an honest debate and we'll just see where the scientific evidence shakes out. It's not that way at all. And no doubt, that's why you're not in academia.

**SOH:** Yeah, I think for some of them, they genuinely believe that this is lifesaving, and if you deny a child this, you're essentially saying that you don't care about that child's life. Part of it is also that activist groups have been very smart in how they've marketed this, and they are making it seem as though gender identity is the same as sexual orientation, even though it isn't. Sexual orientation is immutable. So if you are gay or bisexual, you cannot be made to be straight. But gender identity is different, especially for young kids. The way they feel about whether they identify as male or female can change over time, as we see with the research literature around desistance, this phenomenon of not feeling gender dysphoria anymore. So activist groups have been very smart to make it seem like they're the same, because people look at the history of, say, gay rights, and they say, well, we were wrong to tell gay people that they should change who they are, or that what they felt wasn't real. You'll hear a lot that people will talk about gender identity, like this is something they felt since they were very young and that it can't be changed.

And then this also leaks into therapies, and this is basically forcing any therapist who does not go along with this agenda to leave their profession or to not see these patients, because they run the risk of losing their license. Or now in Canada, potentially, there's a bill that may be passed that will criminalize this kind of therapy that seeks to understand a child's gender dysphoria and doesn't immediately facilitate early transitioning. So it's been very, very powerful in terms of the activism. And I really feel for these kids. I think it's going to be really awful in a couple of years when they do start de-transitioning.

**WOODS:** Well, it seems to me that in about 10, 15 years, we're going to have quite a few such people who went through this process for whom it was not the right thing to do. And it seems like they will have, if anyone cares to listen to them, a fairly powerful testimony against all this. Has that already started to emerge from anywhere?

**SOH:** We see this in the UK, definitely, because there are hundreds of young women who identified either as male or as a different gender who underwent in some cases medical interventions like testosterone or double mastectomies. In some cases, they have had even more invasive surgeries, and they've had, say, their uterus and their ovaries removed. And they're waking up at age 20, 21, and saying, what have I done? So there's one landmark lawsuit that's happening right now with one young woman who is actually suing the hospital that treated her. She was on cross-sex hormones, she had a double mastectomy, and now she's 23 years old and saying, I regret it, and how did the adults allow me to do this? So I don't doubt that there are going to be many, many more cases like this. And it's just appalling to me that, for the most part, the people who are pushing this are not taking a step back and saying, wait a minute, does this really make sense what we're doing?

**WOODS:** I find this extremely discouraging, because the myths that you're overturning in the book are extremely widespread, to the point where there are some people who probably can't even conceive that somebody would consider the myths and not believe in them. And the punishment for not agreeing with them, of course, in academia is clear enough. But also in polite society, we all know there are things you're not supposed to say and believe. When I interview somebody like you, I'm glad to get the information, but then I feel extremely discouraged. Is there any sign of hope in all this?

**SOH:** Well, I'm very grateful for you having me on. You had the courage to do that. You could easily – we all face cancellation in this climate, but it's the people who are willing to stick their neck out that are making the difference. And so that's been my biggest piece of advice to people who are questioning it, is know that you are not alone. I mean, the response to the book has been so positive, and people have been saying to me they're so grateful because they felt like they were crazy for thinking the things that they thought; one, that the science is written in a way that they are able to make sense of it, and that I am very balanced in my arguments and I'm very compassionate.

So even to talk to people in your life. I know it can be scary, but you'd be surprised the number of people who secretly agree and who are not on board with these loopy ideas, because I really think the reason it's gotten to this point is because most people are afraid, and they're afraid of the repercussions, understandably. But for someone like myself, I've built up my life in a way that I do have this freedom to say what I think, and everyone in my life knows what I think. And it is a kind of peace that I can't even express. When you are able to live your life like that. You never have to worry about what people are going to think and who's going to abandon you. It's just incredible.

**WOODS:** Where do you publish your articles these days?

**SOH:** So I am a monthly columnist for *The Globe and Mail*, which is Canada's national newspaper. I was, as I mentioned, a columnist for *Playboy* prior to that. I'm working on some new projects now that I'm not yet ready to announce publicly, but if your audience follows me on social media, I'm on Twitter @DrDebraSoh, and I'm on Instagram @DrDebraWSoh. I will be announcing those on there.

**WOODS:** Okay, well, that was going to be my next question, so I withdraw it. I withdraw it. In your writing and in this book, in particular, you've also written a bit about sex and dating, and so what's your perspective on this, and what do we need to know?

**SOH:** So the myth that women should behave like men in sex and dating, it follows in some ways from myth number two, that gender is a social construct, because my sense is young women today really, truly believe that there are no differences between men and women when it comes to our sexual systems and in terms of how we approach sex and relationships. And this is not true. And also that evolutionary psychology or evolutionary explanations for our behavior are sexist or somehow hold women back. And that chapter really, I wanted to emphasize that we can acknowledge that there are these on-average differences, and that's not any justification to make assumptions about an individual or to stereotype men or women or to justify bad behavior in your partner, but to say, if you understand this research, this is going to help you so much in your personal life, because now you have an accurate understanding of the way we behave, as opposed to these ideological ideas that are not based in fact and are actually going to be quite harmful to both men and women.

**WOODS:** Well, the book is *The End of Gender: Debunking the Myths About Sex and Identity in Our Society* by our guest, Dr. Debra Soh. Check out the book; I will link to it at [TomWoods.com/1773](http://TomWoods.com/1773), along with Debra's social media links that she mentioned. We'll have all that stuff there on the show notes page. Continued good luck with your work. In fact, I wanted to have somebody on, talking about this topic. It so happened that you had a book out at the time, but you were the only name I could think of, honestly. I know there are other people who must be doing stuff on this, but you were the very first person and only person who came to mind. So in a way that's good for you, bad for society.

**SOH:** [laughing] Thank you. Yeah, I do believe my book is the first to really debunk these particular myths, because these ideas have really only gotten so popular, I would say, in the last year. So thank you for having me on.