

Chapter 2

Perceiving Race and Hierarchy

I have two sensations; we will suppose them to be simple ones; two sensations of white, or one sensation of white and another of black. I call the first two sensations *like*; the last two *unlike*. What is the fact or phenomenon constituting the *fundamentum* of this relation?

The two sensations first, and then what we call a feeling of resemblance, or of want of resemblance. ... these feelings of resemblance, and of its opposite dissimilarity, are parts of our nature; and parts so far from being capable of analysis, that they are presupposed in every attempt to analyse any of our other feelings. Likeness and unlikeness, therefore, as well as antecedence, sequence, and simultaneousness, must stand apart among relations, as things *sui generis*. They are attributes grounded on facts, that is, on states of consciousness, but on states which are peculiar, unresolvable, and inexplicable.

J. S. Mill *Logic*

2.1 Racism as the Primitive

It will soon be clear that notions of “race” and hierarchy are ill-defined, indeed unstable, in the mid-nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. Arguments about race and hierarchy frequently played out both in terms of the Irish and the former slaves in Jamaica (Curtis 1968, 1997). The “labouring classes” were also included in racially-charged discussions of inherited incompetence. And as noted above, hierarchy and competence were mapped to gender and religion, as well.

This instability of “race” and hierarchy invites us to take what we shall call *racism* as primitive for our analysis and to consider what distinctions were made by those we study.¹ Taking racism as the foundation for our analysis is very much akin to what Bishop Berkeley proposed by taking perception as the foundation for his work on vision. One learns, Berkeley said, to perceive distance (Levy 2001). Mill’s work on resemblance is even more sharply focused on the perception of difference and similarity:

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¹We use the more familiar “racism” rather than the unwieldy “hierarchicalism” here, to signify thinking in which groups are perceived as superior vs. inferior. Glenn Loury’s axiom: “‘Race’ is a socially constructed mode of human categorization” (2002, p. 5) is much to the point. We focus on the microfoundations of such a construction while attempting (by using Mill’s constructions) to use the machinery found within the period we study.

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Following Mill, we suppose that one person perceives another directly through the immediate senses or indirectly through words and pictures of that other person. The judgment which results is “the same as me” or “different from me”. “The same as me” affirms analytical egalitarianism; “different from me” affirms analytical hierarchicalism. In the debates we study, the step is always taken from “difference” to “inferiority” or “superiority”.²

In line with Mill, we suggest that people learn to perceive “similarity” or “difference.” Part of the learning process involves images and stories which insist upon human homogeneity – the Wedgwood image that accompanied the slogan supposing the truth of *Genesis*, “Am I not a man and a brother?” (below, Chapter 9), was central to the anti-slavery movement³ – as well as images and stories which purport that some people are closer to beasts than they are to people (Chapter 3). Even as the perception of homogeneity widened to people across the globe and sympathy extended to other races,

²The problem didn’t end with our period. In 1963, Martin Luther King rightly urged that an “unjust” law was “*difference* made legal”, while “a just law” is “*sameness* made legal”. (King 1963)

³The manacled African’s nakedness emphasized *his* shared experience of human birth. When the opponents of the anti-slavery movement remade the image and changed the slave’s gender, a message of another sort was conveyed. The painting is by Thomas Stoddard, “Voyage of the Sable Venus, from Angola to the West Indies” 1793, reproduced in Wood (2000, p. 22).

the argument was put forward that some are more deserving of sympathy than others, that “charity begins at home.” This slogan is central to nineteenth century “paternalism” in that it recognizes that unregulated sympathy and choices can endanger hierarchy.

Taking racism as primitive lets us deal with the question of the Jewish “race” with the same facility with which we deal with the Irish “race.” A “race” is what the people of the time perceive it to be. Francis Galton and Karl Pearson will tell us in Chapter 5 that Jews are a “race” because they can be distinguished visually from other people. We will consider how Jews are thereby “proven” inferior, and how this reflects on our argument concerning the motivation of scholars, in Chapter 6.

To provide a thumbnail sketch of the debates on human hierarchy, we use an index of humanity – or human hierarchy – which we denote α for the Greek anthro, the human. We use this device to characterize four major positions in the period we study. We shall use α in what follows to *define* a “race” because we find that race is conflated in our period with religion, gender and class.

Race is also conflated with *choice*. This conflation is perhaps best illustrated by the remarkable 1860 image by Charles Bennett which conveys the message that a woman who exits the household to engage in market activity changes race. The image, entitled “Slavey”, captures the malleability of “race” unforgettably.⁴ A woman who exits hierarchy

⁴The accompanying text makes it clear that Bennett is on Carlyle’s side in the debate over slavery with Mill: “It will be noticed that the eidolographic development of Miss Hipswidg is strikingly suggestive of the enslaved African type of humanity. The banjo, castanets, ‘abundant pumpkin,’ and other conventional solaces of that persecuted race are, however, wanting to make the resemblance



perfect." Bennett and Brough (1860, p. 33). The "abundant pumpkin" is a phrase from Carlyle's "Negro question" discussed in Levy 2001 and Levy-Pearl 2001-2002.

through markets – by entering the labour force – devolves into “an enslaved African type of humanity.” She is now perceived as different, and must be so.

The “progressive” doctrine that hierarchy humanizes, while exiting hierarchy to make self-directed choices causes racial devolution, is central to Charles Kingsley’s influential children’s tale, *Water-Babies*, as well as the *Punch* images we study below (Chapter 3). *Water-Babies* contains the story of the DoAsYouLikes – particularly fond of playing a Jew’s harp – whose devolution to apes and consequent extermination is a matter of no regret. As the last of the ape-men perishes at the hands of a European hunter, he tries to say that he was “man and a brother,” but, having lost of the power of speech, fails in the attempt.

2.2 Theories of Human Capability

What is it that defines the human and measures human capability? By common consent it is “rationality.” In our period, the concept of rationality had a social aspect because it presupposed both common language as well as the capacity for individual choice. Adam Smith supposed a social foundation for political economy when he conjectured that humans trade because they reason and they speak a common language (Smith 1776, I.ii. § 2; Rubinstein 2000). While it is not quite the case that everyone in the 18th-19th centuries defined the human in terms of an ability to use language, the

exceptions were considered eccentric by their contemporaries.⁵ Thus, in terms of our α , there will be a discontinuity of the relation between α and reason at the edge of the development of language.

Having attained the status of human, in the debates we study human capability is related to the ability to make economic and political choices, including the decision to marry and have children. For Classical economists, there are two key aspects of this capability: the ability to sympathize, that is, to take into account other people in the self-interested calculus; and what contemporary economists call “time preference.”

The ability to reason involves the ability to abstract, on one’s own, from surface differences. Those who opposed Classical economics held that such judgements were not to be trusted unless they were directed. Unregulated sympathetic judgements might yield resources to the undeserving. In the debates we study, positive time preference was also viewed as a failing.⁶ As the case was made that some among us fail to make decisions optimally, perceptions of hierarchy and race entered economics: early British post-Classical writers maintained that lack of patience was a particularly Irish characteristic.

Here, we are interested in different specifications of the relationship between humanity and economic ability (entailing sympathetic and intertemporal judgements) in

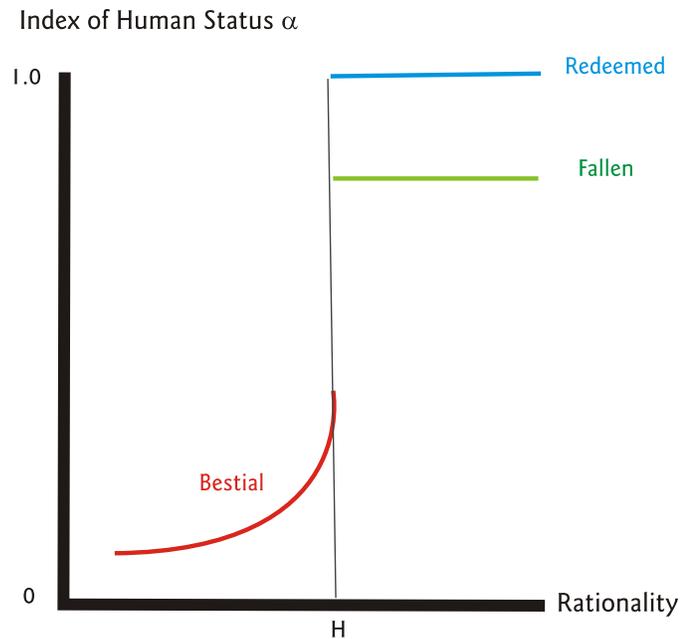
⁵The counter-example is Lord Monboddo (James Burnett) who defined humans as tool users and thus considered the great apes he knew about as instances of men without language.

⁶W. S. Jevons, for instance, argued that in matters of intertemporal decisions, the laboring classes were inherently myopic and prone to making systematic mistakes. For a demonstration of such views in Jevons, Marshall, Pigou and Fisher, see Peart 2000, Lipkes 1993, Collard 1996.

the great debates over hierarchy.⁷ We focus on four foundational views of the relationship: the evangelical, Adam Smith’s, a “developmental” account, and a “progressive”/eugenic account.

1 Evangelicals

The evangelicals distinguished two – and only two – states of the human: the redeemed of highest humanity, $\alpha = 1$, and the fallen of $\alpha < 1$. Since all of the fallen have the possibility of redemption open to them, they are above the beasts. Having achieved the status of the fallen or redeemed, all are equally



Evangelical View of Human Status

human. We will see in what follows that the evangelicals and economists shared the same foundational conception of humanity.

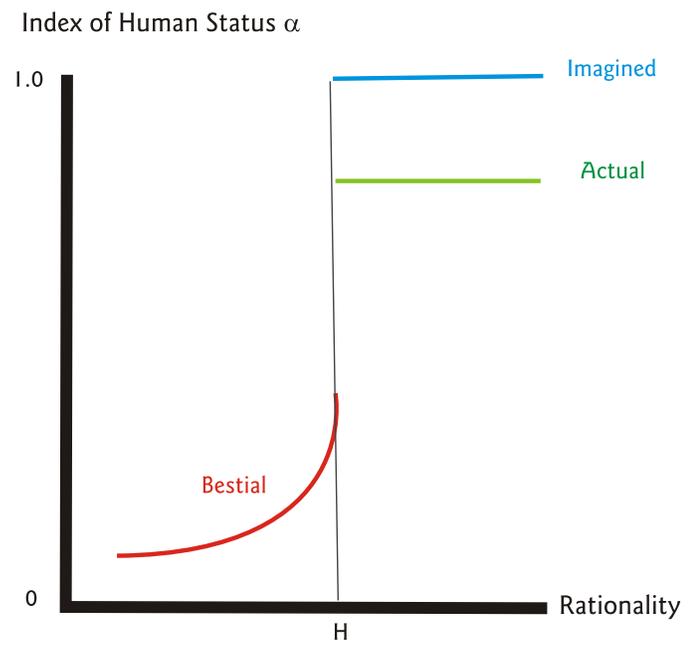
2 Smith

Smith does not consider the redeemed, but he does discuss those who are regarded by their fellows as heroic. These “imagined” types are objects of approval and emulation.

⁷Since we are more interested in racism than race, there are many aspects of the debates on race which will concern us very little. For example, we consider the doctrine of separate creation, “polygenesis,” only briefly in Levy-Peart 2004 when we consider more closely differences between Hume and Smith’s views on human equality.

As we noted at the outset, Smith sees all “real” individuals as equally human.

The critical evangelical doctrine is that of original sin. What unites Smith and the evangelicals is the doctrine that all real men have the same potential. This suffices for them jointly to oppose slavery. Smith’s *Moral Sentiments* describes the process by which people come to moral consciousness. We shall see at length in Chapter 9 that evangelicals



Adam Smith's View of Human Status

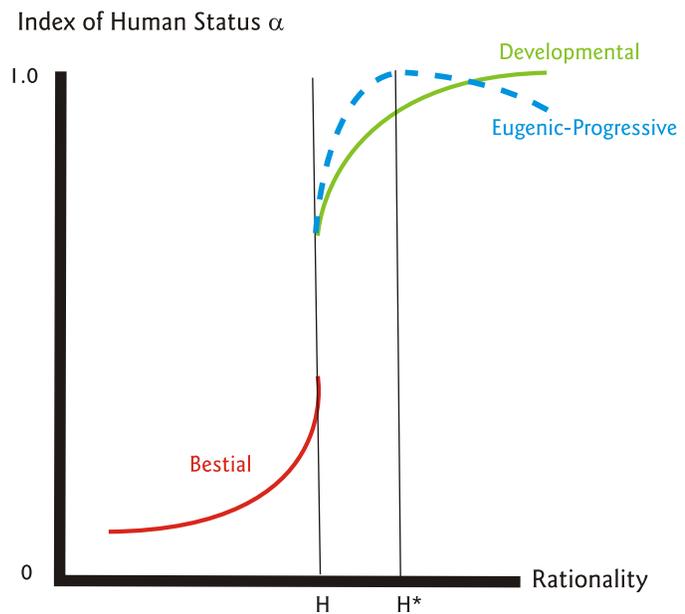
approved of Smith’s argument and relied on his intellectual authority in their own work.

We have alluded to the significance of sympathy in Smith. The α construction construes our intuition that agents may be willing to pay more to make evils vanish for those whose α is “high” than for those who have a “low” α . If black slaves or British women are viewed as people just like us, then we must be willing to pay more to release them from bondage than if they are a lower order of humanity. On the other side of this, denigrating the humanity of distant people and those who sympathize with such people, is part and parcel of the enterprise of hierarchy. When Charles Dickens expressed disapproval of a wife and mother who spent her time worrying about African slaves

instead of being the person her husband and daughters wished her to be, he drew the only expletive – “that creature Dickens” – recorded in Mill’s life and works⁸. We shall meet Dickens’ character, Mrs. Jellyby, in Chapter 7 below.

3 Developmental

The next graph presents two developmental views of human nature which are often confounded. First, there is the utilitarian developmental view associated with Mill and Herbert Spencer. Here, there is a positive monotonic relationship between α and economic ability. Second, there is the biological developmental view associated with Greg and Galton.



Developmental and Eugenic View of Human Status

Here, α attains a maximum at H^* and then bends down. The downward sloping portion reflects the biologists’ criticism of utilitarians for paying insufficient attention to the deleterious consequence of undirected

⁸This occurs in a letter from John Stuart Mill to Harriet Mill of 20 March 1854. “That creature Dickens, whose last story, *Bleak House*, I found accidentally at the London Library the other day and took home and read—much the worst of his things, and the only one of them I altogether dislike—has the vulgar impudence in this thing to ridicule rights of women. It is done in the very vulgarest way—just the style in which vulgar men used to ridicule ‘learned ladies’ as neglecting their children and household, etc.” Quoted in Packe (1954, p. 311. This tells us that Mill had discovered only the book version and had not seen been the public attack from Lord Denman’s on *Bleak House* in serial form.

sympathy and ethics.⁹

Consider the solid line, which represents the utilitarian developmental view. The simple curvature does not tell us what is the causal arrow: do we become better humans as we gain ability to make sensible choices; or do more developed people make more sensible choices? Not surprisingly, there were different views on the matter. For Mill, improved ability to make choices, manifested in part as widened sympathy, improved one's human status (Chapter 7). Indeed, we shall make the case that Mill's notorious "higher pleasures" are simply those choices which reflect expanded sympathy. For Mill, the maximum α was attained by Socrates and Jesus Christ who revealed a willingness to die for strangers. And although Mill was critical of crude American materialism, he believed that the highest national α was attained by Americans who were willing to die to abolish the slavery of their fellows.

4 *Biological Developmental*

In the second half of the century, biologists called for a reduction, or at least a directing, of human sympathy and ethics – critical considerations in the developmental view. A. R. Wallace had argued in 1864 that the principle of natural selection does not operate with humans because people possess sympathy for their fellow humans: we do not let the mentally infirm and the physically unable perish. Eugenists responded that if this

⁹Is it possible be "too" rational? Thomas Carlyle judged his adversary, John Stuart Mill, to be a "logic-chopping machine." At the beginning of Mill's attempt to bring justice to murdered and mutilated Jamaicans (Chapter 8), he wrote that we must not let narrow self-interest distract us from the demands of impartial justice for our fellow creatures.

survival of the unfit were the result of sympathy in humans, sympathy should be suppressed. Thus, without suppression (via eugenic policy), beyond a certain point – H^* – an increase in ability entailing expanded sympathetic judgements, actually *reduces* α . Such thinking led to the eugenicists' program of biological remaking in order to prevent the biological decay that was said to follow the undirected acquisition of sympathetic tendencies in humans, to keep the human race from moving to the right of H^* . In Chapter 6, we consider the incentives facing the expert who purportedly possessed the ability to identify and sterilize “the unfit,” those too simple to make reproductive choices.

There is a more subtle instance of eugenic theorists producing a downward sloping segment of the developmental index. Like most social scientists of the period who presupposed heterogeneity, eugenicists claimed that the impulsive behavior of “inferior” races revealed they lacked the ability to make reproductive choices and possessed high rates of time preference. However, when an evident “inferior” race – the Jews – seemed to reveal a *lower* rate of time preference than the British, the statistician Karl Pearson interpreted this finding as evidence of an inherent defect among the Jews. This is a result of the temptation confronting the expert that we have referred to above.

Eugenicists criticized Classical economists and Jews, and for similar reasons. The downward sloping segment of the graph captures what unites these two groups in the imagination of eugenicists/progressives: both are supposedly characterized by abstraction, materialism, lack of spiritualism. Eugenicists then reasoned that Classical economists

failed to see differences among people because of their tendency to abstract. The great divide upon which we focus in what follows is between those for whom the life of some people is worth more than the life of others and those for whom it is not.¹⁰

2.3 Who are the Pharisees? How Evangelicals Became Jews

In our account, “progressive” means a belief that human nature can and should be improved. This possibility is denied by Adam Smith who held, as a modeling device, that human nature is fixed: human nature could not be transformed or remade. Christian evangelicals accepted the possibility of transformation, but only through the will of God. As a result of their shared doctrine of fixed human nature, evangelicals and economists were attacked together by Progressives as hypocritical “canters” (Chapter 8 below). If the economists appeared Jewish to their opponents and economists share a set of beliefs about human nature with evangelicals, then we might expect the same Jewish label to be applied to the evangelicals. This three-way identification -- economist, Jew, Evangelical – is a test of our approach which takes perceptions as foundational.¹¹

Throughout the nineteenth century, critics called the evangelicals “Pharisees.”

¹⁰In opposition to Mill’s equality proposition, Edgeworth responded “Accordingly in the ‘koomposh’ of an unlimited pauper population, the most favourable disposition might seem to be (abstracted from practical considerations, and *if* the delineation of Wundt be verified within and beyond the region of sensation), might seem perhaps to be, that adhering *ex hypothesi* to the letter of the first problem, we should be guided by the spirit of the second problem, should wish to cut off the redundant numbers with an illusory portion, so as to transfer substantial (equal) portions to a few. There might be, as it were, a mulcting of many brothers to make a few eldest sons.” (Edgeworth 1877, p. 61). We shall return to Edgeworth’s position in Chapter 10 below.

¹¹Taking *facts* as foundational, one might make the case that Classical economists were Jews because David Ricardo’s mother was a Jew and Ricardo was an important Classical economist.

The ancient Pharisees were those with whom Jesus most disagreed, and accused of being hypocrites. Early nineteenth century use of the term signifies hypocrisy, or “cant.”¹²

Pharisee turns into more than an accusation of a personal disconnect between professions of belief and behavior, in the poem that serves as epigram to Kingsley’s *Water-Babies*. Found in the magazine version but suppressed after the first 200 copies of the book were printed, the poem reads¹³

L’ENVOI

Hence, unbelieving Sadduces,
And less believing Pharisees,
With dull conventionalities;
And leave a country muse at ease
To play at leap-frog, if she please,
With children and realities. (August 1862, p. 273)

Although *Water-Babies* attacks those who do not believe in transformation by their betters, and singles out economists for specific criticism, Kingsley does not explain why those who doubt transformation might be called Pharisees. For this insight, we turn to

¹²Here, the difference between the British *OED* and the American *Webster’s Third International* is worthy of note. The *OED* defines “pharisee” as hypocritical: “One of an ancient Jewish sect distinguished by their strict observance of the traditional and written law, and by their pretensions to superior sanctity.” Compare the *OED* on “sadducee”: “A member of one of the three ‘sects’ (the others being the Pharisees and Essenes) into which the Jews were divided in the time of Christ. According to the New Testament and Josephus, they denied the resurrection of the dead, the existence of angels and spirits, and the obligation of the unwritten law alleged by the Pharisees to have been handed down by tradition from Moses.” Only *Webster’s* tells one what the Pharisees actually professed, i.e., “immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, future retribution, and a coming Messiah.”

¹³Consequently, in the rare book market the poem is the marker of the two “states” of the first edition of *Water-Babies* (Macleod 1986, p. 40). Kingsley’s anti-Semitism drew letters of protest to the *Times* (Harris 1981). The relationship of later editions to the suppressed “L’Envoi” is complicated. The first of the one hundred illustrations drawn by Linley Sambourne, the visual epigram, has children and frogs playing leap-frog. But a “new edition” of the original (illustrated by Noel Paton and Percival Skelton) printed in New York (Kingsley 1885?) contains “L’Envoi.”

Werner Sombart, commentator on Marx and Engels and, later, admirer of National Socialism.¹⁴ In Sombart's writings, Jewish law is identified with capitalism.¹⁵ What has been less noticed, is Sombart's next step, which speaks directly to our identification thesis:¹⁶ his chapter, "Judaism and Puritanism", identifies puritans with Jews.¹⁷

The Jews and Modern Capitalism begins this way:

I have already mentioned that Max Weber's study of the importance of Puritanism for the capitalistic system was the impetus that sent me to consider the importance of the Jew, especially as I felt that the dominating ideas of Puritanism which were so powerful in capitalism were more perfectly developed in Judaism, and were also of course of much earlier date. (1951, p. 248)

¹⁴"The Jewish spirit is capitalistic. The English are said to possess the capitalist and, accordingly, the Jewish spirit. And Sombart thinks that the chief task of the German people and, above all, of National Socialism is the annihilation of the Jewish spirit ..." Harris (1942, p. 813). "In identifying Judaism as a moral basis of capitalism Sombart closely follows the pattern set by such early pan-Germanists as his teacher, Adolph Wagner, who looked upon English free trade and laissez faire or 'Manchesterism' and Jewish." Harris (1942, p. 832). Barkin traces Wagner's development from Classical beginnings to exponent of hierarchy: "He had anticipated neither the predominance of Jews in Berlin's economic life nor the unrestrained profit motive at work in the stock exchange and in the dealings of real estate speculators. The working-class squalor that he observed had no parallel in his experience. His Manchester sympathies did not survive a year in this unrestrained boom-town atmosphere of Berlin" Barkin (1969, p. 147). "Industrialism fostered a society in which egotism was rewarded and a concern for the commonweal led to ruin. At times he pondered whether Christianity could long survive in an industrial age. In the recent rise of prominence of the Jews, with their reputed immorality and obsession with material acquisition, Wagner found conclusive evidence for the soundness of his observations." Barkin (1969, p. 155).

¹⁵"Clearly, then, free trade and industrial freedom were in accordance with Jewish law, and therefore in accordance with God's will. What a mighty motive power in economic life!" Sombart (1951, p. 248).

¹⁶Harris (1942, p. 831) and Coleman (2002) catch the earlier, and related, identification "Scotchman and Jew are interchangeable terms" which follows from their trading nature.

¹⁷Schumpeter tells us that Sombart was unique in the history of economics because he was the only economist for whom race is an analytic element: "In fact, so far as I know, Werner Sombart is the only economist of note that ever made significant use of the element of race" (Schumpeter 1954, 792).

... there is an almost unique identity of view between Judaism and Puritanism, at least, on those points which we have investigated. In both will be found the preponderance of religious interests, the idea of divine rewards and punishments, asceticism *within* the world, the close relationship between religion and business, and above all, *the rationalization of life*. (1951, p. 249) [our emphasis]

After giving “an instance or two” of this identity, Sombart quotes poetic authority

I would also recall the words of Heine, who had a clear insight into most things. “Are not,” he asks in his *Confessions*, “Are not the Protestant Scots Hebrews, with their Biblical names, their Jerusalem, phraisaistic cant? And is not their religion a Judaism which allows you to eat pork?” (1951, p. 249)

From which it follows:

Puritanism is Judaism. (1951, p. 249)

“Cant” is the hostile label for the nineteenth century coalition of utilitarian economists and Evangelicals (Chapter 8). This three-way, seemingly bizarre identification -- economist, Jew, Evangelical -- is what our account predicts.