

May Trigger Eye Rolling

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The fashionable campus notion of “microaggressions” blurs the distinction between peaceful speech (offensive or not) and bashing somebody over the head with a club.



If courts, police and/or university officials can rationalize regarding the perpetrator of a so-called “microaggression” as initiating force against an offended listener, they can also rationalize using actual physical force in retaliation. Which, to the extent implemented, would mean the end of freedom of speech.

Advocates of open discourse seem to be in an endless war with champions of a repressive political correctitude. The jabberwocky used to justify that repression keep evolving.

After all, nobody needs a First Amendment in order to utter banal pronouncements about the weather.

The allied campaign urging or requiring professors to issue “trigger warnings” before

discussing anything that might provoke discomfort also dampens discourse.

Who can object to letting viewers of TV news know that they are about to see a corpse? Or sending little kids out of the room when certain subjects are discussed? But is such common sense the point of “trigger warnings”?

At best, “trigger warnings” are a silly name for referring to what nobody seeks to keep secret. At worst, they help trigger distress themselves — or impede frank discussion of controversial subjects. The latter treats adults as if they were not adults; the former makes adults less adult.

If and when “trigger warnings” are imposed by force, with penalties for omitting them, they also endanger freedom of speech.

Advocates of open discourse seem to be in an endless war with champions of a repressive political correctitude. The jabberwocky used to justify that repression keep evolving. The response must be constant: intellectual clarity and eternal vigilance.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.