

## Oration for Ms Deirdre Nansen McCloskey

To be Delivered on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 11am by Professor Steve Fuller

Deirdre N McCloskey is well known internationally in economics, economic history, rhetorical theory, philosophy of science, statistical theory, gender studies, and other fields. From 2000-2015 she taught economics, history, English and communication at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Deirdre McCloskey initially made her reputation as Donald McCloskey, a Harvard PhD who began his career at the University of Chicago where he was quickly recognized as one of his generation's leading economic historians of Britain's Industrial Revolution. However, even then McCloskey was already beginning to test the limits of economic thinking in the deepest ways possible.

This was the context in which I first encountered McCloskey as a postdoc at the University of Iowa thirty years ago, when he was the thought leader at Iowa's Project for the Rhetoric of Inquiry. Back then McCloskey was trying to convince his colleagues in economics that their recourse to

numbers was more about persuasion than proof. But McCloskey meant this as a compliment not a takedown.

He then -- and she now -- rightly believed that the rhetorical dimension of economics displayed its humane character. This insight has yet to be fully appreciated. But that didn't deter McCloskey from pursuing the humanistic side of economics in an impressive series of books, culminating in a defence of what she calls 'bourgeois virtue', the world-view of classical liberalism.

It is marked by tolerance, benevolence and a strong sense of fair play. These qualities are ultimately about the duties that we have to others who are just as free as we are. In this respect, McCloskey challenged self-described 'liberals' when she transitioned from male to female, a process that began during my time at Iowa thirty years ago. If we allow people to reassign themselves by breaking with the class of their birth, which was a key feature of the Industrial Revolution, why can't we do so with regard to the gender of their birth? This is another of McCloskey's deep lessons that have yet to fully sink in.

Indeed, Deirdre McCloskey exemplifies that rare breed of academic who has put her money -- and much more -- where her mouth is. It is a great pleasure to welcome her to Warwick today.

Provost, in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, Deirdre McCloskey.