

Philosophy Ripped From The Headlines!



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Compiled & Edited by *Philosophy Without Borders*

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1. “ICE Came for a Tennessee Town’s Immigrants. The Town Fought Back.”

By Miriam Jordan

The New York Times, 2 JUNE 2018

URL = <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/11/us/tennessee-immigration-trump.html>



The Trump administration’s first big workplace raid struck fear in rural Tennessee. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

MORRISTOWN, Tenn. — One morning in April, federal immigration agents swept into a meatpacking plant in this northeastern Tennessee manufacturing town, launching one of the biggest workplace raids since President Trump took office with a pledge to crack down on illegal immigration.

Dozens of panicked workers fled in every direction, some wedging themselves between beef carcasses or crouching under bloody butcher tables. About 100 workers, including at least one American citizen, were rounded up — every Latino employee at the plant, it turned out, save a man who had hidden in a freezer.

The raid occurred in a state that is on the raw front lines of the immigration debate. Mr. Trump won 61 percent of the vote in Tennessee, and continues to enjoy wide popularity. The state's rapidly growing immigrant population, now estimated to total more than 320,000, has become a favorite target of the Republican-controlled State Legislature. In 2017, Tennessee lawmakers passed the nation's first law requiring stiffer sentences for defendants who are in the country illegally. In April, they passed a law requiring the police to help enforce immigration laws and making it illegal for local governments to adopt so-called sanctuary policies.

But Morristown, a town of 30,000 northeast of Knoxville that was [the boyhood home](#) of Davy Crockett, has drawn migrant workers from Latin America since the early 1990s, when they first came to work on the region's abundant tomato farms. As stepped-up security has made going back and forth across the border more difficult, many of these families have settled into the community, enrolled their kids in school, and joined churches where they have baptized their American-born children.

So the day Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents raided the Southeastern Provision plant outside the city and sent dozens of workers to out-of-state detention centers was the day people in Morristown began to ask questions many hadn't thought through before — to the federal government, to the police, to their church leaders, to each other.

Donations of food, clothing and toys for families of the workers streamed in at such volume there was a traffic jam to get into the parking lot of a church. Professors at the college extended a speaking invitation to a young man whose brother and uncle were detained in the raid. Schoolteachers cried as they tried to comfort students whose parents were suddenly gone. There was standing room only at a prayer vigil that drew about 1,000 people to a school gym.

Here, based on interviews with dozens of workers and townspeople, and in their own words (some edited for length and clarity), is how it happened.



A sign in English and Spanish welcoming worshipers to St. Patrick Church in Morristown, Tenn. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

Angela Smith, 42, a longtime resident of the area: My first thought was one of sorrow. Oh my goodness, this is going to hurt so many people in the community. It's going to hurt their kids, our kids. It's going to have a ripple effect throughout the entire community because these people are part of Morristown. Immediately, I drive over to the parish center to see what I can do to help. I had to park way at the end because it was so packed. I go in, I said, I'm an attorney, how can I help?

The April 5 operation signaled a return to the high-profile immigration raids that last happened during the presidency of George W. Bush. President Barack Obama's chief workplace enforcement tactic was to conduct payroll audits and impose fines on businesses found to employ unauthorized workers. The Trump administration, on the other hand, has vowed to quintuple worksite enforcement. Last week, ICE agents arrested 114 employees at two worksites operated by a gardening company in Ohio.

All 97 workers taken into custody in the Tennessee raid now face deportation, though several have been released pending hearings. And much of the town is reeling. Up to 160 American-born children have a parent who could soon be ordered to leave the country; many families are relying on handouts.



Nataly Luna, 12, whose father, Reniel, was detained in the raid, at a march through downtown Morristown on April 12. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

Nataly Luna, 12, whose father was detained: My mom had told us one day it could happen, that one day one of them would be taken. The hardest thing is talking about it.

After the raid, immigrant advocates organized a peace march, and Nataly carried a sign bearing the image of her father, a native of Mexico who had been working in the United States without papers for 20 years before he was taken into custody at the meat plant that day. “We Miss You,” the sign read. “We need you by our side. You are the best father.”

The Town

Nestled between two mountain ranges and flanked by two large lakes, Morristown is the county seat and industrial hub of Hamblen County, where most of the plant workers’ families reside.

The Latinos who arrived here, especially those who came after the late 1990s, were part of a swelling wave of migrants bypassing traditional gateway states like California and Texas to seek opportunity in the fast-growing South. Word reached their villages that jobs were plentiful.

More recently, as with other places, Tennessee has been struggling with a meth and opioid epidemic. As drug abuse has sidelined many working-age American men and women, local employers have increasingly turned to immigrants.

Katie Cahill, a researcher who studies public health at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville: Tennessee is facing one of the highest rates of opioid addiction among states. Within this challenged state, you have a county that is doing even worse.

These days, Latinos make up about 11 percent of Hamblen County’s population and account for one of every four students in its public schools. Immigrants toil in meat, poultry and canning plants, as well as at automotive parts, plastics and other factories that dot the area.



A woman held a sign with her daughter's drawing at the march. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

Marshall Ramsey, president of the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce: We don't get into immigration issues. As long as they are pulling their weight as workers, that is what we appreciate. We're very proud of our diverse heritage. My wife is actually a seventh-grade schoolteacher here in town and about 50 percent of her class is Hispanic. She raves about parent-teacher conferences. The parents show up. The kids know that the parents have high expectations of them. The parents feel like the kids have been given an opportunity.

Not everyone in town has been welcoming, though. One theme many expressed: The workers were lawbreakers who got caught. In the parking lot of the local Walmart, where several people were talking about the raid at the meat plant, one woman said it could open up employment opportunities. But not everyone agreed with her.

Carol Jones, a retired nursing home worker : Send them back. There will be jobs for Americans, if they get off their butts.

Charles Atkinson, a retired truck driver : You can't get no Americans to work on the farm or nothing. Mexicans get right in there and do the work.

The Plant

Undocumented workers from Mexico and Guatemala formed the backbone of the work force at Southeastern Provision, located 10 miles north of Morristown in the town of Bean Station. They killed, skinned, decapitated and cut up cattle whose parts were used for, among other things, oxtail soup and a cured meat snack exported to Africa.

Immigrants were critical to the family-owned abattoir's growth over the last decade. Many of those affected by the raid, fearing further action from the authorities, spoke on the condition that only their first names be used.



A closed taco truck outside a trailer park where a number of the immigrant families live. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

Elisabeth, 38, whose husband was detained in the raid : He worked there for nine years. When he started, there were only around 10 people. The plant expanded thanks to the Hispanics. It was hard work. He would come home tired and say, ‘We killed 300 cows today.’ In the early years, they’d kill only 15 cows a day. A few months ago, the workers were talking about striking for better pay and work conditions.

With the \$11.50 hourly wage that her husband, Tomas, made at the plant and the \$9 she earns as a seamstress, Elisabeth and her family could afford the \$700 rent for a house big enough to accommodate their six children, three from her previous marriage, and live a relatively stable life, she said. To be sure, the work was heavy, gory and low-paying. Day after day, the workers endured the smell of manure, blood and flesh. But Southeastern Provision offered a major advantage over other businesses: The management, several workers said, didn’t seem to expect them to bother with fake work authorization documents.

Alma, 35, a native of Mexico who worked at the plant for two years: It was the one place where we could get work using our real names. I made \$10 an hour. My job was to operate a big machine that takes the nails out of the hooves and one that slices the skin from the cows’ faces.

Federal authorities said there was evidence that the company had run afoul of the law. In an affidavit, the Internal Revenue Service said the company had withdrawn millions of dollars in cash and told bank employees the money was needed to pay “Hispanics”— suggesting that the company knew it was hiring undocumented workers and evaded payment of federal employment taxes.

An informant hired at the plant in 2017 told investigators that workers felt they couldn’t complain about poor working conditions because of their immigration status. Some had to work unpaid overtime, the informant reported. He said he saw others required to work with “extremely harsh” chemicals without protective eyewear.



A closed Morristown store that sold dresses for quinceañera celebrations. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

Stephanie Teatro, co-executive director of the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Coalition: So far, it has been the workers who have borne all the consequences of the employer's violations. ICE could have decided to audit this employer, and forced him to pay fines and correct his practices. Instead they conducted a raid that left over 160 children without a parent from one day to the next.

No charges have been filed against the company. A federal criminal investigation is ongoing, said Bryan Cox, an ICE spokesman. The owner, James Brantley, said he couldn't talk about the case. His lawyer, Norman McKellar, also declined to comment. "We are in a difficult situation," he said.

The Raid

It was just after 9 a.m., about two hours after more than 100 workers had arrived for the 7 a.m. shift, when shouts of "inmigración, inmigración" rang out across the plant.

Alma went numb. In the cutting line, another worker, Raymunda, put down the butcher's knife she was holding and raced toward an exit. So did dozens of others, their blood-smeared smocks and protective aprons weighing them down. They soon realized that ICE agents, backed by state law enforcement, blocked every door.

Agents cornered and grabbed workers, sometimes barking "Calma!" in Spanish to those who cried and screamed. Some workers reported that agents pointed guns at them to stop them from fleeing. "I stuck myself between the cows," Raymunda said. It was to no avail.

Raymunda: We didn't come here to kill or to steal. We came here purely to work. I have a sister and we were both picked up at the same time.

Within minutes, all the Latinos at the plant were rounded up, including at least one American citizen and several other people who had legal authorization to work.

One of the workers who is an American citizen: An officer with an ICE vest on grabbed me by my shoulder. He grabbed me and wouldn't let me go. I told him he was hurting me and he told me to shut up. They were grabbing people however. For me, basically all the Hispanics because of their color were handcuffed. The white people just stood there.

Immigrants who were lined up, many of them crying, tried to give the woman messages to pass to their loved ones, because they knew she was an American and, therefore, likely to be freed.

The American citizen: When I tried to talk to workers in the line, they put metal handcuffs on me that bruised me. When I told them I am American, they asked me, where are your documents? I said I had them in my car. When I told them that, they asked me, why don't you carry your documents? I told them I don't carry my documents with me because where we work is very dirty. I use a squeegee to clean the blood off the floor in the killing room.

In groups of about a dozen, according to several workers interviewed, Latinos were placed mainly in plastic handcuffs, escorted to white vans with tinted windows and transported to a National Guard Armory. A helicopter hovered above.

Word began to spread that “la migra,” as ICE is known, was in the area. Panicked immigrants walked off the job at other companies in the region and frantically texted each other.



The National Guard Armory in Morristown. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

Veronica Galvan, 29, a well-known figure in the Latino community: I started getting message after message. Is immigration in town? Do you know? I started going through my news feed. I need to find out, especially because my mom works at one of these plants. I pull up to the armory. All these text messages were coming. Are you there? Are you there? Please tell me something, I am desperate. The first thing I thought was, I am going to livestream it on my Facebook.

Ms. Galvan described how she arrived to a crowd amassed behind yellow police tape surrounding the armory, as state troopers stood guard. Relatives of plant workers were crying and obsessively checking their cellphones for news.

Inside, workers said they waited hours to be interviewed and fingerprinted by agents, a process delayed by computer glitches. When agents asked women who had young children to identify themselves, virtually every hand went up.

By late afternoon, agents had released only a handful of people, mainly those in frail health or who had proven they had the legal right to work in the United States.

Angela Kanipe, a third-grade teacher and bus driver : Two non-Hispanic kids on the bus were having a conversation about how they were worried about their friends. And they were talking about how God was going to be mad because he doesn't want you to be mean to people. Why would someone take away someone's parents? When I think about it, it just breaks my heart. It's hard not to cry.

Johnny Gallardo, 15, Raymunda's son : I saw a lot of Hispanic kids crying in the hall at school. I called my dad and asked, 'Are you O.K.?' He said, 'I'm O.K., but this thing happened to your mom.' I went to soccer practice like he told me. I tried to take my mind off it. I just played. I have a goal. I want to go to college. Could my dream be destroyed by this?

In the evening, Johnny headed to the armory with his father and 7-year-old sister, Brittany, who was weeping. They brought insulin injections to be delivered to his mother, who is diabetic.

Families were gathering in an elementary school across from the armory. By nightfall, about 100 people, including teachers, clergy, lawyers and other community members had assembled. Volunteers distributed pizza, tamales and drinks.

Jeff Perry, superintendent of Hamblen County Schools: I got a call from some of our staff members that they had detained several of the parents at the armory. So we had several hundred people beside the road of the armory. As the numbers grew, the situation became more and more dangerous. We provided access to a school facility to keep folks safe. A lot of our administrators were there, several of our principals there to comfort kids.

As the night wore on, about 30 of the detainees, including Raymunda and Alma, were gradually released.

A little after 1 a.m., the agents announced that no one else would be let go. Workers still in detention — 54 in all — were put on buses to Alabama and then Louisiana.

Elisabeth : I was hoping my husband would be freed. Others came out. But my husband never came out. My husband never came. They have ruined our family. He is a good person. He never mistreated me. He cared for my three older children as if they were his own. My favorite moment was when we all sat together to dinner, blessed the meal and shared our day with each other: What did you do, how was school? We all talked about our day.

Irvin Roman, 21, Elisabeth's son: He helped with everything. Now, I have to literally step into his shoes.



Irvin Roman, 21, whose stepfather was detained in the raid, cleaning his family's home. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

The Church

St. Patrick Catholic Church's parish center was converted into a crisis response center. All day, people arrived with food, clothing, toys and supplies for the affected families. At one point, six trucks waited to unload donations.

Volunteers, who showed up by the dozens, received color-coded tags: Yellow for teachers, white for lawyers, and pink for general helpers, who prepared meals in the kitchen, packed grocery bags and performed other tasks.

Bleary-eyed immigrants packed the main room. In smaller rooms, teachers entertained children with stories while their parents received legal services.

Colleen Jacobs, a youth ministry coordinator : There was definitely crying, but you could tell you were in a place of people of faith. You still felt love and connection, more than you felt sadness and despair.

Members of other churches turned up to help, some bearing gift cards and checks.

David Williams, pastor at Hillcrest Baptist Church : As a minister of the Gospel, my concern is for affected families and especially the innocent children. These people are my neighbors and

live in my community. Our congregation as well as the community is divided on the issue. I try to keep it humanitarian, not political, and certainly not racial!

On Topix , a community website where comments are posted anonymously, one person asked, “Why does St. Patrick Catholic Church support law breakers?”

Another person wrote, “This bust is legal, the people are illegals. Why the big sympathy case? I don’t get it.”

Still, a couple of days later, “we had more volunteers than we knew what to do with. We had to turn people away,” Ms. Jacobs said.

At a news conference, faith leaders and Elisabeth, surrounded by her sons, pleaded for the community to pray for the immigrants.

Elisabeth : I have been here 20 years. All my children were born here. We came here for a better future. We didn’t come to steal or to take anyone’s job. Please help all our families. Pray. Pray a lot.

Hundreds of children missed school after the raid. On the evening of April 7, about 120 teachers and school staff packed the church’s basement to talk about how to assist students. On a poster board, they scrawled their feelings. “I cried Thursday night wondering which of my students were without parents that night,” one teacher wrote. “I feel helpless,” wrote another.



Food donated to families affected by the raid filled a Sunday school classroom at St. Patrick Church. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

Jordyn Horner, a school librarian, on Facebook : These past two days have been the hardest of my career and I wasn't prepared. Finding ways to comfort your students who are in tears, upset, angry, and afraid is nearly impossible.

On Monday, three days after the raid, a prayer vigil at Hillcrest Elementary School drew nearly 1,000 people who sat in the bleachers, in folding chairs on the court and, when the chairs ran out, they stood along the walls. A 16-year-old named Ramon stood up to speak.

Ramon : I want to see my mother again. My mother is the only person I have. I live alone now.

Two nights later, St. Patrick Church's center still brimmed with activity as immigrants and supporters gathered to make posters and banners for a procession through downtown Morristown. Ms. Smith brought her 8-year-old daughter, Laurel, figuring it was an important lesson. "This community is a snapshot of the dissonance of America on immigration," Ms. Smith said.

At Walters State Community College, instructors gathered in an auditorium to hear Jehova Arzola, 20, an engineering honors student whose brother and uncle were detained, describe his family's ordeal. No one knew when, or if, they would see them again, he said.

Jehova Arzola: At any time ICE can come and get you. It doesn't matter if you are a criminal or law-abiding. They don't care. The whole community is afraid to leave their houses and go to work. They are afraid there will be another raid.



Families impacted by the raid and local supporters marched through downtown Morristown last month. Charles Mostoller for The New York Times

The Procession

On Thursday, a week after the raid, about 300 people took to Morristown's downtown streets in the evening to draw attention to the plight of the families. Some people, like Colin Loring and his partner, Margaret Durgin, drove for an hour to participate.

"We are here to support our immigrant neighbors. The system needs to be fixed," said Mr. Loring, who is retired from the United States Department of Agriculture. Ms. Durgin arrived with a \$540 check to help the immigrants.

Before setting out, a nun led the marchers, who wore white and clutched white flowers, in prayer. "We love Morristown. We are here to send a message of love and unity," they chanted before heading down Main Street. Along the way, a driver shouted an expletive at the crowd from inside his brown truck and sped off.

Pulling to the front of the line was Raymunda, her youngest children, Johnny, 15, and Brittany, 7, by her side. She said she had a notice to appear in court for deportation proceedings.

Raymunda: The truth is, we don't know what is going to happen next. We have fear, a lot of fear. What else can I say? My husband is incredibly scared. My greatest fear in the world is to have to leave my children.

ONE Follow-Up:

Is the following argument sound? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. Citizens have a moral obligation to obey the law, as created by (e.g.) democratically elected governments of nation-States, and to heed government-authorized coercive law enforcement under those laws.
2. But all people also have a moral obligation to do the right thing.
3. If, e.g., immigration laws and their enforcement in a contemporary democratic nation-State like the USA are both immoral, then people have a moral obligation to resist them, or at the very least, not to obey them and not to heed them.
4. But this means that citizens of the USA are morally obligated to obey and not to obey the immigration laws, and also to heed and not to heed their enforcement, and that is contradictory.

5. Therefore, either (i) it is false that citizens have a moral obligation obey the law, as created by (e.g.) democratically elected governments of nation-States like the USA, and to heed government-authorized coercive law enforcement under those laws, or else (ii) it is false that all people also have a moral obligation to do the right thing.

ONE Link:

“Civil Disobedience”

URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/civil-disobedience/>

2. “Living the Life Authentic: Bernard Williams on Paul Gauguin”

By Daniel Calcutt

Aeon, 11 JUNE 2017

URL = <https://aeon.co/essays/living-the-life-authentic-bernard-williams-on-paul-gauguin>



Paul Gauguin, *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* (1897).

‘If there’s one theme in all my work it’s about authenticity and self-expression,’ said the philosopher Bernard Williams in an interview with *The Guardian* in 2002. Authenticity was already an influential cultural ideal during Williams’s lifetime (he was born in 1929 and died in 2003) but it has become only more so since. What is more familiar and compelling than the injunction to be true to oneself, to keep it real? Williams explored the force and appeal of this ideal, and his work still helps us makes sense of it. But, as he was also keenly aware, being true to yourself can be dangerous.

In his essay ‘Moral Luck’ (1976), Williams discusses Paul Gauguin’s decision to leave Paris in order to move to Tahiti where he hoped he could become a great painter. Gauguin left behind – basically abandoned – his wife and children. This was on the face of it a very selfish thing to do, and you might think that Gauguin’s action was morally indefensible. Williams, however, thinks that Gauguin’s eventual success as a painter constitutes a form of moral luck, in that his artistic achievement justifies what he did. It provides a justification that not everyone will accept, but one that can make sense to Gauguin himself, and perhaps to others. ‘Look,’ we can imagine Gauguin saying to himself, ‘I was right ... I knew I had it in me.’

Williams imagines Gauguin to be conflicted. He also freely admits, however, that his ‘Gauguin’ is not necessarily true in all details to the historical French artist. Williams introduces Gauguin as a useful prop in a thought experiment designed to explore the role that authenticity, achievement and luck play in justification. Williams also just assumes, for the purposes of argument, that

Gauguin did in fact succeed, which is to say that Gauguin did create valuable art, and that this art was a great expression of his gifts as a painter.

The story of moral harm in pursuit of art, with the overall endeavour somehow justified by the art, is a familiar one both in fact and fiction. The fiction tends to be written by men, and their protagonists tend to be men. Life imitates art and vice versa, and in reality those who justify their selfishness (and worse) in the name of art tend to be men too. Williams, however, does not discuss in any detail the harm caused by Gauguin: nor does he discuss the way in which many of Gauguin's Polynesian victims were used as subjects (and objects) in his most famous paintings. This is something I will return to in what follows.

Williams's Gauguin is introduced to dramatise a momentous decision, whether to stay or go, where the choice is constructed in such a way that leaving means to abandon one's family, and staying means to abandon one's art. Williams describes two distinct ways in which you can imagine Gauguin's decision to leave ending in failure. One way is if something goes wrong that is external or extrinsic to Gauguin's artistic ability: his ship sinks, say, or he eats some bad shrimp and dies on the way. If Gauguin had died *en route* to Tahiti as a result of shipwreck or food poisoning, he would not necessarily have been mistaken in his ambition to be a great artist: he'd just have been unlucky. But you can also imagine a scenario where Gauguin arrived safely in Tahiti only to find that he had painter's block, and couldn't produce a thing, or that what he created on the canvas was uninspired and useless. Gauguin's decision to leave France, in this scenario, would have been deeply and intrinsically mistaken. He staked everything on following his inner voice, and obstacles did not get in the way: *he* did.

Why did Gauguin risk everything? Williams invites us to see Gauguin's meaning in life as deeply intertwined with his artistic ambition. His art is, to use Williams's term for such meaning-giving enterprises, his *ground project*. Lots of goals and desires are mundane: if it's raining, for example, then I might want to put up an umbrella; and if I don't like rain on my head, then I have a reason to put it up. Yet, even though I'm English, I don't think that putting up umbrellas gives me a reason to stay alive. This is what a ground project does, according to Williams: it gives a reason, not just given that you are alive, but a reason to be alive in the first place.

Williams does not mention Gauguin's wife and children but many readers at this point might immediately think: what about them? Or as Mette, Gauguin's wife, might have asked: what about me? More pointedly: aren't I and the children part of the meaning of your life? Williams imagines Gauguin's situation as one in which pursuing what he thinks his life is most deeply about – the meaning of his life – must take him away from his family. And this framing assumption can be questioned. Indeed, the American moral philosopher Susan Wolf (a Williams admirer, and one of his most gifted interpreters) has wondered why Gauguin's 'ability to express himself as a painter requires Gauguin to leave France for Tahiti, abandoning his wife and children in the process', and suggests that this construction of the choice should arouse suspicions of 'inauthenticity or self-indulgence or both'.

We can certainly see how, for Williams, the question of authenticity was central to Gauguin's situation. The desires and goals at the heart of what Williams calls a ground project form a fundamental part of one's identity, and in that sense being true to one's deepest desires is being

true to who one is most deeply. That is to say, being true to one's deepest desires is being authentic. We see here the enormously influential cultural ideal mentioned at the outset: the purpose of life is to be authentic, where that means finding out who you are and living accordingly. Gauguin, in other words, was a cultural prototype for a conception of life's meaning that today has widespread appeal around the world. Gauguin's desire to produce great art is his ground project, and it forms his sense of himself as an artist above all else (above, among other things, being a parent). Seen in this light, his decision to leave for Tahiti is an attempt to live the most authentic life possible, the life truest to himself.

Williams suggests that you cannot reasonably set out with the goal of becoming a great artist (or perhaps a great anything): the achievement aimed at is such that you can't know you can do it until after you have done it. That's part of what makes Gauguin's decision necessarily a gamble. Some actions can be justified only retrospectively (if at all) by what happens and, in particular, if things turn out as desired. Williams suggests that, if Gauguin is successful, then he will look back from a new position where his life's ambition is realised. He might then regret the harm caused by his decision to leave, but according to Williams it doesn't make sense for Gauguin to regret the basic decision itself. Williams suggests that, for the successful Gauguin, so much of who he is – the very meaning of his life – would be interwoven with the decision that led him to Tahiti that he couldn't value who he had become while at the same time wishing that he had done otherwise.

Moral philosophers have had a lot of difficulty with Williams's idea of retrospective justification: surely the justification you should have when making a decision, especially a life-changing decision, is not the kind that you can have access to only further down the line, if at all? 'If you are going to do this,' as we can imagine someone saying, 'then you are going to have to justify it to me now.' Williams, as we have seen, suggests that reasoning in such scenarios can go only so far. Sometimes people will throw themselves into decisions whose good sense or not can't be reasonably evaluated at the time. You might not like the fact that a decision will be looked back upon and evaluated from the perspective of the future, and that the future assessment of the decision will inevitably be affected by knowledge of what happened after – but that's life.

Williams presents Gauguin's artistic success as an example of moral luck, and the term is both apt and troubling in its suggestion that morality itself can be unfair. But is his imagined Gauguin a good example of the phenomenon of moral luck? How does Gauguin's artistic success change the moral status of his actions? Williams, in the first instance, suggests that 'Gauguin's project ... can yield a good for the world' and that this is something that moral assessment has to take into account. Second, Gauguin is moved by this good, and so Gauguin is not concerned with doing something entirely selfish, even if he is being self-centred. Finally, Gauguin's success shows that he was right in his intuition that he was capable of achieving great things, which is also to say that he was right about himself. Williams thinks that this gives the successful Gauguin a justification for his actions, and in that sense he is morally lucky.

Williams is ultimately ambivalent over whether to call Gauguin's justification a *moral* justification. Perhaps the Gauguin example, he suggests, shows the limits of morality. But Williams is right that certain kinds of success often transform moral perception. This is true in

politics and sport and many other areas of life as well as art: achievement is foregrounded and moral failings, even grave moral wrongs, are pushed to the margins. Indeed, as in the Gauguin case, the moral wrongs can be interwoven into the story in such a way that the moral problems are made to seem a necessary element: *he wouldn't have been so brilliant if he hadn't had his demons*. And maybe you might think – at least in some cases – that's right: the fine abilities and the horrible failings all seem inextricably tied up in the person's character. And when character leads to great achievement, then moral wrongs are often forgiven or overlooked. That is why the Gauguin example genuinely captures the phenomenon of moral luck.

There is, though, without doubt, something very male about the phenomenon: think of the examples that come to mind, and how many concern men. You might be tempted to ask: is it moral luck or male luck, or in this case do they come down to the same thing? The Australian-American moral philosopher Kate Manne has rightly asked this question. In a recent interview with *Jezebel* magazine, Manne described what she calls 'himpathy' as 'the excessive or inappropriate sympathy extended to a male agent or wrongdoer over his female victim'. One can ask to what extent himpathy is, in so many cases, in defence of the morally dubious man acclaimed for following his inner necessities in pursuit of greatness. The real Gauguin was an abuser of young Polynesian girls whom he knowingly infected with syphilis. If they were alive now, and if they could, they too would say #MeToo. Gauguin led a morally ruinous life in pursuit of his art, and what he depicted in his most famous paintings are his victims. Can you admire his canvasses once you understand them? Is to do so himpathy for the devil? If so, then perhaps we should revise Williams's view of Gauguin's achievements and say not just that his life was ruined by his pursuit of art but that his art was ruined by his life.

Williams was a feminist to the extent that Gauguin would not dream of being. The English classicist Mary Beard observed in 2014 that Williams 'is still known in Cambridge and elsewhere as a supporter of women's causes'. Nonetheless, Beard is right to spot a 'decidedly bloke-ish feel' to some of Williams's work, and that comes out in Williams's discussion of Gauguin. The result is that 'Moral Luck' can in places read like a high-powered discussion of a male midlife crisis. The Gauguin example does incorporate the classic ingredients of a midlife crisis: a conflict between the claims of authenticity and the life one truly wants versus what Williams calls 'the claims of others'. This fits with something that the late Hume scholar Annette Baier has pointed out: that much (male) moral philosophy has centred on a conflict between desire and duty. It makes one wonder how much moral philosophy has been about the desire (albeit at a very high level of abstraction) no longer to be with one's wife and children.

In his first book, *Morality* (1972), Williams quoted with approval D H Lawrence's maxim: 'Find your deepest impulse, and follow that.' Williams rarely assented to so simple and formulaic a view of how to live but he was deeply taken by this individualistic advice, and some of his most influential work can be read as an attempt to provide it with a rigorous philosophical underpinning. Williams's emphasis on desire and authenticity – desire *as* authenticity – was in fact influenced by a whole wave of 19th- and 20th-century literature that pits art and authenticity against morality. He was also no doubt influenced by the cultural changes that took place in Britain in the 1960s and after. Williams gave philosophical voice to what became an enormously popular idea: that to find out what we have reason to do, we have to look not to the wider world or to God, but within.

Williams coined the term *internal reasons* in his defence of the idea that what we have reason to do depends on our individual psychology and not on social norms or metaphysical or religious truths. (This is not to deny, as Williams definitely would not, that society plays a huge role in forming our psychologies.) Many – myself included – have taken the view to be tantamount to moral skepticism: if such people as Gauguin have no motivation to behave in better ways, then ultimately, according to Williams, we have no reason to either. If your partner deep down wants to leave you and the children, then to insist that, despite all the motivational evidence, he has more reason to stay is wishful thinking. If authenticity becomes the sole source of reasons, then authenticity looks like it is going to undermine morality.

How many people have, like Gauguin, used the call of authenticity to justify their selfish behaviour? Williams's package of ideas (desire-as-authenticity, ground projects, internal reasons) is in danger of doing precisely what the journalist Joshua Rothman in *The New Yorker* described the typical midlife crisis as doing: it gives 'irresponsible behaviour an existential sheen'. Nonetheless, the extent to which Williams's ideas are representative of what might be called the 'cultural water' can't be overstated. Many of us now live in cultures where desire is presumed to be the state that should give us direction in life, and where to express true desire is considered the hallmark of authenticity. We aren't all equally free to live this ethic – that can't be emphasised enough – but it's the prevailing ethic and the ethic in ascendancy nonetheless.

Perhaps that's why Williams's conception of reasons strikes many as 'sad but true' (as Manne has put it the title of an [essay](#) on the topic). The problem, however, is not just that liberating desire can liberate jerks to be jerks: the problem is that an ideal of how to live based on desire and authenticity has a tendency to make everyone [jerkier](#). Part of the reason for this is that the ideal of authenticity can make doing what you think you ought to do, rather than what you want to do, look like a vice (hypocrisy, being fake, not keeping it real) rather than a virtue (traditionally known as continence). More fundamentally, and even if it's not what he had in mind, Williams's ideal of authenticity – desire-based individualism – risks undermining the very idea that we ought to reform our lives in the light of ethical reflection. This was the essence of the late British philosopher Derek Parfit's complaint about Williams: that he had replaced the question: 'How ought we to live?' with the question: 'What do I basically want?'

Various traditional conceptions of morality and the good life imply that you need to make your life conform to a structure that is outside you and larger than you. The striking feature of authenticity-as-the-good-life is its suggestion that the only thing to which you need to conform is yourself. This, on the face of it, sounds easy enough: how can I fail to be me? However, Williams's last work, *Truth and Truthfulness* (2002), explored some of the ways in which an ethic of authenticity can in fact be very demanding, by requiring 'a courageous confrontation with the truth'. We do, as Williams noted in the *Guardian* interview mentioned at the outset, tend to think that 'some things are in some real sense really you, or express what you and others aren't'. If you are going to live a life that is true to yourself, then you had better know yourself, and remember that 'know thyself' was one of the Delphic maxims that set Socrates on the road to philosophy.

Williams noted the risks of 'fatuous self-delusion' in 'Moral Luck' but nonetheless the spirit of the essay gives encouragement to self-styled Gauguins to take a punt on their own success with

the belief that achievement can justify what is otherwise unjustifiable. *Truth and Truthfulness*, published one year before Williams's death, has a more cautionary tone. A wiser, older Williams gave more emphatic expression to the fact that the pursuit of authenticity can lead to 'ethical and social disaster'. He also moved away from the stark individualism of 'Moral Luck' and stressed the role that one's community plays in preventing or enabling one to become whom one wants to become. We 'need each other', as he memorably put it in *Truth and Truthfulness*, 'in order to be anybody'.

Most people – if not everyone – struggle with the gap between whom they want to be, and who they are. You might, for example, very much want to be a daring person but it's just not you. Should you still pursue your desire if the wished-for identity is not achievable? Williams doesn't advise what to do in such situations. But in his imagined scenario of a failed Gauguin, he does give a picture of what a dire state you can get into when you relentlessly try to achieve something only to find out that it's not you. You might get to Tahiti, fail at your work, and discover that you are not a great artist after all. You are merely a shit. Your ground project in life, your art, might be based on an illusion, even if your deepest impulse is to pursue it. Think twice, then, before you head out to the South Seas.

ONE Follow-Up:

Is the following argument sound? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. The concept of *moral luck* says that wholly contingent factors can enter directly into the constitution of moral life, and therefore that some actions, principles, or ways of life can be morally justified, or shown to be morally unjustified, only retroactively, depending on whether they produce something of great intrinsic or extrinsic value, or not.
2. Paul Gauguin was a great 19th century artist who produced work of great intrinsic and extrinsic value.
3. Gauguin also believed that, in order to produce his art, he had to be "authentic"—where *authenticity* means the free achievement of a self-realizing, meaningful life—which, in his particular case, meant that he believed he had to cast off everyday conventions, desert his family, move to Tahiti, and live according to a highly bohemian life-style that included questionable or even abusive sexual practices with young Polynesian women.

4. Therefore, since his art did *in fact* turn out to be of great intrinsic and extrinsic value, Gauguin's pursuit of authenticity is retroactively justified, even despite the fact that he deserted his family and engaged in questionable or even abusive sexual practices with young Polynesian women; but if he had failed as an artist, then he would have merely been a shit whose pursuit of authenticity was retroactively shown to be morally unjustified.

ONE Link:

“Bernard Williams”

URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/williams-bernard/>

3. “Reciprocity, Not Tolerance, is the Basis of Healthy Societies”

By Simon Rabinovitch

Aeon, 20 JUNE 2018

URL = <https://aeon.co/essays/reciprocity-not-tolerance-is-the-basis-of-healthy-societies>



The purpose of religious tolerance has always been, and remains, to maintain the power and purity of the dominant religion in a given state. Most dominant religions in most states today profess tolerance, but they also seem to feel especially threatened. Religious nationalist movements in the United States, Europe, India, Turkey and Israel all want to strengthen the relationship between state identity and the dominant religion. In each case, democratic elections have reinforced the significance of the majority’s religion to the meaning of state and nation, elevating the power of that religion. We can see a rising chauvinism in the mix of Catholicism and politics in eastern Europe today that portrays liberals and communists (often a code for ‘Jews’) as enemies. We can see a similar dynamic in the Turkish celebration of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. And we can also see it in the reemerging influence of Evangelicals in the US, as defenders of ‘religious liberty’ in their associations and businesses, and against ‘Sharia’ – as they imagine it – in the public sphere.

Even as religious nationalism gains strength, claims to membership in the ‘West’ rest in large part on a political avowal of religious tolerance. When religious nationalists claim the mantle of tolerance based on the legal protections that exist for religious minorities in their states, they are not wrong. Tolerance has indeed historically been a framework for people fundamentally

different from one another to live peacefully together. Which is precisely why it is time to dispense once and for all with tolerance as a model for relations between groups.

Tolerance skepticism has a long history, stretching back to the German author J W Goethe, who said ‘to tolerate is to insult’. It faced a sustained critique after the Second World War from philosophers and political theorists such as Karl Popper, Herbert Marcuse and many others who saw liberal tolerance as guilty of passively acquiescing to the rise of fascism in the first half of the 20th century. Where Popper saw that a liberal society required repression of some intolerant views for self-preservation, Marcuse saw liberalism’s tolerance of injustice as the problem itself.

Following Marcuse, in the 1960s the New Left asked if the idea of tolerance – especially of speech and political diversity – served only to shield governments, corporations and the elite in continuing policies of economic and racial oppression. More recently, a school of [international-relations scholarship](#) has emerged emphasising how the foreign policy guiding Western governments now divides the world between the tolerant and the intolerant in much the same way that it has always distinguished between the civilised (whites) and the barbaric (everyone else). Even so, the question of how tolerance – religious tolerance in particular – could be a tool of domination strikes many people as counterintuitive or perverse. Tolerance is deeply rooted in the canon of apparent modern ideals: as an inherent good, a necessary individual ethic, a pillar of Western civilisation and proof of its superiority.

Yet tolerance, as an idea and an ethic, obscures the interaction between individuals and groups on both a daily basis and over the *longue durée*; the mutually reinforcing exchange of culture and ideas between groups in a society is missing in the idea of tolerance. Groups do not interact in isolation, they share reciprocally, sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently. If it is true that a global society exists, what its best parts embody today is not tolerance, but reciprocity, the vital and dynamic relationship of mutual exchange that occurs every day between individuals and groups within a society. For teachers, journalists and politicians to begin to speak in terms of reciprocity instead of tolerance will not do away with intolerance or prejudice. But words are important and, as much as they reflect our thoughts, they also shape how we think. Idealising tolerance embeds dominance. Speaking in terms of reciprocity instead of tolerance would both better reflect what peaceful societies look like, and also tune people’s minds to the societal benefits of cultural exchange.

The idea of tolerance owes its origins in part to the Augustinian tradition of the early Christian Church, which was greatly concerned with defining the boundaries of the Christian community. How could Christians live peacefully with people they believed to have crucified their god? St Augustine’s position on the Jews held that these crucifiers should be allowed to live in the midst of Christians and to bear witness to the fate of those who reject Christ. Jews would remain on the outside of the holy Christian community – tolerated, as a remnant of the pre-Christian past. But Christian tolerance of Jews also created a theological problem: how to square the premise of God’s punishment of the Jews with the simultaneous reality of Jewish agency, sometimes prosperity, and sometimes power (even over Christians).

To take one example, during Poland’s late-medieval and early modern expansion, the need for mobile, literate managers with commercial experience (and preferably few political demands) led

the Polish nobility and the Crown to welcome Jews to Poland to fulfil important socioeconomic roles. Some towns in the 14th century wrote charters for the Jews, outlining explicitly their freedom to organise their autonomous religious and communal life for the benefit of mutual Jewish and Christian prosperity. Yet this prosperity also brought increased competition between Jews and Christian burghers, to whom, by the 16th century, the Crown granted in some towns the *Privilegium de non tolerandis Judaeis* (the right not to tolerate Jews). The town of Lublin received such a privilege in 1535, but then the Jews, who formed a Jewish town at the foot of the castle walls (on the outside) received a parallel privilege, *de non tolerandis Christianis* in 1568. These arrangements successfully created a stable society with co-dependent and reciprocal relationships between groups, even while the goal of tolerance for all parties remained the greatest possible isolation, or perhaps insulation, from one another.

Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Sikhism and many other civilisations have historically maintained their own traditions of religious tolerance. On the other hand, Europe's Reformations, if anything, expanded intolerance. The Reformation made stamping out heresy a marker of religious devotion. Before the compromises required for different Christians to live among one another were made, violent religious wars plagued Europe for 100-plus years in the wake of the Protestant and Catholic reformations (from the mid-16th to the mid-17th century). Legal tolerance might have been the winning solution to resolve that century-long descent into fratricide but, for a long time after the reformations, intolerance was seen as a worthwhile theological attribute. A Christian refusal to tolerate significant deviation from doctrinal orthodoxy – or the Jew or the Muslim, or the 'heathens' and 'savages' whom Europeans were first encountering in their Age of Discovery – was a marker of holiness and purity, and of a leader's willingness to put spiritual matters above earthly concerns. A certain notion of tolerance, and the necessity of freedom of conscience in places where the balance of military power was not held overwhelmingly by one group or another, did indeed grow from the reformations and the wars of religion. But it took many years, with dramatic downs and ups, for the idea of tolerance to become a positive good valued in European society.

For the first English theorists of tolerance such as John Locke, tolerance was necessary first and foremost to protect Christianity and Christians' souls. As Locke put it, 'that I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true Church' (some have tried to differentiate between tolerance and toleration – using the latter to refer to state policy – but the two words remain synonymous in common usage). It was in the 17th century, at the very earliest, that the idea of tolerance began to take root in Europe as a principle consistent with good and effective government, and only with the European Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries that philosophers, theologians, political theorists and men of letters argued that tolerating difference was necessary for a functioning and prosperous society. The idea of a citizen or subject's 'right to toleration' circulated throughout Europe with the *philosophes'* project of the *Encyclopédie* (1751-72), an attempt to reorganise human knowledge in a way that its editor Denis Diderot believed would 'change the general way of thinking'. Not only republicans, but enlightened absolutists too, such as Prussia's Frederick the Great and the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II, became proponents of tolerance, always, of course, defined on their own terms.

It was in the American colonies where European powers – first the Dutch and then the British, seeking peace among their colonists – instituted protection of individual religious conscience.

Contrary to American national mythology, tolerance was not a distinct virtue carried to America by those who built their imagined city upon a hill: it was [imposed by European colonial powers](#) to better administer their overseas empires. The ideal of religious tolerance was sewn further in the colonies by transplanted Londoners such as William Penn and Roger Williams, but always to protect Christianity from politics, and not the other way around.

The US, from its birth, marked groups for tolerance and intolerance. The country attempted to conquer, control and Christianise the native people and, until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, the very minimum tolerance – the simple ability to live – was denied to them in most places, and in others was the most they received. Africans fell into an entirely different category; slavery reflects neither tolerance nor intolerance, but rather inhumanity. Even so, the idea that the foundation of the American polity is a multiplicity of ideals – religious and political – was a tension among the founders of the early republic who themselves debated which Enlightenment principles should stand at the forefront of their ideological experiment. It was Thomas Jefferson and James Madison’s vision that an enlightened state must resist creating a religious foundation upon which other dissenting views are dependent for toleration. Jefferson’s view of the political community failed to include women, African Americans or native people, but he grasped the danger of premising citizenship on the tolerance of one religious group by another.

The Enlightenment, the rise of nation states, two world wars and post-war European decolonisation transformed tolerance from a legal concept that regulated the privileges and disabilities of minority religions to a philosophical and ethical ideal. With the ascension of international human rights law following the Second World War, states stopped articulating the protection of minorities in edicts of tolerance or guarantees of minority rights. They instead created legal protections for speech and conscience and laws protecting against discrimination. Many of the old compromises of early modern toleration live on in state churches, officially recognised religious minorities and the accommodations to religion (especially in family law) that remain in many states. But for the most part, as the political theorist Wendy Brown has [observed](#) in *Regulating Aversion* (2008), the sites of tolerance have changed. Tolerance is discussed today as a moral rather than a legal question, and as a matter of civic and cultural life rather than as a practical answer to theological problems.

In fact, tolerance has never escaped its origins as a means for the majority to regulate the minority. It continues to be the case that in today’s national state system the overwhelming majority of governments associate the state directly or indirectly with the majority religion. This is even true in states with legal neutrality on matters of religion such as the US and France. As such, tolerance remains a one-way relationship between the tolerating and the tolerated that, intended or not, keeps the tolerated outside of full membership in the dominant group. In contrast to tolerance, reciprocity recognises that strong and dynamic societies are based on social and cultural exchange.

A focus on reciprocal exchange first emerged in the social philosophy of the early pluralists of the American intellectual tradition about 100 years ago, who battled nativism and resistance to immigration. For instance, in 1915 the philosopher Horace Kallen attacked the sociologist and eugenicist Edward Alsworth Ross for his claim that 20th-century immigrants to the US brought with them dual allegiances that could not be assimilated into American society. Kallen argued in

the *Nation* that what the ‘dominant classes in America’ fear is precisely the fact that, in the process of becoming American, religious and national groups create something new and different that in turn affects American civilisation. Kallen, who coined the term ‘cultural pluralism’ in 1925, and others among the first theorists of pluralism in the country, argued against a kind of toleration contingent on groups effacing their origins. Rather, the pluralism that took hold in some universities and urban landscapes – and certainly not without resistance – presumed that the US and its immigrants benefited reciprocally from immigration.

The early pluralists’ preferred metaphor for American civilisation was a symphony. In this metaphor, each group contributed a distinct sound to an evolving and harmonious musical arrangement. But the fact that each group played its own instrument, and performed from its own music, became a problem for later critics of both pluralism and multiculturalism. The symphony is fine and good, so the argument goes, except when everyone is too concerned with the musicality of their own performance. For liberal doubters, pluralism’s emphasis on ethnic and religious identities only serves to draw boundaries that exaggerate differences. For conservative critics, multiculturalism is incoherent compared with patriotism to country, the only identity of significance. Without all groups adopting a shared civic identity, the ideals of pluralism and multiculturalism are just variations on the old idea of toleration, albeit with a greater appreciation for the benefits of diversity to society.

However, using reciprocity as a lens to view society, the instruments themselves change, and are exchanged, along with the music. Like pluralism and multiculturalism, reciprocity exalts the virtuous circle by which the many cultures of groups shape the culture of a state, and the evolving culture of a state in turn changes the cultures of the groups. Yet unlike pluralism and multiculturalism, reciprocity, as a term, directly evokes active mutual interaction and influence. And as a philosophy, reciprocity recognises the mutual collective responsibilities, and even sacrifices, necessary for such symbiosis. All individuals, in our daily choices and conduct, give up some element of our identities to belong to the broader society. In Émile Durkheim’s great work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), he argued that every individual must transcend his or her own needs to participate in a society. The ‘collective effervescence’ that the individual feels in being a member of that community and participating in its rituals is not only very real, but is the essence of every religion and society. At the same time, societies and states – be they civic empires or federations, nation states, ethno-religious states or something else – *need* reciprocity to thrive. History has left us no examples of civilisations that have flourished without the exchange of cultures, ideas and people.

What about those who refuse to acknowledge that reciprocity is the root of all healthy societies? The question of the limits of toleration has provided grist for the mill of many political theorists; is reciprocity vulnerable to the same vexations? If reciprocity’s binary is understood to be total isolation, then the answer is no. Perhaps one of the benefits of reciprocity as a philosophy or an individual and collective ethic is that it is impossible for any group to live in a society, or at least a liberal-democratic society, non-reciprocally. There are always individual non-contributors, but no group can exist within a society without reciprocal exchange. Individuals and groups might see themselves as living in tolerated isolation, but it is very unlikely that reciprocal exchange is not going on. If a group was to say *we* don’t want to behave reciprocally with the state, other groups or society, the response must be that, willingly or not, *you* already do. American

reciprocity has shaped religious groups extolling isolation – such as the Amish in Pennsylvania or Hasidim in New York – no less than anyone else. As for those who claim that *they* (being some other group) do not behave reciprocally, the response must be that reciprocity posits the impossibility of such an existence.

One of my students astutely pointed out that the problem with reciprocity is that the mutuality it invokes does not take proper account of the hierarchies that exist in all societies. How, for example, would reciprocity resonate with a group that is impoverished and marginalised? Such a group is unlikely to see its relationship with the dominant society through the lens of reciprocity. Nonetheless, reciprocity remains a helpful ideal from which to approach this structural inequality. Social marginalisation, for example of African Americans in the US or Muslims in Europe, reflects a breakdown in reciprocity that can only be improved by greater recognition of the contributions of all groups to our collective wellbeing. The logic and psychology of reciprocity suggests that humans feel a sense of obligation to behave reciprocally toward one another, and that reciprocity is the source of such basic human activities as the rituals of gift-giving. Similarly, civic reciprocity already regulates the relationship between states and groups: the treatment of groups by a state or society tends to determine the sense of obligation to that state or society among individuals in those groups.

Reciprocity is a philosophy, a social ethic, a way of seeing the world, and a psychology. At its most basic distillation, it can serve as a description of both what binds individuals and groups to and within a society, and the mutual exchange of culture that serves as the lifeblood of all prosperous societies. Finding a new framework to approach societal problems is important at a time when ideological differences resting on economic worldview seem to be fading. Because one set of ideals (for diversity, pluralism and exchange) is being challenged by another (for intolerance or, at best, a return to a highly contingent tolerance), a space has opened for a new civic philosophy.

To develop the concept of reciprocity as an individual and collective political ethic we can teach it, study it and write about it. Most of all, we can talk about it, shifting away from a binary vocabulary that counters intolerance with calls for tolerance, and toward a discussion of shared histories and mutual obligations. We must also individually and as groups acknowledge our own civic responsibilities, to our society and to one another, as we respect the contributions of others. In the elected representatives we choose, the policies we support or oppose, and the causes we take on, we can idealise reciprocity as a positive good, and measure ourselves and the progress of our societies against that ideal.

The Constitution of the French Second Republic, enacted during the wave of democratic revolutions known as the Springtime of the Peoples, which swept through Europe in 1848, includes one simple article that grants no right or power to either the state or the people. [Article VI states only](#): ‘Reciprocal duties bind the citizens to the Republic and the Republic to the citizens.’ Reciprocity makes this claim but goes further: the more we acknowledge what reciprocally binds each group to the society, and the society to each group, the better off we will all be.

ONE Follow-Up:

Is the following argument sound? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. The concept of *tolerance* means appreciating and respecting differences in people.
2. But although many people and nation-States have in the past, and still do, *profess* tolerance (of, e.g., different religious beliefs, or unorthodox opinions and ways of life), nevertheless this has very often turned out to mask self-interested motives whereby the majority controls and regulates minority populations, alienates and segregates them, and morally produces serious cultural conflict and, ironically, intolerance.
3. By sharp contrast to tolerance, which is a one-way relation between the tolerators and the tolerated, the concept of *reciprocity* means two-way or mutual socially dynamic interactions between different groups, especially including mutually appreciating and respecting differences.
4. Reciprocity avoids the basic problems of tolerance.
5. Therefore we should engage in reciprocity, and give up not only the very idea of tolerance, but also the entrenched practices of tolerance.

ONE Link:

“Toleration”

URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/toleration/>

4. “Big Tech Isn’t the Problem With Homelessness. It’s All of Us.”

By Adam Rogers

Wired, 21 JUNE 2018

URL = <https://www.wired.com/story/big-tech-isnt-the-problem-with-homelessness-its-all-of-us/>



San Francisco. *David Paul Morris/Bloomberg/Getty Images*

The icons of downtown San Francisco are the same whether you’re looking at the buildings or at your phone. In the blocks around the undulating, metal-screened length of the city’s new bus and train terminal, skyscrapers—including the city’s tallest—flash all the familiar logos. There’s Salesforce and its [new tower](#), of course, but also LinkedIn, Google, Twilio, Zipcar, Github, Okta, and Dropbox. Facebook, which already had something like 3,000 employees in one skyscraper, has [signed a lease](#) on all 725,000 square feet of another one. It’s a gleaming, pixelated future—mostly clean, mostly shiny, punctuated by cranes and pile drivers pushing foundations through the city’s wobbly ground in search of bedrock.

The iconography changes just a 15-minute walk to the west. The tech businesses are in that neighborhood, known as the Tenderloin, too—most notably Twitter and Uber. But here the city’s biggest problem—and California’s, and the country’s—is just as conspicuous as all those tech billions downtown: Homeless people sit or lean at building entrances. The sidewalks are filthy. Amid a few signs of construction and gentrification, like remodeled theaters and hotels, are bodegas, shelters, supportive housing, aid agencies.

It’s a mind-boggling transition. A neighborhood, maybe 15 square blocks, of developing-world-level poverty in the heart of California, the world’s [fifth-largest economy](#). The Bay Area is the

home of Apple, Facebook, Google, Twitter, Uber, LinkedIn, Tesla, eBay, Netflix, Cisco, and much of the capital that funds the early stages of the companies that aspire to join these kinds of lists. Money flows around the Bay Area like packets of information on a global digital network: freely and in great quantity.

Yet on a [single night in January of 2017](#), San Francisco had 6,858 homeless people. Santa Clara County, home of San Jose and a decent chunk of Silicon Valley, had 7,394. (Los Angeles County had 55,188.) California overall had 134,278 homeless people, half of them completely unsheltered, most of them in cities. That's one quarter of all the homeless people in the US. San Francisco's recent mayoral race turned, in part, on homelessness, and the governor's race may, too. The city is turning into a Brechtian horror show where young men wearing AirPods and backpacks emblazoned with the names of gig-economy apps weave e-scooters among people passed out in their own filth.

That's not even the most frustrating part. This is: Everyone who works on homelessness agrees on the way to fix the problem. Build more homes. Not coincidentally, more places for people to live would help alleviate all sorts of other problems, from climate change to income inequality. But the kinds of housing California needs are not the kinds that get built. The reasons amount to an obstacle course built from policy mistakes, economic vicissitudes, and prejudice. "This is not something like pancreatic cancer, where thousands of scientists are striving to find a solution for a really difficult problem that we literally don't know what to do about," says Margot Kushel, a professor of medicine at UCSF who studies homelessness. "We actually know what to do. We just lack the will."

A recent report from the UCLA Anderson School retells a familiar tale. Housing starts nationwide have doubled since the 2008 crash but still aren't keeping up with demand. That problem is at its worst in California and the Pacific Northwest (oh, hi, headquarters of Amazon and Microsoft). As the UCLA economist David Shulman puts it in his section of the report, if you own a home in those parts of the world, you are psyched. Value is way up. If you're a renter without rent control or you hope to buy a home, you are a person whom it sucks to be.

Zoning rules and regulations make it even harder to build new homes. Construction labor is hard to find, and new tariffs on Canadian lumber have pushed the price of wood up 50 percent. But the market's so tight, builders are able to pass all those costs along to buyers. "Housing activity is plagued by excessive zoning constraints in the hot employment markets of the Pacific Coast and the Northeast," Shulman writes. "Larger homebuilders have learned to profit from the tight zoning controls as regulation works to reduce competition."

As a consequence, despite demand and a decent economy, far too few houses get built anywhere—especially in cities. In the past decade, we needed 15 to 20 million new housing units to keep up; the country built [a tenth of that](#). Demand, meet supply: Prices have soared—especially in places like California, which is adding high-paying tech jobs and is, let's face it, a damn nice place to live.

Worse still, the federal government has mostly been out of the subsidized-housing business since the 1980s (when the current homeless crisis had its start). That pushed responsibilities outward, to states and municipalities, which mostly can't afford to fix it.

The result is pressure on young people, people of color, and the poor. People trying to climb onto the ladder can't get a handhold; people on the ladder's bottom rungs get flung off by people nearer the top. They face an impossible choice: Move somewhere cheaper, if they can, or become homeless.



Los Angeles. *Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images*

Unlike many East Coast cities, West Coast localities tend not to have right-to-shelter laws. They're not on the hook to provide a bed for everyone who needs one. Instead, the West Coast has tent cities. Homelessness in the US has stayed relatively stable—0.2 percent of the US population was homeless in 2012 and 0.17 percent in 2017. But in Los Angeles County, that number went from 0.35 percent to 0.54 percent. That's 55,000 people, a whopping 40,000 of them completely unsheltered. So even in LA's rapidly gentrifying central business district, tent cities have come to seem like an [intractable problem](#). It's true along the access roads and freeway underpasses of the Bay Area, as well.

The thing is, this problem is solvable. The science, as shown in large-scale, randomized trials, is pretty solid. For families, housing vouchers—where the government pays for a giant chunk of rent—[really do work](#). But only if the homes are there, a particular problem in high-cost markets like California. “You’ve got to not only provide money to pay rent, you’ve got to boost the supply,” says Carol Wilkins, a longtime consultant on homelessness.

People who are chronically homeless—defined as being without shelter four times a year or more—and who often have addiction or mental health problems are well served by a philosophy called [Housing First](#), which finds them what's called permanent supportive housing that provides access to services as well as shelter. Until recently, even homeless advocates found this idea

radical. Best practice was first to get people off drugs if they were addicted or on them if they were mentally ill—before they were eligible for housing. That’s not the state of the science anymore. “You basically come as you are,” Kushel says. “There is no assumption you’ll be clean and sober or take psychiatric medications. Once you’re in housing, the supportive services wrap around you.”

The trick, though, is that there has to be enough housing available to make all this happen. You need enough homes for people who can afford to rent or buy them, and then enough on top of that to provide room for people with vouchers—by definition below market rate—and permanent supportive units, by definition *way* below market rate. It's expensive.

And it has to be spread around cities, in all kinds of neighborhoods—not just the least desirable lots up against a freeway, or a neighborhood like the [Tenderloin](#) (which, apparently unique among San Francisco neighborhoods, allows services and supportive housing and prohibits its demolition). “You can’t concentrate the poverty. You cannot put all the affordable housing in one place. We went through that in the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s, and what did we end up with? New ghettos,” says Robert Friant, managing director for external affairs, communications, and training center at the Corporation for Supportive Housing. “Taking 150 people and putting them on some industrial site far away from where they can access services they need only prolongs the poverty.”

Aside from the moral imperative of helping human beings who are in trouble, getting people housed turns out to be a cheaper, lower-impact solution to all sorts of [public health concerns](#). Homeless people, especially the chronically homeless, experience health problems as disparate as tooth infections and eye problems, trench foot, and body lice up through infectious diseases like tuberculosis and [hepatitis A](#).

Many of these wouldn’t happen at all in people who were housed, or would be easily treatable in early stages in people who had access to primary health care. There’s a reason six health care institutions in Portland, Oregon, donated \$21.5 million for constructing housing for the homeless in 2016, and the massive Oakland-based health care system Kaiser Permanente has said it will invest \$200 million in affordable and accessible housing.

That reason? It’s [cheaper than an emergency room visit](#). “In the highest-risk people, you can offset the costs,” Kushel says. And in the rest, the best available research says Housing First might not *save* money—but it's better spent on prevention than on emergency rooms. Permanent supportive housing, [while expensive](#), likewise seems to reduce the costs of late-stage treatment of addiction and mental health disorders.

These numbers can be difficult to calculate. Economic assessments of helping the homeless tend not to include other costs, like deployment of first responders to encampments, periodic showpiece cleanups of those encampments, street cleaning services, losses in tourism and business dollars, and all the other things cities pay attention to. Take those costs into account and you’re looking at tangible financial benefits generated by solutions already known to be effective.

Vouchers. Cheaper housing. Permanent support. “We know all that works. It’s not even a question,” Friant says. “People move their lives forward. They get the jobs and education they need.”

Which brings us back to San Francisco and its tech behemoths. So many of them are under fire for [privacy violations](#), [disruption](#) of city streets, excessive [bro-ness](#), lack of [diversity](#), encouraging [Nazis](#), and [monopolistic practices](#), they could really use a win. Why doesn’t some oppressed zillionaire come up with a disruptive algorithm to calculate how much money it would take to fix all this, and then cut a check?

Slightly more seriously, if all these companies are going to load tens of thousands of workers into San Francisco skyscrapers and Silicon Beach campuses, how about helping out those communities? Making sure their working-class support staff can afford to live in the city where they work?

For that matter, forget San Francisco and Los Angeles. Santa Clara County—which includes San Jose (California’s third-largest city after LA and San Diego) as well as Apple’s hometown of Cupertino and Google’s headquarters in Mountain View—is one of the wealthiest counties in the country and has the third-highest rate of chronic homelessness.

A little good news here. They’re on it. In 2016, Santa Clara passed Measure A, which allotted about \$1 billion to the problem. (At the time, the county had about 660,000 units of housing, of which 340 were supportive. *Three hundred and forty*.) An organization called Destination Home has become a sort of coordinator of that and other public money, as well as private philanthropy, like a \$50 million, five-year commitment from Cisco. “We saw a real role for private capital, where it can be more flexible,” says Erin Connor, public benefit investment program manager at Cisco. “In a lot of cases, just to acquire land to build housing you need to move pretty quickly, and the government of a county can’t move fast enough.”

In Los Angeles, the city’s Proposition HHH in 2016 added \$0.348 per square foot to property taxes, and LA County’s Measure H in 2017 levied a quarter-percent sales tax to provide money to fight homelessness—almost \$5 billion over 10 years. The United Way and the Conrad Hilton Foundation, among others, have also kicked in, and the Chamber of Commerce was another major supporter. That’s alignment among voters, legislators, policymakers, and the business community—unusual in other political matters, but fighting homelessness has long had bipartisan and widespread support.



Marc Benioff, CEO of Salesforce, in San Francisco, May 2018. *David Paul Morris/Bloomberg/Getty Images*

In the Bay Area, Facebook has announced a multimillion-dollar commitment to affordable housing. Marc Benioff, the CEO of Salesforce, made homelessness a major part of his speech at the opening of Salesforce Tower, announcing a \$3 million donation primarily to a group called Hamilton Families, which has provided services to homeless people for three decades. An organization called Tipping Point has announced that it's raising \$100 million from (thus far) anonymous donors to build supportive housing.

These dollar amounts are still small compared to the problem, but they also don't come with all the restrictions that federal and state dollars do. Tech company money might come in smaller amounts, over small timeframes, but its donors are more comfortable with experimentation and data-driven solutions. That's why large aggregator-type organizations have developed to send the various streams of money to the right places. It takes massive infusions of public money to address big, long-term solutions. Private money in partnership can fill in the gaps.

And while Amazon led a recent, bloody fight to repeal a Seattle tax on it and other big businesses for anti-homelessness funds, some tech companies (and the people who got rich running them) have actually tried to [build more housing](#). Those companies big-ticket jobs didn't cause California's homelessness and real estate crisis, but they definitely heated it up, and now they're learning to be a part of much-needed philanthropy..

It turns out they're not the biggest problem. We are.

People are very good at saying they want homeless people to have homes. Just not, you know, in their neighborhoods. Even when the money's there, siting a development is expensive, time-consuming, and subject to massive resistance. "Right now it costs \$550,000 to build a new unit of housing, and it takes five to seven years to build a new unit of permanent supportive housing in San Francisco," says Daniel Lurie, CEO of Tipping Point. "So what we're going to try and do is build a new prototype building in two to three years at a cost of \$380,000 a unit, to open people's eyes that there are other ways of getting things built."

Sounds great. How many units?

One hundred and fifty, Lurie says. It'll cost up to \$40 million. And they haven't found a site for it yet.

That's 150 more people who have access to supportive housing, which means the people who need it can get it, and people who can use vouchers can do that too, perhaps. It's available in four years instead of seven, and it proves that red tape can be cut.

But fighting homelessness will require thousands of new units. Sure, Los Angeles apparently got everybody on board, and over the past year overall homelessness actually went down in the county for the first time in four years. "But you have to have those same officials supporting the creation of a specific housing project in a specific neighborhood, when the residents are up in arms," Wilkins says. "Unfortunately, the 'everybody' who wants supportive housing is often quieter than a smaller subset of neighbors who say, 'We agree it belongs somewhere. It just doesn't belong here.' Preferably in a fifth dimension. And invisible."

This is what [NIMBYism](#) looks like.



Silverlake neighborhood, Los Angeles.

San Francisco rules don't allow multifamily housing in huge swaths of the city, though newly elected mayor London Breed [has said](#) she plans to make new home construction a focus of her tenure. Berkeley is famous for exclusionary zoning and [resistance to new housing](#). In Los Angeles, Silverlake residents are trying to get a 50-year-old gas station recognized as a [historical landmark](#) to fight plans to build a 14-unit apartment building; in Berkeley the city council is fighting over "[view corridors](#)" so that people with homes in the hills can prevent the construction of anything in the flats that might hinder their ability to see a bridge.

They have their reasons. Throughout the state, longtime homeowners accrue huge tax benefits thanks to Proposition 13—they pay tax based on their home's valuation when they bought it (plus an annual increase of no more than 2 percent), so longtime homeowners are sitting on bitcoin-mining levels of earning. The value of those homes may well represent those people's main source of wealth.

Longtime California residents have seen developers misbehave before, overbuilding luxury units and displacing residents in entire neighborhoods with waves of gentrification. So there are real, valid trust issues. Oh, and people sometimes can't afford to move, because under Prop 13 rules they'd have to pay taxes on a *new* valuation, and everything's too expensive to buy. And, and, and since they can just give the house to their kids, the law creates a kind of gentry, a legislated aristocracy of homeowners who can never afford to sell ... in a state where no one is building any new homes. The question is not whether greedy developers should be allowed to build big buildings. The question is who should profit: owners of single-family homes or people trying to build housing?

So when people get priced out of San Francisco or Silicon Valley, let's say, they move to the East Bay and get funneled into once less-affluent neighborhoods. If those are in, for example,

Oakland, they potentially displace the (often poor, often African American) people who already live there, and the problem spreads.

At last we come to the intractable part. The cure is easy to formulate; getting people to take the medicine, less so.

The process of building housing to help homelessness must now rely, in part, on PR. Organizations like the ones coordinating efforts in San Francisco and Los Angeles are developing full-bore marketing plans, figuring out what kind of surrogates make the case best (formerly homeless, now healthy people, yes; chiefs of police and developers, no). Focus groups, learning the right messaging, giving tours—it makes for a slower but ultimately more successful process. So does acknowledging that supportive and low-cost housing often has to be all the more beautiful, full of even more community amenities and architectural frills than a plain old market rate apartment building. People love that stuff.

“Part of the role of philanthropy, private-sector partners, tech companies, or others who are opinion leaders and tastemakers is to change people’s attitudes,” Wilkins says. “Even in really exciting, wonderful, diverse places like the Bay Area, I think people still have a lot of resistance to having very, very poor people and people with mental health disorders living near them.”

The last obstacle to getting affordable housing built, though, might be the hardest one to surmount: race. Homelessness [disproportionately affects people of color](#), particularly African Americans. They’re about 12 percent of the US population, 25 percent of the population living in deep poverty, and 50 percent of the population experiencing homelessness, Wilkins says. Mass incarceration of African American men can leave African American women and children more vulnerable to financial problems, and African American families typically have less wealth in terms of savings and home ownership. Displacement of African American populations from cities means that those people who remain have a weakened family support structure—no nearby grandmother or cousin to go stay with if their finances take a bad turn.

“That’s the dirty part of the stories of vibrancy and all the things people like about cities. I think there’s a lot of folks who, if they were truthful with themselves and one another, would admit that they feel comfortable in cities that have fewer black people in them, and that is heartbreaking,” Wilkins says. “It means people’s tastes for a vibrant, healthy, diverse community have limits that are driven by racism.” (In 1970, [14 percent of San Franciscans were black; today it’s about 5 percent.](#))

Maybe things are changing. States and municipalities will have to follow Los Angeles' and Santa Clara's lead in finding more money for subsidies through taxes and bonds. Earlier this year San Francisco’s state senator Scott Weiner floated [legislation](#) that would’ve radically rewritten zoning throughout the state to build denser housing near transit. (Facing opposition from homeowners from the state’s toniest neighborhoods and people defending the poorest neighborhoods against displacement, the bill didn’t make it out of committee.) Other laws actually passed to streamline that multiyear process Tipping Point is trying to disrupt.

The mayor of a residential city just south of San Diego [decried](#) increasingly expensive coastal communities that won't add housing as "mausoleums of the wealthy" and "gilded, apartheid-style communities." And the vice chairman of the planning commission of the peninsula town of Milpitas [quit, publicly](#), after blasting members of the City Council for sitting on their "fat asses" and not building affordable housing.

It's not enough. "It's the schizophrenic politics of the Bay Area," says Tomiquia Moss, CEO of Hamilton Families. "It's our progressive values clashing against our desire to preserve our precious environment."

Let me be even more clear:

When people argue against new construction that changes their "neighborhood character" or makes parking harder, they're protecting the things about their cities that they love, and in California at least, protecting their investment. But those rationales have the effect of being racist, ageist, and classist. And during a homelessness crisis, they prioritize architectural detail and cars over people's lives.

Done right, denser cities are an environmental solution. They [emit less carbon](#) to the atmosphere, helping stave off global warming. And every infill home is one that goes unbuilt on the edges, preserving rural and open spaces and prevent sprawl.

Because natural disasters, especially climate-change-driven ones, preferentially affect buildings on coastlines and on the borders [between urban and wildlands](#), policies that encourage construction of single-family homes in exurban and rural areas make those homes more vulnerable to destruction.

A lack of homes increases [income inequality](#) and poverty. Policies that limit the number of new homes [make poverty worse](#), and they create a less fun city with less support for pedestrians, bikes, transit, and small, local retail.

The debate over whether and how to build all these homes bogs down pretty fast. People both well-meaning and self-interested argue about whether supply and demand actually applies on the neighborhood scale in an overheated housing market. They fight over percentages of affordable units to require in any new development and how tall a development is allowed to be. They clash over zoning, neighborhood character, gentrification, and displacement. All good things for a community to figure out, but in the face of a national tragedy, ultimately noise. Cities change, and scientists know how to change cities to keep the most vulnerable people from dying on the streets.

Walking around Bay Area cities these days, it's hard not to see ghosts, a spectral psychogeography not of what once was, but what might have been—or may yet be. Every vacant lot or surface parking space could've been apartments with street-level shops. Every grassy median amid a wide boulevard makes me hear faint trolley bells, mass transit from an alternate timeline that runs alongside protected bike lanes and stops at pedestrian plazas where there used to be vast intersections.

Denser cities make all those things possible. They're the keys to livable, walkable, surprising and varied cities, and they make it easier to not have people living on the streets.

People just have to build houses.

ONE Follow-Up:

Is the following argument sound? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. Homelessness is a serious problem in the USA, especially California.
2. The simplest, most effective, and morally best solution to the problem is to provide homes for the homeless, whether free-of-charge or at least affordable.
3. Leading, extremely rich technology corporations can raise money to alleviate the problem to some extent, especially in the cities that house their head offices and corporate campuses.
4. Or sufficient funds can be raised through taxes.
5. But the fundamental problem is that even when people agree that homes-for-the-homeless is the solution, and are willing to spend the money, they don't want to build the homes in their neighborhoods, in large part because they don't like the race, ethnicity, or social class of homeless people.
6. Therefore the problem of homelessness, at bottom, is an ideological and moral problem about our own refusal, as comparatively well-off homeowners, to face up to the fact that we ought to open up our own neighborhoods to people of different ethnicity, race, or class.

ONE Link:

“Los Angeles’ Homelessness Crisis is a National Disgrace”

URL = <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-homeless-crisis-overview-20180225-htmlstory.html>

5. “The Ignorant Do Not Have a Right to an Audience”

By Bryan Van Norden

The New York Times, 25 JUNE 2018

URL = <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/opinion/free-speech-just-access.html>



On June 17, the political commentator Ann Coulter, appearing as a guest on Fox News, asserted that crying migrant children separated from their parents are “[child actors](#).” Does this groundless claim deserve as much airtime as, for example, a historically informed argument from Ta-Nehisi Coates that structural racism makes the American dream possible?

Jordan Peterson, a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, has complained that men can’t “control crazy women” because men “have absolutely no respect” for someone they cannot physically fight. Does this adolescent opinion deserve as much of an audience as the nuanced thoughts of Kate Manne, a professor of philosophy at Cornell University, about the role of “himpathy” in supporting misogyny?

We may feel certain that Coulter and Peterson are wrong, but some people feel the same way about Coates and Manne. And everyone once felt certain that the Earth was the center of the solar system. Even if Coulter and Peterson are wrong, won’t we have a deeper understanding of

why racism and sexism are mistaken if we have to think for ourselves about their claims? And “who’s to say” that there isn’t some small fragment of truth in what they say?

If this specious line of thought seems at all plausible to you, it is because of the influence of “On Liberty,” published in 1859 by the English philosopher John Stuart Mill. Mill’s argument for near-absolute freedom of speech is seductively simple. Any given opinion that someone expresses is either wholly true, partly true or false.

To claim that an unpopular or offensive opinion cannot be true “is to assume our own infallibility.” And if an offensive opinion is true, to limit its expression is clearly bad for society. If an opinion is partly true, we should listen to it, because “it is only by the collision of adverse opinions, that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.” And even if an opinion is false, society will benefit by examining the reasons it is false. Unless a true view is challenged, we will hold it merely “in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds.”

The problem with Mill’s argument is that he takes for granted a naïve conception of rationality that he inherited from Enlightenment thinkers like René Descartes. For such philosophers, there is one ahistorical rational method for discovering truth, and humans (properly educated) are approximately equal in their capacity for appreciating these truths. We know that “of all things, good sense is the most fairly distributed,” Descartes assures us, because “even those who are the hardest to satisfy in every other respect never desire more of it than they already have.”

Of course, [Mill and Descartes disagreed fundamentally](#) about what the one ahistorical rational method is — which is one of the reasons for doubting the Enlightenment dogma that there is such a method.

If you do have faith in a universal method of reasoning that everyone accepts, then the Millian defense of absolute free speech is sound. What harm is there in people hearing obvious falsehoods and specious argumentation if any sane and minimally educated person can see through them? The problem, though, is that humans are not rational in the way Mill assumes. I wish it were self-evident to everyone that we should not discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation, but [the current vice president of the United States does not agree](#). I wish everyone knew that it is irrational to deny the evidence that there was a mass shooting in Sandy Hook, but a syndicated radio talk show host can make a career out of [arguing for the contrary](#).

Historically, Millian arguments have had some good practical effects. Mill followed Alexis de Tocqueville in identifying “the tyranny of the majority” as an ever-present danger in democracies. As an advocate of women’s rights and an opponent of slavery, Mill knew that many people then regarded even the discussion of these issues as offensive. He hoped that by making freedom of speech a near absolute right he could guarantee a hearing for opinions that were true but unpopular among most of his contemporaries.

However, our situation is very different from that of Mill. We are seeing the worsening of a trend that the 20th century German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse [warned of back in 1965](#): “In endlessly dragging debates over the media, the stupid opinion is treated with the same respect

as the intelligent one, the misinformed may talk as long as the informed, and propaganda rides along with education, truth with falsehood.” This form of “free speech,” ironically, supports the tyranny of the majority.

The media are motivated primarily by getting the largest audience possible. This leads to a skewed conception about which controversial perspectives deserve airtime, and what “both sides” of an issue are. How often do you see controversial but well-informed intellectuals like Noam Chomsky and Martha Nussbaum on television? Meanwhile, the former child-star Kirk Cameron appears on television to explain that we should not believe in evolutionary theory unless biologists can produce a “crocoduck” as evidence. No wonder we are experiencing what Marcuse described as “the systematic moronization of children and adults alike by publicity and propaganda.”

Marcuse was insightful in diagnosing the problems, but part of the solution he advocated was suppressing right-wing perspectives. I believe that this is immoral (in part because it would be impossible to do without the exercise of terror) and impractical (given that the internet was actually invented to provide an unblockable information network). Instead, I suggest that we could take a big step forward by distinguishing free speech from just access. Access to the general public, granted by institutions like television networks, newspapers, magazines, and university lectures, is a finite resource. Justice requires that, like any finite good, institutional access should be apportioned based on merit and on what benefits the community as a whole.

There is a clear line between censoring someone and refusing to provide them with institutional resources for disseminating their ideas. When Nathaniel Abraham was fired in 2004 from his position at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute because he admitted to his employer that he did not believe in evolution, it was not a case of censorship of an unpopular opinion. Abraham thinks that he knows better than other scientists (and better than other Christians, like Pope Francis, who reminded the faithful that God is not “a magician, with a magic wand”). Abraham has every right to express his ignorant opinion to any audience that is credulous enough to listen. However, Abraham does not have a right to a share of the intellectual capital that comes from being associated with a prestigious scientific institution like Woods Hole.

Similarly, the top colleges and universities that invite Charles Murray to share his [junk science defenses of innate racial differences](#) in intelligence (including Columbia and New York University) are not promoting fair and balanced discourse. For these prestigious institutions to deny Murray an audience would be for them to exercise their fiduciary responsibility as the gatekeepers of rational discourse. We have actually seen a good illustration of what I mean by “just access” in ABC’s courageous decision to cancel “Roseanne,” its highest-rated show. Starring on a television show is a privilege, not a right. Roseanne compared a black person to an ape. Allowing a show named after her to remain on the air would not be impartiality; it would be tacitly endorsing the racist fantasy that her views are part of reasonable mainstream debate.

Donald Trump, first as candidate and now as president, is such a significant news story that responsible journalists must report on him. But this does not mean that he should be allowed to set the terms of the debate. Research shows that repeatedly hearing assertions increases the likelihood of belief — even when the assertions are explicitly identified as false. Consequently,

when journalists repeat Trump’s repeated lies, they are actually increasing the probability that people will believe them.

Even when journalistic responsibility requires reporting Trump’s views, this does not entail giving all of his spokespeople an audience. MSNBC’s “Morning Joe,” set a good precedent for just access by banning from the show Kellyanne Conway for casually spouting “alternative facts.”

Marcuse also suggested, ominously, that we should not “renounce a priori violence against violence.” Like most Americans, I spontaneously cheered when I saw the white nationalist Richard Spencer punched in the face during an interview. However, as I have noted elsewhere, Mahatma Gandhi and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. showed us that [nonviolent protest is not only a moral demand](#) (although it is that too); it is the highest strategic cunning. Violence plays into the hands of our opponents, who relish the opportunity to play at being martyrs. Consequently, while it was wrong for Middlebury College to invite Murray to speak, it was even more wrong for [students to assault Murray and a professor escorting him](#) across campus. (Ironically, the professor who was injured in this incident is a critic of Murray who [gave a Millian defense](#) of allowing him to speak on campus.)

What just access means in terms of positive policy is that institutions that are the gatekeepers to the public have a fiduciary responsibility to award access based on the merit of ideas and thinkers. To award space in a campus lecture hall to someone like Peterson who says that feminists “have an unconscious wish for brutal male domination,” or to give time on a television news show to someone like Coulter who asserts that in an ideal world all Americans would convert to Christianity, or to interview a D-list actor like Jenny McCarthy about her view that actual scientists are wrong about the public health benefits of vaccines is not to display admirable intellectual open-mindedness. It is to take a positive stand that these views are within the realm of defensible rational discourse, and that these people are worth taking seriously as thinkers.

Neither is true: These views are specious, and those who espouse them are, at best, ignorant, at worst, sophists. The invincibly ignorant and the intellectual huckster have every right to express their opinions, but their right to free speech is not the right to an audience.

ONE Follow-Up:

Is the following argument sound? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. Freedom of speech means the liberty to express one’s beliefs, no matter how false, stupid, or offensive they may seem to others, and to undertake free thinking and “experiments in living,” no matter how self-destructive, stupid, or offensive they may seem to others—provided that these forms of

expression these do not involve violence, coercion, or libel—without fear of censorship or punishment.

2. Dogmatically ignorant people and intellectual hucksters, like every other minimally rational person, have a moral right to freedom of speech.

3. But freedom of speech is different from *just access*, which means the liberty to gain access to an audience for one's free speech.

4. If “institutions that are the gatekeepers to the public”—that is, those who control the mechanisms of access to audiences—deem that someone else's free speech is false, stupid, self-destructive, or offensive to others, or that those free speakers are dogmatically ignorant or intellectual hucksters, then the gatekeepers have not only the moral right but also the moral obligation to restrict or even prevent that access.

ONE Link:

“Freedom of Speech”

URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freedom-speech/>
