

## NO PLATFORMING

### Safe Campus and Ambivalent Twists on Freedom of Speech

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#### ABSTRACT

Dieser Beitrag zeichnet die Entstehung und Entwicklung strategischer Ansätze des *No Platforming* seit den 1970er Jahren nach. Während Gegner\*innen argumentieren, dass *No Platforming* die Ideale eines öffentlichen Diskurses missachte, betrachten Verteidiger\*innen es als legitime Strategie der Schadensbegrenzung (harm-prevention). Jedoch behandeln beide Seiten die Debatte im Regelfall als Konflikt um freie Meinungsäußerung und nicht als Angelegenheit der Wissenschaftsfreiheit. Dabei sind inhaltlich und institutionell begründete Einschränkungen der Redefreiheit an der Universität durchaus üblich. Die Wissenschaftsfreiheit ist nicht mit dem allgemeinen Recht auf Redefreiheit gleichzusetzen, sondern sie schließt das Recht von Universitätsangehörigen ein, diskursiv und (inter-)disziplinär auszuhandeln, welche Positionen und Vortragenden an der Universität Berücksichtigung finden. Eine Strategie des *No Platforming* sollte also aus liberaler Perspektive prinzipiell vertretbar sein, wenn sie dazu dient, eine Universitätskultur strenger disziplinärer Standards der Wissensproduktion zu bewahren. In diesem Fall kann sie ein effektives Mittel sein, um Vortragenden ohne ausreichende wissenschaftliche Qualifikation oder mit starkem politischem *bias* Glaubwürdigkeit abzusprechen und Aufmerksamkeit zu verwehren.

This paper reflects on the emergence and the evolution of approaches regarding “no platforming” since the 1970s. While opponents say that no platforming flouts ideals of open public discourse, and defenders see it as a justifiable harm-prevention measure, both sides mistakenly treat the debate like a free speech conflict, rather than an issue of academic freedom specifically. Content-based restrictions on speech in universities are widespread. Besides, this is no affront to a liberal conception of academic freedom, whose purpose isn’t just to protect the speech of academics, but also to give them the prerogative to determine which views and speakers have sufficient disciplinary credentials to receive a hearing in academic contexts. No platforming should therefore be acceptable to liberals, in principle, in cases where it is used to support a university culture that maintains rigorous disciplinary standards, by denying attention and credibility to speakers without appropriate disciplinary credentials or to politically biased actors whose speech elevates risk for harm.

## I Introduction

When I joined flash mobs against Marc Jongen's and Thilo Sarrazin's visits to the University of Siegen in December 2018 and January 2019 under the auspice of Prof. Schönecker's lecture series *Denken und Denken lassen*, I knew there must be a more global debate around the resurgence of right-wing populisms on university campuses.<sup>1</sup> This curiosity is rooted in the recent purge in Turkey, of which I have been a part of, as a signatory of the declaration supporting peace and freedom at the Kurdish front, known as the declaration by Academics for Peace. Entitled, »We will not be a party to this crime«,<sup>2</sup> the declaration reinstates civil deaths, ecological harm and political deadlock caused by the military intervention of the Turkish State and holds the authoritarian government accountable. It is, further, a call to both sides for ceasefire. However, from the point of initial public dissemination, Academics for Peace have been called *enemy of the State*, faced prosecutions and dismissed/sacked from our positions in higher education. Some of us, including myself, have found temporary shelter outside of Turkey, quite a number of us in Germany, whereas others, with travel sanctions, try out alternative survival tactics in Turkey.<sup>3</sup> We are all displaced academics, thriving to preserve our critical knowledge capital and dignity against an authoritarian regime willing to sacrifice its knowledge workers and higher education institutions in exchange for power. Thus, when ideologies against plurality and diversity gain traction in university settings in Germany today, I felt the urge to look for global cases. The first concept I encountered was *no platforming*. No platforming is the practice of blocking, or attempting to block, an individual from speaking at a university because of her expressed moral or political views. It is different from merely protesting a speaker. Protest typically serves to communicate disagreement. It is a form of communication that is compatible with liberal ideals of free speech and tolerance, at least in theory. By contrast, no platforming generally expresses the view that the targeted person is morally or politically beyond the pale, and that they should thus be denied a voice on campus. At face value, no platforming is a practice that seems to be at odds with liberal politics. However, there is more to it than that when individual ideological stances of privileged classes are dominant. In other words, the exclusion of certain speakers from university campuses may be content-based, rather than procedural. This point will be expanded further in this paper with Robert C. Post's arguments on academic freedom and constitutional rights vis à vis the mere extrapolation of free speech principles.<sup>4</sup>

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1 For further debate and insight on the seminar and lecture series, see Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft (blog): »Free Speech und Rechter Populismus«.

2 For the declaration, see Academics for Peace: »We will not be a party to this crime!«.

3 For solidarity efforts and survival tactics of Academics for Peace, see Aydemir: »Criminalizing Hope for Peace«.

4 For a deeper focus on Post's related account, see Post: »Academic Freedom and the Constitution«.

The term *no platforming* dates back to the 1970s, when the UK National Union of Students (NUS) adopted a policy under that name, prohibiting student unions from giving representatives of the fascist National Front party access to speaking engagements on British university campuses. Over time, the NUS's targeted campaign was applied to a wider range of speakers, espousing a variety of unpopular views, including racist, anti-Semitic, misogynistic, Islamophobic, and transphobic views. Recent targets of no platforming in the UK include the MP George Galloway, over allegations of rape denial,<sup>5</sup> Iranian human rights campaigner and secularist Maryam Namazie, for Islamophobia,<sup>6</sup> psychologist Ken Zucker, for transphobia,<sup>7</sup> and feminists Julie Bindel, Beatrix Campbell, and Germaine Greer, also for transphobia.<sup>8</sup>

In the US there has been a parallel rise in the practice of disinvitation, which involves student groups reacting to someone's invitation to speak on campus, e.g. for a commencement address, by pressuring the administration to rescind the invitation, or pressuring the speaker to decline it. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) lists 342 disinvitation campaigns at American colleges since 2000.<sup>9</sup> Recent examples of people targeted for disinvitation by left-wing activists include former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, for war crimes, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, for anti-black racism, anti-FGM campaigner Ayaan Hirsi Ali, for Islamophobia, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for human rights abuses. Disinvitation campaigns have also sometimes been mounted by conservative groups, targeting people like Angela Davis for anti-capitalist views, or Cornel West for criticism of Israel. Disinvitation and no platforming aren't identical – they differ in how they are organized and what kinds of speakers they are used against – but they are similar in certain key respects. Most importantly, they are both tools primarily used by students: an attempt to exert control from below over who speaks and what can be said on campus. Whatever

5 George Galloway said in the video: »Julian Assange sexual conduct is not rape« that the sexual crimes of which Julian Assange has been accused »don't constitute rape« and are at worst »bad sexual etiquette«; see also Rickman: »Julian Assange: What Does Reaction To His Alleged Crime Tell Us About Attitudes To Rape in The UK?« for further discussion.

6 Namazie is a member of the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain, and a spokesperson for *One Law for All*, which campaigns against sharia and other religious laws. The decision to no platform her at Warwick University was later reversed after student and public outcry. See Adams: »Student Union Blocks Speech by ›Inflammatory‹ Anti-Sharia Activist«.

7 Ken Zucker promotes therapeutic intervention for children who exhibit gender non-conforming behaviour. For further discussion on intellectual no-platforming see Verite and Jontry: »›Intellectual no-platforming‹: Ken Zucker pushes back on the latest attempt to discredit desistance-persistence research«.

8 For further discussion see National Union of Students: »NUS's No Platform Policy«.

9 As of September 2017; see »Disinvitation Database«. Note that FIRE includes both actual and attempted disinvitations, and »substantial event disruption« cases in its database (cf. note 1). Some of its cases may arguably be better classified as protest rather than no platforming.

the weight of the differences amounts to, disinvitation can be treated as a subcase of no platforming.

At face value these practices seem to flout liberal ideals of tolerance, pluralism, and open public discourse. One could argue that that was not the case when no platforming was first being used by the NUS as a tactic for combating the National Front. In those days one might have viewed the practice as a permissible form of militant liberalism: a special exception to the normal liberal commitment to tolerance, aimed specifically at combating the rise of political groups whose overt aims included the abolition of liberal institutions. However, as a number of critics argue, the practice of no platforming isn't what it used to be.<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, so the critique goes, no platforming is used not just to fight against overt enemies of liberal society, but to suppress credible positions that are widely accepted by reasonable, sincere, and informed people. If no platforming was still reserved for the National Front, it could arguably be reconciled with a liberal vision of the university. But given that it is used to silence a wide range of viewpoints and speakers – including human rights campaigners, feminists, medical doctors, and mainstream politicians – it appears to have broken faith with that vision.

Granted, some practitioners of no platforming expressly reject liberal ideals. It is a familiar leftist critique, after all, that liberalism colludes in oppression: in its focus on individual negative liberty, its insistence on a distinction between the public and private realms, and its idealization of the public square as a place of reasoned deliberation.<sup>11</sup> Allowing advocates of oppressive ideas a platform on campus, in the name of free speech, might be seen as yet another deployment of liberal ideals in the service of injustice and domination. In turn, no platforming might be seen as an organized mode of resistance to the abuse of liberal ideals for oppressive ends. Those who take this view may invoke Herbert Marcuse's warning that – in the non-ideal conditions of actual political contestation – an ethos of »indiscriminate tolerance« won't result in the triumph of truth, as Millian liberals hope, but instead, the triumph of views favored by the powerful. In such circumstances, and »where freedom and happiness themselves are at stake«, he says, »certain things cannot be said, certain ideas cannot be expressed, certain

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10 See Dittum: »No platform« was once reserved for violent fascists. Now it's being used to silence debate«.

11 For examples of these claims in feminist discourse, see Catharine MacKinnon's claim that liberal conceptions of harm make the harm done by pornography to women unrecognizable; MacKinnon: »Not a Moral Issue«; the claim advanced by Angela Davis (1983): *Women, Class, and Race*; Carol Pateman (1988): *The Sexual Contract*, Susan Okin (1989): *Justice, Gender and the Family*, and Nancy Fraser (2014): *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere* that the liberal notion of a protected »private« sphere obscures injustice in the family; or Alison Jaggar's (1993): *Feminist Frameworks* and Iris Marion Young's (1997): *Feminism and the Public Sphere* which claims that the idealizations involved in liberal conceptions of public discourse systematically exclude the perspectives of those who are taken to be discursively non-ideal.

policies cannot be proposed, certain behavior cannot be permitted without making tolerance an instrument for the continuation of servitude.«<sup>12</sup>

There are those who believe that political discourse in the university is yet another discursive arena in which entrenched power hierarchies thwart the positive aims that – for Millian liberals – tolerance is supposed to promote. No platforming may be defended, by people in this camp, as a necessary means of curbing the repressive consequences of liberal tolerance.<sup>13</sup> For now, our point is just that it is quite straightforward to formulate an internally coherent defense of no platforming that is premised on a rejection of the liberal vision. Indeed, this kind of anti-liberal case for no platforming probably captures the attitude or perspective of some proponents of no platforming. Nevertheless, the task that is more interesting – or at least more dialectically useful, given how critiques of the practice are typically framed – is to see if there is a way to defend no platforming within the parameters of liberal politics. This is especially true because liberal critics of no platforming, in their routine invocation of free speech principles, tend to neglect a crucial fact: the academy is not the public square, and is in fact by its very nature an institution in which content-based speech discrimination is the norm. But before we turn to the question of how liberals might think of the academy, and the place of no platforming within it, let us say something about the debate between critics and defenders of no platforming as it usually plays out.

## 2 THE HARM PRINCIPLE

It might appear that the most promising way of defending no platforming within a liberal framework is by appeal to something like the harm principle, as a limiting constraint on individual liberty in general and free speech specifically. The recent controversy over the attempted no platforming of Germaine Greer provides a useful example of how the harm principle can structure debate around this issue. In 2015 Greer was invited to give a public lecture at Cardiff University. The advertised title for the lecture was *Women & Power: The Lessons of the 20th Century*. Greer's lecture was cancelled, however, after a student-authored petition gathered over 3000 signatures demanding that the university rescind her

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12 Marcuse: »Repressive Tolerance«, p. 88.

13 Marcuse himself would not have wanted his ideas to be co-opted in a defense of no platforming. Marcuse identifies *academic discussion* as one of a few arenas in which an ethos of indiscriminate tolerance is justified. Marcuse thinks that in the special social conditions of academic discussion, such tolerance typically does conduce to the utilitarian benefits that Mill adverts to in his defense of free speech in *On Liberty*; thus academic discussion represents an exception to Marcuse's rule. But regardless of Marcuse's optimism about the consequences of tolerance for scholarly inquiry, it is easy to imagine a version of his critique which is less sanguine about the effects of power on the truth-seeking aims of academic discourse. For further discussion of the nuances of Marcuse's account, see Leiter/Estlund »When Protest and Speech Collide«.

invitation.<sup>14</sup> The petition argued that Greer had »demonstrated time and time again her misogynistic views towards trans women, including continually misgendering trans women and denying the existence of transphobia altogether«. It said such views »should have no place in feminism or society«, and that they contribute to »hatred and violence towards trans people – particularly trans women – both in the UK and across the world«. While paying respect to the idea that debate in a university should be allowed and encouraged, the petition nonetheless insisted that it would be unacceptably dangerous to host a »speaker with such problematic and hateful views towards marginalized and vulnerable groups«.

The signatories to the no platforming petition clearly disagreed about whether Greer's lecture should have been allowed to go ahead. But both sides located their competing claims within a similar normative framework. They agreed that there is a *prima facie* right to free speech on campus, while also agreeing that this right can be overridden to prevent serious harm, e.g. to prevent the incitement of violence against a vulnerable social group. The pivotal issue in the Greer debate, then, was whether there really was a threat of violence against trans women, stemming from Greer's claims about gender, and whatever amplification of those claims might have resulted from her speaking at Cardiff. The actual question was: would Greer's lecture have genuinely endangered trans women, directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action? Together, these two ideas make sense of the apparent points of agreement in the debate around Greer's no platforming: first, that there is a *prima facie* entitlement to free speech on university campuses, and second, that this entitlement can justifiably be overridden given a threat of significant harm.

It is unsurprising that all sides in the Greer controversy would adopt this normative framing. Standard liberal thinking tells us that the expression of ideas and opinions should be free from coercive institutional restriction, but also that there are exceptions for speech that is seriously harmful or carries an imminent risk of harm. This view is partly rooted in the harm principle – the idea famously espoused by John Stuart Mill that »the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.«<sup>15</sup> It is also partly rooted in doctrinal themes from incitement law, in particular the idea that inflammatory or provocative speech should be free from regulation unless it is causing harm.

However, there are complexities lurking beneath the surface. For Mill, limits to free speech governed by the harm principle are compatible with a substantial sphere of personal liberty in *self-regarding action*. These things are compatible, Mill thinks, because much of our speech is purely self-regarding and thus harmless; harm to others is only a danger in areas where speech transforms from mere opinion into some kind of verbal conduct. His classic example: when said in front

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14 Cf. Melhuish: »Cardiff University: ›Do not host Germaine Greer‹«.

15 Mill: *On Liberty*, p. 23.

of an angry mob gathered outside a corn dealer's house, the opinion that corn dealers are starvers of the poor becomes an act of incitement.<sup>16</sup> This neat distinction between mere speech and dangerous verbal conduct starts to look tenuous on inspection, though. All communicative acts – even those that just involve the expression of opinions – have some potential to negatively affect others in some respects. If any sphere of expressive liberty is to be preserved, then, we will have to insist that only certain kinds of harm suffice to justify the regulation of speech, and we will have to specify which ones. We will probably also need to protect some forms of especially high-value expression against regulation, even when the harm of doing so sometimes outweighs the immediate benefit. And we will also need to formulate distinctions.

To assert this claim one must defend a stance on several contested questions, about which harms suffice to justify the regulation of political speech. For instance: is merely feeling intimidated or discriminated against sufficient? If so, is it sufficient in every case, or only when the feeling is reasonable given what the speaker has said? And if the latter, what gives content to our notion of reasonableness? Second, consider the indirect harms to the community, beyond extremist ideological actors' immediate audience, that would allegedly have resulted from their speeches. Substantiating this allegation requires one to defend a stance on the question of when a speaker is responsible for the influence his/her speech has on the audience. For instance: Does the harmful influence have to be foreseeable, or intended, or neither? And if neither, is the speaker responsible for harmful outcomes that result from implausible interpretations of her expressed views? If so: in all cases? And if not: what are the exceptions?

In summary, there are reasons to doubt that an attempted general defense of no platforming via appeal to the harm principle will be either theoretically persuasive or politically successful. Moreover, the use of this argumentative approach leaves advocates of no platforming open to the charge that the practice really isn't about preventing harm at all – that their appeal to this purely procedural liberal precept is really just a cover for the kind of illiberal, repressive purposes, of ideologically restricting disapproved opinions.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, defending no platforming by invoking the harm principle involves simply accepting the liberal critic's presupposition that the academic sphere is an extension of the public sphere, and thus governed by general free speech principles. But this presupposition mischaracterizes the nature of universities and the norms governing communication within them. As I will argue below, defenders of no platforming would do better to reason and argue not in terms of the norms of free speech, but the – importantly distinct – norms of academic freedom.

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16 See Mill: *On Liberty*, pp. 107-108.

17 See Lukianoff: »Freedom from Speech«; Bindel: »Straight Expectations«.

### 3 DISTINGUISHING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREE SPEECH

The civil libertarians who condemn no platforming routinely characterize the university as an institution that should be defined by a commitment to free speech. And this seems credible at face value. After all, if the right to free speech is to be respected anywhere, shouldn't it be respected in institutions devoted to critical inquiry? To invoke free speech in this context is to invoke a central pillar of the liberal tradition: a principle encoded in every major liberal theory of justice, enshrined in the constitutional or common law of all liberal societies, and – according to various international treaties and declarations – grounded in our inalienable human rights.

The problem, however, is that this view treats the university as if it were just an outlet in the marketplace of ideas or an extension of the public square. This is a mischaracterization. Universities are specialized institutions that exist for purposes of teaching and research. Communicative norms and practices in universities reflect these purposes. Here is a related account by William Van Alstyne, a well-known scholar of constitutional law who worked for civil liberties for a long time and therefore a practicing authority in the liberal discourse of freedom of speech. First, universities accord special protection to certain kinds of speech by those responsible for teaching and research: »a personal liberty to pursue the investigation, research, teaching, and publication of any subject matter of professional interest without vocational jeopardy« except in case of »an inexcusable breach of professional ethics in the exercise of that freedom«. <sup>18</sup> This freedom is needed because the realization of the epistemic aims of teaching and research will be compromised if the employment of teacher-scholars depends upon the constant grace and favor of university management, society in general or – especially in the case of state universities – the government. <sup>19</sup>

Communicative practices in universities are not governed, then, by the liberal precepts that regulate communication in the public square. When universities restrict speakers and viewpoints this should not be, and indeed is not, based solely or even primarily on purely procedural standards aimed at harm-prevention. Given that no platforming is a practice that takes place in universities, our question should be whether it is compatible with norms of *academic* freedom, in particular where these norms are understood as distinct from general liberal principles of free speech. Granted, some of the speaking engagements that no platformers target – like commencement addresses, or talks at student societies – are not immediately linked to the teaching and research activities that principles of academic freedom are primarily there to safeguard. But principles of academic freedom are an appropriate reference point all the same, because these other kinds of speaking events are an important part of the cultural and institutional

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<sup>18</sup> van Alstyne: »The Specific Theory of Academic Freedom and the General Issue of Civil Liberty«, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 71.



backdrop against which teaching and research activities are conducted. The norms governing these communicative occasions – as well as attempts to interfere with them – should therefore be guided by consideration of how they affect the university's core academic activities. This consideration is also related to how we engage with the presence of the New Right at the university. Hanke and Cortiel sketch three dimensions: Analyzing the public debate about how universities have responded to the New Right, developing argumentative positions grounded in academic ethics, and reflecting upon the university's own institutional policies.<sup>20</sup> What kind of university do we want and how do we arrive at it?

What principles of academic freedom are primarily there to uphold, on the understanding we have sketched above, is a certain kind of independence: independence in the exercise of technical expertise in teaching and research from the control of outside actors, like governments, businesses, and administrators, who might try to force individuals or departments into »promulgating particular views« instead of »sustaining the ongoing scholarly discipline by which knowledge is identified and expanded«.<sup>21</sup> The aim of these principles is to ensure, for instance, that donors cannot get professors fired for criticizing foreign governments, that corporations cannot buy influence to quash research that threatens their commercial interests, that governments cannot gag scientists whose research reveals dangers created by government policies, and that administrative staff cannot force teachers to modify their syllabi based on the management's ideas about what should be taught. In securing all these protections, though, to reiterate, principles of academic freedom do not guarantee teachers or students (or anyone else) participation in a wide-open discussion of ideas.

On the contrary, the standards of expertise that govern teaching and research are compatible with all sorts of content-based restrictions on communication. What principles of academic freedom are meant to ensure is that such constraints are imposed by credentialed disciplinary experts, not outsiders, and that such constraints serve the promotion of disciplinary knowledge, not some ulterior agenda.<sup>22</sup>

Why should we regard the above as a liberal conception of academic freedom? Robert C. Post, who is also a scholar of constitutional law, this time focusing on equal protection and participatory freedoms, answers as follows. Free people cannot justifiably be subject to the brute authority of elites. Government must involve the people governing themselves in order to be legitimate. For Post, this follows from a broader theory of free speech grounded in the idea of open

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20 Cf. Hanke/Cortiel: »Universität und Neue Rechte. Geisteswissenschaftliche Positionierungen«.

21 van Alstyne: »The Specific Theory of Academic Freedom and the General Issue of Civil Liberty«, p. 89.

22 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 85-93.

democratic participation as an essential requirement of democratic legitimacy.<sup>23</sup> The realization of self-government is not just a matter of a society having formally democratic electoral and parliamentary institutions. This ideal also requires that (i) everyone should be at liberty to participate in the public discourse that underpins democratic decisions, and (ii) that everyone should have access to the knowledge and information necessary for well-informed judgements about how we ought to be governed. Principles of free speech, which safeguard disliked views against viewpoint-based restriction in the public square, serve the first requirement of open access and participation. Principles of academic freedom, by contrast, serve the second requirement. To facilitate everyone's access to the information necessary for informed judgements about issues of public concern, societies need specialized institutions – including an independent university sector – devoted to the creation and dissemination of expert knowledge.

In any case, my argument isn't that Post's account of academic freedom is demonstrably superior to every rival account. Post presents a plausible account of academic freedom, located within liberal politics; he opens up a way to see no platforming as in principle consonant with a liberal understanding of the university's mission and nature. It is no intrinsic offence to the intellectual culture of the university, on this view, that a person should be deprived of a platform to express her views because of a negative appraisal of her credibility and the content of her views. Principles of academic freedom of the kind that Post defends can permit such exclusion, provided that it respects and supports the independent exercise of disciplinary expertise in teaching and research. Of course this does not mean that all or even most instances of no platforming will receive the liberal's approval. What it shows is how such approval can be merited. In at least some cases, no platforming of a particular speaker could positively contribute to an institutional culture that protects the exercise of disciplinary expertise against ulterior influences and external agendas. At least, it would be expected that the mentioned aspect of the institutional culture would not be threatened.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Critics of no platforming argue that the practice is at odds with a liberal commitment to free speech. Defenders of the practice typically respond by invoking the harm principle, which is, on a standard liberal view, the most natural way to defend limits on free speech. But this line of defense is premised on a suite of theoretical and empirical claims that limit its utility. Moreover, it simply accepts the liberal critic's presupposition that the academy is an extension of the public sphere, and is therefore governed by general free speech principles. What is attempted by this article is an alternative way of reconciling at least some

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23 Cf. Post: »Participatory Democracy as a Theory of Free Speech: A Reply«, pp. 617-32.

instances of no platforming with liberal principles. My proposal builds on Post's account of academic freedom, as something entirely different from a mere extrapolation of free speech principles into the realm of the university. Principles of academic freedom, unlike principles of free speech, positively support the exclusion of speakers and viewpoints for content-based – rather than merely procedural – reasons. These exclusions are justified, indeed, they are necessary, in order for researchers and teachers to uphold disciplinary standards and exercise their disciplinary expertise free from undue external interference. The exclusion of speakers because of their views is thus not in principle antithetical to the aims and nature of the university, as some liberal commentators say. At least in some cases, no platforming can be compatible with, and even support, these aims. For an account of dangerous questions and why academic freedom matters, I would recommend that you read the spotlight of *Scholars at Risk* on a MOOC study, partnered with *Academic Refuge initiative*.<sup>24</sup>

Given the discriminatory and marginalizing stance right-wing populists have taken in Europe, one must be sensitive about possible offences their discourse creates against diverse communities on campus.

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