Populism on Campus

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Introduction

Europe survives as an idea and is still a formidable entity but finds itself riven by the obdurate identities of nation states that feel under increasing pressure. In this chapter, the focus is upon British struggles and how they play out on university campuses, because this casts light upon problems with securitization and discriminatory practices. National identities are becoming fragile under financial pressures, manipulated fear of mass migration, and the populist politics that thrive in these conditions. Social media and other versions of mass psychology are creating optimal conditions for an echo chamber in which hysteria, blaming games,

and expressions of hatred can spread like wildfire. I introduce the neologism Iphobia to analyse this societal malaise. The young generations of students currently passing through British universities will be crucial in steering Britain's future, yet no one born this century had a vote in the 2016 referendum to leave Europe. The young can be powerful opinion influencers, and yet they find themselves under various constraints upon free speech, while they attempt to develop their adult views about the world, themselves, and their place in it. Free speech has long been a treasured entitlement in some European countries: with particular focus upon Britain, I will consider the current state and future of free speech on campus. It may be that free speech does not take place on campus much anymore, because online activity is so pervasive and persuasive and because of counterterror bureaucracy that has a chilling effect on free speech (the Prevent Duty Guidance). I consider whether freedom of speech is functioning well enough on university campuses to transform populism into a positive force for good and explore how campus conversations can be facilitated in the current crisis, which is determined across Europe by a range of different forms of extreme, often right-wing, thought and action. I will consider the importance of reviving the art of face to face conversation and debate, in order to create live challenges to the rise of right-wing populism. In this environment, I will suggest that virtuous disobedience may be a useful, even necessary state of mind.

Populism

Populism is an elusive term, yet it is often used as if it is crystal clear. Historically, it refers to movements that started with agrarian revolt in the US in the 19th century, in which underrepresented people with no political power grouped together

for the purpose of improving their living conditions. This was an example of the people seeking to unite to secure their rights.

Populism currently appears to have strong racist tones (Mounk) although Laclau sees it as the salvation of the people. Given such contradiction, it is necessary to contextualize my work according to various definitions of populism, populist language, and hate speech as a context for recent discriminatory and exclusionary trends in the media, in government positions, and in general public conversation. Currently, Muslims and immigrants are the usual targets. These theories of populism are many and varied. They include Germani's historical analysis of fascism and Peronism (1978); Shils's historical analysis of Nazism, McCarthyism in the US, and the ways in which privacy and public life must be balanced to allow the pluralist state to function (1996); Canovan with her two macro-categories of agrarian populism and political populisms (1981); Meny and Surel, who updated populism to show it as part of globalization (2001); Mudde and Kaltwasser with their definition of populism as a 'thin-centred' ideology (2017), which is challenged by Anselmi with his interest in populism as animated by deep social causes, as attempted by Weyland (Weyland, 2001; Anselmi, 2018); Mouffe and Laclau with their work on political identity, which is indebted to Saussure's approach to language as a social fact; Gramsci's notion of hegemony, and Lacan's psychoanalytical model (2007). There are many conflicting theories, and in Britain, there is much confusion: is populism a dangerous right-wing trend or the sincere voice of the people?

Currently, the term 'populism' is often used as a term of abuse to refer to exclusionary, racist movements across Europe that are often also seen as 'right-wing' and conservative. Such terms need to be challenged, and for the context of this paper, I will combine components from two approaches (Mudde and Kaltwasser and Laclau and Mouffe). There is a broad definition from Mudde and Kaltwasser, who argue that populist movements, whether 'left'

or 'right', are based upon two tenets: first, 'we the people' are an identifiable group that is disenfranchised and secondly 'we the people' are governed by corrupt elites that must be made to grant us our rights (2017). I argue that these two features may be perfectly reasonable in all forms of relationship between citizens and state, but I suggest that with certain versions of populism, there can arguably be abuse of power from below as well as from above. This can be seen in the UK referendum that led to the Brexit vote, whereby the implementation of the 'will of the people' will probably ensure that the poor suffer more than they do currently and that the wealthy benefit: we can predict this with some clarity given that deregulation of commercial enterprise, reduction of protections for workers' rights, and deregulation of environmental factors will all feature in new plans for departure from EU.

Another important line of thought is that of political scientists Laclau and Mouffe, who assert that the people are at the core of all politics and seek a more positive interpretation of the will of the people. I use this to build a model of the popular impulses that can be part of populism. For Laclau, populism, therefore, can and must provide a socialist approach that enables the people to govern (Laclau 2005). Laclau and Mouffe propose that all political movements share popular, sometimes populist impulses. In analysing populism, they describe the 'chain of equivalence' as one characteristic of populism: this is their expression of the horizontal alliances that can be forged, whereby different groups band together with a common cause and seek to become a formidable force for effecting their goals. Laclau and Mouffe believe this can be a fair and flat (rather than hierarchical) form of social cohesion that accords with their own socialist preferences. They argue that there are several characteristics of populist movements that can be used for either negative or positive outcomes, and here they analyse the discourse used by populists, which will form part of my definition. One

significant term they use is the 'empty signifier'; this refers to the way in which a type of discourse and rhetoric may overuse a term that has little meaning and yet becomes politically charged: 'the people' is one such term, 'Muslims' is another. Significantly Laclau and Mouffe also warn us about antagonism: they argue that populism can too easily become a form of discourse that controls and inhibits people's understanding of reality by creating antagonistic binaries. A current example of this is the way in which certain populist movements differentiate between the supposedly autochthonous ('indigenous') populations against the allochthonous ('foreign') refugees, and argue that the privileged majority is disadvantaged, endangered, and oppressed by the weak and much less numerous incoming minority (Arif, 2018).

For this essay, I combine two definitions of populism: populism as a movement with a basic claim that the 'people' are ignored by a corrupt 'elite', and populism as a movement that relies more upon passionate language (that sounds sincere and authoritative) than upon a well-developed ideology. This is further developed in Scott-Baumann and Perfect (2020). Such a definition does not give a voice to the young because they do not have platforms in major media outlets or major political parties. I will focus upon the young as they will have to clear up the mess left by older generations, yet they do not have a voice in current debates. Indeed, I will show that right-wing populism is present on campus in the form of various deliberate interruptions to the free speech of students.

Young people as populists, to be encouraged or suppressed

Young people can make a significant difference to public debate at the point where opinions are hardened, the 'people's' voice needs to be heard, and abuses of power must be

challenged: we can recall Birmingham Alabama US, 1963, Paris 1968, Prague 1968, Tiananmen Square 1989, and many others. Students are particularly good at agitating because they have certain privileges: they are educated, they have safe spaces to develop arguments that go against the current societal grain of thinking, and they can be very idealistic. Rogers (2003) sketches a persuasive picture of diffusers of change that shares key characteristics with university students. University staff and students often enjoy the privileges accorded to private spaces, because they can choose whom to invite onto campus as speakers, and it is assumed that students can go about their daily business of studying, being sociable, and discussing difficult ideas in a protected yet also semi-public setting. This particular space is often seen as a symbolic hallmark of liberal democracy and as a vehicle for integration of minorities; governments often make efforts to ensure that minorities and immigrants attend university and to improve their achievements while there, and the university is still seen as the site for citizen formation and hence integration. Current state actors in Britain seem to agree with Rogers about students as potential influencers, and they are worried. There is currently a distinct political bias in the ruling elite in Britain towards right-wing ideologies, expressed in fear about university campuses being left-wing: The Evening Standard (London's daily newspaper) reported that Conservative Party Central Headquarters (CPHQ) would hope to hold the next general election out of university term time to avoid the effect of the Labour Party's Momentum group rallying support (The Evening Standard, 21 February 2019, pp. 22–23).

However, students currently seem disengaged and ignorant about the current sweep of populist parties across Europe. Populism of the prevalent right-wing variety is a phenomenon seemingly nourished by hatred of the 'other' (whoever is

chosen—it has in the past and is now again Jews—currently the predominant focus is upon Muslims) and which insists upon exclusionary and protectionist approaches to societal flashpoints. Of course, many students are politically inactive; this is always the case, generation on generation. However, students and staff who wish to engage should be able to function as change agents in a reasonably functional democracy, as they did in the US over the Vietnam War. Yet, in England and Wales, two elements seem to be having a chilling effect on students' emancipatory potential. Firstly, students are being discouraged from debating controversial topics. Secondly, they themselves often seek to avoid contamination from extremist ideas by refusing to host such speakers as Nigel Farage (a powerful figure who led the Brexit campaign on a nationalist, anti-immigration platform). My research explores this situation and offers some solutions to such a dangerous stalemate, which will have relevance across Europe.

When young people group together to act, their activism can be said to be a necessary (although not a sufficient) trigger for progressive change. However, currently, they are not ready to challenge or engage with populism. Current outbreaks of populism in Europe and elsewhere are providing a platform for hate speech, racial discrimination, and social division. We may find that these populist movements are based on reasonable questions about corrupt elites, and the voice of the people being ignored (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). Yet, it seems that they can lead to the wrong answers, such as giving the people a referendum vote (often binary, yes/no) on a subject they do not understand. A remarkable feature of the current European situation is that many young people are not asking for explanations or justice, and many seem to accept the drift to extreme politics, while often despising it and deliberately ignoring it. There are stark exceptions to this, such as the so-called 'hipster fascists' of Italy,

young adults who admire the politics of Mussolini. These young hipster fascists, who enthusiastically support a return to fascism, believe this is the only way to save Italy. Students on campus are, potentially, the most powerful group to act upon this trend, yet, currently, they are not reacting, except perhaps to avoid these issues by selecting a different path, such as leaving their country to find work, which young Italians are doing.

In spite of their current relative inactivity, universities and students appear to evoke fear precisely because of their relatively privileged freedoms, and this can lead to wilful suppression: Viktor Orban of Hungary appears to be using new laws to restrict the freedom of all foreign-funded universities, with one particular one in his sights: the Central European University funded by George Soros. Can the European public state university continue to be an open space where difference and free speech remain welcome, or is the integration of cultures and faiths increasingly discouraged as if it is a subversive and dangerous social problem?

On British campuses, there is a regulatory framework known as the Prevent Duty Guidance that can be shown to have a chilling effect on freedom of expression. In addition, the charitable status of British student unions is being used to suppress certain political discussions, because charities are legally obliged to adopt an apolitical stance (Ten Downing Street, 2015; Heath-Kelly, 2017; Scott-Baumann and Perfect, 2020). Freedom to use campus space—a space that can be open to ideas yet relatively protected from outside pressures—becomes restricted when 'surveillance of spaces becomes thought of as a fundamental condition of survival' (Docherty, 2011, p. 74). How can the university act as a safe space for discussion if it is also, in some countries, subject to surveillance? How can the university preserve or return to its somewhat ambiguous status as 'safe' as well as public?

The university as a 'public space' and a safe space

This ideal of a university as a 'public space' to which everyone has equal access and equal capacity to test radical ideas in a learning environment may, therefore, be coming under threat. One of the distinct features of the contemporary political scene is that the institutions of representative democracy are going through a fundamental transformation worldwide, and this must affect the universities. In Europe, for example, we have seen the rise of 'non-traditional' political parties and their electoral successes, such as the Five Star Movement in Italy (founded in 2009), the Pirate Party in Iceland (founded in 2012), and Podemos in Spain (founded in 2014). These may not be either inherently positive or negative phenomena, just as populism, according to Laclau, can and should be a positive socialist force for good, not only an exclusionary conservative force for hate (Laclau, 2005). However, the current right-wing populist phenomenon urgently compels us to revisit and update our existing understanding of citizenship, political participation, and the formation of public opinion. Social media has played a significant role in this development by facilitating alternative and relatively unregulated spaces. In addition, it can be argued that the rapid development of a European common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and a European security and defence policy (ESDF) have created serious democratic accountability gaps (Bono, 2002; Barbé, 2004; Lord, 2004, pp. 189–195).

Mocking the young: a right-wing populist trick?

Let me explain how it has come about that students are widely and erroneously believed to be damaging the democratic right to free speech. These attacks have created, and also reflect, a

sense of moral crisis in the country at large, about free speech on campus and the possibility that the very roots of democracy are being threatened by students being opinionated and creating a chilling effect on campus. I will show that there is a chain of equivalences here between government policy and media, an antagonistic approach towards young, well-educated citizens. In this standoff, the empty signifiers are 'students' and 'free speech'.

The standoff takes two accusatory directions: the young are either chilling speech or they are overheating speech or both simultaneously. I will deal with these in turn; first, the chilling. In England, the young are often mocked in the media: they are described as snowflakes who are obsessed with political correctness and 'melt' at the slightest hint of controversy (Bennett, 2017). Students are accused of creating 'safe spaces' that restrict free discussion, and of 'no-platforming', i.e. denying outside speakers the opportunity to speak to student groups on campus. These accusations come from the government and are amplified by the media and by certain libertarian websites, most significantly *Spiked Online*. *Spiked* is a self-identified libertarian digital magazine which has created a methodologically unsound research approach to collect and censure purported infringements of free speech on campus, e.g. they criticize a students' union that votes to stop selling the newspaper The Sun in the student shop (Gray, 2016).

This discourse implies that students are frustrating the will of the people by using censorship of freedom of expressions and thought. Let us compare this populist narrative with the available evidence that shows us who can speak on campus and who is denied a platform. The National Union of Students (NUS) has accepted the government's list of proscribed organizations, and thus the following are not allowed to speak on campus: Al-Muhajiroun, British National Party, the English Defence League, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Muslim Public Affairs Committee, and

National Action. The NUS also seeks to ban racists and fascists and provides guidelines about the need to refuse a platform to speakers who are considered transphobic. By acting thus, the NUS believes it is consistent with the 1986 Education Act (2) that protects freedom of speech and expects student unions to follow suit, asserting that such a policy does not contravene Article 10 of the Human Rights Act, because it does not prevent anyone from speaking freely.

In 2018, in response to media excitement and accusations about students suppressing free speech, the BBC Reality Check team (Schraer and Butcher) requested information under a Freedom of Information request. 120 (of around 350) universities reported the following episodes since 2010: there were six occasions on which universities cancelled speakers as a result of complaints, and there were no instances of books being removed or banned. There are over two million students on campus every year, so these numbers are very small and do not bear out the public concern. These figures seem to be consistent with the law professor Erich Heinze's approach. In 2016, Eric Heinze argued against suppression of speech, airing ten arguments for no-platforming, and giving more potency to the ten arguments against no-platforming.

Yet, of course, students and universities do indeed sometimes impose no-platforming. The University of Bristol banned Emma Fox of the Henry Jackson Society in 2019, of which more later. She had recently authored a document for HJS, published in January 2019 called 'Extreme Speakers and Events: In the 2017/18 Academic Year'. The University of Bristol students union could have found arguments to counter the HJC's position. Its reaction fits Heinze's response to what he calls the 'non-facilitation' argument and which he counters with the desire of many students to 'assume power over their own social status' instead of being protected in a 'paternalistic, infantilising vein'.

In another example of no-platforming, in April 2019, Cardiff University cancelled a talk about the government's new Sex and Relationship Education proposals. Parents at Muslim schools expressed concern about LGBTQI education for young children, and this was presented by David Jones in the Daily Mail as a struggle to maintain liberal values. The Muslim Council of Wales had invited Dr Kate Godfrey-Faussett to speak on the matter at Cardiff University, but the university cancelled, citing irregular booking procedures for the venue. This speaker represents one aspect of a deeply argued, poorly evidenced national debate that conflates social conservatism with extremism, and a university debate about these important issues would have been a valuable contribution to a national discussion (as discussed by ASB on Radio Wales 14 April 2019).

Such complex topics require careful and time-consuming preparation, and both student groups and universities may on occasion act defensively. The frequent assertions by media and government that no-platforming is frequent, cannot be justified. Yet, we found some student union and staff perceptions to be that the Prevent Duty Guidance and the Charity Commission are partly responsible for an atmosphere that encourages no-platforming.

If no-platforming occasionally takes place, where does that exclusionary impulse come from? There are single incidents that are thought-provoking: after the 2016 referendum that triggered Brexit, a Tory party politician became very upset about the possibility that students could be discussing whether to remain in the EU and accused the university sector of unprincipled bias (Daily Mail, 25 October 2017; Fullerton, 2016). No one publicly challenged such a partisan outburst, which seemed to be based upon the belief that universities should only support the discussion of issues compatible with government policy. As well as occasional incidents like that, there are groups affiliated

to the government that insist stridently and consistently upon an urgent need for no-platforming. The Henry Jackson Society (a 'foreign policy' think tank) is one such group and publishes regular analyses of extremism on campus. Its latest report, in January 2019 ('Extreme Speakers and Events: In the 2017/18 Academic Year'), claims that 'Extremist hate preachers, pro-jihad activists, and avowed anti-Semites have "near-unfettered" access to students' (see Fox, 2019). The report asserted that SOAS (which hosted the Islam on campus project) tops the list nationally for dangerous extremism, even though fewer than 2 per cent of SOAS events (43) were considered 'extreme' by the HJS in 2017–18, and 'extremism' meant related to Islam (Scott-Baumann and Perfect, 2020). This report was taken seriously by media and other observers, leading to a Sunday morning BBC radio interview of a SOAS member of staff, a blog invitation for another SOAS member of staff, and serious concern expressed by a SOAS cultural partner. This was misleading information that feeds the public perception that campuses are dangerous and such a view has allies: well-funded right-wing organizations such as Turning Point USA are also now in Britain, arguing that academic staff are corrupting students with their own political opinions.

Research evidence

In fact, the evidence is very different, as my research shows. In addition to the contradictory pressure to be more libertarian (Spiked Online and various media pundits, e.g. Fraser Nelson) or to impose more no-platforming (Henry Jackson Society) there are two state-managed sources of pressure. One pressure is created by the enforcement of the Prevent Duty Guidance, a counter-extremism measure, on campuses. The other pressure point is

the Charity Commission's regulation of students' unions and controversial speakers, which is related to the Prevent duty. I have evidence in findings first from my AHRC-funded project Re/presenting Islam on Campus (2015–18), conducted with Guest, Naguib, Cheruvallil-Contractor, and Phoenix, to be published with Oxford University Press in 2020. Our empirical research was extensive: we interviewed or hosted in focus groups 253 students and staff at six universities and conducted an online survey with 2,021 students attending 132 universities. Secondly, we have evidence in the SOAS-funded project The Charity Commission and Students' Unions (2016–18) and research conducted with campus-based Prevent implementers (2018–19) conducted with Perfect, to be published in 2020 with Routledge. The Charity Commission research was a single-issue exploration of the role of the Charity Commission in regulating students' unions, and we interviewed 20 student union officers. They expressed satisfaction with the financial advice given by the Charity Commission but often regretted the fact that, because student unions are charities, they must function, as all charities must, apolitically.

In 2017, the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) launched an inquiry into freedom of speech on campus. This is a cross-party parliamentary group that has no power to alter legislation but has considerable influence in government. The JCHR found much of the concern around freedom of speech to be exaggerated, but the JCHR identified a number of factors that can have a 'chilling' effect upon speech on campus, including the impact of regulatory bodies and government counter-extremism measures. These factors can have a particular impact on Muslim students and staff, on students and staff who are thought to be Muslim, and students and staff of colour. My research is quoted frequently within the JCHR report and corroborates evidence of the oppressive influence of these two government initiatives in particular.

This chilling of free speech by the government is acknowledged by the JCHR and is part of a much wider and deeper state-sponsored securitization approach towards free speech and free thought. In England, equality and integration are threatened because public spaces are increasingly securitized. All public social spaces for education and health care are now monitored, through the Prevent policy, for signs of extremism, including universities (Heath-Kelly, 2017). Debates and research about whether or not there really is a 'chilling effect' on freedom of expression in universities are difficult to conduct—because talking about extremism is considered to be an act of extremism and is elided with controversy and potential reputational damage (Scott-Baumann and Perfect, 2020). It has become difficult to invite speakers deemed 'controversial', and it is also likely that a sort of informal no-platforming occurs unofficially before any formal invitations have been issued because students may doubt whether a speaker will be approved, as Garton Ash argues. Brown and Saeed (2015) propose that security discourses constrain students' activism, university experience, and identities, and now 'all bodies are potentially vulnerable to infection by radicalizers and thus warrant surveillance' (Heath-Kelly, 2017, p. 297).

Wider context: digital, societal, religious

The social media revolution has also placed different pressures upon the university by creating a very different sort of campus—on social media. In this contemporary digital era, the boundaries of a campus are more 'porous' than ever before. Facebook, for example, began on campus as then Harvard sophomore Mark Zuckerberg's attempt at creating an electronic version of dormitory 'face books', but now it has over two billion active users (Taplin, 2017). Even when they are on campus, students can

interact with a broader world simultaneously, through various digital means. This shift forms the backdrop to my work; re-establishing the power of the spoken word in order to help the young to anatomize their judgements, enhance their decision-making, and challenge their social environments—which are increasingly hybrid between offline and online (Abercrombie, 1960; Lee and Scott-Baumann, 2020).

Another feature of modern society that affects universities is the position of religion on campus. Society needs universities which face difficult societal issues but is not always supporting universities in that task, and we will consider critically Habermas' approach, that modern society needs religion: he proposes that religion and secularism are often measured against each other, rightly or wrongly, and thus are needed to balance each other out (Habermas 2005). However, in Europe, there is particular focus upon Islam as if it is the only religion, and it is usually negative. The intellectual, cultural, and moral contribution of Islam is rarely recognized in wider society (Kamali and Rabb). There is a tendency to think and speak (violently) of Muslims as 'the different other' and as a security threat on campuses. Government programs designed to tackle 'extremism' and the impact of those programs on universities and Muslims may constitute a form of oppressive populist discourse and contrast starkly with the concept of universities as places of debate about difficult issues. Paradoxically, religious and political tensions are increasing anti-Semitism, anti-terrorism legislation, misunderstandings of anti-terrorism guidance, and legislation in universities. These, coupled with the general shifts in higher education policy, are all making such debate more difficult (Scott-Baumann, 2017).

In England, the religion or belief landscape has changed dramatically in recent decades, while new legislation requires universities to have 'due regard' to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The broader political context

includes differing responses to this legislation by politicians and students as well as academic and legal debates about a 'chilling effect' on freedom of expression and academic freedom in universities. The mental health needs of students are reported to be increasing exponentially. So, whatever we may feel about such fears, let me also suggest an emotional component that requires attention. I exaggerate perhaps in order to demonstrate an urgent need for society to pay attention to its own self as a collective. A vacuum is created when the confident bodily cogito is displaced by multiple online avatars of the self. This vacuum has been filled with a phenomenon encapsulated in my neologism 'Iphobia'. Iphobia is not a contraction of Islamophobia, rather more a generalized societal malaise of which Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and racism comprise indicative components. In our Iphobic state, algorithms encourage the negative, the angry, and the narcissistic alongside pictures of kittens. Immersed in this mad world, the vulnerable self finds it difficult to come to terms with itself, and the 'I' is phobic about its own existential condition, through which I must try to understand and accept how to be human. The human condition is hard to bear; it is interdependent and painfully provisional and a constantly evolving work in progress. Through Iphobia, the 'I' feels wounded and lashes out by using extreme speech, damaging the democracy it inhabits to a point which may already be beyond repair. The demand for recognition that leads to so much societal friction and mishandling of human rights legislation can become a bad infinity whereby we seek recognition indefinitely (Ricœur, 2005, pp. 247–63; Campbell and Manning, 2018). There is also, in many young people, a digitally stimulated societal desire to appear as perfect as the kitten pictures, as described by Freitas in *The Happiness Effect* (2017). This creates the illusion of a confident cogito, a thinking person as a free agent. This illusion requires the 'emotional labour' described by Hochschild in *The*

Outsourced Self (2012) and the constant search for novelty described by Elliott and Lemert in *The New Individualism* (2009). Such phenomena reflect a common human tendency to define ourselves by lack, loss, and longing, feelings which are exacerbated by lack of Facebook likes, and, thus, lead us to ignore the positives that may allow us to help each other to overcome the asymmetries of injustice and live reasonably satisfactory lives in the real world (Scott-Baumann, 2013).

Our wounded self, a cogito exhausted by seeking recognition for oneself instead of mutual recognition of shared difficulties, uses language crudely ('Why do you cover your head?') and is ill-served by the remarkable and worrying tendency to use visible differences for determining risk ('Why has he grown a beard?'). Campus free speech is over-chilled by security personnel and security machinery that expand this risk from Islam and ethnic minority students in general to all staff and students, which encourages intolerance of difficult conversations.

Popper's paradox of tolerance

Ethnic minority students are increasingly being seen as belonging to suspect communities (Scott-Baumann, 2018). Religion becomes a 'problem' in the form of Islam as perceived by non-Muslims. The hermeneutics of suspicion is immensely powerful and difficult to dismantle (Scott-Baumann, 2008; 2017b; 2020). This is more evident in society at large than on campus; Harman and Jones demonstrate that after Brexit, the number of hate crimes in Britain rose dramatically (2017). This apparent resurgence of racism is part of a multinational debate about multiculturalism in the 'Western world' (Bromwich, 2016; Chin, 2017). Critiquing this situation entails dealing with the fine line between what is tolerable and what is not tolerable in democratic societies (Ricoeur, 1996), i.e.

reassessing Popper's famous 'paradox of tolerance'. Popper argued that liberal democratic societies must be tolerant of many things but not of intolerance as such. Translated into the terms of free speech, hate speech is not legitimate free speech. But the problem is, of course, how to draw the line, and here the French philosopher Ricoeur's work proves to be invaluable, not only because he addresses these problems both in published (Ricoeur, 1996; Ricoeur, 1991) and unpublished (Ricoeur, 1986) material but also because his practical philosophy provides us with a way to mediate between conflicts and to decide how to proceed in the context of ethical 'hard cases'. These are often ambiguous situations where no abstract universal rule applies but instead, what is called for is a 'situated judgement'. Ricoeur shows us how to take into account the specificity of each singular situation (Ricoeur, 1992). If we wish to encourage students to think this way, then I tend towards Laclau's view of popular impulses forming the basis for all politics. If such impulses are being systematically discouraged, as we see with the chilling of free speech on campus, then we need to consider virtuous disobedience. By this I mean disobedience motivated by an understanding that action will have an impact that is good for the community as well as for the individual, even, or especially when, such action is discouraged. Thus, when freedom of expression is discouraged it is worth considering whether it is worth risking censure in order to discuss complex issues for the good of public understanding. More harm may be created by submitting to restrictions than by breaking them.

Virtuous disobedience

Currently, with right-wing populism surging in the polls, migration and terrorism being presented as great threats, and governments appearing complicit in such discourses, students

seem to be unwilling and/or unable to challenge phenomena that many of them dislike. Disobedience seems far from their thoughts, and this may be enormously detrimental to healthy democratic functioning. I wish to suggest that, by analogy with demonstrating in the streets, students need to fill the campus with the words and ideas they are being asked to avoid.

There is, of course, a tradition of this. In his 1969 essay 'The Justification of Civil Disobedience', Rawls developed ideas of civil disobedience that he felt would be appropriate in a near-just state: action should be reasonable, proportionate, and focused upon a specific injustice. This formed part of Rawls' 'principles for individuals' in his Theory of Justice but these principles are not clear. There is a degree of circularity to his position as it assumes the status of 'near-just' to be agreed upon. Rawls also assumes that the degree of disobedience will be mild enough to cause no harm. This is a limited idea that ignores the concept of a struggle against evil, such as we saw in Mahatma Gandhi's and Martin Luther King's civil disobedience programs. Nor does Rawls take account of Thoreau's 19th-century approach to avoidance of complicity with injustice or wrongdoing. Thoreau coined the term civil disobedience current in the modern age. But Thoreau was more radical than Rawls: Thoreau believed his government did not deserve his allegiance. Rawls' ideas depend upon on how nearly just the 'near just' state actually is. Rawls stresses the civility of disobedience: actions must be peaceful, conscientious, and openly displayed, whereas Thoreau felt no allegiance to his government. My work borrows from both: I take the spirit of Thoreau and keep it legal: this entails creating partnerships between government figures and students so that the young can have influence. They may need to engage in virtuous disobedience.

It is valuable in this time of crisis about the functioning of democracy to consider whether students, who are the future of

democracy, can be invited to consider whether civil disobedience is a form of participation in the life of the political community. In addition, we can explore the possibility that state coercion may itself be illegal and, therefore, resistance to it may not be an illegal act. In the United Kingdom, the chilling of free speech for students and academic staff is now routine and considered necessary to prevent radicalization and acts of terror; challenging this is not worth the effort as it is made to seem like an illegal act and has reputational penalties. For Muslim staff and students, the situation is even worse than that for universities: in order not to be thought to be terrorists, they deliberately self-censor, think twice about growing a beard or wearing black, and take care which books they get out of the library (even when the books are on their reading list). In addition, student unions are now no longer able to support their student members in political activism. In this context, perfectly legal behaviour has thus been made to seem illegal because controversy is not allowed by the Charity Commission, which is in charge of student unions. Acts of virtuous disobedience may, therefore, present a viable option, to subvert the counter terror procedures that disseminate a form of right wing populism by suspecting Muslims and those of colour.

The civic virtues of a student-as-citizen may be more appropriate here than the consequentialist and deontological approaches to disobedient action. Thus, the often rehearsed idea that the consequences of disobedience must be good (Rawls) and one's motivations must be those that would serve others well (Kant) may not be the prime concerns; perhaps what are even more important considerations are the roles that the citizen can and should play in actively working to secure democratic functioning through the exercise of their civic virtue.

However, such actions may be considered to damage the innocent. Here is an extract from a staff email at a UK university

which shows just how difficult virtuous disobedience is when one's actions may risk the safety of another:

> The Departmental Learning and Teaching Committee expressed concerns that students who read about anti-terrorism policies may get caught up in the PREVENT structures. The committee's concern was that students would end up searching for material related to the module. So, for example, let's say there's a prescribed reading on the Indian government's response to the Students Islamic Movement of India (a banned terrorist organization in India). And the student then googles 'Students Islamic Movement of India' and finds something written purportedly by the organization. The committee's concern was that the students doing this google search as a result of the module reading would lead them to getting inadvertently caught up in PREVENT. I understand that the institution has a duty of care towards the students, and I personally would not want students to get caught up in tangles with PREVENT due to innocent reading. My own view is that students should read as much and whatever they want, but I understand that the state might have other opinions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my research asks the question that none of the politicized debates about free speech on campus makes any attempt to address: how do students and staff make judgements about complex issues such as populism, which often polarize complex topics into simplistic and extreme binaries and also often draw the learner into a securitized force field that impairs critical judgement? This happens with such phenomena as Brexit, Catalonian separatism, environmental issues, the European project, Israel/Palestine,

gender identity and student empowerment, immigration, and the terrorist threat, for example. My research shows that it is vital to bring the core ideals of the university back into focus and revitalize students' desire to make good judgements about the urgent matters facing Europe (Abercrombie, 1965).

This brings us back to Popper's challenge, to which there is no easy answer: hate speech, racism, and sexism must be unacceptable, but feminist philosopher Judith Butler cautions against suppressing such painful speech or refusing it a platform. In her book *Excitable Speech*, she recommends development of expertise to face up to and challenge unacceptable speech (Butler, 1997). There are many techniques that we already have at our disposal, ranging from classical rhetoric and the skill of chairing controversial speakers well, so that a balance of views can be heard, to C.S. Peirce's community of inquiry that can be used in class to enable students to take control of negotiating what is and is not acceptable prior to discussions led by students, not by staff (Leith, 2011; Scott-Baumann, 2010). Face-to-face conversation on campus must be brought back, with staff confident to encourage difficult conversations and students accepting the need to negotiate parameters for debate. Universities have these skills, but they are currently in cold storage through fear of being labelled extremist and encouraged to be de-radicalized.

My research shows that university students and staff in England and Wales (especially those from minority ethnic groups) are finding it difficult to manage such opportunities due to the chilling of speech, the restrictions on inviting speakers and institutionalized racism (EHRC, 2016). In her excellent and important masters' thesis Wille (2017) shows the risks of this in Norwegian higher education, broadly understood by the NOU in 2006. Sjoen shows this impact of counterterror programs clearly at the school level (Sjoen, 2019). Similarly, at this time of 'post-truth' and rising populism, action is urgently needed

that will benefit university management and students, European research communities, and governments in their desire to strengthen European institutions and educate competent citizens equipped for meaningful 'multi-dialogues' in the complex global context (Matsuura et al., 2001). Such action will take the form of reviving debating societies and discussing what forms of free speech will work and in what situations. Student populism is not strong on campus, either in a right-wing, exclusionary or a Laclauian socialist form; on the other hand the state is encouraging populism that is being used to mock students and stifle debate, but this brand of populism is not being discussed and challenged, which is a great concern for the future of Europe.

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