

The Ethics of Social Media: Being Better Online¹

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Abstract: Social media is a mess. Philosophers have recently helped catalogue some of the various ills. In this chapter, I relay some of this conceptual work on virtue signalling, piling on, ramping up, echo-chambers, epistemic bubbles, polarization, moral outrage porn, and the gamification of communication. In drawing attention to these things, philosophers hope to steer us towards being better online. One form that this takes is a call for more civility (both online and off). There is a good case to be made for this; social media is a mess, and we should be kinder and look to communicate better with each other. But there is also a good objection: Civility, and calls for civility and politeness, can placate serious resistance to power and wrongdoing. What we ought to be doing is resisting power, looking to protect democracy and mitigate the climate crisis. And given that, so the objection goes, focussing on civility is at best wrong-headed, and at worse counterproductive to real needed change. How then are we to negotiate the call for civility with the need for real change? The hope is that we can be better online and work towards serious change together.

Introduction

When Elon Musk initially threatened to become Twitter's largest shareholder, The Onion ran a piece with a few fabricated reaction quotes. One of them reads:²

"I hope this doesn't attract other toxic people to the site."

Social media is a mess.

Philosophers have recently helped catalogue some of the various ills. In what follows, I relay some of this conceptual work on virtue signalling, piling on, ramping up, echo-chambers, epistemic bubbles, polarization, moral outrage porn, and the gamification of communication.

In drawing attention to these things, philosophers hope to steer us towards being better online. One form that this takes is a call for more civility (both online and off). There is a

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² This was attributed to "Sara Melville, Etrementier" (<https://www.theonion.com/elon-musk-becomes-largest-twitter-shareholder-1848752502>).

good case to be made for this; we should be kinder and look to communicate better with each other, and perhaps this could help clean up some of the mess online (and off).

But there is also a good objection: Civility, and calls for civility and politeness, can placate people and blunt serious resistance to power and wrongdoing. What we ought to be doing is resisting (illegitimate) power, looking to protect democracy and mitigate the climate crisis. And given that, so the objection goes, focussing on civility is at best wrong-headed, and at worse counterproductive to real needed change.

How then are we to negotiate the call for civility with the need for real change? The hope is that we can be better online and work towards serious change together.

1. Being Bad Online

Social media competes for our attention. As it turns out, one thing that really grabs our attention is moral outrage.³ And there are a variety of vices and phenomena associated with this. Perhaps the most well-known of these is virtue signalling.

Virtue signalling is “the use of moral talk for self-promotion” (Tosi and Warmke 2020: ix), that is, when one uses moral language to make oneself appear good or better than others. Tosi and Warmke give the following fictional example:⁴

As someone who has long fought for the poor, I find all these proposals to eliminate rent control laws disgusting. If you think these are even worth listening to, you don't care about poverty in this country (Tosi and Warmke 2020: 20)

Their idea is that the speaker is virtue signalling here, trying to impress on you just how much they care about the poor, using moral language for their own self-promotion.

Tosi and Warmke (2020: 16) suggest that one can seek prestige for one's moral qualities in two main ways, through either claiming to care a lot about some moral issue, or using moral language to dominate one's (out-group) rivals. And they see this happening online, in the way which people look to both proclaim their own virtues, and demonise those they disagree with.

Tosi and Warmke see this as playing out in a variety of unhelpful ways, including *piling on* and *ramping up*. Piling on:

[...] occurs when someone contributes to public moral discourse to do nothing more than proclaim her agreement with something that has already been said. When

³ See Brady et al. (2017), and Simpson (2021).

⁴ Tosi and Warmke (2020) use the term 'grandstanding' rather than virtue signalling, as Levy (2021: 9545-46) notes, 'virtue signalling' is a much more common term. I will treat 'virtue signalling' and 'grandstanding' as synonymous in this chapter. See Tosi and Warmke (2020: 37-40) for their reasons for not using the term 'virtue signalling'.

people grandstand by piling on, they are just trying to get in on the action or register their inclusion on the right side. (Tosi and Warmke 2020: 45)

Tosi and Warmke conceptualise the vicious nature of this here, in terms of the motivations of the people piling on, namely that “they are just trying to get in on the action”. But of course, as they themselves acknowledge, piling on does not have to be motivated in this way. Our motivations for expressing outrage can be quite genuine. Nevertheless, piling on can still be vicious, because of its effect on the target of it. Jon Ronson (2015) discusses several cases of this, where people’s lives were devastated by large-scale public shaming in response to bad posts on social media.⁵ And he worries about this. If you say something offensive in person, your friends might pull you up on it. They might be annoyed, and have a word with you. That seems like an appropriate response, punishment, and repair. But if millions of people pile in, we risk a disproportionate response and punishment, with less hope of repair.

To make matters worse, people don’t just pile on, sometimes they *ramp up* the moral criticism. If we are using moral talk to impress others, we might be tempted to go even further than other people in denouncing some wrong.⁶

This feeds into a worry about *polarization*, both online and in our culture and politics more broadly.⁷ We are currently culturally and politically divided, and social media appears to be increasing this. This is a familiar complaint about conversations online, that we only talk to those we already agree with, and demonise those we don’t.⁸

In recent work, Thi Nguyen (2020) has drawn a distinction between *epistemic bubbles* and *echo chambers* here. He views an epistemic bubble as occurring when “relevant voices have been left out”, and an echo chamber when “relevant voices have been actively excluded and discredited” (Nguyen 2020: 141). Let’s unpack this a little.

An epistemic bubble is “*a social epistemic structure which has inadequate coverage through a process of exclusion by omission*” (Nguyen 2020: 143). These can form in well-meaning and less well-meaning ways. For friends can group together, as like-minded people who enjoy each other’s company. But, as Nguyen (2020: 143) notes, this can lead to coverage-gaps; “Friends make for good parties, but poor information networks.” Alongside this way that bubbles can form are more sinister cases, such as the way in which social media’s algorithms curate our online experiences. As Nguyen (2020: 144) notes, we do not have access to these algorithms, and we typically underestimate the extent to which what we see online has already been tailored for us.⁹

⁵ For further discussion of cyber mobs and public shaming, see Aly and Simpson (2019: 129-132).

⁶ For a basic overview of *ramping up*, see Tosi and Warmke (2020: 51-54). And for a full account of public shaming, which includes some examples of when it can be warranted or fruitful, see Fox (2020).

⁷ See Sunstein (2009).

⁸ See Turp (2020) for a thoughtful discussion of how we are more likely to treat others in an objectifying way online.

⁹ For discussion of trust and the opacity of algorithms, see McKinlay (2020).

In sum, the worry with an epistemic bubble is that, through omission, members of a community “will not receive all the relevant evidence, nor be exposed to a balanced set of arguments” (Nguyen 2020: 145).

Nguyen wants to distinguish such bubbles from a more insidious case, which he refers to as *echo chambers*.¹⁰ Echo chambers, so conceived are also epistemic communities, but ones which create “*a significant disparity in trust between members and non-members*” (Nguyen 2020: 145). The worry is not that members of an echo chamber do not encounter other views, the worry is that they seriously distrust these other views, and the people who hold them. Nguyen draws the distinction as follows:

Bubbles restrict access to outsiders, but don’t necessarily change their credibility. Echo chambers, on the other hand, work by offering a pre-emptive discredit towards any outside sources. (Nguyen 2020: 146)

Nguyen (2020: 147) points out that this is strikingly close to how indoctrination into a cult occurs. The members of an echo chamber (or cult):

[...] are not just cut off, but are actively alienated from any of the usual sources of contrary argument, consideration, or evidence. Members have been prepared to discredit and distrust any outside sources; thus, mere exposure to relevant outside information will have no effect. (2020: 147)

Nguyen also talks of *moral outrage porn* and the *gamification of communication online*. Moral outrage porn, unlike authentic moral outrage, “invites its users to seek simplified moral representations of the world, and to simplify their own moral beliefs in order to maximize the gratifications of outrage” (Nguyen and Williams 2020: 149). As for gamification:

it increases our motivation in an activity by narrowing and simplifying the target of that activity – which, in turn, changes the nature of that activity. (Nguyen forthcoming)

He notes that this can be fine if the activity has a simple target, such as the learning the days of a week in another language. when that’s the case there is no great harm in gamifying it. But crucially, this is not the case for communication, which does not have a simple target, and is not a game.

Nguyen contends that all of these things instrumentalize important aspects of our life:

Echo chambers instrumentalize our trust; moral outrage porn instrumentalizes our morality; and gamification instrumentalizes our goals. (Nguyen forthcoming)

¹⁰ Of course, these terms are not exclusively his. But he draws the distinction in this way. For what it is worth, I think Nguyen’s distinction is a good one though, but I’m not sure how naturally these terms fit this distinction. I suspect that, in everyday language, we treat ‘echo-chambers’ and ‘bubbles’ as relatively synonymous. Cf. Nguyen and Williams (2020: 150n3), where they say of their use of the term ‘porn’ that “We in no way mean to claim here that these usages perfectly track natural usages; we introduce them for the sake of brevity.”

He worries that:

All of these phenomena involve hedonistic instrumentalization, where we take an attitude or mental state and modify it away from its appropriate target in exchange for pleasure. (Nguyen forthcoming)

I agree with Nguyen's claim that these phenomena exist, and are troubling.

For what it's worth though, I'm not convinced by his thought that we are always motivated by pleasure to engage in them. I agree with him that these things are bad, but I suspect we can be motivated to behave badly in a plurality of different ways, and not just hedonistically. We might behave badly online, but do so in a non-pleasurable way; we might be deeply frustrated as we do so. I think human beings go wrong in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons, with a variety of different motivations, and not just through pleasure seeking.¹¹

But this is a point of minor disagreement. Nguyen's work draws our attention to different worrying cases online, and helps us see how problematic they are.

2. Being Better Online?

So what are we to do? One option is to log off, quit, and leave social media. I think there's a lot to be said for this. Simpson (forthcoming) offers a rich discussion of the ethics of quitting social media, and concludes:

We should be trying to make communication technology work in humanity's collective interests, more than it is currently, and [...] withdrawing from social media is one way to spur change (Simpson forthcoming: 18)

Simpson seems right here.

But it's also worth thinking about other ways to spur change. And for this, I want to address two questions. Firstly, is social media actually as bad as the philosophers in the previous section suggest? And secondly, how might we behave better online?

Let's begin, once more, with virtue signalling. There are bad ways to do this, which Tosi and Warmke draw our attention to. But as Neil Levy notes:

[...] every practice has its pathologies. To assess whether a practice should be condemned as a whole, we also need to identify any benefits it may have, measure the relative weights of its costs and benefits, and assess whether those benefits can be procured by some other, less, costly, route. (Levy 2021: 9547-48)

¹¹ For further discussion, see Saunders and Sticker (2022), where Martin Sticker and I make the case that Kant is wrong to think that all moral wrong-doing is motivated hedonistically or by self-love.

Levy then argues that publicly signalling one's values is not a perversion of moral discourse, but an important feature of it. In response to Tosi and Warmke, he makes the case that "a central function of moral discourse is signalling commitment to norms" (Levy 2021: 9555), and that given this:

Far from virtue signalling bypassing reasoning, it provides inputs into reasoning processes and leads to better justified beliefs. (Levy 2021: 9551)

Levy provides an alternative reading of what is happening online, one where we are engaging in important moral discourse. He also disagrees with Tosi and Warmke's cynicism about other people's motivations:

[...] in general people do not engage in public moral discourse in order to send these signals. No doubt some do, but the claim that this is routine or even common seems to be an expression of [...] cynicism about morality [...] and equally unmotivated. (Levy 2021: 9557)

Tosi and Warmke walk a fine line here, between just drawing our attention to a phenomena, and suggesting that it is widespread. They do acknowledge this, and even mention the *naïve cynicism* cognitive bias, where we typically assume others are more selfish than they are.¹² But, despite this self-awareness, I do think they tend towards cynicism. They claim: "Much of our discourse is so awful because it consists of moral grandstanding (Tosi and Warmke 2020: ix), and that "many of us do it regularly" (Tosi and Warmke (2020: 11)).¹³ But what is the evidence for that? For there are other credible explanations for why our discourse is so bad.

Levy has also put pressure on the claims that Tosi and Warmke make about polarization. He does not think that group polarization is obviously irrational, for:

There seems no a priori reason to think that the truth is more likely to lie in the middle of a group of deliberators (Levy 2021: 9550)

This seems right. The truth does not lie between climate change deniers and the science, the truth lies with the science. In this crucial case, "a commitment to impartiality seems to be in tension with holding power to account." (Ashton and Cruft 2021: 7)

Ashton and Cruft (2021) suggest an alternative explanation for increased polarization:

[...] we are tempted by explanations in terms of worsening material inequality, the broadening of the gap between rich and poor, and increased awareness of this gap. (Ashton and Cruft 2021: 4)

I am also tempted by this explanation. In the previous section, I remarked that we are culturally and politically divided. We are also increasingly economically divided. And I think this helps explain increases in polarization in certain cases (especially those related to

¹² See Kruger and Gilovich (1999), and Tosi and Warmke (2020: 77-82) for further discussion of moral cynicism

¹³ See also Tosi and Warmke (2020: 29; 74; 134) for more cases that strike me as cynical. On the other side of the line, see Tosi and Warmke (2020: 62) for cases where they appear to rein the cynicism in.

material inequality). But I'm not sure it fully explains the polarization we see online, especially on non-economic issues. For I do think social media is a mess. And presumably, we want to make sure good conversations are taking place online, and they often aren't.

I should note that there is some evidence that polarization of policy positions has not increased; see Levy (2021: 9551n6), where he surmises that "people dislike each other more than previously, but they are no further apart on the issues". On this, Ashton and Cruft contend that:¹⁴

[Social media] has created the impression of a sudden splintering of the public sphere, but the diversity of opinion and interests was always there. They were just not as visible to some people before social media reduced the barriers to contributing to the public sphere. (Ashton and Cruft 2021: 6)

What then are we to do?

One thought is that we ought to increase exposure to other views, to attempt to burst bubbles and hopefully reduce polarization. Nguyen worries about this though:

But [...] if what's going on is actually an echo-chamber effect, exposure is useless or worse. (Nguyen 2021: 152)

In response, he argues that in order to counteract echo chambers, we need more than exposure, we rebuild trust between their members and outsiders (Nguyen 2021: 158). And he provides a story that suggests how this might occur:

Derek Black, who was raised by a neo-Nazi father, groomed from childhood to be a neo-Nazi leader, and who became a teenaged breakout star of white nationalist talk radio.

[...] Black went to college and was shunned by almost everyone in his college community. But then Matthew Stevenson, a Jewish fellow undergraduate, began to invite Black to his Shabbat dinners. Stevenson was unfailingly kind, open, and generous, and he slowly earned Black's trust. This eventually led to a massive upheaval for Black – a slow dawning realization of the depths to which he had been systematically misled. Black went through a profound transformation and is now an anti-Nazi spokesperson. (Nguyen 2021: 158)

Of course, Stevenson was under no obligation to befriend Black. None of us face obligations to befriend Nazis.¹⁵ But Nguyen is interested in this case as an example of how we might loosen someone from the grip of an echo chamber. Gaining their trust, he argues, can help. Nguyen's focus is primarily epistemic, but there are also ethical aspects to this. For

¹⁴ Cf. Loh, Suphan and Zirning (2020: 92), who note that: "Instead of reducing fragmentation, the Internet and especially social media platforms merely replaces old fragmentations of public spheres with new ones." Ashton and Cruft (2021) for further discussion of whether we are seeing increased polarization, as well as critical discussion of popular narratives surrounding post-truth and new technology.

¹⁵ For a brief discussion of how we should treat Nazis, see (Olberding 2019: 14-15).

Stevenson helped Black through being good, through being “unfailingly kind, open, and generous”.

This takes us to our second question, namely how might we be better online?¹⁶

One place to start involves being aware of certain pitfalls, the sorts of things we looked at in the previous section – the ills of virtue signalling, piling on, ramping up, and so on – and looking to avoid them.

The other obvious place to start involves generally trying to be better, and here there’s not much to say that you don’t already know. Nguyen notes that Stevenson was kind, open and generous. And most of us could do better on these fronts. This also chimes with advice that other thinkers in this area give: calls to be a bit humbler, less rude, more open to listening to others,¹⁷ more understanding, charitable, and patient – the usual good things!

This is what being better involves, both online and off. And the fact that the literature in this area converges around these recommendations, and that they are familiar ones, is reassuring. So how can we be better online? Your grandparents could tell you: we should be kinder, listen more, and be more understanding.

3. Civility and Challenging Power

But is this missing the real issues? Is it bourgeois hang-wringing over politeness, while the world burns? I think this is a serious challenge. After all, the world is close to burning.

Tom Whyman sharpens this point, and drives it home with force:

But what on earth would be the point of insisting that—say—an oil executive, whose business and personal advancement are bound up in the ongoing destruction of the planet, probably has a good reason for behaving the way he [...] does? Why on earth should anyone take the time to listen to the various perceived grievances and disguised bigotries that this person would no doubt cite in order to justify his position? What’s the point of acknowledging our shared humanity with someone whose very existence compromises our survival as a species? According to Stanley, the key problem with “flawed ideologies” is that they prevent us from seeing how reality (including social reality) really is. Given everything, why shouldn’t we suppose that the current moral fetish of civility is just such a flawed ideology? (Whyman 2019)

¹⁶ Now perhaps even the asking of the question this way, and focussing upon *ethics* is a misguided, given that this seems to approach the issue at the level of *individuals* and not *systems*. However, as Aly and Simpson (2019: 139) note: “[...] taking a more structural perspective on how to address these concerns hardly makes things easier.”

¹⁷ For a good account of the virtue of listening, see Notess (2019).

I'm not exactly sure how to mention this, but there is a controversy about Tosi and Warmke's research. For it seems to be funded by a grant related to the oil giant Koch brothers.¹⁸ Of course, this doesn't mean that what they say is thereby wrong, or should be dismissed out of hand. But it does seem to be the sort of thing that makes Whyman wary about calls for civility.

Whyman offers more analysis and a suggestion:

Combating the civility fetish, then, does not simply mean giving way wholesale to rudeness and anger.¹⁹ Our thinking must be guided by material interest, but not in the name of self-assertion. We must instead seek real understanding, of our own position as well as everyone else's. [...] To our opponents, we must extend a deeper sort of charity than mere politeness—a charity strong enough to consider that there might be some instances in which, given everyone else's interests, certain people's views simply do place them beyond the moral pale, a place from which no direct argument can draw them back. (Whyman 2019)

What are we to make of this? I think Whyman is right to draw our attention to this challenge. For some views are beyond the pale, and our thinking should be guided – or at least informed – by material interests and conflict.

What else? Firstly, I think we should be careful about calling people beyond the pale and giving up on them. Perhaps Whyman is right that no *argument* can bring people back (the philosopher's dream!), but other things might – recall Nguyen's example of the neo-Nazi who responds well to kindness, openness and generosity.

Secondly, I think I disagree with Whyman when he concludes that:

[...] civility-for-civility's sake is little more than a pantomime of genuine moral inquiry. If civility can still be considered any sort of virtue, it must be a very shallow one. (Whyman 2019)

I'm not sure civility is shallow. Amy Olberding has convincingly made the case for the importance of civility, as a way of living the big values.

Olberding draws upon Confucian ethics, which acknowledges our deep dependence on each other.²⁰ How though, are we supposed to live in light of this, day to day? As she puts it:²¹

¹⁸ <https://dailynous.com/2021/05/26/koch-use-causes-rift-in-philosophy-department/>

¹⁹ Unfortunately, I don't have the space to address the politics of *anger* here. That's a shame, because Srinivasan (201) and Cherry (2018) have recently done some excellent work in this area.

²⁰ Sagar Sanyal worries about this, remarking that Confucian ethics is an ethics of the ruling class, and so perhaps it is no surprise that it calls for civility.

²¹ See also Olberding (2019: 69): "[...] there is a significant gap between acknowledging that I am a deeply social being and living as if it matters. It is rather easy and straightforward to intellectually acknowledge I need others. It is far more difficult to be governed by it in a robust and substantial way. For while ordinary life is pregnant with indications of our deep dependencies on others, what can or should it mean to walk around in the world with this truth? Some truths seem so deeply nested in the fundament of who and what we are that

[...] I have need of others, I depend on others, and I owe to others my very being and existence, but what does that mean when I run Monday's errands? (Olberding 2019: 69)

Confucian ethics, she tells us, recommends we live with good manners as a way of discharging these big values. In doing so, we honour our own sociality and what is finest in our humanity (Olberding 2019: 71). For,

[...] the accumulation of small manners, Xunzi would remind us, is no small matter.²² For it bears on whether we can welcome cooperation and community with others, or will instead find misanthropy appealing, enduring people where we must but avoiding them whenever we can. (Olberding 2019: 108)

Olberding encourages us to be humbler (2019: 73-82), more generous, respectful and considerate (2019: 86). In doing so, we temper what is worst in ourselves, and also invite others to respond in kind.

But is this naïve, as Olberding (2019: 138) worries, bringing a stick to a gun fight, or worse, showing up to a gun fight with no stick, but a smile? Personally, I'd rather not show up to a gun fight. But maybe that's missing the point, or avoiding the reality of our world. Perhaps a gun fight is taking place, or is about to, and we need to do something.

But why can't civility help? Olberding suggests it is neither naïve nor hopeless:

In the midst of much that is bad, it is all the more important to honor what is good and to struggle mightily to retain one's humanity. (Olberding 2019: 60)

Part of the issue concerns the environment we live in:

[...] a culture that treasures getting along, not making waves, and assiduously keeping interaction pleasant will discourage incivility even when it would be roundly righteous to let fly with some uncivil dissent. That, of course, is not the culture we inhabit. My worries are not that I will fail to be rude when I ought to be, but that I will be rude far more often than I should. (Olberding 2019: 137-38)

That seems right, and to capture how things often are online.

Olberding also objects to the thought that being civil means not dissenting:

One of the more lamentable developments in contemporary civic life is a propensity to conflate dissent and incivility, to treat dissent *as* incivility and ignore the myriad other forms dissent can take. (Olberding 2019: 138)

[...] there is a significant gap between acknowledging that some dissent is uncivil and assuming that dissent *requires* incivility. Much of what dissent can do – contest,

it is challenging to know how they ought operate at the surface of daily existence, how they can or should shop up in how we live."

²² Olberding (2019: 108) also quotes Richard Duffy here: "Trifles are unimportant, it is true, but then life is made up of trifles."

dispute, rebuke, admonish, assert alternatives, or even shame – can be done through civil means. (Olberding 2019: 139)

Indeed, she argues that “civility *can* be sharp, forceful, and pointed” (Olberding 2019: 142). Further:

In our current political climate, it is not obvious to me that incivility does enjoy more potency than civility. (Olberding 2019: 143)

Olberding, Aly and Simpson, and Whyman all worry that encouraging incivility might make things worse. Here’s Whyman:²³

But perhaps we ought to be wary of invoking this sort of divisive, even religiously minded, certainty as an antidote to the current fetish for civility. Even within academic philosophy, there would appear to be ample evidence that open incivility is likely to produce a discourse that is far, far worse. (Whyman 2019)

And Olberding (2019: 46) worries that the poor and those without social status will end up bearing the brunt of any lack of manners.²⁴ Aly and Simpson point out a structural element to this:

[...] insofar as these episodes lead to a wider degeneration of political discourse, the implications of that seem unlikely to aid progressive political causes. When people on all sides of politics are at risk of becoming the targets of mass outrage, it seems like the politics of hatred, xenophobia, and tradition has a competitive advantage over a politics of hope, inclusion, and social transformation. (Aly and Simpson 2019: 132)

So where does this leave us? The hope is that we can bring together the emphasis on civility with the urge and need to resist power and seriously change things.²⁵

One way of coming at this would be to distinguish between how we behave and the goals we pursue. Civility then, might tell us about how we ought to go about behaving, but could also leave open what political goals we want to work towards. I think we should be working towards mitigating the incoming climate crisis, alleviating poverty and upholding democracy (to name 3). And we can build towards these common goals, while attempting to remain humble, generous and respectful of our shared humanity.

But perhaps civility and these goals are more connected than this. After all, respecting and caring about others is part of the reason why we want to alleviate poverty, mitigate the climate crisis and protect democracy. Or, at the very least, we can try to achieve these goals while also trying to maintain our humanity. We just saw Aly and Simpson (2019: 132) note that, when it comes to the “degeneration of political discourse, [...] the politics of hatred,

²³ As a counterpoint, see Callard (2019), who makes the case for more fighting in philosophy. And see MacLachlan (2021: 190-94) for discussion.

²⁴ See also MacLachlan (2021: 188-89).

²⁵ See also Nguyen and Williams (2020: 168): “Both moral outrage and civility are vital”.

xenophobia, and tradition has a competitive advantage over a politics of hope, inclusion, and social transformation.” That is sad, but true. But perhaps there is a flipside to this, where the virtues of being kind, open, and understanding give us a competitive advantage in fixing this mess, and making a more humane society, both online and off.

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