It is truly an honour and pleasure to be able to deliver this lecture, and to be able to follow the speakers who have gone before me, speakers such as Walter Sisulu, Wole Soyinke, Edward Said and Noam Chomsky. My thanks to Jacques, to Max and to UCT for inviting me.

It is an honour, too, to be the fiftieth speaker in this great series. But being the fiftieth speaker raises an interesting question: Is there anything left to say about academic freedom that the 49 before me have not already said?

To appreciate why the debate about academic freedom is not yet exhausted, and probably never will be exhausted, we need to recognize two points. First, that while there is something special about the academy that requires freedom of speech, there is nothing that should make us privilege academic freedom above other forms of freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is a right, not a privilege. We need to defend academic freedom. But we need to recognize, too, that freedom of expression in the academy is intimately related to freedom of expression more widely in society. Our ability to defend academic freedom is intimately linked to our ability and willingness to defend freedom of expression more widely. So, I will talk today about the academy and academic freedom. But I will talk much more about the wider social context of free speech and the assault upon it.

And second, to defend free speech, whether in the academy or in society more widely, we need to know not simply why freedom of expression is important but also in what ways that freedom is being threatened. The importance of freedom of expression is broadly same now as it was when Albert van de Sandt Centlivres, the first TB Davie Memorial lecturer, took to the podium in 1959; indeed it is broadly the same as when John Milton in 1644 wrote *Areopagitica*, his famous ‘speech for the liberty of unlicenc’d printing’, and one of the greatest polemical tracts in defence of free speech.

But if the significance of free speech is much the same, the ways in which freedom of expression is threatened are very different now from the ways they were 50 years ago, even more from the ways they were 400 years ago. In different times, in different places, there exist different kinds of threats to free speech, needing different kinds of responses.

This is particularly important to appreciate today. One of the key points I want to make this afternoon is that not only are threats to free speech very different today, but we often do not recognize threats *as* threats. Contemporary hazards to free speech are often signposted as defences of freedom.

When people think of menaces to free speech, they think mostly of government censors, or of journalists being locked up or of violent responses such as the murderous attack earlier this year on the offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. These kinds of threats are, of course, hugely important, and it is imperative that we stand up to them. Especially as all too often we fail to do so, whether those threats emanate from Islamist groups or the censorious state.

But at least we usually recognize such threats as threats. There has developed over the past few decades, however, a new, more insidious, kind of censorship. Insidious because it is not often recognized as censorship. A kind of censorship that progressives often embrace as a good.

I‘ve spent much of the past twenty years discussing, debating and defending free speech. And one of the ironies I’ve found in doing so, is that few people are willing to say ‘I’m against free speech’ or ‘I think censorship is a good’. What most opponents of free speech say, instead, is ‘I’m for free speech. But…’ You can say what you like, they insist. Just don’t say anything that is offensive. Or hateful. Or might make people feel uncomfortable. Or provoke them. Or is irresponsible.

So over the past few years we have seen the growth of regulations and prohibitions against offensive speech. The spread of trigger warnings in universities. Campaigns against so-called ‘microaggression’, defined by the University of California as ‘brief, subtle verbal or nonverbal exchanges that send denigrating messages to the recipient because of his or her group membership’.

The predicament runs far deeper, however, than formal regulations or prohibitions. The real problem is that we have internalized those prohibitions. We have come to accept censorship not just because of external proscriptions, but also because of internal ones, because of a moral horror at the thought of offending others.

Self-censorship is, of course, something that we all practice to a degree. Most of us do not simply blurt out every thought that comes into our head, and most of seek to keep debates civil and polite. Without constant editing, neither coherent thought nor rational conversation would be possible.

But what I talking about here is not such forms self-editing that makes thinking and talking possible. It is rather *political* censorship that we have come to view as if it were a form of the essential self-editing necessary for thought and conversation.

It may be a small word – ‘but’ – but it carries a heavy burden when someone says ‘I’m for free speech but…’. For what the ‘but’ expresses is a major transformation in attitudes to free speech.

For much of the past half millennium, from the days of Milton’s *Areopagitica* or John Locke’s *Letter on Toleration,* freedom of expression was seen as not just as an important liberty, but as the very foundation of liberty. ‘Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties', wrote Milton, adding that 'He who destroys a good book destroys reason itself'.

Or as the black leader, and former slave, Frederick Douglass put it in his 'Plea for Free speech in Boston', a speech he delivered in 1860:

'Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants. It is the right which they first of all strike down. They know its power. Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, founded in injustice and wrong, are sure to tremble, if men are allowed to reason of righteousness, temperance, and of a judgment to come in their presence. Slavery cannot tolerate free speech.'

All progressive political strands that emerged through this period were wedded to the principle of free speech. All accepted that speech was an inherent good, the fullest extension of which was a necessary condition for the elucidation of truth, the expression of moral autonomy, the maintenance of social progress and the development of other liberties.

What the 'I'm for free speech but…' argument expresses is a challenge to this idea of free speech as an intrinsic good. For many progressives today, free speech is as likely to be seen as a threat to liberty as its shield. By its very nature, they argue, speech damages basic freedoms. Hate speech undermines the freedom to live free from fear. The giving of offence diminishes the freedom to have one's beliefs and values recognized and respected.

Speech, therefore, has to be restrained by custom, especially in a diverse society with a variety of deeply held views and beliefs, and censorship (and self-censorship) has to become the norm.

In fact, censorship has come to be seen as *more* than the norm. For many, censorship has come to be a progressive act, a means of protecting people, challenging power. Restrictions on hate speech protect those facing racism or homophobia or misogyny. Restrictions on offensive speech protect the dignity of powerless groups. The use of trigger warnings protect the emotionally vulnerable. And so on.

Traditional advocates of free speech also, of course, drew the line at various points and rarely pursued a principled attitude to free speech. Freedom of expression may have been seen as the foundation of liberty, but those advanced the idea also often restricted its scope. Such restrictions usually fell into two categories. Some related to the question of harm. Most advocates of free speech accepted that in certain circumstances speech could cause harm and so had to be restricted. The most celebrated expression of such a view came in a judgment given by the American Supreme Court judge Oliver Wendell Holmes who in 1919 pointed out that ‘The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic.’

What actually constitutes the political equivalent of yelling fire in a crowded theatre has been the matter of fierce debate. Politicians and policy makers have, over the years, cited a whole host of harms as reasons to curtail speech – threat to national security, incitement to violence, promotion of blasphemy, the undermining of morality or the spread of slander or libel. However thin may have been some of the reasons given for such censorship, there was nevertheless a broad acceptance that speech was an inherent good; and restrictions, however specious they might have seemed, were regarded as exceptions rather than the norm.

The second category of restrictions might be labeled simple hypocrisy: restrictions defended by advocates of free speech that flew in the face of their reasoned arguments for the importance of freedom of expression.

Milton, for instance, may have insisted that ‘the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience’ was more important than all other liberties. But it was not a liberty he was willing to extend to Catholics on the grounds that the Catholic Church was the biggest obstacle to the extension of freedom and liberty.

Similar views were held by John Locke. Locke is often seen as providing the philosophical foundations of liberalism and his *Letter Concerning Toleration* is a key text in the development of modern liberal ideas about freedom of expression and worship. Yet, Locke, like Milton, refused to extend toleration to either Catholics or atheists. Catholics, Locke wrote, ‘*ipso facto* deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince’; their opinions therefore run contrary to ‘the preservation of civil society’ and cannot be tolerated (an argument that was also made about Jews and Muslims). Locke was even harsher about atheists. Those ‘who *deny the being of a God’,* Locke insisted, are ‘not at all to be tolerated’. ‘The taking away of God, though but even in thought’, he wrote, ‘dissolves all’.

Hypocrisy has historically always been a central strand of liberal views on free speech. And it remains so today. Today, though, the notions both of harm and of hypocrisy have been radically transformed. Harm has come to be seen, not as it was in the past, as the occasional damage that might be done by ‘dangerous’ speech but as the everyday, constant effect of almost any kind of speech. This normalization of the idea of ‘harm’ can be seen in particular in universities.

Consider the growth of ‘trigger warnings’. The concept of ‘trigger warnings’ began in the 1970s in the treatment of people suffering from great trauma, initially Vietnam vets. Through such treatment emerged, too, the concept of the ‘post traumatic stress disorder’, or PTSD, which embodied the idea that for certain people the memory of a trauma always exists, lying just below the surface of consciousness, ready to be triggered. A ‘trauma trigger’ was an experience that was not in itself frightening or traumatic, but which helped unleash that underlying traumatic memory.

This idea was subsequently taken up by feminists. Feminist bloggers, in particular, would often preface a discussion about rape or sexual assault with a warning that the material discussed may trigger a post-traumatic stress reaction in women who had faced similar experiences.

Whether trigger warnings are useful even for those who have suffered great trauma is a matter of much debate among psychiatrists. Today, though, such warnings have been vastly extended to cover not just great trauma, but any material that might be upsetting or might make someone feel uncomfortable. Among content for which trigger warnings have been demanded, according to one list, are references to ‘misogyny, the death penalty, terrorism, drunk driving, how much a person weighs, racism, gun violence, drones, homophobia, PTSD, slavery, victim-blaming, abuse, swearing, child abuse, self-injury, suicide, descriptions of medical procedures, corpses, needles, discussion of ‘isms’, slurs (including ‘stupid’ or ‘dumb’), kidnapping, dental trauma, discussions of sex, spiders, insects, snakes, vomit, pregnancy, childbirth, blood, slimy things and holes.’

After which all one can say is, ‘Wouldn’t it be easier just to put a trigger warning on life itself?’

Trigger warnings are not forms of censorship per se. But the extension of the notion of ‘harm’, and the idea that almost any form of words or thoughts or ideas can be harmful, and that one must be routinely protected against the harm caused by words, have all helped undergird the culture of censorship.

Such an extension of the notion of harm has become almost routine in universities. The list of books or ideas that come with a health warning is quite extraordinary. For instance Oberlin College in America puts a trigger warning on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* because ‘it may trigger readers who have experienced racism, colonialism, religious persecution, violence, suicide, and more.’ Other books for which trigger warnings been imposed, or demanded, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, F Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*.

To extend the meaning of harm in this fashion is to eviscerate the meaning of the university. The university is a space for would-be adults to explore new ideas, to expand their knowledge, to interrogate power ,to learn how to make an argument. A space within which students can be challenged, even upset or shocked or made angry. It is, as the writer Jill Fillipovic has put it, ‘a place where the student's world expands and pushes them to reach the outer edges – not a place that contracts to meet the student exactly where they are.’

To be at a university is to accept the challenge of exploring one’s own beliefs and responding to disagreement. Trigger warnings, on the other hand, have become a way of short-circuiting uncomfortable, unpopular or unpalatable arguments. The reason that novelists or academics deal with issues such as racism or colonialism or misogyny is that these are real issues in the real world. One may be able to protect students from such experiences in the seminar room. One cannot protect them in the world outside, where such issues confront all of us without any warning signs attached. In the real world, all of us are forced, indeed in my view, morally obliged, to confront issues such as those of racism and homophobia and misogyny.

At the same time, trigger warnings, like regulations against the giving of offence, reinforces the idea that women or those from minority communities are inherently vulnerable, weak and ‘Other’. They help, in other words reinforce the very stereotypes that underlie much of the worldview of bigots.

If the idea of harm has been vastly expanded, the concept of hypocrisy has been greatly reduced. It is not because hypocrisy has disappeared. But the argument for censorship that flows from the 'I’m for free speech but…’ view proceeds not from hypocrisy, as did, say, Locke’s argument for not tolerating Catholics, but from a sense that censorship is a good.

For the proponents of the 'I’m for free speech but…’ view, censorship is not something that cuts against the grain of their basic principles. It is rather something that is nurtured by those principles, something intimately linked to the way in which many of today’s ‘progressives’ look upon free speech. Censorship is, for them, an essential tool in the struggle against injustice.

How did this transformation in attitudes to free speech come about? The answer lies in a number of different developments, perhaps the most important are the rise on the one hand, of identity politics, and, on the other, of what many call the ‘therapeutic society’.

In one sense ‘identity’ has always been an intimate part of political discourse. It is difficult to imagine politics without some reference to identity. Nationalism is a form of identity politics. Racial identities and class identities have clearly deeply shaped political debate.

But contemporary identity politics refers to something very different from old-fashioned politics of race or class or nation. However significant national or racial or class identities may have been, politics, in the past was shaped largely by attachment to particular ideologies. What shapes politics today is, to the contrary, the breakdown of old fashioned ideological politics.

Over the past three decades the very character of politics has transformed. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the left, the tarnishing of many liberation movements in the Global South, the demise of social movements in the West - all have helped transform political consciousness. The broad ideological divides that characterised politics in the past two hundred years have been all but erased.

In the global South, from Algeria to India, from Bangladesh to Turkey, from Egypt to South Africa, the organizations that led struggles for freedom from colonialism, or the ideologies that claimed to represent the identity of the free nation, have become senile or corrupted. People are becoming, or have become, disaffected with the old order. The new opposition movements that have emerged to give voice to that disaffection are often rooted in religious or ethnic identity, often sectarian or separatist in form.

In the old nations of Europe, too, we can see this combination of popular estrangement from the old political order and the fragmentation of opposition to it. Here disaffection has found home in populist anti-immigration movements, or in regional and separatist groups.

Once the left embodied a universalist vision. From well before the Enlightenment, radicals challenging inequality and oppression did so in the name of universal rights. Radicals insisted that equal rights belonged to all and the there existed a set of values and institutions, under which all humans best flourished. It was a universalism that fuelled the great radical movements that have shaped the modern world – from the almost-forgotten but hugely important Haitian Revolution of 1791, to the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles of the twentieth century to the movement for women's suffrage to the battles for gay rights, indeed to the struggle against apartheid.

Today, the relationship between radicalism and universalism is very different. Radicals often decry universalism as a Eurocentric project, a viewpoint that is itself imbricated with the poison of racism, chauvinism and particularism.

There are a number of reasons for this transformation. The Europe of the Enlightenment was also the Europe of imperialism. If Europe was responsible for the enslavement of more than half the world, many asked, what worth could there be in its political and moral ideas, which at best had had failed to prevent that enslavement, at worst had provided its intellectual grounding? Did not those challenging European imperialism also need to challenge European ideas? These were questions that became ever more urgent as the peoples of Africa and Asia, and migrants and descendants of slaves, too, started developing their own voices through literary and political movements from the Harlem Renaissance to the African National Congress.

Over time, opposition to European rule came increasingly to mean opposition to European ideas, too. European ideas, many insisted, were tainted because they were a means of effecting European power. The ideals that flowed out of the Enlightenment, however progressive they might seem, could not, the critics insisted, be wielded by those challenging European rule. They grew out of a particular culture, history, and tradition, they spoke to a particular set of needs, desires and dispositions.

Non-Europeans, many argued, had to develop their own ideas, beliefs and values that grew out of their own distinct cultures, traditions, histories, psychological needs and dispositions. Out of these claims came a host of separatist movements that set out to hew political, cultural and moral traditions distinct from those of Europeans, movements that ranged from Garveyism to Negritude to Black Power.

The struggle for black rights in America in the 1960s was highly influential in developing ideas both of black self-organization and black identity, and of promoting, in the words of black power activist Julius Lester, ‘the recognition of those things uniquely ours which separate ourselves from the white man.’

It was highly influential, too, in nurturing these ideas in a host of other communities. Using the template established by black power activists, many other groups, from Native Americans to women, from gays to Muslims, insisted on their own particular cultures, identities and ways of thinking. ‘The demand is not for inclusion within the fold of ‘universal humankind’ on the basis of shared human attributes’, as the feminist and sociologist Sonia Krups put it; ‘nor is it for respect “in spite of one’s differences”. Rather, what is demanded is respect for oneself as different.’

Whereas in the past, identity had been directly linked to the project of social transformation, now the politics of identity demanded recognition as an end in itself. ‘Stripped of a radical idiom’, as the American critic Russell Jacoby has put it, ‘robbed of a utopian hope, liberals and leftists retreat in the name of progress to celebrate diversity.’ Difference, Jacoby concludes, ‘has become… the ideology of an era without ideology.’

The result of all this is that solidarity has become increasingly defined not in political terms – as collective action in pursuit of certain political ideals – but in terms of ethnicity or culture. The answer to the question ‘In what kind of society do I want to live?’ has become shaped less by the kinds of values or institutions we want to establish, than by the group or tribe to which we imagine we belong. People have come to understand values less in terms of ideals than in terms of identity.

What has all this to do with free speech? The argument for free speech, as it developed from the seventeenth century on, was, as we have seen, as the very foundation of liberty. And it was regarded as the foundation of liberty because of the acceptance of a universalist vision of political norms and moral values. The acceptance that rights are universally held and that all humans best flourish under the same kinds of values, institutions, forms of governance.

From this perspective, the importance of free speech is that it creates the conditions necessary to think through problems, whether political, social, moral or personal. The conditions necessary to expand one’s own horizons, to understand the viewpoint of others, to open up our own viewpoint for challenge, to be able to engage in the kind of political and social dialogue that can help create a more universal language of citizenship.

What identity politics expresses is the breakdown of the universalist vision. The acceptance instead of the idea that every group has its own culture, values and ways of being. And that universalism is the imposition of an alien, indeed racist, viewpoint.

From this perspective, free speech, the ability to expand and universalise experience, to question that which is seen as unquestionable, can often appear as a threat. And censorship can provide a means to shore up the broken barriers, and to exclude unwanted, unacceptable or threatening views and values.

In the past, progressive politics was rooted in the notion that every human being was capable of deploying his or her practical reason or moral sense to live an authentic live as an individual. It was a belief that helped anchor in the modern world the idea of moral autonomy. The politics of identity has appropriated the language of authenticity to describe ways of living that are true to the supposed characteristics of distinct social groups. This in turn has led to the demand that one must respect different beliefs and cultures as authentic ways of being for different people. It is a demand that turns on its head notions of respect and autonomy.

In its traditional (Kantian) sense, respect requires us to treat every human being equally as a moral, autonomous being. Every individual possesses the capacity to express political and moral views and to act upon them. And every individual is responsible for their views and actions and is capable of being judged by them. Freedom of expression is an expression of individual moral autonomy, of the capacity of people to engage in a robust debate about their beliefs and their actions – and to bear the consequences.

The demand from identity is that we should respect not just the person *qua* person but also his or her beliefs. It’s a demand that undermines individual autonomy, both by constraining the right of people to criticise others’ beliefs and by insisting that individuals who hold those beliefs are too weak or vulnerable to stand up to criticism, satire or abuse. Far from according them respect, the politics of identity treats people less as autonomous beings than as vulnerable victims needing special protection.

This tendency has been exacerbated by another key development of recent years: the rise of what has been called the ‘therapeutic society’ or ‘therapeutic culture’. These phrases have come to describe a society in which social problems are increasingly regarded as psychological ones, and social change viewed more through the medium of individual therapy than of collective action.

In the 1960s the American sociologist and cultural critic Philip Rieff coined the phrase ‘the triumph of the therapeutic’ to describe the way that psychiatric ideas had become part of the common coin of everyday life. Since then a series of very different thinkers on both left and right, from Thomas Szaz to Christopher Lasch to Russell Jacoby to Frank Furedi, have explored the ways in which a therapeutic sensibility has come to be the means through which people mediate their social relations.

For Rieff, therapy had taken the place of religious faith. For many of the more recent thinkers the therapeutic sensibility has come to fill the place created by the erosion of *the social.* In recent years many of the mediating institutions of social life – from trade unions, to religious organization to political parties – have crumbled. The informal social networks, whether of family or of friends, that used to provide individuals with both meaning and support have often eroded too. People experience society in a far more atomized fashion. At the same time the old barriers between the public sphere and the private sphere have become highly porous.

Theorists of therapeutic society suggest that today people find meaning and affirmation in settings that are both more individualized and more public, from self-help groups to self-disclosure TV, from professional therapy to social media. One of the consequences of these shifts, they argue, is to exacerbate the sense of the individual as weak and vulnerable, of the world as a dangerous place and of other people as potential threats.

The relationship between therapeutic society and identity politics is highly complex and beyond what I can address in this talk. But there are a number of points worth making. First, the same kind of social changes have given rise to both, in particular the breakdown of ideological politics and the erosion of broader social identities. Second, the therapeutic idea of the individual as weak and vulnerable has reinforced the tendency to normalize harm, to perceive all words as threatening, and to insist that people need protecting from offence, which has come to be regarded as an existential thereat to one's identity and self.

And third, we can see how in the marriage of identity politics and the therapeutic society, the very character of free speech has become transformed. In a world in which many reject the possibility – indeed the desirability – of common values and goals; in which the prospects of fundamental social transformation seem to have ebbed away; in which societies have become more fragmented and identities more parochial; in which words can appear not as a means through which to find our common humanity but as constant threats to our self-identity; in which there is a tendency to deprecate the idea of moral autonomy and to view the human individual as vulnerable and damaged and in need of protection – in such a world, it is not difficult to see how censorship, the means through which to restrain the power of words, can become transformed into a good.

At the roots of the contemporary transformation of attitudes to free speech, lies then a transformation in the ways in which we view ourselves as human beings, our relationships to each other, and our vision of what it is to live in a society. To defend free speech, and to oppose censorship, is at heart to defend an essential vision of what it is to be human.

Let me finish, then, by remaking the case for free speech as a universal good. At the heart of the argument for censorship as progressive, and of the giving of offence as a cultural and moral wrong, is, as I have suggested, the belief that a plural society places particular demands on speech, and that speech must necessarily be less free in such a society. For diverse societies to function and to be fair, so the argument runs, we need to show respect not just for individuals but also for the cultures and beliefs in which those individuals are embedded and which helps give them a sense of identity and being.

This requires that we police pubic discourse about those cultures and beliefs both to minimise friction between antagonistic cultures and beliefs and to protect the dignity of those individuals embedded in them. As the British sociologist Tariq Modood has put it, that ‘If people are to occupy the same political space without conflict, they mutually have to limit the extent to which they subject each others’ fundamental beliefs to criticism.’

It’s an argument that seems to me fundamentally to misunderstand both the nature of diversity and the relationship between pluralism and free speech. When we say that we live in a diverse society, what we mean is that it is a messy world out there full of clashes and conflict. And that is all for the good, for it is out of such clashes and conflicts that cultural and political engagement emerges. Or to put it another way, diversity is important, not in and of itself, but because it allows us to break out of our culture-bound boxes, by engaging in dialogue and debate and by putting different values, beliefs and lifestyles to the test.

But the very thing that is valuable about diversity – the cultural and ideological clashes that it brings about – is precisely what so many people fear. Diversity may be a good, they argue, but it has to be policed to minimise the clashes and conflicts and frictions that it brings in its wake. The imposition of moral and legal restraints on being offensive is one form of such policing.

I take the opposite view. It is precisely because we *do* live in plural societies that we need the fullest extension possible of free speech. In plural societies, it is both inevitable and important that people offend the sensibilities of others. *Inevitable*, because where different beliefs are deeply held, clashes are unavoidable. Almost by definition such clashes express what it is to live in a diverse society. And so they should be openly resolved than suppressed in the name of ‘respect’ or ‘tolerance’. And *important* because any kind of social change or social progress means offending some deeply held sensibilities. Or to put it another way: ‘You can’t say that!’ is all too often the response of those in power to having their power challenged. To accept that certain things cannot be said is to accept that certain forms of power cannot be challenged. Human beings, as Salman Rushdie has put it, ‘shape their futures by arguing and challenging and saying the unsayable; not by bowing their knee whether to gods or to men.’

The notion of giving offence suggests that certain beliefs are so important or valuable to certain people that they should be put beyond the possibility of being insulted, or caricatured or even questioned. The importance of the principle of free speech is precisely that it provides a permanent challenge to the idea that some questions are beyond contention, and hence acts as a permanent challenge to authority. This is why free speech is essential not simply to the practice of democracy, but to the aspirations of those groups who may have been failed by the formal democratic processes; to those whose voices may have been silenced by racism, for instance. The real value of free speech, in other words, is not to those who possess power, but to those who want to challenge them. And the real value of censorship is to those who do not wish their authority to be challenged.

The right to ‘subject each others’ fundamental beliefs to criticism’ is the bedrock of an open, diverse society. Once we give up such a right in the name of ‘tolerance’ or ‘respect’, we constrain our ability to challenge those in power, and therefore to challenge injustice.

At the heart of this argument is the insistence that any form of progressive politics requires us to overcome, rather than embrace, the barriers of identity.

That it requires us to work towards a more universalist vision of society. And that only free speech makes this possible. Free speech – proper, full-blooded free speech – is the lifeblood of any progressive politics and of any progressive transformation of society. If we treasure the one, we must treasure the other.