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The enemy is
SILENCE
not
BEING OFFENDED



Birds of a feather flock together and so do we. Often, we find ourselves surrounded by those who share our views and opinions. If we're in a position of power, those who work for us will often feel obliged to at least pretend to agree. This almost ubiquitous fear of offending people has the unfortunate effect of making people repress what they truly think or feel.

When people feel they have no choice but to retreat into their own silos and bubbles it kills the chance of exposure to differing points of view or ways of life. This is ironic when the key to making people feel comfortable is actually through the very same exposure people have come to be wary of. When people talk about difficult subjects, even if they do so with negative emotional charge, a seed is planted. Growth and experimentation lead to an opening of horizons and an acceptance of lifestyles that are foreign or different.

It is difficult to identify normality when the subject requires special treatment. The level of difficulty often leads to diminished engagement, resulting in the necessity to ask difficult questions to establish what people really want. Do people want to be embraced just like everybody else or do they want to be treated differently? If the answer is the former, then it makes sense that the anxiety some people feel when engaging with others is misplaced. If we fear offending others, how can we begin to engage in authentic relationships with them?

Yes, there is a difference between good and bad intent but villainising people for treating people normally (which includes the risk of offence) is counterintuitive and puts such a massive psychological wedge between people. If inclusion truly is the goal, then we are not going to get there with fear and distrust. Instead, a path that is paved with exposure and conversations, of both the difficult and more comfortable kinds, will cultivate an environment for frank and open discussion without fear of retribution, leading to true and honest inclusion.

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