

Ms Diana Durham, poet and writer—written evidence (FE00023)

House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee – Inquiry into freedom of expression online

- 1. Is freedom of expression under threat online? If so, how does this impact individuals differently, and why? Are there differences between exercising the freedom of expression online versus offline?**

Yes, freedom of expression is under threat online. Currently the freedom of conservative thinkers particularly of course in America, has been censored. Shutting down the online accounts of an acting Republican President of the US, elected by over 70 million citizens, is the most extreme example, combined with the bias in the mainstream media, which tells only one side of the story. Additionally, an alternative venue to those shut out, Parler, has been destroyed by the monopoly that Facebook, Twitter, Google and Apple have chosen to exercise. The freedom of expression of those who hold traditional views of biology, gender, sexual identity, Christian values, is also under threat, due to the loosely worded and over-proliferating Hate Crime Legislation (which urgently needs dismantling and tightening up) combined with the 'woke' illiberal/liberal cultural Marxist views of the Big Tech companies. And the freedom of expression of writers, academics and many others who view British history and its legacies as cultural realities to be proud of, is also under threat, due again to the Woke bias in the Big Tech companies, combined with the similar viewpoints in many universities, companies, and cultural institutions.

- 2. How should good digital citizenship be promoted? How can education help?**
- 3. Is online user-generated content covered adequately by existing law and, if so, is the law adequately enforced? Should 'lawful but harmful' online content also be regulated?**

Should be considered in terms not of masses more regulations, but of the need to allow more traditional, conservative views, including accurate accounts of history, rigorous study of Literature, with some philosophy added, to be promoted so that young people are no longer brought up in such ignorance, relying solely on the likes of Google and their equally ignorant peers to inform them.

- 4. Should online platforms be under a legal duty to protect freedom of expression?**
- 5. What model of legal liability for content is most appropriate for online platforms?**

Yes. Or at least, subject to the legal definitions that already govern Slander and Libel.

- 6. To what extent should users be allowed anonymity online?**

They should be allowed anonymity if they wish it, within the restrictions of above answer.

7. How can technology be used to help protect the freedom of expression?

As above.

8. How do the design and norms of platforms influence the freedom of expression? How can platforms create environments that reduce the propensity for online harms?

Again, the answer/issue is not so much technical as it is cultural. Moral values have to be allowed expression.

9. How could the transparency of algorithms used to censor or promote content, and the training and accountability of their creators, be improved? Should regulators play a role?

They need regulators, but not idiot ones. Their regulators should be very well educated in philosophy, history, literature, know how to think for themselves, and articulate and use language skillfully and accurately.

10. How can content moderation systems be improved? Are users of online platforms sufficiently able to appeal moderation decisions with which they disagree? What role should regulators play?

As above. It's the humans, not the algorithms that need help.

11. To what extent would strengthening competition regulation of dominant online platforms help to make them more responsive to their users' views about content and its moderation?

I'm not sure what is meant by 'competition regulation of dominant online platforms'. If it means making it easier for others to set up alternative platforms, I think it is essential.

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