

The right to disagree

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The Observer commentator Nick Cohen is not much loved by many on the left it seems to me. That's because he is a liberal. But as one astute academic observer of my work noted a while ago, I might be on the left, but there is quite a lot of liberalism within what I write, and even how I run this site - where despite the trolls' claims most get a run for their money before they get banned and then not due to what they say, but for repeating the only idea that they have, quite often.

Let me be clear what I mean by a liberal. It is a person willing to respect or accept behaviour or opinions different from one's own and who is open to new ideas. Any democrat has to be that. It is a pre-condition for being so in my opinion, but you can disagree.

A liberal can disagree with another liberal, of course. They can do so noisily. They can accuse others of not telling the truth. They can want to win the argument. But as Cohen [has argued today](#), there is now a real crisis for liberals. That crisis is that it is no longer acceptable to disagree in very many circles, which as he notes is just as much a problem on the left as it is on the right. I can confirm that I know from very personal experience that this is true.

All of this reminded me of a Jonathan Pie video from earlier this year, which was intensely laden with genuinely liberal thinking:

<https://youtu.be/j6oGBA8RPK8>