

Being polite to those intent on harm is not morally nec...

Published: January 13, 2026, 11:15 am

I liked this comment from [Dr David Berger in the British Medical Journal](#):

Too often in this pandemic, reasoned dissent in social media has been met by accusations of “disrespect”, “professional discourtesy” or “bullying” by squadrons of tone police whose real purpose is to mute the critical message, rather than to maintain genteel standards of discourse.

In the Taoist hierarchy of moral values, kindness sits above justice, which itself sits above ritual, the lowest category, and the one in which “politeness” is to be found. It is not the highest virtue to be polite to people who you believe are doing serious harm through their negligence or incompetence. [1] While politeness is not to be discarded out of hand, neither should it take precedence over kindness to one’s fellow beings by attempting to protect them. If harsh words or actions are necessary to prevent harm, if the actions of some have moved so far beyond the moral sphere as to no longer be worthy of the etiquette of the salon, then so be it. The duty of the moral being is to do whatever it takes to do the right thing to prevent the world burning, not to be polite at all costs to the arsonists as they continue to set fires.

So very true. I have had enough of the pearl-clutching, hate-inducing commentators who scream foul whenever they think their sensibilities have been offended whilst they go about trashing everything of real value in this world.

David Barger is right to have spoken out against this form of oppression.