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Freedom isn't free [1]

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On Monday evening the Oxford Union (OU) held [3] a forum on free speech titled, "*A Night of Discussion on Free Speech*". Many of you may well be under the illusion that it was about something completely different due to the media coverage. Two of the speakers they chose were Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP and David Irving, the historian; both have a very close relationship to free speech.

They hold views that the majority of rational people would find distasteful. Irving has denied the scale of the Holocaust, whilst Griffin believes that immigrants (especially non?whites) should be returned to their homelands (we?ll leave aside the wide?ranging socialism of his party for now). They were not given a platform to vent on these issues though, and I suspect that even if they had then many in the audience would have easily deflated their arguments.

The alarmist nature of the media ? mainly based on the shrill of those who despise different ideas and views being placed in the public domain ? has, as always, meant that a logical and rational debate on free speech has had to be put aside. We should all be able to protect ourselves against the misuse of free speech. It is after all not a granted right; it is inalienable. The faith in our abilities should not be handed over to the government so that they may grant us the privilege of hearing, reading and seeing what they deem to be right. That is the path down which many of those bemoaning the invitation of those two speakers wish to take us. People are free to speak, as we are all free not to listen. We must have faith in all to ignore those with a message of hate.

The OU should be applauded for having the courage to specifically invite those two speakers to debate. They should be supported for believing that the students in attendance are rational and intelligent enough to make up their own minds.

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