Twitter Thread by Ian Dunt

Ian Dunt
@IanDunt

This view that only government's can censor, that only state agents coming to your house and slapping something over your mouth counts as limiting free speech, really needs to be tackled.

The oddest part is that's it's generally the left which seems most content to let private companies wield extraordinary power over who can speak and how.

There are all sorts of legitimate reasons to limit free speech. Right now we are seeing one of them with Trump - to prevent incitement to violence and a threat to the functioning of democracy. But it is still censorship.

We need to be clear that that is what it is, rather than limiting our definition of censorship to the smallest range of actions conceivable.

This is not a new idea. Benjamin Constant, Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill were treating the silencing which comes from society as equivalent, or more dangerous, than that of the state hundreds of years ago.

Redefining censorship as state-only is like winding back the maturity and sophistication of liberal thought back to the pre-Napoleonic era.

The other distinction which needs to be made is between a social media site like Twitter, which really has become equivalent to the public square - a key part of civic life - and a publication like a magazine.

Being booted from one is not equivalent in effect, even if it might be in cause, from being booted from another.

Anyway more thoughts on this - mostly questions rather than answers - here https://t.co/9KW6GIGhm8