Twitter Thread by Pete Wharmby



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Once again I'm reminded that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The recent push by a large number of autistic people to 'own' their diagnosis and try to raise acceptance and dispel harmful myths has kicked up a minority of autistic people to fight against this.

This may seem bizarre - who fights against improved acceptance? - but actually has clear roots in the ongoing culture war the West seems engaged in. The identity positive autistic movement, of which I am a part, is viewed by some as another manifestation of 'wokeness'.

This is the right-wing definition of 'wokeness', of course - ie a modern equivalent of the pejorative take on political correctness, but it's definitely at the core of this 'neurorealist' movement - the idea the autistic community is being hijacked by 'woke lefties'.

They believe that the push for acceptance of neurodiversity and rejection of the medicalisation of autism is misguided and drawing attention away from those autistic people who, in their view, need more help and intervention.

The trouble is, this view is pretty much baseless. Firstly, there is little evidence that autistic advocates who push for acceptance are in any way harming autistic people who require more help and support. Second, the view effectively silences those of us who are able to share.

The argument seems to be, if you're capable of actively advocating, then you're not really autistic - at least not autistic *enough* for your opinion to matter. This is an obvious nonsense in itself, as it is so generalised as to be useless to anyone, but also ignores key things.

For example, it assumes that autistic people who can advocate online in text are somehow highly capable generally. This is simply not true. Many of us are acutely affected by being autistic, fighting executive function issues, massive anxiety and depression.

Autistic advocates online are *online*. There's a reason the movement has only managed to take off since the development of social media - it gives those of us with communication disabilities an opportunity to speak. These 'neurorealists' deny us that.

They claim the very act of advocacy shows we can't speak for those we advocate for, which causes a serious logical regression that ultimately means no one can ever advocate for anyone. They know this, or at least i hope they do. But they don't care.

This is because their agenda is simply to squash any sign of progressive identity politics, because it goes against their political ideology, as far as I can tell. There are other motivations - shady links to ABA and the 'autism mom' phenomenon (there's a *lot* of money there.)

But ultimately there's just an intolerance of autistic people taking control of the narrative; a hatred of the idea that autism could just be another way of being. Insistance it is a disease, an illness that ruins lives.

I could go on but frankly it's exhausting. I've got most of these people blocked or muted as they rarely argue in good faith. If anyone wants to add to this to fill out my points, please do - I'm not the font of all knowledge on this!

Just so you know, my feelings towards these individuals are pretty strong. They've caused me personally a lot of misery over the last few years, but that's nothing compared to the cumulative harm they've done to the autistic community. I really don't like them.

The takeaway here is that not all autistic people view 'neurodiversity' as a good thing. Also, that not all autistic people argue in good faith. I've been accused of not being autistic by more other autistic people than non-autistic folk, and that's disturbing to me.

We autistics can have a tendency - and it's rooted in positivity - to idealise our community and blame neurotypicals for our ills. But it's not as simple as that.