Twitter Thread by Megan McArdle



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... which is why the Times, like other major newsrooms, should tell their employees to get off Twitter entirely:

https://t.co/JpQvjBN0Mz

(Yes, I am tweeting this. Enjoy the delicious irony. No, really, sit with it for a moment. Roll around, until your skin tingles from its mildly caustic properties.)

(I am now on a Twitter campaign to get major institutions, including my employer, to tell employees to get off Twitter. I don't expect it to work. But a girl's gotta try.)

(Given that I am a right-wing columnist, in an overwhelmingly left-wing industry, people are bound to be suspicious of my motives. *Mutter/cough/something something et tu cancel culture?* Understandable. However ...)

Ironically, my conclusion was not inspired by conservatives complaining about "cancel culture". It was inspired by conservative editors and other institutional leaders of my acquaintance complaining about the corrosive effect Twitter was having on their institutions.

Professional institutions are delicate creatures. They function because they have a common ethos, hell a telos, towards which everyone is working, and everyone's professional energies are ultimately channeled towards that joint product.

That's true even if you don't have an explicit ideological project; you still have a common "corporate culture", which matters A LOT.

Obviously that's an ideal--there are always principal-agent problems in any employment relationship, people trying to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the whole, or push their pet projects even if fulfilling them would be a disaster for the institution ...

But Twitter reportedly made this much worse. People started treating their workplaces like hotels where they parked while they engaged in their personal brand-building exercise on Twitter.

Any attempt to refocus employees on the needs of the institution bogged down in endless adjudications of superficially similar behaviors that were treated differently ... "Why does Mommy love Joey more than me?"

And I guess this is where I am fundamentally conservative: I think institutions matter a lot. I think virtually every staffer at a major newsroom or thinktank or other professional group is getting more out of their group than the group is getting out of them.

The sum is greater than the parts. It is a mistake to let that sum disaggregate into a dozen or a hundred or a thousand parts, which is what Twitter tends to do.

I don't want the government to ban it, to be clear, and I think Twitter itself should strive for viewpoint neutrality

But I think major institutions should also strive for viewpoint neutrality by telling everyone to get off Twitter, rather than taking on the impossible job of "retroactive social media editor" where people are disciplined or fired after the fact for crossing a dim and wavy line.

Anyway, thanks for reading, as usual, this is just a little teaser for a column that makes the point in much more depth. That column is here and I urge you to read it: https://t.co/JpQvjBN0Mz