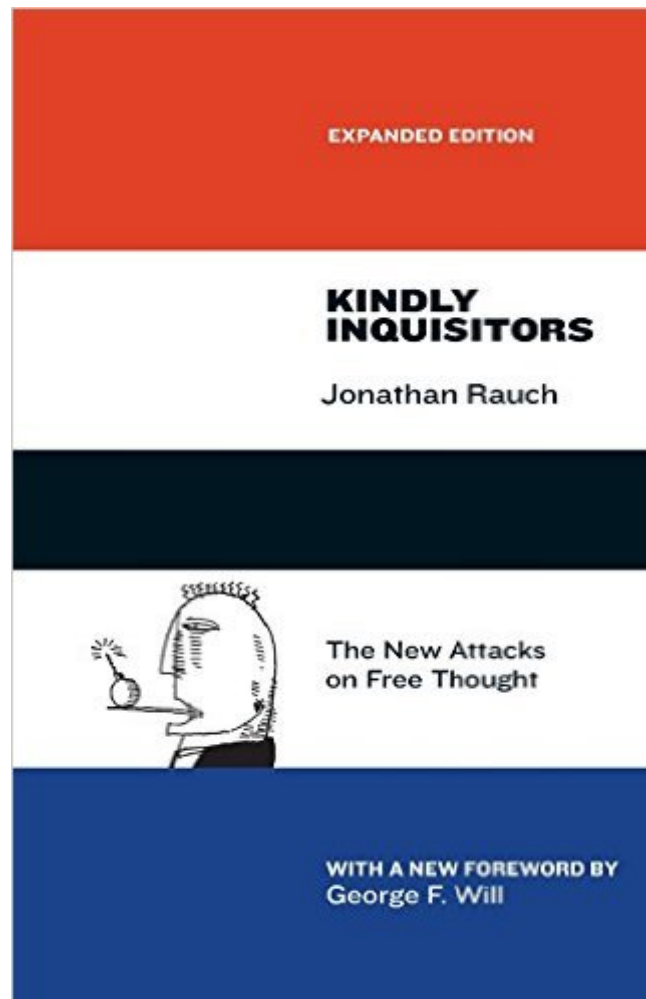


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Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks On Free Thought, Expanded Edition



Synopsis

A liberal society stands on the proposition that we should all take seriously the idea that we might be wrong. This means we must place no one, including ourselves, beyond the reach of criticism; it means that we must allow people to err, even where the error offends and upsets, as it often will. So writes Jonathan Rauch in *Kindly Inquisitors*, which has challenged readers for more than twenty years with its bracing and provocative exploration of the issues surrounding attempts to limit free speech. In it, Rauch makes a persuasive argument for the value of liberal science and the idea that conflicting views produce knowledge within society. In this expanded edition of *Kindly Inquisitors*, a new foreword by George F. Will strikingly shows the book's continued relevance, while a substantial new afterword by Rauch elaborates upon his original argument and brings it fully up to date. Two decades after the book's initial publication, while some progress has been made, the regulation of hate speech has grown domestically—especially in American universities—and has spread even more internationally, where there is no First Amendment to serve as a meaningful check. But the answer to bias and prejudice, Rauch argues, is pluralism—not purism. Rather than attempting to legislate bias and prejudice out of existence or to drive them underground, we must pit them against one another to foster a more vigorous and fruitful discussion. It is this process that has been responsible for the growing acceptance of the moral acceptability of homosexuality over the last twenty years. And it is this process, Rauch argues, that will enable us as a society to replace hate with knowledge, both ethical and empirical. It is a melancholy fact that this elegant book, which is slender and sharp as a stiletto, is needed, now even more than two decades ago. Armed with it, readers can slice through the pernicious ideas that are producing the still-thickening thicket of rules, codes, and regulations restricting freedom of thought and expression. —George F. Will, from the foreword

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Customer Reviews

Jonathan Rauch is an excellent writer, and I am definitely part of the choir for his argument that speech restrictions, especially on college campuses, are a perversion not just of the ostensible purposes of our colleges, but of any kind of liberal or scientific thought. Despite my agreement with his arguments, I gave this book only 3 stars because I felt that it provided me with little new information, and would have no effect on those who are urging "speech codes". As I read, I kept thinking of Amadeus, when the Emperor explained to Mozart what was wrong with his latest composition: "Too many notes." In this, too many words. The problem is that those who favor "speech codes" have long since concluded that theirs is the only right view, and that those who feel otherwise are either evil, or stupid, or both. Or, as Rauch says, are latter-day Fundamentalists, with whom it is pointless to argue, Try reading the lonely one-star review for a reasoned rebuttal to Rauch's thesis. So what's the value of a long intellectual argument? Nor is this anything new. As Nat Hentoff noted in "Free Speech for Me, but Not for Thee", written just over 20 years ago, both Left and Right have been trying to censor the other side for years. And universities have long been known for their leftish bias. Many years ago, when I was in college, official censorship was not yet in vogue, but even the least perceptive of students was careful in what he said in class, or wrote as an exam answer. All that has really changed is that the onslaught of "victimization" studies at the universities has provided an excuse for campus-wide censoring of Wrong Speech enforced by administrators who too well remember the fate of Larry Summers at Harvard..

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