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# BOYCOTTS, EXPRESSIVE ACTS, AND WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT

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A COMMENTARY ON Alan Tomhave and Mark Vopat (2018), “The Business of Boycotting: Having Your Chicken and Eating it Too,” *J Bus Ethics* 152: 123–132, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3336-y>

## ABSTRACT

Alan Tomhave and Mark Vopat have argued that organized boycotts against the expressive acts of companies and their leaders are pro tanto morally wrong because they constitute an attempt to silence voices in the marketplace of ideas. I argue that such boycotts are not best viewed as attempts to silence, but rather as a morally permissible form of withdrawal of support of certain expressive acts.

IN “THE BUSINESS of Boycotting: Having Your Chicken and Eating it Too,” Alan Tomhave and Mark Vopat (2018) argue that certain boycotts are pro tanto morally wrong. They focus primarily on *organized* (as opposed to merely individual) boycotts against the *expressive* acts (as opposed to what they call ‘consequential acts’) of companies or their officials. In their view, such boycotts are pro tanto morally wrong because they attempt to silence voices in the marketplace of ideas.

In this Commentary, I argue that organized boycotts against expressive acts (hereafter, *expressive act boycotts*) are not best framed as attempts to silence. Rather, these boycotts are better construed as a pro tanto morally permissible attempt at collective withdrawal of support for what are viewed as morally reprehensible ideas.

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