

Caitlin Smith

Professor Long

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"Censorship and Silence" by Umberto Eco

In "Censorship and Silence", an essay by Umberto Eco, he starts by discussing the history of censorship. He then goes on to describe the two different ways in which it has been used throughout society: censorship through silence versus censorship through noise. I found the points that he brings up very interesting. I think that they are very applicable in today's day and age. I have learned about censorship in other classes, but I have never learned about the idea of censorship through silence versus censorship through noise. I agree with Eco's opinion about the different ways they have been used and the way that they can affect us. I also enjoyed learning about the history and the origins of the practice and the words used for it in some different languages.

Censorship through silence was the first way that was mentioned. Eco states that this is the older style of *velina*, a word that has changed throughout history to come to mean censorship. The idea is that the way to censor speech and ideas is to simply stop it from being talked about. This has happened historically and continues to occur in many countries around the world. In the United States, censorship through silence is not nearly as common. In some ways, this way of censoring citizens is effective but is a more controlling and direct way of doing it. In places like the United States, blatant censorship like this is not something that people will stand for, making it not as useful to be a common practice. In many other countries, the government monitors

internet usage to physically silence certain things. For example, in China, it has been difficult for protests to be organized when any mention of them online is deleted almost immediately.

On the other hand, censorship through noise is the other version that Eco discusses. Things are censored by talking about many other things to almost drown them out. This is much more common today and because it is more subtle, it happens much more. The "noise" of other information, which is often more interesting and meant to cause discourse, distracts from whatever is trying to be hidden. A lot of people today, especially younger generations, have much shorter attention spans. This combined with a lot of distractions makes it quite easy for this kind of censorship to happen successfully.

I can think of many examples of this censorship by noise that we can see today. As I started to discuss before, it seems like younger generations are more susceptible. For example, TikTok has become a huge source of media and news for many people, but the truth can get lost in all of the noise. I have experienced friends talking about news and when I ask where they saw it, they say TikTok. Sometimes I won't question it, even though it isn't always coming from a reliable source. Once, I did some further research on a video I saw and realized that the creator was biased and left out some key information. There are many people on the platform that claim to be experts but aren't. They talk about things they aren't qualified to. This makes censorship by noise quite effective and easy to implement.

Information and news these days also go through trends. Whereas in the past people would be worried about a news cycle, now, news falls in and out of being trending. It would not be that hard for information to be buried by something more exciting and new. One popular creator can easily change the tide of a conversation or distract from it completely. Our minds are very easily influenced and we jump to new news very quickly. Opinions are formed and changed

constantly as we receive more info. Social media algorithms also affect what media is consumed by mass amounts of people.

I also found Eco's comment about "needing noise" to be very insightful. I can relate to that myself in a literal way. I work best when I have a constant, slight distraction. For example, coffee shops are great because I can look up or just tune in to the sounds around me for constant stimulation. Many people are like this and so much media is consumed that it is easy for so much noise to be created online. I do think that listening to silence is needed more in our society. I hope to find ways to work on that in my own life.