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Freedom Of Speech, Censorship And The Story Of Jonathan Swift And Dennis Defoe

Freedom of speech and censorship are opposite faces to each other. Freedom of speech, or as it is commonly called, freedom of expression, has for up to 300 years ago in the ages of the fathers of English literature -Swift and Defoe, been a core subject of discussion . It entails the freedom of individuals to speak their minds expressingly without fear of harm or any legal sanction—the confidence of giving your opinion on any topic anytime. On the flip side, censorship is the restriction of the freedom of speech. Usually, it has been engaged by authorities, i.e., governments, private intuitions, and other organs of control over people. The story of Swift and Denoe focuses on their writings during their time and censorship their faced from the parties they ridiculed.

Freedom of speech is internationally codified in *Article 19 of the International Declaration of Human Rights of 1948*- "everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference" and "everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice. (United Nations (10 September 1948). "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights") and in the *International Human rights*. This freedom is

multifaceted, as described by John Milton:

Freedom of speech is understood as a multi-faceted right that includes not only the right to express or disseminate information and ideas but also three further distinct aspects:

1. the right to seek information and ideas;
2. the right to receive information and ideas;
3. the right to impart information and ideas

International, regional, and national standards also recognize that freedom of speech, as the freedom of expression, includes any medium, whether orally, in writing, in print, through the internet, or in art forms. This means that the protection of freedom of speech as a right includes the content and the means of expression. (Randal pp. 226–27)

This comes in since the expressed opinions need to be communicated. On this idea, freedom of speech involves the verbal autonomy to express opinions and views through writings, pictures, films, banners, and other publications. Freedom of speech holds much significance, especially for democratic people. Alexander Meiklejohn has that for a democratic system to be effective, there must be no constraints on the free flow of information and ideas. (Puddephatt, 128) Moreover, it promotes the development of science, politics, and other social aspects. Freedom of speech is limited in certain aspects with justifiable reasons.

Censorship could be of merit if viewed from the lenses of a positivist, but

detrimental on the other hand. Freedom of speech is usually not absolute, for it collides with other human rights. censorship is sometimes exercised by dominant religious bodies to suppress the revolution's counter-views or criticism by other religions. In countries like Saudi Arabia, there are religious police who actively prevent the practice or proselytizing of non-Islamic. Also, Pope Paul VI banned some works of 'Index Librorum Prohibitorum ("List of Prohibited Books")'. ("Index Librorum Prohibitorum | Roman Catholicism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*). Political censorship is the most rampant form of censorship. It is sometimes practiced due to concerns of public security and to prevent public attention, which could consequently lead to revolutions and coos. For example, during World War II, the catchphrase "*Loose lips sink ships*" was used as a common justification to exercise official wartime censorship and encourage individual restraint when sharing potentially sensitive information, a form of military censorship. (Demm,2019) Other forms of censorship include internet (Deibert,2008, MIT Press.), Corporate, and economic-induced censorship. All these are generally of concern to National security, to control obscenity, control explicit sexual content, control hate speech, manage and protect children and other vulnerable groups, promote or restrict political or religious views, and prevent slander or Libel. However, in some circumstances, censorship is seen as a tool for the practice of a totalitarian form of ruling, which is not appreciated, at least by the majority.

The works of Swift and Defoe were instrumental in regard to free speech and censorship in their times. This was the era when legislation on licensing the printing press was being lifted, though any criticism of the government attracted them to be held criminally liable. However, matters of libel were taken to court. Swift's notable works

include A "Tale of a Tub (1704)", "An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity (1712)", "Gulliver's Travels (1726)", and "A Modest Proposal (1729)". His works had a lot of satire, which, in a way, fell afoul of the censorship of Hanoverian England. He was a strong churchman in the Anglican church and, therefore, suffered attacks from Roman Catholicism and other dissenting churches. In his writings, Daniel Defoe fought for religious freedom and freedom of speech.

In conclusion, it is to be noted that with today's ever-advancing communication technology, censorship is hard to implement, and matters of free speech are more crucial.

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