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Editorial

We are very pleased to introduce the *Social Science Text and Academic Research (STAR) Journal*. The purpose of this journal is to encourage social science, undergraduate students at two-year colleges to pursue undergraduate research, be recognized for their contributions to the social sciences, and to disseminate the findings of their research.

The benefits of undergraduate research are well documented, as are the benefits of exposing students to undergraduate research early in their academic career. By focusing on undergraduate research at two-year colleges, the *STAR Journal* hopes to encourage faculty members to use the prospect of publication as a motivation for both themselves and their students.

Both articles in this edition were from an Introduction to Political Ideologies course taught at Anoka-Ramsey Community College in Minnesota during the spring 2018 semester. Both articles involved students working with a faculty mentor, revising their works, and submitting drafts according to the double-blind review standards of the journal.

While both articles are from the field of political science in general and political theory in particular, the *STAR Journal* welcomes submissions from all social science disciplines. Undergraduate research in other disciplines, English and Communications for example, will also be considered if the content is social scientific in nature. It is the hope of the editorial board that more faculty members at two-year colleges will incorporate undergraduate research in the classrooms and use the prospect of publication as a motivation for their students.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the editors who agree to read these and other papers. I have been overwhelmed with the positive responses I have received from people willing to help get this journal off the ground and with the amount of time and energy these reviewers have given to this project.

Matthew Schuster
Editor-in-Chief
STAR Journal

A More Utilitarian View on Censorship and Free Speech

Benjamin Swenson

Abstract: In this essay I examine the practical aspects of free speech and highlight the impracticality of censorship. Using the ideas of John Stuart Mill and the realities of countries like China and Russia, I propose that an environment of hyper censorship promotes illogical thinking by the restriction of civil discourse, and that freedom of speech is a driving factor in progress. I then examine the possible reasons for censorship laws, which I conclude mainly are: to obtain more power for the government over the people, and to keep the people from harming each other with hate speech. I conclude that neither of these reasons outweigh the good brought by free speech.

Key words: Free Speech, Censorship, John Stuart Mill, Utilitarian

Censorship and restrictions on information and expression have been a staple of authoritarian governments since Socrates was put to death by the Greek state for his “corruption of youth and his acknowledgement of unorthodox divinities” (Newth). While many international institutions like the Human Rights Watch and the United Nations recognize speech as a basic human right, it is often hard to answer the question, why? For many, freedom of speech is ingrained in the understanding of morals and ethics of their culture, so to simply say it is an inalienable right is circular. Less spoken of are the practical and largely beneficial aspects of freedom of speech, expression, and information which this essay will be exploring.

Due to the subjective nature of “good” and “bad,” it is imperative that select axioms, or truths, are established for argument’s sake. The first axiom is that, while suppression of free speech is not inherently good or bad, citizens should at the very least be able to think freely. While some leaders have certainly tried to legislate and punish what they deem incorrect thought, the fact remains that due to physical limitations, it is impossible to completely know for certain what a person is thinking. Therefore, free thought (not expression) is a guaranteed right.

The second axiom is that the general purpose of a government is to provide protection to its citizens and to generally promote their happiness and well-being. Why would we use this definition for a state’s purpose? Because this definition does not discriminate on the kind of laws the state can create, thereby eliminating bias towards “good,” democratic laws, as long as they are in the interest of the people. Also, in part, it acknowledges that nearly every world government has some system of defense, whether it be a formal military or some variant of a self-organized militia.

Finally, it would be apt to establish what censorship and suppression are. The Oxford Dictionary defines suppression as “The action of suppressing something such as an activity or publication” (English Dictionary). Censorship is a more specific form of suppression that deals with speech and media “that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security” (English Dictionary). Some forms of censorship are not inherently bad and can be of substantial use. For example, child pornography is censored in many countries. By making access to viewing it more difficult, fewer people will seek it out, the practice of making it will be discouraged, and ultimately less harm will come to the children involved. This kind of censorship is not the topic of this essay. The part of censorship’s definition this essay will deal with is the “politically unacceptable” forms of expression and speech.

What harm is caused by suppressing speech? It’s a valid question, given what’s been established so far. At face value, censorship doesn't stop a person from thinking something, and censorship laws aren’t off the table if a government believes they will help the people, so what is its sin? While technically, people are free to think whatever they wish under censorship laws, there is a form of

thought control established through mass silencing. When certain information is forbidden to be spoken of, and the citizens comply, it is never spoken. Imagine now that a new generation is born and raised under this law. Are they truly free to think? The first instinct is to say, "Well, of course, nothing is stopping them", but this is a fallacy. Are they free to think about what is forbidden to speak of? They do not know the information, for no one has told them. Not only do they currently not know this information but under the law, they can never know it. How can one think of something they do not know? It is simply impossible. For example, a Stanford study was conducted with groups of Chinese college students regarding sensitive, previously censored information. Some groups were given access to uncensored information and were encouraged to use it, while a control group was not (Chenn). Both groups were asked identical questions regarding satisfaction in the government and economic optimism among other topics (Chenn). Specifically, students that were exposed to uncensored information reported lower levels of satisfaction in the Chinese government and a 21.3% decrease in political trust in the current administration relative to the control group (Chenn). In addition, students who were exposed to sensitive information predicted the country's GDP growth to be 0.9% lower than the control group prediction (Chenn). Overall, their findings suggest that "uncensored information persistently and substantially changes students' knowledge, economic beliefs, and political attitudes" (Chenn).

But censorship does more than simply destroy free thought. It also destroys logical discourse and objectivity. Just as opinions are subject to censorship laws, so too are facts, a clear example being the USSR under the rule of Joseph Stalin, where scientists and their findings were silenced because they either personally disagreed with the regime or because their work was in conflict with the needs of the state (Cienciala). While none of this is inherently wrong, it is simply illogical to keep scientific discourse from taking place, as its result is a misunderstanding of the world. John Stuart Mill makes a similar point in his essay *On Liberty* that can be applied here:

Were an opinion a personal possession of no value (except to the owner), if to be obstructed in the enjoyment of it were simply a private injury, it would make some difference whether the injury was inflicted only on a few persons or on many. But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth. If wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. (Mill, 21)

In essence, Mill is saying that a truth will always bring benefit, but even falsities are valuable, for they give society a clearer understanding of what the truth is. To silence either can only bring harm, not just to a nation's citizens but also to the state from a lack of progress. But what is wrong with that? Assuming that one is fine with being illogical, what harm is done? While no physical harm could come from this state of illogicalness (with the exception of medical advances, possibly), rather harm would be done to the mental faculties of the individual. Mill writes about this in another of his works called *That the Ideally Best Form of Government is Representative Government*. In it, he asks that his reader imagine a government run by "One man of superhuman mental activity" who manages all aspects of government (Mill, 239). He theorized that the people would become passive for they had no active participation in the process of government (Mill, 239). Similarly, this idea can be applied to the idea of free speech and expression. If a government forbade any criticism of the state, the logical citizen would likely follow for fear of retribution. "What development can either their thinking or their active faculties attain under it?" Mill asks rhetorically, the answer being little for without the mental stimulation and development of discussion and discourse individuals and society at large will become passive and unthinking.

This raises a question. If it truly is illogical to censor speech, why would a government create such legislation? One of the more common reasons for speech suppression laws is to give more power

to the sitting government, specifically the executive branch (Beschastna). This is done by outlawing any criticism of the government or the countries leaders, and a prime example of this method is Russia. In the summer of 2012 four bills were passed and enacted that severely limited free speech. Tatyana Beschastna summarized these laws in her article "Freedom of Expression in Russia as It Relates to Criticism of the Government":

One such law allows a government agency to block a long list of internet websites from within Russia. The second bill returns the "slander" provision into the Criminal Code, after it was recently removed by former President Dmitry Medvedev. The third provision imposes heavy fines on individuals who organize or participate in demonstrations not sanctioned by the government, which practically encompasses all anti-government street protests. Fourth is the "foreign agents" bill that brands the externally funded non-governmental organizations as "foreign agents" with significant limitations on their rights and functions. (Beschastna)

Many more of these kinds of laws exist with a large portion of them concerning access to specific cities on the internet, prompting the blacklisting of government opposition sites like Grani.ru, which had "closely followed the cases of protesters prosecuted for participation in the May 6, 2012 mass protest against Putin's inauguration on Moscow's Bolotnaya Square, which the authorities qualified as 'mass rioting'" (Online). These legislative actions blatantly show the government's concern that free speech could challenge their authority. It can be presumed then that power is a reason for speech censorship.

There is another common purpose for censorship laws aside from power, one that is at the very least well-intentioned, and that is hate speech. Hate speech is defined as "Abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group, especially on the basis of race, religion, or sexual orientation" (English Dictionary). While it might seem logical to create rules that limit hate speech for its possibility of increasing happiness, they're flawed in their very nature. They're flawed because they are built off of something that is inherently subjective. In their purest form words are an arrangement of symbols or vibrations traveling through the air. They have no destined meaning, much less any objective power over another person. The definition of hate speech itself implies that hate speech is about the intent rather than any specific words. To correctly and justly legislate hate speech one would have to know absolutely the intent of the speaker, which as stated by the first axiom is impossible. What about the harm that is caused to those subjected to hate speech? If one believes that words have no physical power, then one must also believe that words cannot make someone else feel anything. While realistically, humans will allow their surroundings to influence their state of mind, they don't have to. As humans, we choose our emotions.

John Stuart Mill wrote ad nauseum about free speech and the individual, and while much of his work is largely based on philosophy and principle, his essays are filled with applicable and pragmatic points about the world. Near the end of his essay, *On Liberty* he states the following:

The combination of all these causes forms so great a mass of influences hostile to Individuality, that it is not easy to see how it can stand its ground. It will do so with increasing difficulty, unless the intelligent part of the public can be made to feel its value—to see that it is good there should be differences, even though not for the better, even though, as it may appear to them, some should be for the worse. (Mill, 82)

To allow discourse, even if unpopular, to occur is to embrace the logic, fairness, and the progress of all of mankind.

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Green Ideology: A Comprehensive View of Humans, the Environment, and Society

Sarah Blahoski

Abstract: The green ideology is far more complex than it is often portrayed. While green ideology is concerned with environmental protection and changing how humans relate to the natural world, it is also concerned with changing how humans think of themselves and how they relate to each other. To this end, green ideology is concerned with promoting ideas of equal rights, social justice, individual freedom, non-violence, and self-reliance.

Keywords: Green Theory, Equal Rights, Social Justice, Freedom, Non-Violence

In politics, or any other social study, a political ideology is a coherent set of views on politics and the role of the government (Houghton). Across America, there is a wide variety of political ideologies that shape how society thinks and acts on things like the environment, society, laws, taxes, and other important debates. Taking this into consideration when referring to green ideology, the views and beliefs of green ideology revolve around the environment and its interaction and effect on society, and similarly how society interacts with the environment. The exact interactions between the environment and society can be seen in everyday life in circumstances such as climate change. While there are a variety of ways in which society and the environment are intertwined with one another, whether the interactions refer to social justices, ecology, politics, peace, or democracy, it's important to understand that green ideology is far more complex than simply being concerned about the environment.

Firstly, in order to understand green ideology completely, we must fully grasp the main goal of it. The goal is, generally, to change the relationship between human interaction and the environment. The ways in which the relationship between society and the environment should change has to do with the forms of organization of the environment in a market economy (Vladimirov). Meaning that, since the United States went through Industrial Revolution, society faces a new reality that requires new activities, including: trains, cars, architecture, natural resource allocation, etc.,. These new activities have completely changed the way in which modern day America lives, benefitting society while depreciating the environment. Green ideology acknowledges the changes in new activities essential to modern life. Although green ideology does not wish to reverse all economic progress, it intends to modify the progress so that it does not negatively affect the environment. A few ways in which green ideology plans to protect the environment includes: "greening" of human life, balancing ecology and politics, and implementing environmental security.

By "greening" human life, human activities should be "oriented towards protection of the environment from harm" while "[recognizing] the ecological factors and the development of anthropogenic activities with ecological effect" (Vladimirov). Simply put, the activities in which humans participate in should not only benefit humans but should be beneficial for the environment as well. Any activities that do not benefit or that harm the environment should not be participated in. Rather, humans should be accommodating to the environment, not vice versa. Balancing ecology and politics is another important factor which should be incorporated into protecting the environment. Essentially, this is the idea of balancing the concept for sustainable development and coordination of the goals and interests of all parties in society, regardless of political affiliation. The balancing of ecology and politics intertwines with implementing environmental security. Environmental security is the idea that "all achievements – scientific, economic, technical, technological and social, shall be used to ensure that people's activities are implemented in an environmentally friendly way" (Vladimirov). The belief that "greening" human life, balancing ecology and politics, and implementing environmental security are

essential steps towards the direction of environmental preservation and protection is a strong foundation belief held by green ideology.

While the environmental aspect of green ideology is important, there are many social aspects that are also essential in understanding green ideology. As an Ideology, the green ideology “strongly defends social rights and individual freedoms” (Vowels). Specifically, the social aspects of green ideology involve homosexual law reform, the rights of indigenous people, youth representation, and rights of future generations, along with respect and tolerance without violence and social justice and responsibility. Firstly, giving equal rights to the LGBTQ community is an important value held in green ideology. Specifically, it is stated that the goal is to see “a world free from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, a world in which difference is accepted and even celebrated” (Green Party of Canada). Secondly, giving equal rights to indigenous people is also an important virtue of green ideology. These rights include private property rights and improvement on education, among many other things (Hudson). Along with equal rights to minorities, green ideology emphasizes the importance of thinking about today’s youth and future generations. Specifically, it is emphasized that thinking and acting in a long-term perspective is important for the future because, “the freedom and solidarity we want to characterize today’s society should also apply for our children, their children and future generations” (Green Party of Sweden). Along with LGBTQ’s and indigenous people, green ideology also focuses on other minority organizations such as feminist groups, racial equality groups, and more. Knowing this, it is clear that equal rights for minorities and indigenous people is a significant factor in understanding green ideology, along with thinking long-term for future generations.

Along with the ideal of equal rights, it is of the same importance to think of non-violence and social justice. The principle of non-violence is directly influenced by the principle of peace that is held within green ideology. Non-violence, as a method of change, according to green ideology, will be used as a method for handling conflicts, which will in turn, lead to a long-term sustainable society (Green Party of Sweden). With peace being a core value of green ideology, it is sensible that social justice is also included in these values. Specifically, social justice is the belief that “everyone has the same right to basic social and material security, a security that should provide good cons to create a meaningful life” (Green Party of Sweden). The securities mention involves that of equal education opportunities, will then in turn lead to participation in democracy, which will lead to obtaining meaningful work. Simply put, social justice and non-violence principles held within green ideology helps create not only environmental security and equality, but also personal security and equality.

Lastly, self-reliance, self-management, and freedom are individual based beliefs held in green ideology. Specifically, self-reliance means “being able to depend on one’s fundamental resources and opportunities” (Green Party of Sweden). By making use of local opportunities to manage the basic supply of food and energy, self-management and self-reliance would become more evident. Along with self-reliance, green ideology believes that freedom is the equal right to equal opportunities, and that people must be free to develop without being pressed by prejudice. The belief of freedom and the individual act of being self-reliant are both emphasized in green ideology because of the individualistic and environmental benefits which follow them.

Because green ideology is a relevant ideology to understand, it is equally as pertinent to realize how it can be applied into the living standards of today. Green ideology’s basic features of environmental safety, efficiency, and equality are not only essential to the foundation of green ideology itself but should also be equally as valued in modern-day society. A few ways in which the concept of green ideology can be applied today include climate change along with other various forms of environmental changes. Specifically, knowledge and action geared toward climate change has been on the rise, with government and society working together for the betterment of the environment. Aiming to solve underlying causes of environmental issues rather than solely focusing on dealing with the effects would reverse the inevitable result of our actions’ environmental decay. By emphasizing

recycling, public transportation, stair use (as compared to elevator use), and electricity efficiency, there are many ways in which global environmental preservation actions are being taken and acted upon. The more active we are to achieve the goal of a safe and healthy global environment now, the greater the environmental understanding, respect, and responsibility there will be in the imminent future, where our civilizations will thrive.

All in all, green ideology focuses on how the environment and society interact with each other and how the interaction between both should be mutually beneficial for them. Specifically, to change the relationship between human interaction and the environment, certain steps need to be taken. Green ideology clearly states and organizes these steps by describing environmental steps, social steps, and individual steps. By creating an environmentally “green” society, all parties would benefit. Because green ideology focuses on the environment and how social and how individuals affect and can relate to it, it's clear that green ideology is far more complex than simply being concerned about the environment.

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