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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

Authors

Aman Khullar, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University
Daksh Walia, Batch of 2021, Ashoka University
Poorna Rathi, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University
Pranav A S, Batch of 2019, Ashoka University
Ritam Chakraborty, Batch of 2020, Ashoka University
Vikram Mervyn, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University

Peer Reviewers

Arya Amritansu, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University
Neha Nandakumar, Batch of 2020, Ashoka University
Poorna Rathi, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University
Ritam Chakraborty, Batch of 2020, Ashoka University
Saujanya Bharadwaj, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University
Yash Agarwal, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University

Cover Designer

MaryAnne Rodrigues, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University

Website Designer

Ojas Kumar, Batch of 2022, Ashoka University

Faculty Mentor

Professor Raja Rosenhagen, Ashoka University

Founding Team and Editorial Committee

Aadya Singh, Batch of 2020, Ashoka University
Deepti Jayakrishnan, Batch of 2021, Ashoka University
Harsha Potapragada, Batch of 2021, Ashoka University
Ila Deep, Batch of 2019, Ashoka University
Udoyon Banerjee, Batch of 2021, Ashoka University
Mukund Maithani, Batch of 2021, Ashoka University
Nayancee Srivastava, Batch of 2021, Ashoka University

FOREWORD: A LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

The circumstances in which this journal was conceived in demand addressing, and the Core Committee shall do as much here:

For a society that had just restarted, to take on such a big project that would require consistent, long-term commitment was risky. To add, the world had just been hit by a pandemic. This is to realise and appreciate that this journal was conceived of and arranged for completely remotely.

A little preview: some of our papers are pointedly about freedom of speech. These were selected and finalised well before the fiasco of March 18th, with the news of Prof. Mehta resignation being broken to the students by national television. The mobilisation of the Ashokan student body and faculty that took place thereon has been admirable. However, it is important, here, to acknowledge that such collective action has lacked in previous events of similar underlying issues. It is important to acknowledge further the attempts made by students, led by the Student Government, to make this movement about something more than the resignations of Prof. Mehta and Prof. Subramanian, by making it about (a) academic freedom in general, (b) not running a university like a corporate project, and (c) the workers' plight.

In our role both as students curating a journal in this specific and broader climate and as budding philosophers, an additional responsibility lies in disenfranchising the lofty notion of the ivory tower. As inheritors of a discipline that has been popularised as an abstract one, it is our responsibility to commit to the highest degrees of academic freedom in all climates, in all possible ways. One such way is by understanding and arguing for the ways in which freedom is framed, as some papers collected in this volume do. The Editorial Committee of Citta hopes that this journal inspires a call to reclaim intellectual spaces.

1. THE ROLE OF EVALUATIVE METACOGNITION IN CONSCIOUS PERCEPTION

\- **PRANAV A S (He/Him)**

Batch of 2019 at Ashoka University

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I will develop a theory of metacognition explaining our awareness of our perceptions using Ori Beck's neuro-computational model of Naïve Realism and Daniel C. Dennett's user-illusion account of consciousness. I will begin by explaining how rich and complex our conscious experience is, and what the phenomenology of conscious experience entails. I will then use Beck's theory of neuro-computational Naïve Realism to explain perception, and will use this foundation to further expand on my theory of metacognition. I propose that metacognition is an evaluative conscious state that arises from two distinct processes working in tandem: apperception and abstraction. Apperception is a form of evaluative dynamic control involving our attentional and intentional mechanisms and, in conjunction with abstraction, is responsible for our awareness of our perceptions. Abstraction is a meta-representation of all the complex biological and neuro-computational processes happening in our body, working in a similar manner to a smartphone's graphical user interface meta-representing all the complex software and hardware processes happening in the phone in a user-friendly manner. The phenomenological experience of what it is like for us to experience something is a product of these two processes occurring simultaneously. By using Ori Beck's neuro-computational model of Naïve Realism to build a theory of metacognition, I aim to provide a robust characterisation of our conscious perceptual experience that can be extended across various sensory modalities.

I.   INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I claim that our awareness of our perceptions is a product of two distinct processes working in tandem – apperception and abstraction. To do so, I will first briefly lay out a theory of perception, drawing from Ori Beck's neuro-computational model of Naïve Realism. I will then explain how apperception and abstraction give rise to our awareness of *what it is like* for us to have perceptual experience. Finally, I will explain how the combination of a

neuro-computational Naïve Realist theory of perception and my theory of metacognition can provide a robust characterisation of the phenomenology of conscious experience.

Our stream of consciousness is rich, varied and complex. At the time of writing this paper, I see the screen of my laptop and the words on the screen. I hear the construction work happening outside, the noise of my laptop's cooling fans and the faint sound of conversation between my mother and grandmother in the living room. I have the aftertaste of my evening coffee on my tongue. At any given moment, we are seeing, smelling, tasting and feeling a myriad of sensations. On top of this, we also experience different emotional states, bodily moods, psychological states and other mental states that can also affect our perceptual experience in any number of ways. This rich conscious experience, along with the complex perceptual data that constantly streams through our perceptual processing kit, is what defines *what it is like* for us to have conscious perceptual experience.

The phenomenology of conscious perceptual experience is best explained through Thomas Nagel's *What is it like* phrase (Nagel), that there is something it is experientially like for a conscious subject to perceive something. There is something it is experientially like for me to see the jumbled pile of dirty clothes on my bed, or to see my broken video game controller next to my laptop . The features that define my perceptual experience, along with the qualitative character of my experience, are what make up the phenomenology of conscious perceptual experience. For example, the perceptual experience of seeing my broken game controller is defined by both the visual features – the colours and shapes of the buttons on the controller, the position the controller is in and so on – as well as the qualitative character of my experience – me remembering how I broke the controller and associating the controller with some of my favourite video games.

Differences in perceptual experiences are not merely due to differences in our perceptual processing apparatus, however, as the qualitative character of perceptual experience also varies from person to person. There is something it is like for me to listen to *Ride the Lightning* by Metallica because of my auditory processing apparatus as well as various psychological and emotional states that influence how I listen to the album. My younger brother will probably have a completely different experience listening to the same album even if he listens to it through the same pair of earphones at the same volume, as it is not just that he hears the album differently as his sensory organs may be, and probably are, different from mine but also that he has different emotional and psychological states when listening to the album.

II.   **<u>PERCEPTION</u>**

To better explain how we become aware of our perceptions, we must first lay out a theory of perception. For the purposes of this paper, I will primarily focus on conscious visual perception and its phenomenology. Naïve Realism minimally holds that (i) perception is constitutive of mind-independent external objects, (ii) perception is non-representational, and (iii) perception has its phenomenology because of the properties of the mind-independent external object and subject-object-environment relationships (Beck 608-609; Genone 6-7). Under this minimal view, perception is externally directed, with the object of perception being directly presented to our perceptual faculties, alongside all subject-object-environment interactions that can affect our perception of the object. This direct perceptual relation between subject and object is an acquaintance relation that provides us with knowledge of the object that is epistemically more primitive than propositional knowledge, in that we are directly perceiving the object without an intermediary representational mental state.

Beck's neuro-computational model has two further additions to the minimal commitments of Naïve Realism we established earlier: (i) perceptions are dependent on the neuro-computational properties of the subject, and (ii) the phenomenology is not solely determined by mind-independent external objects (Beck 624). He defines a multiple component aspect to perception made up of the objects that appear to the subjects, the appearance properties of the objects and the perceptual appearance relation. To reuse the example of the orchid: not only is there a certain way the orchid appears to us, but it has certain appearance properties. Further, there is a relation that the orchid appears a certain way to us as subjects. This perceptual relation takes the form *'object x appears a certain way W to subject S'* (Beck 625).

The force of Beck's theory is that when the relation *'object x appears a certain way W to subject S'* is instantiated in the orchid appearing a certain way to us, the orchid itself along, the way in which it appears to us and our appearance properties – the orchid appearing pink to us – are constituents of the relation. When I perceive a pink orchid, the pinkness is both a property of the object as well as an appearance property. When the orchid appears a certain way to us, we perceive *that very orchid* to be pink in virtue of both the object being constitutive of our perception *and* our appearance properties. Thus, phenomenology under neuro-computational naïve realism is as follows. If an orchid (object *x*) appears a pink (*W*) to me (*S*), that fixes an aspect of my perceptual phenomenology. If I did not perceive the orchid, it would not appear pink to me and hence, I would have a different perceptual phenomenology. If I had been in a different neuro-computational state, *I* would not have the same appearance properties and thus, my perceptual phenomenology would have been different again.

To summarize, our theory of perception is both externally directed *and* internally dependent. Perception depends on the subject's neuro-computational faculties in order for the

external mind-independent object to appear to the subject in a certain way. However, perceiving an object still requires us to be in a direct perceptual relation with a mind-independent external object such that it is constitutive of our conscious perceptual experience. In this way, perception is responsible for the presentation of an object as a function of its properties, as well as being internally dependent on the neuro-computational faculties of the subject perceiving the object. For example, when I see an orchid, factors such as the selective reflection of certain wavelengths of light, the angle at which the orchid is held, the way light refracts through dew drops on the petals, the shadows that fall across the petals and the stem and other physical minutiae may also inform my image of an orchid. However, my image of the orchid may also be affected by blemishes in the structure of my eye, certain psychological or emotional states, my attentional and intentional mechanisms and various other internal factors.

III.   **<u>APPERCEPTION</u>**

As mentioned earlier, our streams of consciousness are often rich and complex, with an influx of perceptual data as well as psychological, emotional, mental and physiological moods that all influence our conscious perception. To understand how we become conscious of our perceptions, we must understand the role metacognition plays with regard to perception.

Metacognition means 'cognition about cognition', or awareness of our awareness. It is our awareness of our own cognitions and perceptions and how we come to be conscious of them. I will be using an evaluative framework of metacognition, which Joëlle Proust minimally defines as "the view that metacognition has a primary function of self-evaluation, which may or may not be further enriched by the capacity to attribute mental states to oneself" (Proust 4). The role of metacognition, with respect to perceptual experience, is to serve as an evaluative form of real-time control that allows us to be conscious of our perceptions.

This consciousness of our perceptions involves two processes that happen simultaneously: apperception and abstraction. Apperception is how we are able to cognise our perceptions and verbalise, at least to some extent, what it is like for us to have a certain experience. Apperception is fundamentally a dynamic form of evaluative control over our perception, and is intentional and attentional. I am only aware of my perception of an orchid when I am directing my attention towards the orchid and intend to perceive it, in some minimal way. Upon seeing the orchid, apperception takes the raw image of the orchid and dynamically reacts to how I direct my attention and what I intend to see.

Apperception functions in a similar manner to how perception functions under the neuro-computational model used in this paper. When perceiving a mind-independent external object, we enter a direct perceptual relation with it such that it is constitutive of our perceptual experience. However, our perception of the object is also affected by psychological, physiological and emotional moods. Similarly, our perception of the object is directly constitutive of the process of apperception. Apperception is also affected by psychological, physiological and emotional moods, given that it is also dependent on our attentional and intentional states.

However, it seems nigh impossible for us to immediately notice *everything* we see as well as have knowledge of *all* the processes in our body that allow us to see, such as the focus of the lens in our eyes, the way our pupils dilate to let in light and so on. It does not seem feasible for our perceptual faculties to dynamically process *every* aspect of such detailed and rich perceptual experience such that we are conscious of each aspect, even if we consider the limiting factors of attention and intention. In order for apperception to carry out its evaluative role in metacognition, there must be something beyond attention and intention directing what we see. There has to be

something that makes it possible for our neuro-computational faculties to make sense of the complex stream of perceptual data such that we are aware of what we perceive.

IV. <u>ABSTRACTION</u>

I believe that there is some level of data abstraction that takes place in tandem with apperception. When we perceive an external mind-independent object, our neuro-computational faculties meta-represent the stream of perceptual data in real-time, in a similar way to how the graphical user interface (GUI) of a smartphone meta-represents all the complex hardware and software processes to only present us with what we need to know to make sense of the functioning of the phone. Dennett's 'user-illusion' account of metacognition makes an analogy between the user-interface of a smartphone and consciousness (Dennett 341). A smartphone and its various apps run on a number of complex hardware and software processes, and making sense of all these processes in real-time as we use the phone would be nigh impossible. However, we are able to use our smartphones and all the apps on them because we are only given the data absolutely necessary for us to understand how to use them by the abstraction of all this raw data into the user interfaces of the phone and the apps on it. This is the 'need to know' principle.

The 'need to know' principle is we only know what we *absolutely* need to know about our body's functioning. Representing all of our bodily processes in such a way that we are *always* actively cognisant of these processes would be much too complex and taxing on our mental resources and our communication systems. Similar to how apps on our smartphone only give us access to the information we need to know to make sense of the functioning of the app and phone through the user interface, we are only given the data we need to be able to represent the physical processes behind perception.

Consciousness, under this view, is similar to a smartphone's GUI. Making sense of all the hardware and software processes powering the phone in real-time would be impossible for us, and hence we are presented with only the information we need to use the phone and make sense of its functioning. Similarly, making sense of all the perceptual data in our stream of consciousness, alongside our physiological, psychological and emotional states would be impossibly taxing for us. Hence, there is some level of meta-representation occurring that only gives access to the features needed for us to make sense of our environment. This is how we become conscious of our perceptions, similar to how the GUI of a phone becomes its own entity despite being a meta-representation of all the hardware and software processes running the phone.

We come to possess a sense of 'self' perceiving something only through this abstraction of all the various physical processes involved in perception. Comprehending and parsing all the data available to us through the physical processes involved in perception would tax our cognitive and communicative capabilities too much, and thus all the data is classified based on what we *need* to know to effectively communicate and function. Through this abstraction of data, we start understanding *what it is like* for us to experience something, and so become conscious of what it is to perceive because of this meta-representation of raw data.

V. <u>METACOGNITION AS META-REPRESENTATIVE AND EVALUATIVE DYNAMIC CONTROL</u>

Awareness of awareness, hence, occurs through both apperception and this 'user-illusion' working in tandem. When I see an orchid, my perceptual faculties take in *all* the data available through perception. However, I am only given access to the features that are necessary for me to make sense of what I am seeing. Apperception occurs in tandem to this abstraction of raw data

and takes into account the subject-object-environment interactions that affect how the object is presented to me, and allows me to cognise what I am seeing. I do not have immediate access to *all* the data and am instead given access to the data needed to become aware of what I am seeing. This seems to account for individual phenomenology as well as taking into account how rich and complicated our stream of consciousness is, as various conscious factors such as attention mechanisms, intentionality and conceptual knowledge play a dual role in both apperception and the abstraction of raw data.

It must be noted that meta-representation of data does not mean that there is a representational mental state involved in metacognition, but rather that to indicate how the data abstraction works by giving us selective access to what we need to know. Meta-representation does not involve some layered representation of an object, to put it crudely, but is rather like a pointer in C++, dynamically pointing us to the data we need to cognise the object of our perception alongside all the attentional and intentional mental processes that affect how we perceive an object. This concept of meta-representation functions similarly to the user interfaces of our smartphones and how the apps on it require the basic raw code of an app to function. These apps are not really a representation of the code, instead *presenting* only what we need to make sense of the app and its functioning through an abstraction of data in the form of a GUI.

Thus, metacognition functions as a form of dynamic meta-representation of the rich and varied stream of perceptual data that we process. Through apperception and abstraction of all the perceptual raw data, the particular phenomenology of our perceptual experience takes place by dynamically giving us access to what we need to know in order to make sense of what we perceive. When viewing a movie, I am not immediately aware of everything on screen, but instead direct my attention and intention towards certain aspects that interest me or that are

visually striking. Apperception and abstraction allow for this to happen by dynamically pointing me to the data required for me to cognise these aspects.

VI.   NEURO-COMPUTATIONAL NAÏVE REALISM AND METACOGNITION

Our theory of perception is externally directed and internally dependent. Perception is a direct acquaintance relationship between the subject, object and the environment, and is affected by the appearance properties of the subject. In the relation '*object x appears a certain way W to subject S*', subject S processes a complex and rich stream of perceptual data. Subject S' neuro-computational faculties process the stream of perceptual data, while dynamically giving access to the data required by the evaluative process of metacognition.

Metacognition is itself two processes occurring in tandem: apperception and abstraction. Apperception is one form of evaluative control over our perceptions, and depends on our attentional and intentional mechanisms. It is directed in nature, and provides the evaluative character of metacognition. Abstraction is the implementation of the 'need-to-know' principle, using the evaluative nature of apperception to dynamically make available only that data which is needed for us to cognise our perceptions. By doing so, perception is transformed from an unconscious process into an active and conscious process where we evaluate what we perceive, where we direct our attention and are able to verbalize, communicate and form beliefs about what we perceive.

The evaluative character of metacognition affords us our rich individual phenomenology of experience and governs how we are able to express and be conscious of what it is like for us to perceive something, as we are given access to only that perceptual data that we need to cognise our perception and make sense of it. We are given access to a mind-independent world that is

uniformly accessible, but various psychological, cognitive and physiological factors influence our individual phenomenology of experience. Our neuro-computational faculties evaluate the raw stream of data available through perception, while our attentional and intentional mechanisms make certain data available to us. It is the internal dependency of neuro-computational naïve realism, along with the subjective nature of the attentional and intentional mechanisms driving the evaluative nature of apperception, that allows us to infer and form beliefs around our externally directed perceptions of an object. I can say that the orchid appears pink *to me*, according to the '*x appears to subject S in way W*' relation, where the pinkness of the orchid is *my* appearance property, in virtue of apperception dynamically focussing my attention on the orchid along with abstraction pointing me to the data required to make that assertion.

VII. <u>CONCLUSION</u>

In summation, I have developed a theory of evaluative meta-representative metacognition, where the process of metacognition dynamically evaluates the perceptual data processed by our neuro-computational faculties. Consciousness of our perception arises as a product of this dynamic and evaluative form of metacognition, where consciousness functions as a GUI of sorts and makes it simpler for us to make sense of the complexity of our stream of perception. The subjective nature of metacognition as well as the internal dependence of our perceptual faculties, when taken together, provide the foundation for a theory of perception and consciousness that takes into account the rich and complex phenomenology of our conscious perceptual experiences.

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2. DEFINING SIDE CONSTRAINTS AND CONSEQUENTIALIST KANTIANISM

- **RITAM CHAKRABORTY (He/Him)**
  Batch of 2020 at Ashoka University

ABSTRACT

Consequentialist Kantianism is a version of consequentialism developed by Michael Ridge that tries to make sense of side constraints in a consequentialist theory of ethics. In other words, it is a form of consequentialism that tries to deliver Kantian deontic verdicts across situations and accommodate side constraints. However, I argue that the way Ridge defines side constraints in this framework is confusing and obscure. Further, I argue that Ridge, in his theory, makes non-violation of side constraint the goal of one's action rather than having it as a constraint on one's action. Ridge's account, therefore, is not very appealing to any defenders of side constraint. On the other hand, if we accept an alternate and better definition of side constraints: limits on what can be done in the pursuit of the good, then Consequentialist Kantianism has no side constraints at all. Ridge, in his attempt to show that there exists side constraints such that side constraints are compatible (and not puzzling) within some version of consequentialism, ends up in a position where there are no side constraints. In this sense, at least on one definition of side constraints, Ridge fails to make sense of side constraints in his project.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will argue in favour of the following proposition: if side constraints are defined as *limits on what can be done in the pursuit of good* then Consequentialist Kantianism (which is a version of consequentialism developed by Michael Ridge) has no side constraints at all. This exercise, I believe, is worthwhile for the following reason. This exercise shows that – if a simple definition of side constraints is applied to a contemporary version of consequentialism, viz: Consequentialist Kantianism, then it yields the verdict that Consequentialist Kantianism cannot accommodate side constraints. This is important because

Consequentialist Kantianism attempts to accommodate side constraints (Ridge 422).[1] If it can be shown that Consequentialist Kantianism fails to do so, then it opens up further prospects of research on how the theory can be modified to accommodate side constraints.

I structure my paper as follows. I first describe Michael Ridge's framework of Consequentialist Kantianism. I then argue that the way Ridge defines side constraints is obscure, troubling, and confusing and consequently, argue that we need to adopt a better definition of side constraints. Next, I argue that my definition is better and show that if side constraints are defined as such then Consequentialist Kantianism has no side constraints at all. I also look into one objection and provide a response. Finally, I conclude my paper by upholding that Consequentialist Kantianism in its present form is not compatible with side constraints.

II.   <u>CONSEQUENTIALIST KANTIANISM AND SIDE CONSTRAINTS</u>

Michael Ridge (Ridge 421-438) developed a theory of value that when combined with an appropriate theory of action delivers Kantian deontic verdicts across situations (Woodard 261). Roughly, Ridge's framework (Ridge 421-438) can be summarized as below:

P1: Bad willing and only bad willing has agent-neutral and teleological disvalue (theory of value).

P2: A possible outcome is said to be the worst if and only if it has more things with agent neutral and teleological disvalue than all other possible outcomes.

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[1] Refer to the following: "The crucial moral verdicts to be accommodated here are the ones according to which at least some of our moral duties take the form of what Robert Nozick once called "side-constraints….The reader .... should simply read the present argument as an attempt to make sense of side-constraints within the framework of a value theory that is agent-neutral and teleological and excise all references to Kant and what is Kantian." (Ridge, 2009, p.422).

P3: An agent can only control his/her own will and has no control over the will of others.

P4: An agent ought to minimize the risk of getting the worst possible outcome (this is what Ridge calls the mini-min theory of right action, explained below).

C: An agent ought not to have a bad will himself/herself.

Let us now inspect each of the premises. Let us first look at P1: *Bad willing and only bad willing has agent-neutral and teleological disvalue (theory of value)*. Immanuel Kant, in his Groundwork *for the metaphysics of morals*, claimed that "[t]here is nothing it is possible to think of anywhere in the world, or indeed anywhere outside it, that can be held to be good without limitation, excepting only a good will" (Kant Ak: 393). Accordingly, he thinks that 'good will' is the only good without any limitation. Ridge refers to this claim to defend his theory of value (and P1) as a good enough representation of Kant and Kantianism. Ridge defines that good will is the only good and has a positive value. "A good will is, at a minimum, a will that is committed to some suitable moral rule or set of moral rules" (Ridge 427). Inversely, Ridge defines a bad will as the only bad and a will that is not committed to some suitable set of moral rules(s) when the agent could have committed himself/herself to such a set of moral rules(s). Since a bad will is the only bad, it is the only thing that has unconditional disvalue both as agent-neutral and as teleological (Ridge 427).[2] It is agent-neutral because the disvalue of the bad will is not indexed to any agent (Ridge 424). It is teleological in the sense that its bad will is not worthy of promotion given its disvalue (this is how Ridge understands

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[2] Ridge's interpretation of Kantian value is that it is agent-neutral and teleological (Ridge 421-426). One may argue that this reading of Kant is not correct. However, the debate is beyond the scope of this paper. If we accept Ridge's claim, then it is easy to see that good will being the only thing of positive value as explained in Kant's *Groundworks of Metaphysics of Morals* should be the only thing that is of value both as agent-neutral and teleological. Every other kind of good, if there are, can ultimately be expressed in terms of good will. Inversely, bad will is the only bad and is the only thing that has disvalue both as agent-neutral and teleological. All other kinds of bad, if there are, can be expressed in terms of bad will.

'teleological').[3] Inversely, good will and only good will has value as both agent- neutral and teleological.

Let us now discuss P2: *A possible outcome is said to be the worst if and only if it has more things with agent-neutral and teleological disvalue than all other possible outcomes*. A proponent of a consequentialist theory will judge an outcome (or a possible outcome) based on its value. It follows that a thing (or a possible thing) that has more disvalue is worse than a thing (or a possible thing) that has lesser disvalue. Further, any rational agent will always prefer a better outcome (or better possible outcome) rather than a worse one (or worse possible one) and consequently will prefer a world (or a possible world) with lesser disvalue than any other worlds (or any other possible worlds). Out of any possible set of outcomes, the possible outcome that has less of bad will (the only thing with disvalue) is preferable. Therefore, the worst outcome (or the worst possible outcome) is one that has the maximum bad will. This is a crucial step in Ridge's argument. He defines the ranking of the outcomes (or possible outcomes) in terms of disvalue rather than value.[4] That is, a world with ten people having a good will and no one having a bad will is at least as preferable as a world with a hundred people having a good will and no one having a bad will (Ridge 428).

Now, there remains a question: how do we account for goods that are neither agent-neutral nor teleological, or for a bad that is neither agent-neutral nor teleological? The answer should rather be simple in our present account of the Kantian framework. There is only one good, namely, good will, and there is only one bad, namely, bad will. Both of these are agent-neutral

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[3] See Ridge 424.

[4] An interested reader may look at Ridge 427 to see Ridge's defense of this step.

and teleological. If there are any other goods or bad, they are ultimately reducible to or expressible in terms of good will or bad will, as Ridge thinks. For example, telling a truth may be a good but telling a truth is having a good will on this account. Similarly, telling a lie is a bad and is a bad will.

Before looking into P3: *An agent can only control his/her own will and has no control over the will of others*, let me briefly discuss another idea. Ridge asks whether it is possible for an agent to have a bad will himself/herself to prevent two or more people from having a bad will (Ridge 428).[5] *Prima facie* the answer is 'yes' because certainly we prefer a world with fewer bad wills and a world with five people with bad will is worse than a world with one person having a bad will. Therefore, Consequentialist Kantianism seems to fail to accommodate impermissibility of minimizing violation (refer to footnote 5 for the definition of impermissibility of minimizing violation).[6] This is a further problem because if minimizing violation is permissible then Consequentialist Kantianism will fail to deliver Kantian deontic verdicts across all situations.

However, Ridge thinks that this objection is surmountable. He appeals to the Kantian conception of free will (Ridge 428-430). According to it, each of us has control over our own will only (this is stated by P3: *An agent can only control his/her own will and has no control over the will of others*); we cannot control anybody else's will. The objection stated above rests on the presupposition that the agent having a bad will is *necessary* for others not having a bad

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[5] It is important to keep *n* (where, *n* is the number of bad will or in some sense the number of people having a bad will) strictly greater than one. Philosophers are conflicted over what happens when *n* is exactly one. Since that debate is beyond the scope of this paper, we stick to the assumption that *n* is strictly greater than one. [5] There is also a consensus among philosophers that it is impermissible for an agent to violate a constraint *C* once, even to prevent *n* violations of *C*, where *n* is strictly greater than one. This is known as impermissibility of minimizing violations.

[6] There is also a consensus among philosophers that it is impermissible for an agent to violate a constraint *C* once, even to prevent *n* violations of *C*, where *n* is strictly greater than one. This is known as impermissibility of minimizing violations.

will. This is not true on Kant's account. Kant would deny that the agent having a bad will can necessitate others not having a bad will in any way. Thus, this minimizing violation objection cannot hold good.

A diluted version of the previous objection still survives (Ridge 428). The diluted version runs as follows. It may be the case that an agent having a bad will is not necessary for others not having a bad will, but it merely increases the probability that others will not have a bad will. That is, if an agent lies it will not necessitate other agents not telling a lie but will merely increase the probability that they will not tell a lie. This objection cannot be overcome by appeal to the Kantian conception of free will. Kantian free will does not deny that an agent having a bad will cannot increase the probability of others not having a bad will. Now the question arises – if an agent having a bad will increases the probability of others not having a bad will, should the agent have a bad will? What is the right action? These questions lead Ridge to introduce P4: *An agent ought to minimize the risk of getting the worst possible outcome which* is his interpretation of the Kantian theory of right action.

Now, let us look at P4: *An agent ought to minimize the risk of getting the worst possible outcome*.[7] According to Ridge, "the Kantian should hold that an action is right just in case it is no more likely than any of the other available options to produce the very worst of the available outcomes" (Ridge 430). This is what Ridge calls his mini-min theory of right action (*ibid*). Put simply, our action is right just in case it reduces the risk of producing the outcome that is the worst of all possible outcomes.

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[7] The defense of P4 is rather weak – Ridge provides little reason to accept that this is the right interpretation of Kant's views. P4 is necessary to produce Kant's deontic verdicts across all situations. However, this does not mean that P4 accurately represents Kant's views.

Now let us see how the conclusion: *An agent ought not to have a bad will himself/herself follows*. The risk of the worst possible outcome increases if the agent has a bad will. Let me explain. If the agent has a bad will then the probability of having the worst possible outcome (that is, the agent has a bad will and everybody else also has a bad will) is non-zero, but if the agent has a good will then the probability of having the worst possible outcome is zero. This is because an agent can control only his/her will and this means that an agent having a bad will keeps the worst possibility open (that is, all others also have a bad will). But the agent ought to reduce the likelihood of the worst possible outcome. Everybody having a bad will is the worst possible outcome because compared to all other possibilities it has worse will and bad will is a thing of disvalue. Therefore, an agent ought not to have a bad will himself/herself.

Now let us look at Ridge's definition of side constraints. Ridge defines side constraints as "fundamental prohibitions against certain kind of actions which non-vacuously prohibit such actions (a) even when an action of that kind would best promote people's acting in accordance with that very prohibition *and* (b) even when so acting would promote the most value or expected value" (Ridge 423). Let me illustrate my reading of this definition by an example.

According to Ridge's definition of side constraints, I am prohibited from telling a lie even when telling a lie myself would best promote other people not telling lies and consequently would promote good will or expected good will. In this paper, I will proceed with this reading of Ridge's definition. This definition is different from the way I have defined side constraints in at least two ways. First, it has built within itself the impermissibility of minimizing violations. The impermissibility of minimizing violations features within the definition itself. Second, the way I have defined side constraints, side constraints are simply limiting on the agent's own action in pursuit of good – the definition does not give us any information about whether there can be any tempting reason to violate the constraints. Ridge's definition of side

constraints, however, tells us a bit more. It tells us that there can be tempting reasons in the form of some possible outcomes (namely, minimizing violations or maximizing actual/expected value) which might give the agent some reason(s) for violating constraints. For example, an agent can tell a lie once to prevent five other people from telling lies. But, as the definition also tells us, an agent ought to resist such temptations and not violate the constraint.

I will now argue that it is difficult to make sense of side constraints as defined by Ridge in the framework of Consequentialist Kantianism. This is because of the following two reasons. First, Ridge's entire framework attempts to accommodate side constraints and to show that violation of side constraints is impermissible even when doing so minimizes the overall number of violations. But Ridge says that side constraints are "fundamental prohibitions against certain kinds of actions which non-vacuously prohibit such actions (a) even when an action of that kind would best promote people's acting in accordance with that very prohibition" (Ridge 423). This is another way of saying, C is a side constraint if it is impermissible to violate C once by some agent even if that would prevent (or promote the prevention of) n number of violations of C by other people, where n is a number strictly greater than 1.[8] This is the impermissibility of minimizing violation. The impermissibility of minimizing violations is there in the definition itself. Ridge has defined side constraints in terms of impermissibility of minimizing violation and has tried to show that it is impermissible to violate a constraint in Consequentialist Kantianism! Impermissibility of minimizing violation is trivially true by the definition of side constraints in this account. Or is it the case that he thinks impermissibility of minimizing violation is conceptually prior to side constraints? That is, he thinks that side constraints should be defined in terms of

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[8] Refer to footnote 4.

impermissibility of minimizing violation. But defining side constraints in terms of impermissibility of minimizing violations is not very plausible because of the following reason. If it is plausible, then we need to define impermissibility of minimizing violation first and we need to find a way of defining impermissibility of minimizing violation without referring to side constraints. Ridge himself has not shown this can at all be done.

Now, I will look into the second objection. Let me grant that the previous objection can be addressed somehow. But there is still another problem. All that Ridge has shown is the following: we ought not to have a bad will even if having a bad will ourselves increases the likelihood of other people not having a bad will. What is the side constraint here? Ridge might answer – the side constraint is an agent is prohibited from having a bad will himself/herself (this is the only prohibition in his entire framework). But what does Ridge's theory of right action say that the goal of any right action is? The answer is again – an agent not having a bad will himself/herself. It seems that Ridge has made non-violation of side constraints the goal of one's action rather than having it as a constraint on one's action. This is not what any defenders of side constraints would want. Thus, at its best, Ridge's account of side constraints is confusing, troubling, and obscure.

Let us now look at the way I define side constraints – *limits on what can be done in the pursuit of good*. This definition is a plausible definition because of the following reason. This definition captures an essential feature of side constraints: they are *limits* on actions in the pursuit of good. Defenders of side constraints would want this feature in any definition of side constraints because they understand side constraints as limits of actions (Lippert-Rasmussen 54) – this is the defining feature of side constraints. Further, this definition is not only simple and has an intuitive appeal but is also liberal – defenders of side constraints may differ on what the limits on our actions are and why there are these limits. Defenders of side constraints, if

they use this definition, they will be able to describe what these limits are or why there are such limits in their own way without surrendering to any a priori constraints that arise solely from the way of defining side constraints.

Moreover, this definition is not obscure because neither does it define side constraints in terms of impermissibility of minimizing violation nor does it say that minimizing the violation of side constraints is the goal of one's action (rather, it makes it clear that these are limits on one's action in pursuit of some other goal). Therefore, it is immune to the two objections stated above.

Now, one might object that the impermissibility of minimizing violation is built into my definition as well. That is, they might claim that permissibility of minimizing violation is implicit in my definition but is explicit in the definition given by Ridge. And there is no significant difference between the two. Therefore, one might claim, my definition is actually similar to that of Ridge and is not immune to the first objection. I do not examine the truth of this claim in this paper. But even if impermissibility of minimizing violation is implicit in my definition (let me assume that the objection under consideration holds good) and somehow it is not immune to the first objection, then also my definition does better. It definitely addresses the second objection to Ridge's definition (as I have already described above). Therefore, my definition is better than that of Ridge because it addresses at least one objection and consequently, has fewer disadvantages.

However, even with my definition, side constraints do not exist in Consequentialist Kantianism. Let me explain why. What does an agent need to do to pursue the 'good' in Consequentialist Kantianism? The answer is: an agent ought not to have a bad will himself/herself. An agent is always required to *not* have a bad will according to this theory (and this is necessary to deliver Kantian deontic verdicts). There can be no possible scenario

when an agent can have a bad will himself or herself – which in turn means that there can be no limits on our action in the pursuit of the good. If there are limits on our action in the pursuit of a good will, then we fail to pursue the good will and end up having a bad will. But this is not permissible in Consequentialist Kantianism. In this sense, no limits can exist in the pursuit of not having a bad will and conclusively, there exist no side constraints. This is problematic for the defenders of side constraints because they would want that at least one side constraint exists such that the side constraint is compatible within the consequentialist theory. Thus, Consequentialist Kantianism, having done away with side constraints (instead of accommodating side constraints in a consequentialist theory), is also not appealing to the defenders of side constraints because for the defenders of side constraints there is nothing left to defend – Consequentialist Kantianism cannot have the very thing, that is, side constraints that the theory purports to explain (cf Ridge, 2009, p.422).

III.   **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, I have shown that if side constraints are defined as *limits on what can be done in the pursuit of good*, then Consequentialist Kantianism has no side constraints at all. That is Consequentialist Kantianism is not compatible with side constraints. This is a problem not only for defenders of constraints but also for Consequentialist Kantianism (as Consequentialist Kantianism at least tries to accommodate side constraints in a consequentialist theory). I have not given any solution to the problem, but at least this paper gives reason to believe that Consequentialist Kantianism needs some revision in order to accommodate side constraints.

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3. A THINKER BASED APPROACH TO RESTRICTING FREEDOM OF SPEECH

- **DAKSH WALIA (He/Him)**

Batch of 2021 at Ashoka University

ABSTRACT

Seana Shiffrin argues for the protection of freedom of speech as an instrument for benefiting the rights of individuals as thinkers. They argue that censorship disrupts the intellectual growth of individuals, and impedes their welfare, and possibly rights, qua thinking beings. I disagree with this and argue that upholding interests of individuals qua thinkers also requires us to place restrictions on speech acts which condemn the whole or a part of an individual's identity, thus creating space for censorship. The very rights of individuals qua thinkers at the core of Shffrin's arguments would also call for some forms of censorship in situations where free speech hinders an individual's intellectual development. One may object that such a restriction prevents those expressing opinions tagged as hindering, for example: hate speech, from being corrected; political dissent, from being expressed. I reply that political discourse falls under public expression which is distinct from the case of bigoted speech, and the thinker interests of someone expressing their identity are more important than someone expressing a belief about other's identities. Additionally, in the case of politics, attacks on individual identity which target the person's sexuality, gender, race etc. should not be part of political criticism, which should focus on their expressed political opinions, ideologies, and actions.

I.   INTRODUCTION

For large parts of history, the discourse around freedom of expression has focused on the need to protect it from intervention. From Mill's defence of liberty, Shiffrin's thinker-based approach, the efforts of intellectuals have been concentrated in trying to defend this freedom. However, recently there has been a debate within liberal spaces as well as broader intellectual circles about the limitations of the freedom of expression, or whether there should be any such limitations at all. This has led to questions about 'the right to offend', or other forms of speech which can be categorized as racist, sexist, homophobic or any other form of bigotry. While most

freedom of expression activists do allow for a restriction on hate speech which incites violence and causes physical harm, the question of hate speech which is offensive and may cause non-physical harm to another individual but does not cause physical harm remains unsolved. The more recent defense of the freedom of speech by Seana Shiffrin utilizes thinker interests to argue for this liberty. I will use these principles to argue for limitations on the same. In this paper, I argue that a thinker-based approach to freedom of speech should restrict speech acts that condemn the whole or some parts of an individual's identity.

II.   <u>SHIFFRIN'S ACCOUNT</u>

Shiffrin argues that the interests an individual has as a thinker, are the foundation for free speech, as this liberty is necessary for the development and maintenance of her self's thinking faculties (Shiffrin 80). For the purposes of this paper, we will refer to the interests of the self as a thinker as simply the interests of the thinker. They argue that freedom of speech plays an important role in the development of each thinker's mind and personality. According to Shiffrin, thinkers have an interest in developing a capacity for practical and theoretical thought, apprehending the truth, exercising the imagination, and having moral agency. They also have an important interest in becoming distinctive individuals, responding authentically, living among others and getting appropriate recognition and treatment. Fully developing one's mental faculties with the ability to identify its contents, assess them, and differentiate bits of information we merely know against those we fully endorse also requires externalizing of mental states. We need to project what we are thinking in order to fully evaluate particular statements and decide whether to endorse, reject, or modify them (Shiffrin 89). This process requires them to explicitly represent them, linguistically or otherwise. They are unable to carry out complex processes and evaluations through mental language only. Representation and external articulation are

significant in developing one's thoughts. It is important to engage in free and sincere communication for fully executing our responsibility towards the development of other thinkers, and to be equal parties to the discourse that governs our lives. The flow of evaluation flows both ways, ensuring that free speech is crucial to the development of the thinker as well as effectively carrying out responsibilities towards the development of others. Thus, Shiffrin argues for freedom of speech as it fulfils the interests of thinkers, or individuals as thinkers.

III.   IN DEFENSE OF CENSORSHIP

1. Applying Shiffrin's Account to Censorship

I argue that the interests of thinkers also place certain restrictions on freedom of speech. The seemingly consequentialist assumption behind Shiffrin's argument is that we should do what best serves the interests of individuals as thinkers. They seek to display how freedom of speech is beneficial for thinker interests and so deserves protection. However, by proving that these interests can be harmed by some kinds of expression, using the same assumption of promoting thinker interests, that expression must be limited or restricted. The force of this paper is to formulate a justification for banning speech that is deeply offensive in nature. Examples of the same include homophobic, sexist, racist speech acts, and I argue that such speech acts harm thinker interests in a significant manner, providing grounds to curtail freedom of speech.

Consider the following exchange between two individuals-

A: There is no such thing as climate change, it is a myth made up by scientists to make themselves more relevant.

B: The global weather patterns have been rapidly changing, it is unreasonable to deny a phenomenon we witness for ourselves every day.

And now contrast it to the following exchange-

(Trigger Warning: Homophobia)

C: I have been reconsidering my sexuality over the past few months, I think I am homosexual.

D: Homosexuality is immoral and vile. It is unnatural and you must seek treatment for it.

It seems rather odd to place the statements made by B and D in the same category of speech acts and give them an equitable treatment as far as freedom of expression is concerned. Even though both are made in response to, and seek to criticise, a statement made by a previous speaker; they differ in the nature of speech act performed. B seeks to critically evaluate A's claim about the world and provide evidence that would challenge it using observations. However, D makes a normative judgement on an individual choice made by C, and in passing that judgement, also expresses condemnation of that practice and the individual adopting that practice. Hereon, I argue that speech acts like D that seek to condemn or pass value judgements on choices of individuals pertaining to themselves, violate the interests of the condemned thinker, and must be restricted.

To understand the harmful effect that bigoted statements have on thinkers, we need to understand how society interacts with the individual's personality development. In the Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel argued that the process of identity formation was also a dialectic between the self and the other, or the individual and her society (Singer 78). An individual's self-consciousness is threatened when this 'other' fails to recognize the various dimensions of its personality. Hannah Arendt furthered this idea by arguing that aspects of the self can develop in solitude, i.e. by being in dialogue with oneself but it still needs external

acknowledgement to reconcile the 'two-in-one' dual identity that is formed in solitary dialogue (Arendt 476). A lack of acknowledgement can lead to extreme psychological distress and the dire challenge of loneliness. Recent studies have also argued that aversion to the feeling of loneliness is a biological response and points to a human need for social connection (Hawkley). Consequently, avoiding loneliness is an important interest for individuals, and could lead them to curtailing their expression if they find that the society condemns them for expressing certain aspects of their identity and this is antithetical to the thinker interests that were enlisted earlier.

2. <u>Harmful Speech Acts and Identity Formation</u>

Speech acts that express a condemnation of an individual's personal identity create an environment that is antithetical to the thinker interests of the condemned individual. Such expressions are often value judgements based on some aspect of the individual's identity, attaching a negative value to it, which makes the expression of such identities more precarious for those who do possess them. We have identified that social acceptance and acknowledgement from others is an important interest for thinkers. If they express something that has a negative value judgement attached to it, they will face a deficiency of social acceptance and be criticised for such an expression. As a result of the strong impulse to avoid this, they will then seek to censor out that particular expression. When this expression is a part of an identity they carry, this means that the negative value associated with the identity leads them to censor an important part of their overall personality, and prevent the thinker from being fully represented in society. This also means that they will never get recognition for the identity they censored out, which will either lead them to try and change the identity, or in cases where that is not possible, prevent it from going out in public. These are all adverse contradictions to the interests of thinkers, as they prevent them from becoming distinctive individuals by forcing them to censor their identity, do

not allow authentic responses, and prevent them from getting external recognition. As we must carry out actions that best promote the interests of thinkers, acts that are detrimental to the same must be restricted. In this case, that means that speech acts which condemn an individual's identity are not part of the freedom of expression and must be restricted. This not only includes physical acts that cause harm, but also verbal or written acts whose harm we have proved above.

The challenge of lack of recognition gets much worse when ingrained in systematic discrimination and injustices. The power imbalances against marginalized groups means that the discourse they live in is not reflective of their identity, and is often dominated by the oppressor. In such a scenario, it becomes even more important to prevent negative connotations from being attached to their identity, as these statements are often made by those who marginalized them in the first place and possess considerable socio-political power. The marginalized groups live in a narrative that they do not have control over, and can be deeply detrimental to their interests as thinkers if left unregulated. They will fail to find any recognition or acknowledgement for their identity, and worse still, would find its condemnation leading to extreme cases of self-censorship. An example of this is the idea of closeted gay people, who do not reveal themselves due to the fear of social persecution. A vital intervention to protect their interests as thinkers is to restrict speech that condemns them.

IV.   OBJECTIONS

An objection to this argument could be that this restriction is a violation of the interests of those who hold such opinions and limits their growth as thinkers and restricts scope for political criticism. People who hold opinions that fall under the category of restricted expressions are unable to express them, and thus their thinker interests are harmed in a similar

way to those who are at the receiving end of these offensive opinions. Not being able to express these opinions in public also results in them never being opposed and understanding that they are wrong. Lastly, the scope for political criticism can be curtailed by these restrictions. Criticising political personalities or individual's political beliefs require you to engage with their personal beliefs as well, and that must not be restricted. This would make it hard to distinguish offensive speech from the domain of free expression, and reduce the force of expressive liberty massively.

I respond that there is an important distinction between personal and public opinions which demarcates the restrictions on freedom of expression. Personal opinions or expression is concerned with oneself, while public expression seeks to make claims about issues that are of public interest. Thereby, an individual's belief about economics or politics is something that can be criticized because it is relevant to the public domain. However, their sexuality, race or other parts of their identity which do not affect the public discourse should be protected from criticism. One should not make normative judgements on aspects of people's identities that do not affect them. Additionally, it is important to distinguish pejorative responses from constructive criticism. Consider the following statements:

X: I support party J because it works for the development of the nation.

Y: While party J may have marginally benefited the nation economically, it has impeached on citizen's rights, so it has not benefited the nation as a whole

and shouldn't be supported.

Z: Supporting party J is a stupid decision, you are an immoral and insensitive individual who does not care for others.

While both Y and Z are responses to X, they again differ in the speech act they perform. Y seeks to give a counter claim and provide justification for that claim while Z is passing a moral judgement on people who endorse X, and does not counter the claim itself. Our conception of freedom of expression would extend to Y but not to Z, as the latter does not add any value to the discourse and passes a value judgement on the individual's identity.

Attaching an additional pejorative value to someone's opinions is not healthy for public discourse, but it is a much greater problem when this value is attached to an aspect of the individual's identity. It is hard for individuals to have their beliefs criticised, but the harm that comes from having their very identity question is much worse.

As for the trade-off between the thinker interests of the one who expresses such opinions pitted against those to whom they refer to, the latter's interests are more important in this scenario. The expression they are denied is one of their own identity and personality while the other group is being denied the chance to voice their judgement of someone else's identity. There are many beliefs one holds and not all beliefs are equally important. We assign different values to beliefs, our reaction to someone disagreeing with what dessert we like best is generally much weaker than our reaction to disagreement over how society should be politically structured. One's belief about their own identity and self are also more important than our beliefs or judgements about others' identity. We engage with the world with a specific view of our own identity, and it is a central part of our mental world. This is also visible through the concept of an 'identity crisis' showing how individuals' own identity are paramount parts of their mental world. On the other hand, our beliefs about others' identity are secondary, no one delves into a crisis when they do not know something about another person because these beliefs are not central to our mental world. Consequently, the interests of those whose identity is

threatened are more important here as they pertain to themselves rather than their judgement of others, and so their thinker interests are of a higher importance. The relevant thinker interests of the group whose identity is threatened are more important than those of the offending group who are only barred from expressing a belief pertaining to judgement of other people's lives, and so deserve more protection. More importantly, the people who are being denied expression under this restriction do not face a general lack of representation in discourse which is in contrast with the status of marginalized groups who lack representation already, and thus have more crucial concerns.

Lastly, while truth is valuable in public discourse, educating those with false beliefs cannot come at the cost of identity development of others. In most cases, people with bigoted beliefs do not change them even when exposed to rational arguments that should compel them to do so, and this is a result of the failure of reason to change the affective responses of the mind. Even if achieving this truth was somehow possible, it would come at the cost of people's identity development being hindered. However, the value of this truth would be that their acceptance in society would increase, so we are preventing the very same interest from being achieved immediately, just to achieve it at a future date. A much better solution is to restrict speech acts which condemn an individual's identity.

V.   **CONCLUSION**

Through this paper, we see that the thinker-based defence of freedom of speech should not espouse absolute freedom. Maximizing the protection of the interests of individuals as thinkers requires not just a provision for freedom of speech but also reasonable restrictions on the same freedom when required. I utilized the same interests as Shiffrin did to argue for freedom, in order to show the limitations of this freedom. The speech acts which condemn an

individual, and as an extension, a thinker's identity or some part of it, are detrimental to thinker interests and must be restricted. This paper refutes the idea of 'the right to offend' under freedom of speech and defends the placement of certain restrictions on this liberty.

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4. THE UNACCEPTABILITY OF WAYS OF LIFE IN RAZ

- AMAN KHULLAR (He/Him)

Batch of 2022 at Ashoka University

ABSTRACT

Joseph Raz aims to answer a liberal dilemma: freedom of expression is given excessive protection and value in liberal societies compared to how much people care about it. He argues that freedom of expression requires protection because it is a public good. The public expression of our ways of life helps validate our ways of life. I object that Raz's concept of validation does not ensure the public acceptability of ways of life. I also show how Raz's inclusion of attacking speech in the purview of protection defeats his aim of promoting people's well-being because his theory assumes an incomprehensive and impractical account of the nature of interactions between people and communities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Joseph Raz deals with a liberal dilemma posed by the provision of freedom of expression: citizen's interest in their freedom of expression is meagre compared to the protection it receives in liberal societies. Raz attempts to answer this puzzle by arguing that freedom of expression is a public good. By being a public good, freedom of expression is essential for a society; it encapsulates the interests of the society as a whole. Raz's core argument is that the public portrayal and expression of people's distinct forms of life — composed of opinions, attitudes etc. — validates these forms of life. The censorship of the expression of views and opinions exhibits an authoritative condemnation of their whole lifestyle. Raz also contends that his theory of freedom of expression entails the protection of speech that expresses criticism or hostility towards other ways of life, which he refers to as *attacking speech*. In this paper, I argue that Raz's conception of the validation of ways of life doesn't ensure their public acceptability, and that his theory's protection of attacking speech

weakens his core argument of the validation of ways of life.

I begin the paper by charitably reconstructing Raz's theory that portrays freedom of expression as a public good. I explain his conception of the validation of the ways of life and his argument for protecting attacking speech. First, I present my argument for analysing a flaw in the overarching idea of validation. I show that Raz's own logic and assertions result in the failure to attain public acceptability of the ways of life. Then, I demonstrate that protecting attacking speech effectively invalidates Raz's theory because it is counterproductive to the wellbeing of the very people Raz intends to promote.

II.   RAZ'S ACCOUNT OF VALIDATION

Freedom of expression is at the heart of liberal thought. Philosophers have long dealt with the task of formulating a theory that accounts for the core ideas and interests in the freedom of expression. While most freedom of expression theories tend to focus on the interests of different stakeholders in exercising speech (such as speaker, listener, audience, etc.), Joseph Raz addresses the liberal puzzle posed by freedom of expression. Raz posits that people have far more interests in having employment or avoiding accidents on the road than having the right to free expression; however, freedom of expression affords stronger protections in liberal societies compared to the value people attach to their interest in it. To answer this paradox, Raz argues that freedom of expression is a public good, which makes it an essential component of public culture.

Raz provides three arguments for his thesis: democratic justification, the validation of ways of life by public portrayal and expression, and censorship as an insult. His core argument is that the public expression of ways of life validates them. He introduces the idea of *ways of*

life to refer to the various distinct kinds of lives human beings live. These characteristics are "an aspect of a wider net of opinions, sensibilities, habits of action or dressing, attitudes etc. which, taken together form a distinctive style or form of life" (Raz 309).

One's opinions, attitudes, activities, emotions etc. all constitute a distinct form of life. Its expression performs two important functions: to familiarise the public with various ways of life in the public sphere, and to ensure public acceptability of the ways of life being expressed (311). Validation of a way of life entails that people gain the reassurance that others are aware of their problems, experiences etc. and that they are accepted in society. Public expression enables people to identify with their way of life and believe that "their way of life facilitates rather than hinders their integration into their society" (312). Raz contends that the freedom to receive validation of a way of life is essential for the wellbeing of the individual. It is also important to note that he proposes a criteria for "valuable" ways of life that qualify for protection of speech: ways of life having redeeming features.

Raz also extends his argument to cover "speech by people who do not share the style of life about aspects of which they express themselves" (310). Under the previous inclusion, people can express their views about ways of life which they themself do not follow. Further in his paper, Raz makes an argument for protecting attacking speech: the kind of speech that expresses hostility or criticism towards other ways of life. I intend to analyse the scope of validation of ways of life in Raz's argument and demonstrate that protection of attacking speech is not favourable for an individual or community's well being.

III.   <u>VALIDATION, NOT PUBLIC ACCEPTABILITY</u>

I use Raz's logic and assertions to show that his own assertions nullify his claim for ensuring public acceptability. I argue that the scope of validation of a way of life through

public expression doesn't ensure the public acceptability of that way of life. Raz doesn't provide an exposition of public acceptability; however, during his discussion of outcomes of freedom of expression, he asserts public acceptability of a way of life as a distinct outcome from the awareness and familiarisation of it. This distinction indicates that accepting a form of life means more than just knowing about it. I take public acceptability of a way of life to be the case when all communities and individuals in the public sphere approve of the way of life, including those with ways of life other than the one being expressed.

Citizens in a liberal state, one with a constitution and set of laws, are bound to accept ways of life if we take acceptance to mean merely maintaining peaceful coexistence. Individual citizens hold no power or authority to put restrictions on any fellow citizen's way of life and their actions. Citizens of a liberal state are bound to accept other ways of life as a result of the nature of the liberal state, which mandates that its citizens can freely practise their ways of life. Hence acceptance of a way of life, understood as accepting a community's peaceful coexistence, is not a choice in a liberal state.

For the concept of acceptability of a way of life to be of any interest to our discussion, it needs to be different from mere peaceful coexistence or from refraining from restricting other ways of life because citizens are bound by default to accept them, regardless of their public expression. Approval is an integral part of acceptability because although one may accept a way of life, one may not approve of it. For example, one may not approve of the practices of a particular religion; however, he may accept the people who follow the religion by giving them the space to practise their religion as they like. Hence, post expressing one's way of life, what one truly expects and desires is that people understand and approve of their way of life, beyond mere acceptance as defined by a restrictive definition of acceptability.

I now use assertions from Raz to demonstrate how public expression of ways of life does not ensure their public acceptability. First, Raz admits that "criticism of rival ways of life is a part of any way of life in the sense that it is implied by it" (320). This implicit criticism means that a person's expression of his own way of life entails an implicit criticism of any rival way of life, a way of life whose aspects like practices, attitudes or beliefs one disapproves of. The mere act of expressing one's own way of life criticises an existing rival way of life. Criticism of a way of life expresses condemnation of the way of life by the individual or community that follows a rival way of life. Raz admits this fact by stating that "criticism, hostility or neglect by individuals or sections of the public express only their hostility or condemnation" (320). Hence, public expression of a way of life leads to criticism of a rival way of life, and criticism expresses the condemnation of the rival way of life.

The condemnation of any way of life causes the disapproval of the respective way of life. On a conceptual note, condemnation signifies expressing disapproval in the first place ("Condemn"), and Raz asserts a similar relation between condemnation and disapproval. Raz states that censorship "expresses official, authoritative disapproval and condemnation of the style of life" ("Condemn") which is censored. Condemnation and disapproval of a way of life is a tautological way of denoting disapproval towards a way of life. Additionally, Raz asserts that censorship "expresses not merely disapproval of the particular act of expression which is censored. They express disapproval of the whole way of life of which it is a part" (Raz 312). Condemnation can be concluded to express disapproval due to two reasons. One, in a conceptual way, both signify the same meaning, and second, Raz is affirmative that disapproval of acts of expression entails disapproval of the way of life they are a part of. Using Raz's logic and assertions, I demonstrated how public expression, producing implicit criticism,

leads to disapproval of ways of life. My definition of public acceptability requires approval of ways of life for them to be acceptable. Hence, public expression of ways of ways of life does not ensure their public acceptability.

It is necessary to elaborate why disapproval caused by censorship is similar to the disapproval caused by expression of criticism, for my argument to hold valid. Censorship is the ultimate result of disapproval or condemnation of a way of life by an authority, in the first place. An authority considers a way of life to be objectionable and disapprove of it before deciding to censor it. Disapproval and condemnation are not only the result of censorship, they act as a cause of censorship in the first place. In a similar manner, an individual or community may disapprove of a way of life; however, they may not have the authority to censor the respective acts of expression. Censorship of certain acts of expression is a result of an authority's power to censor acts of expression. The initial notion of disapproval of a way of life that drives censorship is identical to the disapproval of an individual or community towards a rival way of life.

IV.   ATTACKING SPEECH WEAKENS VALIDATION

Raz's inclusion of attacking speech, speech that criticises ways of life, in his theory of freedom of expression weakens his argument for validation of ways of life because attacking speech has damaging implications for the well being of people who are criticised. In the previous section, I've shown that expression of ways of life doesn't ensure their public acceptability because it entails the implicit criticism of other ways of life which eventually leads to disapproval. Attacking speech is an explicit and more severe form of condemnation than what is caused by expression of one's way of life. Disapproval of one's way of life is an inevitable result of mere public expression of way of life. Now that we encounter attacking

speech which is an explicit and more intense form of expression of criticism, the harmful effects of attacking speech will be above and beyond disapproval of one's way of life.

Raz first expands the scope of protection of expression to cases of "speech by people who do not share the style of life as about aspects of which they express themselves" (310). This protection includes speech where a speaker can reflect, express or describe ways of life and their concerns that he himself does not follow. Raz further argues for the protection of speech that expresses criticism, hostility and neglect towards other ways of life. Attacking speech can be characterized as speech maligning or vilifying a way of life or its practices and ideas. Using the affair of Salman Rushdie, where the muslim community was outraged after the release of Rushdie's book expressing a critical portrayal of Muslims, Raz analyses a case of attacking speech, as he terms it. He argues that expression of criticism or hostility by individuals or sections of the public expresses only their hostility or condemnation; it does not carry the authoritative voice of the society (320). Authoritative voice or censorship of a way of life is insulting and harmful because it renders the people, following the censored way of life, as an unequal part of the society.

I object to Raz's proposition that 'attacking speech does not represent the authoritative voice of the society' because it assumes an impractical and narrow picture of how hostility is expressed and received in society. The paradigmatic case of understanding and analysing attacking speech is religious conflicts. There are various instances and examples of religious conflicts where expression of attacking speech can be identified as leading to severe conflict. One of them is the conflict between Islam and Christianity that Raz addresses. I will demonstrate the relation between expression of attacking speech and its societal manifestations of violence and hostility using the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. The rivalry between

Hinduism and Islam in India is similar to that of Islam and Christianity because the two religious communities, in each case, disagree and criticise certain ideologies and practises of the other.

Hindu and Muslim communities in India over the past hundred years have been in constant conflict at various instances. Ideologically and in their religious practises, Hindus and Muslims differ and disagree on issues like monotheism, proselytising, and practises like consumption of meat (Popham). They qualify as rival ways of life by Raz's definition. Historically, Hindus and Muslims in India have practised their freedom of expression to express criticism and hostility towards each other. The conflict between these two communities is not restricted to expression of attacking speech; on numerous occasions, there have been violent engagements and riots between them. Expression of hostility has manifested into islamophobia, communal politics, hate speech and most importantly, violence (Marlow). Expression of hostility, as witnessed in the case of religious conflict, is counterproductive and detrimental to the interactions between individuals and communities because of its harmful consequences. Consequences of hostility are damaging for the well being of people that Raz aims to promote.

Raz asserts that freedom of speech is critical to the well being of individuals because when people can publicly express their ways of life they can be an equal member of the society (312). Contrary to this claim, the provision of protection of attacking speech is harmful for an individual or community's interests, beliefs, and practises. The freedom to express critical views and portrayal of ways of life can hurt the sentiments of and demoralise the community being criticised and condemned; moreover, it can potentially create conditions conducive to severe conflicts. Sentimental, moral, and material damage to a way of life is

counterproductive to the well being of the followers of that way of life and to the society, at large, because it can induce distrust and resentment amongst people. Expression of hostility by an individual or community may not represent an authoritative condemnation on behalf of the society, but the consequences of such expression are threatening enough to consider their restriction. Raz does not present any clear benefit that one may derive from attacking speech except arguing that it is difficult for people and communities to avoid attacking speech. His two arguments for defending attacking speech are that one cannot expect people to avoid being exposed to attacking speech and that censoring attacking speech is not reasonable. Hence, attacking speech does not offer any inherent benefit to the speaker; however, it causes immense sentimental and moral harm to the person it is directed at.

An objection to my example of the Hindu Muslim conflict may be that the hatred and violence are a result of the government's propaganda and incitement of communal hatred. Such allegations make the mistake of putting the entire burden of the matter on politics and overlooking an individual's rationality to make decisions and actions. Communal politics may play a role in exacerbating the religious divide and spreading hatred; however, this proposition does not acknowledge that there are real tensions that exist between religions in ideological and cultural terms. The main actor who makes decisions and takes actions on his belief in cases of hatred and violence is the individual, not the government. In analysing the interactions between communities, it is unreasonable to disregard the authority that an individual holds in practising his rationale and following his beliefs because the autonomy and rational capabilities of an individual actor are important factors defining an individual's actions. The claim that government propaganda is the driving force behind such conflicts leaves out the considerations I proposed for the importance of an individual actor in religious conflicts.

V.   <u>**CONCLUSION**</u>

Over the course of this paper, I showed, using Raz's own logic and assertions, that Raz's argument for public expression fails to ensure public acceptability of ways of life. Public expression of ways of life inevitably results in the disapproval of ways of life, which doesn't qualify my definition for public acceptability. I then argue that protecting attacking speech weakens Raz's argument for validation of ways of life. Using the case of Hindu-Muslim conflict, I argue how attacking speech leads to hatred and antagonism between conflicting ways of life. Attacking speech causes more damage to the people it is directed towards than the insignificant benefit it may provide to the speaker. I also address an objection to my argument which contends that religious conflicts are a result of government propaganda. I respond that this objection fails to recognise the importance of the individual actor in cases of conflict.

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5. FREE WILL AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- **POORNA RATHI (She/Her)**
Batch of 2022 at Ashoka University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine how free speech theories may function in a deterministic context. The concept of determinism influences free speech theories in many ways. This paper first argues in favour of determinism using a hypothetical example. It lays out a concept called mindfulness, using which freedom of expression and determinism can be reconciled. It then considers how a specific free speech theory, Seana Valentine Shiffrin's "A thinker-based approach" can be modified to fit into a deterministic framework.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Seana Valentine Shiffrin, in *A Thinker-Based Approach to Freedom of Speech*, argues that most contemporary autonomy theories of free speech gloss over the individual *thinker* and the conditions necessary to develop free thought (Shiffrin 283). Her argument seems to assume a certain level of deterministic influence when it comes to freedom of expression because it asserts that freedom of thought requires that specific external conditions are met. However, her theory does not go all the way in accepting determinism.

In this paper, I argue that free speech theories, such as Shiffrin's, can go a step further in accepting determinism. I examine free speech theories from an entirely deterministic perspective. In the first section, I will discuss why and how determinism may apply to freedom of speech. I will do this by using T.M. Scanlon's *The Difficulty of Tolerance,* and his theory of audience and bystander interests. In the second section, I will discuss how Shiffrin's thinker-based framework may be modified to account for deterministic influences. I conclude by showing how this is a

useful endeavor simply because freedom of speech demands protection even with a theory as radical as determinism.

II.   DETERMINISM AND MINDFULNESS

First, it is useful to understand what determinism means in the context of freedom of expression. I define determinism as the idea that factors beyond our control govern all our thoughts and actions. When it comes to freedom of expression, this simply means that the thoughts we believe we want to express, or actions we think we want to perform, are in fact influenced by external factors that we have little or no power over. Meanwhile, what Scanlon describes as audience and bystander interests are also affected. All types of public expression aim at specific groups of people, and it is their interests that Scanlon calls audience interests. Bystander interests, meanwhile, are the interests of people who are indirectly affected by public expression (Scanlon 88-93). Someone may argue that public acts of expression function as a deterministic influence on audience and bystander interests. For instance, subliminal advertising is used by brands to influence consumers' responses to certain stimuli, without consumers being consciously aware of these influences. It could be as simple as a word flashing on the screen long enough for consumers' unconscious mind to register it, but short enough for the conscious mind not to notice it at all. Audience interests are undermined because subliminal advertising makes us think we have a good reason for acting in a certain way, even though there may not be any such reason (Scanlon 90). Subliminal advertising thus becomes an external factor that the audience is unaware of and has no power over.

I argue that determinism applies to freedom of expression on a broader scale than just audience and bystander interests. I will provide an example to illustrate this. When an individual believes that they have an idea they wish to express to a group of people, there are a lot of

external factors that influence this belief. First, the individual requires appropriate stimulation for certain ideas to be able to enter their minds. This stimulation could be anything, ranging from an open conversation, through reading a book, to watching a TV show. Ideas build off of one another and an individual thus needs exposure to other people's ideas to have ideas of their own. Second, external factors also affect the *wish* to want to express these ideas; the political and social environment must be conducive to people expressing themselves freely. It is possible to illustrate this with an example:

A man, Bob, wishes to express his support for a particular political party, called the 'country's party' (CP). Bob's support for the CP came about when he heard one of the party leaders speak at a public rally. He had also been occasionally seeing flyers and posters promoting the CP, though he was not aware of it. His friends and family keep discussing how charismatic the leaders of the CP are. The speech, in reality, moved him because Bob had been facing one of the issues addressed by the leader. However, he thought his support was a result of how charismatic and honest the speech was. Bob expresses his support for the leader and the CP through social media. The majority of the population of Bob's country supports the CP.

Bob's support for the CP is a result of many factors he is not even aware of – propaganda in the form of flyers and posters, positive evaluations of the party from people he trusts and the promise to solve an issue he feels strongly about. Moreover, his decision to voice his support through social media comes about because most people around him hold the same views as him. Thus, it becomes less likely he will face backlash for his opinions. Bob's example is useful because it illustrates how people can come to hold beliefs and ideals as a result of factors beyond their control or even their knowledge.

People who vouch for free will in free speech theories may object that individuals always have a choice between whether or not they wish to hold particular views or to express those views. Even after being exposed to external factors, Bob has a choice between supporting the CP or not supporting them. Even if he supports the CP, he still has a choice between expressing his support or not doing so. So, while external factors may limit the number of choices available to an individual, the individual still possesses the power of choosing between certain alternatives.

I would argue that individuals must at least be aware of the external factors influencing their views to have the ability to choose between holding them or not. We can term the concept of being aware of external influences as 'mindfulness.' Mindfulness would involve the individual examining these external influences for their validity, reliability et cetera. It is not impossible to resist making certain decisions, given that the individual is aware of the factors compelling them to make those decisions. Consider Bob's example again. His decision to express his support for the CP is a result of propaganda and positive evaluations of the CP he hears from people he trusts. If Bob is able to recognize these two external factors and consider whether or not they are valid reasons to extend his support for the CP, he is being mindful. However, if he does not consciously know the reasons behind his support for the CP, he cannot examine them for their reliability or validity. Consequently, Bob would then be unable to resist the external forces compelling him to support the CP. However, it is vital to note that while the chances of a choice becoming available rise significantly as a result of mindfulness, it is still not entailed.

It is also necessary to make a distinction between free speech and free will. Whether or not speech and expression are free is usually governed by the government of a particular country. I see freedom of expression as a more or less political concept that is based on the idea that people should be free to express themselves however they want as long as that expression does

not interfere with the freedom of other people. On the other hand, the theory of free will is much broader. It opposes determinism and argues that an individual has "control over one's actions" (O'Connor and Franklin, SEP) Free will is directly opposed to determinism, and claims that people always act freely and are able to choose their thoughts and actions. This paper focuses on the idea that free *speech* can operate even without free *will,* in a deterministic framework along with the condition of mindfulness.

The ideas of determinism and mindfulness expressed in this paper greatly influence and provide more strength to theories in support of freedom of expression. The next section will discuss how Shiffrin's freedom of expression theory would be affected by these ideas.

III.   DETERMINISM AND THEORIES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION-- SHIFFIN

Shiffrin's primary argument is that freedom of expression theories must focus more on the individual thinker, rather than just the speaker or the listener (Shiffrin 283). Free speech, according to her, is crucial for the realization of individual agents' interests such as self-development and self-knowledge. She argues that certain [external] conditions such as free speech are necessary for the satisfaction of the individual agents' interests (Shiffrin 291). The right to free speech that other people possess, here acts as an external factor influencing the interests of individual thinkers. This is the point at which Shiffrin acknowledges the deterministic influences that play a part in her framework.

However, I argue that Shiffrin does not account for the fact that deterministic influences may pervade her thinker-based framework on a much broader scale than she acknowledges. For the interests of this paper, I will focus mainly on one of the individual thinkers' interests she lists – 'responding authentically'. She argues here that rational thinkers are interested in forming

mental contents based on valid and reliable reasons, *uninfluenced* by external forces (Shiffrin 290). I would argue that her claim lacks in adequately explaining how this interest in responding authentically may be satisfied. While she accepts the role of deterministic influences at some level in her argument, she ignores it in talking about the interest to respond authentically. It seems to me she does not pay enough attention to how individual thinkers can go about forming mental contents without being influenced by any external factors. Simply the condition of free speech is not enough to satisfy the interest in responding authentically.

I suggest an additional condition that can modify Shiffrin's argument to satisfy the interest of the individual thinker in responding authentically. This condition is mindfulness, as discussed in the previous section. Mindfulness can usefully be incorporated into her theory to achieve this interest. Let us take Bob's example once again. Bob, as an individual thinker, holds an interest in responding authentically and expressing support for a political party based on reliable and valid reasons. As explained in the first section, Bob does not have much of a choice in how he responds in a deterministic framework even with the condition of free speech, unless he is mindful of the reasons behind why he feels compelled to respond in a certain way. Bob is being compelled to support the CP due to external factors, so his mind responds by supporting the CP. However, with the condition of mindfulness, it is possible for Bob to understand and weigh his reasons for supporting the CP adequately. He may then respond authentically to the situation.

A possible objection to this argument consists in the idea that not everyone can develop mindfulness, which then poses a challenge to arguments in favor of protecting freedom of expression. In a deterministic framework, there should be no reason that external factors do not also affect the ability of an individual thinker to develop the skill of mindfulness. For instance,

people's educational backgrounds, certain mental illnesses or even their lack of exposure to opinions different from theirs could present hurdles in the development of mindfulness. If deterministic influences apply to all individuals but the skill of mindfulness cannot be inculcated by everyone, then arguments to protect freedom of expression are undermined. This is because if not all individuals' mental responses can be trusted to be authentic and rational, it is not reasonable to protect everyone's right to free expression.

In responding to the above objection, I have to admit that there are certain cases, such as particular mental illnesses, where mindfulness cannot be fully developed. However, I would argue that in most cases, there is at least the *possibility* of an individual thinker actually becoming mindful of their thoughts and actions. As long as the possibility of the development of mindfulness exists, everyone's freedom of expression ought to be protected. Moreover, the objection that the ability to develop mindfulness is also subject to external factors only makes the case in favor of freedom of expression stronger. Free speech would ensure that individual thinkers are exposed to other individual thinkers' thoughts and ideas, making them more open to opposing views, thus being able to develop the skill to think about the validity and reliability of the factors affecting their own beliefs. Bob, for instance, would need to be living in a country that protects free expression to be able to develop mindfulness. If he is to recognize external factors compelling him to support the CP, he must have access to opposing views. He must be able to have a rational, open argument with another individual thinker. Consider a case where Bob's country does not allow for dissent against the CP. In such a case, even if he is able to recognize the external influences, it is very unlikely that he could test them for their reliability and validity. Hence, this makes a case for the protection of freedom of expression.

I must point out that while mindfulness can be developed over time, the mere protection of freedom of expression does not entail it. Therefore, this is a hole in the argument for free speech functioning in a deterministic framework and I have been unable to find an alternative or an addition to the concept of mindfulness in this paper. Nevertheless, a satisfying argument has been made in favor of the protection of freedom of expression.

IV. __CONCLUSION__

Determinism is often seen as a radical theory. This is because it completely dismantles the idea of free will and individual choice, and places all its emphasis on external factors to explain human behavior. It is a very challenging theory, and particularly so when it comes to the freedom of expression or freedom of any kind. This is because the idea of freedom itself is, in a way, antithetical to determinism. Nonetheless, there are ways in which the two can be reconciled, as has been shown in this paper. Mindfulness seems to be an adequate concept to reconcile freedom of speech and determinism, even though there may be alternative ways to do so. Mindfulness, thus, becomes a necessary but not sufficient condition for freedom of speech to be able to exist within a deterministic framework.

The arguments this paper makes are useful because they make a case for freedom of expression stronger. Determinism may be radical, but the theory is unable to make arguments in favor of freedom of expression redundant.

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6. THE CHOICE

- **VIKRAM MERVYN (He/Him)**
Batch of 2022 at Ashoka University

Beyond the green-tipped hills, the highway ran from Vellore to Sholinghur. If you looked towards the hills from the road, the trees grew smaller and smaller, and then slowly merged into clouds of green, as they climbed the summits. Now and then on the foothills and sometimes a little higher, you could spot a hut. This one, sat about nineteen meters from the road, on the foothills with the least greenery.

At about eight in the morning, Sundaram awoke, on his cot, with no memory of anything. He sat upright on the cot with his legs stretched out. The blanket with the mango pattern laid over his legs. He stared at the wall as though it were a person. The paint was peeling off on the corner touching the ceiling. There were moths and flies sleeping next to the tube light.

The thoughts that ran before his eyes meandered without a sense of need. They were void of any essence, and they seemed like dead fish that swam.

Sundaram discovered after a full minute that his arms could be lifted, his fingers crunched, his elbows bent, and that his neck could twist. He lifted one leg and then bent the other. He lied down again and rolled about on the cot. He ran his fingers across his face, and then his scalp. He felt that most of his head was skin, except in some regions long strands of hair stood, flimsy and weak. Sundaram found that his forearms were very similar to the scalp in terms of hair quantity. Then he sat on the edge of the cot with his legs dangling. When his feet fell to the floor, his veshti squeezed between his bum and the mattress, stayed on the cot, leaving his legs bare. Sundaram, then, caressed the soles of his feet. It was a peculiar feeling. He moved on, upwards. His calves were much like his forearms, in both function and form. The calves were just a little bigger. And then he drew similarities between his knees and elbows; quadriceps and biceps; hamstrings and triceps. Where Sundaram expected an armpit, he found a long, flaccid tube; a slug. He played with it. It began to grow. Sundaram found the growth of the slug between his

legs pleasing. He kept playing with it until it was no longer a slug.

"WHAT IS GOING ON HERE!" A voice boomed from somewhere.

Sundaram looked up. There was a woman. Her skin was dark, just like his. She was a fat woman. And the skin that was exposed from beneath her saree, tumbled down in rolls of fat. Her hair was the color of dusk with a few slivers of white.

"DO I NOT SATISFY YOU ENOUGH?!" She screamed. "Why do you have to fap like that! That too in the morning!!"

Sundaram stared at her, just like he had stared at the wall. He watched her flail her hands around. He heard the sound of her booming voice. When he listened to her, his mouth moved, mimicking the rapid jerks and stumbling of her lips. He scrunched his nose. There was a fragrance to her. Sundaram leaned in closer, sniffing. The woman heaved a large breath and then with one swift motion, as though she was a pro at all the arm-lifting, she pushed

Sundaram sent him flying towards the wall. His head hit the wall and the world shuddered. Sundaram peered around at the room wondering what made it shudder. And then he tried hitting his head again on the wall. The world didn't shudder.

"Amma! Why are you screaming?" A young man said, walking in.

He was thin. And young. He was otherwise the same as Sundaram. It was as though all the features he had felt on his face had taken their form as a sight for his eyes to look at.

"Appa!" The young man said. "Why is your dick out?"

"Aiyyo! Aiyyo! Aiyyo! Aiyyo!" The young man's mother wailed, beating her chest. "Tell me! How do I tell my own son what you were doing??"

Sundaram watched the two of them. Their actions were rapid and at times profound. There were instances when Sundaram's eyes widened at the elaborate detail and the effort that went into each movement. As he was watching them, like a grain of glitter, a spark, something glinted for a moment. Sundaram crawled away from the wall and sat on the edge of the cot again. His legs dangled. The lady and the young man constantly screamed and said things, while he searched

between their bodies for that glint. His eyes meandered from the green bureau to the shelf with the Tanjore dolls. And then it searched the ground, near their feet. And then he saw it: a figure just like him. The same elbow, the same scalp, the same quadriceps, the same everything. It peered back into him when he did that. It moved its hand when he did.

"No! Don't stop me!" The lady said. "I'm going to my mother's house, Gopi!"

"Amma! No!" Gopi said. "He's just gone crazy today… look at him. He hasn't said a word. Leave him be. He'll be fine."

And then the lady began to cry. She plopped herself on the floor as she cried.
"Why are you crying, ma?" Gopi asked.

"I used to scare you when you were young saying that the poochandi would come when you did bad…" She said, "Now…my husband is doing the WORST to me!! Where's the poochandi now?!"

Gopi lifted her up and took her out of that room.

"Appa, come out quick, once you get better," Gopi said, hitting his forehead. "Why are you the way that you are?"

Sundaram sat on the cot, thinking about getting off. There was no reason to get off. He knew none. He remembered none. And so he stayed.

He watched the wall for some time. And then he looked out of the window at some of the trees and at the babblers that leaped about. After that, he lied down and stayed in the cot. His eyes felt heavy and so he went back to sleep.

When Sundaram woke up again, the room was dark. The peeling paint wasn't visible any more and the tube light was switched off, and so he couldn't tell if the moths and flies were still there. It was pitch black everywhere. Sometimes a truck would pass on the road and the shadow of the window would glide across the wall occasionally. He felt his arms and legs again. He still had them. He sat up and groped around on the cot and on the table nearby. There was a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. There was a lampshade on the table.

Sundaram looked outside the window. Most of it was black. Some trees stood more black and so he could see the vague silhouettes of trees and rocks.

Outside, he heard Gopi and the lady chatting. They were loud. And then a figure crossed the window. A slouched silhouette, as though it was a man wearing a gunny sack over his head. It moved slowly, with a trot. Sundaram watched the figure go past his bedroom.

"WHEN WILL YOU GET OFF THAT STINKY BED, NAAIYE!" The lady screamed.

Following the sound, Sundaram looked through the slit between the wall and the door. There was light outside. The woman was cutting vegetables and the boy ate a piece or two, every now and then.

Sundaram watched them. And then there were knocks. It came down on the door like rain. Non-stop. And the knocks lost the crispness with every coming knock. And the sound became crude like the snapping sound you heard when you chisel wood, or when the ax finally breaks through the bark to the flesh of the tree.

The lady screamed. She screamed for a very long time. Sundaram peered through the slit. "The door has claws coming through it!" She screamed.

Gopi ran in and got a hammer. He kept hitting the claw every time it cut through the door and peeked in. But the holes in the door just kept getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger. And then finally, the holes began to grow into each other, until the door fell down in pieces.

A bedbug, the size of a grown man, stepped into the house. It had a large shell on its back, like a turtle. Its face was segmented into small fragments of exoskeleton. And then two antennae slapped about like whips.

Sundaram watched the bedbug walk into the house. Its antennae whipped against Gopi's chest. Gopi hammered its legs. The bedbug opened its mouth: two claws like hooks. And bit into Gopi's neck. Then, it lifted it up, and the floor was full of blood.

The woman wailed. She beat her chest when she saw her son die. And then she crawled to the room in which Sundaram sat. The bedbug followed. Sundaram leaned back now. He peered no more. The action got closer and closer.

The door swung open.

"Sundaram! Do something! Kill this thing! Ethavadhu Pannu!" She screamed. Sundaram watched her lips move and tried to mimic it. And then he saw the bedbug's mouth. He noticed that the claws of its mouth were oriented horizontally while his lips were oriented vertically. He tilted his head to see if he could move his jaw up and down like the human-sized bug.

"Save me! Save me, please!" She shouted and wailed. "Kaapaathunga!!"

Sundaram crossed his legs. The woman put her hand on his legs and begged for help. The bug had reached by then. It swung itself down and came back up with the lower half of the lady's body. It swung the half away while the other half laid bloody and dead on the ground.

Sundaram looked at Gopi's head far away. And then he looked at the lady's upper half. He began to see the similarities in their facial features.

The bedbug came to the cot. It whipped its antennae against the ceiling. Sundaram looked at its body. Its belly was hard. There were lines all across.

The bedbug opened its jaws and came at Sundaram. Sundaram reached for the lamp on the table and swung it at the bedbug. The bedbug's head dented with the blow of momentum. Sundaram swung it a couple more times and the bug fell dead.

Sundaram looked out of the window. And then he looked at the lower half of the woman's body on the other side of the room. Then he stared at her face. He waited for it to gesture. It was still. He looked through the door frame at Gopi's headless carcass, and the pool of blood around it.

And then he watched the trees again. The babblers were gone. He felt sleepy again only at three in the morning, which was when he slept.

Design: MaryAnne Rodrigues.