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ARTICLE

Democracy Today: Reflections on Derrida's Essay on Public Opinion

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ABSTRACT

Opinion is identity expressed in an interplay between ephemeral forms of creativity and the enduring need to codify, structure, and preserve these expressions across time. From the earliest physical and transient manifestations such as dance and performance to building artifacts that celebrate the cultural and aesthetic values of a society, lives the duality between the ephemeral and the perpetual. Language emerged as the means of expression—spoken then written—of the dialectic between the fleeting and the permanent, among other complexities of life. Spoken language, in prose or poetry, exists in the moment, not unlike dance and performance; yet, once written, its ideal content is preserved for posterity, reexamination and the study of linguistic structures as well as historic record, also affording historical continuity. Through grammar and philology, language is analyzed as a framework and vehicle for ideal and emotional content maintaining relevance and comprehensibility over generations. This inquiry into language parallels the broader artistic endeavor to balance immediate, intuitive expression with the desire to create a lasting cultural legacy. Just as dance or oral storytelling can captivate an audience in the present, the written word and enduring artifacts make these expressions available for access and interpretation. In architecture, built artifacts bear the parallel duality of form and purpose—utilitarian and emotional—within structures in symbolic meaning. And so, artistic expression is a continual discourse across many forms, whether ephemeral or enduring, with each form serving creativity that is at once instantaneous and historically relevant.

Keywords: Jacques Derrida; Public Opinion; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Georg Wilhelm Hegel; Linguistic Studies; Aesthetic Expression; Representation

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1. Introduction

While such inquiry came to be, its purpose, serving scholarship, had lesser impact on the currency of expression. Grammar, a Greek venture later taken up by the French, grew into an elaborate science of linguistics serving to resurrect and integrate Antiquity into modern thought; however, it left much outside of its immediate realm vulnerable to dissipation. Ferdinand de Saussure[1], in his A Glance at the History of Linguistics, traced an evolution from an introverted study of the laws governing antique expression into the prime tool organically leading collective identity to the rapidly evolving current times. He writes of a new crop of neogrammarians (Junggrammatiker)—the leaders of which are K. Brugmann, H. Osthoff, and others—liberating linguists from a hermetic existence. He credits them for language being an outcome of the collective thought of the minds conceiving of linguistics, rather than a creature wildly sprouting out of circumstance. Conclusively, balancing the ephemeral and the enduring, artistic expression is in line with Jacques Derrida's argument on public opinion as an anchoring linguistic force that derives its power from its own fluctuating nature. Derrida's post-structuralist view frames public opinion as both transient and enduring, like the evolution of language itself from its early oral fleeting recitals to the more lasting engraved, inscribed, and written forms. His concept of "today" refers to expression's dynamism, remaining continuously relevant through place and time. In public opinion, endurance is a function of content rather than form of expression. Opinion endures due to its standing for its very moment and being liable to change without notice as collective opinions transform through their constituents in perpetual tension between the moment and the underlying strife to preserve and structure for posterity.

This study examines the dialectical nature of public opinion as the prime vehicle for general will, on the one hand, yet one that is volatile and ever-changing in force and direction adrift time and circumstance. It visits Jacques Derrida's 1989 pamphlet, previously partially published in periodicals, presenting his views through his post-structuralist reading of the collective will when expressed. The text presents the dynamic nature of change as ever relevant across various contexts, but exemplified in the present moment, whenever "the present time" is. Derrida refers to this as "today," a fleeting time capsule that carries its significance forward through time, this is well within Ferdinand De Saussure's notion in semiology the significance of a notion travels along the movement of named notion through time.

2. Results

Democracy is no guarantee for public opinion to appear without interference and be documented in its raw and unprocessed form. While public opinion is procured by democratic means, another form of processing would have already taken place *a priori*. Democracy in this sense is a political form serving to license some forms of processing that happen under its umbrella that are ultimately subversive of some basic aims of democracy, not the least of which are transparency, direct association between will and representation unfiltered or violated through unwarranted intervention. A prevailing challenge in identifying public opinion may be considered a linguistic one: While public opinion implies direct reference to a collective voice, it is in fact unaccountable to a given subject. It is a passive voice that may as well be adopted as it may be orphaned depending on surrounding circumstances. Derrida wrote of the domain of public opinion being beyond electoral representation in that it could not be reduced to the makings of the general will or the simple summation of individual stances gathered, processed, analysed, even subjected to the theories of sociology or the methods of information gathering. Derrida pointedly sets it in linguistic terms that public opinion could not be appropriated to the first-person pronoun or the quaint syntax of subject or object. Public opinion is neither, another notion of De Saussure's. The latter qualification is one of syntax attributing public opinion to no accountable authority. It is at once a voice of no one and that of everyone, and that is no accident. There exists no single, immediately accountable author of public opinion, and this absence gives public opinion its authority. Through the stream of time and changing places emerges the power of public opinion as a stable voice, the stability of which is grounded upon its constant evolution. As a result, the discourse of "today" remains as relevant in virtual constancy as it would if moving swiftly with the tides of time and space, transcending the specifics of any single moment or location. Posts on social media platforms (particularly on Twitter or its reincarnation as X, and on YouTube) serve a role that recalls that of newspapers being affixed to the span of one day or less (when evening papers were issued in addition to the

standard morning issues). Such posts referred to their time and place with immediacy, retaining relevance and "freshness" that subsequent reflections or historic accounts may well lack. This is the core of Derrida's thesis in this regard. The title *Call it a Day for Democracy* sets the time frame for identifying public opinion as one day and with it the procurement practices being democratic, even if they do not truly guarantee the purity of the outcome or its true representation of the constituents. Such representation teeters on two contradictory domains: One is that of legal representation, or legally sound practices in gathering information by means that honestly reflect the opinions of the sources—summed or individually gathered—ultimately serving the collective public; the other is to recognize that a democratic practice, sound, honest, and focused, yet covering the events of one day would reflect the conditions of that day including its purposes, goals, aspirations, and realities, but little beyond. It truly reflects the one fact of short duration: Change.

3. Discussion

In 1992, Jacques Derrida contemplated the Europe of the day, sensing that some of the rudimentary makings of identity were in question at a time when the mechanism and techniques of sociological expression were seemingly unclear, maybe inadequately representative of the realities of the time: "*Today, what is public opinion?*" Derrida specifically refers to a current moment, knowing that *today.* Extended reference to temporal aesthetic expression is in Hubert *Damisch*'s work *Noah's Ark. Essays on Architecture*[2], edited by *Anthony Vidler* –2016 by MIT Press– as a fleeting instance along time. It is not only fleeting in its chronological duration, but in its circumstances, makings, even its consequences. The "public" is a presumed total of a given multitude summed up into a whole of an often-unverified character or tendencies. With its outcomes impossible to predict, democracy is presumed virtuous in affording the *dēmos*—the common people—access to making decisions, to given capacity. In other words, it is a means to unknown outcomes, one that is one with public opinion: Erratic and difficult to conclusively foresee. Nations vary in their aptitude to self-govern; however, dictatorship is not admissible on grounds of the public not knowing their best interest, thus calling for one person—or a select few—to govern in their stead. Even when a range of possibilities is outlined by demographics, cultural considerations, and geo-political properties defining a people, the public remains an organic collective for the purposes of a democratic operation. While Derrida considers the government of possibilities to defy force and reason, those possibilities are finite, not unlike those upon the throwing of a die having six sides limiting the possibilities to the same. *A Day for Democracy* refers to a day as a segment of time defined by condition rather than the direct count of hours. Derrida's day refers to a situation with all that may bring of poetic possibilities, in the Aristotelian sense in his *Poetics*. Public opinion is ephemeral, not unlike life itself, reflecting them and—while itself unforeseeable—often poetically foreseeing and prescribing new venues for approaching what life might bring along.

In defining what language is, De Saussure clearly distinguishes it (*langue*) from speech (*langage*), not necessarily setting the two apart as much as cautioning against reducing the former to the latter, while speech is a component or manifestation of language. He qualifies language as a manifestation of a social reality, a collective of conventions or conditions of which speech—rather the content spoken—is an outcome. At the outset of this paper, opinion was defined as identity expressed, leaving open what constitutes expression, the collective of human faculties by means of which the human will self-manifests. So does life itself, complex and unresolved as the primordial discourse and discord between natural order and the human will, Schopenhauer's world as will and representation in his *Essay in Ethics and Politics*[3]. Ferdinand de Saussure called for recognizing the heterogeneous nature of language, since it covers and hovers above life in its various areas, tangible or otherwise. Also, language, being a means of communication, is as much a property of the collective—that is, society—as it is of the individual. In that sense, language defies being limited to one aspect of cognition or one area of the human mind but not another; it is all-encompassing and must be understood with the context of this defiance and allowed its virtually limitless domain.

M. d'Alembert, the eighteenth-century French mathematician, studied music as a repetitive mathematical structure set around the *musical note*. Through his understanding of order and structure, d'Alembert recognized that what was born out of mutable circumstance would also be mutable

and could not be foreseen or set to systematic progression or predictable outcome. He stopped short of echoing Aristotle's *Poetics*[4, 5] where erraticism and tumult are the driving forces of history, poetry, political commentary, and entertainment. This is extensively addressed in F. M. Cornford's seminal study of *The Timæus* by Plato in *Plato's Cosmology*, London 1997[6].

Poetry, in the Aristotelian sense, is a timeless concept that remains relevant across the continuously expanding lexicon of media and communication. It stretches covering the expanse of human speculation on the event, current or past, outside of immediate recording. The musical quality of poetry is but the form in which it was set for enjoyment, but the content is what sets it apart from historical accounts, given that both could be, and were indeed, set to meter and song. Aristotle additionally set poetry apart from history in poetic accounts being imitative and completely free of consequence. War, death, destruction, and loss are tales of yore or presumed future unseen or felt here and now. They impart no sadness on the moment, today, and the audience could enjoy splendor free of material loss. Aristotle wrote that what otherwise is painful to witness becomes a joy to behold as realistic representation in art, living or dead, another nod to Aristotle's *Poetics*. And while Aristotle defined poetry through content, going beyond immediate accounts into speculative thought and commentary, Hegel placed poetry at the top of the hierarchy of the arts for its musicality and independence from filtration through several wills outside that of the initial skill of its creator. Ranking the arts in a list was a common practices in essays of aesthetic theory, Hegel's Lectures on Aesthetics were in that tradition in which he ranked the arts in scale from the highest to lowest (the highest being poetry and the lowest being architecture) depending on freedom of will: Poetry is the form of art that is freest since ideas are directly delivered through language to the audience, immediately communicating the initial spark of creativity, preserving its form and content to the greatest grade possible. Architecture, on the other hand, is an elaborately collective effort of multiple wills, skills, visions, and crafts all of which mediate the initial creative impulse, modifying it through the exigencies of material considerations, altering it beyond recognition into a final form that may or may not bespeak the original concept. As a creative act, poetry is the closest artifact to the will of the artist issued with minimal to no filtration or intervention by external factors other than those behind its formation. Once set free from consequence, narrative gives pleasure through the knowledge that it is being told for show; however, pleasure is not the sole aim of poetry, a notion that reconciles the two views of Aristotle and Hegel of poetry being, in fact, joyous and informative in its releasing imagination from the shackles of reality. Poetry may not be a term still used today, but in its original sense, it has assimilated the growing forms of speculative expression in audio-visual media, performance arts, and even virtual and augmented realities. With its relatable and direct vocabulary, poetry is essentially musical from journalism and radio through song and cinema, incorporating fact with fiction, emotion, and storytelling into the enduring charm of artifact.

Accessibility to the populace presented otherwise complicated discourses to the public, elevating public opinion to heights otherwise unattainable by the more elaborate, collaborative, and politicized forms of artistic expression. This accounts for the presence of poetry and song in folklore and epic where fact makes way for fantastic confections of imagery, costume, dance, and physicality committed to all but freedom itself. Aristotle presented history as an exercise in threading political discourse into a tale for the curious mind to examine potential and peril through narrative, referring to it as "experimental politics," similarly to how scientific experiments stand to validate theory. Political theorization remains so until tested on the grounds of reality for actual outcomes, and that is the role of studying history and threading it into documented accounts. Tragedy is an essence of art the way liquidity is a property of water that could be modified into ice or vapor to serve utility or ornament.

The way a word connotes often greatly varies from its immediate meaning. The work of context or circumstance, connotation is an indirect association to aspects not part of the thing itself but surrounding, interlacing and permeating it the way time, place, culture, and emotion do often eluding reasonable thinking yet remaining evidently real. Meaning varies with time, place, and context changing in combinations thereof without loss of significance. While naturally retaining its meaning, metaphorically, lightness experiences a widely varied dynamic that covers the range of negative to positive connotations depending on the purpose served in lightness or hindered thereby. A physical property of objects is weight pertaining to mass and the pull of gravity.

Etymologically, besides the immediate meanings of "*illumination*" and "*not heavy*," *light* means *unimportant* and *active*. The latter two meanings come from hasty, springy action that is lacking in thought as it is driven with agility. And while speed or agility is often a positive quality, they are, in this sense, paired with absence of mind or deliberation, thus wanting in positive consequence. And so, both meanings are interlinked in being trifling. Another aspect of note in this sense of the word is "*not heavy.*" Lightweight objects, words or deeds are understood to be insignificant or inconsequential. This is entirely a matter of connotation, for there is no direct connection between weight as a physical property and significance, except in an architectural sense where larger buildings, monuments, and structures last longer and are more resistant to the elements thus indirectly associated with significance.

By extrapolation, things of longer duration were of greater import, against the pertinence yet transient nature of public opinion. Longer duration served civilizations of yore where growth was slow, development took years to be in visible effect, and norms had deeper and longer lasting roots in common sensibility. But as times changed, so did the need for permanence. Mechanization radically changed the course of making in every sense. With newly patented instruments, new spaces were designed and built to accommodate new operations the artifacts mechanically made. New patents continuously issued drove change that spared no aspect of daily living bringing about the start of a new outlook to modern living: the notion of flexibility against obsolescence. An aspiration in design aimed to make artifacts that remained valid through as many changes in use as possible, making machines that anticipated enough change to remain purposeful long enough to justify their cost and utility before the next update. From machines to furniture, things were deliberately less durable and more versatile. With mass production already well underway in England by the second half of the eighteenth century, expanded notions in furniture design in France, intended *à deux fins,* by mid-nineteenth century looked to dynamic conditions of living, increasingly limited space and the growing need to accommodate new instruments and gadgets. An expanding sense of cognizance molded into a shorter-term outlook, devaluing overly projected planning in favor of more frequently revisiting a current state for modification in line with technical advancement. A modifiable structure is, in turn, known as a *light* structure, that remains intact while various components or members are removed and replaced for repair or improvement. By the same sense of the word *light*, a pliable or collapsible structure—one that can be made to manifest dual or multiple forms at will with no loss of structural integrity—is also a light structure, such as a temporary prop, a camping device or a stage design. Lightness as such is expressed in applying will to form and purpose without compromise. While the meaning of *lightness* remains the same throughout time, its connotations have evolved along with sensibilities and purposes associated with craft, means and methods of making and, most significantly, expression of utility.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon—a nineteenth-century French thinker and philosopher—wrote of a latent quality in an artifact that renders it irreducible to the material from which it was made, yet pointing out that materiality is one source of inspiration. The availability of iron, marble, and stone inspires the sculptor to work, but the resulting statue is more than the constituting boulder from which the statue was carved. Similarly, events inspired expression, poetic or factual, varying in extent and blending with imagination depending on the magnitude of said events. One of the greatest sources of inspiration was war, ever present in the story of humankind since the earliest known times and their surviving accounts. War inspired the epic—an account where event is told through confections of gods and mortals driving narratives, accounting for events that may challenge common sense through often imaginative tales to bridge missing details into legendary inspirational literature set to song and music affording performance and regenerative interpretation. In its very harshness, war inspired, universally catalyzing international transactions in ways that peace and docility fell short of eliciting. This quality drove Proudhon—also considered an anarchist—to state that had war not existed, art would have invented it. In that sense, poetic license bestowed unexpected qualities upon conflict such as entertainment and education, where lessons were learned, and possibilities considered. Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to have been rather than the way they were, bringing about that a poet's view is but their own and has no obligation to account for fact. Creative license could be explained in terms of both reason and emotion, rather than reason alone, and that makes for immense power. This is the power of opinion, and it is the

very same quality that necessitates acknowledging the erratic and tumultuous nature thereof, both individually and collectively, with conventional facts being contorted into mixtures born out of irreverence to serve rapidly evolving conceptions of a better life, social commentary, and developing value systems, all brought to the delight of the senses through the artist and the power of language. In his *Philosophical and Esthetic Letters and Essays*, Friedrich Schiller, German playwright and philosopher, addressed the power of language and authority of tradition in his concept of *the eternal yesterday*, as published in The Catholic Series, London, 1845 [7].

In his introduction to the English language edition of *The Other Heading*, Michale B. Naas wrote of the applicability of Derrida's paper to "present-day" political concerns being "elliptical," with Derrida's complexity of style and content remaining intact notwithstanding appropriation to time and place. This appropriation is described as corrective cycles of history in this author's chapter entitled *The Geometry of Democracy: World Affairs and the Cycle of Everything* that appeared in the 2015 International Institute for Advanced Studies'(IIAS) book *Manipulated Man in Manipulated Society* Volume One edited by the late George E. Lasker. And while "today" is time recurring with every sunrise, place in Derrida's paper is Europe. But for the interest of this paper, place—including Europe and other places—is the summation of geography, history, and the value system of laws and values binding them with language and expression. Language and expression define this analysis in form and content, "and it is not so much an analysis of particular public opinions as of the forms and means by which opinion becomes visible and effective," according to Michael B. Naas in his introduction to Derrida's *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* published in 1992 [8].

The three core abilities of Reason, perception, conquest, and reason—conceiving ideas—signify that Reason is the means of recognizing the universe external to our own being. Empirical reality exists in physical form, but also calls for faith for a full grasp, not unlike the existence of God. However, objects of faith as often defy Reason as they may comply therewith, calling for more than faith to validate external impulses. Where faith is applied to constant values, familiar ones, or concepts of comfort and surrender of choice, it is an act of Will toward a world that is subject to chance, unforeseen change, accidents, coincidences, and many other terms coined to describe what reason could not comprehend, prescribe, or predict. Derrida, once more, likens the autonomous motion of events around human cognition to the ice leaving the hand falling as they may according to forces of their own accord [9]. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had written a letter to Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert, eighteenth-century French mathematician, philosopher, and music theorist of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Paris among others across Europe. *On the Theatre*, with reference to an article that M. D'Alembert had written regarding inaugurating a theatre for the dramatic arts in Geneva, a matter that concerned Rousseau as a Genevan concerned with his own city and its occurrences, especially those with direct or perceived impact on shaping public opinion. It was Rousseau's thesis in this regard that called for Derrida's reference to that letter in his discourse on public opinion today [10, 11]. *"One of the inevitable effects of a theatre established in a town as little as ours will be to change our maxims, or, if you please, our prejudices and our public opinions, which will necessarily change our morals [manners] for others, better or worse I do not yet say, but assuredly less appropriate to our constitution,"* Rousseau wrote [12], reserving morally qualifying the impact of a major theatre on the values driving public opinion in the city. However, he understood that a dramatic theatre might disrupt the stability of morals and, consequently, their connection to absolute values such as to the Constitution. Derrida had core interest in the dialectical dynamic between politics and the arts, a driving force of public opinion toward perpetual mobility and changefulness from day to day [13]. The Greek *ephemeros* means *lasting for a single day*, a descriptive term with little moral import except in instances where perpetual change speaks of dynamism, innovation, and susceptibility to innovative thought, as would be both in the arts and in public opinion. The arts represent creative minds, and public opinion represents popular discourse, including—alongside politics—the arts, popular taste, and current affairs, and so in both cases *ephemeros* is virtuous. It is a measure of *lightness—levitas*—another term describing freedom from the shackles of convention, even the replaceability of components without jeopardizing collapsing the structure.

Set adrift by chance and circumstance, public opinion has the virtue of unpredictability and is innately resistant to forecasting except through open discourse, where specula-

tive scouting is a transparently public and inclusive activity of its moment[14]. It is but a morsel of life, at once open yet vulnerable to elimination or other random perils, always remaining relevant to current events and aware that public opinion must be reported only by democratic means. True to its means, public opinion is uncertain and precarious, the same way democracy itself is a well-meaning premise to uncertain conclusions—by evidence of some leading democracies—be it in means or end, otherwise being "the rhythm of public opinion" according to Derrida, a path that is external to the opinion in its uncertainty, "for it breathes, deliberates and decides according to other rhythms." Rhythms are punctuated with occurrences that are at once common, frequent, yet critical to shaping things along the passage of time that include referenda, parliaments, polls, and the transforming voter, the very source of legitimacy for public opinion[15].

Authority of public opinion comes from the legitimacy of the voice it represents and is thus an ethical authority rather than a legal one; for public opinion is not law. It is an embodiment of the disparities within the societal fabric, at once making for society's strength yet explaining the unpredictability of its political stance, or attributing a unified voice thereto, as in "who is public opinion?" In acknowledging the inevitable multiplicity within unity, public opinion is reported in the passive voice that, while denying immediate authorship, transfers it to the voice of the media carrying the content back to the people. Derrida questioned this transference as being not implied so but an act of filtration and intermediate authorship subject to scrutiny as such: "*The newspaper is supposed to secure a place [lieu] of public visibility proper to informing, forming, reflecting or expressing, thus, to representing, an opinion that would there find the milieu of its freedom.*" The media—in reporting, polling, and the more involved role of editing—*forms* and transforms content, creating it into the image of its editors with virtually no limit to the extent of transformation beyond satisfying a now-new collective will besides that of the public source and destination: That of the news creators. Ideas are extrapolated in several directions as required to build the journalistic slant or media outlet policy or any number of names descriptive of the media outlet and its ideological direction[16]. This may not be as "evil" as the critics of media practices often suggest, probably since public opinion often comes about without a core of ideology or a prescribed "whole" that makes it a direct sum of its parts—namely the individual. In this sense, the question arises of how the individual relates to the collective in owning public opinion complete with inconsistencies, variations, and unpredictability. Derrida considers the collectiveness in delivering opinion in group somewhat of a critical mass that augments the credibility of a given political stance built up in great numbers that are constituted of individual views[17]. Public constitution, rather than being a simple addition, is a complex augmentation of components as numbers as well as character where they may subtract or cancel one another as well as they may directly add up resulting in unforeseen composite creatures identified as "the public" that may not be in the image of its individual people in whatever image that collective might be.

4. Conclusions

Public opinion may be solicited, in polls among other mechanisms of collection and reporting, or it may be reckoned with when voiced uninvited in the various forms of activism, uprisings, even revolutions, but always intended to exercise judgment or decision-making. Derrida describes public opinion as taking place "outside statutory representation." Naturally, statutory representation that has place for public opinion is a democratic one, for, in autocracies, there would be no room within the legal structure for the expression of opinions outside the designated holders of power, and this observation remains intact for nearly all the points made in this argument, and largely in Derrida's essay as well. This notion explains Derrida's coupling the discourse on public opinion with the implied reference to parliamentary democracies as a model of government. He cites Article XI of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* regarding freedom of the press prohibiting "the formation, expression, and especially the publication" of public opinion outside representations of the parliament and other duly recognized bodies. Apparently, this continued to be in effect to include the legislation on the press in 1881[18]. Derrida carries on with modern references of expression of public opinion and representations thereof including cinema, through some "accelerated" means of expression that—while present in the context of speeches, declarations, and demonstrations—appear independently in their impact on expression, namely putting an end to it all, and that is bombing. He literally places bombs along the

path of expression as an attenuation of both cause and effect, yet on that is an earthing of the pent-up charge behind the acceleration. The latent charge analogy further describes anger as undefined, unintellectual, without a set aim or purpose, not unlike its manifestation, the unpredictable, unforeseeable public opinion of unknown disposition not unlike dice having just left the hand. An expression resisting placement inside or outside statutory order, public opinion bears the meaning and moral import of its authorship, circumstances, and, above all, its timing. The multiplicity underlying the authorship of public opinion might explain the underlying paradoxical, thus inclusive, nature of its being at once of several disparate qualities, being "philosophical, political, theoretical, and practical" with the linguistic commonality of a populace, yet the ideological precision of a collective mind where errors and points of selfishness were smoothed out through differences and cancellation of individual passions into the selflessness of a people with a cause and an objective that is all-inclusive and all-representative[19]. Now, social media afforded public expression unprecedented levels of independence, notwithstanding that social media platforms do have editorial policies enforced through censorship, cancellation, and closures, often raising once again questions regarding freedom. Freedom from mediation seems more possible than ever, if not freedom from one's own limits and retrains. "*Can one speak seriously on the press in the press?*" Derrida asks, and replies, "*Yes and no*," when it is a *no*, in fact. It may be unclear what "seriously" qualifies the question, but—qualification aside—freedom from intervention, rather than freedom of will in its absolute sense, is not possible. At least, public opinion can vie to remain free of gratitude to an external entity, be it an individual or several, for public opinion must remain autonomous, born out of its own internal forces[20], cancelling redundancies, rounding sharp edges, and hearing extremities closer to a common central stage, and proceeding forward toward a commonly perceived source of light and fresh air out of constraint and out to the open.

In an age where social media has largely replaced regulated network television as the primary source for procurement, collection, and delivery of public opinion, the question of gratitude or allegiance to a new source seems as pertinent as ever. This takes the form of questioning editorial policies of social media platforms, such as Facebook (now rechristened as "Meta" and owning Instagram, WhatsApp, Threads, etc.) and Twitter (renamed X). At the dawn of the age of social media, the general expectation was that they were cyberspaces dedicated to free expression, with no bounds or limits, no rules, and no "editors" to prescribe or define right, let alone wrong. Soon, this expectation was proved to be an illusion, and while no editors were found, algorithms ushered in a new age of invasive suggestions, unsolicited marketing schemes, and more gravely, censorship on grounds of opinions being eliminated for their containing terms flagged for elimination. While such technology is far from groundbreaking or unexpected, its employment against the notion of "open skies" and the newly found expanses of freedom was a reminder, once again, that the parameters of expression, political analysis, and unfettered discourse, even in the age of big data collection, will come with new limits built to the size of the new age of expression, maintaining the relevance of age-old concerns for freedom of expression, artistic representation, and exercise of the will to voice public opinion.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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