A Halt in Society

In history, ancient Rome was the greatest civilisation of the first few centuries. The empire was unstoppable: winning war after war and people believed they were happy because no one ever had to know what the government was conspiring. Roman censors were powerful politicians who maintained morality and made sure to keep the public under their fingertips. As the government spiraled into a demise however, so did the censors who came with it, ultimately leading to the downfall of the empire. Ray Bradbury author of the dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451,* written in 1953, presents similar ideas of a world in which censorship and authority has gotten out of control to the point that there is no life left in humanity. Today we live in a similar yet slightly different empire. A global empire of thoughts, ideas, and information being passed with the click of buttons. While an overload of information can certainly be overwhelming for a diverse and sensitive society, **humanity cannot thrive where there is censorship. It shows weakness in leaders and society, it does not only hide what people see, but hides and controls their thoughts, and censorship causes punishment, rather than rehabilitation towards the future.**

Censorship is something much more than distorting the audio when a vulgar word or theme plays during a song. It is the roadblock on a street of ideas between two people’s minds. In a song, a vulgar word is simply an idea. An idea that parents, teachers, and others alike do not want their children, whose minds are still shaping, to become influenced by, representing low-class, limited vocabulary, and a more rebellious lifestyle. “If you hide your ignorance, no one will hit you and you'll never learn.” (Bradbury, 2). Censorship, in a way, is a form of weakness, not only in that these ‘swear words’ are only powerful because of the fact that they are censored, showing that censorship creates power in what was not intended, and weakness in what was, but more-so because it is easily attainable happiness. In *Fahrenheit 451*, all books and information are censored from the world, creating a powerful, strong, fearful meaning behind the books, and most importantly a cheap sense of joy. Easily attainable emotion is a first-hand sign of weakness. Reality is filled with harsh truths that must be confronted in order to surpass, learn from, or overcome. As quoted, “Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, top-heavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it.” (Bradbury, 3). The government in *Fahrenheit 451* is scared of the public, and therein the society cannot function with the government scared of what the public may do, because that only leads to one thing, total control.

Brain-washing may have seemed like a thing of fantasy as a kid. Although the Hollywood inspired brain control machines are still exclusive to television, there is no doubt at all, that the government has the power in a technology, and internet-based society like today to make people think what they want. A mother censoring her child from music with inappropriate topics and words doesn’t do so because she doesn’t want her child to hear them, she does so to avoid thinking like them. The government does the same. The censorship of any form of information is their form of metaphorically hooking you up to that cartoon brain controlling machine. Humans aren’t known to be the smartest and most advanced animals for a reason, our ability to think for ourselves and go outside of the box of what is normal or allowed is partly the reason that people have advanced so far. When we begin to hold back any independent thinking like in *Fahrenheit 451*, our civilization is halted or may even be demised. Numerous moments in history that have been iconic moments of change have been from what was not allowed or seen before. The French revolution among others is responsible for democracy and less corrupt politics; a very important part of modern-day governance. Learning and fixing the past is important for the world and censorship only makes it so we hide further and further away from fixing our own mistakes.

The Christian religion has taught many that humans are not perfect, and mistakes are a part of everybody. Faith aside, being ‘only human’ is a commonly said phrase, expressing that people should not be blamed for actions because everyone tends to do the wrong thing. Why is it so common to hear young teenagers swear even though their parents often forbid it? Why did roman slaves rise against the empire? Censorship encourages punishment rather than rehabilitation. Hiding people from something and punishing them for being human and using their curiosity, like *Guy Montag* of the book who is curious about once again reading the bible, but is punished for such actions, makes us as people no better than the masters who censored and punished roman slaves. Arguably then, if it were not for a reduction in censorship which allowed us to realize what had been done, we may have still lived in a slave society today.

Censorship may be a useful tool to help with the public in sensitive times and to keep life simple, but as all tools, if they are relied upon we forget what we are able to do by ourselves in the first place. It is clear that humanity cannot thrive where there is censorship because it shows a weakness in society, it controls people’s thoughts, and causes punishment over rehabilitation. We as people have come so far in only a few short millenniums, to believe it can be so easy to have it all go away.

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