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**HATE SPEECH AS AN ABUSE OF FREEDOM OF  
SPEECH**

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# **HATE SPEECH AS AN ABUSE OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

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In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

RAHMİ UYSAL

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Date (17.06.2022)



*To My Dearest Family...*

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## HATE SPEECH AS AN ABUSE OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### ABSTRACT

The thesis thematises the actuality of abuse of free speech through three different – early modern, modern, and near-future – accounts of this nexus, demonstrating how the abuse continuously takes on new appearances. I initially define abuse of freedom of speech as hate speech in terms of corrupting free speech by populism through demagoguery, commercialisation, and security concerns. I argue that hate speech no longer emerges in the classical form of insults and swears against particular minorities or people. Instead, it originates from demagoguery, the reduction of free speech to a commodity, the psychological pressure of security politics, and the culture of fear. I name this form of hate speech the abuse of free speech. In doing this, I use mixed methods research. I firstly handle the critical film of Ken Russell's, *The Devils* (1971) through the textual analysis method of film studies. *The Devils* is interesting to reconsider in a contemporary context because of its explicit focus on the demagogic element in the nexus of parrhesia, cancellation, and self-censorship. Later, the study turns to *The Circle* (2013), a novel by Dave Eggers, which elaborates on how the attempt at creating a transparent society causes the perversion of free speech through commercialisation. I examine the novel via literary analysis. In the next chapter, the study discusses how security concerns and fear legitimise hate speech through critical discourse analysis of former US President Donald Trump's speeches on immigrants. To conclude, I articulate, in a prism, how populism corrupts free speech and leads to hate speech through demagoguery, commercialisation and security concerns, and I underline the problems of populism by associating them with liberal democracy.

**Keywords:** Freedom of Speech, Hate Speech, Populism, Abuse



# İFADE ÖZGÜRLÜĞÜNÜN İSTİSMARI OLARAK NEFRET SÖYLEMİ

## ÖZET

Tez, ifade özgürlüğünün kötüye kullanılmasının gerçekliğini, bu bağlantının üç farklı - erken modern, modern ve yakın gelecek - anlatımıyla temalaştırıyor ve kötüye kullanımın sürekli olarak nasıl yeni görünümler kazandığını gösteriyor. İfade özgürlüğünün kötüye kullanılmasını, demagoji, ticarileştirme ve güvenlik kaygıları aracılığıyla populizmin, ifade özgürlüğünü yozlaştırarak nefret söylemine yol açması olarak tanımlıyorum. Bu noktada araştırma, nefret söyleminin artık belirli azınlıklara veya insanlara yönelik klasik hakaret ve küfür biçiminde ortaya çıkmadığını, bunun yerine demagojiden, ifade özgürlüğünün bir metaya indirgenmesinden, güvenlik politikalarının psikolojik baskısından ve korku kültüründen kaynaklandığını savunur. Araştırma, bu nefret söylemi formunu, ifade özgürlüğünün kötüye kullanılması olarak adlandırır. Bunu yaparken karma yöntem araştırma şeklini kullanıyorum. Araştırmada ilk olarak Ken Russell'ın eleştirel filmi The Devils'i (1971) film çalışmalarının metinsel çözümleme yöntemiyle ele alıyorum. The Devils, parrhesia, iptal ve otosansür üçgeninin demagojik unsura açık bir şekilde odaklanması nedeniyle, filmin çağdaş bir bağlamda yeniden ele alınması ilginçtir. Daha sonra, çalışma yönünü, Dave Eggers'in (2013) şeffaf bir toplum yaratma girişiminin ticarileştirme yoluyla ifade özgürlüğünün nasıl saptırılmasına yol açtığını detaylandıran romanı Circle'a çeviriyor. Romanı edebi analiz yoluyla inceliyorum. Sonraki bölümde ise çalışmada, eski ABD Başkanı Donald Trump'ın göçmenlerle ilgili konuşmalarının eleştirel söylem analizi üzerinden güvenlik endişelerinin ve korkunun nefret söylemini nasıl meşrulaştırdığını tartışılıyor. Sonuç olarak tezde, populizmin ifade özgürlüğünü nasıl yozlaştırdığını ve demagoji, ticarileştirme ve güvenlik kaygıları yoluyla nefret söylemine yol açtığını bir prizma içinde dile getiriyor, ve populizmin sorunlarını liberal demokrasiyle ilişkilendirerek altını çiziyorum.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** İfade Özgürlüğü, Nefret Söylemi, Populizm, Suistimal

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Despite its past centrality in daily life, religion, philosophy, and politics, today 'freedom' appears to be an economic concept that merely is readily perverted for political interests. While freedom meant obtaining political rights against the government and intellectual emancipation, it has now been reduced to freedom of consumption (what to buy, which to buy...) in the market. However, my discussion is not disrespecting the concept of freedom or limiting it to the economic idea. Instead, I intend to categorise it and enrich the debate. Therefore, I classify freedom as political, religious, philosophical, and economic.

Substantially, political freedom is to fight for civil rights and the ability to resist tyranny. In other words, a free person is out of the ruler's authority to reign the city. The ruler cannot command a free person. On the other hand, religious freedom is to act to the extent permitted by God freely. Philosophical freedom emerged from the religious approach. It refers to the emancipation of the mind. Last but not least, the economic one deals with freedom of consumption and free trade.

In this thesis, I solely treat freedom in terms of political freedom and follow Spinozist political philosophy. I define freedom as the capability to act and not to act within one's free will against any power. I handle power as the capacity to give the order. On this account, in a political body, insofar as the individuals can disobey orders, they are free. If individuals must obey the command, they are in captivity. However, as in Spinozist philosophy and Atomism, my intention is not to go into the determinism theses in my study. Instead, I restrict the capacity to act or not to act to political freedom.

Notably, Spinoza (2010) mentions that freedom can be only realised with freedom of thought. In his political philosophy, the individual(s) is free to the extent they express themselves freely and comfortably. Starting from this argument, I began considering and working on free speech. I dealt with the link between freedom of speech and tyranny in this regard. Tyranny and despotism, both taken in the same sense and used interchangeably in the rest of the study, mean to rule over people without their consent. I handle free speech as a critique, control mechanism, and apparatus for citizens to be free if the government turns into tyranny. Paradoxically, however, although free speech must be a control mechanism of despotism, it is used to normalise/legitimise hate

speech by populism, which I call the abuse of freedom of speech. Following this, populism, as a method, misrecognises itself as a democratic structure to hide its abuse.

What has enticed me to this theme is the intriguing lack of awareness and bluntness with which the 'the abuse' is taken for granted today. In this regard, my main reason to work on this topic is to emphasise that while free speech should be a tool protecting minorities, enabling all citizens to share ideas and criticisms against rulers, and advancing democracy, it is ironically turning the hateful, separatist, and vulgar language of despots, autocrats, and populists into an apparatus to legitimise. Hence, I underline that the problem we face in daily life and politics is the perversion/abuse itself.

I intend to vividly decipher the *idée* of the perversion/abuse that has shaped itself in different times and forms, in the context of populism and free thought. In effect, the perpetrator of the idea of perversion is not fixed, and the same, but despotic methods are part of the constellation. But the main point of my research is the perversion caused by *right-wing populism*, which has increased its effectiveness with religion and nationalism.

What is striking in such perversion and abuse is that hate speech is about insults, swears, and vulgarity, demonstrating these negative statements as if disguised as patriotism, security, and counsel. Therefore, I argue that hate speech no longer emerges as insults and swears against particular minorities or people. Instead, it originates from demagogy, the reduction of free speech to a commodity, the psychological pressure of security, and the culture of fear. A democrat-looking despot can trigger hate speech with praise and a smiling face. Importantly, such an approach can enlighten us to reinterpret hate speech from a different point.

As the method, I chose three cases from the different timelines, early modern, modern, and near future. Because my purpose is to indicate that the abuse of free speech is not political, economic, and communicative but also a metaphysical issue is reshaping itself through different forms. This study intends to understand how populism abuses free speech and causes hate speech.

Methodologically, my thesis constitutes an empirical-oriented method. Theoretically, I build on these classical and modern authors mentioned above. Empirically, I draw these cases: the Devils, a popular film in the US and the UK, Dave Eggers' best-selling novel, the Circle, and the infamous, controversial former president of the US, Donald Trump.

In this regard, I use mixed method research. Firstly, I analyse the film *The Devils* via textual analysis of film studies and decipher the use of hate speech as a weapon. Later on, I examine *The Circle* through literary analysis. The research's last case is Former US president Trump is handled through critical discourse analysis of his speech about immigrants on YouTube videos.

The film is inspired by *The Devils of Loudun* (1989), written by Aldous Huxley and *The Devils*, a play indited by John Whiting (1966). Later, I deal with a contemporary best-selling novel about the perversion of democracy and its political and economic consequences, *The Circle* (2013). Lastly, I handled internationally infamous former American president Trump, whose populism many people loved to hate.

In each chapter, these cases are analysed independently, but there are main parts together that I theoretically discussed in Chapters 1 and 5. My theoretical attention focuses on chapter 1 comprehensive together theoretical analysis based on the above-described academic landscape. Mainly, I use theories articulated by such as Spinoza, Hannah Arendt, Carl Schmitt, Hobbes, Diken, etc.

Written in this prism, the thesis consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1 deals with the theoretical background of free speech and hate speech. It investigates abuse, hate speech, and populism through demagoguery, commercialisation, and security concerns. Here I depict the forms in which abuse occurs. Later, I discuss populism as the perpetrator of the abuse of freedom of speech by associating tyranny and populism. The chapter focuses on how populism contains despotic practices that pervert democracy and free speech. Chapter 2 deals with demagoguery as abuse. It thematises parrhesia, cancellation, and self-censorship through a critical analysis of Ken Russel's film, *The Devils* (1971).

Chapter 3 copes with the commercialisation of free speech through the close reading of Dave Eggers' novel, *The Circle* (2013). Here I focus on voluntary servitude, the spiral of silence, and political correctness. In this context, I elaborate on how freedom of speech is abused by despotism by misrecognising itself as anti-despotism. Chapter 4 discusses neo-despotism, the culture of fear and security through former US President Donald Trump. Here, I examine how neo-despotism abuses free speech by using fear and security concerns to legitimate hate speech.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion, finally returns to the actuality of the abuse of freedom of speech and sums up my line of thinking throughout the thesis. Here I initially re-emphasise the link between populism, hate speech, and the three senses of demagoguery, commercialisation, and security concern, and discuss the possible constellations of this link, which allows for further differentiation based on repetition.



## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Isaiah Berlin claims that there are more than 200 meanings of the word ‘liberty’ (Berlin 1969, 2). If we consult the ancients, Aristotle (1998) for instance, we come across an understanding of freedom that is articulated in the framework of the master-slave relation through an important concept, the ‘use of the mind’ (see Agamben 2016). On this account; the master is a free man who uses their body with rational foresight and is not exposed to someone else’s pressure to act. The enslaved person, in turn, is the one whose body is controlled to be laboured as the animate instrument or particular machine. Hence, those whose bodies are not the property of others and rule themselves with their minds are free citizens.

As political animals, as *zoon politikon*, free citizens are not, in fact, totally at liberty (as they would be in the state of nature). Because through the social contract, they renounce their freedom to some extent to live in harmony. As Locke writes, political association is grounded in a ‘voluntary union’ of free subjects who actively choose their rulers and their form of government (Locke 2017, 75). Citizens consent to transfer their rights to the sovereign to live as one body.

However, to function as free individuals within society, they must be able to express themselves freely. For Spinoza, therefore, individuals’ political freedom within the society and the state is solely realised by freedom of thought. Every individual is the master of his/her own thoughts and must freely express them. Speaking under the pressure of another power is the very definition of slavery. A regime that approves the prohibition of freedom of thought can only lead to tyranny. Therefore, where there is no free speech, tyranny reigns. At this point, Spinoza makes an essential distinction between the free city and the despotic city. While the first is based on law, freedom, and rationality, in the second one, ‘the domain of the law is colonised by superstition, and free speech is criminalised’ (Diken 2021a, 58). In other words, freedom is, first and foremost, free speech.

How, then, can we define freedom of speech? Emancipation of mind and spiritual and psychological liberation of humanity is not our topic in this thesis. Instead, I seek to problematise the relationship between political freedom and freedom of speech. In this context, political freedom mainly appears as a capacity to realise one’s actions willingly

and express oneself without resistance, pressure, limit or authority. Where there is no freedom of thought, oppression and intolerance accompany a separatist and despotic environment. Since individuals are free to the extent that they express themselves, freedom of speech can work as an instrument that prevents despotism and political bondage.

Importantly, Spinoza insists that democracy should be built rationally because the aim of democracy, its reason, is ‘to avoid the desires as irrational, and to bring men as far as possible under the control of reason, so that they may live in peace and harmony (Spinoza 2010, 441). Any action contrary to this principle would only mean the ruin of democracy. Suppose democracy turns into a government dominated by emotions, passions, and irrationality. In that case, the rise of demagoguery is inevitable, and it always results in tyranny, that is, the abuse of freedom of speech. Demagoguery is fed by fear and corrupts democracy and free speech.

Therefore, it is interesting that tyranny often emerges due to corrupted democracies. As Plato (2003, 356) sarcastically remarks, even a donkey and horse can be a leader due to insatiable freedom in democracy. In this prism, the biggest problem of Democracies is the demagogues who can deceive the public and lead the way to tyranny, which Plato defines as the perversion of democracy. In tyranny, the ruler does not want the public to express itself and advocate its rights.

Along similar lines, Aristotle mentions “Anyone who is a rival in dignity or free-mindedness robs tyranny of its superiority and its status as a master of slaves, and so tyrants hate him as a threat to their rule” (Aristotle 1998, 168). Tyranny has no tolerance for free thought. Hence, free speech is a mechanism hindering tyranny and despotism. Insofar as individuals have free speech, they achieve their liberty. However, hate speech occurs when freedom of speech is used in vulgar, offensive, or hateful language. Here I propose the concept of abuse of freedom of speech to define hate speech in a different dimension.

### **2.1. Hate Speech As An Abuse of Speech**

Like freedom of speech, hate speech has various definitions and uses in literature. Brown, for instance, points out that “Nowadays a great many different kinds of people who are not legislators, legal professionals or scholars of law use the term ‘hate speech’” in countless different types of context about a tremendous diversity of



phenomena” (Brown 2017, 424). Examining international human rights does not underline the ambiguity between hate speech and free speech, nor does it give a specific definition of hate speech. The Council of Europe, in turn, emphasises that exceedingly negative statements that threaten social peace constitute hate speech. Yet, this definition, too, does not still clarify the concept of hate speech and its distinct sides from free speech.

Likewise, for the Committee of Ministers, “hate speech covers all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance” (Council of Europe 2022). Subsequently, in Western philosophy, hate speech was a tool of religion and religious institutions to present and legitimise the enmity and hatred against infidels. Just as the Church is against Jews and Islam or vice versa, hate speech was an instrument of these institutions.

Initially, freedom of speech emerged as the idea of religious freedom (tolerance) against hate speech. In essence, hate speech is the way to reduce freedom of speech to hateful emotions. In this regard, I define hate speech as hateful and vulgar language emerging from the perversion of freedom of speech. Hate speech appears when free speech is reduced to offensive and cruel emotion and passion. The perversion is realised when free speech is not used against tyranny but utilised by tyranny itself and causes hate speech. In our study's kernel, the abuse is recognised owing to demagoguery, commercialisation, and security concerns.

## **2.2. Populism and Abuse**

Now I examine populism in terms of perversion of free speech and despotism. I define populism as producing political discourse according to the public named underdogs, which roughly refers to conservative, low-income, and uneducated people. However, the data from cases in research indicates that the problem arises when populists perform claiming to speak for the underdogs despite doing the opposite. In this regard, populism is to perform a kind of demagogic discourse. Nevertheless, to clarify our argument, the definition should be expanded.

If we take Ernesto Laclau's (2005) approach, populism is a part of the discursive construction of certain normality and is the voice of the underdogs. However, the problem is that this political discourse cannot turn into action. For example, Leaders in

the US who use populist discourse from Trump to Biden, have not been able to oppose the gun lobby or capital centres in America, no matter how much they say they are on the side of the people, underdogs. Moreover, the data shows that the wealth of leaders such as Putin, Maduro, Biden, Trump, Aliyev, and Xi Jinping, who can be positioned as populists, has reached millions of dollars (Money. 2021).

Populism is part of the discourse to be produced about them, but it is not necessary to do what is said. In this regard, I handle populism as a political discourse, unlike political ideology. Treating populism as a discourse will help us understand the emptying out of the concept. In other words, it can often be ironically seen to make promises on behalf of the underdogs and to protect the capital.

I start explaining populism through Oscar Wilde's (1969) despot definition and articulating the relationship between populism and despotism. According to him, "there are three kinds of despots. There is the despot who tyrannises over the body. There is the despot who tyrannises over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannises over soul and body alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People" (Wilde 1969, 773). Diken (2021a) correlates *the people* with populism and adds sovereignty, governmentality, and populism to the third kind of tyranny.

The tyranny of the people can evolve into the tyranny of the majority or the underdogs' despotism, also called populism. It must be accentuated that there is an inner relationship between despotism and populism. Diken (2021a) underlines that the concept of despotism is a metaphysical problem that appears at different times and in different ways, not only in politics but also in everyday life. In this context, populism is a neo-despotism of demagogues learning from despotism and following its principles. Then, what is despotism?

I define despotism and tyranny is to reign arbitrarily over people without their consent. Along similar lines, Ancient Athenian correlates despotism with the perversion of democracy. Plato (2003) says that despotism springs from democracy. He (2003) writes that tyranny turns the state into the wretchedest form of government, resulting in slavery, disorder, and unlaw. Likewise, Aristotle (1998) notes that despotism as the perversion of kingships. He (1998) emphasises, that, unlike a virtuous king, a tyrant is a self-interested, corrupt ruler who enslaves his subjects. For Diken, "despotism initially

as an arbitrary rule, in terms of the transgression of the distinction between law and unlaw" (2021a, 4).

As can be seen, populism is a tardy term that has existed since Plato but is referred to differently. As a belated term, populism was used synonymously with despotism in ancient Greece and late modern times. Indeed, it takes the role of despotism to pervert democracy just as despotism. The tyranny and despotic actions that exist within the democracy that Plato warned about are veiled with the concept of populism. Especially in liberal democracy, the gravity of the situation is made up by using populism instead of despotism. The problem is that while saying to Trump populist, we cannot call him a despot. In the United States, which prides itself on its democracy, the despotic practices of a president like Trump are simplified as populism. It just helps to hide the despotism that is the crisis of democracy. Another philosopher who associates this term with despotism and fanaticism in the late modern period is Spinoza, which we will examine under the title of demagoguery.

Indeed, the problem is despotism itself. These actions are blurred as soon as despotic and tyrannical actions are named populism. In essence, populism is a different form of despotism but uses the same principles. According to Diken, "Insofar as despotism is the internal perversion of democracy, the concept of populism is a contemporary stand-in for this perversion that eats up democracy by speaking for the demos" (2021a, 127).

Populist despotism arising from democracy claims to speak for the people but consolidates its power. According to Aristotle, "the ones who attempt to establish a tyranny are either the most powerful (popular leaders in democracies, dynasts in oligarchies) or those who hold the most important offices and hold them for a long time" (1998, 153). Hence, democracies, particularly away from the rationalism of Spinozist philosophy, always risk giving birth to populist despotism. How, then, does populism pervert democracy?

The problem of populism is that it produces politics according to the silenced thoughts of the public, which is typically limited by political correctness. For instance, it produces politics by reviving ideas such as racism, fascism, Nazism, sexualism, etc., which are suppressed. Significantly, populism has demagogues abusing the people's emotions with hope and fear. Moreover, it reduces politics to emotion and economy. Politics is based on constantly changing feelings and economic interests. Populists

ignore real issues of the underdogs, even if they claim to struggle for the benefit of underdogs and create artificial problems and enemies to manipulate the public for their own interests. Instead of solving the problems of the lower classes who cannot benefit from health services, Trump delays these problems with the immigration agenda.

Therefore, populists do not tend to produce politics about an issue but use it with empty hope and fear. As a discourse, populists claim to speak for the lower classes, but whether to act is up to their initiative. Moreover, they protest technocrats and cultural elites but do not try to be an alternative to them. Further, while abusing democracy, populists ironically present themselves ironically as "true" democrats, who apply democratic values suitably like free speech. Trump claims that he is someone who protects and follows democratic values such as free speech, justice and collaboration, and he blames his opposites as populists.

Canovan (1999) underlines the victimisation that populism benefits most. According to her, "populists see themselves as true democrats, voicing popular grievances and opinions systematically ignored by governments, mainstream parties and the media" (Canovan 1999, 2). At the core of populism is the ongoing victimisation from which it draws its strength.

Taggart mentions, 'populists tend to identify themselves with a "heartland" that represents an idealised conception of the community they serve' (Taggart 2002, 67). The centre of populism is constituted by victimisation and the heartland, not the people. The essence of populism needs the resentment against an enemy to maintain its policy.

Populist tendency gains public support through freedom of speech and determines an internal and external enemy, named corrupt elites. There might be continually resentment insofar as there is an enemy and an "other". Christa Deiwiks emphasises that "the demarcation between the 'people' and the 'other' expresses itself as resentment" (2009, 3). They present themselves as a victim while positing an enemy against them. Hitler was a victim against elite Jewish capitalists, Le Pen against immigrants and radical Islam, Maduro against the US, or pure people (underdogs) against capitalists.

Also, they normalise hateful discourse owing to the freedom of speech. Their aggressive discourse reduces freedom of speech to hate speech. Whilst Donald Trump, for instance,

openly targeted Asian, Hispanic, and Muslim communities, at the same time, he could advise and warn us against white supremacy and hate speech.

### **2.3. Demagogy**

Now, I discuss the abuse of freedom of speech and how it is realised in three ways: Demagogy, commercialisation, and security concerns. Also, I mention that the abuse leads to hate speech due to such a process.

Demagogy is with us in politics and everyday life, and it does not show any sign of disappearing soon. Contemporary politics is seized by two tendencies attracting and repelling it at once: Fear and. In its most archaic sense, demagogy, *dēmagōgos*, derives from *dēmos* and *agōgos*, referring to the roots of the verb, "divide". In this regard, demagogues are the rabble of democracy, pitting the people against each other through fear and hope. Hence, their politics are based on separatist, creating hatred against specific groups (elites, foreigners, immigrants, etc.). Demagogy is abuse that empties out the purpose of free speech through palaver, trickery, imaginary fear, and hope, mediating the transition from democracy to tyranny.

If we consult Plato, he provides a salutary warning about how freedom might be abused/perverted/corrupted by democracy. According to him, the desire for unlimited and insatiable freedom harms the city and changes democracy to tyranny in two ways. On this account, when the rulers are very amenable and give whatever people demand, and later, they stop providing the demands of the people; they are punished by them and blame with oligarchy (Plato 2003, 354), which brings about revolt and a constant disorder within the city-state. If the rulers, in turn, outweigh the citizens, they start to insult them like a slave. However, Plato insists that citizens tend to transfer their will to a charismatic and popular leader who leads them.

He says, "The people always have some champion whom they set over them and nurse into greatness" (359). He adds that "this and no other is the root from which a tyrant springs; when he first appears above ground, he is a protector. (359)" Once people have their protector, their real fear is to lose him. The protector, who sees that his people are slaves to him, enters into their blood and can deceive them. The problem of Plato with democracy is the probability of an incompetent and self-interested person coming forward as a protector and abusing the city's values. Therefore, it is interesting that he sarcastically asserts that democracy offers such freedom that even a donkey is more

accessible in the city than other animals and can even come to power. The roots of the tyrant ought to be investigated in the protector. How, then, does the protector abuse/pervert/corrupt freedom of speech and become the tyrant?

Importantly, Plato (2003) insists that the primary hazard that democracy may cause is the rise of demagogues readily. On this account, demagogues abuse people's emotions through hope and fear. Demagogy ironically puts forward the most ignorance and incapable as wise and capable. In this regard, Plato emphasises that "democracy grandly trample all these acceptable notions of ours under her feet, never giving a thought to the pursuits which make a statesman, and promoting to honour anyone who professes to be the people's friend" (2003, 346).

For him, the people tend to follow the demagogues and believe their promises. Plato defines these people (those whom demagogues easily deceive) as the most crowded and uneducated class of democracy: *the people*. At this point, if we go back to Ancient Greek thought, we see two essential words democracy is interpreted with: *demos* and *ochlos*. While *demos* means the people of a Greek state, *ochlos* refers small specific group. If a horde of petty profiteers and rabble's will outweighs the rest of the people, they turn democracy into *ochlocracy*. If democracy turns into *ochlos*, demagogues can come to power, which results in tyranny.

Along similar lines, Spinoza, a philosopher who carries the approaches of Plato to modernity and whose basic element is free speech considers religious fanaticism as the main problem for it abuses democracy in comparison to Plato's tyranny argument. Like demagogy, religious fanaticism reduces religion to superstition, fed by imaginary fears and hopes. In my discussion of demagogy, I confront, from the start, the old idea of superstition with another old idea, that of tyranny. Here I follow the Spinozist line to define superstition. Spinoza mentions that superstition is "the elaborate systems of dogmas framed by theologians are based on superstition, resulting from fear" (2000, 46). He asserts that "people would never be superstitious, if they could govern all their circumstances by set rules, or if they were always favoured by fortune" (55).

Demagogues gain political power through superstition and the inclusion of it into politics. In Spinoza's political philosophy, irrationality, that is, superstition is the enemy of democracy. The philosopher who pioneered the idea of tolerance warns us about the importance of religious tolerance for democracy. If there is no religious tolerance, there

is fanaticism. Fanaticism takes the role of demagoguery, which is the enemy of democracy in the political philosophy of Spinoza, and it ought to be removed from politics. What is remarkable, though, is the similarity between Plato and Spinoza: politics is reduced to fear by demagoguery in both.

At this point, Diken (2021a) underlines the intrinsic relation between superstition and despotism. A despot is in politics what superstition is in religion. Superstition depicts God through anthropomorphism (lawgiver, despot, merciful, generous, etc.). Likewise, a despot has the same personality as their followers. Just as religious fanaticism benefits from superstition, demagoguery reduces politics to imaginary fear and hope. Superstition is a despotism of emotions over reason.

Demagoguery, just as superstition, is a despotism reducing politics to fear. Demagogues create their own superstitions by abusing democracy and free speech. The theological discourse used by politicians in contemporary politics reflects the relationship between superstition and demagoguery. Hence, demagoguery is not only Plato's problem but also in our modern society. Democracy is always in danger of evolving into an ochlocracy due to demagogues who deceive people with a vain appetite, fear, and hope.

#### **2.4. The Commercialization of Freedom of Speech**

What holds the nexus together, in both commercialisation and the abuse of free speech, is profit. I use the term commercialisation of free speech in the sense of freedom of speech reduced to profit and commodification. The starting point of the abuse of free speech with commercialisation is commodifying the concept and becoming part of the political and economic interest. The capitalist imperative contains forces pushing the economy to modern society's centre.

Therefore, it is interesting that values such as fraternity, equality, and freedom, considered a virtue in Ancient Greece, are evaluated according to the relation between profit and loss. Just as the well-known motto of the French Revolution is ironically emptied out: Liberty, equality, and fraternity replaced with freedom to consume, share the profits equally, and communal life with those having the same ideologies. In this context, significantly, liberty neither refers to being the master of a person's passion nor a way of criticism that hinders despotism.

Conversely, free speech is reshaped as freedom of consumption in the market. On this account, Bauman (2020) asserts that the reduction of freedom, which should be handled

concept extensively, to the freedom of consumption for individuals due to capitalism. Placing the economy at the centre of life causes the individual to think only in terms of buy-sell, win-lose, and profit-loss, which means that these concepts such as equality, freedom, and fraternity, which people fight to the death, are printed as ‘‘T-shirts’’ and are ironically sold on the Internet.

In this context, I underline that the most significant result of the centralisation of economic thought is datafication. In this prism, reducing everything to data and profit leads to the marketing of the most basic and vital rights, such as freedom of speech as a commodity. Further, in the context of capitalism, the fundamental problem of free speech is that it is a means of obtaining data rather than freedom against tyranny. Therefore, it is an interesting paradox that private companies and platforms market free speech as an apparatus against tyranny because this monopolisation of freedom of speech is actually despotism.

Self-expression reveals people's tastes, shopping practices and likes. Thus, through digital platforms, marketing free speech as a commodity can function as a data collection tool. For example, while platforms such as Twitter and Facebook enable users to share what they think, they might collect data about them and sell it to advertising agencies in that way. This reminds us the datafication, which reduces the life to data and expresses it being directed through data. Free speech, which should be the most important value of democracy, becomes a tool to classify people's tastes and what they can buy. In this prism, free speech significantly is abused through datafication, which results in the loss of its essence.

## **2.5. Security Concerns**

Here, I scrutinise how security concerns cause the abuse of free speech. Crucially, security is the reason people live as one political body in Hobbes' political philosophy. For Hobbes (1998), in the state of nature, every man is an enemy to every man, which he called '*Homo homini lupus*' or '*Bellum omnium contra omnes*. For him, people transfer their rights to a sovereign through a social contract to preserve their lives and security. In this regard, he insists that the *raison d'état* of the state bases on security. Conversely, lack of security brings fear and exception.

Diken (2021a) defines our society, starting from security politics, where the exception is normalised. According to him, ‘‘ours is a society characterised by the increasing



promotion of the logic of exception from the periphery of social life to its centre, a society in which the abnormal shows all the signs of turning into a norm” (2021, 14). If there are constant risk and security issues in society, these can create opportunities for despotism. Machiavelli (2021) suggests that a prince rule with fear to retain political power, which fear is always in favour of the despot. Neo-tyrannism or neo-despotism uses the passions, which helps them to abuse democracy and free speech.

On this account, Virilio (2012) asserts that fear is not only an emotion but also an environment. For him, “fear is now an environment, a surrounding, a world. It occupies and preoccupies us. Fear was once a phenomenon related to localised, identifiable events that were limited to a certain timeframe: wars, mines, epidemics” (2012, 14). Furedi names this fear atmosphere the culture of fear which refers to “the growth and expansion of existential insecurity and risk aversion” (2006, 18). Fear and lack of security might give birth to populism, despotism, or neo-despotism. It should be underlined that “security is the fundamental question taking priority over everything else” (Laustsen & Diken 2017, 202). An insecure environment leads to change in the current norms and laws, which brings us to the state of exception. Agamben points out that “the security concerns is one of the element proclamation of the state of exception” (2005, 16).

Due to state of exception, the emergency becomes the rule, and the very distinction between peace and war loses or becomes impossible. Even hate speech can be normalized and replaced with free speech. Hence, politics of security always might give birth to tyranny. Mainly, anti-immigrant and xenophobia discourse is a typical example of security politics among today’s populists such as Trump, Le Pen, Orbán, etc. Former US President Donald Trump's rhetoric against immigrants from Mexico, China, and the Middle East masks hate speech through security concerns. Despite all the reactions, Trump defends his offensive speeches as freedom of speech. In this prism, politics of security and fear normalise the abuse of free speech.

### 3. THE DEVILS: HATE SPEECH AND DEMAGOGY

Ken Russell's film *The Devils* (1971) tells the story of political and religious turmoil, which revolves around priest Urbain Grandier, who is known as a charismatic, clever politician, and handsome lover by his town (Diken 2015, 20). Also, it shapes around a Protestant fortified city called Loudun, which resists Cardinal Richelieu's "New France". The film thematises Loudun as a plague-stricken city in 17th-century France, which has gotten complicated by sexual, political, and religious corruption.

The story mainly focuses on the protagonist Grandier, who is against the church's authority and the king by protecting the city of Loudun and its fortification as free and independent self-governance. In substance, the pioneer of French nationalism, Cardinal Richelieu, aims to manipulate Louis XIII to control France with the central administration. Richelieu argues that fortified cities occur a significant risk against the sovereignty of the central administration. Even though Grandier mentioned that he was loyal to the king, Cardinal Richelieu still believed fortification threatened New France. The film begins with the spectacle of Louis XIII, the Birth of Venus. "This scene, a play within the play, immediately introduces us to an elementary aspect of power: its theatricality" (20).

At the end of the spectacle, Cardinal Richelieu defines the term of *New France*: "I pray that I may assist you in the birth of a new France, where Church and State are one" (Russell, 1971, 0:03:45). Yet, according to the Cardinal, as long as Feudalism laws remain and fortified cities still exist, France will never be united and mighty. Besides political interests, Cardinal Richelieu looked at the king and prayed that "and may the Protestant be driven from the land", underlining the religious tension between Catholics and Protestants. Grandier was assured full powers by Georges de Sainte Marthe, former governor of Loudun.

In the next scene, we see him at the governor's funeral while addressing the public. He is extremely capable of the use of rhetoric and also speaks pretty poetic language. His speech, at the funeral, points out: "Religious wars are over. Catholics no longer fight with Protestants. We have survived" (0:05:29). At the same time, we visit nuns of the Ursuline order who endeavoured to look at Grandier, whose good looks and charisma are known to all the women in the city, from the small window of the convent during the funeral of the governor of Loudun.

We meet another vital character in the film; Jeanne des Agnes. She is the mother superior of the convent. When she saw the nuns who tried to look at Grandier from the window calmly, she suggests them not allow satan to seduce them with sensual delights. Simultaneously, once the nuns leave the room, she immediately runs to the locked room to see Grandier from a small unseen window near the floor of the convent. Shortly after, as a reflection of her subconscious, a vision suddenly indicates that she is with him, but it will not be realised because of her hunchback. Then, we comprehend afterwards that she is exceedingly obsessed with Grandier.

Crucially, Grandier is a man who believes in uniting with God per the love of a human. His belief failed when Philippe, the daughter of Trincant, the magistrate of the Loudun, got pregnant. While she lies down next to Grandier and says she is pregnant, she starts crying. Once Trincant has learned this, he immediately looks for Grandier. As soon as he finds him, he threatens and attacks him, saying, "I'll see you in Hell!" (0:21:32) afterwards. Later, the chemist and the surgeon added that "He ought to be reported to the Pope" and "He ought to be prosecuted as well"(0:21:44). Thus, the process which prepares for the end of him has begun. Shortly after, he meets a young woman named Madeleine. Grandier believed to unite with God. He needs love, the love of a human. When Grandier is asked whether a priest can marry, he answers that nowhere in the New Testament is there an injunction against marriage (Diken, 2015, 21). Later on, he married Madeleine.

Sister Jeanne's love was painfully destroyed by Grandier's marriage and rendered massive hate. She is the worst enemy of Grandier now. In one last expectation, Sister Jeanne still hopes that Grandier will become the new Father Confessor; however, she despairs when meeting with Father Mignon instead, doubling her hate against Grandier. Diken summarises that "this disappointment, which is followed by gossip about Grandier's secret marriage, drives Sister Jeanne to insanity. She informs Father Mignon of Grandier's secret marriage and makes accusations of witchcraft against him" (22). Significantly, this hysterical obsession of Sister Jeanne to Grandier provides an opportunity to eliminate him for Richelieu and state authorities. Later on, Father Mignon immediately informs them. Hence, they decided to prosecute by using the statements of Father Mignon, the chemist, and the surgeon. Eventually, after they conferred, they decide: "But if it is a genuine case of possession by devils and if

Grandier himself was proved to be involved", Laubardemont concludes: "Conjecture is useless. We need a professional witch-hunter" (Russell, 1971, 0:55:44). They call Father Barré.

### 3.1. Parrhesia and Demagogy

Here I juxtapose parrhesia and demagogy and indicate how parrhesia, one of the greatest virtues of one in Ancient Greek thoughts, become dysfunctional against demagogy. Notably, the understanding of the freedom of speech of Ancient Greeks is remarkably different from contemporary societies' perspectives. When Diogenes, who is the most important representative of cynical philosophy, is asked what was the most excellent thing among men, he says, "Freedom of speech (Parrhesia)" (Laertius 2015,358). Significantly in Ancient Greece, freedom of speech is not a right to obtain for a person, but it is a virtue that comes from human nature. This virtue is called *parrhesia*. According to Mitchel Foucault, etymologically, "the word parrhesia appears for the first time in Greek literature in Euripides [c.484-407 B.C.] (2001, 11). The word generally is translated to English as free speech. "The one who uses parrhesia, the parrhesiastes, is someone who says everything he has in mind: he does not hide anything, but opens his head and mind completely to other people through his discourse" (12).

However, this power to say anything is entirely different from flattery, fraud, and demagogy. To be *parrhesiastes*, the person should use parrhesia against power and authority. Every thought wisely, boldly, and openly should be expressed against power. What is said and done should be harmonious to understand the difference between flattery and parrhesia. To be a virtue, the individual ought to practice it even if s/he is under pressure, torture or death threat. Hence, what makes an individual parrhesiastes is that he speaks boldly and openly to power and authority.

Cynic Diogenes and Alexander the Great's dialogue were excellent examples of the main differences between freedom of speech and parrhesia. Once Alexander came and stood by him and asked if there was any favour he could do for him, Diogenes replied; yes, stand out of my sunlight. Diogenes boldly and openly replied to the question and stated his opinion against someone who was the most influential person in his epoch. Then "Alexander said that if he had not been Alexander, he should have liked to be

Diogenes.” (Laertius 2015, 339) In other words, fearlessly, individuals stand against power and say their thoughts by venturing into all that will happen to them.

On the other hand, demagoguery contains flattery and fraud. A demagogue deceives the people to gain political power through empty promises that will never realise but fool them. The demagogue acts according to the conjuncture and in their own interests. Demagoguery is to defend the truth that will provide political and economic interest. It does not require sacrificing everything for the truth like a parrhesiastes.

On the contrary, it is not a problem for the demagogue to change his word and not fulfil his promises. Written in this prism, ‘Parrhesia is what Grandier is practising in the film, as well: he develops a specific relationship to truth through frankness, by expressing his opinion and saying very directly what is on his mind’ (Diken, 2015, 31). While he represents parrhesiastes, Barré, a professional witch-hunter, reminds us of a demagogue who uses hate speech for his benefit.

At this point, Diken problematises the relation between parrhesia and truth. In a parrhesiastic game, the parrhesiastes speaks, lives, and dies for the truth. Grandier aims to unite with God. To do this, he either uses the love of a human or turns everyone against him through a parrhesiastic game to bring about his end. He is exceedingly courageous in speaking against authorities and never steps back from his truths. Instead of false life, he is prepared to sacrifice himself for his truth. In this respect, Grandier speaks what is on his mind frankly without fear against the sovereign. ‘But he is not only frank; his opinion is also his truth’ (ibid). Grandier disrespected the church by attacking it. The inquisition judges him with a lack of fidelity. However, the problem here, in his trial, was not a lack of fidelity as such; in essence, as comedies of terror, the trials sought to conceal a fundamental fact: the internal perversion of the church (27). By the time things got out of hand, he had returned to Loudun. What he saw deeply shocked him: Naked nuns who kiss each other, whip themselves, shout and behave like a ‘devil’. He shouted reproachfully: ‘You have turned the house of the Lord into a circus! And its servants into clowns. You have seduced the people in order to destroy them! You have perverted the innocent!’ (Russell, 1971, 1:17:11). By the way, Sister Jeanne, with both hands in the air tied to ropes, intervenes and accuses him of being a devil. Seemingly, the inquisition was torturing her to accuse him; nonetheless, it is no

longer crucial because Grandier was charged with heresy. Sister Jeanne was solely a victim and tool of power.

Later on, he was tortured and humiliated due to fake evidence like the signed confessions of possession. In this way, the inquisition labelled him. Thus, his words are no longer critical for the rest of the trial. Significantly, he needs to confess the rightness of the church by accepting all accusations. After persecutions have been done to prove the signs of the devil that Sister Jeanne claimed, Grandier came to his trial. One by one, Laubardemont presented the inquisition the false documents that they threatened nuns to sign and the letters they placed in his house. He defended himself in a parrhesiastic way and spoke his truth:

“The devil is a liar and the father of lies. If the devil’s evidence is accepted, virtuous people are in the greatest danger. For it is against these that Satan rages most violently. I have never set eyes on Sister Jeanne of the Angels until the day of my arrest. But the devil has spoken. And to doubt his word is sacrilege. You have totally perverted Christ’s own teaching. This new doctrine, Laubardemont’s new doctrine, Barre’s new doctrine, especially invented for this occasion, is the work of men who are not concerned with fact or with law or with theology but a political experiment to show how the will of one man can be pushed into destroying not only one man or one city but one nation!”. (Russell, 1971, 1:51:15)

When Grandier reveals the complot against himself, Judge immediately responds to him: “This is not a political trial. Remove the prisoner ” (1:51:17). As soon as he mentioned the political turmoil behind the trial, the inquisition removed him. Eventually, the court gave its decision. “Grandier is found guilty of commerce with the devil to possess and seduce, obscenity, blasphemy, sacrilege... His punishment will be to be burned alive”(ibid). The trial of Grandier openly indicates that parrhesia, in spite of one’s speech being honest and transparent, is become dysfunctional by a demagogue’s propaganda and palaver.

### **3.2. Cancellation and Censorship**

Demagogy uses free speech to humiliate the other by using insults. Further, the demagogue creates hatred and prejudice about the dissenter(s) with disdain. Therefore, it is remarkable that anyone who has been humiliated in front of the public through insults and slanders can result in self-censorship. In this direction, here, I problematise

how a demagogue (Barré) silences opponents (Grandier's followers) for his own benefit with cancellation and censorship in the Devils.

Velasco underlines that “public humiliation is not new and has existed for centuries. History has shown that humanity has devised a multitude of creative yet gruesome ways of shaming an individual for alleged social and legal infractions, e.g. public flogging, wearing a dunce cap, forced public exposure, and public caning” (2020, 6). People always face being isolated due to their thoughts and opinions. We see in the film that the dissenters who support Grandier are exposed to public humiliation even though they are right. The dissenters who voice up against the church and state authorities next to Grandier immediately are cancelled and silenced in the film. Those who are noble and wealthy faced losing their jobs and properties.

We witness another conversation between Laubardemont and the magistrate in the exorcism of Sister Jeanne. Some audiences insistently demand to end up the spectacle and complain about the absurdity of public exorcism. Laubardemont thereupon asks who these dissenters are? Once the magistrate told him their identities and metiers, Laubardemont responded with a big laugh: "I think we might soon acquire an interest in the catering trade, my friend" (Russell, 1971, 1:02:32). These dissidents were never seen again until the trial of Grandier and the scene where they testified against him. People who tend to stand with Grandier are immediately cancelled and compelled to change their opinion.

Herein, we ought to underline the concept of cancel culture to understand the cancellation in the film. Louis defines cancellation as the label used to remove individuals from a position, from a place or a job (2021, 2) and leads to sanctions affecting their both personal and professional lives. It is a form of imbalanced social protest that could cause labelling, shaming, or isolation with irreversible reputational damage. Cancel culture is the up-to-date term to signify cancellation in online and other venues. Although cancel culture helps decrease politically incorrect statements and thoughts such as racism, misogyny, fascism etc., it may damage free speech. The concept might lead to restricting open debates and changing people’s opinions. Hence, cancel culture is often associated with freedom of speech and censorship. Mainly self-censorship is the biggest obstacle to freedom of speech. If the environment created leads

to self-censorship, freedom of speech becomes empty and meaningless, resulting in its perversion.

In this sense, cancel culture contains freedom of speech, but ironically it might be used to shut down free speech because if control is lost while isolating and cancelling someone during protests, cancel culture can lead to hatred. For this reason, the cancel culture has a high risk of bringing hate speech. Velasco emphasises that “cancellation culture is a highly complicated social movement. It is one of the highest displays of the democratisation of discourse. On the other hand, it is also a force for censoriousness and intolerance for ideas that run contrary to the dominant acceptable social norms” (Velasco 2020, 6). At this point, the possibility of facing sanctions and isolation might encourage people to censor themselves. Individuals may remain silent due to public humiliation, even if the current dominant public opinion is biased. In the film, we meet Father Barré, an inquisitor who investigates the case of Grandier. His language is highly fanatic, aggressive, and hateful. He succeeded in creating a public perception that Grandier was guilty.

Barré is a demagogue feeding with fear of people. At this point, Rancière writes that "in fact hatred is a rallying force in its own right and rallies for no reason (2021, 74). The cancellation of Grandier facilitates Barré to gather people around himself. Accusations, false witnesses, and evidence against Grandier ostracise him and damage his reputation. Barré leaves alone Grandier by eliminating his supporters and creating hatred and fear against him. He ironically used free speech (as hate speech) to destroy freedom of speech and lead to the isolation of Grandier from the public.

### **3.3. Ad Hominem**

Ad hominem or argumentum ad hominem is a method of discussion that the demagogues often use unknowingly and knowingly, which is part of logic. Initially, Walton states that "ad hominem argument is the use of personal attack in a dialogue exchange between two parties, where the one-party attacks the character of the other party as bad, in some respect, and then uses this attack as a basis for criticising the other party's argument" (Walton 2000, 102). It is an attempt in logic to misdirect people from the proposition itself to irrelevant and nonsense personal deficiencies of the argument's owner. For instance, supposing someone says that a political party led to misery of farmers in b city; therefore, he claims that they should no longer continue with the same



minister of agriculture, the person (c) thereupon answers that you learn how to speak first, you act like a fool. The person (c) directs their arguments to the personality of the proposition's owner. In this way, the person (c) tries to gain psychological superiority in the discussion or ignores the proposition that s/he cannot answer. Walton emphasises that "even so, a personal attack is hazardous as a form of argument. It can be irrelevant, and it can prejudice an audience. It can be based on innuendo rather than real evidence and can have a powerful smear effect in persuasion much out of proportion to the real worth of the argument" (2006, 275).

As a demagogue, Barré uses argumentum ad hominem to prove himself and refute his argument against Grandier. He insults Grandier instead of answering his views to prove he's right. When Grandier shouts at the crowd during his execution, he says, "If your city is destroyed, your freedom is destroyed also!". Barré answers that "the fiend still speaks. The head of sacrilege, the master of the worst actions, the teacher of heretics, the inventor of all obscenities, the foul, impious one..." (Russell, 1971, 1:44:42). Barré does not respond to Grandier's arguments and continues blaming him for possession. The spectacle and hate speech mainly realise the film's argumentum ad hominem. In other words, the more Grandier is humiliated, the more his arguments are trivialised. The spectacle aids in deflecting Grandier's arguments from their context to his bohemian and disordered lives. The public opinion against him is used as a gun through the spectacle in the film. Further, the hateful language of Barré creates prejudices about Grandier and leads to his trivialisation of him in front of public opinion.

*Poisoning the well* is the species of ad hominem fallacy in the logic used to create prejudice to trivialise counterarguments. Walton points out that "it attacks the trustworthiness and the intellectual honesty of the arguer as a credible source, undermining her sincerity or objectivity in a way that makes an audience discount the worth of her arguments" (2006, 276). After a horrific and disturbing torture scene, Barré compelled Sister Jeanne to inform Grandier's name to the inquisition, and he succeeded. He managed to tarnish Grandier's name and reputation in public opinion. Eventually, Grandier was burned at the stake while the crowd laughed and pointed at him sarcastically.

Meanwhile, the city's fortifications are immediately being demolished with the screams of people. Albeit Grandier fought for the people of Loudun and their freedom, they

insulted and laughed at him while he was suffering. In his last moments, he shouted to the crowd: ‘‘I am about to meet the God who is my witness, and I have spoken the truth’’. The crowd laughed simultaneously and said to Barré: ‘‘Burn, burn, burn!’’ Grandier: ‘‘Don't look at me! Look at your city! If your city is destroyed, your freedom is destroyed also!’’

Barré continued his speculation and pointed at Grandier to the crowd; he said: ‘‘The fiend still speaks. Confess! Confess!’’ Grandier's last words these: ‘‘fight them, If you would remain free men’’ (Russell, 1971, 1:45:00). Barré as a successful demagogue, has become the showman of the spectacle and deceived the people through fallacy argumentation. All that happened in Loudun are not strange today. Well, is it a political method that is still up-to-date in our politics, isn't it?

#### 4. THE CIRCLE: FREE SPEECH AS THE COMMERCIALISATION

The story of Dave Eggers' remarkable novel (2013) takes place in the not-so-distant future where a technology company, the Circle, inspired by multinational companies like Microsoft and Apple, nearly takes control whole market and political space by itself. The Circle primarily produces security systems called SeeChange, Childtrack, and TrueYou, which claim to prevent crime and create a perfect and filterless society. The novel opens with the main character Mae's first impression of the massive, brilliant, and fairy tale campus of the Circle. Later on, we meet three executives of the Circle called Three Wise Men. One is Ty, Tyler Alexander Gospodinov, the visionary behind TruYou. The other is Eamon Bailey, the caring public face of the Circle "loved" by all employees (Eggers 2013, 24). Tom Stenton, the third, is the Circle's "world-striding CEO and self-described Capitalist Prime" with "at, unreadable eyes" (23). Everyone Mae talks to in the Circle is busy and overworked. According to their determined mission, every coworker has a specific job and responsibility to do on campus. They must submit their data, including iris and scanning recognition, to the Unified Operating System, which combines and collect everything online. They are constantly watched and controlled whether they complete their task through the online system.

Mae quickly gets used to her new place thanks to Annie, Josiah and Denise's help and suggestions. Bailey introduces "a tiny camera called SeeChange, the shape and size of a lollipop powered by solar and satellite, in the following pages. These cameras are quite accessible and can be hidden anywhere to watch someone or something. People might either use them to observe their elderly and needy parents whether they are safe or to disclose the despotic practices. Bailey underlines that the importance of SeeChange is that "tyrants can no longer hide thanks to them. In other words, in a world where people are unsure whether they are being watched, they constantly worry about the cameras and their attitudes and speeches. That way, "the not-knowing will prevent abuses of power" (78). Bailey emphasises that surveillance can end tyranny and create a transparent society, making democracy "improve". Bailey defines the spirit of SeeChange with these words: "All that happens must be known"(109).

Mae, a withdrawn and modest person, barely adopts herself to Circle's custom. At first, she likes spending time with her family at home and kayaks by herself; she changes her attitude after persistent warnings and pressure from other coworkers and becomes a more active member of the Circle community. After Mae spent time with her family on the weekend instead of attending the company's community event, Denise and Josiah firmly interrogated her to find out why she didn't participate in the events. They were not satisfied with Mae's reasons for not attending and pressured her to say that what she did was irresponsible and selfish. "Denise was looking at Mae intensely. Mae, I have to ask a delicate question. Do you think ... Well, do you think this might be an issue of self-esteem? Excuse me? Are you reluctant to express yourself because you fear your opinions aren't valid? Mae had never thought about it quite this way, but it made a certain sense. Was she too shy about expressing herself? "I don't know, actually," she said (289). Both Josiah and Denise considered the decision perverted and selfish, putting the Circle in the background.

The Circle must be in the centre of the workers. They must sacrifice their private life. Symbolic violence that she faces in the Circle will internalise her voluntary servitude. Mercer, the ex-boyfriend of Mae, notices this crucial change in her and taunts her. He says that "you're not seeing anything, saying anything. The weird paradox is that you think you're at the center of things, and that makes your opinions more valuable, but you yourself are becoming less vibrant" (399). Mae reacted to Mercer by insulting him and putting forward his physical and characteristic features through *ad hominem*: "He'd been fat even then, hadn't he? What kind of guy is fat in high school? He's talking to me about sitting behind a desk when he's forty pounds overweight? The man was upside down. That ugly, ever-sweating moose-man would never have a say in her world again" (401). For Mae, it is not crucial whether her arguments are correct. On the other hand, the Circle and everything related to it is sure and true. She has turned out to be a defender of it. The more she advocates the Circle's values, the more she loses something from her characters and beliefs.

Whilst the Circle gets bigger, Mae is devalued and loses something from her personality. She voluntarily serves and is an ambassador for the Circle. At this point, Diken interrelates Feuerbach's alienation with the Circle's captivity. According to him, Just as religion captures what is profane and sacralises it, the Circle captures the

commons and commodifies it for display in the spectacle (B. Diken, *The despotic imperative: From Hiero to the circle* 2019, 198). Feuerbach asserts that (2008) God derives from a sense of the inadequacy of people. For him, “what man is in need of, whether this be a definite and therefore conscious, or an unconscious need, – that is God” (Feuerbach 2008, 38). He continues with religious alienation: “religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is – man is not what God” (1). The more humans devalue themselves, the more God is sanctified. Just as a religion, the more people value the Circle to have a perfect community, the more they become enslaved to it.

After the discussion with Mercer, Mae steals a kayak to shake off. But her lawbreaking is recorded by SeeChange cameras that Mae overlooked. When she went to the campus the morning after, she realised that the Circle knew all about her lawbreaking. Bailey immediately calls Mae to the room and questions her one-on-one. “Well, I wouldn’t want anyone seeing me do that. It wasn’t right. It’s embarrassing. He put his cup on the table next to him and rested his hands on his lap, his palms gently embracing. So, generally, would you say you behave differently when you know you’re being watched? Sure. Of course. And when you’ll be held accountable. Yes. (429) Bailey says with great inspiration that “finally, finally, we can be good. In a world where bad choices are no longer an option, we have no choice but to be good” (444). Mae is enlightened after this meeting. She decides to be the first volunteer who goes full transparency. Bailey immediately arranges a presentation for Mae to announce her decision. “From now on, she will wear a video camera on her all the time, and her entire life, in the tiniest detail (except in bed and in the bathroom), will be recorded in full and aired simultaneously. The screen behind Mae reads, “Secrets are Lies. Sharing is Caring. Privacy is Theft” (Diken 2019, 192).

Mae had millions of watchers in a short time. She sacrifices her privacy for a perfect and filterless society where no crime can cover in shadows. Of course, some people are unpleasant about the idea of transparency and abolishing private life. Firstly, Annie tries to escape from Mae, and she shyly speaks with her and only shares her true thoughts when they are alone in the toilet cabin. Later, Kalden, whom she thinks is strange, mysterious, and likely an agent, warns her about completion. However, things take on another dimension with the idea that being a citizen requires a mandatory Circle

membership. To persuade people to vote, Mae asks, “so why not require every voting-age citizen to have a Circle account? (Eggers 2013, 588). Further, people pay their taxes and social security and receive any governmental services through the TruYou database. Moreover, all these services will be nearly cost-free (595). After that, Mae introduces its new system, SoulSearch, the ultimate search tool that enables finding criminals. Mae presents the principle of SoulSearch by selecting an arbitrary fugitive criminal and demonstrates her photo through the Circle’s media. The criminal is found in less than 20 minutes during the live spectacle and is handed over to the cops. The result is impressive. “Let’s do another! someone yelled in crowded (687)” This time, the system will search for a regular civilian. “She quickly found a photo on her tablet and transferred it to the screen behind her. It was a snapshot of Mercer taken three years earlier”(ibid). Mae smiled and acknowledged the crowd in the room: “This is Mercer Medeiros. I haven’t seen him in a few months and would love to see him again. Let’s start the clock” (688).

Less than 10 minutes, Mercer is found somewhere while driving. But he does not intend to communicate with crowds; he escapes and insults people around him. Mae suddenly panics because everything takes place so fast. She shouts to him, “Mercer, stop the car and surrender. You’re surrounded.” Then she thought of something that made her smile again. “You’re surrounded ...” (698). However, Mercer still drives toward a concrete barrier and no longer care about drones and crowds around him. A voice rose from the crowd: “Mercer, submit to us! Submit to our will! Be our friend! You can’t escape, Mercer!” the woman’s voice bellowed. “Never, ever, ever. It’s over. Now give up. Be our friend!” (700). Mae's eyes turned to the camera instinctively, and she saw that Mercer had committed suicide by speeding his car toward a concrete barrier.

After this tragic and catastrophic spectacle, Mae experienced deep sadness and blamed the truck instead of condemning the Circle. "There’d be no chance of that happening if Mercer was in a self-driving vehicle. Their programming would have precluded this. Vehicles like the one he was driving should frankly be illegal. That stupid truck, Mae said. And not that it’s about money, but do you know how much it’ll cost to repair that bridge? And what does it already cost to clean up the whole mess down below? You put him in a self-driving car, and there’s no option for self-destruction” (704). Mae and Bailey’s attitudes about Mercer’s death underline the Circle as a cult, untouchable

belief, and new religion. Towards the end of the book, Mae learns the truth that the mysterious person Kalden is Ty, one of the Three Wise Men. Ty is a person who created the Circle but did not expect that it will turn ‘‘the fucking shark that eats the world’’ (730).

Ty warns Mae about how the Circle turned into a tyranny that captures everything and normalises surveillance through the flow of information and data. His idea turned into a totalitarian nightmare. ‘‘If you can control the flow of information, you can control everything. If you want to bury some piece of information permanently, that’s two seconds’ work. If you want to ruin anyone, that’s five minutes’ work. How can anyone rise up against the Circle if they control all the information and access to it?’’ (734), said Ty. Surveillance begins with safety, but it normalises and becomes permanent. Ty gives Mae a proclamation to end all this. Mae should read this publicly about the Circle's tyranny, he insists to her. He claims that ‘‘we must all have the right to disappear’’ (739). In the next chapter, Mae exhales and says to herself: ‘‘so close to the apocalypse’’ (742). She was happy that Ty couldn't deceive her but wondered what would have happened if it had been someone else instead of her. The Circle will bring peace and create a perfect community. She considered, ‘‘the world before the Circle, would be only a memory’’ (745), Mae’s willingly slavish devotion to the Circle’s worldview, which she calls ‘‘loyalty,’’ results in the loss of all hopes of avoiding the beginning of the end, the ‘‘completion’’ of the Circle (Diken 2019, 194). The novel ends up in a dystopian world.

#### **4.1. Abolishing of Private sphere**

Ancient Athenians had two distinctly separated areas: Agora and Oikos. Agora is a place where people discuss political, economic, and social issues and interests, a pioneer of the contemporary public sphere. On the one hand, Oikos is forbidden territory, a household, as is modern private property (see Sennett 1996, 48). In that way, the public sphere could not intervene private sphere. On this account, Arendt (1958) mentions that the rise of the city-state and emerging the public realm led to people's two different lifestyles. The private sphere, Oikos (household), was a sacred place where no one out can intervene if they are not a family member. The household head, its ruler, is the master of one's own family (see also Xenophon 2020).

Arendt underlines that the household head, its ruler, was considered to be free only in so far as he had the power to leave the household and enter the political realm, where all

were equals (1958, 32) In other words, a despot who is head of household is considered a free citizen as soon as he independently moves between the private and public sphere. Hence, the criteria of being a free citizen are based on the distinct of these spheres in the ancient world which the boundaries between the private and public spheres are clear. Diken adds in this regard, ‘in ancient Athens, the rule of the despot, *oeconomicus*, denoted a specific power relation in the *Oikos*, the domestic sphere. Political power, in contrast, was seen as something that pertains to the *polis*, as a relationship between free men concerning the common good’’ (2021b, 4). Arendt (1973) defines modern totalitarianism's motivation with removing the private sphere. According to her, "totalitarianism signifies the ‘abolition of the private sphere’ altogether, positing the identity of public and private interests" (Arendt.1973, 432). However, being all-seeing and all-knowing is an invasion of people's private sphere and privacy.

The Circle wants to abolish the private sphere rootedly and exist only public sphere, which is the principle of totalitarian regimes. Everything should be collected in one place, which is the public sphere, because privacy is theft. After the launch of SeeChange cameras, the Circle itself goes transparent. A thousand SeeChange cameras are installed on campus so that its campus life can be watched by outsiders (Diken 2019, 191). The *raison d'état* of the Circle is gathered around the fear of security. The Circle must control and, when necessary, repress human passions through fear, hence the necessity of the spectacle of fear of crime, murder, rape, kidnapping, and tyranny (195). Thus, it allows abolishing the private sphere to enable a ‘‘filterless’’ world where ‘‘Secrets Are Lies; Sharing Is Caring, Privacy Is Theft’’ (Eggers 2013, 463). If people keep secrets, it makes crimes possible, inspires speculation (745), and helps tyrants hide; therefore, the private sphere must be abolished. However, the problem arises at this point. Continuous surveillance causes the disappearance of the private sphere, resulting in free speech abuse. How, well, does this perversion take place?

Although the Circle claims that surveillance is realised due to security concerns, the reason for the surveillance, in fact, in the Circle, is to prevent people from expressing their thoughts and sharing them freely. If all the private spheres are watched, no one can speak comfortably. Therefore, surveillance leads to self-censorship. Ironically, free speech as an apparatus against tyranny is taken ownership by tyranny itself.



## 4.2. Voluntary Servitude and The Spiral of Silence

Etienne de la Boétie, in his book, questions how it happens that so many people, villages, cities, and nations willingly suffer under a single tyrant with no power other than the power they give him. According to him, “custom becomes the first reason for voluntary servitude” (Boétie 1975, 79). People consent to be reigned by a tyrant, not to be excluded by social bond or social contract if the majority already submitted the legitimacy of tyranny. Boétie gives an example that compares a freeborn person to someone accustomed to slavery to underline his arguments. He asserts that “one never pines for what he has never known; longing comes only after enjoyment and constitutes, amidst the experience of sorrow, the memory of past joy” (79). They voluntarily serve because those who come after captivity have not tasted the freedom.

If we go back to the novel, Mae first sees that everything is planned and scheduled and managed as a custom and habit in the Circle. Events that are compulsory to attend on the weekend, the necessity of sharing every activity and hobby on the Circle profile simultaneously, and the pressure to follow the constant notifications seem to be part of being a community at first. Although The Circle seemingly presents a highly participatory, liberal discussion environment where circlers can express themselves freely through their Circle profiles, they follow and obey its rule with symbolic violence. In other words, what appears to be freedom to the Circlers is really voluntary servitude (Diken 2019, 195).

The Circle has a colossal blackmail web that can cancel the one against itself. It means that it has 90% of the information flow in the world can control everything. Ty, one of three wise men, says to Mae, “you want to bury some piece of information permanently; that’s two seconds’ work. If you want to ruin anyone, that’s five minutes’ work. How can anyone rise up against the Circle if they control all the information and access to it?” (Eggers 2013, 734). When someone expresses their thoughts against the public opinion of the Circle, they might be cancelled and ruined in a short time through the flow of information the Circle controls. Therefore, the Circlers either should change their opinion or submit to the spiral of silence.

In this respect, Neumann (1974) recounts that the theory describes both those afraid to freely express themselves not to be excluded by dominant public opinion and indecisive about changing their thoughts according to it. As soon as Mae is part of the Circle

owing to symbolic violence, she will be a voluntary servant to adapt to her environment and not be excluded by other coworkers. As Ferdinand Tönnies (1922) points out “public opinion demands consent or at least compels silence, or abstention from contradiction”(as cited in Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 44). Like Mae, Annie and Ty had to consent to the authority of the dominant public opinion and remain silent. Annie disagreed; therefore, she paid the price with a nervous breakdown owing to symbolic violence. Although Ty is the creator and one of the Three Wise Men of the Circle, he is isolated and banned from going out on campus.

At this point, Tönnies underlines (1922) that public opinion always claims to be authoritative. Neumann (1974) adds that “public opinion can be described as the dominating opinion which compels compliance of attitude and behaviour in that it threatens the dissenting individual with isolation, the politician with loss of popular support” (44). People unwillingly share their opinion because threatening and criticising dominant opinions might cause isolation. Hence, she emphasises the tendency of these people to remain silent or change their opinion. If we focus on the case of Mae, she puts her thoughts, hobbies, and beliefs aside voluntarily and serves only the Circle. She surrenders to the spiral of silence to not be ostracised and, worse yet, cancelled. The Circle blur politically and socially incorrect methods through political correctness and cancel culture. If people doubt that their opinions will not prevail dominant opinion, they tend to remain silent. Worse, they may change their opinions to avoid pressure and social exclusion.

Mae had difficulty getting used to the Circle’s community and customs. Annie, Josiah, Denise and Bailey’s insistence and breaking the law made her a voluntary servant of the Circle. Mae either changed her opinion or remained silent against dominant public opinion. When the novel ends, we meet a completely different Mae. Even if Mae thinks that she freely expresses her thoughts under surveillance, she behaves/speaks/considers according to the dominant public opinion of the Circle. It becomes her life purpose: “I want to be seen. I want proof I existed” (Eggers 2013, 738).

#### **4.3. Usage of Political Correctness and Cancel Culture against Freedom of Speech**

Moller writes that "political correctness is the attempt to establish norms of speech (or sometimes behaviour) that are thought to protect vulnerable, marginalised or historically

victimised groups, and which function by shaping public discourse, often by inhibiting speech (Moller 2016, 1). Political correctness and cancel culture either help prevent hate speech and hinder those who use it, or they might restrict freedom of speech and cause abuse of it. Moller underlines that there will always be a risk of both concepts being perverted. Hence, Moller warns us that the idea, we should note, is one used by its enemies; dubbing something politically incorrect implies there is something worrisome or objectionable at work, though not necessarily that the politically correct option is wrong, all things considered (2). What is interesting in Circle is that the existing dominant public opinion is turned into political correctness itself, and the dissents to it are cancelled.

In her research, Pippa Norris (2020) indicates that cancel culture considerably restricts academic debates because scholars and academics are afraid of damaging reputation and public shaming, which results in the spiral of silence. Even in a university where we hope everyone can express themselves freely, it is a considerable problem facing censorship. In other words, hate speech or politically incorrect opinions such as racism, misogyny, xenophobia, etc., can disguise as political correctness. At this point, Jacques Rancière (2014) writes that the principles of totalitarianism have become the properties of democracy. The distinct among them has been abolished in contemporary politics. According to him, “the dominant discourse designated States as totalitarian if, in the name of the power of the collective, they denied both individuals’ rights and constitutional forms of collective expression: free elections, and the freedom of expression and association (Rancière 2014, 30). Democracy can behave like a totalitarian regime that may violate freedom of speech, human rights, and intervention to free elections through political correctness. As Moller (2016) underlines that targeting one's rights and liberties can be dubbed and disguised under the concept of political correctness.

We witness in the Circle that it uses democracy and its facilities to establish its tyranny on the circlers, which brings us to the argument of Plato investigates that tyranny springs from democracy. Diken writes that the paradox is that while reacting antagonistically to what it perceives to be “tyranny,” the Circle reaffirmatively outbids itself, appropriating despotism while rejecting it (2019, 195). The Circle produces its own demagogues. The populists or demagogues who derive from democracy abuse

political correctness for their benefit. By targeting "others" , they corrupt/abuse/pervert free speech.

Further, the social network is used to spread surveillance in the Circle. Mae says in the launch of SoulSearch that “as you know, much of what we do here at the Circle is using social media to create a safer and saner world (Eggers. 2013, 678). However, Ty asserts against the argument of using social media to create a safer world that the Circle can cancel anybody criticising it in a second through the flow of information it has. He adds, “under the guise of having every voice heard, you create mob rule, a filterless society where secrets are crime” (735). Diken underlines that “despotism returns in an informational-technological variant and is assimilated into the Circle’s spectacle-democracy” (Diken 2019, 195).

The Circle's greatest trick is to provide free speech, making it something feared through political correctness. People like Mae, Annie and Ty might remain silent and change their opinion if they are constantly under the hazard of isolation by public opinion instead of expressing their thoughts. In this sense, voluntary servitude is a factor in emptying the meaning of freedom of speech because those who remain silent and consent are captured in a spiral of silence. The Circle describes the potential near future when we achieve voluntary servitude due to automation. A world where freedom of speech has no meaning and only facilitates marketing principles. In this respect, Diken concludes that ‘automation, after all, is what happens when you achieve voluntary servitude’ (Diken 2019, 199).

## 5. TRUMP AS A NEO-DESPOT AND SECURITY CONCERNS

Today, we face a new language that almost captures all politics: The vulgar *language*. The populists and demagogues who claim to consider protecting working-class interests have become owners of this language. Trump, a former president of the US, is the purest representative of this language. According to Žižek, Trump's success in using this language helps him draw the public's attention. He writes, "what does he do to 'steal the show' at public debates and interviews? He offers a mixture of 'politically incorrect' vulgarities: racist stabs (against Mexican immigrants), suspicions on Obama's birthplace and university diploma, bad taste attacks on women, offending war heroes like John McCain ... " (Žižek 2017, 543). Diken adds that "Trump is private idiosyncrasies, platitudes, a bit on weapons, populism, wild suggestions and so on" (Laustsen & Diken 2017, 264). However, the problem gets worse when his political incorrect vulgarities are normalised. This normalisation is the perversion of freedom of speech.

Trump corrupts freedom of speech and degenerates hate speech into political correctness. He uses vulgar language through the freedom of speech that democracy provides for every citizen, but he stigmatises minorities and immigrants as others with it. Also, he can normalise racist and misogynistic opinions through freedom of thought. He condemns white supremacy groups while blaming Muslims for supporting terrorism and bans them from entering the US or calls the Covid-19 pandemic a Chinese virus by targeting Asian communities. He says racism is evil simultaneously (Charlottesville, Aug 14, 2017).

At this point, Diken (2021b) introduces the concept of *neo-despotism* to focus on contemporary society from the perspective of despotism. This concept will help understand the reasons for abusing freedom of speech. Neo-despotism has different characteristics in comparison to classical despotism. While despotism is an arbitrary rule of governance and explicit violation of laws arbitrarily, neo-despotism seems like true democracy and asserts it saves democratic values, which is the most perilous side of it. Neo-despotism fulfils the principles of despotism. In Diken's words, "neo-despotism is a despotism that has 'learned' from, or rather appropriated, the past criticisms of despotism" (14). He asserts that "the constitutive feature of neo-

despotism is self-denial: unlike its conventional incarnations, today's despotism can appear as its opposite, staging itself as a domain of freedoms. Neo-despotism speaks the language of fear of security but does not seek to legitimise a despotic order per se. On the contrary, it promises a new, 'democratic' world free from 'despots' and their 'terror'—everything in neo-despotism hinges on a specific form of political subjectivity'' (14).

The self-denial of neo-despotism is a critical phrase in contemporary politics and the abuse of freedom of speech. Trump's success is creating the fear of immigrants and "others" to legitimise his vulgar and hateful language as he advocates democratic values. He endeavours to approve his foul language as political correctness through fear and security concerns.

### **5.1. Trump and Culture of Fear**

With the culture of the fear thesis, Furedi (2006) underlines that the significant development in the moral outlook of society is the transformation of safety into a fundamental value. According to him (2006), the more we talk about fear of something, such as fear of pandemic, terrorism, immigration, poverty, etc., the more the culture of fear is normalised and settled down in our lives. The role of media accelerates the spread of fear. On this account, he mentions that "the most significant contribution made by the media is not so much how it frames and communicates a specific threat, but its role in popularising and normalising a language and a system of symbols and meaning for interpreting society's experience. Neo-despotism spreads the language and politics of fear through the alarmist feature of the media. In this way, neo-despots find the opportunity to normalise hate speech under free speech by using fear and vulgar language.

In this context, I deal with Trump's discourses to underline how he normalises his hate speech through three different YouTube videos. First, I focus on Trump's statements during his campaign in South Carolina in 2015, enlightening the abuse of freedom of speech. In C-SPAN's news on YouTube, he refers to Pew Research centre's data and reads the report in front of him: "They won't report a problem which I read you this statement Donald J Trump is calling for analyst. You gotta listen to this, okay, this is pretty heavy stuff, and it's common sense, so we have to do it"(C-SPAN 2015, 0:38). Meanwhile, we hear applause and confirmation sounds from the audience. He

continues, ‘‘Donald J Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the US until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on. You have no choice, we have no choice. There is a great hatred toward Americans by large segments of the Muslim population. Most recently, a poll from the Center for Security Policy was released that is showing 25 per cent of those polled agreed that violence against Americans. 51% of those polled agreed that Muslims in America should have the choice of being governed according to Sharia. They want to change your religion. I don't think so. We can't live like this. You're gonna have more World Trade Centers (WTC)’’ (3:43). We could be politically correct, and we can be stupid, but it's going to get worse, folks. They don't want our system and have no sense of reason or respect for human life’’ (4:18).

Trump legitimised himself with research and poll numbers and labelled all Muslim communities in the US as jihad supporters and potential murderers by mainly signifying WTC. Although, at the beginning of his speech, he mentions that ‘‘they won't report a problem’’(0:23), he continues reading the report to the crowds with applause. Nevertheless, fear and security concerns aid in justifying his language and capturing the groups. He makes the outcomes of a study more important than the implementation of the method, sample space, and participants.

Further, his other statement on Mexican immigrants in the presidential announcement speech in 2015 deserves attention in this context. He says that ‘‘when Mexico sends its people. They're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people’’(CNN 2015, 0:31). This statement of Trump has been publicly discussed in detail. He advocates himself as a truth-teller, just as Diogenes and Urbain Grandier against criticisms. He asserts on the show he participated in on Fox News: ‘‘if it's good for me or bad for me, I don't think of that. I think of saying the right thing, and people have to be alerted to the fact that we are getting some really bad characters coming into this country’’ (Inside Edition 2015, 0:43). In this regard, Diken compares Diogenes and Trump in terms of truth-teller. While Diogenes is parrhesiastes (see Foucault, 2001: 19), Trump, in turn, stands in for the total emptying out of truth-telling as a political and ethical praxis (Diken 2021b, 15).

In every way, Trump perverts/corrupts/abuses free speech by mixing it with vulgar language and hate speech. He empties the meaning of freedom of thought through alternative facts and self-denial of his abuse. Ironically, he uses freedom of speech to shut down free speech. In a YouTube video of CNBC Television, Trump's speech on the Covid-19 virus as a Chinese virus was discussed as a racist statement. He answers whether calling the coronavirus the 'Chinese virus' is racist. He says "it isn't, because it came from China. That's why. I wanna be accurate" (CNBC Television 2020, 0:26) . The statement that " it came from China" is politically incorrect, even if it refers to the first cases to appear in China because the origin place of the Covid-19 virus has not been officially detected yet by both locals and World Health Organisation authorities. This statement solely helps alienate Chinese and Asian Americans. In this sense, he normalises hate speech by using politically incorrect words as if they are correct.

## **5.2. Populism and Freedom of Speech in Trump's Speech**

Trump was just the most visible among populists in this sense. According to Žižek, "Trump as a media phenomenon is an answer to this predicament: it is simply an attempt to keep together the two heterogeneous components of the Republican Party – big business and populism" (2017:541). In other words, the populism with Trump targets "pure people" (underdogs) by an elite that populism is against, which is the inevitable paradox of our antagonistic society today. He brings populism and elitism together and conducts it against xenophobia. "Making America Great Again" refers to exalting the US against "other". The politics of Trump is based on the "other". A public opinion relying on this politics brings a separatist and contradictory language. Substantially, the slogan itself has vulgarity inside it. It targets those who are not American and encourages the country to become one against "them". Jutel points out that "Making America Great Again" lies in the pleasure of being of the people and licensed to lash out against a multifarious enemy (Jutel 2018, 258). His rudeness makes him stand out as a performer in the spectacle; in Diken's words, he is the performer in "the world's greatest reality show, the American presidential election" (2017, 263). Trump succeeded in bringing together political and economic values of both elite and pure people (underdogs) through populism which is his pride. How interesting is it that wealthy, propertied an elite as a capital owner businessman is called populist and claimed to protect the rights of "pure" Americans?



Jutel continues and underlines that "Donald Trump is the synthesis of a media politics in which affective intensity and enjoyment are the principle political-economic values. He is not simply a media-savvy showman; he offers himself as a subject of enjoyment and elicits affective identification" (Jutel 2018, 249). He is the showman of populism. Trump is a production of the 'disneyfied society' where fiction and reality disappeared in his speech. It is difficult to be sure whether he lies or not. Also, his alternative facts hide his neo-despotism. Just as the actual function of Disneyland is to hide the fact that the rest of America is fake, Trump is what enables and sustains the fantasy that our politics is serious and well-grounded (Diken 2017, 265).

Trump's expression freely renders his racism, misogyny, and vulgar language to freedom of speech. He acts like a truth-teller, although he lies more than twenty thousand (see: Wall of Lies) He abused freedom of speech to protect the monopoly and interests of certain groups and tried to justify himself and his arguments by creating an anti-immigrant language of fear and security concerns. His self-denial and performance as a true democrat and victimisation hide the abuse of freedom of speech. In this sense, the self-denial, victimisation, and reduction of politics to passions is the problem of populism.

Herein lies the most significant danger with Trump, says Diken, reducing politics to passion, which is exacerbated every time commentators approve of Trump's 'conviction' and claim that his plain speech is part of his appeal (264). Trump reduces every decision to passion and puts himself at the victimisation centre. In this way, he dares to use hateful and vulgar language.

### **5.3. The Politics of Fear**

As I examined in the second chapter in detail, the language of the demagogue is fed by fear, security, and hope. Also, I juxtaposed the demagogue and the parrhesiastes and mentioned that a demagogue is ultimately the opposite of parrhesiastes. The demagogue is the charlatan who deceives people. Their promises are made up of *empty promises*, which is why Plato saw them as charlatans. A demagogue smiles and salutes every citizen in the early days of their power.

The demagogue promises and lies to govern for their profit, not the people. At this point, Plato (2003) believes that in good government, the least willing to rule can be the best ruler. Rancière agrees with Plato and adds that "good government is the

government of those who do not desire to govern. If there is one category to exclude from the list of those who are capable for governing, it is, in any case, those who set their sights on obtaining power'' (2014, 98). Once the demagogue earns the citizens' trust, he wishes to increase their dominance over the public. In this sense, state and church authorities do not tolerate dissent. At this point, Schmitt (2007) underlines that the concept of political is based on conflicts or, as he says, friend-enemy distinction. For him, "the political is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping" (Schmitt 2007, 111). It is the entire state that decides who will be enemy or friend.

In this respect, an 'other', alliances, and dissenters legitimise the states as an organised political entity. Like Schmitt, in Machiavelli's State (2021), security is its *raison d'être*. According to him, the prince can instil fear against dissidents for his safety. He suggests that "it is much safer, for a prince, to be feared than loved" (Machiavelli 2021,108). Therefore, Machiavellian philosophy says that populists like Trump, Barré or Bailey need an enemy to maintain their language of fear if they wish to protect their charisma. In this regard, the security concerns allow states to use fear against the dissenter(s). Insofar as the use of hate speech against someone considered a threat to the political body, public opinion and the state become normal.

## 6. CONCLUSION

I focused on the perversion/abuse/corruption of freedom of speech through three cases. Also, I associated them with demagogy, commercialisation, and security concerns to indicate how free speech is corrupted by populism. Later, I problematised the relationship between the abuse of freedom of speech and hate speech. Eventually, covering four main themes: the abuse of freedom of speech, hate speech, demagogy, and populism, the thesis finalises with the proposition that populism reduces freedom of speech to emotion and economy, resulting in hate speech.

### 6.1. Political Future of Freedom of Speech

As should be clear by now, the abuse of free speech appears in our political culture as that which cannot be symbolised. Accordingly, the recurring problem is a triple reduction: Demagogy, commercialisation, and security concerns. Time after time, the abuse of free speech is condensed to something unmeasurable and un-representable, on the one hand, or its persistent presence is denied, on the other. Therefore, I sought to articulate a measure of the abuse, illuminating how it persists despite being continuously overlooked or projected elsewhere. The abuse of free speech can only occur based on recognising the abuse and perversion.

Here, I propose to inquire about the problem of populism and the abuse of free speech at the roots of liberal democracy in terms of contemporary politics. The forms of abuse, which we have examined in detail in 3 cases, are frequently encountered in modern politics. The most prominent instance of this is Trump. While Trump was using hate speech against immigrants, he defended himself as a truth-teller. He acted as the despot to end the despotism.

As discussed in the Demagogy and Plato section, insatiable freedom in democracy breeds despotism. However, the problem is to hide this in democracy by saying populism instead of accepting the issue: Despotism. The reason why populism is used so much today and populist leaders are increasing is because we cover up the fact that despotic and authoritarian regimes have risen in western democracies and calling all kinds of tyrannical actions populism. Indeed, the despotic movements and discourses of

the right-wing leaders that speak like alcoholic uncles are ironically called populism, but not despotism.

Populism is a concept that has been around since Plato but is presented as new. Populism is the despotism of the people and the perversion of democracy. The common point of the three cases we examined in this context is clearly despotism, but its equivalent in today's academic literature is populism. Three cases are about institutions and individuals who claimed and discoursed that they were performing the deep psychological emotions of the public, underdogs.

As exemplified by the Devils, the demagogy understands the abuse through its triangulation with Parrhesia, cancellation, and self-censorship. In a near-future approach, the focus shifts to another, the Circle, emerging triangulation: commercialisation, voluntary servitude, and the spiral of silence. The two triangulations are not identical, but they are allied. And because they do not overlap completely, they produce differences. Thus, focusing on the abuse of free speech as an instance of repetition casts two approaches in a new light, allowing us to revitalise the concept of the abuse by putting it into a different use. Both directions eventually are supported by modern abuse and neo-despotism. Hate speech is inevitable where security politics and fear reign. I intended to underline abuse differently from early modern to the near future. I put populism at the centre of abuse.

The definition of populism is not given for granted in my thesis; it is defined through the cases. It shows that the concept of populism dates back to the ancient Greeks and came up with various tactics. However, the problem in modern politics today is that despots who abuse democracy present themselves as the most excellent protectors of free speech in the centre of democracy.

## **6.2. Misrecognition and The Problem of Liberal democracy**

Populist tendency perverts free speech via a missed trick: Misrecognition. Even though freedom of speech is abused, the abuse itself is denied. At the same time, the populists pervert freedom of speech and empty out its purpose (it would be a tool against tyranny), rejecting the perversion. Further, they claim that they are true democrat and parrhesiastes. In this sense, I problematised that populists utilise freedom of speech and cancel the individual(s) for the profit of authority is an abuse/corrupt/perversion of the concept. And I importantly asked this question: Is freedom of speech should be given to

those who are against free speech? Barré frequently insulted, slandered, and humiliated Grandier and those supporting him in the Devils. He hinders every thought that is against authority and himself.

Today, concepts such as parrhesia, free and hate speech are entirely turned upside down. In the Devils, the church burned the truth-speaking individual. Applying today, the church would speak the truth and burn the demagogue. In this regard, calling the Circle a dystopia, which reveals today's problems, would be to ignore these issues. Ironically, the Circle, which established its despotism to prevent despotism, speaks the truth, while those who oppose it become supporters of despots. Indeed, this slipping point and the upside-down situation is the abuse itself.

Calling despots the populists in liberal democracy hides despotism. Populism serves to cover up the crisis of despotism within the democracy. Thus anything that does not fit within the framework of liberal democracy is called populism. Misrecognition of populism itself enables to abuse of free speech as if populists are parrhesiastes. Thus, insatiable freedom in liberal democracy, political correctness, and the rise of demagogy and populism led to the use of hate speech as if it were freedom of speech.

Therefore, I use the concept of neo-despotism, which is proposed by Diken (2021a), to define populists. Albeit populism contains despotism, as depicted in the cases above, populists are not handled as despots. On the contrary, they present themselves as fighters against despotism. Barré and inquisitors, the Circle and Trump are despots who struggle with despots. In this respect, the problems of liberal democracy should be accepted and discussed bravely instead of naming everyone against its values as populists. Populists are neo-despots who deny their despotic actions. The perverse side of neo-despotism is self-denial. It blurs its dictatorial actions by hiding behind democratic values.

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