Like the protagonists in a Greek tragedy, Ryan Craig's Charlotte and Theodore find their personal relationship threatened by ideological tensions that dominate their era. As academic philosophers, they can identify and name the conflicting principles; they can usually attach the names of the sages who formulated each idea. Not that it does them much good.

This sad story is everywhere informed by intersecting philosophical and legal debates that have been conducted for many centuries. Since humans first began to communicate with each other in speech, perhaps fifty-five millennia ago, some of them must sometimes have objected to what others were saying. They may have objected so much that they silenced them. But it was the ancient Greeks who first articulated the abstract principles or freedom of speech and censorship, and they knew that underlying the debate there was always the issue of power.

In the very first book of the oldest Greek epic, the *Iliad*, the seer Calchas asks Achilles to protect him if Agamemnon does not like the diagnosis of the gods' anger he is about to deliver: 'Swear that you will be ready to defend me both with words and with your powerful hands. I think I am about to anger a man who rules in might over all the Argives, and whom they obey. When a king is angry with an inferior, he is the more powerful. Even if he swallows down his rage for that day, he cherishes resentment in his heart until he can act on it'.

The monarchs and tyrants who ran Greece until the end of the 6th century BCE routinely dictated what could (not) be said by their subjects. The ideal of free speech came with the advent of democracy in 507 BCE. The new Athenian democratic constitution was founded on ideals born of long repression. Two crucial ideals were 'equality in the right to speak in public' (*isēgoria*) and 'frankness' (parrhēsia). Any (male) citizen had the right to address his peers, 'even the man who earns his daily bread by working at a trade', as the orator Aeschines puts it.

The statesman Demosthenes, terrified that the Athenian democracy would be overthrown by the brutal Macedonian monarchy, clung to the democratic privilege of frankness 'It is necessary to speak with *parrhēsia*, without holding back or concealing anything'. The ideal of frankness, however, had its

limits. It was forbidden to suggest that the democracy itself could be replaced by another constitution. Euripides' audience would have approved when one of his characters said that being unable to speak what one was thinking amounted to slavery. But the tragedians were careful never to imply approval of any system other than democracy. Even Aristophanes, who as a comic poet enjoyed a licence to belittle everyone that would be the envy of many stand-up comedians today, knew that criticism of the constitution was off limits.

Socrates' prosecutors charged him with impiety in not respecting the traditional gods and corrupting the young men of Athens. His defence speech stressed that his constant interrogation of his fellow citizens, and encouragement to examine their own prejudices and assumptions, was beneficial. He claimed to have spoken the whole truth as he sees it. But he was aware that such candour would not work in his favour: 'I know that this plainness of speech makes my prosecutors hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth?'

Socrates has been a hero of advocates of free speech ever since. Surely, in any fair and open democracy, freedom of religion and discussion of radical ideas should not only be permissible, but a right? Yet the historical context is crucial. Socrates was, for good reasons, associated with the upper-class sector of Athenian society that had recently undermined the democratic constitution. What if freedom of speech for one individual compromises fellow citizens' freedoms?

The Athenian democracy was overthrown in 338 BCE. Aristotle, who was a few years later prosecuted by the Athenians on the same grounds as Socrates, insisted that 'It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it'. But the ideal of free speech was denied to early Romans under laws that ordained capital punishment for slanderous songs. Julius Caesar simply said, 'War has no use for free speech'. Augustus banished Ovid for disrespectful poetry. The Christian conversion of the Roman Empire ushered in many centuries of persecutions of heretics, sceptics and even other Christians with different opinions.

The right to speak one's mind is today a hard-won and, globally, far from universal right. Many, even within democracies, on both left and right, believe that their opponents' freedom to voice their views requires curtailment, even removal. But this is more than a political matter, as Lottie and Theo discover. Who is allowed to say what, when, where, and to whom, affects careers and even personal relationships.

Freedom of Speech can never be absolute, but there is nothing more important than asking what exactly it is, and where to position its limits. At a climactic moment in *Charlotte and Theodore*, Teddy shouts 'JOHN STUART MILL!!', for as good a place to start as any is John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, where he argues that sole purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community is to prevent harm to others. Unfortunately, even the two philosophers in this drama seem unable to prevent harm to those they love.

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