

Q: If one takes what you are saying as permission to say whatever comes into your head, without taking responsibility for the (very possibly) hurtful effect it might have on others -- not because of their baggage, but because of your insensitivity to other people's feelings, then I think that's very wrong. I'm not certain that that is what you mean but it'd be very easy to understand it that way. It takes a very high level of consciousness before one always says something appropriate to the time, place and company.

A: No, I am not "giving permission" for you or me to say whatever comes into our heads. I am saying that you have no control over what you say, permission or no permission.

Ultimately, you will say what you say and refrain from saying what you refrain from saying, and any story you tell yourself about having chosen what to say or not say will be a kind of lie you tell yourself. That imagined "choice" is not a choice at all. There is no "myself" with the power to make such supposed choices.

The imagined controller is a story you tell yourself. You have been trained since infancy to tell it. Both the words you imagine might be harmful and the idea of not saying them come from the very same place—your brain—and whether the words are spoken or repressed is the outcome of complex interactions and negotiations among countless neurons. There is no unique group of "myself" neurons in the brain in control of that negotiation. That myself is a ghost in the machine.

The idea that we are responsible for our behavior is inculcated in children beginning in early childhood. It may be necessary to program the infant brain in such a way so as to render the new human fit to be part of society, but if you have been properly programmed to be polite and not offend, there is no reason to take pride in it. It's no different from a dog that has been housebroken through rewards ("good dog" and a treat) and punishments ("bad dog" and a swat with a rolled-up newspaper).

You were toilet trained like that yourself, and trained in countless other ways. It is the totality of that training plus whatever random experiences and situations are part of your history that does any supposed "choosing."

I am not saying that we should not teach children to be civil. I am saying that the best minds among us take no pride in being the way they are, nor shame. They have come to understand that in each moment things just are as they are, including what they see, feel, think, and do, and no little homunculus in one's brain is in control of that. Our behaviors are the outcome of countless forces, DNA, past experiences, fears and desires, etcetera, not the rational "doings" of one central character.

No one, I am saying, is to blame for anything. We may need to hold people accountable, but that will be a form of social pressure and training (good dog/bad dog), not because there is actually a "someone" who can justly be held accountable. If you understand this, you do, and all

the energy previously employed in dithering, considering, judging and all the other background noise of so-called "self-control" will be liberated. You will be free to be as you are which is, I am saying, all you ever can be.

If you do not understand this, you cannot somehow choose to understand it. You get what you get when you get it. This conversation may shed some light on the matter:

<https://youtube.com/video/nQAvGXUpG88/>