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Changing a Mind: Psychoanalytic Perspectives

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Biography

Growing up in an intensely religious household, I was naturally predisposed to philosophical, particularly moral, reflection. Upon discovering philosophy, many of my beliefs have and continue to change. It's an experience I've become more comfortable with and through my writing, I hope to allow others a similar opportunity. Much of my research focuses on philosophical approaches to psychology. I find psychoanalytic theory especially fecund, as it blends the undeniable effects of religious belief, raw qualitative data, and philosophical rigor. Furthermore, various media and our relationship to them are in a constant state of evolution. As it forms a large basis of my research, I believe it would be neglectful for philosophically oriented academics to ignore this dynamic relationship.

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Abstract

In this paper, I want to describe the process and difficulties involved in what we colloquially call “changing one’s mind.” This process is necessarily difficult as our beliefs are structurally interdependent, stemming from the syntactical symbolic nature of the unconscious posited by Lacan. Therefore, to change one belief is to alter the entire structure, risking a form of chaos. This is further problematized by the reality we imbue our ideas with. Jung implies, through his exposition of fantasy and directed thinking, that our conceptual realities can be reinforced by the external world. It is then through recourse to the external world that I believe we are capable of changing our minds. Specifically, certain films are capable of initiating a syntactical switch in our subconscious beliefs by displaying the world in a novel way. There is an ethical imperative to regularly revise our ideas as well. Irigaray’s Ethics of Sexual Difference and Kristeva’s understanding of abjection form the basis for my argument here. Society is both structured by and involved in the process of structuring the unconscious mind and therefore individuals must take upon themselves the responsibility to engage in new kinds of thought, however arduous and uncertain it may be.

Keywords

Irigaray, Kristeva, Lacan, Jung, Psychoanalysis, Ethics, Film

Introduction

Classical psychoanalysis presents us with a linear and detailed exposition of human psychic development from infancy to adolescence, but I want to develop a theory of how the individual can change after these embryonic metamorphoses. Shifting a perspective that has settled over time requires more concentrated and persistent effort than the nascent development of the ego. I will refer to this post-adolescent, elective shift in perspective as simply “changing one’s mind”. I find this to be an undervalued colloquialism in our country today. To change one’s mind, depending on the depth of the shift can be to radically alter many other aspects of their life. The repercussion, however, is in proportion to the extent of the change; this is to a degree, temporally conditioned. Certain beliefs have existed longer than others, and in effect, have increasing influence over newly acquired ideas and perceptions. In demonstrating the regimenting effect of existing ideas as well as the potential for a change of mind, I want to turn to Carl Jung’s work on the unconscious sources of fantasy as well as the potential to direct fantasy

through works of art. Furthermore, I will attempt to explain the nature of changing our minds via some of Jacques Lacan's descriptions of the symbolic register and unconscious.

There are pitfalls, opportunity, and imperatives to changing one's mind depending on their particular situation. To give a cursory review, in some cases a change of mind is necessary to eliminate destructive tendencies, directed either outward or toward oneself. In other cases, marginalized demographics of people are ushered into a predestined definition of self, and therefore must overcome societal hurdles as well as ingrained mental habits to become fully themselves. Furthermore, this process is not without its risks. Self-alienation, abjection,¹ and aggression are all potential outcomes of intentionally shifting one's thinking. To demonstrate some of these imperatives in their particularity I find Luce Irigaray's work concerning bias in psychoanalysis as well as Julia Kristeva's essay on abjection and Lacan's concept of aggression.

Concept Formation: Directed Thought and the Symbolic

Jung's theories of the unconscious differ quite distinctly from Freud's, but I would like to assert that they can be more encompassing because he takes into account the particular social and historical situations of individuals, and also uses these theories to describe how concept formation occurs. Furthermore, his description of fantasy allows for an understanding of it as a redemptive tool to alleviate the sedimentation of those concepts into what is essentially narrow-mindedness. After a discussion of Jung, I will turn to Lacan's theory of the symbolic to demonstrate how personally constitutive our beliefs and opinions actually are, thereby making them difficult to alter, yet I believe the potential to do so lies in what Jung calls "directed fantasy" (Jung [1921] 1990, 58).

To begin with a description of concepts and their formation, "the concept . . . though it may have general and proved validity, will always be a product of the subjective psychological constellation of the investigator" (Ibid. 9). Furthermore, "the thing-likeness of the purely conceptual, . . . the 'reality' of the predicate or the abstract idea, is no artificial product, no arbitrary hypostatizing of a concept, but a natural necessity" (Ibid. 29-30). Jung succinctly captures two very important elements of the nature of concept formation; the first being the inherently subjective quality of the concept, idea, or opinion and the second is its necessary appearance as reality. We form concepts all the time. It is a natural and efficient way to categorize an otherwise innumerable list of individual experiences, but concepts are subject to a sedimentation process where

1. I mean specifically to use Julia Kristeva's term from her work *Powers of Horror*.

they become more ingrained in an individual and adopted by society despite their potentially increasing uselessness. Ideas or concepts are formed to describe the character of what is currently occurring, and are subject to the possibility of inaccuracy and obsolescence. However, due to the material reality we imbue the idea with, as well as social reinforcements, individuals and society can take time to revise and enact new ideas.

“The product of the mind’s activity is exalted above the disordered multiplicity as an *idea*” (Ibid. 36). Ideas are powerful and enforce our semblance of reality. As I mentioned, they may become too influential in the context of society, but may also become too powerful in the individual. “It may easily happen that a particularly strong and therefore particularly isolated and uninfluenceable complex becomes an ‘over-valued idea,’ a dominant that defies all criticism and enjoys complete autonomy . . . in pathological cases it turns into an obsessive or paranoid idea” (Ibid. 277).

Concepts that over-stay their utility can quickly become hindrances on both personal and societal scales. This occurs in several varieties socially. In some instances, naïve ignorance can prompt inconsiderate behavior or, a privileged social position can evoke apathy for the marginalized. In more sedimented versions, systemic injustice is overlooked, and outdated, maligned legislation can remain unchecked.

It becomes a difficult necessity to switch out or alter concepts when one becomes more operative within reality. “The more ‘eternal’ a truth is, the more lifeless it is and worthless; it says nothing more to us because it is self-evident” (Ibid. 60). Some individuals are more resistant to this idea while others only need to hear sufficient reason in order to understand and enact this necessity. It would be another entire project to attempt to define the variable that determines an individual’s capacity to truly change their mind. Or to put it in question form: what allows us to change our minds? Why is it difficult or exasperating to do so? I believe part of the answer lies in the implications of Jung’s ideas about directed thinking.

“Thinking with directed attention” is a special kind for Jung; it occurs in certain instances such as in finding “the solution of a difficult problem” or on the occasion it is necessary to “write down the problem, or make a drawing of it so as to be absolutely clear” (Jung [1912] 1916, 13). It is a way of thinking that “works itself out more or less in *word form* . . . directs itself wholly to the outside world . . . [and] leaves behind a corresponding exhaustion” (Ibid. 14). It is the kind of thinking that is advocated in educational systems. He opposes this to fantasy, which is a phenomenon that I will discuss at a later and more relevant occasion.

More importantly, directed thinking shapes society by redefining and circumscribing the ideas by which people operate. It is from where we derive our legal precedents,

scientific principles, nutritional information, and ability to create and operate machinery among so many possible examples. “Directed thinking” as Jung calls it “is the manifest instrument of culture, and we do not go astray when we say that the powerful work of education which the centuries have given to directed thinking has produced . . . a practical application of the human mind to which we owe modern empiricism and technic” (Ibid.19-20). The very fact of modern technology is proof that directed thinking has a cumulative effect through the function of education. Arguably, our state of technological rationality is at an historical apex and is therefore more governed by concepts than any previous time. Since we can use concepts to create materials that abide by their rationale, our conceptual apparatus believes ever more firmly in the materiality of its creations.

Furthermore, concepts can’t exist socially without our ability to express them. As they are thought in and through language, they are expressed and empowered by their articulation. “The primitive, *magical power of the word*” gives concepts their imputed reality and therefore objectivity (Jung [1921] 1990, 44).² As we use language to designate and identify real objects and colloquially believe it to have some inherent relation to them, the same should be true for more intangible realities. Wielding language is to apply a system of codifications. We experience a perception, thought, or feeling and in order to communicate that experience we attach words to it. Repetitious use of those words solidifies their meaning to us, making them less questionable, more closed, more obvious. This occurs on individual and social levels as well.

I hope that in describing the process of directed thinking, as well as its inauguration and expression in language, I have adequately explained how concepts are formulated, wield power, and can eventually diminish in usefulness. It then becomes the responsibility of aware and intellectually involved individuals to alter concepts and when the time arrives, dispose of them.

The codification process intrinsic to language is a process of symbolization, or one of the registers that Lacan believes the subject operates on. Specifically, the symbolic constitution of the subject posited by Lacan makes our ideas (which are also conditioned by symbolic processes) particularly difficult to change and conditioned into the individual with increasing inertia. “It is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject” he

2. He believes this is due to a psychological remnant of primitive man’s inability to distinguish words from the reality they are describing. While I also believe the language used to describe concepts carries a certain weight, the imputed reality of concepts may have more to do with the repetitive, functional use of language.

writes at the beginning of the “Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*” (Lacan [1970] 2006, 7). Since the symbolic constitutes the subject (i.e. the transcendental being experiencing *this* version of reality), it also has the potential for different configurations and therefore can radically alter the subject. He writes, “The subject follows the channels of the symbolic,” moreover this symbolic register affects subjects communally; “it is not only the subject, but the subjects, caught in their intersubjectivity, who line up . . . and, more docile than sheep, model their very being on the moment of the signifying chain that runs through them” (Ibid. 21). Symbolic understandings have a contagious effect, and concepts are perfectly articulated through language; they *are language*, or a code that runs through subjects animating them and uniting them. “The unconscious is the fact that man is inhabited by the signifier” (Ibid. 25). According to Lacan, our common constitutive element is nothing more than the ability to accept a set of signals and adapt them. Jung echoes this sentiment: “Unconscious content is to an infinitely greater degree common to all mankind than the content of the individual consciousness” (Jung [1912] 1916, 62).

It is more than the code itself that people are attuned to; Lacan argues that the syntax of symbolic organization is the basis for unconscious memory. “The remembering at stake in the unconscious . . . is not related to the register that is assumed to be that of memory . . . I will therefore go so far as to say that the burden of proof rests, rather, with those who argue that the constitutive order of the symbolic does not suffice to explain everything here” (Lacan [1970] 2006, 31). Any consistent activity in the unconscious requires a sufficient explanation. What Lacan is proposing here is a prelingual symbolic constitution of the unconscious, a structure defined by syntax.

Syntax, being the arrangement or order of words in a sentence, implies a few things about the way this unconscious mechanism operates. First, each link in the chain is individual unto itself *and* participates in a collective meaning. Second, the relations of the parts or symbols determine the overall meaning of this string. To rethink this logic, it isn’t much different than how Jung approaches dream analysis. “The Deity or the Demon speaks in symbolic speech to the sleeper . . . this means that the dream is a *series of images, which are apparently nonsensical, but arise in reality from psychologic material which yields a clear meaning*” (Jung [1912] 1916, 9). Images are the currency of the unconscious. Lacan writes, “The stamp of an impression or the organization by an idea, express rather well, in fact, the roles of the image as the intuitive form of the object” (Lacan [1970] 2006, 62). The unconscious is given images that become symbols themselves, producing through conglomeration, a whole symbolic structure and meaning based on their syntax. As the dream has a whole meaning unto itself as well as meaning

for the individual parts, and its relation to past dreams, the unconscious organizes its meanings symbolically into a totality of sense.

In terms of regularity and alterability Lacan writes, “What must be kept in mind here is the rapidity with which a formalization is obtained that is suggestive both of a remembering that is primordial in the subject and of a structuration in which it is notable that stable disparities can be distinguished therein” (Ibid. 42-43). The idea of a *stable disparity* in the symbolic chain is an element of this thought that I’d like to preserve for later use. Otherwise, the unconscious or the symbolic order (both are theoretically said to constitute the subject to differing degrees) employs symbolic codes to produce meaning from the syntax of those otherwise nonsensical images.

In an attempt to continue the greater chain of thought: concepts and ideas are built through directed thought, which is cumulatively increasing via recorded history and technology. They are also communicated through language. Language is both a code that operates on the symbolic register and the way in which directed thought is formulated. By exposing the constitutive symbolic unconscious, language and ideas can install themselves as images, becoming situated in and maintaining the present syntactical meaning. There is, however, also the possibility of alteration to the constitutive syntax in such a way as to cause a new meaning to appear. If this were not a possibility, the very practice of clinical therapy and rehabilitation would be pointless.

Imperatives for Change

Undergoing a symbolic restructuring of the unconscious is difficult work full of pitfalls and downsides, but it proves to be a necessity for some individuals as well as simply prudent for many others. Irigaray’s critique of Freudian principles is an exemplar of the way that ideas can come to sediment and dominate popular thought with a maligned version of the truth as well as an insight into the subjectivity of someone oppressed by the weight of those concepts. Women historically find themselves situated in such a way that they must either acquiesce to their imputed conceptual identity or find a way to reorder the symbolic chain in such a way that they can formulate their own personal character. In other cases, individuals who do not find themselves oppressed by inappropriate concepts can learn to accept and understand those who are through systematically testing and altering their own symbolic structures, in effect cultivating characteristics such as compassion and open-mindedness.

Irigaray writes, “The feminine must be deciphered as inter-dict: within the signs or between them, between the realized meanings, between the lines . . . and as a

function of the reproductive necessities of an intentionally phallic currency” (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 22). The phallic currency she describes is used to determine the validity of the signs that constitute the symbolic; in this case, Irigaray is making the argument that the feminine has been left out of this symbolic circuit and essentially misplaced. In other words, masculinity “introjects” its meanings in an over-burdening capacity to the symbolic order, over-determining and over-signifying; defining the not-male. Introjection, according to Jung means, “throwing psychological principles into material reality,” which is a completely natural phenomenon (Jung [1912] 1916, 146). However, for one demographic to introject meaning for others is to impose a hegemonic system of alienated identities. Irigaray describes this inherited persona as being a mirror. “Woman will therefore be this sameness – or at least its mirror image – and, in her role as mother, she will facilitate the repetition of the same, in contempt for her difference. Her own sexual difference” (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 54).

When patriarchal definitions of femininity are introjected, a perverse conceptual understanding of what that means can arise. Irigaray points this out when she claims that according to Freud, “the point at which the ‘change to femininity’ has to occur, [is] with the [woman] becoming the indispensable instrument of male pleasure” (Ibid. 30). Woman’s identification with the sedimented, and outdated concept of femininity is essentially a trap set before birth, a kind of original sin.

This loss of autonomy due to circumscription within a gendered hierarchy is a far-reaching effect, with multiple consequences; many of which are not at all times clearly identifiable. Irigaray writes, “She has then no *consciousness* of her sexual impulses, of her libidinal economy, and more particularly, of her original desire and her desire for origin” (Ibid. 68). Being subjected to a conceptual definition of self that is alienated from anything that one truly is can produce this disoriented mindset. Kristeva describes this in her essay on abjection; she writes, “I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of what will be ‘me’. Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be” (Kristeva [1980] 1982, 10).

More so than a vague sense of alienation, abjection can be the cause of persistent self-loathing. “Thus braided, woven, ambivalent a heterogeneous flux marks out a territory that I can call my own, because the Other, having dwelt in me as *alter ego*, points it out to me through loathing” (Ibid. 10). An image of the alter ego can be immediate and intuitive; it has possessed a consciousness and commanded it to act or think in a certain way. These instructions are unbearable, as they emanate from someplace else. Kristeva describes the accompanying affect: “I give birth to myself amid the violence

of sobs, of vomit. Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system" (Ibid. 3). The symbolic order, as constitutive of the subject, is implicated in abjection's appearance. It is exactly the intertwining of symbols, their painful syntax, and our understanding of their overall meaning that causes this feeling of self-alienation.

Self-contemptuous abjection is only one response to the codifications of patriarchal symbolization; Irigaray describes how this brings about a lack of desire, or inability to want. She describes, "a *void*, a *lack*, of all representation, re-presentation, and even strictly speaking of all mimesis of her desire for origin. That desire will henceforth pass through the discourse-desire-law of man's desire" (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 42). In this case, male desire isn't just allowed, it becomes sanctioned and is involved in creating the sanctions themselves. "It is his desire which, come what may, prescribes the force, the shape, the modes, etc., of the law he lays down or passes on, a law that reduces to the state of 'fantasy' the little girl's seduced and rejected desire" (Ibid. 38). Male, or in the more general and abstract, conceptually based laws and regulations are issued from an individual or group that wields authority, which implies no special ontological status to the subjectivity of the authoritarians. Authority abides by its own logic, a logic of desire, the desire of the individuals with authority and is thus reified in legal and social norms.

This authority is implicated in deciding which concepts become solidified and continually utilized. Kristeva also notes the heterogeneous forms of authority and their implication when she writes, "an unshakeable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in . . . Religion, Morality, Law. Obviously always arbitrary, more or less; unflinchingly oppressive, rather more than less; laboriously prevailing, more and more so" (Kristeva [1980] 1982, 21).

One form of conceptual authority that grants individuals the ability to regulate the use and exclusion of ideas can be achieved through educational landmarks, and at once it becomes apparent why diversity is a necessary aspect of an effectively inclusive educational system. In making gestures toward the educational system as a source of relief for abject conceptualizations, I hope to make the path, which I will describe a little later, clearer. For now, I hope to have pointed out the necessity and imperative that changing the governing symbolic order carries for certain groups. It should be increasingly evident that those who don't bear the strain of these ideas are responsible for alleviating the burden for others where possible. This includes keeping an open mind to criticisms, truly thinking through concepts as if they will apply to material reality (as they will apply to certain psychological realities and legal domains), and challenging dominant claims due to the very fact that they have been accepted for such a long time. In following

some of these methods, I hope it is possible to create a truly open forum for communal intellectual development that leaves as few lives “based on exclusion” as possible (Ibid. 6).

Practical Personal Alteration

In this section, I would like to demonstrate how the potential to direct our thinking in new ways, or alter our symbolic unconscious memory and modify or eradicate obsolete concepts could be harnessed through fantasy. Specifically directed fantasy, which manifests objectively, in some instances, as art. Artistic expression represents and influences the time period it is produced in, and I believe the modern form of expression is film. I will then describe a few examples of films that are capable of performing the initial syntactical switch that allows for the criticism and reconstruction of concepts.

I’ll begin with a brief description of dream or fantasy thinking as Jung describes it; “here, thinking in the form of speech ceases, image crowds upon image, feeling upon feeling; more and more clearly one sees a tendency which creates and makes believe, not as it truly is, but as one indeed might wish it to be” (Jung [1912] 1916, 21). This is the opposite of directed thinking in a few ways. As directed thinking brings a corollary exhaustion, with fantasy or dream thought “we no longer compel our thoughts along a definite track, but let them float, sink, and mount according to their own gravity” (Ibid. 21). Fantastic thinking occurs naturally and effortlessly, where directed thinking must be maintained and focused. What’s more, directed thinking looks toward the future and builds itself accordingly where, “the material of these thoughts which turns away from reality can naturally be only the past with its thousand memory pictures” (Ibid. 21).

Pure fantasy is, in fact, not very productive or useful. It’s a bit like excess thought that also expresses our innermost desires. Jung describes it as, “A lessening of interest, a slight fatigue, is sufficient to put an end to the directed thinking . . . We digress from the theme and give way to our own trains of thought . . . the poor man imagines himself to be a millionaire, the child an adult . . . we imagine that which we lack” (Ibid. 31). In other words, “*the conscious phantasies tell us of mythical or other material of undeveloped or no longer recognized wish tendencies in the soul*” (Ibid. 39-40).

While fantasy doesn’t intrinsically play any decisive role in the development or cultivation of civilization, I believe it holds a good deal of potential for those who find themselves abjected. For women, according to Irigaray, “The nonsymbolization of her desire for origin, of her relationship to her mother, and her own libido acts as a constant appeal to polymorphic regressions” (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 71). The inability to identify through symbolic representation that which one truly desires, leads to regressive

symptoms. Pure fantasy in its unadulterated state is of little use here as a pure and individual expression of desire, but it does function as an expression to oneself. Armed with knowledge of one's own desire, I believe it becomes possible to create, indulge in, and disseminate works of directed fantasy that subvert and undermine patriarchal valuations.

Directed or creative fantasy appears to be an oxymoronic formulation but their functions are, as all mental functions are, intrinsically intertwined. According to Jung, "The goal of totality can be reached neither by science, which is an end in itself, nor by feeling, which lacks the visionary power of thought. The one must lend itself as an auxiliary to the other, yet the opposition between them is so great that a bridge is needed. This bridge is already given us in creative fantasy" (Jung [1921] 1990, 58-59). In my interpretation, creative fantasy is fantastic thought that abides by some of the parameters of directed thinking. Specifically, fantasy is expressed in images and I believe these images accumulate the way directed thought accumulates through language and technology. This vast collection of constructed fantasy, echoing the symbolic and collective desires of those who produce them is the history of all art. Or, as Jung states: "Aesthetics by its very nature is applied psychology and has to do not only with the aesthetic qualities of things but also – and perhaps even more – with the psychological question of the aesthetic attitude" (Ibid. 289).

I believe the artistic medium of our age, the age, which Irigaray argues is burdened by the question of sexual difference,³ is the motion picture or film (Irigaray [1982] 2003, 5). By watching a film, audiences participate in a fictional and subjective, yet communal and real experience. Audiences' participation in these flights of fancy is not to be undervalued; the experiences communicated to cinematic audiences are done so in a way that most resembles subjectivity. We view images that move, the way our eyes move to interpret apparent motion. We hear with the cinema, not just musical scores, but the ambient noise in a scene. However, that is not to take away from the powerful effect of music in cinema. The musical element tied to narrative and the visual component is implicated in evoking a passionate response from the audience. As Jung puts it, "The power of God is threatened by the seduction of passion; a second fall of angels menaces

3. She posits that the question of our age is one of sexual difference; I believe this is to ignore the other differences intrinsic to modern society (racial, religious, etc.). While the question of our age is some form of difference, there is seemingly an important tie to how this question is expressed in artistic mediums. In order to best understand the current age, I wish to draw from the current popular medium. These are my intentions in choosing the seemingly arbitrary medium of film for analysis.

heaven . . . the power of the good and reasonable ruling the world wisely is threatened by the primitive chaotic power of passion” (Jung [1912] 1916, 120). Films viscerally engage us on more of our sensory organs than any other medium to date and therefore I believe can elicit some of the strongest reactions, emotionally and intellectually.

Jung writes, “the relation of the individual to his fantasy is very largely conditioned by his relation to the unconscious in general, and this in turn is conditioned in particular by the spirit of the age” (Jung [1921] 1990, 53). The creative fantasies projected on the screen communicate a specific relationship to the community’s subconscious, one that is determined, in part, as a reaction, to the spirit of the age. This relation is expressed, reinforced, or contradicted through cinematic imagery. Here I mean imagery in the sense Lacan does, or the intuitive form of understanding for the unconscious. The expression of those images interacts with our own symbolic chain. “The signifier’s displacement determines subjects’ acts, destiny, refusals, blindnesses, success, and fate, regardless of their innate gifts and instruction, and irregardless of their character or sex; and that everything pertaining to the psychological pre-given follows willy-nilly the signifier’s train” (Lacan [1970] 2006, 21). The signifier’s deployment in cinema, with a different syntax than what might naturally occur in us suggests a new image or syntax and through that opens the possibility for new actions, beliefs and enterprises.

The experience of film is mediated primarily through the filmmaker and technical apparatus of the cinema (which strongly resembles our own sensory apparatus), and due to this we can come as close as possible to experiencing another person’s subjectivity. Through revolutionary forms of cinema, both in the aesthetically abstract and socially challenging senses of innovation, the conceptual reality dominating a time can be explored, undone, replaced, or obliterated.

I find it’s only prudent to introduce a few concrete examples of films that attempt to create such a symbolic dissonance, and I would like to start with Spike Lee’s *Do The Right Thing* (1989). This film attempts to bring the viewer into the actual conditions of a Brooklyn neighborhood on the hottest day of the summer, and all the tension implied therein. Narratively, the film begins with usual introductions of the characters, but attempts to avoid casting anyone as a strict antagonist. The main character is a pizza deliveryman, named Mookie, whose eyes we experience this film through. Mookie works for an Italian man named Sal who hires mostly other Italians and abides by a kind of passive racism. He allows his employees to harass Mookie and other minority customers without much trouble and he truly views a divide between himself and the community he serves.

This film seeks, above all else to acquaint the viewer, as personally as possible, with the infuriating experience of blatant racism. One infamous scene has several characters speak directly into the camera and deliver a lengthy racially hateful insult for several different ethnic groups. I found this to be a powerful cinematic technique in that it puts the audience in a position to be personally insulted and to also experience racial aggression from a detached viewer's perspective simultaneously.

Aside from techniques, the characters in this film seem to represent different perspectives on antagonistic racial relations. Mookie, for one, is a rather neutral character, he tries to assuage and change his racist coworker's mind through appeals to their common interests. He even deescalates a situation that occurs between his store's owner and a regular customer. It isn't until the end of the film, when racial prejudices overflow into violence that Mookie helps incite a riot by throwing a garbage can through his store's window. The point in this seems to be that despite what level of neutrality one hopes to assume there is only so much control an individual can exert over their circumstances and environment. When they have become truly hostile, hostility can be the only recourse. *Do The Right Thing* then allows the audience to experience, briefly and removed from other consequences, the subjective state of someone faced with racist aggression as well as the objective circumstances that must coalesce to a point of violent expression. This experience can allow those who don't otherwise participate in that symbolic interaction in their daily lives to understand how it occurs.

Another film I want to point to briefly is *The Stepford Wives* (Forbes 1975) as a similarly functioning example but instead related to the forced domestication of women. The main character of the film is Joanna, who has just moved to the Connecticut suburbs from New York City with her husband Walter and initially she finds herself somewhat out of place. I will also mention here that it can be very telling what demographic a film is trying to represent through their choice of "main character"; but Walter proves to be something of an antagonist in this instance. He joins the local men's club in Stepford and mysterious events begin occurring. For instance, Joanna's only like-minded and relatively independent friend suddenly becomes much more interested in her household duties than her friendship with Joanna. Walter begins to expect much more from Joanna in terms of "wifely duties" and the men's club seems to be mysteriously at work behind much of this. How the plot of the film develops is an articulation of its syntax. As a psychological thriller the tension and danger continually mount from the relative comfort of the initial scenes. In much the same way, marriage for a woman at the time may have proved to create a safe haven for her initially until she eventually finds herself operating like an automaton in service of the family. Similarly, the musical score is quite eerie, which

juxtaposes the calm visuals of the natural setting in suburban Connecticut. The visually apparent tranquility of family life serves only to mask the pain occurring behind closed doors.

Through my analysis of fantasy (arbitrary and constructive) as well as its interaction with the symbolic order, I hope to have shown here how films are capable of presenting us with a codified experience, mimicking our own subjective experiences to allow an audience to understand a new perspective. This codification is similar to language in their shared ability to act on the symbolic order. By granting access to otherwise unheard voices, films facilitate the breakdown of obsolete concepts by demonstrating, through narrative example, exactly where their applications become harmful. This, at once, allows audiences who are not in touch with those problems to become aware of them and grants those who may feel isolated by that situated perspective a sense of commonality.

Dangers of Alteration & Conclusion

It is here that I would like to return to Lacan's statement that the unconscious can maintain "stable disparities" in the syntax of its memory, that is, alter the code in repetitive ways. Establishing an individual change in the syntax as a precedent for instating that variant, as a new permanence, is what I referred to earlier as a stable disparity in the system. To effect a syntactical change without reinforcing it through repetition leaves the disparity unstable. The relative instability of disparities in the symbolic register can cause tremendously harmful effects for the subject. I believe an instance of this occurs when Lacan writes about the fragmentation of identity that is constitutive of aggression.

Lacan locates aggressiveness in a subjective experience, mediated by images, specifically that of "the fragmented body;" these include: "images of castration, emasculation, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, and bursting open of the body" (Lacan [1970] 2006, 85). These are ways of describing experience, or representations of an internal self-relation to one's body. As a series of images, they are directly implicated in the Lacanian symbolic order as well as a kind of Jungian morbid fantasy. This unconscious self-relationship implies a social and expressive aspect as well. Lacan writes, "There is a specific relationship here between man and his own body that is also more generally manifest in a series of social practices: from tattooing, incision, and circumcision rituals in primitive societies to what might be called the procrustean arbitrariness of fashion, in that it contradicts . . . the natural forms of the human body" (Ibid. 85). The actual symptoms of such a state can vary but "the aggressive

tendency proves to be fundamental in a certain series of significant personality states, namely, the paranoid and paranoiac psychoses” (Ibid. 90).

Aggression is a structural problem that occurs during ego development. Lacan writes, “A specific satisfaction, based on the integration of an original organic chaos, corresponds to the *Urbild* of this formation, alienating as it may be due to its function of rendering foreign. This satisfaction must be conceived of in the dimension of a vital dehiscence constitutive of man and makes unthinkable the idea of an environment that is preformed for him” (Ibid. 94). Aggression is a fundamental, intrinsic aspect of ego formation. It is triggered when a person feels out of place or uncomfortable with themselves. The dehiscence of incorporating new chaos, or an irregular syntax, into an individual creates a volatile personal climate. Irregularity conditions the acceptance, on a personal and unconscious level, of erratic behavior. According to this formulation an aggressive person can be said to be constituted by a disparate semiotic. These are all potential side effects that I believe follow from my proposed rubric for a changing mind, if implemented in an unhealthy fashion.

As a final thought, I want to mention that my approach to this material is somewhat inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the Body without Organs; essentially, I wanted to develop parallel concepts for psychological development that Deleuze imputes to the body. Central to this is the individual’s ability to intentionally establish new structures as the basis for novel thought, action and experience. Deleuze writes, “you make [a BwO] . . . And it awaits you; it is an inevitable exercise or experimentation, already accomplished the moment you undertake it, unaccomplished as long as you don’t” (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1993, 149). The difference between establishing a BwO or changing one’s mind is exerting the right kind of effort. Furthermore, extreme utilization of the process results in negative effects. “Staying stratified - organized,” as opposed to experimenting with a BwO “is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse” (Ibid. 161). Questioning myself and altering my unconscious symbolic structure too irregularly can lead to a paranoid aggression, yet maintaining the use of an outdated and oppressive ideal is destructive for others, thus the much-disputed question of egoism. The BwO is a means to restructure the self, through what limited semblance of autonomy we can grasp. I wanted to demonstrate that changing one’s mind can be a practiced and refreshing skill, which is equally pivotal in the progression of any society as in the development of the individual.

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