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Multimedia Storytelling

15 November 2023

Creative Essay: Identity of the Soul

What is the identity of our soul? Can we have more than one? Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is when one person has multiple distinct personalities within their mind, each with a name, history, and set of characteristics. DID forms after intense traumatic events, usually resulting in the case of personalities being created as a coping mechanism. It's only when they have nobody else to talk to, their mind creates new identities for them to interact with. What interests me about this disorder is the large mental struggle between personalities for ultimate control of the body. When a person has these personalities do they all share the collective soul as well? Or does the last person standing gain the rights to the holder's soul? Within the mix of personalities, the original is still locked in their brain, but some voices are louder than others. Do these personalities know that each other exists? If so, how does a person with this disorder keep their true self without permanently turning into a different identity?

One of the examples of DID that I instantly think about is the movie *Split*. *Split*, released in 2016 and directed by M. Night Shyamalan, follows a more extreme fictional representation of a person with multiple personalities. In this film, Kevin, James McAvoy, is told to have twenty-three different personalities within his mind. He kidnaps three teenage girls and throughout the movie, Casey, played by Anya Taylor-Joy, identifies them and uses them against him. Though people disagreed with this portrayal of a person suffering from DID, I can't help but find this internal conflict of Kevin oddly interesting. If you were to say that everyone is limited to one

soul, then how would this case of twenty-three identities share one soul in harmony? It's clear that the evil and most powerful personality, The Beast, is disliked by all the others but they can never get rid of it.

I'd like to relate this concept to a video essay we all watched for class. Jacob Geller created the video called "Head Transplants and the Non-Existence of the Soul" in which he spirals into topics of morality, identity, and souls. It talked about how the body (briefly) lives in harmony with itself even when the source of the mind and the body aren't the same. Homing into his example of Dr. Robert Joseph White's "successful" head transplant of a monkey. After removing both heads of two monkeys, keeping one head alive and one body alive, scientist Dr. White then connects the opposite body parts until they awake. The monkey opens its eyes but has no other functions, it is doomed for death trapped in this confused state in which it doesn't know who it is anymore.

Before the monkey woke up, let's talk about what happened in both the mind and the body of the two monkeys combined into one. Similar to any human organ transplant, the two assets wanted to reject each other. Bodies have a mind of their own, any living being's body is on autopilot. The brain controls the whole body, but where does the soul live? Because technically the body never died, I like to think that the soul (whatever may be left) still resides within. Same thing for the head. Digging deeper, these two half-souls combine into one but the new identity doesn't know which soul it is anymore. Relating to Kevin, this one soul, one body, but with multiple identities, both split the soul into twenty-three pieces and ultimately is how it can resume living. This endless turmoil and conflict of control results in the collectiveness of each part of the soul. All trying to fight for the body's life and their own. This is exactly what is

happening to the monkey. These half-souls fight for the body but they come together to produce the short new life and identity of this monkey.

Other than *Split*, a great example that Geller talked about in his video is the video game *Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus*. In *Wolfenstein II*, you play BJ who eventually gets caught by Nazis and then beheaded in public. Allies of BJ retrieve his head and transfer it onto the body of a Nazi super soldier. Another case of these two half-souls being combined into one so that it keeps the head alive. I see *Wolfenstein II* as the same as Dr. White's experiment with the monkeys because even though the life of BJ continues, so does the body of the nameless Nazi super soldier. This instance complicates itself more because BJ is of Polish and Jewish descent yet he is kept alive by the very thing he aims to revolt against. This mental conflict of being saved by a Nazi leaves me to believe that his soul isn't combined with the one of the body, but separated like Kevin. Because these two opposites, especially with a deep hatred towards one another will never learn to co-exist. And BJ now has to deal with this constant reminder of both not being his whole self again and technically being half German now.

Though BJ's head transplant isn't a study of DID, I want to continue about the power struggle in his mind. Inferring that this moral conflict in his mind is just another war he's fighting. I feel that his soul has to be constantly fighting his German body just because that was the nature of their previous lives. The struggle for control, where the strongest mind gains the body but the mind has to fend off the controller so that power isn't taken away. This controller is seen in *Split* where each personality has their specified time with control over the body. But at the same time, they all want the body to continue their individual lives.

Another example of DID in popular culture would be in Marvel's Moon Knight, specifically, the *Moon Knight* show that aired on Disney Plus in 2022. The show follows Steven

Grant who discovers that he is one of Marc Spector's multiple personalities. Then at the end of the series, a third identity is revealed, Jake Lockley, which Grant and Spector both don't know about. Though Grant and Spector learn to work together as well as share the power of the moon god, Khonshu, Grant didn't know anything about his true origin. The story is told through his point of view, blacking out when Spector takes over the body as Moon Knight. There is also banter between Grant and Spector via their collective soul.

If Moon Knight represents anything, it's that the relationship between identities is the opposite of Kevin's. Where Kevin's identities are split apart, Moon Knight's identities are tied together by the supernatural force of Khonshu. Initially, Spector was supposed to die in the Egyptian temple, but by pledging himself to serve the god it resulted in the multiple personalities of Marc Spector. But both Kevin and Moon Knight can hear the voice in their head, and all the voices ask is for the body's controller. Though both characters had an initial personality which sprung into the number of other identities, no one personality has the right to the body because they all do. Each identity thinks they are the original, which is how people who are affected by DID eventually lose themselves amongst the chaos inside their head.

The combination of two or more identities into one collective soul will always bring conflict within the carrier's mind. The process of merging two individuals living or dead is enough to send to mind wild. One set of thoughts, characteristics, memories, and simply life is enough already for the mind and soul to handle. Once another is attempted to be packed into the preexisting soul, that's when complications start to arise. The identities will always try to overpower one another to get their time in the spotlight. Whether the two personalities are friendly with each other or the opposite, with how much power the mind and soul have on the body, who wouldn't want to be in control? Either just for a minute or they depend on the so-

called controller of the body forever until another challenges them for the throne. In terms of the identity of the soul, I believe there is none. It's always a competition between certain characteristics that you have because not all personality traits you possess will be used in every situation. The identity of your soul is whatever you want it to be. You have the power to be whoever you'd like to be at the moment, or forever for that matter.

Works Cited

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