

Texts

Mimetic Desire and the Scapegoat

The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas

Human

Personhood is the status of being a person. Defining personhood is a controversial topic in philosophy and law and is closely tied with legal and political concepts of citizenship, equality, and liberty. According to law, only a natural person or legal personality has rights, protections, privileges, responsibilities, and legal liability.

Personhood continues to be a topic of international debate and has been questioned critically during the abolition of human and nonhuman slavery, in theology, in debates about abortion and in fetal rights and/or reproductive rights, in animal rights activism, in theology and ontology, in ethical theory, and in debates about corporate personhood and the beginning of human personhood. IE, climate change (technical debate but very important), Abortion, Immigration, Health care for old people, racism in some forms of thought.

Themes

- Scapegoating
- refutation of the possibility of a perfect society
- *Omelas* takes as an axiom the need for a scapegoat, where

- *Omelas* as a refutation of utilitarianism

Passages

-While mimetic violence divides each against each, scapegoating violence unites all against one. Thus the destruction of the scapegoat produces a genuinely unifying experience, the peace and relief of which makes such a profound impact that, over time, the hated scapegoat is turned into a god, and the community tries to perpetuate the peace-bringing effect of this original lynching by

commemorating it ritually and sacrificially. Ultimately this ritualized violence becomes the basis for religion, mythology, kingship, and the establishment of those differences in role and status that are so essential to bring about internal peace. (Differentiation cuts down on mimetic rivalry since only “equals” can compete for the same object.)

-They all know it is there, all the people of Omelas. Some of them have come to see it, others are content merely to know it is there. They all know that it has to be there. Some of them understand why, and some do not, but they all understand that their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers, even the abundance of their harvest and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child's abominable misery.

- At times one of the adolescent girls or boys who go to see the child does not go home to weep or rage, does not, in fact, go home at all. Sometimes also a man or woman much older falls silent for a day or two, and then leaves home. These people go out into the street, and walk down the street alone. They keep walking, and walk straight out of the city of Omelas, through the beautiful gates. They keep walking across the farmlands of Omelas. Each one goes alone, youth or girl man or woman. Night falls; the traveler must pass down village streets, between the houses with yellow-lit windows, and on out into the darkness of the fields. Each alone, they go west or north, towards the mountains. They go on. They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back. The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness. I cannot describe it at all. It is possible that it does not exist. But they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas.

Questions

- Is a scapegoat required for a perfect society?
- Are humans ever able to grow beyond the need of a scapegoat?

- How does the addition of a scapegoat make a society perfect?

Synthesis

- Both of them show the concept of blame or judgement
- Differences
- Both of them seem to deal with psychology.

- Differences is the problems with scapegoating lessons