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The unique experience of French film-makers was evident in their films. During the war France was an occupied country, unlike say England or the USA, and the experience of austerity and internal tensions, created by a population that in part resisted and in part collaborated with the Nazis, left a mark on the country's psyche. A distinctive philosophy - existentialism - evolved in France in the post-war years. This philosophy, associated with Jean-Paul Sartre and other French intellectuals, was a major influence on La Nouvelle Vague. Existentialism stressed the individual, the experience of free choice, the absence of any rational understanding of the universe and a sense of the absurdity in human life. Faced with an indifferent world an existentialist seeks to act authentically, using free will and taking responsibility for all their actions, instead of playing preordained roles dictated by society. . . They changed notions of how a film could be made and were driven by a desire to forge a new cinema. (Nottingham 1-2)

Nottingham notes that existentialism in New Wave cinema emerged from the post-war environment in France, and I argue that this juxtaposition offers insight into the patterns observable between art expression, especially film, and sociopolitical movements and global political events. Film stands out as defining a culture artistically within the context of a period because, for one, printed media such as poetry or novels or static visual art is a saturated market that doesn't have the cultural influence found in film. It seems counterintuitive that an art industry with significantly more content would be dwarfed by the influence of an industry with limited releases and significantly higher barriers to entry. (It's worth noting that barriers to entry in foreign film industries were not as significant as those in Hollywood, though nonetheless that barrier surpassed that of other artistic modes.) Artists are

influenced by their environments (in a general sense, not ecologically). Their inspiration might come from an original thought or introspective reflection but such inspiration is derivative of the artist's experiences. One cannot think if one does not receive external stimuli. Because artistic inspiration comes from the environment, artists tend to represent the values, fears, and often counter-culture of the time in their work. In saturated markets such as the written word it's more difficult to extrapolate a representation of a society in a period. In addition, film is a more focused industry which relies on the audience to justify production. Therefore, movements in film are favorable for drawing conclusions about a society.

Now there's this connection between fascism, morality, and existentialism. Fascism emphasizes a mentality where the fate of the individual is inconsequential when considering the fate of the group. Fascism encourages the individual to value the will of the state and by extension valuing the morality of the state or institution over the morality of the individual. People subjected to a fascist ideology are left without an individualistic identity or moral subjectivity. France, as Nottingham explains, was occupied during the war, and anti-fascism, apologetics, and fascism arose organically among the population. Following the war and the emergent reality of fascism's caustic nature, the French sought to reconcile remaining cognitive dissonance, assert a renewed individualistic identity, and make sense of the social effects of propagated ideology. This meant that the people of France suddenly started thinking more about how the ethos affects the ego and the super-ego affects the ethos. There is a dynamic relationship between how people en masse shape a society and how they respond as individuals to the society they themselves helped create. These questions relevant after the war led to a heightened sense of the individual's role in society, and from there a fascination with existentialism in the New Wave film movement emerged.

In *The 400 Blows*, this existentialism and how it relates to the subjective morality of society juxtaposed with the individual is apparent as we develop an understanding of Antoine's place in society.

While authority figures around him perceive his behavior as delinquent and as we see him do objectively illegal things, we're driven to understand his behavior from the perspective of Antoine, the individual, as opposed to the external perspective. The viewer's sympathy for Antoine elicited by Truffaut's attention to his role as an iconoclast, as if almost by nature, overpowers the socially imposed morality by which one might judge Antoine's behavior. By placing emphasis on Antoine as an anti-hero, the audience is led to conclude that social morality is not infallible. This realization is the key to reconciling residual fascist ideology and placing proper value on moral subjectivity.

I argue that the relationship between cultural trends and counter-culture as a response can accurately predict trends in the expression of social values in film as well as the emergence of revolutionary modes of audio-visual entertainment. Nottingham states: "They changed notions of how a film could be made and were driven by a desire to forge a new cinema." This desire came from the new identity France forged after the war, and similarly regenerative or revolutionary social paradigms have led to redefine filmmaking in the 21st century.

In my first explication I discussed the relationship between emergent existentialism in French cinema and diminishing fascism in France post-war. This newfound existentialism found roots in a subjective morality and redefined purpose for the *nouvelle vague* generation (youth culture in France) which led to an alienated generation. *The 400 Blows* (1959) explores this emergent existentialism. To expand upon this evolving theme in French cinema, I move to Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) in which existentialism has notably evolved:

At 6 minutes, 20 seconds into the film, Godard cuts to a surprise party at Ferdinand's wife's parent's home. The opening shot of the sequence is filmed with an overwhelmingly artificial, bright red filter that saturates the actors in the scene as the men discuss cars and the women, beauty products,

much like a scripted advertisement. Ferdinand moves through the shot without participating in the conversation. He moves into another shot, this time saturated in green, where he asks an American filmmaker “exactly what cinema is.” This is the only conversation in which Ferdinand engages. Next he moves through a shot with a sepia filter gently lit in which a couple kisses – this catches Ferdinand’s attention. In the following shot, utilizing an artificial blue filter, he moves through a conversation between a man and woman in which she talks about her hair spray – Ferdinand shows no reaction. Next Ferdinand moves through a bright, naturally lit shot with a topless woman and a clothed man in which she suggests women abandon lingerie, as in bright light (such as in the shot) it becomes indecent, yet she is naked. In the following shot Ferdinand begins to pass a man lighting a topless woman’s cigarette shot with a blue filter. There is a discontinuous cut in which the only change is the filter, this time green, and Ferdinand moves backward slightly. Back in a blue shot, Ferdinand sits and asks Frank for the keys so he can leave. In the final shot, lit with blue, red, and green light, Ferdinand destroys a large cake and throws it at a guest before leaving.

This sequence is Godard’s most aesthetically affecting scene in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) because he uses blatantly artificial lighting, filters, and one-dimensional sets to exaggerate the Ferdinand’s disenchantment with bourgeois French society. He tackles blind consumerism with the partygoers’ vapid regurgitation of advertisements, parodying the real-life banality of consumerism as he and Ferdinand sees it. This red shot is the most saturated of them all and the characters are all but entirely washed out by color, symbolizing how those people have become diluted by consumerism.

Ferdinand yearns to be captivated by something, and in the next shot when he asks Samuel Fuller, a real-life American director, what cinema is, and Fuller responds, “in one word: emotions,” Ferdinand is not satisfied by this answer. Ferdinand isn’t moved by this because there are no real emotions present in this interaction, only the concept of emotionality. The short shot in sepia of the

couple kissing is arguably the most natural shot in the sequence, and the emotionality of the kiss captures Ferdinand's attention more so than any other interaction in the scene. The next scene, and first blue one, returns to the satirized consumerism of the red scene mixed with narcissism as the woman obsesses over the softness of her hair as she studies it wide-eyed. The over-lit natural shot of the topless woman dismissing lingerie as indecent in bright light and void of "allure" illustrates the objectification of women, and the men in the following two shots pine after topless women.

The jump cut that turns from blue to green is likely an homage to the style Godard used in his earlier work as a response to the criticism he garnered. It acts as a rejection of traditional cinematic techniques and establishes Godard's complete distaste for popular culture. Godard speaks directly to the viewer throughout the entire scene with the blatantly satiric dialogue and artificial light. He wants the viewer to know that this scene is a message independent of traditional cinematic storytelling.

Godard closes this sequence with a short monologue from Ferdinand which establishes the existential crisis he is experiencing as the artificial party finally removes his blinders: "I've got a mechanism for seeing called eyes, for hearing called ears, for speaking called a mouth. But they feel disconnected. They don't work together. A person should feel like he's one individual. I feel like I'm many different people." Here Godard establishes the more philosophical existentialism that will drive the film as a whole. This sort of existentialism, which remarks upon ordinary life, the hypocrisy, the vanity, which remarks upon the futility and greater questions of existence untouched by the bourgeois, is an evolution of the existentialism explored *The 400 Blows* (1959), which focuses primarily on subjective morality and the cultural disparity between youth culture and the dominate French culture of the time. In this instance, the defector lives within the bourgeoisie and therefore must undergo more significant existential enlightenment before he is capable of removing himself from French society. It's worth noting that as Ferdinand and Marianne leave, they pass all of the colored lights that dominated the party, symbolizing their leaving bourgeois culture behind to pursue their existential philosophy.

There is a clear evolution of the existential movement, and around this time, two years later, Hollywood cinema produces *The Graduate* (1967), which is an American exploration of existentialism and counter-culture in a similar vein as *The 400 Blows* and *Pierrot le Fou*. When considering the themes surrounding these movies, a genealogy of existential exploration in film begins to emerge and conclusions about the artist's relationship with the memetics of expression within the global film community. In fact, Richard Dawkins' theory of memetics is the perfect tool for analyzing the evolutionary nature of artistic movements.

In stage one of the current event connection I explicated a passage from Stephen Nottingham in which he explained how occupation of France during WWII lead to the existentialism movement in film following the war. I came to the conclusion that existentialism emerged from France's desire to reconcile their past, make sense of the social effects of propagated ideology, and establish an individualistic identity and morality. I argue that existentialism, given the historical context, is the only movement that could have possibly emerged from fascism because it so perfectly counters its philosophies, and that the formal features by which existentialism has come to be defined are an evolved product of early post-fascist existentialism. To broaden this conclusion: I believe that trends in artistic movements can be predicted by analysis of the cultural movements and global political events which precede them. In an effort to justify this argument, I will apply this analysis to global economics in the 21st century.

Privatization of industry has been implemented around the world due to a substantial effort from the US since the industrial revolution. Privatization put production and distribution in the hands of the people; privatization was billed as the democracy of economics. Democracy operates as a republic – much like how a small number of people have direct control over the operation of a business.

Democracy has checks and balances through separate institutions, and the capitalist market must also abide by the rules set by a separate institution. It was a good system until things got out of hand.

The biggest limitation to making money before the financial industry was how quickly goods and services could be rendered. It was quickly discovered that money could be made as fast as people needed it (loaning). It didn't end here, soon it was realized that money could be made as fast as a business's estimated/perceived value increases, which, as the market indicates, is bankruptcy or billions in a single day. In today's world, supercomputers are used to complete billions of microtransactions everyday on Wall Street. Money can be made as fast as an electron travels through a circuit. These firms spend millions in tech research so their data can travel faster than the competition's, they'll even move supercomputers closer to NYC to improve data latency (Sunshine). These innovations in the financial industry have been the causal factor of ongoing instability within the financial system. MIT predicts a global financial collapse by 2030 given current market trends (Turner).

Since the 2008 crash revelations about the nature of the financial market in the 21st century have finally reached the public. In response to those events, the forgone prosecution of those culpable parties, and the general state of the industry, Wall Street's most vocal opponent took to the streets on September 17, 2011. Their list of grievances was broad and this was said to hurt the campaign, but in retrospect it only highlights the severity of the situation. The Occupy movement gave way to a new social awareness. Before 2008 no one knew 40% of all capital was held by 1% of the population (Allegretto 4). Before 2008 no one knew there were more vacant homes than homeless people in the United States (Burt). At this point, these facts are so well-known that citing them is superfluous, but I like to cover my bases.

From this heightened socioeconomic awareness emerged film that echoed the grievances of concerned individuals. *Margin Call* (2011) was an independent film about the fictionalized events which led up to the 2008 crisis (Chandor). *The East* (2013), another independent film, adopted a radical

perspective by following an anarchist group orchestrating attacks on corrupt and immoral businesspeople through the eyes of a privately hired spy who turns on her employers (Batmanglij). The film emphasizes waste, immoral business practices, and the moral ambiguity of militant social activism. *The Other Guys* (2010), although a slapstick comedy, focuses on economic crime and devotes the end credits to stylishly listing facts of inequality and economic criminality (McKay). These films among others are the first in a movement focused on socioeconomic activism in the sort of concrete terms through which we saw early French New Wave films explore existentialism before moving into more abstract explorations. I argue that a new movement is emerging from this heightened socioeconomic awareness, and given the progression toward the abstract as seen in the French New Wave, this 21st century movement will evolve similarly.

I've been building upon this idea that cultural movements evolve in distinct patterns which interact dynamically with conventional culture, counter-culture, emergent cohorts, and events. I've established that post-fascism in France gave way to existentialism insofar as the philosophical questions raised by a culture lost between two divergent ideologies can be accurately categorized in the succeeding existential movement. In many ways existentialism, or any artistic movement, behaves like water eroding earth: expanding, changing course through gravity's influence, creating new channels, and scattering into tributaries which empty into much larger bodies of water. I offer this simile because the water behaves more closely to various modes of thought than any other analogy I could illustrate. The mode of thought is derivative of itself, and its movement is determined by its environment. Not only that, but we can look at a stream and see the dry channels that stream once flowed through—we can see the impact a mode of thought had on a particular place and time, and its influence remains as an imprint.

As I watched Godard's *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) for the second time in preparation for this essay, I noted themes of postmodernism. Godard breaks the fourth wall numerous times and Marianne tells Ferdinand as they position the car to fake their deaths, "This isn't a movie" (Godard). I started thinking about how postmodernist thought could have influenced Godard's interpretation of existentialism in the film, and I realized that postmodernism is, at a basic level, an inward analysis of that which a concept is constructed. While I began with the observation that *Pierrot le Fou* is a deeper exploration of existentialism than *The 400 Blows* (1959), it's become apparent that the principles of postmodernism (that is to say exploration of deconstructed concepts) are key to exploring the depth and fundamental complexities of such a movement.

That brings me to the emergent movement I identified in the previous stage: this heightened socioeconomic awareness. This movement is beginning as counter-culturally and politically driven much like existentialism was in post-fascist France, and I believe it will follow the same trend of abstraction and deconstruction.

This new movement is interested in preservation of the environment, rejection of excess, reevaluation of social morality, and justice for the people through prosecution of economic criminality. This sought justice is more a desire for acknowledgement of the grievances asserted by activists than a mission for vengeance; that is to say that these activists seek the symbolic validation paramount to propagating these socioeconomic ideals. The justification of these principles lie in a fundamental reevaluation of social morality. Whereas before free capitalism was seen as the embodiment of freedom, the ultimate socially moral ideal, the new socially moral ideal is equality, and capitalism is seen as incompatible with this ultimate ideal. Equality among people can be further reduced to a moral ideal which values the quality of human life and the "human spirit" above all other pursuits, or as it has already been coined: humanism.

The sentiments of humanism emerge most prominently when considering the global population as a connected, empathetic global family that shares threads of commonality across culture simply by being human. *Life in a Day* (2011), a documentary which compiled amateur footage from 80,000 sources on a single day in July 2010, while having many existential themes, more specifically explores this connective tissue of ubiquitous human heritage and establishes that we have much more in common than we realize (MacDonald). *District 9* (2009) explores this connectivity within the context of science fiction by constructing an allegory to racial subjugation with an alien species that inhabits Earth, and the operating factor in a bond between a human and a Prawn is a fundamental humanity (Blomkamp).

This fundamental bond between people has never been the focal point of any film movement, and its emergence through socioeconomic awareness and the exploration of the concepts which define it are leading to new artistic explorations in film reminiscent of post-fascism and existentialism and many other movements which have followed this same pattern of genesis and evolution.

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