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Short Papers on OCD, Psychopathy, and Psychopathology

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What are Some Characteristics of OCD in Children?

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OCD and Philosophy

Obsessive-compulsives and philosophers have a lot in common. First if all, they are both compulsive doubters. They doubt the obvious. They rationalize their doing so by saying that they are trying to be rigorous and that they are trying not to believe things that are false. But that is, indeed, a mere rationalization. Both the obsessive-compulsive and the philosopher are impotent, being too fearful to engage the world. And to the extent that they have potency, it lies in their ability to manipulate linguistic or otherwise symbolic proxies of reality. So instead of dealing with the world on its own terms---instead of dealing with the world in the world—they try to internalize as much of the world as possible into the sphere of their own thought, where they are dominant. And they are dominant there both because they are more inclined towards thought than towards action and also, more importantly, because it is their own mind where, of course, they ipso facto have total power.

Or at least the illusion thereof—more on this in a moment.

Then there is the fact that both the philosopher and the obsessive-compulsive are unduly preoccupied with logical niceties and fine points of argumentation. This is at least partly a derivative of their sense of impotence: when one has no material of one's own to work on—which is the case whenever one is too afraid of the world to venture out into it and get material---one preoccupies oneself with secondary material—with matters of grammar, logic, argumentation and the like.

Plus, by conditionalizing the acceptance of hypotheses on subtleties of proof and argumentation, they are able to rationalize continuing to remain in their own heads; they are able to rationalize commandeering debates, and holing them up within their own thought-scape, pending the resolution of niceties of logic and dialectical protocol which, of their very nature, are incapable of being definitely resolved.

There is another, somewhat less invidious dimension to the just-discussed similarity between the philosopher and the obsessive-compulsive. Neither the philosopher nor the obsessive-compulsive has any real doubts, even of a purely intellectual variety, as to the contents of the external world. In any case, neither has any more such doubts than the next person. But both are indeed more doubtful than the next person. They are more doubtful, and with good reason, as to the contents of the internal world. With the both the philosopher and the obsessive-compulsive, their supposed doubts about the external world are displaced, projected doubts about the internal world. They are both people whose minds are veritable caldrons of primal desires but who, being moral, do their best to suppress and repress their basal urges. The result is that, while their understanding of the external world is in fact perfectly

good, notwithstanding their asseverations to their contrary, they are quite in the dark as to the internal world, believing or half-believing themselves to be logic-driven, Cartesian ratiocinators, when, in fact, their Cartesianism is only a veneer, which holds only of the thinnest and most uppermost mental stratum of theirs, the rest of their respective psyches being Nietzschean cesspools.

And both of these types of people fancy themselves 'rational actors'—people who have gotten the better of the base side of themselves---when in reality they are anything but rational actors, the truth being that they are driven by rage, narcissism and fear. Indeed, their intellectualism is a reaction to, and attempt to cloak their own darkly retrograde psychological condition.

And their insistence on the rationality of man is merely an idealization—a projection of a self-image that they half-have and are 100% trying to have. And the Lockean/Cartesian insistence on the non-existence of the unconscious—on the brazenly spurious idea that mind extends only as far consciousness---is merely another tendentious rationalization, and a decidedly more sterile and superficial one than their false, but not entirely misconceived insistence on the primacy within people of rationality.

There is a second similarity between the obsessive-compulsive and the philosopher. They are both pathologically concerned with ethics—with questions of right and wrong and good vs. evil. In both cases, this is because they are crypto-criminals—people whose fundamental orientation with respect to others is anti-social—this being reflected in their solipsism and skepticism---but who also have strong, nay draconian, superegos and thus do everything in their power to suppress their criminal side. And to this end they enlist their pre-existing penchant for dwelling on technicalities of logic; which, when transferred from the sphere of knowledge-theory into the domain of ethics, results in their dwelling on technicalities of a legalistic nature. And this is why many an obsessive-compulsive, and also many a philosopher, goes into law.

Philosophers tend to be extremely sensitive to, and intelligent about, niceties of language. This is obviously true of some obsessive-compulsives, but it is unknown whether it is categorically true of them. But supposing that it is, this, I think, is a derivative of their fear-based retreat from the external world, which is the realm of action, into the internal world, which is the realm of thought. After all, sensitivity to linguistic niceties being cut from much the same cloth as sensitivity to logical niceties, and the latter being, as we have already seen, a by-product of the philosopher's and the obsessive-compulsives replacing of reality with cognitive proxies thereof.

One last point: I have noticed that a hugely disproportionate number of philosophers, including myself, are professional level musicians. Around 40% of philosophy professors fall into this category. I don't know whether the same is true of the class of obsessive compulsives—it presumably isn't. But even though there is not, in all likelihood, a categorical connection between OCD and musicality, there may be a

sub-categorical connection, as in, there may be a relatively comprehensive sub-set of the class of obsessive-compulsives whose members are also musical and whose being musical is connected to their OCD. In any case, it seems that musicianship and philosophical ability are related in that both involve decrypting and then re-encrypting information; they are both about organizing information—and doing so with obsessional concern for the logical interrelations holding among bits of information organized, and a proportionate disregard for the correspondence of that information to external reality.