

Freedom of belief is of central and obvious importance to a democratic community. Of course, beliefs are already quite problematic to the generation of a common public space. The twin “literal” issues surrounding the epistemological question, those of the expression and interpretation of beliefs, underscore the emergence of subjectivity in all political praxis, and in the broad sense, the critical self-questioning encountered in the everyday face-to-face encounter. As a brief example, what if the other’s belief not only differs from my own, but ultimately proves threatening— perhaps merely to my rationalization of reality, but also perhaps literally harmful or violent towards myself or my community. Do we require a *dangerous* other, to whom it is supposed we are “naturally” allergic, in order to achieve a community?

Let us examine the supposition that there are certain beliefs which could conceivably lead an otherwise peaceful society to violence. If there are such beliefs, they would certainly be powerless if they remained only as such; it seems to me that, by definition, beliefs only gain power when they are combined with a capacity and willingness to act on behalf of them. Even with harmful and dangerous beliefs, if they are only beliefs and influence action and speech in no perceptible way, we cannot say that they are harmful to others; indeed, we cannot properly speak of the content or value of beliefs which remain forever unexpressed. Now, in those beliefs which *do* transcend the immaterial realm of convictions, it can be fairly easily shown that beliefs whose content involves harm towards some other party are especially likely to be the source of actual violence or disagreement. In fact we can distinguish between two broad categories of belief: those that affirm some unifying principle of commonality, and those which affirm an antagonistic principle of division.

This distinction enables us to hazard an interpretation as to the nature of the transition which occurs from thought to action, from belief to principle of behavior. An idea has power inasmuch as it is believed; thus, belief is the power of an idea, though not the origin. Belief is *faith in the possibility of revelation*, in the future, but especially that aspect of reality to come which is completely unpredictable, and opens up onto a radical alterity whose horizons cannot be encompassed rationally. The infinite idea which is believed precedes the belief, if only minimally: an infinitesimal belief (which is an infinite skepticism) is required in order to approach an idea within the “reasonable” bounds of concepts. This is the essence of what it means to think rationally, “objectively”—which really stands in this case for, pretending we know nothing about the situation or ourselves, we act like we believe completely and only in the network of sensibility and in the testimony of our senses. Objectivity is actually a complex mediation of the subject-object relation which supports an illusion of perfect communicability, supposes an almost religious sort of fundamental sense-event which could guarantee the consistency and accuracy of our deductions and observations—“within reasonable limits,” not comprehending the limits are just as arbitrary as the task for which the measurements are being taken.

Belief names the properly subject-ive moment in thought, indeed, it names the outermost limit of subject-thought. The process of belief transforms ideas into action. Belief powers the idea, demands faithfulness and responsibility, *moves* the subject to *act*, guides the action with deliberate concentration, with a joyful care. We can gather these strands together in order to enunciate the structure of belief; let’s say that belief is the adequation of thought, and that this is accomplished by the repeated generation of (subjective) self-difference. Belief ex-cends this

primordial separation between subject-object and Other, “completes” it in its total incoherency. The asynchrony between the same and the other is constantly generated by the unnatural and self-critical movement (belief, interpretation) which is brought about in the *social* encounter, and the subject is itself actualized in a responsibility to one’s relationship to the community. Indeed, we might say the first question of any possible future democracy is at once and entirely a question of peace and political economy, and so the key question for politics at this moment would be— to put it lightly— who’s the adult here? Could we compare society to the enactment of a scene from a dream, whose origins are lost in the depths of time and whose goals, limits and internal consistency are equally, terrifyingly uncertain?

All we own is an unfreedom we have been convinced to freely accept: where is the freedom we were taught to love? We should not be convinced of our own unworthiness or inadequacy. The non-adequation lies wholly within the total system which cannot integrate that which remains itself. Power is thought transforming into action; by escaping the reach of established power, we can lead both thought and action beyond the sick and paranoid systems which seek to completely ontologize reality, reduce everything vital and beautiful and free into a empty void full of violence and shadows and a wild, unsustainable desire... Just as there is no truth without dancing, there can be no ethics without a balance between the whole and the part, a balance which never reaches a perfect equilibrium but is always playing about the edges, deploying its forces to the limit, in an upheaval of the established institutions which is the inauguration of a new way of being. Such a transcendence is already the *jouissance* of a new manner of speaking... The belief in peace is salvation and slavery at once; democracy as a “peaceful” attitude towards beliefs ends up assuming an outright hostile, authoritarian attitude towards individuals. An ideal democracy is already a false one, and this hinge is why democracy functions so much better than other systems: reflexivity, evolution, and so on... But our freedoms erode as quickly as they are written into law, a writing which can never be adequate to the unfreedom which predominates...

(c) Fractal Ontology, 2007