

Flat Denial

by Robert Gear (November 2017)



Inverted Personages, Joan Miró

In a previous article ([NER, October 2017](#)) I briefly mentioned some well-known people who had swallowed the red pill, those who had undergone what could be called a 'political' metanoia. Here I want to enquire into the catalyst for such change. Can

it be engineered? What happens when an individual has a change of heart or mind and suddenly understands how his whole worldview, constructed as it has been in support of ideas long known to be failures, often enough reprehensible and the cause of much misery, sees the curtain drawn apart? I am talking about moral, intellectual and secular awakening in the *individual*, a Scroogian metamorphosis, presumably a necessary condition (but clearly not sufficient) for a more general societal moral evolution. After all, neuroscientists assure us that our brains have enough plasticity to be remapped at any age. For Socrates, the illusory state was both a moral and intellectual error from which Sophists had to be dissuaded, and any conversion had to be both emotional and ethical. For Kierkegaard, such a transformation was spiritual and had to be emotional and non-rational; but sudden spiritual epiphany with a divine origin of the Saul/Paul variety is outside of my concern here.

Societal moral change has been analyzed in a groundbreaking work by Kwame Anthony Appiah in