

Social Purposes of the Comedic

Community/Civil Society

Bridging gaps between people

Different ideas about relationships

- Community (Gemeinschaft)
- Civil Society (Gesellschaft)

Community

- Rural/Agrarian
- In which individuals are attuned to the needs of a larger collective community, often homogenous.
- Defined by strong definition of biological family, in which social roles and norms such as morality are inherited and often untested and unquestioned.
- Often defined by reactionary over-protectiveness and willful ignorance of communities outside the collective.

Ex: *The Village*



Civil Society

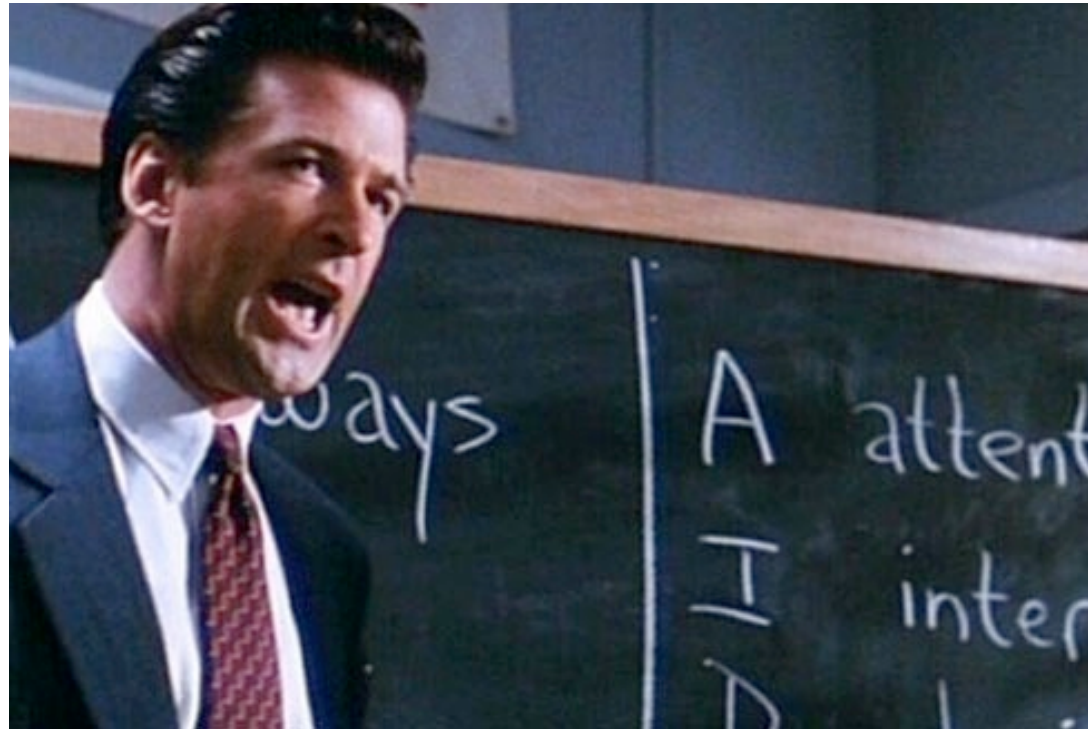
- Urban/Suburban
- The needs of the collective are replaced by the needs of individuals. The society is maintained by people acting in their own self-interest (e.g. not being destroyed)
- Social norms are imposed by social controls such as governments, law enforcement, executive boards, voting bodies. These norms are tested, but sometimes flawed.
- Often defined by social and economic inequalities, political abuse, and compulsive over-consumption.

Ex. Reservoir Dogs (Tipping Scene)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-qV9wVGb38>

Ex. Glengarry Glen Ross



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-AXTx4PcKI>

American Politics

- Tea Party (Community)
- 'progressive' // 'conservative'
- Libertarian (Civil Society)

- Remember the Id, Superego, Ego structure and how it might apply.

American Family Life

- Because America is largely rural, the community lifestyle is pervasive, but the country is a republic of individual states that needs a huge amount of civil control.
- In addition, our mass media is usually produced in cities where 'Civil Society' is dominant. Mass media exports a certain urbanity to rural areas.

American Family Life (cont'd)

- So, an honest navigation of popular culture requires us to hold often conflicting, if not mutually exclusive, values as true.
- E.G. All are created equal, but:
- We are endowed with the unalienable right life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The Simpsons

- Early episodes highlight the tension between relatively simple, unspoken community standards, and the increase in urbanization through mass media.

Extremes and Isolation

- At their most extreme and unquestioned moments both Rural Communities and Civil Societies can create isolation.
- Often, films and media use comedic moments to talk about this isolation and highlight the possibility for connection in an isolating social setting.

Comedy and Community

- Wylie Sypher: Comedy Helps Us Understand what we have in common as people, which is both good and bad experiences.
- Comedy sometimes works in opposition to culturally dominant ways of dividing us or isolating us.
- Because comedy is both a collective and subjective experience, it is useful for talking about how we experience belonging.

Me and You and Everyone We Know

- What are examples of characters working toward 'Community' and within 'Civil Society'?
- How do people try to make connections with other people?
- How do people understand what is acceptable in a community?