
Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind In Prisms Of Sigmund Freud And Friedrich Nietzsche

The film, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, tells the story of Joel Barish and his girlfriend Clementine Kruczynski. The movie begins on Valentine's day, and Joel is about to go to work, but suddenly runs to another train that is heading to Montauk. He meets Clementine on the train, but little do they know, this is not the first time they have met. Both Joel and Clementine underwent a procedure to have their memories erased of each other. However, while Joel is having his memory erased of Clementine, he realizes that he still loves her deeply, and does not want to forget about her. To try and preserve her memory, he runs from memory to memory in an attempt to save her from leaving his mind. The film focuses on Joel's mind, and his attempt to fight for the preservation of Clementine's memory.

Neurologist Sigmund Freud developed the psychoanalytic theory. This theory stated that people could suffer from an unconscious idea or emotion charged memory that they are unaware of, but from which can be revealed by bringing it to consciousness. Through this theory, Freud came up with the theory of human nature. The three parts to this theory contain the id, the ego, and the superego. The id, or pleasure principle, contains the instinctual drives that seek immediate satisfaction like a small child. The ego, or reality principle, is nearest to our ordinary conception of self with our conscious mental states that we articulate as "I think/feel/want." This includes perceptions of the real world and decisions about how to act. The superego contains a person's conscious derived from the moral norms learned in childhood. It confronts the ego with rules and prohibitions, like a strict parent — this causes feelings of anxiety or guilt, causing repression between the ego and superego. Through these three principles, Freud claims that there are unknown causes that govern our choices. Mental states, such as memories, exist, but we are not always consciously aware of them — they can be called to mind when relevant.

In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Joel easily recalls memories of his childhood. He does this in an attempt to save Clementine from being completely erased from his memory. Joel was able to use these memories because they were relevant to the situation. Clementine told him to "go somewhere where they won't find us," so he dove into his memories that were from his childhood, thinking that they would be safe there. Freud explained that the existence of emotionally charged ideas in the unconscious parts of the mind actively cause influences on what a person thinks, feels, says, and does. This explains why Joel and Clementine decided to reunite because Joel most likely had unconscious memories of Clementine. If this was true, those memories would not have been erased from Joel's brain because they would not have

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shown up on the brain map because he would not be actively remembering them. Therefore, if both Joel and Clementine had repressed memories about each other, they would have an influence on their emotions for each other. This is because although they could not actively remember, the emotions they felt for each other were familiar, because they had felt them before. Even if their relationship was destined to fail, Joel and Clementine chose to reunite.

German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, explored the effects that modernity had on human life. Modernity defined geo-politics, cultural conditions, and beliefs dominated by enlightenment ideals, including faith in science, objective truth, urbanization, and secularization. He believed that traditional belief systems made no sense in the modern world, therefore, “God is dead.” Through this idea, Nietzsche came up with a new idea, called our “will-to-power,” and this was the new way for people to assert meaning in their lives. He believed that the solution to our weaknesses was something called tragic optimism — the sense of joy and vitality of a person who neither dwindles from struggle nor struggles blindly, and one is willing to fight for their own weaknesses and fears to embrace the fight for self-determinism. Nietzsche believed that “the herd” were people who could not think for themselves, so they allowed other people to tell them about truth, such as religion. Will-to-power was Nietzsche’s argument against the herd, saying that we must all learn to think for ourselves, understand that everyone’s perspective holds validity, understand that every individual is unique, and that truth cannot be the same for everyone because of our differing perspectives and uniqueness. Will-to-power says that we all have power over our lives, we all want to express who we are, and we all want recognition for who we are.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind explores the idea of will-to-power. For example, when Mary quotes, “blessed are the forgetful for they get the better even of their blunders,” she is saying that people who forget things will have a better in experience in the world. Spending too much time recalling past memories of pain, regret, or unhappiness does no good in someone’s life. People who are forgetful are blessed because even if they mess up or regret something, they will forget about it and move on quickly. Being forgetful is ultimately a blessing. This leads to the idea of “ignorance is bliss” because the forgetful do not remember the bad things they have done; therefore, how can they ever learn from their mistakes? Of course Joel and Clementine will end up reuniting, because they forgot about each other in the first place. They both chose to erase each other from their minds. They became ignorant to the fact that they will not last together. Until they find the tapes. After they listen to their tapes, they realize that it may not be the best idea to be together. Joel says, “I can’t see anything I don’t like about you.” Clementine replies, “But you will. You will think of things. And I’ll get bored of you and feel trapped because that’s what happens with me.” Although their relationship is destined to fail, they decide to reunite and accept the imperfections of their relationship so they can fulfil their unconscious desires.

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Joel also expresses will-to-power in the film when his memory is being erased. Joel quickly realizes that he does not want to erase Clementine from his memory. His solution to this is to run through his mind and find different memories to “hide” in. He wants power over his mind back, and is running with Clementine, memory hopping, praying that they will be safe. Clementine tells him to “take me somewhere else until morning,” and to “remember me, try your best, maybe we can.” Despite the way things ended between them, Joel wanted to keep her memory alive because he loved her. He was not in control of his mind while it was being erased, because no matter where they were “hiding,” the memory eraser workers still found them and erased that memory. Even though she was ultimately erased from his memory, likewise for Clementine’s memories of Joel, they still ended up reuniting.

Overall, Joel and Clementine decided to reunite even though they knew their relationship was destined to fail. The dual prisms of Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche explain why this was the outcome of the movie. Freud’s theory of human nature explained that Joel could have repressed memories of Clementine that would have been impossible to erase. This would cause Joel’s thoughts, feelings, and actions to be influenced by these repressed memories. Nietzsche’s theory of will-to-power explains why Joel wanted to control his memory — he wanted to get power of his mind back. Both Joel and Clementine chose to reunite in order to fulfil unconscious desires.

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