

Being Human

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Editors Note

During one of the intellectual discussion in our Scholarly Research Project seminars here at the University of Gloucestershire we were discussing how amazing it would be to create an academic journal for students, professors and the public alike. We wanted to produce a journal that we had completely designed ourselves as students. Being Human sprung from us wanting to connect with everyone, no matter their level of education, and therefore this is a compilation of the second year of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics' work. This journal features a wide range of interesting work ranging from writings on women in religion to flying monks. We hope that you enjoy our hard work and any comments would be appreciated greatly on uogbeinghumanjournal.wordpress.com

Josephine Bradford

With special thanks to Flo Tippetts-Hill for providing front and back cover image, for further information on her work please go to; flotippetts-hill.co.uk

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“Paradise lies at the feet of the mother” - By Emma Thompson

- An opinion piece on ‘Inside the Gender Jihad: Women’s Reform in Islam’ by Amina Wadud.

Inside the Gender Jihad: Women’s Reform in Islam is a book that covers a wide range of topics surrounding gender inclusiveness within Islam such as leadership, interpretive possibilities of the Qur’an, education, sexuality and motherhood. Whilst including her own stories and experiences as a single Muslim mother, Wadud urges for a change of status for women in the Islamic world. Within the chapter ‘A New Hajar Paradigm: Motherhood and Family’, Wadud shows her disagreement with the statement ‘Paradise lies at the feet of the mother’ which was once spoken by the Prophet Muhammad and is meant to show that great honour belongs to women due to their ability to hold life. This piece will be looking at the statement with reference to traditional gender roles in Islam, marriages ending in divorce and concluding with my opinion on the matter.

The main point that Wadud gives in her disagreement with the statement is shown through the struggles of poor and single mothers who must give birth and care for their child on their own whilst still working to be able to provide for it. No paradise is present, just the agony of a struggling woman trying her best. A good example of this is the story of Sarah the wife of Ibrahim and Hajar the Egyptian slave who was given to Ibrahim to bear his children when Sarah could apparently no longer do so. Wadud believes this story to ‘partially indicate how women were perceived as vessels to carry male and female

greatest importance regardless of any concerns the women may have had. Conflict arose over Sarah and Hajar when Sarah has a son also and the issue of heritage and who is technically Ibrahim’s first son was brought up and Hajar ends up being banished to the desert with her son. There is no paradise to be seen for Hajar, just banishment to a desert and a son to somehow take care of. The problem with the statement ‘paradise lies at the feet of the mother’ is that it fits every mother into the same role regardless of circumstances. This statement is seen as fact and therefore the struggles that these mothers must go through is often ignored. Statements such as this shield society from ‘taking a hard look at the ways women are treated in the family and the complexities of circumstances for women as mothers’.

Natural progression from this brings us to the traditional gender roles in Islam. The role of the mother is something that has been socially constructed. Religion is one of many things that influenced the conception of the ideal mother, developing certain behaviours and ideas concerning not only the mother but also family in general. Wadud discusses this in her chapter and shows that mothers are always going to be the female parent and therefore are already subject to certain fundamental ideas about women’s bodies, sexuality and behaviour, “In many cases the good woman is equated with the good mother.” This could give the assumption that a woman’s reproductive potential and sexuality are merely aspects of a woman that serve the household and her husband. The traditional view in Islam, particularly in the Arab world, is that men are the providers of the family

the family whilst women’s main responsibilities are within the domestic domain such as childcare and housework. It is a man’s role to handle the economic maintenance of the family which is a notion that is supported in the Qur’an: “Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women).” Women are still seen as responsible for domestic affairs however more recently this view has shifted so that instead of this being their only responsibility, it is regarded as their first responsibility. Therefore a woman is allowed other jobs outside of the home as long as their responsibilities at home have been fulfilled first. Female participation in society has increased in recent years, possibly due to the economy and the notion that one salary per household is not enough to sustain a ‘decent standard of living’. So although Fatima Mernissi believes the role of women being purely domestic is merely a traditional view with no hold on modern day life, giving the example of Moroccan women playing a substantial role in the maintenance of family, we must still take into consideration single women. If we view a single woman with more modern thinking, then her role in the household will never be finished and she will never be able to work outside of her domestic responsibilities. She would not be able to work due to looking after her child, a role that she has no help with and a responsibility that will not be fulfilled for at least a century until the child is old enough to be on its own. With no income she would not be able to afford a babysitter so that she could go out to work and therefore with reference back to the main statement, once again there is no paradise to be seen for these

single mothers.

Aliah Schleifer gives two characteristics of motherhood in Islam as being affection and generosity to which she states are not ‘mutually exclusive’ but do support each other and give a state of equilibrium in the house. Making generosity, or in other words, selflessness as a virtue is almost like putting mothers in a prison to which they must meet every standard, or virtue, they are set before they can be released. It is impossible for every woman to meet all of these values and virtues due to the wide range of women in this world with different circumstances. It may be more difficult for a woman who has been shown nothing but cruelty or women like Hajar who have been cast aside to show such virtues in the way they are expected to. To say that paradise lies at the feet of these women with such responsibilities on their shoulders with sometimes no help at all is a difficult thing to grasp.

There are some who disagree that statements like these are wrong to say however. In an article called ‘Muslim Women Empowered by Their Religion’, Weam Namou speaks of motherhood and how important the role of the mother is within Islam. Namou shows that “Islam regards the duty of raising children in the best manner as the noblest occupation a woman can do” and this care for her children and also her home is seen as a form of worship that a woman performs. This may be so but in the case of a divorce it is the man that will usually have custody of the children despite the raising of children being the woman’s duty. Divorce is most often instigated by the husband and if the wife sought a divorce it was often paid by the price of ‘relinquishing the right to see their children.’

Raising children may be the noblest thing a woman can do but I cannot see how the statement 'paradise lies at the feet of the mother' can be considered to be true in every case. As previously stated there are too many different situations to be taken into consideration where single women are left on their own to care for their child or where poor mothers are unable to provide for herself or her child. Although this may be a different case in modern Islam, looking at traditional Islam makes it difficult to accept this statement and the points that Wadud makes are an easy and understandable position to take on the matter.

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The Relationship Between the 'Outside World' and New Religious Movements. - By Suzie Kibblewhite

Abstract

In recent decades there has been a lot of public concern and media attention regarding numerous reports of violence surrounding New Religious Movements (NRMs). A common perception among the public regarding NRMs is that they are a cult-like, using "deceitful practices" in their recruitment processes whilst also targeting "weak willed people" who are "easily duped". A survey during the 1990's conducted by the Anti-Cult Movement (ACM), 43% of 1000 New Yorkers agreed, "brainwashing is required to make someone change from an organized religion to a cult", suggesting that this view is a common one. The representation of NRMs from the media and the almost automatic, negative connotations of the word 'cult' are a detrimental concoction that may explain the violence, coercion and brainwashing that is assumed. However, to what extent can the external world be held accountable for the perceptions of a NRM? Are the religious movements themselves and their followers also to blame? Who is responsible for creating a harmonious relationship between the majority and the minority? Us or them? The present article will attempt to answer these questions and inquire into the claims of violence, coercion and brainwashing in NRMs and conclude that each party must be cooperative when defining a relationship between themselves, a subject heavily debated in the media.

Introduction

Whilst some religions may be more 'world affirming' as Roy Wallis influentially distinguished (1984), promoting a more harmonious relationship with the wider society, a number of NRMs tend to distance themselves from the secular society, rejecting it or abandoning it through religious practices. For example, the Unification Church, Aum Shinrikyo, Scientology and the Hare Krishna Movement are just some of the religions that show this tendency (some of which have been reported to have had episodes of violence, coercion and brainwashing take place within them). This separation has a profound effect on the 'outsiders' point of view, consequently causing misunderstandings and miscommunication between 'us' and 'them'. In the 1960's, 70's and even as recent as the 1990's, the public have relied heavily on the media and journalists for information about the NRMs that were now being born, however direct contact with many of the NRMs was not evident in the reports and accounts of the new cults. This inevitably led to a tangled web of 'Chinese whispers' in an attempt to explain new beliefs and practices that one would not necessarily understand. James Beckford states that it is the "unusual kinds of religious groups..." that "...encounter [the] most hostility", whilst there is always "conflict...around controversial NRMs" and a "low-level prejudice displayed against so-called cults in everyday journalism". Perhaps, then, it is indeed the outside world that induces violence on to the NRM and plays a major role in the negative portrayal of the 'other'. Through demonization and segregation from the normal society, isolation and the sense of threat grows

within the NRM and its' followers.

Violence inside and out: Waco, 1993

Hostility from the outside world has led to tragedies, but most notably the tragic event in Waco, Texas 1993. Seventy-six members of a community of Branch Davidians were killed in a gun battle when their community was raided and sieged by the US government. Allegedly in possession of firearms and grenades whilst also being accused of federal crimes, the FBI felt compelled to protect the public and attempt to prevent a possibly dangerous incident, despite not having any concrete evidence. The cult's leader, David Koresh, was reportedly abusing children of the community and many horrendous articles were published about his supposed actions.

Despite the 1993 incident in Waco, Texas, Roberts and Sage argue that perhaps, "Hostility to outsiders was deliberately cultivated by [NRM] leaders for the purpose of enhancing solidarity and social control". A charismatic leader is not always a criterion in an NRM but many examples of social isolation are linked to those that do. The People's Temple (1978) led by Jim Jones, the Solar Temple (1994) led by Joseph Di Mambro and Aum Shinrikyo (1995) led by Soko Asahara were all captivating leaders, often seeing themselves as God-like with an ambition to reject the world in which they live. When attempting to gather new recruits, a number of cults seem to promise solutions for personal problems and provide a sense of belonging that the secular world has failed to provide for someone. These promises offer a false hope whereby separating oneself from the disappointing reality of

the world is the only alternative. The cult leader often endorses that they have a 'special knowledge' and hold to the key to a better way of life. Promotion of religious and spiritual practices without drugs, medicine or therapy is often pledged too. Whether this could be considered brainwashing is debatable. A new convert must find the NRM and its' beliefs appealing and genuine when of 'sound-mind', although perhaps preying on the "lonely, the vulnerable [and] the insecure" may question whether one is of 'sound-mind' at all.

Violence or Next Level Thinking? Heaven's Gate

Violence is not always inflicted on the outside world when discussing NRMs. An exception to this is the controversial cult 'Heaven's Gate', founded in the 1970's by Marshall Applewhite (aka "Do") and Bonnie Nettles (aka "Ti"). In March 1997, 39 members committed suicide in San Diego proving that hostility is not always directed to the outside but resulted in the cult's own implosion. By telling his followers the only way to escape the human suffering that was about to come was to follow him, the compelling and intriguing Do ensured that members of Heaven's Gate were extraterrestrial beings and would be accepted into the next level. The act of suicide would allow access to the next level and the members were fully accepting of this. In their "Exit" interviews, recorded days before the mass-suicide, members left messages and explanations as to why they were taking part in such a disturbing practice, most of who seemed eerily relaxed, happy with a blasé attitude about the situation.

A combination of drugs and asphyxiation led to the 39 deaths and resulted in mass media coverage. Brainwashing or mind-control may be the only way to justify anyone willing to take his or her own life in exchange for a promise that had not been proven. The difficulty arises when one cannot be certain whether the members of Heaven's Gate truly believed Do and his unusual doctrines or whether they were coerced into taking part.

Prior to the tragedy, the outside seemed to have a "polarizing rejection" towards the cult, as many did not understand the beliefs and practices. The similarities between the cult and science fiction made the NRM seem somewhat comical. With references from Stargate, E.T. and Close Encounters of the Third Kind in the writings of Heaven's Gate, science fiction had "become a matter of escapism and fantasy" for the group but also allowed the outside world to consider the cult as almost farcical. Perhaps Heaven's Gate felt such isolation and self-consciousness for their unusual beliefs, the only way to escape the critical eyes of the secular society was to disappear. A mere three weeks after the tragedy the American television show Saturday Night Live aired a sketch that portrayed Do "as a wide-eyed space-monarch surrounded by grinning followers..." The misconceptions and misunderstanding of Heaven's Gates beliefs held by the outside may have contributed the tragic demise of 39 people, yet there seemed no attempt by the media or journalists to form a balanced view of the cult acted in such a way, just a demonization of one man's supposed warped view of humanity. Members' accounts of Heaven's Gate assure that there was no brainwashing or coercion involved and that they fully

understood what they were doing, however ex-member accounts are very different. Some felt coerced into giving up the material life that they had previously led and when they tried to leave many were guilt-tripped into returning. Males were castrated which was allegedly voluntary, however without coercion or manipulation of the mind one may find this hard to believe. Clearly holding some resentment towards the cult, ex-member accounts may be just as unbiased as a current member's views.

Conclusions

NRMs that hold "apocalyptic imaginaries", world-rejecting views and ideologies seem to be linked with extreme acts of violence. As we have seen, the Branch Davidians (1993) and Heaven's Gate (1997) are examples of this. More recently however the Islamic militant group Al Qaida have constantly been in the media for their radicalized actions. Al Qaida claim to seek a "post apocalyptic restoration of the Islamic caliphate, untainted by secular rule or external hegemony". This ideology created by Osama Bin Laden and his associates requires a "jihad" (a holy war). Whilst lacking features of coercion or brainwashing techniques, members of Al Qaida appear to be "highly committed" and find that the "wider population...[are] sympathetic to the sect's ideology". By killing the enemy, notoriously the western world, and being willing to die are the religious duties that receive divine blessing and therefore ultimate transcendence. Like Do, the charismatic leader of Heaven's Gate, Bin Laden was the figure head for Al Qaida. Almost messianic in nature and seeming enigmatic to his followers, it seems that a common thread linking

violence and NRMs is not only possessing world-rejecting and apocalyptic ideologies, but also the factor of a housing a persuasive leader. Whether the violence is directed inwardly or outwardly seems to vary.

There is no doubt as to whether brainwashing, coercion and violence exist in the realms of NRMs, however even 'organized' religions such as Christianity have aspects of these. For example, are chanting and prayers in church a form of mind-control and indoctrination? In order to prevent the tragic situations that we have previously seen involving NRMs is that the outside world should accept some responsibility, that is, before speculating and casting judgments on a different set of beliefs, we have a duty to understand them rather than plead ignorance or be facetious. The "religious illiteracy" that fuels the media is partly accountable for preventable tragedies as it reinforces the theory of 'us' and 'them'. However, purposeful segregation from secular society may be enforced by a cult creating a division that is inevitable. In this case the cult must harbor some responsibility to find a way of practicing their beliefs whilst being harmoniously independent from the cultural norm. If this is not achieved then it seems appropriate for an intervention to be implemented, before potential fatalities, extremism occur.

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Eilmer, The Flying Monk.

By Connor Bevan

It seems apparent that the ambitions of man have always had a striking tendency to probe beyond the extent of standard physical and cognitive capabilities. These desires are manifested and entrenched within the oldest of mythologies and woven within the most novel fantasies. Among these is the seemingly age-old vision of flight. In the West, this notion can be seen manifest in the continuity of Greek thought, through the Medieval Catholic world. It prominently captures ours and the imaginations of scholars, writers and thinkers as an arrogant, romantic and inexorable dream. One such attempt and focus on human aviation can be perceived strikingly obtrusively among the eclectic and extensively rich history at Malmesbury Abbey.

In the year 1010 AD the monk Eilmer of Malmesbury (Also known as Oliver or Elmer) attempted one of the earliest recorded instances of flight from the top of Malmesbury Abbey tower. Eilmer, in the tradition of rediscovering knowledge held by the ancient Greeks (alongside others in academic circles of the time) began to observe of the natural world; particularly creatures of the air. In study of bird-life he became captivated by the concept of flight and envisaged this ability possible for humans. Concluding from his avian examinations that he would attach wings to his arms, utilising both wind and gravity he successfully flew over 200 meters only to crash-land in Oliver's Lane, breaking his legs and crippling him for the rest of his long life. Also, Eilmer had a strong familiarity with the tale of Daedalus and Icarus of Greek

myth and subsequently drew influence from this – It was thought he ‘might fly as Daedalus’. Moreover, it is said he witnessed the passage of Halley’s Comet in the year 989. The sight of a heavenly body (of which little beyond religious context was known) may have aided in prompting this endeavour. As a case study we can perceive in Eilmer a certain fascination with ‘The Above’ when we consider also his work on astrology. He later claimed his failure was simply due to the absence of a tail to guide his course, even planning a second flight in determination of this.

Here we stumble upon broader themes, notably a distinct attempt at revival and continuation of Greek thought, culture and ideas, particularly among academic culture - not isolated to this one event in Malmesbury. Indeed, various clergy would identify with doctrine of dominion over animals demanded in Genesis (typifying an ideal of human self-importance, righteous command over animals and provoking a notion that beasts should have no feat over divine man). It would seem this notion of pushing man to the limit of his dreams and aspirations overpowers the more seldom-found pious humility which would deem flight a sinful desire, upsetting the natural order by succeeding the God-given physical restrictions we possess. Many would dabble with ideas of flight, such as Giovanni Damiani in Galloway in 1507, emanating the mythical Daedalus - attempting flight with feathers alone. The conclusion of this brave and foolhardy endeavour is evident of course... he was not successful; simply falling hard to the ground and miraculously not dying. We see further wishes and attempts of flight in the Middle East, the designs of Da Vinci and even Ancient

China. In Eilmer’s ‘epic flight’ , we see some degree of scientific method alongside a driven faith and awe; observation, aerodynamic design, logical positioning and post-flight analysis - rather than daring a fairy tale unarmed.

It is striking that Eilmer is remembered and revered so when the other achievements of the Abbey throughout its history were comparatively great; surviving the dissolution and holding the first organ and largest library in England and being the resting place of King Æthelstan. Yet William of Malmesbury, heralded with ‘justice to be the greatest medieval monastic historian’ chose to write extensively of Eilmer. Furthermore, Eilmer was hardly a Wright brother and it was not his only accomplishment, with his work at the abbey including having produced several astrological treatises which remained in circulation until the 16th Century, many centuries beyond his life. Even the abbey focuses on him to commercial and historiographical effect; including him at the forefront of historical summaries, art, celebration, even re-enactment, not to mention revering the ‘hero’ by depiction on the stain glass windows of its north side, holding a place among abbots, commanders, saints and messiahs. Perhaps his idolisation owes to his bold facing of the perils and dangers during his attempt, seemingly unfazed by the foreshadowed warning inherent in the myth of Daedalus of man flying too close to the sun.

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Emma Watson’s ‘HeForShe’ Speech on Gender Equality.

- By Shannon Boyle

Emma Watson’s gender equality speech launches the ‘HeForShe’ campaign which encourages men to join the feminist movement. An inclusive approach is necessary in achieving gender equality. The most inclusive approach may be intersectional feminism which suggests that society is not patriarchal but much more complex. It stems from Schüssler Fiorenza’s concept that society is one of ‘kyriarchy’. Kyriarchy expresses that oppression works in ‘a complex pyramidal system’ of interlinking social structures, so everyone in society oppresses and is oppressed. Therefore, inequality works on many different levels and affects far more than just women.

Watson touches upon intersectional feminism in recognising that men also face societal oppression. An example of this in her speech is her father’s parental role being valued less by society. Another is that men are more likely to suffer from clinical depression and commit suicide, yet do not seek help because of gender stereotypes, such as the need to appear ‘macho’. So, men should want to join the feminist movement to dismantle the patriarchal enforcement of unrealistic gender stereotypes. However, Watson fails to note the crucial involvement of kyriarchy. As Sian Ferguson discusses on Everyday Feminism, it is kyriarchy that must be challenged rather than patriarchy, because inequality affects everyone.

Watson’s speech begins, ‘We want to end gender inequality – and to do that we

need everyone to be involved' and so, men must also become advocates for gender equality. However, in only addressing women and men, the 'HeForShe' campaigns audience is limited to the cisgender community. Gender identity is much more than biological sex. To actually have everyone involved, the feminist movement must be inclusive of an increasing transgender community. Gender is a wide range, as Killermann lists in *A Guide to Gender*, to name a few, there is agender, bigender, genderfluid and genderqueer. Only once the feminist movement encompasses the whole range of gender, and makes an appeal to all, will gender equality really be achieved.

This is why intersectional feminism is such a strong approach. It includes everyone and highlights that oppression is a much wider issue than gender alone. But as Killermann expresses, to solve inequality and oppression, we must tackle each individual part and Watson is correct in highlighting gender as a main element of inequality and societal oppression. However, the speech and campaign Watson promotes would be more successful and appealing if an intersectional feminist approach was adopted.

Despite these issues, Watson addresses an important problem in that 'feminism has become an unpopular word'. The fight for gender equality is often perceived as misogyny verses misandry but, as Killermann highlights, this is a misconception that needs to be eradicated. Some feminists are misandrists, but most are not. Gender equality is not about hating men or bringing men down, but raising other gender's to have the same rights and opportunities as men. Feminism is about

removing the stigma and stereotypes attached to every gender, from cisgender to transgender. Intersectional feminism works to destruct this kyriarchy within society.

Watson's speech is a good first step towards gender equality, but there is a long way to go. The 'HeForShe' campaign needs to adopt more of an intersectional approach to truly achieve gender equality. It must welcome every gender and aim to dismantle kyriarchy, acknowledging that women's rights are part of a much bigger picture of inequality.

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Expression Under Suppression: Soviet Non-Conformist Art.

By Josephine Bradford

Throughout this piece I will be referring to Soviet nonconformist art, so it would seem primarily there should be a definition of what exactly Soviet nonconformist art refers to. Although the Soviet Union was in power from 1922 to 1991, the exact time period that shall be examined is from the middle of the fifties to the late eighties. This is the time just after Stalin's death until the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev and his policies of Perestroika and Glasnost. Throughout there will be references to many different artists including photography from the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of nonconformist art which is part of the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum to the exhibition of Glasnost.

Initially if we examine photography from this era, it wasn't until 1956 that Stalin's regulation of photography was lifted before this photography and art could not be published in the press so were bound to shop windows and building walls. It was Nikita Khrushchev that denounced these policies and it was in the years between 1956 and 1964 that a 'cultural thaw' came about, army funding was cut and money were put into housing, book publishing, cinema, newspapers and illustrated magazines. In 1966 photojournalism there was little concern to the authorities while it went under a petition to become 'humanised'. The photo-essays that were published at this time were on varied subjects such as the Moscow film festival, the circus and the ballet. At this time the critics scolded the artists for taking pictures of

artists, poets, scientists and writers instead of the every everyday working people and not celebrating the labour of workers. In the late sixties and early seventies the influences from the Baltic republics could be seen creatively in the country. It was at this time that the exhibition titled, *Our Motherland in Artistic Photographs*, this featured landscape and poetic art from all over the Soviet Union, there was a distinct movement away from ideological themes and more towards ascetical qualities. The discussion between 'staged' and 'live' photography was well over by 1970, just as everywhere else in the world 'live' was far more popular. It was these photo-essays that featured 'live' photography that became famous and critically acclaimed the narratives of such work was "the life of the Soviet worker in the 1970s – the glory and love of our country always and forever". This was the same approach to photography and this ideology from the 1930s, the image (figure 1) below was published in 1958 at the beginning of the new era post Stalin. This magazine named 'Soviet Union' was distributed across Europe and America in an attempt to generate sympathy for the country's Communist idea. The photograph of a young man and women (figure 1) working in agriculture is a strong example of the use of propaganda at the time. Although this may not be seen as communist deception as both of them seem happy and healthy it must be noted that the Soviet Union were going through a massive forced collectivisation on Russia's agricultural economy. The goal of this was to join all existing agricultural farms together to create one which was led by the state.



Figure 1

Figure 2



Figure 3

If we compare this to the image shot by Sergei Borisov of the young women saluting her nation wrapped in the flag of the Soviet Union, this portrays a completely different image. Not only is the location drastically different, shot in the middle of a city featuring a model like women it depicts glamour and money opposed to poverty and control. Borisov work does not feature Soviet iconography very often but this image is a clear contrast between the Western beauty industry a striking young woman clothed in Soviet representation and an almost full salute that leaves the viewer wondering if she is simply shielding her eyes from the sun or is it something deeper? Although the reference to Socialist Realism is clear here the picture as a whole is closer to fashion photography, highlighting the ever-growing love for designer wear in Russia at the time.

If we then go on to observe Soviet fine art and paintings from the 1950s to 1980s. The Soviet Union was fragmenting rapidly, the ideological images are now being more influenced by Western culture, and Margarita Tupitsyn called this art "the space between shaken myths". This was due to the social, political and economic movements from Gorbachev as mentioned before. This was the time when the long term clash and line between official and non-official culture was blurring into one. Olga Sviblova writes a quote from Kazimir Malevich (a Polish-Russian painter in early 20th century) in her writing named 'Soviet Non-Conformist Art of the 1980s: Strategy of Approach',

"A State catastrophe affects only one section of citizens, while the others celebrate the beginning of a new state, therefore there is no catastrophe as such, only progress, a step forward ... in our

contemporary art a constituent assembly was formed with representatives of all the living and dead Persian Shahs and catastrophe awaits it, for the new State has no need for the taste of the old."

This began with the cracks in the totalitarian system started to appear after Stalin's death and were filled with Khrushchev's changes. Over this period (late 1950s to early 1960s) there was a redistribution of power and responsibility however there was still the foundation of State and Socialist ideology, this was known as the 'Khrushchev's thaw'. The notion of unofficial or underground art occurred after the Manezh exhibition in 1962, it featured art in a 'severe-style' from the left wing side of MOSKh (Moscow branch of the Union of Artists) and approved symbols of Socialist Realism. In essence these works were largely 'Sotsrealism', glorified depiction of communist values however they included components of realistic humanisation of canonical idols derived from classic Stalinist art. Except when Khrushchev entered the exhibition with the other members of government he became enraged, spurred on by his advisors, at the emphasis was wrongly placed on the appearance of the art instead of the content and meaning and this caused policies on art to harden. Despite this when Khrushchev retired he made a formal apology to the artists stating that his position was incorrect and his gravestone became a mark of reconciliation.

The term unofficial art does not actually refer to the characteristics of the work but to the conditions in which this art was produced, artistic work of underground artists was housed in basements and attics. Moving on to the next decade, the seventies and eighties saw the rise of a

new genre of art, Sots Art. This was the Russian equivalent of American 'Pop Art' but with a definite characteristic of Socialist Realism. It came about with the shortage in the production of material items merging with the overproduction of ideological production. There was a consensus opinion that ran through from the earlier times when Stalin ruled, Malevich stated it as, 'Any form of the created spiritual world must be constructed in accordance with a single idea. There can be no special rights and freedoms for art.' This Communist notion dictated that life and art was limited for every citizen, which conflicted greatly with the revolutionary ideas of the twentieth century. Eric Bulatov, a Russian born artist, stated it was the process of creating art that was a release from the ideological illusions and dictation that the everyday Soviet man was subjected to. Furthermore when describing the origins of Russian unofficial art Ilya Kabakov, he states that it was fundamentally an attempt to express the 'powerless existence that overwhelmed us all.'

It was in the period between the late seventies and the middle of the eighties, long after the Khrushchev's thaw, that a new wave of young Russian underground artist emerged. These were the artists that spent their childhood under the rule of Leonid Brezhnev, when Soviet Socialism was irrationally dictating every piece of everyday life, both for the individual and society as a whole. At this time there was increasing propaganda surrounding the citizens of the Soviet Union at home, at work and in schools. The streets were filled with giant posters of portraits of the leaders and slogans of revolution however as each day passed this publicity lost its power to motivate. Before long the

system that has induced fear into the first generation of unofficial artists had collapsed but this also included the anxiety that inspired many of the original artists. These people had grown up in a world which had drastically changed since their childhood, they now could organise their own subcultures, including underground forms of music, poetry and art. During 1975 the first unofficial art exhibition was held at VDNKh (the Exhibition of Natural Economic Achievements), this featured traits of Sot Art from previous generations. During the late seventies to the eighties most underground artists worked within groups as official art had complete control of public art areas which consisted of two or three exhibition halls owned by the Union of Artists. By 1987 a number of new artists were drawn together by their 'enthusiasm for absurdist actions and performance art, although this did not prevent them from producing remarkable collective and individual artwork charged with rampant energy.' Also in this year the first underground event took place named the '17th Young Artists' Exhibition' at the Kuznetsky Most Union of Artists. This became a momentous event in Russian art history as it was the first wave of unofficial culture to smash against the era of Glasnost and Perestroika. This exhibition that thrust the ideology and character of Soviet unofficial art into the public eye, and thus becoming one of the most catalytic events for the legalisation of unofficial art. Before this art of this classification was passed around from person to person and kept in artists' studios and apartments.

Opposite it can be seen from these two images, the first being a figure (4) of Stalin addressing the people. It reads "Great

Stalin Is a Banner of Friendship between the Peoples of U.S.S.R.!", this image epitomizes Stalin's propaganda of health, happiness and friendship between all. If we then compare this to the work of Lord Gowrie (figure 5) in the late eighties, nearly forty years later, the difference is considerable. This is a clear example of Sot art, the text reads "They are opening our eyes..." when this piece was created Russia was in the end of its art legislation due to Glasnost and Perestroika which finally led to the demise in 1991 of the USSR. It was during this time that non-conformist art collapsed.

Figure 4



Art in twentieth century Soviet Union was unlike anywhere else, multiple factors contributed towards the rise and fall of the non-conformist art revolution. The regimes such as Glasnost and Perestroika were the main contributors to why unofficial art is now legal today. As although they ruled that all art would be accepted in reality it was only art that conformed to the regulation of 'being for one common purpose'. Nonetheless this is how unofficial art was born through the fear and anxiety of those living with living for nothing but their artwork. It is fair to say that without the awful dictatorship of Stalin and his followers this art would have never have been born. It shows us that out of such hardship and control the human being will always need to be creative and express themselves and the feelings of generations.



Figure 5

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Victoria's "Perfect Body" and Topshop's Scrawny Mannequins – The Ethical Implications.

By Suzie Kibblewhite

Is it ethical for the fashion industry to prey on the insecurities of many women, such as image and weight, in order to sell its' products? How can we justify an advertisement endorsing the societal ideology of the "perfect body" when it can lead to mass inadequacy? Feminists such as Natasha Walter and Paula Black have discussed these issues and conclude that 'perfection' is not an aesthetic choice but a political and ethical concern. Therefore by promoting an 'ideal' can be seen as immoral. However focusing on personal weaknesses and sensitivities may not be the intention of some marketing campaigns.

The following two examples show how we should reinterpret the promotion of fashion as the intentions may be misunderstood. Society could attribute to branding the industry as unethical and the origins of the 'perfect' ideology should be looked at before conclusions are made.

The "Perfect" Ad

Famous fashion brand 'Victoria's Secret' has released a new advert for a range of underwear using their well-known models on the image. The problem arises when one reads the slogan 'The Perfect "Body"'. The models are stereotypical of the fashion industry, that is, thin, idealised and seemingly "perfect". There is no surprise then that this "ideal" image of women caused a backlash and to some extent quite rightly so. However, I believe that

this backlash is fairly unnecessary and should not have caused such outrage.

More popular in the US than in the UK, 'Victoria's Secret' is notorious for using models of a particular size and shape creating a typical look for the brand's advertisements and catwalk shows, therefore I am unsure as to why another advertisement by the company using these models was so shocking. The models are known as "angels", suggesting that they are otherworldly beings that don't belong on this earth. This heavenly portrayal, I feel, is not meant to replicate normality and does not claim to do so. In addition to this, the target audience of the brand and the majority of returning customers would already be aware of past advertisements and the brand identity. Even for those who are not being appealed to may have seen billboards or television ads with these models on. Therefore responses of surprise and shock from the public could be considered over the top.

In the advertisements' defense, nowhere does it actually imply the body itself is "perfect". The word 'body' is in inverted commas suggesting that the alleged perfection is an illusion and that the underwear is actually creating the "perfect" aspect. However today's society naturally assumes that the ad promotes a body shape unattainable by the majority. This assumed societal negativity should be the issue being raised here as the fashion industry has always used models and images with implications of perfection; it should already be accepted and complied with. It is actually the garments being sold that create the 'perfect "body"', not the models as the tagline states 'Perfect fit. Perfect comfort. Perfectly soft', even offering for the consumer to 'explore the collection' suggesting the varying sizes of

women has been catered for. If the garments were to make you look like one of Victoria's angels then this would increase the product sales out of pure curiosity, but nonetheless the product would still sell.

The fundamental problem with this advertisement lies within the terminology. By using the word 'perfect' Victoria's Secret has opened itself up to criticism, but paired with a society that tends to be oversensitive and emotional allows for said criticism to be negative. Admittedly the brand would or should be aware of how many women today have body image issues and how 'perfect' could be misconstrued. However before jumping the conclusion that the brand is entirely at fault, a closer look at the interpretation should be being considered. The media should also be aware that by posting the advertisement, which is predominantly image-based, leads one to believe that the image is being critiqued as opposed the wording, which is the case in this example.

Topshop Twitter Outrage

A young woman who is a UK size 8-10 tweeted a photograph of herself standing next to a Topshop mannequin with extremely thin legs in comparison to her own. Being seen by millions of people on Twitter the photograph unsurprisingly caused a major stir in the media. Being described as "shocking", the size of the mannequin has implications of promoting an unhealthy body image however I believe that this is not the case. Fashion models and mannequins have nearly always been notoriously thin, with catwalk models being described as coat hangers for designer clothes.

They are mere displays to show off garments and this, in the 21st century, should not be a surprise. There have been attempts in the fashion industry to use bigger models with department store Debenhams using size 16 models in branches across the UK in 2013. However there is little evidence to suggest that average sized models, like those in Debenhams, sell more products than thin ones suggesting that if all clothing stores used average sized mannequins would have little effect. Body image issues of both men and women have also been found to be internal and whilst comparing oneself to a shop mannequin causes anxiety, the problem ultimately lies within oneself or society as a whole, not with the fashion industry and its' mannequins. Mannequins and models of similar proportions to that of the Topshop one have also been associated with eating disorders. Some may refute this, as eating disorders cannot only be triggered by image but by numerous other things such as upbringing and diet. I feel that this is an unfair connection to make between the size of a mannequin and a serious mental health issue.

Admittedly the Topshop model does not represent the average size of today's woman, however it is not meant to. To assume that a shop mannequin is telling you what size you should be is a mistake. Whatever garments are on the mannequin will not look the same when on a living and moving human body. For a customer to think this shows the naivety and perhaps ignorance of society. It is a societal duty to inform people, most notably easily influenced young girls, that shape and size does not matter and that aspiration to be like a shop mannequin is not realistic and highly unlikely. Moreover, those who are naturally thin and slender

much like a mannequin should not be criticised if they are perfectly healthy and well, nor those who are suitable for a modeling career. To cater for everyone size of every person would be impossible and mannequins, of small and average size, are the best way to display clothes. High street clothing is made in multiple sizes and styles and this caters for size variation, alongside the opportunity to try garments on makes the size of a mannequin immaterial as you can see how the same clothes being displayed will look on the human body.

Another consideration to make before agreeing with the media is that some mannequins are actually outrageous in their form. From boxed shaped heads to rectangular hands and missing limbs, mannequins can be a form of art that adds to the ambience of a brand and the artificiality has proven popular in contemporary culture. Although it is doubtful that Topshop were using their mannequin as a piece of artwork, the point should still be considered that mannequins are not always made to represent the human form.

To a person who has never experienced the fashion industry or the field of advertising, the Victoria's Secret and Topshop articles may cause a negative reaction. In a society that is media driven and image conscious however, such backlash and outrage is unnecessary and could be avoided by acceptance rather than rejection. By drawing attention to a problem that has existed for years, another red flag has risen regarding body image and this has heightened the hype about a societal insecurity that is inescapable. Women, and men, will always strive for 'perfection' whether it be ones image or otherwise and in a western culture this is to be

expected. The underwear collection marketed will still sell and the Topshop mannequin will still display the clothes, I do not believe that the fashion industry is intentionally endorsing perfection. The consumers of each product will be all shapes and sizes and profits will still be made despite the unethical, though not purposeful, implications of each issue. To be part of a society that assumes I will interpret images and slogans as 'Truth' is rather insulting, as we are not all as quick to conform to what is allegedly 'the ideal' or to be so easily led by brand identity. Furthermore 'the ideal', that is being skinny and toned, can be accepted and ignored with little fuss. Attitudes and responses to 'the ideal' need to change as this is where the problem lies; a societal naivety that is outdated.

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Faustian Myth and the Popularity of Its Historical Stages.

By Connor Bevan

Abstract

Faustian Myth remains one of the more intriguing and popular tales in global folklore, elements of which are contracted into the most popular works of fiction in the form of novels, movies and plays to this day. Aside from being a popular form of tale it continues to be an overlooked yet integral aspect of particular religiosities. For example, beyond biblical accounts, these stories set the paradigm of perceptions of how the devil is perceived in his nature, his role within Christianity and his interaction with mankind in a rather unsanctioned, unofficial manner. Therefore it is necessary to explore the importance and impact of these as both a work of fiction and even a historical determinant of certain Christian doctrine. In doing so we can begin to understand this phenomenon more clearly and speculate as to why it holds this fabled place among literature and myth.

Being a largely unexplored idea it is worthwhile to attempt to unveil the extent, impact and nature of the myth, especially in its reception into popular culture. In discussion of this it is necessary to also ascertain any categorisations or discernable historical patterns that supplement this. In developing some clarity over these accounts it seems increasingly apparent that these stories have deep influences on early Christian doctrine and that these stories are more prevalent than we may initially realise, manifesting themselves in different ways.

To begin to examine this series of myths we must look at their paradigmatic and archetypal expressions visible in derivative works of fiction. Notable here are the plays Goethe's Faust and Doctor Faustus which coin the very term Faustian Myth. Furthermore, both the first record of such an account and many modern alterations on the tales that supposedly take the notion of the Faustian Myth as distinctive from fiction and religious folklore must also be examined. From these sources we can grasp the popularity of the myth, its impact and how it has changed over time as the myth redeveloped itself. We can also begin to see by looking at particular sections of these accounts and the more enduring and inexorable elements of storyline that remain to reveal that certain aspects resonate on a popular level with readers, listeners and viewers.

Through examination of these materials it seems apparent that we can indeed distinguish between three loose categorisations of Faustian Myth which are roughly chronological as historical stages in development. These subsequently convey the deep popularity elements of these stories have enjoyed over the years, being reformed and received worldwide; perhaps due to the abhorrence of these acts or an identification of similarity in the desperation of our own situations (or indeed both). The first of these are 'Pre- Faustus' accounts – stories of folklore and myth that served religious and sociological purposes of changing doctrine and generally inspiring fear and aversion to particular practices. Then we see the Faustian theme transformed into fictional entertainment, typified in the play Doctor Faustus, setting the paradigm for the myth so that all encounters of its type are labelled and

given universal recognition. Then exemplified in such stories as Robert Johnson's we see a third form emerge which displays an even stronger popularity with the myth in 'Post- Faustus' occurrences. Here we see genuine people holding these claims who commune with the devil through desire and ambition.

This potentially provides a greater insight into both an overlooked aspect of specific Christian notions and popular culture and our informed perception of the devil and his attributes. Especially with the latter kind we can grasp a certain psychological desire to identify with some of the antipodes at play within these stories.

Given more time and scope I would endeavour to explore the true extent to which these fantasies are believed with conviction at the identified stages and why these beliefs are held, exploring the justifications and reasons at hand for this. Particularly with the former identified category, typified in Faustian musicians, this exploration is extremely psychologically revealing.

Other interesting and important areas of enquiry include the further exploration into doctrinal establishment and how the Faustian Myth has been used both directly and indirectly as a deterrent to subscription to Satanism and Satanist or Paganistic ritualistic practices due to their connotations and association with elements of these tales. This would include a detailed examination of the sociological and ideological nature of blood rituals, sacrificial practices, the trading of one's soul, eschatology, rejection of god, communion with demons, devil worship, certain sexual acts, material and sinful desires and the

worship of idols. As such, it would require an effort of intense study into historical accounts in order to gauge historical perceptions of these acts and the value judgements given to them and how often they appear within these myths and to what narrative degree they are utilised as prominent features in these storylines. Then it would be prudent to gain a sense of the popularity and reception of these stories and then ascertain how these previously mentioned historical perceptions have developed or changed. As such there could then potentially be identified, by a strong line of causal argument, the correlation between Faustian Myth and doctrinal shifts.

Perhaps another aspect of potential research could be the role of Satanic worship and witchcraft in these myths in relation to the debate as to whether this a true dimension that is included in the myth. This would mean engaging with other historical material concerning such beliefs and enquiring as to how this fits into the construct of the historical stages of Faustian Myth; whether such movements are inclusive into one of the stages or indeed they form a new category in themselves. For the purposes of this research piece these groups were not identified as typically part of Faustian Myth, representing a subcultural, religious and sociological phenomenon. That is, it is part of their social and religious practice to act in this way and these individuals can be seen to act both alone or in groups. In contradistinction, the characters of Faustian myth always act alone and there is an emphasis not on their beliefs but their desires, ego and ambition (which is why I am interested in the psychological and social aspects of this phenomenon).

These figures are unsuspecting characters; maybe even people of reputable nature or religious belief who turn their back away from the social norms and expectations and through greed and jealousy seek out Satan. The distinction is one that relies on many variables, but with further research this pre-substantiated judgement could be proven inaccurate or misinformed.

Faustian Myth holds a place among the most popular and intriguing stories of world folklore; elements of which are employed frequently in the form of plays, movies and novels to this day in fiction. The Faustian Myth, Contract or Bargain can be reasonably defined as essentially a series of accounts, both fictitious and apparently genuine, of very particular interactions with the devil whereby an individual will seek out Satan and sign a pact or contract with him in order to fulfil material pursuits in exchange for their soul. Alongside this instrumentally prevalent component there exist other common narrative aspects featured in Faustian Myth, many of which appear in the play, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe and its influence, Goethe's *Faust*, which sets the paradigm for the story so that all encounters of its type are labelled and given universal recognition. Being a widespread form of folktale it is also a source, alongside biblical and theological work as well as theodicies, somewhat unofficially of doctrine and certain Christian ideas including the nature of the devil, his interactions with mankind and his roles within Christianity. This essay will discuss Faustian Myth as both a fictitious motif of entertainment and an aspect of par-

ticular genuine beliefs. It is necessary to engage with this topic due to its religious significance, fabled place in literature and marginal current academic recognition. In doing so we can begin to comprehend these myths in their various historical stages and how their popularity relates to notable psychological realities.

In this essay, the existence of three rough historical, developmental stages will be identified and argued for. Using Marlowe's play as a keystone in historical development these include 'Pre-Faustus' stories of myth and folklore that historically served both directly and indirectly doctrinal purposes of inspiring fear and aversion to connotative practices. Then we see development as the Faustian theme is transformed into fictional entertainment, typified in the play *Doctor Faustus*. Then exemplified in Faustian musicians we see a third form emerge which displays an even stronger popularity with the myth in 'Post-Faustus' occurrences. Here we see, through desire and ambition, genuine people holding these claims who commune with the devil, or lesser demons. Faustian Myth appears throughout Christian, Satanist and many African religious tales and from the Sixth Century onwards this popular trend of accounts can be seen to begin, with continuity into modernity.

The first of these is the myth of Theophilus the Penitent (or Theophilus of Adana), argued to be the first clear example of a Faustian Myth which 'served as the basis for the later Faust theme'. Indeed, Paul Caurus maintains that this is the 'oldest story of a devil-contract', a view that Durrant and Bailey also advocate in that is this the 'first recorded story of a pact with the devil', which seems to support

this claim. If it is not the foremost Faustian account in existence then it is most certainly among the oldest and most famous, beyond reasonable doubt. Keeping to the canonical and generally accepted accounts, given their commonalities in narrative, the story is essentially that Theophilus sought the counsel of the devil after he doubted his humility in turning down the position of Bishop of Cilicia, in order to allow another to take his place. After being prompted to seek out the devil he proceeded to bargain for the position of the bishop (and some say treasure) from the man he had allowed to take his place and who then unfairly deprived him of his own ecclesiastical office in exchange for renouncing Christ and handing over his very soul. In many versions, rather anti-Semitically, it was a Jewish sorcerer who arranged this deal. It is important to note here that it was Mary, alongside Christ, who was to be renounced in this deal and it is Mary's intercession which was offered for his salvation. This expressly holds the typical characteristics of Faustian Myth, such as blood signing and also fits with the first category as it can be seen to influence doctrine concerning the promotion of anti-Semitic attitudes, the nature of the devil and his interactions with mankind according to some even establishing the need for Mary's intercession. As a case study, alongside perhaps the notorious Devil's Bridge Legends and the accusations of Pope Sylvester II's bargains of a similar nature with Satan, again both with emphasis on personal sacrifice in exchange for desires we can see how such stories establish pervasive beliefs and superstition. 'It also provides ones of the bases of the legend of Faust', our second category.

The Keystone in our examination, the *Doctor Faustus* and Goethe's *Faust* plays offer us several defining thematic aspects and can be seen as a turning point for the development of Faustian Myth. Once again in both classic texts we see the critical narrative elements of the integral blood pact for example in exchange for magic and wisdom. In *Doctor Faustus* we see this as a central element to the narrative as the blood congeals as an omen of consequences and similarly in Goethe's *Faust* a drop of blood completes the signing after an argument with Lucifer's demon, Mephistopheles. Here we see the folktale transformed rather dramatically into a groundbreaking series of stories of popular fiction, as opposed to mere legends.

This archetypal form of the Faustian Myth has been prevalently focused upon across educational curriculums worldwide as somewhat of a standard, inexorable and internationally recognised text. For instance, the Open University examines Marlowe's famous work as a morality play in one of its literature modules and the Columbia College in New York similarly focuses upon Goethe's *Faust* as a key module for its literature students. Educational institutions and curricular bodies worldwide can be seen to analyse both stories of the legend in exploration of its themes of morality, themes of power, antipodes and literary value, particularly at higher levels of study. Needless to say that this story has been reimagined, recycled and recounted in a multitude of versions, formats and forms ever since making it one of the more popular tales of literature. We have of course, as brief testimony to this Estanislao del Campo's 1886 play *Faust* by and many more in between, up until the

present day Faust by Edgar Brau in 2009. Veritably, the standard Faust legend has seen restyling in the expression of operas, novels, musicals, television, radio and many other mediums since its inception. Subsequently it can be seen to influence our third category.

Our third identifiable category are the genuine figures who claim to have, in the spirit of the Faust legend, made pacts and bargains with the devil to fulfil material wants; entailing the many so called Faustian Musicians. Much like the figures in ancient Christian folklore and the plays previously discussed these men and women can be seen to trade their soul in a pact for greater power, though this power is singularly virtuoso musical mastery in this instance in contrast to political prestige, magical ability or wisdom.

Perhaps the most famous exemplar of this third category is Robert Johnson, the delta blues guitar player who after an alleged encounter with Satan at a crossroads went from having no skill to unparalleled talent, revered in music for decades. There has been speculation as to whether it was Satan that Johnson met or even the African trickster god Legba, though some scholars disagree that Legba would even be known to such people. Ferris states that blues players were seen to have seductive powers over women and that this 'fits in with this old African association with the crossroads where you find wisdom: you go down to the crossroads to learn, and in his case to learn in a Faustian pact, with the devil'. Curiously, the historian Robert McCormick notes how his wife's death was regarded by her relatives as divine retribution for his decision to sing secular songs which was com-

monly known as 'selling your soul to the devil'. Moreover he argues that Johnson accepted this and other more outlandish claims of the devil legend as a salute to his committed decision to adopt the full time lifestyle of an itinerant or travelling musician.

Another exceptionally prominent figure is Niccolò Paganini, though there is some speculation as to his apparent invention of the rumour, he almost certainly played along with it for the purposes of fame; which is strikingly psychologically revealing in itself. Many other musicians have also claimed or have been labelled to have made Faustian bargains in exchange for musical ability from various genres, though most notably blues and heavy metal; these include Tommy Johnson and Infernus. It should be noted here that there is some equivocation among scholars and academics, opening abroad debate, as to the allocation of the legends. That is, many of these urban legends are somewhat muddled and attributed to several figures at once. Elijah Wald, for instance comments that the myth of Robert Johnson in particular, was in fact transferred from Tommy Johnson, as well as given support from his influence Zinnerman, who would practice in graveyards.

Unlike standard theistic Satanists; devil worshippers, witches and similar believers our third category do not represent a strong a religious, subcultural and/or sociological phenomenon. Therefore though they may share similar commonalities with aspects of the narratives featured in typical Faustian Myths (such as soul selling , a conflicted conscience and morality and blood signing), for this reason they are largely ignored in this discussion of

Faustian Myth. Indeed, it is part of their social practice for normative Satanists to act in this way, either alone or in particular social groupings. In contradistinction, the characters featured in Faustian Myth always explicitly act alone, in contrast to the social norms and expectations and through psychological impetuses such as greed and jealousy seek out Satan. Here there is an emphasis not necessarily on their beliefs but their desires, ego and ambition. These figures are almost exclusively unsuspecting characters; perhaps even people of reputable nature who come to these decisions; from Theophilus, Pope Sylvester II, Faust himself and Paganini, in this sense it can be seen as a conversion of sorts. Furthermore, it should perhaps be noted that theistic Satanists have been excluded from this discussion also due to the fact that there are strong arguments to suggest they are largely in many cases a historical invention, overplayed by the more politically motivated elements of Medieval Catholic states. Here we see testimonial accounts forced into the parameters of inquisitorial notions of demonic witchcraft. Such a view as advocated by Ginzburg seems to deny us the ability to produce accurate statements about many of the characters we may wish to add in our third category and is supported by Poole in his work *The Lancashire Witches* whereby he agrees with Ginzburg and clarifies the religious distinctions greatly that were 'transformed by elite inquisitors'. Subsequently, due to this line of argument, that they were often in truth resembling nature worshipping Pagans, though by no means all, it is somewhat difficult to determine the veracity and historicity of these accounts, requiring intensive historical study to ascertain the true historical distinction or homogene-

ity between Satanism and Witchcraft in various cases.

In summation therefore we can identify clear threads of continuity and trends in these accounts as this cultural motif undergoes transformation in nature through the ages. This narrative in Christian folk-tale, popular fiction and its most recent manifestations as a phenomenon of urban myth has remained strikingly popular in various circles for centuries. As a side note, many sources discussed and utilised in this discussion relating to the reality of these events may have the appearance of being somewhat ill-researched and lacking a convincing academic focus, or indeed a verifiable historical authority in comparison to considerations of similar dimensions of the supernatural or religious yet this is the very critical nature of myth; surrounded in mystery, equivocation and uncertainty and thus is largely of peripheral concern. Many studies, particularly those which focus upon ancient and urban myth argue that 'ambiguity is an influential factor (and) in its multifaceted forms is integral to outstanding branding and consumer meaning making, as well as myth appeal more generally'. Perhaps most compelling about this enduring theme is the particular emphasis on the soul and that it is a narrative of antipodes. That is, great fictitious extremes that juxtapose one another in these stories; not only do we see the soul as the most precious thing one can give but the devil as the embodiment of surely the most utterly evil thing itself and of course our material desires and wants are reasoned to be somehow of greater value than our very souls. It can be argued that these tales serve as a telling recognition of the intense ambitions of mankind; Theophilus valued his position

and pride over his soul, Faustus valued wisdom over his eternity and Johnson valued fame and skill over his spirit. Is it because we are so appalled by the lengths we see these individuals go to in order to reach their goals that we are so drawn to these mythical events... or as clearly some do, is it because in some way we see our wanting selves in these characters; at a crossroads and desperate for our desires?

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What shifts in both belief and practice can we see as emphasised by Mahayana Buddhism, as opposed to those found in Theravada traditions?

By Lucy Harris

There are many shifts in both belief and practice that are emphasised by Mahayana Buddhism. This is due to the more liberal nature of Mahayana Buddhism, in the sense that more people are able to reach enlightenment; including the lay community by becoming Bodhisattvas. This was illustrated at the Ju Shi Lin, Manila conference, 'On the other hand, according to the Mahayana tradition, many Bodhisattvas are lay people. Among the great Bodhisattvas such as Manjushri, Samantabhadra, Avalokitesvara.' However there are similarities between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. For example their following of the four noble truths. The path to enlightenment through Theravada Buddhism is much stricter and largely unattainable to the lay community. Much of the divide between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism was the result of the Buddha's death around 400BC. Not only was there the loss of the Buddha, but the loss of a leader altogether. The Buddha did not appoint a successor to continue to lead the Buddhist community, even though there were now many Arahants. There are three main ways of separating Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, firstly, geographically, as described by Denise Cush 'Theravada (the way of the elders) is followed in the more southern countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. It is thus sometimes called 'Southern Buddhism' or 'Pali Buddhism', after the language of its scriptures. Mahayana (the great vehicle)

is an overall term for the many varieties of Buddhism practised in the more northern and far-eastern countries.' Secondly, the differing views of the same concepts between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, for example, the way the Buddha is viewed. And thirdly, historically, Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism both have very different histories, not only does Theravada's history date much further back than Mahayana's history but also in matters such as Mahayana Buddhism being the second turning of the dharma wheel. In this essay I will be mostly outlining the shifts of belief and practice emphasised by Mahayana Buddhism while also showing some similarities between the two schools.

A huge shift in beliefs emphasised by Mahayana Buddhism is the way Nirvana and Samsara are viewed. For example within Theravada Buddhism, Nirvana is believed to be indescribable, it can only be experienced and to attempt to describe Nirvana would be like trying to describe colour to a blind person. Nirvana is the complete detachment from the three fires, hatred, greed and ignorance; it is being able to see things as they really are. For the benefit of understanding, a brief attempt at describing Nirvana is 'Just as the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, even so this Doctrine and Discipline have one taste, the taste of release.' Nirvana is described as a totally different and separate place from the place and cycle of Samsara.' Whereas for Mahayana Buddhism, although there is still the belief in Nirvana and escaping Samsara, Mahayana Buddhists aim for Buddhahood and in most cases and rebirth in the Pureland. A school under Mahayana Buddhism believes Nirvana can be experienced within Samsara; this is the school of Madhyamaka. Nagarjuna is the founder of Madhyamaka and states Nirvana and

Samsara are the same, Nirvana is not a different place to Samsara. The difference between Nirvana and Samsara is gaining the ability to understand the ultimate truth of reality. This refers closely to the heart sutra as its focus is on understanding the emptiness of all things and that everything is one in the same things. This is shown in the dialectics of emptiness: first stage in the heart sutra. 'Here, O Sariputra, form is emptiness, and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form; form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form.' This sutra shows a shift in both belief and practice of Mahayana Buddhism as the school are now also referring to different texts as their guidance, whereas Theravada Buddhists strictly only refer to the Pali Canon and it is preserved in Pali; the language it was originally written in.

The way the Buddha is viewed throughout Mahayana Buddhism is very different to the way the Buddha is viewed throughout Theravada Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism believes that the Buddha is a historical figure. The man Siddhartha Gautama who was born 2,500 years ago (480BC) and died in 400 BC. He can no longer in any way be contacted and he achieved enlightenment during one lifetime. Whereas Mahayana Buddhism believes that on a spiritual level the Buddha is still always with us and can be contacted through meditation and prayer. The Trikaya Doctrine is key in distinguishing the shift in both belief and practice for Mahayana Buddhism on the way the Buddha is viewed. Trikaya refers to three separate parts, Dharmakaya (ultimate truth), Sambhoghakaya (Heavenly Buddha's, e.g. Amitabha in Happy land) and Nirmankaya (Buddha's in earthly form

e.g. Siddhartha Gautama.) Mahayana Buddhism has often referred to itself as 'the second turning of the Dharma Wheel' as originally The Trikaya was only consistent of two parts; the Dharmakaya and Nirmanakaya. Mahayana Buddhism later introduced Sambhoghakaya when the two groups set off on their own paths, evident of a shift in both belief and practice for Mahayana Buddhism. This is supported by Peter Harvey, 'The new sutras were regarded as the second 'turning of the Dharma-wheel.' Although it would be easy to assume each school of Buddhism would insist their path is the Dharmakaya (ultimate truth), they do not. Both schools of Buddhism agree each path is as true as the other; it is merely a case that certain paths are better suited to certain people. However, there are individuals that have the opinion that one path is better than the other. Buddhist expert Barbara O'Brien shows this, 'according to Mahayana, individual enlightenment is not possible. The ideal in Mahayana is to enable all beings to be enlightened together, not only out of a sense of compassion, but because we cannot separate ourselves from each other.' We not only see a shift in belief by Mahayana Buddhism on the way the Buddha is viewed, but we also a shift in the practices of Mahayana Buddhism by the way the Buddha is viewed. For example, within Mahayana Buddhism when focusing on liberation from Samsara, Mahayana Buddhists focus on heavenly beings, the Bodhisattvas and the Buddha to help guide them to Nirvana. Whereas in Theravada Buddhism, the practice on the way the Buddha is viewed is still that he is dead and cannot be contacted, therefore he cannot help individuals along their paths to Nirvana. Furthermore Theravada Buddhists focus on themselves and freeing their own minds when trying to reach Nir-

vana, they do not call upon the Buddha or any other heavenly beings to guide them.

Bodhisattvas are a key shift both belief and practice of Mahayana Buddhism in comparison to Theravada Buddhism. Within Theravada Buddhism only one Bodhisattva is accepted, the Maitreya Bodhisattva, whereas within Mahayana Buddhism many different Bodhisattvas are accepted. A huge shift in the cosmologic beliefs between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism is apparent. The Buddhist cosmology in Mahayana Buddhism extends too many heavenly beings, and not just the Buddha. This is not the only shift in cosmology; Theravada Buddhism does not support the cosmology of the Buddha as a heavenly being. This is supported by Peter Harvey, 'Secondly, a new cosmology arising from visualization practices devoutly directed at the Buddha as a glorified, transcendent being.' The goal of a Bodhisattva is seen as the 'non-selfish' goal within Mahayana Buddhism. Bodhisattvas are beings that have reached enlightenment but delay Nirvana in order to help others reach enlightenment. For example, Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, who dwells in happy land with Amitaba in order to help others along their paths. It is said 'she looks down and weeps' at all the suffering within Samsara. Mahayana Buddhism also accepts Bodhisattvas such as Mansjuri. However, the major shift in belief with regards to Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism is that anybody can become a Bodhisattva because we are all born with the potential to become a Bodhisattva. Regardless of what life path we may take, whether it is a monastic lifestyle or a lay lifestyle. This is supported by Beatrice Lane Suzuki 'The first conception in Mahayana is that of the Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is a future

Buddha, and we are all future potential Bodhisattvas, while those who have already taken the Bodhisattva vows are already on the first rung of the ladder of the Bodhisattva.' However in Theravada Buddhism only the monastic community has the opportunity to become an Arahant, this is the Theravada goal, further illuminating the shifts in belief and practice as Theravada has a different end goal, Mahayana Buddhism has altered its path to obtain a different end goal.

The Diamond Sutra scripture particularly refers to the initial vow taken by a Bodhisattva, detailing the commitment of this role. 'The Lord said: Here, Subhuti, someone who has set out in the vehicle of a Bodhisattva should think in this manner: 'As many beings as there are in the universe of beings, comprehended under the term "beings" – egg born, born from a womb, moisture born, or miraculously born; with or without form; with perception; without perception; or with neither perception nor no perception – as far as any conceivable form of beings is conceived: all these I must lead to Nirvana, into that realm of Nirvana which leaves nothing behind.' The initial Bodhisattva vow gives great responsibility to all those that take on the role, they must save all beings born from a womb; (all human beings) no matter their perception, (no matter who they are, what they have done in their lives or how much of a challenge it will be to get them to Nirvana, as many will not follow Buddhism, etc.) from Samsara. The extent of this selfless and what would seem impossible act is imminent when looking at the world today, for example, it would be extremely challenging for a Bodhisattva to guide an Islamic follower into believing the teachings of the Buddha and to convince them to reject their own faith. These kinds of exam-

ples particularly highlight the selflessness of the Bodhisattva as they delay their own Nirvana to help those that are mostly not going to accept the beliefs and practices of Buddhism to attain Nirvana.

A prominent shift in practice within Mahayana Buddhism is the much more liberal nature of the monastic community, in particular reference to the discipline of the monastic community. For example, Mahayana monks are not restricted to living in monasteries and strictly following the 'middle way' path of life. Many Mahayana Buddhist monks live lay lifestyles, this is supported by Beatrice Lane Suzuki, 'With the exception of the Shin sect, which from the beginning advocated marriage, priests were not supposed to marry and carry on a family life. But with the Merji Restoration (1868-1871) this was changed. Government support and protection was largely withdrawn from the temples, and the priests were treated in many ways as lay men and allowed to marry.' This is in many ways contradicts what is traditionally viewed as being a monk, as to be a part of the monastic community within Theravada Buddhism you must renounce all worldly pleasures, belongings and involvement with loved ones in order to attain enlightenment as all these attachments will ultimately lead one to suffering (dukkha). Begging the question of were the beliefs and practices of Mahayana Buddhism merely formed to suit certain Buddhist monks who did not want to give up certain aspects of their lifestyles, and who were not committed to living such disciplined lifestyles. However, in justification for the more relaxed lifestyle of Mahayana Buddhist monks, Mahayana Buddhism states that it is having faith in the Buddha that allows one to reach enlightenment, although

faith in the Buddha is important for Theravada Buddhism, the major emphasis is on living a disciplined lifestyle, in showing dedication and self-sacrifice in order to attain enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhism believes that absolute faith in the Buddha is sufficient to achieve enlightenment, illuminating a huge shift in practice for Mahayana Buddhism.

A clear shift in belief within Mahayana Buddhism linking to the monastic community is the Varna (class) system. Although within Theravada Buddhism the monastic community are not particularly seen as being of higher class to that of the lay community, it could be argued they are of slightly higher importance due to the fact they are the ones who shall obtain Nirvana, and spend time discovering truths about our existence which allows the lay community to live more moral lives. Whereas shown previously within Mahayana Buddhism does not have such strict rules on the lives of the monastic community, the gap between lay and monastic is not as large, which would suggest a more equal Varna system.

Skilful means has been used throughout Buddhism in both Mahayana and Theravada. Theravada Buddhism has used skilful means much more historically, for example, skilful means was often used by the Buddha during his lifetime as many people were uneducated, and therefore he used skilful means to simplify the teachings of Buddhism to their level of understanding. This has been described as, 'One devises a method according to the event; one devises a method according to the time; and one devises a method according to the circumstances.' However in the current day it is used more by Mahayana Buddhism illustrating a shift in practice. On some level, Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism still

have skill in means in common in the current day. For example, to save a child from a burning house, you should lie and bribe them with sweets to save their lives. Although the act of lying is bad it is overruled by the 'right intention' of lying to save the child's life.

On the other hand, there are key and defining factors that show overemphasis on the beliefs and practices by Mahayana Buddhism. For example the Four Noble truths, a key foundational teaching in belief and practice for both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. The First Noble truth refers suffering in itself that we are all inevitably going to suffer within the cycle of Samsara. The second noble truth refers to the origin of suffering, because of our desires and need for fulfilment we are constantly craving and therefore always suffering as there is always a need that has not yet been fulfilled, the second noble truth is often linked to conditioned arising. The third noble truth gives a solution to the cessation of suffering in order to renounce and release oneself, this is called Nibbana. Finally, the fourth Noble truth refers to the eightfold path, following the middle path to escape dukkha, the path is consistent of eight factors, 'right view or understanding', 'right speech', 'right action', 'right directed thought', 'right concentration', 'right mindfulness', 'right livelihood' and finally 'right effort'. The factors of the eightfold path are what Buddhists from Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism base their lives upon; they are their guide for living moral and ethical lives by having the right intention in all that they do. The closeness in belief and practice between the two schools is supported Peter Harvey, 'Over the centuries, many monks studied and practised according both the Sravakayana (Theravada) and Ma-

hayana; not infrequently, both were present in the same monastery. The Chinese, in fact, did not come to clearly differentiate the Mahayana as a separate movement till late in the fourth century.'

Another reason that suggests the differences in belief and practice are overemphasised by Mahayana Buddhism is the ethical status of women. Both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism when referring to belief and practice in this respect are extremely similar. Buddhism is one of, if not the least oppressive religion when it comes to women. Many women are drawn to Buddhism because of this matter; Buddhism states that we are all equally suffering in the cycle of Samsara, regardless of our gender. Whereas most other religions believe men are of higher importance to women. For example, classically within Christianity women are held under the sin of Eve. Women are now condemned to feel pain during childbirth, and to obey their husband's commands. Eve is throughout the bible is described to be made from one of Adams ribs, giving the notion that she is merely an extension of Adam, as all women are extensions of their husbands, and therefore without a husband can never be whole and of lesser importance to men. As explained by genesis 2:21, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, for she was taken out of man.' Neither Mahayana nor Theravada Buddhism demonstrates these negative connotations of women merely because of their gender in their beliefs or practices. There is much evidence within Buddhism to suggest the importance of women, with particular reference to a man's role in the way he should treat his wife. Evidence of this is supported by H. Saddhatissa, 'A wife as the west be min-

istered to by a husband: (i) by being courteous to her, (ii) by not despising her in any way, (iii) by being faithful to her, (iv) by handing over authority of domestic management to her, (v) by providing her with adornments.'

In conclusion, the fundamental shift in belief and practice that is emphasised by Mahayana Buddhism is the end goal of becoming a Bodhisattva rather than an Arahant. Although there are many differences that are emphasised by Mahayana Buddhism, the end goal is most important as this is why Mahayana Buddhist choose to live their lives differently in many aspects compared to Theravada Buddhists. When comparing the differences in the role of the Arahant and the Bodhisattva it is clear that the Bodhisattva goal is more compassionate to all beings and denies those following Mahayana Buddhism the opportunity to be selfish by only achieving enlightenment for themselves. This shift in belief and practice by Mahayana Buddhism is essential as it teaches compassion and selflessness to all other beings, thus illustrating Buddhism being one of the most non-violent religions in the world's history.

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Watchmen Film Review.

By Robert Alexander

Film is a powerful medium with which to promote reflection. To stimulate thought, and present speculative ideas to the consumer. American Psycho and Starship Troopers are strong examples of these kinds of films, which unlike the generic thriller or drama; they hold a more profound message for the cinema goer. Often film serves to hold a mirror up to certain aspects of society. Achieved through parody or retrospection. Make us question certain aspects of our world.

I believe that the adaptation of books to film is something highly positive. It can be more than just Hollywood's attempt to recycle tried and tested ideas to make quick money. They can bring the ideas of the original to new audiences. Make their themes and conceptions relevant to a new generation. Or even pave the way to create something completely new, an interpretation of the original that offers yet more views worthy of thought, stimulating reflection by the viewer.

Watchmen is one of these films. Adapted from the original graphic novel by Alan Moore, whose work has been the source of many adaptations of literature into film. Watchmen presents a sociological examination of how the world would react to the existence of superheroes. But, this is a sub element of the film's main focus: A focus on the people of a bleak world, and the values they hold onto throughout the trials they face. This film makes the viewer question their own morality, but takes no obvious side. It remains ambiguous and impartial throughout. It exposes each of

the characters' shortfalls, no one moral system ever presented as being infallible. There is no obvious bias towards any one protagonist.

No doubt, this is a character driven story. Focussed on these individuals and the demons that plague them. We have the government, hidden away from the world in their sterile command bunker, headed by Nixon and his closest congressmen. Faced with the imminent threat of nuclear war against the Soviet Union. Desperate to achieve some form of superiority over the rival superpower as their deadly standoff continues. We have Doctor Manhattan, the seemingly omnipotent physicist freed from the perspective of normal men. He sees time's arrow in flux, perceives his past present and future all at once. His perceptions of the world radically different from our own, they have completely changed his psyche. Detached from the human condition, never aging and unable to die, Manhattan fails to see the worth of man, an irrational species he can no longer relate to. He no longer possesses the ability to see an intrinsic worth in humanity. No more important than the sands of Mars or the stars of the wider cosmos.

And we have the others. The Watchmen. The wealthy tycoon Ozymandias, desperate to prevent the war. Rorschach, a penniless hobo. Hunted by the police, yet continues to fight against the sordid criminal underbelly of New York. Daniel Dreiberger and Laurie Juspeckzyk, former vigilantes, who in their own ways fear the world. Living without purpose, they each miss the days where they could make a difference. And the older Watchmen, minor characters who having done their part have washed their hands of the world and

retired from it in their old age. Characters who in many ways are as detached from the world as the inhuman Doctor Manhattan.

Indeed, you could write a short essay on any one of these characters. Or a larger book in considering every character in addition to the wider subtext of the film. And this is exactly what The Blackwell Philosophy group, a Pop Culture series in their review, 'Watchmen and Philosophy' have done. They have produced a critical analysis of the novel's political commentary and its deep philosophical musings. It is clear that the film is teeming with so many famous works of philosophers and ethicists, capturing the studious heart of the original novel well. We have Kant, Nietzsche, Bentham through utilitarianism, Freud and Lawrence Kohlberg in the study of moral development, in addition to many others. These multitudes of concepts are imprinted upon the characters. And each behaves uniquely. Sometimes their choices lead to disastrous consequences, following their own moral beliefs. But I do not believe that is a concern of the film. Any conclusions we develop are inconsequential to the point of this work.

The book focusses on many topics. The first it considers is Doctor Manhattan. The genius of Doctor Manhattan's character is that whilst he is obviously unhuman, he still remains incredibly relatable to the viewer. "In the world of Watchmen, a freak accident turns physicist Jonathan Osterman into Dr. Manhattan, a kind of "superman" who is able to perceive events atemporally, live indefinitely, manipulate matter at its most basic level, and travel unaided to distant worlds." In fact, Dr

Manhattan is potentially the most unique and fascinating element of the film. "The superman exists, and he is American". Dr Manhattan exists as the United States' primary military asset, having won them the Vietnam War, and stands as a formidable diplomatic tool with which to dominate the U.S.S.R. with.

He can do almost anything. Yet despite all his power, the former John Osterman feels incapable of saving the world from nuclear annihilation. He feels no attachment to the world around him. "I am tired of earth, these people. I'm tired of being caught in the tangle of their lives." He has withdrawn from the world, his perception of reality prevents him from seeing humanity in the light that we do. He has withdrawn emotionally as well, with no human connections keeping him tied to our planet. As an outsider, no longer holding anything in common with humans, and no longer human, he perceives no value in them, or in life. And his character begs the question. Can there be morality, or a drive to peruse moral obligations, without the elements of the human condition in place?

"I read atoms, Laurie. I see the ancient spectacle that birthed the rubble. Besides this, human life is brief and mundane." Without that attachment, Dr Manhattan can only perceive humanity in the same way that any observer can. As naught than physical phenomena. How a scientist might observe and document the movement of stars for instance. There doesn't exist that emotional connection that humans share with fellow humans in his mind. For this reason, Manhattan struggles to care about humanities imminent

destruction due to nuclear war, in the same manner that you or I might struggle to care about the collapse of an unstable, weather-weakened cliff face.

In fact, Manhattan only achieves a caring for humanity by coming to understand the uniqueness of life as a physical phenomenon itself, not by developing some emotional connection with us. "Events with astronomical odds of occurring, like oxygen turning into gold. I have longed to witness such an event and yet, in human coupling [procreation], millions upon millions of cells compete, to produce life." The sheer uniqueness and complexity of life as a physical phenomenon, the sheer wonder of all the environmental conditions and variables of events required to come together to create and sustain life. "To distil so specific a form" This was what it took to convince him of humanity's worth. Not some emotional attachment to us. But the acknowledgment of the miraculous nature of life.

So, let us summarise the film and novel in conclusion. Examine its plot and themes. The year is 1985. And things are grim. The golden years are over, the threat of nuclear war greater than ever. The film examines the ethical beliefs of the characters, and holds each in equal worth and merit. The film attempts to examine how the world would realistically respond to the existence superhero vigilantes. And, the conclusion the author comes to is not a pretty one. If anything, the world is more savage than ever. And these individuals are not pure of heart white knight type-cast heroes. They are flawed, harrowed and damaged by their occupation and the things they've experienced.

It's just as much a sociological examination as it is one about ethics. Intrigued by the psychological profiles of these vigilantes. How these people of different up-bringsings, beliefs, and personalities have become the troubled men and women who we see on film. And how they behave in this world. Every fibre of the film falls back upon the ethics and principles of this alternate world and the people within it. And, the film begs the question. Yet never answers it. Who amongst the characters is right?

Critics of the second noble truth of Buddhism ‘the origination of pain’.

By Bingying Deng

The Four Noble truth (ariya sacca) is the succinct expression of the Buddha’s teaching, which was originally recorded in the early Stutta collection known as Nikayas. The term ariya means ‘noble one’ and sacca is normally used in the sense of ‘truth’ but it also means ‘reality’ and real existence.

“And furthermore, with the abandoning of pleasure and stress — as with the earlier disappearance of elation and distress — he enters and remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity and mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness, so that there is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness...”

In the scripture the Buddha’s own discovery of the arya- saccas is from the fourth jhana. The term jhana means the meditative state of profound stillness and concentration in chosen subjects. Accordance with the fourth jhana neither pleasure nor pain could bring purity of peace and mindfulness.

According to the Nikaya passage, the Buddha states that he has always known two things: suffering and cessation of suffering.

Dukkha is the theme of the four noble truths, which means pain, suffering and unsatisfactory. The Four noble truths are: Dukkha ariya-sacca (the Noble Truth of the Pain) is talked about what suffering is and all life involves suffering. Dukkha samu-

daya ariya sacca (the Noble Truth of the origin of pain) illustrates the cause and reason of suffering. Dukkha nirodha ariya sacca (the cessation of the pain) explains how to stop the pain. Cattari ariya saccani (the path to the cessation of the painful) refers to the way to overcome tanha (craving or desire). The Second Noble Truth will be evaluated in depth in this article.

“Now this monks, for the spiritually ennobled is the originating-of-the-painful (dukkha-sammudaya) true reality. It is this craving (tanha) which lead to renewed being, accompanied by relishing and attachment, seeking enjoyment now here, now here, now there; that is, craving for sense-pleasure, craving for being, craving for non-existence.”

Base on the first sermon of Nikaya, the cause of dukkha is tanha, which literally means ‘thirst’. It is clearly refers to clinging on desires and demanding. The English equivalent translation should be more than that because it contains much stronger and forceful sense. In Buddhism, tanha is used in extreme and derogatory sense, therefore craving is a much better translation.

The first sermon identifies three types of craving and there are: craving for sensual pleasure (kama-tanha); craving for being (bhava-tanha); and craving for non-existent (vibhava-tanha). An example, craving of sensual pleasure which can be a person’s sexual desire; or/and searching for a kind of tasty food. Craving for certain identities for instance can be a person wants to be a good Buddhist, which is related to self-fulfilment. Craving for a non-existence is an interesting one, which is a drive to get rid an unpleasant situation. A person is

in an unbearable situation, feels hopeless and helpless. He/she has strong intention to get out of it, in some extreme case, whom may wishes he/she has never been born, therefore may commit suicide.

“If its root remains undamaged and strong, a tree, even if cut, will grow back. So too if latent cravings not rooted out, this suffering returns again and again. (Dhp 338)”

Carving can lead to frustrations, if one’s demands cannot be satisfied. People often struggle because these craving can never be satisfied. It can also lead to quarrels, strifes and conflicts between individuals and/or groups. On the contrary, it can motive people to perform certain action, therefore it can have a great affect on karmic results of rebirth.

As the Buddha said cravings lead many pain and suffering of the world, He is right in certain degree. By looking at the world history, for instance, one of the essential reasons of Japan invaded China during 1930s which is because of their government craved for resources. In the Nanking Massacre (1937-1938) there were over 200,000 Chinese people were mercilessly killed by Japanese soldiers and there were between 20,000 to 80,000 women were sexually assaulted, victims were between age of eight and over seventy years old. In the latter claim is because some individuals desired sexual pleasure.

‘There are so many bodies on the street, victims of group rape and murder. They were all stripped naked, their breasts cut off, leaving a terrible dark brown hole; some of them were bayoneted in the abdomen, with their intestines spilling out

alongside them; some had a roll of paper or a piece of wood stuffed in their vaginas’ (quoted in Yin and Young, The Rape of Nanking, p. 195).

If there were no infinite craving for resources and sexual pleasure, the inhuman crime would not happen, there would be no war but peace.

Counter to above, it can be argued that without craving, there would be no civilization; there would have been no differences between human being and other animals. People always crave to live a better life, want to have better knowledge of the world, which leads people to live life there is today. People’s craving for meaning of life has led many religions and philosophies thrive too.

Thus brings pain but also add huge value to people’s life.

Furthermore, although craving of non-existence has negative effect, however it dependent on people’s attitude of how it is taken. For example, an Australian Christian evangelist and motivational speaker Nick Vujicic who was born with no limbs, his speech has inspired many people. In his autobiography ‘Life without limit’ that he described he attempted suicide when he was a teenager. Later he fights for himself by taking his disability positively, to help himself and others. The disability and his attitude towards it which made him a stronger person in the end, and it helps him living a much better life. Thus it can be seen, such a craving ironically helps cause a further rebirth.

Another important cause of dukkha is ditihi, which can be loosely translated as

'views'. It includes beliefs, theories and opinions. These can narrow down people's visions due to circumstance and environment, just like a blind man who makes a part of elephant that he has felt for the whole of what an 'elephant' is (Ud.67-9 (BW.214-15)). The Buddha said theories or 'views' could lead to quarrels and conceit (Sn.842-3). Therefore people should not have views. People should replace a viewpoint with a direct 'seeing'.

However, Buddhism also holds the concept that it is important to hold the right view and this idea is emphasized many times in Samyutta Nikaya and Anguttara Nikaya). The right view also known as 'Buddhist views which bring goodness and wisdom and lead people to right direction.

"Precisely this Noble Eightfold Path, my friend — right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the path, this is the practice for the full comprehension of these forms of stressfulness." (SN 38.14)"

"Just as when a sugar cane seed, a rice grain, or a grape seed is placed in moist soil, whatever nutriment it takes from the soil & the water, all conduces to its sweetness, tastiness, & unalloyed delectability. Why is that? Because the seed is auspicious. In the same way, when a person has right view... right release, whatever bodily deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever verbal deeds... whatever mental deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever intentions, whatever vows, whatever determinations, whatever fabrications, all lead to what is agreeable, pleasing, charming, profitable, & easeful. Why is that? Because the view is auspicious."

cious." (AN 10.104)

From the above mentioned, the Buddhist teaching of view contradicts each other. It is unclear and confused. It can be true that people should not have or have less bias view sometimes. However, it is impossible for people have absolutely no views at all. It is unavoidable that some people who is brought up in a different cultural background has different views or ideas for example.

The term 'self' has been criticized by Buddha, which he saw as leading to attachment and thus suffering also finite. This teaching is recorded in the khandhas (Five Aggregates).

"An uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person — who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma — assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He assumes feeling to be the self..."

"He assumes perception to be the self..."

"He assumes fabrications to be the self..."

"He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness." (SN 22.85)

"If one stays obsessed with form, monk, that's what one is measured by/limited by. Whatever one is measured by/limited by, that's how one is classified." (SN.22.36)

According to Buddha there should be no cravings and emotions, because all of these lead people to be selfish. Buddha says people even do not own their own

body; it is not right to claim 'my body is mine' says Buddhism. The 'body' does not belong to anyone; it arises due to the past karma.

However it could also say that 'self' makes people suffer, but it is also important what make people individual and unique. Without existence of self the world would be very dull. Moreover, emotion is one of the key element of human being, should people abandon them to against the nature?

The paticca-samuppada (Conditional Arising) strongly related to the Second Noble Truth. It is one of the core teachings and practice of Buddhism. It is also the key sources in Niddna Samyutta and the Mahanidana Sutta. The Buddha's chief disciple said. 'Whoever sees Conditional Arising sees Dhamma, whoever sees Dhamma sees Conditional Arising.' (Majjhima Nikaya 1.190-191)

Everything changes and nothing is permanent; what people have or experience now, will pass away eventually. Nothing can be independent from the Conditional Arising. The Conditional Arising lead to another cause. For instance, the reason of why apple is apple is not a coincidence, but one representative cause and apples are given in this way. Craving is arise conditioned by feeling and spiritual ignorance.

"And what is dependent co-arising? From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name and form. From name and form as a requisite condition come the six sense media. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress and suffering." (SN 12.2)

From above texts, there is a formula of conditional arising. It illustrates a sequence of pains:

1. Spiritual ignorance cause constructing activities
2. Constructing activities cause discriminative consciousness
3. Discrimination consciousness cause mind and body
4. Mind and body cause the six sense bases
5. Six sense bases cause sensory simulation
6. Sensory simulation cause feeling
7. Feeling cause craving
8. Craving cause grasping
9. Grasping cause becoming
10. Becoming cause birth
11. Birth cause aging
12. Death, sorrow and distress

The doctrine of dependent arising is usually presented in Pali Canon in terms of the 'twelvefold formula'. Besides explaining the origin of dukkha (pain) the formula also explains karma rebirth and functioning of personality.

For Buddhism, the basic root of pain and stress of life is spiritual ignorance rather than sins. It started before birth and it is

from one's previous life.

"Monks, this mind (citta) is brightly shining, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements (A.I.IO)"

"There is, the deepest layer of mind is bright and pure. This represents, in effect, the potentiality for attaining Nirvana –but defilements arise through the mind's inept modes of interaction with the world. Even a newborn child is not seen as having a wholly pure mind, however, for it said to have unskillful latent tendencies which are carried over from previous life (M.I.443)"

Four awakenings, must lose anusaya (four taints): sense of desire, attachment to some kind of being and spiritual ignorance.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands the taints, the origin of the taints, the cessation of the taints, and the way leading to the cessation of the taints, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dharma. [...] There are three taints: the taint of sensual desire, the taint of being and the taint of ignorance. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of the taints. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of the taints..."

When a noble disciple has thus understood the taints, the origin of the taints, the cessation of the taints, and the way leading to the cessation of the taints, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to lust, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit 'I am,' and by abandoning ignorance

and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering." [MN9.70-71]

Constructing activities play an important role in the Conditional Arising. The main 'constructing activity' is a will. If one behaves in certain way, then the will gets certain karma result. For example, anger will cause more angers. It also explains why pains are often follows one after another.

Nobody can be dependent the Conditional Arising; however for those who destroys spiritual ignorance, action will not bring any karmic results. This teaching contradicts with the concept of 'nothing can be dependent from the Conditional Arising.'

This metaphysical concept of conditional arising is interesting. The idea of ignorance is origin of all the bliss. It is very convincing.

Looking at Chinese history, in 1950s during Mao Zedong's time China's birthrate was as high as four children family. Mao encouraged people to have many children to increase the country's workforce, therefore in 1950s the rate of population 1.9 percent each year. The ignorant decision is lacking of considering the possible bad consequence such as over growth of population.

To control population growth, the one child policy was first introduced in 1970s. One family only allowed one child. Many women were forced to have an abortion, even at very late pregnancy. High financial penalty was enforced, if the rule were broken. The policy violates so many human rights, caused so much pain and suffering.

should people learn and follow.

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard claims there is no object truth in religion; belief is personal and only mean to those who believe it. Therefore, even some doctrines of Buddhism contradict with each other, some of them sound unconvincing, but still there is much brilliant wisdom such as ignorance is origin of bliss. It is possible to make one's own choice between these contradictions and 'unconvincing' teaching by intelligence. Believe whatever convinces you if the enlighten works perfect.

The birthrate is decreased to 0.7 percent, but there are many negative impacts of the policy one of most essential problem is cause the gender imbalance of population. Due to traditional preference for boy, large numbers of female babies have ended up homeless or in orphanages, and in some cases killed. In 2000, it was reported that 90 per cent of fetuses aborted in China were female, as result today men outnumber woman more than 60 million.

Nevertheless as newborn baby has no almost no awareness of the world, therefore, is it fair to claim that they doesn't have pure mind? According to Buddha, the ignorance is came from previous life, again there is no evidence for the concept.

A link between a cause and an effect may not always be clear. It can be argued that, people merely assume there is a link between event one with event two, there is no direct evidence of a cause and an effect. For example, a person lie to one of his friend which hurt his friend indeed, then ten years later, someone does what he did to his friend to him, karma can be claimed there to explain, but how can people tell is effect of karma? Otherwise the idea does make perfectly sense.

In conclusion, the teaching of the Second Noble Truth is fairly convincing on the relationship between cravings, views and ignorance are origination of pains, however as craving and views can be take positively to make people live in better life.

The teaching of conditional arising makes sense generally, however, Buddhist scriptures sometimes contradict with each other. It always confuses people. What

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