

From Zoroaster to Star Wars, Jesus to Marx: The Art, Science and Technology of Human Manipulation

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Superficially, it appears that humans enjoy a wide variety of spiritual and religious traditions. In fact, the vast majority of human belief systems (secular and religious/spiritual) are rooted in and colonized by the same ancient Persian narratives (specifically the Zoroastrian Frame), narratives created by elite actors with an elite agenda in mind. This article explores the ancient roots of our modern spiritual and secular beliefs, demonstrates their ideological and colonial character, briefly examines the emotional, psychological, and spiritual toll, and outlines a course of research for those interested in moving forward with an authentic decolonizing agenda. The paper introduces several terms into the lexicon, including Symbol Factories, Ideological Institutions, and Toxic Socialization.

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It is not just because it has been neglected that I have chosen to focus upon the relatively neglected ideological dimension. My main reason for this choice is that the exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language (Fairclough 2001, p. 2).

The violent metaphor of divine warfare... has become the central metaphor of the Master Story of Western culture. It has settled into the center of the psyche... [and] has shaped the unconscious psychosocial assumptions of our cultures. This set of unconscious apocalyptic assumptions forms the sources and stage set for what we find meaningful in our cultures, from the violent game machines in the arcades our teenagers frequent to the actions of the Islamic Fundamentalist who flew airplanes into the World Trade Center. It is a short psychospiritual step from the vicarious forms of wishful mythic violence... to the mythic wishes that hurled gasoline-laded flying machines into the workplace of twenty thousand New Yorkers (Ellens 2001, pp. 3–5).

Introduction

If you live on this planet and you have spiritual beliefs, even if your beliefs lean towards the secular, it is likely these beliefs are of Persian/Zoroastrian origin. Historian Mary Boyce reveals the origin of our collective beliefs in the words and teachings of the priest/prophet Zoroaster (a.k.a. Zarathustra), who was active

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around 1000 B.C., in the region that later became known as Iran (Boyce 2001). According to Boyce, "Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the revealed creedal religions, and it has probably had more influence on mankind, directly and indirectly, than any other single faith" (Boyce 2001, p. 1). Boyce's statement about the profound influence of Zoroastrianism is certainly true since there are elements of the Zoroastrian cosmology and theology in just about every religion and mind on this planet. These elements exist in Christianity and Islam (Akbar 2020), which together make up over 50% of the world's religious population ("Religious Composition by Country" 2015), as well as Judaism, and the Bahai faith. They may even have penetrated into Buddhism (Wallis 2018) and other Eastern religions as well. Elements of the Zoroastrian narrative also penetrate deep into culture, including secular culture, all over the world. As such, these early Zoroastrian beliefs form a powerful and globally ubiquitous master narrative (Halverson et al. 2011) or master story (Ellens 2001) which, as this paper shall attempt to demonstrate, was specifically designed to facilitate colonial and imperial ambitions through the psychological and emotional manipulation of the exploitable, working masses.

Origin and Contours of the Zoroastrian Master Narrative

We start our journey through the ideological master narrative of this planet with Zoroaster. Zoroaster was a mystic—somebody who had mystical experiences or direct communications from God and the spirits. Zoroaster believed that he had been "entrusted by God with a message for all mankind" (Boyce 2001, p. 17). His revelations, his reception of this message, occurred when he was thirty in a prototypical baptism event. Boyce (2001, p. 19) explains that "...after emerging from the pure element, water, in the freshness of a spring dawn – he had a vision. He saw on the bank a shining Being, who revealed himself as Vohu Manah 'Good Purpose'; and this Being led Zoroaster into the presence of Ahura Mazda and five other radiant figures, before whom 'he did not see his own shadow upon the earth, owing to their great light.'" From this initial revelation and many more communications with Ahura Mazda and other beings that followed, Zoroastrian precepts developed. The mystical beings gave Zoroaster information on cosmology, eschatology, worship, and ritual.

Scanning the system as presented by Boyce (2001), we can identify several familiar themes that originated in the Zoroastrian teachings and that together constitute what we might call the *Zoroastrian Master Narrative* or **Zoroastrian Frame**.¹ This narrative includes several key ideas, including the idea of a patriarchal hierarchy, the existence and personification of cosmic evil, a linear and staged view of creation, a cosmic binary (or dialectic), a cosmic choice, the notion of judgment (both interim and final), and the idea of a utopian end point to history. Let us examine each of these briefly in turn.

¹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Zoroastrian_Narrative.

A Patriarchal hierarchy: In what Iranian scholar Mary Boyce calls a “startling departure from accepted beliefs” of the time, The Zoroastrian teachings installed a primary male God and principal authority figure from which all creation, and all good things, flowed. Whereas before there were more Gods, and the Gods were more equal and team-oriented, after Zoroaster, Ahura Mazda became the one true creator God under which other entities in the pantheon all served in their various appointed tasks (Boyce 2001, p. 21).

The existence and personification of cosmic evil: In the West, we are all familiar with the notion of evil, whether embedded in the “dark shadow” within us all (Jung 1980), or personified as the cosmic evil known as Satan who, for various reasons, stands in opposition and conflict to the one true good God and his forces of good. This figure first appeared in Zoroastrianism. Prior to Zoroastrianism, evil figures of cosmic import did not exist. There were, of course, notions of evil, but these were associated more with what Rice (1998) termed the personification of threat, specifically environmental and human threat, than any cosmic/existential evil. As Boyce says, prior to Zoroastrianism, “the Indo-Iranians seem to have regarded their divinities hopefully, as being by nature kindly disposed towards men; and evil they appear to have attributed in the main to lesser, spiteful beings, the demons and witches and fearsome monsters who inhabited this world rather than the heavenly one beyond it” (Boyce 1996, p. 83). After Zoroaster, this changes. As Messadie (1996, p. 85) notes, the essence of the Zoroastrian faith “is the unprecedented creation of a God-Devil pairing and an equally unprecedented Good/Evil ethical dualism.”

A linear, evolutionary, and three-stage view of creation: In addition to a patriarchal hierarchy and the instantiation of cosmic forces of good versus evil, Zoroastrianism also instantiated a linear, evolutionary, and staged view of creation which, as Boyce (2011, p. 27) notes, is also a break with earlier spiritual tenets that emphasized cyclical cosmological frames. “The strong sense inculcated by Zoroaster of both time and purpose, of all mankind and all *spenta* being striving towards a common end, a foreseeable goal, has been held by some to be the most remarkable characteristic of his teachings” (Boyce 1996, p. 233).

This linear and staged view of evolution is expressed in the Zoroastrian **Doctrine of the Three Times**.² In this doctrine, creation emanates from Ahura Mazda and passes through three stages, these being **Creation** (when the world is first created), **Mixture** (where oppositional forces of good and evil fight in order to improve the variety of creation), and finally, **Separation** (where creation is finally transformed and perfected). According to the Zoroastrian faith, the initial period following creation is simplistic, static, and undesirable—a boring garden of Eden, basically. The mixture is a time of energetic conflict instantiated specifically to create more interest and variety in creation. The final stage, separation, so named because the forces of evil are separated and removed at the beginning of this stage, is an eternal period of interesting and entertaining variation and complexity created as a consequence of the shake-ups that occurred in the mixture.

²https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Doctrine_of_the_Three_Times.

This eschatological belief in an end-times denouement and transition to utopia is a dramatic and significant shift in beliefs. Whereas before Zoroastrianism, cosmic *cooperation* was seen as necessary to “Maintain the world according to asha”³ (Boyce 2001, p. 26), after Zoroaster, “perfection” would be attained, but only by passing through several thousand years of cosmic struggle and conflict.

The Zoroastrian Binary: According to the Zoroastrian faith, we are currently in the **Mixture** phase (or, as some readers might prefer to refer to it, the chessboard phase). In this phase, mixture is accomplished via what we might call the **Zoroastrian Binary**⁴ in honour of the fact that it was Zoroaster who appears to be the first, though certainly not the last, to proclaim it. The Zoroastrian Binary is a binary, a dialectic conceptualized as an opposition between **good** (i.e., order, righteousness, and justice personified by Ahura Mazda) and **evil** (i.e., disorder, immorality, and injustice, personified as Angra Mainyu). In the Zoroastrian faith, it is this “dialectical” struggle between oppositions (good/evil, thesis/antithesis, ying/yang) that creates the innovative movement that leads us through the mixture towards the final utopian denouement.

A Cosmic Choice: If there is going to be a “mix,” we are going to need some things to throw into the mixture. These “things,” as it turns out, are humans. The presentation of the cosmic binary leads to the conceptualization of humans on a cosmic battlefield/chess board where they are faced with a cosmic choice—either work on the side of good or on the side of evil. The choice that humans have to make is prefigured in Zoroastrian doctrine by Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, both of whom make a choice to be what they are. One being chooses “righteousness” and goes on to do all good things, while the other chooses falsehood and goes on to do all bad things. As Boyce (2001, p. 10) notes, “An essential element in this revelation is that the two primal Beings each made a deliberate choice ... between good and evil, an act which prefigures the identical choice which every man [sic] must make for himself in this life.”

“The Work” Complete: According to Zoroastrian theology, the “mixing” goes on for several thousand years. At a certain point, when creation has been perfected through mixture, the binary opposition will end and creation will return to a state of calm existence when there is once again no more “duality.” This “end of history” is known as “**Frashokereti**” (‘healing’ or ‘renovation’ or “making wonderful/excellent”). According to Boyce (2001, pp. 28–29), the time of Separation “is a renewal of the time of Creation, except that no return is prophesied to the original uniqueness of living things....but whereas in the beginning there was one plant, one animal, one man, the rich variety and number that have since issued from these will remain forever....after Frashogird...” all the gods will unite with humanity and “each place will resemble a garden in spring...” In the end, good and evil will be no more, and the Gods and man will be together “restored to its original perfection...”

³“Asha” refers to a cosmic order of goodness, righteousness, truth etc. In original schemas, asha was maintained with cooperation, not war. For a detailed overview of the term, see Schlerath and Skjærvø (1987).

⁴https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Zoroastrian_Binary

Judgment, Justice, Punishment, and Reward: Logically, given the necessity of evil in the mix, and the positive long term outcome of mixture (i.e., utopia), one might expect that those who “choose the dark side” would be allowed to join in the festivities that occur when “mixture” is complete. As it turns out, even though everybody makes a choice to play on a specific side, and even though the mix requires dialectical opposition for it to proceed, there is a right choice and a wrong choice. The right choice, which leads to reward, is to side with the good God and fight in his war. The wrong choice, which leads to ruin, is to side with Angra Mainyu and do bad things. It helps with the mix if you make this choice; however, if you make this wrong choice, when you die, you are judged, punished, and condemned. The judgment occurs as you traverse a bridge of souls, the so-called **Bridge of the Separator**. On this bridge, souls face a tribunal of three celestial judges. These judges hold the **scales of justice** upon which are “weighed the soul’s thoughts, words, and deeds, the good on one side, the bad on the other.” (Boyce 2001, p. 27) Once the soul is weighed, the soul is judged and rewarded or punished based on whatever side of the scale weighs the heaviest. Boyce once again notes the shift from previous beliefs when she says that Zoroaster takes an earlier less moralistic pagan belief in the transition between death and life makes it into a robust process of **judgment, justice, punishment** and **reward** based on ethical achievements, with dire cosmic consequences.^{5xx}

The Final Ordeal (i.e., Armageddon) and Final Judgment: In addition to the “run-of-the-mill” judgment that occurs at the end of every life, the Zoroastrian faith also instantiates the belief that once “The Work” is complete, a final struggle or “final great ordeal” will occur. In this end-times scenario, the forces of good and evil meet in one final combat, the purpose of which is to erase evil from creation. As Boyce notes, the tradition describes “the ordeal” as

...submersion in a river of molten metal, to be undergone by the whole physical world and by all humanity, both those still living in the flesh and the greater host of the departed, gathered together again in menog state from heaven and hell. “Then fire and Airyaman Yazad will melt the metal in the hills and mountains, and it will be upon this earth like a river. Then they will cause all men to pass through that molten metal ... And for him who is righteous, it will seem as if he is walking through warm milk; and for him who is wicked, it will seem as if he is walking in the flesh (pad getig) through molten metal’.” (Boyce 1996, p. 242).

At this final ordeal, “the wicked will suffer a second death, and will perish off the face of the earth. The Daevas and the legions of darkness will already have been annihilated in a last great battle with the Yazatas; and the river of metal will flow down into hell, slaying Angara Mainyu and burning up the last vestige of wickedness in the universe” (Boyce 2001, p. 28).

⁵In Christianity, e.g., 2 Corinthians 5: 10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” Also Colossians “Anyon who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs” (Colossians 3: 25).

The Holy Qur’an opens with a reference to the “Day of Judgment” (*The Qur’an* 1:4, Abdullah Yusuf Ali).

According to Boyce (2001, p. 29), “salvation for the individual depended on the sum of their thoughts, words and deeds, and there could be no intervention, whether compassionate or capricious, by any divine Being to alter this.” In other words, when “the end” finally comes, you get no second chance. The judgment that is passed is final and you either live as an immortal in paradise on Earth, enabled by Amesha Penta (Immortal Holy One) who prepares a “mystical ‘white haoma,’”⁶ a substance which confers immortality (Boyce 2001, p. 28), or you don’t.

Thereafter men [sic] will become like the Immortals themselves, of one thought, word and deed, unaging, free from sickness, without corruption, forever joyful in the kingdom of God upon earth. For it is in this familiar and beloved world, restored to its original perfection, that, according to Zoroaster, eternity will be passed in bliss, and not in a remote insubstantial Paradise.” (Boyce 2001, p. 28)

To summarize, the Zoroastrian Master Narrative is a patriarchal eschatological frame that posits a linear evolutionary/spiritual struggle that leads to the evolution and progression of creation from simple to more complex. The progression is driven by a necessary and in the end beneficial, at least for some, cosmic conflict between the forces of good and evil, personified and (later) abstracted into pure force. Our life purpose is to choose a side in this cosmic battle and then fight it out until creation has become complex and interesting. Then, a final judgment is passed where evil is destroyed and the good folks who fought the good fight get to live happily ever after in some version of eternal paradise.

Global Penetration

Any individual with even passing familiarity with this world’s religious, spiritual, and, it should be clearly noted, secular cultural productions will recognize the ubiquitous nature of the themes identified above. The patriarchal hierarchy, for example, is at the core of the Abrahamic monotheisms, including Judaism, Islam, Christianity, (Stover & Hope 1984) and the Bahá’í Faith (Abdu’l-Bahá 1912) as well as many popular cultural productions where the “saviour” figure is inevitably a white male patriarch of some sort. Just think Star Wars (Luke Skywalker), Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, The Matrix, and so on and so forth.

The good/evil binary has also penetrated this world’s cognitive frames. As Messadie (1996, p. 74) notes, “... our Jewish, Christian, and Islamic angels and archangels, and consequently our Devil, were born” in the “Iranian Matrix.” The

⁶According to the Wikipedia entry, Haoma is a “divine plant”, with stems, roots, and branches that are tall, fragrant, *golden-green*, and easy to grow. The plant is a healing aphrodisiac that increases awareness and strength, is nourishing to the soul, and can be consumed without any negative side effects! White Haoma is probably either a special version of the plant, or a separate and sacred preparation (perhaps it is a purification of the oils) which, because of its purity and concentration, confers upon the imbiber health and immortality.

good versus evil binary is constantly rehearsed in Christian and Islamic culture. In the Bible it is personified as a serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3), a devil (Acts 5:3), and a satanic figure (Revelations 20:1-6). In Islam, the binary is an opposition between a haughty and defiant satanic figure known as Iblis (Quran 2:34, Quran 7: 11-13) and the one true and good God Allah. The binary also finds expression in the modern “Pharaoh narrative” which casts the personified evil of a Pharaoh against the transcendent good of an almighty patriarchal God (Halverson et al., 2011). We also find this binary good versus evil narrative in Judaism, a fact which seems to contradict this paper’s sourcing of the binary in Zoroastrianism. Judaism is of course older than Zoroastrianism. This apparent conflict is explained by the fact that this binary did not appear in Judaism until Rabbi Isaac ha_cohen of Castille wrote his kabbalistic doctrine of the "Treatise on the Emanations on the Left" in 1265. As Dan (2006) notes,

The formulation of the powers of evil as an independent enemy of the divine, and the description of human life as being conducted in a dualistic universe in which evil and good are in constant struggle, is the contribution of the kabbalah to Jewish worldview. There are some indications of an intensified conception of evil in the Book Bahir and in the works of the early kabbalists in Provence, but the first kabbalistic dualistic system was presented in a brief treatise written by Rabbi Isaac ben Jacob ha-Cohen, entitled *Treatise on the Emanations on the Left* in 1265 C.E.

Before the good rabbi introduced this binary, Judaism contained only only watered down, domestic notions of evil (Gilad 2018).

We do not find this Zoroastrian binary only in pre-modern religious systems. We also find elements of it embedded deeply in secular culture, in video games, movies, television, popular theatre, and so on. We find it in productions like *Star Wars* where Ahura Mazda, played by Luke Skywalker, faces off against Angra Mainyu, played by Darth Vader. In the movie, the two duke it out in cosmic battle the final apocalyptic ending of which is the destruction of the “death star” and annihilation of all those within it. On television, the popular HBO series *Game of Thrones* is a classic presentation of this ancient ideology. In this show, the good but misguided rulers of Westeros prepare to fight the undead and clearly evil “White-Walkers.” John Snow, a resurrected leader (Sayoshant) of the “good forces,” makes the all-important Zoroastrian choice in episode one of season three where he says, “I wish to fight for the side that fights for life.” In children’s books, you find Harry Potter, another resurrected Sayoshant, fighting the deceptive/evil Voldemort. In literature, you find it in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, where the forces of light, assisted by literature’s greatest underdog, Frodo, fight Mordor’s dark horde.

In addition to Zoroastrian good versus evil binary, we also find Zoroastrian notions of a linear, evolutionary, and staged creation, complete with judgment, punishment, reward, and damnation, throughout the world’s major Western religious and cultural traditions. In Christianity and its derivatives, creation starts in a beautiful garden, continues when its residents are kicked out, and ends when the “chosen ones,” the ones who successfully attain redemption, are rewarded with a final return into a new paradise, while the “cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile,

the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—...will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. (Revelation 21:8). In Islam, “those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord (*The Qur’an* 2:62) while those who have sinned will “dwell therein forever.” (*The Qur’an* 2:62). Even in the Baha’i faith, the Zoroastrian Frame is plain for all to see.

The world is established upon the foundations of reward and punishment. Knowledge and understanding have ever affirmed and will continue to affirm the reality of Paradise and Hell, for reward and punishment require their existence. Paradise signifieth first and foremost the good-pleasure of God. Whosoever attaineth His good- pleasure is reckoned and recorded among the inhabitants of the most exalted paradise and will attain, after the ascension of his soul, that which pen and ink are powerless to describe. For them that are endued with insight and have fixed their gaze upon the Most Sublime Vision, the Bridge, the Balance, Paradise, Hellfire, and all that hath been mentioned and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures are clear and manifest (Bahá’u’lláh, 2006, para. 3.11).

You find this linear, staged, judgment-laded view of humanity in secular culture as well, and in some surprising places. In science fiction, in the book *Childhood’s End*, author Arthur C. writes about aliens who come to Earth to preside over the renovating rapture of the “chosen few,” a rapture that leaves all the unworthy ones to slowly die away on a fading planet Earth. The exact same idea is found in Christian circles in the “Left Behind” books of Christian fundamentalist Tim LaHaye are clearly carriers of the Zoroastrian master story.

Modern popular culture and traditional monotheisms are not the only places you find the Zoroastrian story. You find elements of it in philosophy, in various places, for example in the concept of *Apocatastasis*, which is reconstitution/restitution/restoration to the original primordial condition. It is also found liberally salted through Western elitist/esoteric traditions where it forms the roots of various “ancient wisdom discourses” like the *prisca theologica* and *philosophia perennis* of the Renaissance, both of which are explicitly linked to “sages” such as Zoroaster (Hanegraaff 2012, p. 8). We also find it in Freemasonry and other 18th and 19th century esoteric religions, but in slightly modified. Here we find evil is both depersonified into a cosmic force *and* explicitly acknowledged as a necessary component in the evolution of society and of human growth. As one Freemason says,

You can think of nothing terrestrial without being compelled to recognize the existence of its complementary opposite. Light and darkness; good and evil; right and left; birth and death; adversity and prosperity; male and female; pleasure and pain. These are the dualisms inherent in the physical world of which we are a part. Experience of these opposites is essential for human growth. Our existence consists of perpetual movement, like chessmen, from a white square to a black and from a black to a white. These moves continually test us and form our character; we grow as a result of our responses to both good and bad conditions. For how can we say that one class of experience is better or worse than the other? Each is necessary and each complementary. (Lomas, 2010, p. 27: italics added).

Notably, Freemasons explicitly link these teachings to Egyptian and Persian roots. In Freemason's teachings, the checker board is a symbolic representation of the cosmic "balance" between good and evil. As one brother put it, the checker board represents "the Good and Evil Principles of the Egyptian and Persian creed. It is the warfare of Michael and Satan, of the Gods and Titans, of Balder and Lok; between light and shadow, which is darkness; Day and Night; Freedom and Despotism." (Pike 1871).

The same Zoroastrian narrative also finds expression in Theosophy (Blavatsky 1889), which is founded on the work of Russian aristocrat Blavatsky, where it then passes into various New Age cultures and traditions (Chajes & Huss 2016). This is also found, remarkably, in the work of F. Hegel and Marx. Hegel, a major intellectual influence on Marx, taught a dialectical binary, thesis and antithesis that led, through struggle and opposition, to an end-of-history realization of God's freedom (Hegel 2015). Hegel himself admits his is merely a "translate[ion] [from] the language of religion into that of philosophy" (Hegel 2015). Instead of Satan/Darth Vader and God/Luke Skywalker fighting the battle of good versus evil, it is a depersonalized oppositional dialectic, driven by historical "forces" (Ruder 2015) that moves us all forward towards final ~~renovation~~ restitution. In Hegel/Marx, just like in Lucas/Star Wars, just like in the Bible, two opposing forces fight it out in a class struggle, the culmination of which is either "total ruin of the contending classes" or a "revolutionary reconstitution of society." From Marx's Communist manifest we have:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. (Marx & Engels 2008).

The influence of the Zoroastrian Master Narrative on Marxist thinking is obvious. Notably, this influence extends into leftist art. Bruce Cockburn, a popular and progressive Canadian singer/songwriter, sings about the dialectical binary in his song "Rumors of Glory."

You see the extremes
Of what humans can be?
In that distance some tension's born
Energy surging like a storm
You plunge your hand in
And draw it back scorched
Beneath it's shining like
Gold but better
Rumours of glory
Bruce Cockburn

Theorizing the Hegemony

It is clear from even this brief overview that the Zoroastrian Master Narrative forms a bedrock upon which almost all of the world's current religious and cultural systems, particularly those birthed from and involved in the European colonial project, draw. A question that must arise at this point is, how did this ancient religious framework become such a pervasive part of our ancient and modern cultural/religious milieu? It is possible to suggest, as some do (Campbell 1972, 2004, Jung 1980), that because these themes appear to be "universal, they must in some way represent features of our general racial 'imagination,' permanent features of the human spirit...of the psyche" or that these "holy tales and their images are messages to the conscious mind from quarters of the spirit unknown to normal daylight consciousness" (Campbell 1972), but this is sociologically naive and completely incorrect. More reasonable explanations can be offered, particularly if we start with the fact that these beliefs do not appear out of thin air; they are necessarily and inevitably created, produced and distributed by humans. Once we realize that, the obvious questions from a sociological, psychological, historical, and gender studies perspective are, *who created the belief systems, how did they do it, how they propagate it, and why.*

Three Case Studies

We can answer these questions by looking at three case studies, Zoroastrianism, Catholicism, and the Western Tarot deck. In the case of Zoroastrianism, it was elite members of the empire who created and propagated the Zoroastrian Frame. It is true that Zoroastrianism itself was rooted in the mystical utterances of Zoroaster who lived around 1,000 BCE, but these beliefs were subsequently co-opted, modified in currently unclear ways, and turned into colonial tools of empire by elite's in the Sassanian empire, specifically the autocrat Ardashir and his high priest Tansar. Tansar was responsible, at Ardashir's behest, for writing down and modifying Zoroaster's teachings, which existed primarily as word-of-mouth teachings prior. Tansar began the process of writing down the word-of-mouth teachings when he declared Ardashir the final arbiter of the Zoroastrian doctrine, suggesting that Ardashir was "more richly endowed with virtues than the ancients...." Tansar further suggested that Ardashir was uniquely qualified to revive a faith that had "decayed" because he was a man of "true and upright judgment..." (Boyce 2001, p. 3). Once the authority of Ardashir had been proclaimed, Tansar then selected a single Zoroastrian tradition among several that were available in the region, after which he brutally and with "excessive bloodshed" (Boyce 2001, p. 103) sterilized the Zoroastrian field by suppressing all other word-of-mouth traditions that existed at the time.

"...in place of the former fraternity of regional communities, a single Zoroastrian church was created under the direct and authoritarian control of Persia; and together with this went the establishment of a single canon of Avestan text, approved and authorized by Tansar... Tansar set about his business and selected one tradition and left the rest out of the canon. And he issued this decree: The interpretation of all the

teachings of the Mazda-worshipping religion is our responsibility." (Boyce 2001, p. 103).

Why would the autocrat Ardashir claim interpretive superiority, reduce the Zoroastrian faith to a single cannon, and violently subdue competing understandings? The answer to these questions is simple. Ardashir re-created the Zoroastrian faith as an elite master narrative. He subsequently used this master narrative to consolidate ideological and temporal power, and gain domination over his enemies. He used it to build a hegemonic narrative frame, in the Gramscian sense (Hoare & Sperber 2016), or a discourse, as per Foucault (McHoul & Grace 1993). These members of the ancient Persian elites created a master narrative which provided the "sacred" beliefs and values which influenced how people think about themselves and the world and how they act in the world. He used the religion not for the good of humanity and not because he thought it reflected truth, but to control behaviour. He created this hegemonic master narrative in what I would call a **Symbol Factory**. Symbol factories are a "special instrument of violence and thought control" (Ruyle 1975, p. 11) where agents of the [Accumulating Class](#) get together to create their ideologically impregnated master narratives.

That Ardashir used Zoroastrian word-of-mouth teachings to create a discourse is made clear by Boyce when she says,

Ardashir was not only a military genius, but a man of great shrewdness and administrative talents, who was prepared to use bloodless means as well as warlike ones to establish his rule and create a new Persian empire; and one of the tools which he chose for this was religious propaganda. There can be little doubt that the priests of Persia, whose forefather had led to Zoroastrian community under the Achaemenians, felt themselves well fitted to do so again; and they plainly undertook with zeal the task of persuading their fellow Iranians that they, together with the new dynasty to which they lent their support, were more devout and orthodox, and would be truer upholders of the faith, than their Parthian predecessors had been. (Boyce 2001, pp. 101–102).

The example of Ardashir demonstrates exactly who creates hegemonic master narratives (agents of the accumulating classes) and how they do it (they do it in symbol factories). It also provides a general answer to the question, why? In short, agents of consciousness working for empire-building elites do it by co-opting available spiritual narratives, centralizing control of these narratives in the hands of elite actors and then modifying these narratives in a way that makes them suitable as ideological tools. They then violently suppress competing frames in order to establish the hegemonic domination of their system. The example of Zoroastrianism provides a precise outline of this process.

This colonization of belief systems for the purpose of empire-building and control of the masses is evident in another case study that examines the progressive, revolutionary work of Jesus Christ as he challenges and is consequently assassinated by local colonial elites (Sosteric 2020b). As with Zoroastrian beliefs, which were anti-elite to begin with (Boyce 1996), Christ was

anti-elite with a remarkably progressive mission and message. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,” he said, “because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.” (Luke 4:18). Unfortunately, Christ’s progressive messaging was a threat to elite prerogative and they had him assassinated. When that did not work to stop the spread of his progressive messaging, Roman Emperor Constantine “converted” to (really, the proper term is co-opted) Christianity and subsequently set about to control and modify (read colonize) the grass-roots Christian narrative. (Sosteric 2020b) by determining what constituted Christian canon and then by hiding the texts away from mass eyes for centuries while elite scribes edited the texts in privacy (Ehrman 2007, Sosteric 2020a). In this process, elites working in the Catholic Church re-imposed and carried forward the Zoroastrian narratives, once again using these narratives to consolidate hegemonic domination and elite rule right through to the 21st century.

Finally, you can see the bourgeois interference in the spiritual narratives of this planet in another case study, specifically in the Freemason’s creation of a Tarot propaganda device used specifically to propagate an updated Zoroastrian narrative to their own members, and to the masses of this planet (Sosteric 2014). In this case, elites working in Masonic Lodges updated the Zoroastrian narrative for a more secular, Capitalist mindset and then distributed this narrative through fanciful images of the Italian Tarot deck, creating what Decker, Depaulis and Dummet (Decker et al. 1996) said was “...the most successful propaganda campaign ever launched: not by a very long way the most important, but the most completely successful. An entire false history, and false interpretation, of the Tarot pack was concocted by the occultists; and it is all but universally believed.”

Propagation and Indoctrination

As this point, we have seen who creates the master narratives and we have a sense of how. Diving deeper, the question now becomes how have these beliefs been so successfully and surreptitiously propagated from generation to generation to the point that the world is mostly unaware of them despite their obvious existence. In order to maintain, preserve, and propagate the Zoroastrian Frame, elites set up special creative institutions, **Symbol Factories**⁷ and **Ideological Institutions**⁸ (part of the **Mechanisms of Compliance**⁹ the **Accumulating Class**¹⁰ used to produce, reproduce, maintain, and distribute an ideology amenable to their [Regime of Accumulation](#)).

Symbol factories provide the symbolic/archetypal templates for narratives aimed at thought and behavioural modification. Symbol factories, which include institutions like Freemasonry which created the modern ideological tarot deck (Decker et al. 1996) and the esoteric or internal parts of the Catholic Church,

⁷https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Symbol_Factory.

⁸https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Ideological_Institution.

⁹https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Mechanisms_of_Compliance.

¹⁰https://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/index.php/Accumulating_Class.

where ritual and dogma are created and the bible is edited to be in line with elite prerogative (Ehrman 2007), do this by reviving, restoring, reviving, reproducing, updating, and distributing the ancient Zoroastrian narrative frame, or some particular version of it. This is exactly what happened when Ardashir used his high priests inside a temple (i.e., symbol factory) he funded to help him co-opt and refine the elite master narrative. It is exactly what Emperor Constantine did when he created the Catholic Church and co-opted the Christian narrative. This is also what happened with the Italian Tarot deck which was brought into the Freemason's symbol factory (i.e., their masonic lodges) and subsequently recreated as a tool to distribute the Zoroastrian narrative. These should not be controversial statements. Freemasons and other elites are explicit about the transhistorical existence of "identical doctrines" that have existed throughout the course of ancient and modern civilization (Lomas 2017) and explicit about the need to periodically revive, restore, and "vindicate" the ancient teachings. (Blavatsky 1889). As one Freemason put it:

In all periods of the world's history, and in every part of the globe, secret orders and societies have existed outside the limits of the official churches for the purpose of teaching what are called "the Mysteries": for imparting to suitable and prepared minds certain truths of human life, certain instructions about divine things, about the things that belong to our peace, about human nature and human destiny, which it was undesirable to publish to the multitude who would but profane those teachings and apply the esoteric knowledge that was communicated to perverse and perhaps to disastrous ends (Wilmschurst 1922, pp. 22–23).

Wilmschurt is quite clear. Symbol factories ("secret orders and societies") produce, reproduce, and revise the narrative through the centuries.

On the other hand, we have **Ideological Institutions**. Ideological institutions are different than symbol factories in as much as they do not modify or recreate narratives built in symbol factories but instead specialize in distributing, via symbol, story and drama, the hegemonic master narrative onto unwitting, and usually unwilling, victims. You can see the use of symbol and drama in ideological institutions throughout the esoteric and exoteric fabric of Western religion. For example, freemasonry, which functions as both a symbol factor and, during regular meetings, an esoteric-religious ideological institution, codes the Zoroastrian binary in the symbolism of their First-degree tracing board. The tracing board shows a "chessboard of life" with black and white squares indicating that the binary between good and evil, black and white, is a natural and foundational part of creation, upon which Freemasons build their advancement. Masons also freely and openly admit the use drama to reinforce the basic archetypes, engaging in ritual enactments designed to convey and reinforce specific ideas. Cicero and Cicero (2004, p. 108) of the Golden Dawn freely admit the use of drama when they say "Then, just as now, ritualists employed theatrical props, special effects, symbolism, gestures, speeches, and other elements of performance to have the greatest visual and emotive impact on their audience..." Symbols and drama are also used in exoteric ideological institutions. The Church, an exoteric-religious ideological institution, holds weekly dramas designed to

convey key Zoroastrian archetypes. In addition, exoteric secular ideological institutions, like Hollywood, use highly sophisticated dramatic presentations of the Zoroastrian narrative (Star Wars, the Matrix, Harry Potter, etc.) to convey, sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly, ancient Zoroastrian archetypes.

Note that symbol factories and ideological institutions may be subdivided into esoteric and exoteric institutions, and religious and secular institutions.

Esoteric institutions, which are quite common in the West (Versluis 2007), are elite institutions with elite membership, closed to the general public and whose teachings are in general hidden from view.

Exoteric institutions, on the other hand, are public facing institutions, whose doctrines are publicly available.

Religious institutions create and distribute religious style narratives and include institution whereas **secular institutions** are institutions which create secular type narratives.

Figures 1 and 2 provide a preliminary classification of some of extant symbol factories and ideological institutions.

Figure 1. *Preliminary Classification of Some of Extant Symbol Factories and Ideological Institutions*

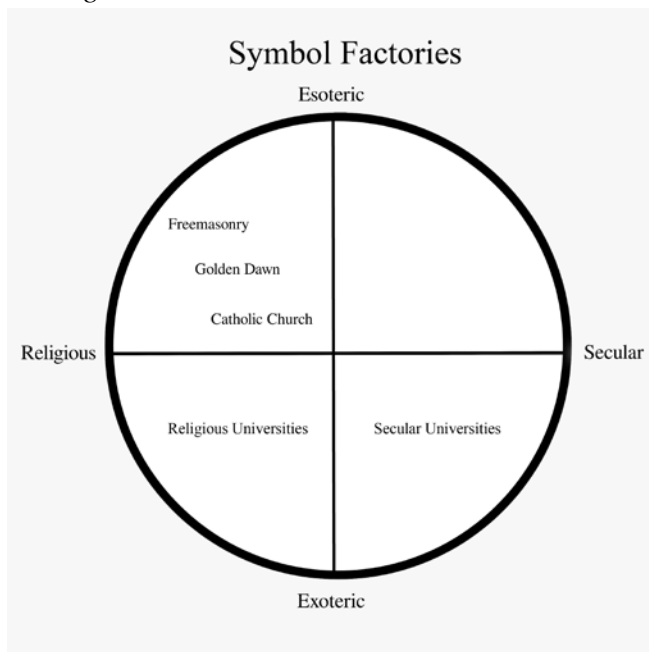
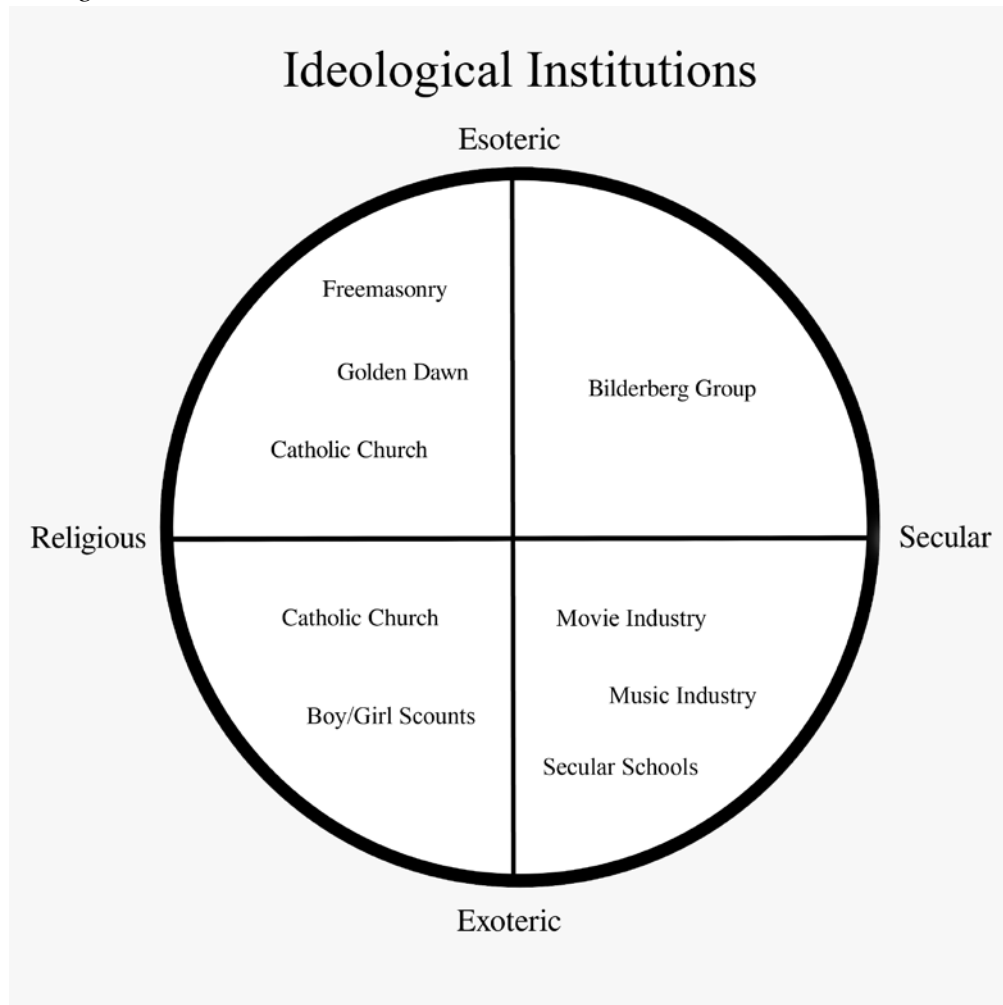


Figure 2. *Preliminary Classification of Some of Extant Symbol Factories and Ideological Institutions*



A few comments are in order.

First of all, note that most symbol factories are esoteric, for obvious reasons. It makes no sense to reveal ideological manipulation of planetary narratives to the public. The exception here is universities where elite narratives like Social Darwinism¹¹, or business narratives that privilege and elevate “entrepreneurs” as a special breed of humans, are consolidated and distributed.

Second, note that some institutions function as both symbol factory and ideological institution. Freemasonry, for example, renovates ancient master

¹¹Social Darwinism is a set of ideologies (rooted in the theories of elite conservative social scientists and philosophers like Herbert Spencer, Francis Galton, and Thomas Malthus) that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which applied Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection to human society. The basic premise of social Darwinism is that the strong or fit should thrive and multiply, while the weak or unfit should not, an idea often used to justify political conservatism, imperialism, racism, and laissez-faire economics (Hofstadter 1992). It was not a direct extension of Darwin's ideas about biological evolution, but rather a controversial application of his theories to social, economic, and political issues.

narratives and also distributes these narratives in their regular initiatory and social gathering.

Third, note that in modern complex societies, many different types of ideological institutions are deployed to distribute elite ideological narratives. This includes, in the secular categories, the many corporate media outlets that distribute ideological content, the K12 and post-secondary education systems elite institutions like the secretive Bilderberg Group (Anon 2019) whose agenda is to “bolster consensus” (read indoctrinate individuals) around free-market capitalism. In the esoteric-religious category we find various secretive organizations, like Freemasonry, the Golden Dawn, and the internal, esoteric operations of the Catholic Church. In the exoteric-religious category we find organizations like the esoteric Catholic Church (the one on display in Sunday go-to-meetings), organizations like the Boy/Girl Scouts, and so on.

Why Do They Do It?

At this point, we have tentative answers to most of the questions posed by the existence, persistence, and ubiquity of the Zoroastrian Frame. We know who creates the narratives (i.e., members, allies, or wannabe members of the accumulating class), how did they do it (they use symbol factories) and how they impose it (they use ideological institutions). We also have a general answer as to why. They do it to help maintain and reproduce their Regime of Accumulation from generation to generation. A specific question remains at this point, however, and that question is, how exactly does the elite narrative reproduce the System.

Compliance and Submission

There are several ways the elite narrative controls thought and modifies behaviour in the direction of System support and maintenance. Number one, the Zoroastrian narrative **constitutes individuals as passive**, compliant, fearful, and primed to submit and worship designated (usually white) authority figures. In the Western world, in Churches, in the media, and even on Google, the archetypal image of authority is God, an older, abusive, white, male figure who issues commandments and provides final behavioural arbitration. This core archetypes of the Zoroastrian frame provide the emotional and psychological anchors for deference to imperial, colonial male authority the world over, whether that be the “man” in the home, the king of the castle, the principal at the school, the CEO at the corporation, or the president of the country.

The Zoroastrian framing, which is an incredibly violent frame (Ellens 2001), also encourages, enables, and justifies emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual violence. If somebody does something wrong, if they do not conform or perform to expectations, if they commit a crime against property, we are primed not only to engage in harm but also to feel ethically and spiritually justified in that harm. Why not? Justice, judgment, and punishment are written into the ontological foundation of the cosmos. The function of these archetypes to encourage, enable,

and justify violence is most obvious in the case of the Western legal system which invokes concepts of justice as it engages in violence against others. It is also visible in our home life, where intimate partners lash out in retribution every time their partners engages in a “wrong” action, and where parents engage in all sorts of damaging (Sosteric & Ratkovic 2016) emotional and psychological acts of violence as a way of “correcting” their children’s behaviour.

In addition to constituting individuals as passive and compliant, and in addition to justifying the penal/corrective use of force and violence, a violence which facilitates maintenance of their regime of accumulation, Zoroastrian archetypes also enable a particular orientation to the world, one that primes individuals to struggle, strive, and, most importantly, work hard and long hours. Whereas before Zoroaster, cosmic *cooperation* was seen as necessary to “Maintain the world according to asha”¹² (Boyce 2001, p. 26), after Zoroaster “perfection” was the goal and could be attained by passing through several thousand years of cosmic struggle, conflict, and strife. Previous pagan and indigenous frames encouraged less work and less struggle because the modelled goal of life was cooperative maintenance and not unending struggle and change. Following the Zoroastrian modification, one needed variously to struggle, strive, and work hard to prove one’s worth, and idea that becomes clearly formulated and highly significant, as Weber clearly pointed (Weber 1904), to the development of psychological and emotional frames conducive to capitalist exploitation within capitalist economic organizations (Simmons & Mills 2005).

In addition to constituting individuals as passive, compliant, worker bees, and in addition to justifying the penal/corrective use of violence, Zoroastrian archetypes also justify and enable imperial wars and colonial expansions. The Zoroastrian frame constitutes the world and our life purpose as a fight between good and evil. This framing allows for easier manipulation and weaponization of the masses. For example, Kennedy used the Zoroastrian framework to invoke public support for the 1960s and 70s NASA space program in the U.S.A. The program was driven forward, at least in the public mind, by a desperate competition fuelled by a Zoroastrian binary between “good” U.S.A. and “evil” Russia (Wall 2011). The frame also provides justification for colonial expansion. Rulers who have imperialist ambitions can (and still do) use the Zoroastrian frame to paint their opponents as evil and deserving of destruction (Sosteric 2018b). So it was the case the European colonizers who used Zoroastrian archetypes to motivate and justify genocides in order to steal the lands of the “godless savages.” So it is, currently, with modern colonizers justifying war, genocide, and colonial theft by painting their opponents as evil. We can see this strategy played out in real-time as former president of the United States Donald Trump recklessly paints anybody and everybody who opposes his Capitalist agenda (#BLM protesters, liberal “elites,” cultural warriors, and all who oppose unfettered accumulation) with the dark side of the Zoroastrian binary (Sosteric 2017b), thereby weaponizing his base against them.

¹²“Asha” refers to a cosmic order of goodness, righteousness, truth, etc. In original schemas, asha was maintained with cooperation, not war. For a detailed overview of the term (see Schlerath and Skjærø 1987).

In addition to constituting individuals as passive and compliant, enabling violence, shaping humans into easily exploitable worker bees, and enabling colonial expansion and weaponization of the masses, Zoroastrian archetypes also justify and enable elitism. These archetypes enable the creation and refinement of a distinction between those “chosen,” worthy, or fit, those who are smart and who fight on the side of good, and those who are not chosen and who do not deserve reward because they are evil or bad in some way. This distinction can be used to *justify the inequality and privilege that is at the heart of the elites regime of accumulation*. If you are rich, it is because you deserve it in some fashion. If you are poor, that is just part of God’s corrective lesson plan. Note, these archetypes can also be used internally, with a slight twist, to justify elite actions to themselves. Madam Blavatsky, for example, justifies elitism and secrecy by comparing the members of mass society to servile Simia. "Society in its servile condition suggests to the intelligent observer of its mimicry a kinship between the Simia and human beings even more striking than is exhibited in the external marks pointed out by the great anthropologist."(Blavatsky 2016, p. 42). A particularly pithy statement of this elite posturing is provided by Freemason Lomas who encourages the ruling class to rule while at the same time providing Zoroastrian justification for their exclusionary and elitist rule.



Non-initiates live from their gross senses. They live at their circumference using reason, cognition, and workaday intelligence. Initiates have a revolutionary inward experience that transforms their consciousness. It is one thing to be the top of one's class, but quite another to be moved to a higher class altogether (Lomas 2010, p. 21).

From the “Lecture of the second degree of Freemasonry” (*The Lecture of the Second Degree of Freemasonry* 2005) we learn that it was masons who dragged the “savages” from their dark hiding places and “instructed” them in the ways of civilization. Similarly, members of Princeton’s Skull and Bones society refer to the uninitiated as “barbarians,” (Robbins 2000) less evolved, less rationale, and less capable than the top of their class “chosen ones.” You can see this dismissive

and elitist framing of the grossly sensual barbarians as clear as day in the Golden Dawn Tarot card entitled The World.¹³

Finally, Zoroastrian archetypes enable power and privilege by teaching, at least in the hallways of esoteric ideological institutions, a remarkable moral relativism. Casting the material universe as a Zoroastrian chessboard where “light and darkness; good and evil; right and left; birth and death; adversity and prosperity; male and female; pleasure and pain” exist in a “complementary” opposition (Lomas 2010, p. 28), Freemasons learn not only that they must accept when evil things happen, but they learn that they themselves can also act on either side of the great divide and still be aligned and connected to the “Blazing Star” buried deep within.

New brethren sometimes ask, ‘It is not our duty to keep to the white squares and avoid the black? The answer is No. It is quite beyond your power to do so, for every good has the seed of evil in it, and every evil contains germs of good. This does not mean that you must prefer evil to good, darkness to light, or court adversity for its own sake. It merely means that the joys and sorrows, the lights and shades of mundane existence must each be accepted with equal thanks....It is the same with our standards of conduct, our ethics. We label our actions good or bad, but the distinction is an arbitrary convention. The ideal of one age becomes a fault in the next....Our distinctions of good and bad, true and false, are nothing more than the personal or collective view of our society at that moment. *To the clearer sight of the Initiate things are neither one nor the other, they are just facts of life needing no qualifying.*..(Lomas 2010, pp. 28–30).

In other words, ethics are relative and actions, good or bad, just are. This framing teaches elites not only to passively accept the “trials and tribulations of life” their workers face as part of the “master plan,” but also gives them license to do bad things, or to allow others to do bad things because, after all, it is all part of a checker-board cosmic balancing act. Such a framing is useful to captains of industry and government actors because it allows them the ethical flexibility to cast their actions and the actions of their brethren no matter how vile (for example, exploitation of child labour, toxic dumping, etc.) as a part of cosmic balancing act over which they are ultimately merely players. It is a convenient ethical fiction inserted to justify unethical behaviour in service to profit. It is deeply ironic that the Zoroastrian binary is used in this way, considering Zoroaster’s original anti-elitism, and considering the fact that Freemasons tell themselves they are an ethical institutions. As any Freemason will tell you, “Freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols.” Though, after the above, perhaps a better definition would be Freemasonry is a peculiar system of amorality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols designed to enable greed.

¹³Note that a typical Catholic Church calls the place where the “barbarians” sit the nave of the Church. The word “nave” is also used to refer to the hub of a wheel. Is the nave of the Church then the hub of a loosely organized set of ideological institutions designed to propagate ideology and indoctrinate citizens into their appropriate social class positions?

Research Directions

There is a lot more that needs to be said about archetypes, narratives, stories, drama, how elites use these to control the masses, and what we can do about it. The purpose of this paper is to identify the Zoroastrian master narrative and its key archetypes, and to introduce the concepts of symbol factory and ideological institutions to help frame elite ideological activity. Hopefully, this paper has contributed in a modest fashion to elevating our understanding of religion, human spirituality, and its intersection with elite activities. However, this paper really just functions as a foundation for a much larger, desperately needed research program. I would like to close this paper by outlining some of the possible lines of research, and by commenting on the relation of this paper to the important work of decolonizing the study of religion and spirituality.

Building upon the recognition of the reality and significance of symbol factories, one line of historical research would trace the emergence of symbol factories as such and also trace the emergence and evolution of elite-controlled spiritual narratives as they are created in symbol factories and pass through ideological institutions to be propagated and modified into the ideological and cultural institutions of this world. There is some work in this area. Akbar (2020), for example, traces the penetration of the Zoroastrian Narrative into Islam, and Hanneegraf (2013) provides some sense of the transmission of these ideas as they pass through elite Greek and Renaissance culture into modern esoteric narratives, but much more work needs to be done identifying the specific institutions and tracing their ideological modifications. Consider the Zoroastrian concept of the Saosyant, for example. In the original teachings of Zoroaster, a Saosyant was any highly ethical, spiritually advanced person (“good men and leaders of the people”) devoted to teaching and transforming the world in preparation for Frashorkerti (Boyce 1996, p. 235). Later, this understanding was turned into the doctrine of personal saviour, a single individual tasked by God to singly handily transform the world (Boyce 1996, Dhalla 1938). According to this modified belief, a “man who is better than a good man” (Maneck 1997), a greater man than even Zoroaster (Boyce 1996, p. 234), will come, crown the work of Zoroaster, and arouse humanity for their part in the final struggle. The Saosyant, who will enjoy a miraculous conception, will wake people up and help transit them to a final stage of creation, the Separation (Boyce 2001). Why this modification? Why the suppression of the idea that multiple grass-roots experts might emerge? Why the focus on a single saosyant saviour? This, I think, for two reasons.

One, because it facilitates the constitution of humanity as passive sheeple by casting them as waiting for a saviour to fix everything. Rather than opening the door to Saosyant status to anybody, thereby potentially creating an army of spiritual educators bent on transforming the world, these modifications slam that door shut and lay the salvation of the planet quite unrealistically on the shoulders of only one person, who will never come. Suggesting that anybody can be a Saosyant creates a much different eschatological expectation and motivation than suggesting that we must wait for “the one.” It is the difference between passively sitting and praying for the saviour to come versus actively participating in the

work of waking the people up and transforming reality—not an insignificant difference. These days this modification has become a principle archetype distributed by modern secular ideological institutions. Thus we have the saosyant Harry Potter, Neo (the “one”) from *the Matrix*, the saosyant John Snow from *Game of Thrones* and, in a considerably lighter and more mocking vein, “The Guy” from the movie *SkyKids 3D: Game Over*, just to name a few.

Another reason for the modification from multiple grass-roots spiritual experts devoted to transforming the world to a single chosen one may be that this modification facilitates the consolidation, exercise, and even abuse of power. Priming the “barbarian” masses to expect a saviour primes them to accept people as saviours. Those with charismatic or financial resources can exploit this priming with intention and purpose by claiming themselves to be the saviours. This occurs not only with cult leaders (Kohl 2010, Miscavige Hill 2013) but also, notably, politicians. Hitler compared himself to Jesus and said he was chosen to lead the revolution (Kraft 2016). More recently, former U.S. president Donald Trump claimed to be “the chosen one” on international television (Cillizza 2019). Claiming to be the chosen on gives certain elites power over people primed by the Zoroastrian “chosen one” archetype.

In addition to the historical work of tracing the emergence of symbol factories and ideological institutions, and tracing the elite’s hegemonic framing, scholars also need to query their own uncritical adoption and propagation of the frame. For example, some psychologists, psychiatrists (Sosteric 2014), and anthropologists (Greenberg 2023) believe the tarot to be a useful tool for psychological growth and even cognitive decolonization. However, as should be clear by now, it is not. It is a tool designed specifically to indoctrinate. Thinking otherwise enables continued propagation of the narrative (Sosteric et al. 2023).

In addition to the historical work of tracing the emergence of symbol factories and ideological institutions, tracing the elite’s hegemonic framing, and calling into question our own naive propagation of the Zoroastrian frame, scholars also need to identify and trace resistance to these frames. The Zoroastrian frame is powerful and penetrative, but also contested, and this contest needs to be elevated and examined. For example, Margot Adler casts Wicca as a self-conscious attempt to recover authenticity lost as elites colonize human spirituality (Adler 1986). Similarly, Rice (1998) Strong and Strong (2017), Deloria (2003), and many others note the subversion of indigenous spirituality by colonial actors and call for, or point to, the recovery of ancient spiritual authenticity, which is a call to contest the dominant Zoroastrian frame. Christ’s opposition to the hypocrites who misrepresent and misused Jewish law (Sosteric 2020b) could be seen as attempting to recover a lost authenticity. Even Zoroaster saw himself as recovering a lost authenticity, putting himself squarely against elite hypocrisy, “outwards observance,” rituals, casuistry, and sacrificial offerings and pointing towards a spirituality “based mainly upon the heart” and aiming at “righteous conduct.” (Dhalla 1938, p. 38). It is a deep irony among many deep ironies that the teachings of an individual who set himself against elite hypocrisy should come to be so central to their hegemonic regime. Finally, I myself am in the process of

developing an alternative to the elite hegemonic frame that currently dominates this planet which I call the *Triumph of Spirit Archetype System* (Sosteric 2021)



In addition to historical research, we also need to do challenging psychological research. In particular, there is the question of the actual psychological, emotional, and physical impact of Zoroastrian narrative on the mental, emotional, and physical health and well-being of individuals victimized by it. In order to understand that impact, we propose the notion of Toxic Socialization (Sosteric & Ratkovic 2016). Toxic Socialization is a socialization process rooted in the Zoroastrian Hegemonic Master Narrative. It is intentionally designed by agents of the accumulating class in order to undermine human potential, disable the body's ability to act independently, and disengage us from transformative spiritual practices (Sosteric 2018a) with the goal of creating compliant cogs in the System. A toxic socialization process is a socialization process characterized by six components: psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical **violence**, profound **neglect** of one's Seven Essential Needs (Sosteric & Ratkovic 2020), **chaos** in the home environment, **parentification** of one or more children (because adults cannot function adequately as parents because of the damage they incurred), **indoctrination** (with some version of the Zoroastrian Frame), and **distortion/destruction of healthy family attachments**. As we point out in our paper, this process, which we all experience to one degree or another, does profound damage to the body and mind. It leads to all sorts of psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual dysfunction. The damage diminishes our human potential and ultimately, and as intended, turns us all into compliant and enslaved cogs in the elite's toxic regime, cogs which, through their own acts of violence, neglect, and indoctrination of others, help the elites reproduce the regime. Research specifically focused on the components of toxic socialization and the

impact of this on human health, well-being, our ability to think independently, and our ability to make spiritual connections is sorely needed.

Challenging psychological research also involves coming up with new psychological paradigms. Dated but still highly influential psychological theories, like Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation and need, or Bowlby's horrifically inadequate theory of attachment, are, with their sexist prescriptions and highly individualistic notions of striving and "self" actualization, are rooted and reflective of the colonial elite master narratives. These theories need to be updated (Sosteric & Ratkovic 2022). It should be noted that there is a shift in this direction. Philip Zimbardo, famous for his prison experiments, recently realized that people following orders and blindly fitting into violent roles do so not because of personal deficiencies or some deeply buried "evil" core, but because of a system of complex and powerful forces that create "the Situation" which facilitates the evil action (Zimbardo 2007). As Zimbardo says "...most psychologists have been insensitive to the deeper sources of power that inhere in the political, economic, religious, historic, and cultural matrix that defines situations and gives them legitimate or illegitimate existence." (Zimbardo, 2007, p. x). Hopefully, this paper has sensitized us to the "deeper sources of power that inhere" and given interested researchers a basic template for describing, understanding, and researching these "complex and powerful forces."

In addition to the above psychological concerns, there are also humanistic and transpersonal questions that need to be addressed. Humanistic and Transpersonal psychology are schools that examine mystical experience, transcendence, "spiritual intelligence," and other questions related to personal development, personal fulfillment, existential meaning, and human spirituality. Within these schools, there is an awareness of the power of "archetypes," myths, and even mystical experience to determine human understanding and human behaviour (Jayanti 1988, Semetsky 2000, Vaughn & Neuberg 2019), and to heal and transform (Bidney 2004, Bien 2004, Mitha 2018, Rahtz et al. 2017, Vuckovic et al. 2010); however, there is limited to no awareness of the agenda-driven penetration of the accumulating class into the mythological and archetypal field of the planet and how this penetration might impact, interfere, and undermine our understanding and practice of human spirituality. Given their focus on human spirituality, it should go without saying that understanding the agenda driven manipulation of religion and spirituality undertaken by agents of the accumulation class is important.

Humanistic and Transpersonal psychologies are not the only sources of positive analysis of human spirituality. Spiritual masters and others (Emerson, 1950) have for centuries been pointing out the positive psychological, behaviour, social, and spiritual outcomes of a properly practised authentic spirituality. In our more modern times, limited research has tagged everything from pure cosmic bliss (Kacela 2006, Watts 1973) through epiphany and enlightenment (Bidney 2004, Bucke 2006) to enhanced creativity (Ikbal 2000), enhanced intelligence, and enhanced psychological function (Hanes 2012) as outcomes of authentic spiritual practice. If we assume, for the moment, that these positive outcomes of spiritual practice have been tainted and suppressed by elite interference and toxic

socialization, we might well ask where the human species might be right now, spiritually speaking if we had more clearly understood and identified their interference earlier, and somehow launched a more practical and effective resistance.

Speaking of our failure to properly understand human spirituality, and launch a proper resistance, the next line of questioning becomes “Why?” Why do we not have a better understanding of the nature of human spirituality and the consequences of elite interference. Speaking for sociologists, it is true that we have, since at least Karl Marx, identified the ideological nature of religion; however, we have failed to understand the full significance of ideological institutions and symbol factories and we have failed to properly interrogate human spirituality. Instead, we have sidelined the “mystical” aspects of human spirituality (Sosteric 2017a) and focused on the ecclesiastical components of “religious” institutions (Perry 2020). Given the critical nature of sociology and the context provided by this paper, this oversight is surprising, to say the least. The question then is, why did it happen? We might point to the belief systems of our major sociological figures as one potentially fruitful avenue of investigation. Both Foucault (Carrette 2000) and Berger (2011), major figures in the analysis of religion and ideological discourse, avoided critical discussion of religious institutions. Both Foucault (Carrette 2000) and Berger, who had aspirations to the Lutheran Priesthood (Berger 2011), grew up rooted in Catholic/Zoroastrian theology. They may have accepted the basic themes (i.e., good versus evil) as existential truths and therefore been disinclined to examine them through a critical lens. Other sociologists may simply reject the study of religious beliefs and human spirituality as irrelevant nonsense in a world of presumed secularizing modernity (Bruce 2002). Alternatively, it is also possible that there has been political interference in the academy. It may be the case that sociological attention has been deliberately turned from careful examination of religious belief systems and human spirituality for fear that if sociologists were to take a closer look, they would easily see through the curtain, thereby exposing the manipulative Gremlins playing on their global chessboard. Here I would simply point to Elkin’s first-person account of the “murder” of humanistic psychology (Elkins 2009) as an indication of this possibility. As Elkins points out in his analysis, Humanistic Psychology was well on its way to demonstrating the significance, potential, and importance of authentic spirituality to heal, enlighten, and fundamentally transform humanity. Consequently, it was deliberately destroyed by elite actors before its findings could lead too far into spaces uncomfortable and unwelcoming of elite manipulations. Did this happen in sociology? Despite early interest in the mystical aspects of human spirituality (Garrett 1975), where sociologists deliberately turned from a more focused analysis? This is not an unreasonable position to take, especially when considering the possibility that elites have suppressed authentic human spirituality unmediated because it is a decisive and easily discernible threat to the status quo (Sosteric 2018a, 2020b). It is so threatening, in fact, that members of the accumulating class have, over the centuries, poured incalculably vast amounts of wealth and resources into symbol factories, ideological institutions, and the suppressive efforts these represent, for

the express purpose of mitigating and erasing the terrifying (to them) threat to their system that is posed by informed critical analysis and an authentic spirituality unmediated by elite actors.

Finally, it is important to note here that the research project outlined here is fundamentally an anti-colonial research project. Indigenous spiritualities the world over have been suppressed, corrupted, and outright erased by colonial agents of the Christian Churches in what Clark calls an “African spiritual holocaust” (Clark 2012), but which is really a brutal planet-wide effort focused on erasing all traces of indigenous spiritual understanding (Barbeau 1915, Deloria 2003, 2006, Laughlin & Rock 2014, Rice 1998, Some 1994, Strong & Strong 2017) and replacing it with their alternative versions—similar to what Ardashir did with the Zoroastrian teachings. We see this quite clearly in Sioux (Rice 1998) and Huron/ Wyandot spirituality, for example, whose original creation myths represented a highly supportive and co-operative creation process, but which later absorbed colonialist Zoroastrian concepts, like the patriarchal and authoritarian concept of the Great Spirit (Barbeau 1914, Barbeau 1915, Irwin 1990) and concepts of justice, judgment, personal failure and sin, cosmic good versus evil, and final judgment (Parker 1913). In the context of a failing global ecosystem, identifying Zoroastrian impositions, recovering Indigenous spirituality, and incorporating its insights into a modern human spirituality seems like an important, nay critical, project.

Conclusion

The... world will need to decide whether it wishes to change this destructive story and its vicious core metaphors, or continue to wreak increasing psychospiritual havoc upon itself until the metaphor becomes so pervasive that we will all feel relieved with the impending prospect of a final cataclysmic Armageddon, closing out our history. Does this seem far-fetched? It is the palpable vision of the Zionist Christian Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, of the Islamic terrorists, and can it not be of the Israeli Zionist who would rather fight than switch? Such folk are serious and sincere about their vision and are quite sure they are closer to God’s truth than any of the rest of us who seek spiritual authenticity and religious integrity and peace. The metaphor of cosmic evil and violence has taken over their center (Ellens 2001, pp. 3–5).

This paper has provided an examination of elite ideology. In particular, this paper has identified the source of “perennial” elite spiritual ideology in the Zoroastrian Master Narrative, which is essentially a collection of easily identified and globally familiar archetypal codings created in symbol factories and propagated through the world’s secular and religious ideological institutions by elites who use their “perennial” ideology to manipulate mass behaviour and justify and excuse the actions that facilitate, power, privilege, and accumulation. After identifying this frame, introducing the terms symbol factory and ideological institution, providing three cases studies to help flesh out understanding, and briefly examining the deleterious impact of toxic socialization on individual well-being, the paper identified several lines of research that scholars need to undertake. The research agenda here is quite large, but of primary importance. Humans are

meaning makers and the meaning they make are critical for understanding human potential and well-being, not only of humans themselves but of the entire planet. Elites have exploited this under the cover of darkness for centuries. It is long past the day time for us to expose their activities and enlighten ourselves so we can take back the symbol and meaning making function for ourselves and save the planet, as Zoroaster and others would have us do.

With that said, I would like to end this paper by saying that the Zoroastrian Frame has to be replaced. A new meta-narrative, a new meaningful framing, is need. A new meaning system that encourages authentic independent will, free thought, peaceful co-existence, and authentic mystical/spiritual experience is required if this planet is going to be saved from the looming ecological, political, and psychological catastrophes wrought by the hegemonic supremacy of the elite bred Zoroastrian Frame. Reforming humanity's belief systems may seem like a radical call to some, but this is similar to earlier calls for the re-enchantment of science (Griffin 1988, Laszlo 2006), and also reminiscent of Comte's recognition of the importance of meaning and belief, and his unfortunately quite boring attempt to bring "positive" religion to humanity (Comte 1852). Of course, reforming human archetypes and human religion will not be an easy task by any means. It will require not only the creation of a creative and meaningful new narrative framing, but the immediate and concentrated participation of artists, actors, writers, musicians, academics, priests, gurus, and others involved in the creation and dissemination of human knowledge and human culture. I myself have taken a tentative step in this direction with the creation of what I call the *Triumph of Spirit Archetype System* (TOSAS). The TOSAS provides a set of progressive, emancipatory, and empowering archetypes that emphasis collective responsibility, collective work, and an evolutionary eschatology which we all, and not just the chosen few, must participate in. This archetypal system, introduced in the article "Imaginal research for unlearning mastery Divination with Tarot as a decolonizing methodology, NOT.

Authentic paths towards decolonization" (Sosteric et al. 2023), is certainly not the final word on ideological, archetypal, narrative, or spiritual reform, but it is my hope that it and this paper may jump start a deeper and more meaningful discussion vis a vis human spirituality, archetypes, meaning, and what we can all do to help save the planet.

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