

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

Superficially, it appears that humans enjoy a wide variety of spiritual and religious traditions. In fact, the vast majority of human belief systems are rooted in the same ancient Persian soil. This article explores the ancient roots of our “modern” secular and spiritual beliefs, demonstrates their ideological character, briefly examines the emotional, psychological, and spiritual toll, and outlines a course of research for those interested in bringing additional sophistication and depth to the sociological, psychological, historical, and political study of human spirituality and human religion. The paper introduces several terms into the lexicon, including Symbol Factories, Ideological Institutions, and Toxic Socialization. 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, 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 a priest/prophet by the name of Zoroaster (a.k.a. Zarathustra), who was active 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 person's 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. Zoroastrian tenets also penetrate deep into 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 and control of the unwashed and exploitable masses.

Origin and Contours of the Zoroastrian Master Narrative

Zoroaster himself 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 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 on cosmology, eschatology, worship, and ritual developed.

Scanning the system as presented by Boyce we can identify several familiar themes that together constitute what we might call the Zoroastrian Master Narrative or Zoroastrian Frame.

A Patriarchal hierarchy: In what Iranian scholar Mary Boyce calls a “startling departure from accepted beliefs” of the time, Zoroaster 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 (and it is always a “he”) forces of good. This figure was invented by Zoroaster. Prior to Zoroaster, 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. Prior to Zoroaster, “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 Messadieu (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.”

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

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

21 This eschatological belief in an end-times denouement and transition to
 22 utopia is, again, a dramatic and significant shift in beliefs. Whereas before
 23 Zoroaster cosmic *cooperation* was seen as necessary to “Maintain the world
 24 according to asha”¹ (Boyce, 2001: 26), after Zoroaster, “perfection” would be
 25 attained, but only by passing through several thousand years of cosmic struggle
 26 and conflict.

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

37 **A Cosmic Choice:** If there is going to be a “mix,” we are going to need
 38 some things to throw into the mixture. These “things,” as it turns out, are
 39 humans. The presentation of the cosmic binary leads to the conceptualization
 40 of humans on a cosmic battlefield/checker-board where they are faced with a
 41 cosmic choice—either work on the side of good or on the side of evil. The
 42 choice that humans have to make is prefigured in Zoroastrian doctrine by

¹“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).

1 Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, both of whom make a choice to be what they
 2 are. One being chooses “righteousness” and goes on to do all good things,
 3 while the other chooses falsehood and goes on to do all bad things. As Boyce
 4 (2001: 10) notes, “An essential element in this revelation is that the two primal
 5 Beings each made a deliberate choice ... between good and evil, an act which
 6 prefigures the identical choice which every man [sic] must make for himself in
 7 this life.”

8 **Judgment, Justice, Punishment, and Reward:** Logically, given the
 9 necessity of evil in the mix, and the positive long term outcome of mixture (i.e.
 10 utopia), one might expect that those who “choose the dark side” would be
 11 allowed to join in the festivities that occur when “mixture” is complete. As it
 12 turns out, even though everybody makes a choice to play on a specific side, and
 13 even though the mix requires the dialectical opposition for it to proceed, there
 14 is a right choice and a wrong choice. The right choice, which leads to reward,
 15 is to side with the good God and fight in his war. The wrong choice, which
 16 leads to ruin, is to side with Angra Mainyu and do bad things. It helps with the
 17 mix if you make this choice; however, if you make this wrong choice, when
 18 you die, you are judged, punished, and condemned. The judgment occurs as
 19 you traverse a bridge of souls, the so-called **Bridge of the Separator**. On this
 20 bridge, souls face a tribunal of three celestial judges. These judges hold the
 21 **scales of justice** upon which are “weighed the soul’s thoughts, words, and
 22 deeds, the good on one side, the bad on the other.” (Boyce, 2001, p. 27) Once
 23 weighed, the soul is judged and rewarded or punished based on whatever side
 24 of the scale weighs the heaviest. Boyce once again notes the shift from
 25 previous beliefs when she says that Zoroaster takes an earlier less moralistic
 26 pagan belief in the transition between death and life makes it into a robust
 27 process of **judgment, justice, punishment** and **reward** based on ethical
 28 achievements, with dire cosmic consequences.²

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

²In 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).

1 resemble a garden in spring....” In the end, good and evil will be no more, and
2 the Gods and man will be together “restored to its original perfection...”

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

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

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

22 According to Boyce (2001, p. 29), “salvation for the individual depended
23 on the sum of their thoughts, words and deeds, and there could be no
24 intervention, whether compassionate or capricious, by any divine Being to alter
25 this.” In other words, when “the end” finally comes, you get no second chance.
26 The judgment that is passed is final and you either live as an immortal in
27 paradise on Earth, enabled by Amesha Penta (Immortal Holy Ones) who
28 prepares a “mystical ‘white haoma,’”³ a substance which confers immortality
29 (Boyce, 2001, p. 28), or you don’t.

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

35 To summarize, the Zoroastrian Master Narrative is a patriarchal
36 eschatological frame that posits a linear evolutionary/spiritual struggle that
37 leads to the evolution and progression of creation from simple to more
38 complex. The progression is driven by a necessary and beneficial cosmic
39 conflict between the forces of good and evil, sometimes personified and

³According 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.

sometimes, as we shall see below, abstracted into pure forces. 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 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 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). The binary also finds expression in Judaism which contained only watered down notions of such cosmic evil (Gilad, 2018) 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.

In our modern times, the good versus evil binary has penetrated deep into secular culture, into 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

1 presentation of this ancient ideology. In this show, the good misguided rulers
 2 of Westeros prepare to fight the undead, and clearly evil, “White-Walkers.”
 3 John Snow, a resurrected leader (Sayoshant) of the “good forces,” makes the
 4 all-important Zoroastrian choice in episode one of season three where he says,
 5 “I wish to fight for the side that fights for life.” In children’s books, you find
 6 Harry Potter, another resurrected Sayoshant, fighting the deceptive/evil
 7 Voldemort. In literature, you find it in Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings, where the
 8 forces of light, assisted by literature’s greatest underdog, Frodo, fight Mordor’s
 9 dark horde. In all these cases, including the religious narratives, there is a
 10 choice to be made between good and evil and a final judgment where justice is
 11 doled out in the form of the total destruction of those who chose the evil.

12 In addition to Zoroastrian spiritual patriarchy and the good versus evil
 13 binary, the **linear, evolutionary, staged version of creation**, complete with
 14 judgment, punishment, reward, and damnation, also finds expression throughout
 15 the world’s major Western religious and cultural traditions. In Christianity and
 16 its derivatives, creation starts in a beautiful garden, continues when its
 17 residents are kicked out, and ends when the “chosen ones,” the ones who
 18 successfully attain redemption, are rewarded with a final return into a new
 19 paradise, while the “cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the
 20 sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—
 21 ...will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. (Revelation 21:8). In
 22 Islam, “those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did
 23 righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord (*The Qur’an* 2:62) while
 24 those who have sinned will “dwell therein forever.” (*The Qur’an* 2:62). In the
 25 Baha’i faith, the Zoroastrian Frame is plain for all to see.

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

37 You find this mythology in some surprising places as well. In science
 38 fiction, in the book *Childhood’s End*, author Arthur C. writes about aliens who
 39 come to Earth to preside over the renovating rapture of the “chosen few,” a
 40 rapture that leaves all the unworthy ones to slowly die away on a fading planet
 41 Earth. The exact same idea is found in Christian circles in the “Left Behind”
 42 books of Christian fundamentalist Tim LaHaye are clearly carriers of the
 43 Zoroastrian master story. You also find elements of the Zoroastrian in
 44 philosophy, in various places, for example in the concept of *Apocatastasis*,
 45 which is reconstitution / restitution / restoration to the original primordial
 46 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)

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). Some may bristle at the suggestion, but 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 ~~cosmic~~ class struggle, the culmination of which is either “total ruin of the contending classes” or a “revolutionary ~~renovation~~ 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 many 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 question becomes, *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. 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 Tanser. Tanser was primarily responsible for writing down Zoroaster's teachings. Tanser 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...." Tanser further suggested that Ardashir was uniquely qualified

1 to revive a faith that had "decayed" because he was a man of "true and upright
2 judgment..." (Boyce, 2001, p. 3). Once the authority of Ardashir had been
3 proclaimed, Tanser then selected a single Zoroastrian tradition among several
4 that were available in the region, after which he brutally and with "excessive
5 bloodshed" (Boyce, 2001, p. 103) sterilized the Zoroastrian field by
6 suppressing all other word of mouth traditions that existed at the time.

7 "...in place of the former fraternity of regional communities, a single
8 Zoroastrian church was created under the direct and authoritarian control of
9 Persia; and together with this went the establishment of a single canon of
10 Avestan text, approved and authorized by Tanser... Tanser set about his
11 business and selected one tradition and left the rest out of the canon. And he
12 issued this decree: The interpretation of all the teachings of the Mazda-
13 worshipping religion is our responsibility." (Boyce, 2001, p. 103)

14 Why would the autocrat Ardashir claim interpretive superiority, reduce the
15 Zoroastrian faith to a single cannon, and violently subdue competing
16 understandings? The answer to these questions is simple. Ardashir re-created
17 the Zoroastrian faith as an elite master narrative and subsequently used the
18 Zoroastrian religion to build a hegemonic narrative frame, in the Gramscian
19 sense (Hoare & Sperber, 2016), or a discourse, as per Foucault (McHoul &
20 Grace, 1993). These members of the ancient Persian elites created a master
21 narrative which provided the "sacred" beliefs and values which could be used
22 to influence how people think about themselves and the world and how they
23 act in the world. This hegemonic master narrative was created in what I would
24 call a **Symbol Factory**, a place where agents of the accumulating class get
25 together to create their ideologically impregnated master narratives.

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

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

38 The example of Ardashir demonstrates exactly who creates these "special
39 instruments of thought control" (agents of the accumulating classes) and how
40 they do it (they do it in symbol factories). It also provides a general answer to
41 the question, why. In short, agents of consciousness working for empire-
42 building elites do it by co-opting available spiritual narratives, centralizing
43 control of these narratives in the hands of elite actors and then modifying these
44 narratives in a way that makes them suitable as ideological tools. They then
45 violently suppress competing frames in order to establish the hegemonic

1 domination of their system. The example of Zoroastrianism provides a precise
2 outline of this process.

3 This colonization of belief systems for the purpose of empire building and
4 control of the masses is evident in another case study, detailed elsewhere
5 (Sosteric, 2020c), that examines the progressive, revolutionary work of Jesus
6 Christ as he challenges and is consequently assassinated by local colonial
7 elites. As with Zoroastrian beliefs, which were anti-elite to begin with (Boyce,
8 1996), Christ was anti-elite with a remarkably progressive mission and
9 message. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,” he said, “because he has anointed
10 me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for
11 the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”
12 (Luke 4:18). Unfortunately, Christ’s progressive messaging was a threat to elite
13 prerogative and they had him assassinated. When that did not work to stop the
14 spread of his progressive messaging, Roman Emperor Constantine “converted”
15 to (really, the proper term is co-opted) Christianity and subsequently set about
16 to control and modify (read colonize) the grass-roots Christian narrative.
17 (Sosteric, 2020c) by determining what constituted Christian canon and then by
18 hiding the texts away from mass eyes for centuries while elite scribes edited
19 the texts in privacy. (Ehrman, 2007; Sosteric, 2020b). In this process, elites
20 working in the Catholic Church re-imposed and carried forward the Zoroastrian
21 narratives, once again using these narratives to consolidate hegemonic
22 domination and elite rule right through to the 21st century.

23 Finally, you can see the bourgeois interference in the spiritual narratives of
24 this planet in another case study, specifically in the Freemason’s creation of a
25 Tarot propaganda device used specifically to propagate an updated Zoroastrian
26 narrative to their own members, and to the masses of this planet (Sosteric,
27 2014). In this case, elites working in symbol factories (i.e., Masonic Lodges)
28 updated the Zoroastrian narrative for a more secular, Capitalist mind set and
29 then distributed this narrative through fanciful images of the Italian Tarot deck,
30 creating what Decker, Depaulis and Dummet (Decker et al., 1996, p. 1996)
31 said was “...the most successful propaganda campaign ever launched: not by a
32 very long way the most important, but the most completely successful. An
33 entire false history, and false interpretation, of the Tarot pack was concocted by
34 the occultists; and it is all but universally believed.”

35 As this point, we have seen who creates the master narratives and we have
36 a sense of how. The question now becomes how have these beliefs been so
37 successfully and surreptitiously propagated from generation to generation to
38 the point that the world is mostly unaware despite the obvious existence of this
39 transhistorical frame. There is a two part answer to this question. The first part
40 is how are these archetypes and narratives propagated down through the
41 centuries and the second part is how are they instilled in the individual.

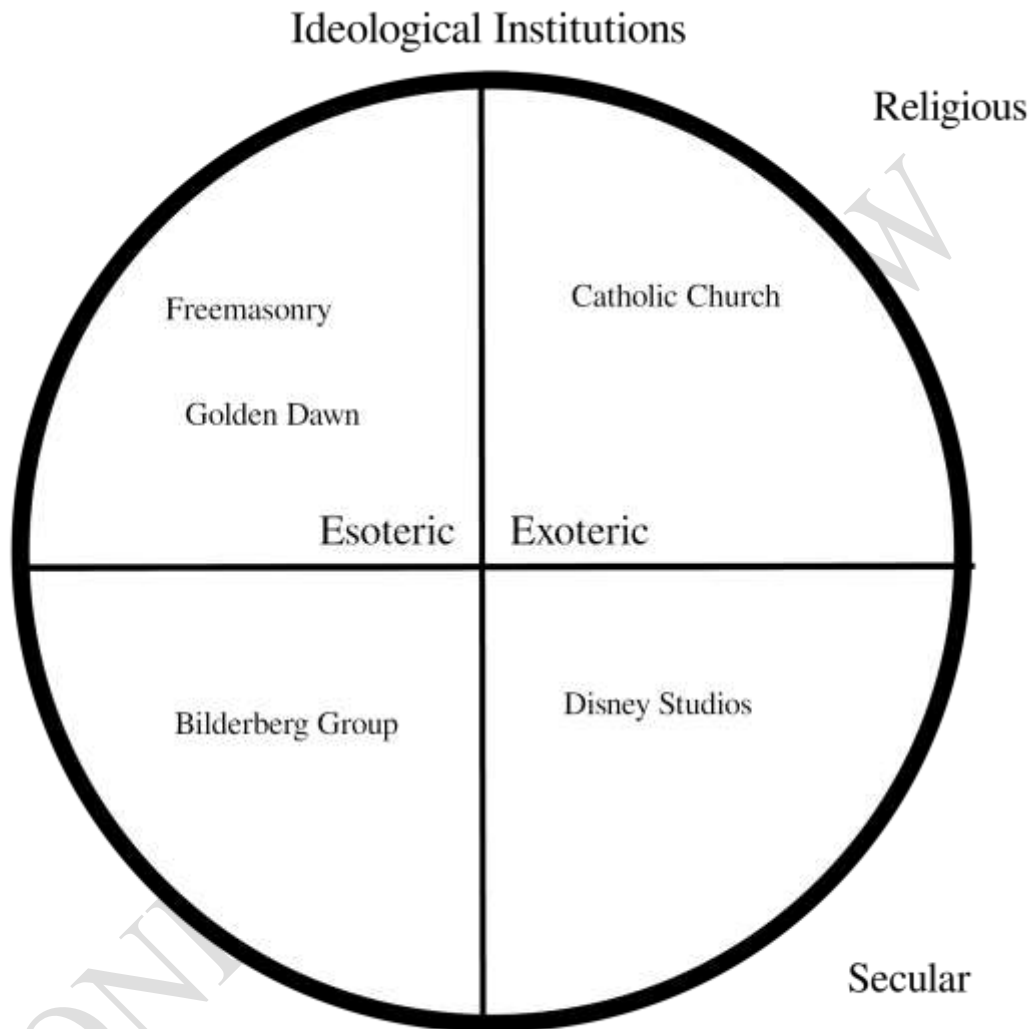
42 We already have the information we need to answer the first question. In
43 order to maintain, preserve, and propagate the Zoroastrian Frame, elites set up
44 special creative institutions, which I will call **symbol factories**, designed
45 specifically to help them maintain and reproduce their **Regime of**
46 **Accumulation**. Symbol factories provide the symbolic/archetypal template for

1 thought and behavioural modification. Symbol factories do this by reviving,
 2 restoring, reproducing, and distributing the ancient Zoroastrian narrative frame.
 3 This is exactly what happened when Ardashir used his high priests inside a
 4 temple he funded to help him co-opt and refine the elite master narrative. It is
 5 exactly what Emperor Constantine did when he created the Catholic Church
 6 and co-opted the Christian narrative. This is also what happened with the
 7 Italian Tarot deck which was brought into the Freemason's symbol factory
 8 (i.e., the Masonic Lodges) and subsequently recreated as a tool to distribute the
 9 Zoroastrian narrative. These should not be controversial statements.
 10 Freemasons and other elites are explicit about the transhistorical existence of
 11 "identical doctrines" that have existed throughout the course of ancient and
 12 modern civilization (Lomas, 2017), explicit about the need to periodically
 13 revive, restore, and "vindicate" the ancient teachings (Blavatsky, 1889), and
 14 explicit about the existence of symbol factories or "secret orders and societies"
 15 that exist specifically to propagate ancient ideology (Wilmshurst, 1922, pp. 22–
 16 23).

17 Symbol factories produce, reproduce, and revise the narrative through the
 18 centuries. On the other hand, we have **Ideological Institutions**. Ideological
 19 institutions do not modify or recreate narratives built in symbol factories but
 20 instead specialize in producing and distributing the narrative via symbol and
 21 drama, in stories and rituals and such. You can see the use of symbol and
 22 drama in ideological institutions throughout the esoteric and exoteric fabric of
 23 Western religion. Freemasonry, which functions as both a symbol factor and,
 24 during regular meetings, an ideological institution, codes the Zoroastrian
 25 binary in the symbolism of their First-degree tracing board. The tracing board
 26 shows a "chessboard of life" with black and white squares indicating that the
 27 binary between good and evil, black and white, is a natural and foundational
 28 part of creation. Cicero and Cicero (2004, p. 108) of the Golden Dawns freely
 29 admit the use of drama in ritual when they say "Then, just as now, ritualists
 30 employed theatrical props, special effects, symbolism, gestures, speeches, and
 31 other elements of performance to have the greatest visual and emotive impact
 32 on their audience..." The Church, an exoteric-religious ideological institution,
 33 holds weekly dramas designed to convey key Zoroastrian archetypes. In
 34 addition, exoteric secular ideological institutions, like Hollywood, use
 35 symbolism and drama in movies like Star Wars, the Matrix, and Harry Potter to
 36 convey ancient Zoroastrian archetypes.

37 Note that ideological institutions may be subdivided into esoteric and
 38 exoteric institutions, and religious and secular institutions. Esoteric institutions,
 39 which are quite common in the West (Versluis, 2007), are elite institutions
 40 with elite membership. Esoteric institutions keep their teachings and practices
 41 hidden and secret. Exoteric institutions, on the other hand, are public facing
 42 institutions, like the Catholic Church on Sunday. Esoteric and exoteric
 43 institutions can also be religious or secular. Exoteric-religious institutions
 44 include institutions like the Catholic Church or the Baha'i faith. Exoteric-
 45 secular institutions include institutions like the mainstream/corporate
 46 Hollywood movie, news, book, and music industries. On the other hand,

1 esoteric ideological institutions include esoteric-religious institutions like
2 Freemasonry, the Golden Dawn, the Skull and Bones, and so on, as well as
3 esoteric-secular ideological institutions, like the secretive Bilderberg Group
4 (Anon, 2019) whose agenda is to “bolster consensus” (read indoctrinate
5 individuals) around free-market capitalism.
6



7
8 **Why do they do it?**
9

10 At this point, we have tentative answers to most of the questions posed at
11 the beginning of this section. We know who creates the narratives (i.e.,
12 members, allies, or wannabe members the accumulating class), how did they
13 do it (they use symbol factories) and how they impose it (they use ideological
14 institutions). We also have a general answer as to why. They do it to help
15 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 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 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, after all; 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 justifying the penal/corrective use of violence, Zoroastrian archetypes also enable a particular orientation to the world, one that primes individuals to struggle, strive, and most importantly work hard. Whereas before Zoroaster cosmic *cooperation* was seen as necessary to “Maintain the world according to asha”⁴ (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 co-operative 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,

⁴“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) (1987)

1 as Weber clearly pointed (Weber, 1904), to the development of psychological
2 and emotional frames conducive to capitalist exploitation within capitalist
3 economic organizations (Simmons & Mills, 2005).

4 In addition to constituting individuals as passive and compliant, justifying
5 the penal/corrective use of violence, and making good little capitalist worker
6 bees out of people, Zoroastrian archetypes also justify, through their
7 constitution of life purpose as a fight between good and evil, imperial wars,
8 colonial expansions, and various elite agendas. Rulers who have imperialist
9 ambitions can (and still do) use the Zoroastrian frame to paint their opponents
10 as evil and deserving of destruction (Sosteric, 2018). So it was the case the
11 European colonizers who used Zoroastrian archetypes to motivate and justify
12 genocides in order to steal the lands of the “godless savages.” So it is,
13 currently, with modern colonizers justifying war, genocide, and colonial theft
14 by painting their opponents as evil. We can see this strategy played out in real-
15 time as former president of the United States Donald Trump recklessly paints
16 anybody and everybody who opposes his Capitalist agenda (#BLM protesters,
17 liberal “elites,” cultural warriors, and all who oppose unfettered accumulation)
18 with the dark side of the Zoroastrian binary, a side which allows for the easy
19 manipulation and weaponization of the masses.
20



21
22
23 In addition to constituting individuals as passive and compliant, enabling
24 violence, shaping humans into easily exploitable worker bees, and enabling
25 colonial expansion and weaponization of the masses, Zoroastrian archetypes
26 also justify and enable elitism, the distinction between those “chosen” and
27 worthy, and those who are not chosen and who do not deserve reward because
28 they are evil or bad in some way. If you are rich, it is because you deserve it in
29 some fashion. If you are poor, you are being punished for past sins.

30 Finally, Zoroastrian archetypes enable power and privilege by teaching, at
31 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. 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.

Additional Questions

There is a lot more that needs to be said about archetypes, narratives, stories, and drama, how elites use these to control the masses. Additional discussions of archetypes, master narratives, and their use in symbol factories and ideological institutions is provided elsewhere (Sosteric, 2020a, 2021), however additional research is need. Researchers need to trace the emergence of symbol factories as such and also trace the evolution of elite-controlled spiritual narratives as they pass through symbol factories and are propagated and modified into the ideological 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 more needs to be done. 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). At some point 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 (Boyce, 2001). Why this modification? We might suggest the modification occurred because it facilitates the constitution of humanity as passive, 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. 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 ideological institutions. Thus we have the Saosyant Harry Potter, Neo (the “one”) from *the Matrix*, John Snow from *Game of Thrones* and, in a considerably lighter and more mocking vein, “The Guy” from the movie *SkyKids 3D: Game Over*.

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 (Kohl, 2010; Miscavige Hill, 2013) or financial resources can exploit this priming with intention and purpose by claiming themselves to be the saviours. 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 one gives certain elites the power of 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 identify and trace resistance to these frames. The Zoroastrian frame is powerful and penetrative, but also contested. Margot Adler casts Wicca as a self-conscious attempt to recover authenticity lost as elites colonize human spirituality (M. 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, 2020c) 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).

In addition to historical research, we also need to do challenging psychological research. There is the question of the actual psychological, emotional, and physical impact of Zoroastrian narrative, a narrative which encourages ubiquitous violence euphemised as punishment or divinely sanction warfare, on the mental, emotional, and physical health and well-being of individuals victimized by the Zoroastrian frame. Although it would be a considerable shift for psychology, this work is beginning. 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 political, economic, religious, historical, and cultural forces that create "the Situation" which facilitates the evil action (Zimbardo, 2007).

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 social class, ethnicity, and gender 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. These schools would certainly benefit from a research program aimed at understanding the agenda driven manipulation of human spirituality and how this impacts, undermines, and corrupts our collective spiritual experience.

Finally, research is needed to trace the suppression, corruption, and outright erasure of Indigenous spirituality 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 progressive Indigenous spiritual understanding (M. Barbeau, 1915; Deloria, 2003, 2006; Laughlin & Rock, 2014; Rice, 1998; Some, 1994; Strong & Strong, 2017). We see this erasure

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 (C. M. Barbeau, 1914; M. Barbeau, 1915; Irwin, 1990), or the formerly foreign concepts of justice, judgment, sin, cosmic good versus evil, and final judgment (Parker, 1913).

Conclusion

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, 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 in order to understand, expose, and finally replace imposed ideology with a new meaning system that encourages authentic independent will, free thought, peaceful co-existence, and authentic mystical/spiritual experience. The development of this new system 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 emphasize collective responsibility, collective work, and peaceful and collective eschatological denouement in which we all, and not just the chosen few, must participate in. You can read all about the TOSAS in *The Triumph of Spirit Archetype System* (Sosteric, 2021).

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