

WAYS OF THINKING

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BA Illustration

*Julia's Manifesto 502 words, Jon's Reflective Writing 471 words, Ryan's Analysis
503 words |
Jon & Martin*

- 1) One must aim for Stoicism. Warm blood is essential.
- 2) The romanticism of daily life needs to be implemented.
- 3) O mundo não está em sua casa. Abrir mais para outros pontos de vista, lugares e situações.
- 4) Who deserves compassion is not a worthy question, who gives compassion is.
- 5) Autonomy within community.
- 6) Confront respectfully and seek to educate. Compassion is once again essential.
- 7) Change is inevitable and infinite. Allow yourself the same luxury.
- 8) Deconstruct and create constantly and consistently.

After considering my manifesto and the beliefs and ideals important to me I identified three key words that run through my statements as main concepts, namely: stoicism, compassion and romanticism.

The modern philosopher Lawrence Becker (2017) wrote that stoicism is “what one ought to do or be to live well – to flourish.” This feels slightly simplistic to me as I understand the main goal of stoicism to be living in agreement with nature, and what separates humans from animals is our ability to act with rationality which means we can decide what our reaction is to our circumstances. (Holiday, 2016). If we can rationalise our reactions, we can become immune to the painful or difficult things in our lives. Donald Robertson (2019) wrote “to learn how to die is to unlearn how to be a slave” and we can translate this metaphor for any painful experience. Art can reflect stoicism in its depictions of negative subjects, using art as a communication medium to tell a story that would otherwise not be told. It can also be a medium that shows beauty even in painful or traumatic scenes.

Compassion is important in art and life because everyone deserves compassion even if they don't give it themselves. If we lose compassion we lose humanity. Compassion is defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary as an awareness of others' distress and the drive to relieve it. Art is a communication tool to express that compassion and awareness of other's suffering, or indeed ones own suffering. “Bringing visibility to social injustices and sharing the voice of those who are suffering is what I want to bring into the world through my art.” (Langlois, 2020). I strive to create the same awareness in my art, either of beauty, or of pain, or discomfort. I would like my art to be a medium that raises awareness of other people's experience and my own experience.

Romanticism is the ideal that makes all of the compassion and stoicism we develop in our lives worth the effort. The word romantic tends to mean related to love or sentimentality but in terms of art or literature it has a much wider meaning. It relates to developments in art and literature as well as philosophy. The romantic movement was “inspired by a desire for liberty,” and “denounced exploitation of the poor. There was an emphasis on the importance of the individual” and “the importance of expressing authentic personal feelings” (Forward, 2020). In art, we are able to experience and communicate our authentic feelings if we wish, or to create new experiences for people who consume that art. For instance, street art can be considered to be liberating or vandalism, depending on the viewpoint of the beholder. “Where before the lines between public art and graffiti were

clear and obvious, street art occupies a space in between.” (Bacharach, 2016) I feel in my manifesto that I would like romanticism to help in the exploration of boundaries, and the expression of personal and community experiences.

Jon’s reflective writing piece



Fig.1 A screen shot from the Disney movie Hercules

I chose the movie Hercules as my artefact. When considering the Disney production of the movie Hercules, which is based on the story of the Greek hero Hercules, I was struck by the juxtaposition of modern and ancient norms and how these were depicted.

The storyline was influenced by the ancient myth of Hercules and his legendary power, and this was depicted in the movie where he defeated an undefeatable beast. The scene shows the celebration following his victory, in a way that the ancient people may be expected to celebrate, but this is followed by a modern montage to music which shows merchandise being prepared, money rolling in to the hero and the sort of celebrity worship that is accepted as fairly commonplace today.

Robert Garland states that “In the Greco-Roman world, the means of promoting stardom was extremely limited. Access to the most effective mechanisms was limited to the political class, to kings and above all to emperors.” (Garland, 2020) This means that the pursuit of fame and glory was nothing new to the ancient Greeks, and victors of high profile events such as the Olympics in ancient Greece could expect to be richly rewarded, “reflecting the importance the community gave to citizens who represented them on the sporting field. (Romero, 2020)

This hero worship was clearly demonstrated in the movie, which had Hercules carried victorious on the shoulders of the crowd, with all praising his valour. The movie then goes on to show the merchandise being produced and used to exploit the crowds to spend money and this is an interesting concept. The effect is to make the viewer question capitalist consumption, and the depiction appears satirical to the adult viewer, making us feel that the overt consumerism is surely a modern spin on the attitudes of ancient Greece, but there is also the undertone one should be aware of that this was a production aimed and children and families, and children would accept the commercialism as a cultural norm. The excerpt also appeared to be ironically slightly self-critical of the movie production, as it would itself expect the sale of merchandise and box office takings to be profitable.

Dr Gregory Hand states in his talk about this that “Viewers know that animated images they are seeing are not real, but respond emotionally as if they are.” This creates, according to Dr Hand, “a state of mind ripe for commercial exploitation.” What is more rare is to see such commercial exploitation so transparently portrayed on the animation screen. (Hand, 2011) Certainly the crazed purchase of celebrity related paraphernalia is not an experience that would have been literal in ancient Greece, which creates humour and satire in the portrayal in the movie, and even a discomfort of the blatant display of commercialism that we partake in in today's society.

Semiotic Analysis of Medusa by Caravaggio



Fig 2. Medusa by Caravaggio

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio painted the above image in 1597 to depict the moment that Medusa was executed by Perseus. An Italian diplomat commissioned the painting to give as a gift as a ceremonial shield to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. He painted it on a convex

wood circle, which was stored in an armoury for several years. It was then used as a battle motif, and placed on some warriors' chests as a symbol of their ferocity. The whole painting therefore is a symbol of courage and ferocity. (Caravaggio.org, 2020). Caravaggio used a chiaroscuro method of painting, to use striking light and dark in the painting that creates drama in the painting. This can be seen in the glint of light in the dark eyes and the teeth in the mouth, which is open in an expression of horror and fury.

The myth of Medusa involves the beautiful lady Medusa who was assaulted in Athena's temple by Perseus, which angered Athena who turned her into a gorgon. A gorgon was a woman with snakes for her hair who could petrify anyone who met her gaze. The snakes in the painting also symbolise rebirth in literature, which is interesting as they are on her head at the moment of death. (Barolsky, 2013)

Caravaggio used his own face to depict Medusa's face in the painting, which may symbolise his immunity to her power, as he did not gaze on her. Also, the painting shows the eyes looking away from the viewer, perhaps towards her murderer, Perseus, which is a sign that the viewer is in no danger from her now. This could also be symbolic of the death of Medusa in which Perseus used the reflection from a shield to avoid looking at her, and therefore did not meet the fate of others who had met her gaze, and was then able to attack her.

Barolsky explains that the image portrays the very moment of Medusa's death, as Perseus decapitated her. There is blood showing her life blood draining from her. Caravaggio witnessed several executions to research the moment of death in order to accurately reflect this in his work. (Varriano, 2010)

Medusa came to represent valour and the power of the state. The image was used as "the most frequent image on Italian parade armour of the Cinquecento" (Springer, 2010). Springer also stated that "In parade armour, Medusa becomes a political apotropaion, a symbol of the power of the state." This means that it was a symbol that was expected to ward off bad luck in battle.

There is some conjecture that the painting may have been heavily influenced by the work of da Vinci who had died some 80 years earlier. Da Vinci had created a shield with a hybrid monster emblazoned on it at the request of his father. He had used snakes, insects and lizards he had collected to inspire him. Caravaggio did the same thing, hoping to achieve the same disturbing power that Leonardo had with his shield. (Jones, 2003)

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