

Howard Lotker – Opponent for Hesameddin Hanafialamdari’s Master’s Thesis

Egotistic Body-Brain versus Compassion

(Who am i?)

((Is peace only a fantasy?))

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Dear Colleagues:

I wish I could give Hesameddin Hanafialamdari’s master’s thesis a good evaluation, as the text and concepts within generally deserve, and to recommend that it pass - however there are so many formal problems with the text as a thesis, that I cannot recommend that it pass in the state it is in now, so sadly I must recommend that it receive an F.

There are two main formal problems with the text: the first is the total lack of footnotes for references and citations as required by AMU, failure to distinguish one’s own work from sources can be considered plagiarism, see:

<https://www.amu.cz/en/study/bachelors-masters-and-doctoral-theses-vskp/drafting-and-submitting-theses/ethics-writing-scholarly-text-and-how-cite-sources-used/>

AMU requires that all degree papers have footnotes for works referred to or directly quoted at the bottom of the page where the references are made - the footnotes need to include the work cited, date of publication, author and page number.

Hesam’s thesis does not have any footnotes at all.

At times in the thesis Hesam refers to specific works or authors, and writes about what his impressions of the authors’ theories or a summary of their book. But there is no formal citation, or date of publication in brackets, which of course there needs to be in a thesis paper...

The second formal problem with the work is the lack of a list of works cited “References” in the thesis which also must be part of every AMU thesis according to:

<https://www.amu.cz/en/study/bachelors-masters-and-doctoral-theses-vskp/drafting-and-submitting-theses/ethics-writing-scholarly-text-and-how-cite-sources-used/>

Now I will write about what is working well in Hersam’s final paper, after I will go into detail about what wasn’t working in the thesis. I found the thesis over all a good balance of personal writing (journaling, prose and poetry), mixed with intellectual

research, balance with chunks of self-dialogue (and sometimes self-torture), with an emphasis on and analysis of Hesam's own traumatic experiences, and his attempts to deal with them. At the beginning of the paper this worked very compellingly, leading us deeper into the topic and into Hesam's struggle. Unfortunately, the structure Hesam brilliantly introduced at the beginning of the thesis failed to develop as a literary tool, it kept the same structure and same purpose throughout. It would have helped to have more variation as the paper progressed, perhaps some of the sections could have been incredibly long, and others very short, to break up a pattern that became tiresome. Of course, Hesam's talent as a thinker and a storyteller would have also been helped by getting consultations with his advisor along the way...

One of my main objections to the paper, and one that would certainly have been dealt with if Hesam had consulted with Alice before submitting the final version, was that it set up a multitude of false dichotomies, and/or improperly stated questions and themes, without much ability to see around them. Even the title of the work contains two of these in my opinion:

Egotistic Body-Brain versus Compassion

(Who am i?)

((Is peace only a fantasy?))

The first line of the title sets up Ego vs Compassion. Actually, why can't my Ego also be compassionate? Ego is simply the German proper noun for "I" and was used casually by Freud in his writings, not so by his translators, who turned the Ego into a false idol and fetishized focus of angst. I think that if we look at how we can be both selfish and loving as human beings, as well as everything in between. Maybe instead of violently repressing the selfish part of us, we should rather accept it as part of the system, come into dialogue with it as Psychologist Hubert Hermans (founder of Dialogical Self school) suggests, and allow it space as a part of our inner world. Maybe it would also help you Hesam in your own Inner Partner work to let the inner dictator express himself sometimes more fully and freely.

By asking, *Is peace only a fantasy?* In the title, I think what you mean is, is a permanent state of complete world and individual human peace a possibility? And the answer is no: because the only constant in the universe is change. Failure to take this physical, psychological, and philosophical principle into account caused many errors in Hesam's conclusions, and also errors in what kind of questions he was asking – and answers he was seeking.

I think that the influence of Krishnamurti's ideas, who's lectures Hesam quotes, have the same problem of setting up an illogical and false dichotomy, one that is similar to logic hears within fundamentalist sects, that 'my way is the only way'. You talk about K's teachings, that, "if one observes the totality of the 'me', of the mischief it does to the world, one will not hold it for a second... This means that humankind's efforts for creating security is preventing him from true security which is absolute psychological peace. Partial-relative peace is another form of self-deception." Later with inspiration

from Krishnamurti Hesam rejects the possibility of a journey towards a freer self or enlightenment as a delusion – the answer is either totally inhabit radical change, or you will not succeed at all. But even if one is able to make a radical revolution inside oneself, there was no evidence presented that one can or will stay in that perfect condition forever, is there? Because change is a constant factor, your radical inner state (and relationship to the ego) will change as well.

At times I feel like Hesam the film maker is caught up in the two-dimensional reality of Plato's Cave, watching on the screen what he believes is the true story of reality, and that the world is actually 2 dimensional, because that is only experience he knows. A world with only 2 dimensions is naturally full of binary "either or, up or down" logic and false dichotomies. However, if he chooses to leave the cave he will immediately experience a whole new, multiverse of reality.

Hesam's past experiences growing up in a traumatic system and family have caused him to be highly reactive to certain triggers, and having to write this thesis certainly pushed some of those buttons. Yes, he IS speaking truth to power, but this truth about the absurdity of the rules is something that is already very well known, and he is not dealing with it in a new way, on the other hand he was quite successful at addressing this theme in his thesis in an extremely personal way. The way he is mixing his personal history with philosophy, psychology, self-help, seeking, with his inner struggles, was unique and is quite compelling and has potential to develop into a literary work.

In recent years one of my old inspirations keeps coming back to me in many forms, maybe it can help Hesam too, so I have included it here. Kintsugi is an ancient Japanese tradition whose name literally means 'golden repair,' it is a wonderful attitude to have towards broken things. When pottery beaks in Japan it is not thrown in the garbage, often it is skillfully reassembled by artisans using the golden repair technique, one that emphasizes the beauty of the pottery and the uniqueness of its breaking points. Japanese philosophy and culture place high value on the imperfect and broken (wabi-sabi). For these pots, their repaired existence becomes more powerful and more valuable than the 'perfect' state they were in before.

All in all, in this thesis the strengths in Hesameddin Hanafialamdari's prose, creativity, thought, personal histories, arguments, and writing, outweigh the weaknesses, so I wish I could recommend that it pass. However, I cannot recommend this because of the lack of footnotes and bibliography, so sadly I must recommend that it receive an F.

Opponent Questions for Hesam:

- 1) Please defend or refute the issue of you setting up false dichotomies in the paper, do you see this as a problem? Do you see radical peace - forever - as attainable, how?
- 2) Please explain in detail your reasoning behind your breaking of the AMU thesis rules.