

Concretization

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Concretization As with almost every aspect of “ developed” or “ first world” culture, a cloud of laziness accompanies any call to a challenge. Although finding an easier means of overcoming obstacles has been rooted in human existence since we came to roam the earth, it appears we have achieved a new level of indolence. Understanding abstract philosophical or religions bares no exception. To witness this one need look no further than todays pop culture. A quickGooglesearch of “ celebrity tattoos” yields upwards of 54 million results in a little over 2 tenths of a second.

Riddled among the image results are countless crosses, Taijitu’s, words in Sanskrit and other philosophical or religious symbols. Riddled among these are famous rapper “ lil wayne”, actress Angelina Jolie and pop celebrity Pamela Anderson. I do not necessarily condone assumptions, however, I believeit would be safe to say that these, among countless other, harbor symbols as an easy or careless means of professing a devotion to a specific ideology. Furthermore, an ideology that know little or nothing about.

I may well be wrong and perhaps they are well educated in the ways of their respective religions/philosophies but would not wager on it if I were a betting man. Considering that Pamela is a vegan because her “...body is a temple” yet has had a not to distant history with pill and cocaine abuse might tilt the odds in my favor. Nevertheless, it is not just celebrities who are concretizing abstract and demanding philosophies, they are just most readily accessible.

In todays first world countries, praising a concretized symbol of aphilosophyor religion is an easy way of identifying ones self with the select group without difficulty of actually having to learn about it. Just as students are reading the spark notes instead of the book or parents are hiring au pairs

instead of raising their children (working/single parents excluded), so are most individuals taking a lackadaisical approach to their spiritual beliefs. This is easily done through making a symbol concrete.

Consider the concept of yin-yang, a theory of balance representing male and female in unison to depict wholeness. This is often portrayed by the Taijitu symbol that most western cultures are familiar with. What is often difficult to understand about Yin-Yang is that it is ultimately a teaching of metaphysical dualism. This is to say that one is only as much itself as it is the absence of its counterpart; light is just the absence of darkness. The concept seems simple when applying it to light and dark but when it comes to questions of existence or consciousness it becomes difficult to understand.

Consequently, people, either due to laziness or ignorance, attach themselves to the concrete symbol and the simplest explanation to accompany it. Thus we see that the Taijitu, in western culture, has itself adopted the name the Yin-Yang or more absurdly the “ Ying- yang”. I have a friend who to this day thinks he has a tattoo Yin-Yang tattoo. It’s a pretty abstract and unlimited concept to fit in the confines of ones skin; I’m not sure if he even is aware of the word Taijitu; I don’t think I should ask. The development of concretization, however, cannot lay burden solely on the symbol.

Symbols have been used to represent religions, philosophies and factions of all sorts for thousands of years. Instead, I believe ignorance, and furthermore the lack of motivation to rid oneself of ignorance, is to blame. This has become increasingly evident in the modernized world we live in today. In a time when information, entertainment and even food is mere seconds away at the fingertips of the majority of the nation, the concept of delayed

gratification slowly slips through the proliferated cracks of our artificial society. I, too, am guilty of the act.

When I went to military school in the 9th grade each cadet was responsible for two pairs of shoes, the dailies and the dress. The dailies were to have no scuff or tearing around the sole but would ultimately suffice with a rather dull finish. The dress shoes, on the other hand, were required to be shined to a mirror finish; a feat that requires the perpetual spit shine of rag and polish until the pores of the leather are filled. A rule of thumb is that one should be able to see the whites in their eyes when they pick up to inspect the shoe.

After three hours work on one shoe alone, a blurred outline of my face was all I could make out. An older student heard me complaining to my roommate and came by to see what was the fuss. "I've been working on these all day," I muttered, "this is impossible". He smiled and turned as if to undermine my complaint. "Delayed gratification," he replied as he walked off, "delayed gratification." This was the first time I had heard the phrase. I looked it up and have kept it in the back of my mind ever since. In this increasingly fast paced world we live in, instant gratification is phasing out the concept of hard work and reward.

This holds true in our approach to religious/philosophical beliefs. We all want to just get it... just understand... just be enlightened. There are those that meditate for an hour, a day, a week and then are frustrated and perplexed as to why they are not yet enlightened... Or, they go get Yin-Yang tattoo and claim they are. Unfortunately much of today's world focuses on the simple, the easy and the instant and thus breed much of the laziness and ignorance that results in concretization of the abstract and complex.

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