

Winter 2023, Issue 5



# CURIOSITY









# Editor's Note

***Dear Reader,***

We can only be deceived when there is a chance of realisation. In the past issues, we have taken pride in presenting carefully investigated facts and pledged to forge ahead in the journey for truth... but what's next? A culmination of five years worth of introspection, we zoomed into the very essence of an idea and invite you to SEE deception through our and our writers' eyes.

Stimulate – Before anything, we shall converse with ourselves prudently about how to proceed. Recall your instincts—what comes to mind when you face unpleasanties, see a needy afar, look at yourself in the mirror? How do we know if we are deceived? Is realisation just another deception?

Examine – Just like when you regain sight from the darkness, it is time to let your eyes refocus. Shy not away from examining and questioning humanity, history and culture. But what follows when deception floats to the surface? In hopes of answers, we consulted the advice of psychology expert Professor Suzanne So and health data specialist Professor Kelvin Tsoi. But perhaps deception itself is not always so important when we have values and purposes we hold dear.

Experience – With renewed views and eyesight, we are ready to explore the real world again. Indulge in a salivating review of Indian delicacies in Hong Kong or engage in a reflective dialogue revolving around Green Knights.

We have been challenging facts, arguments and our analytical tools, constantly searching for evidence and proofs. But what if truths are in themselves beyond our eyereach? Maybe when we are blindfolded by deceptions we are kidnapped from truths. But maybe we are protected from the daunts and dangers in daylight at the same time. It takes courage and skill to uncover the hidden, for what is to discover may change your world forever.

Perhaps, the answer to a world of uncertainties is to believe in what you think. After all, we are not only exploring, we are living and experiencing. Be discerning, but don't forget to enjoy the ride.

Yours truly,

***Charlotte Ip***

Charlotte Ip  
Co-editor in Chief

***Buji Wong***

Buji Wong  
Co-editor in Chief



[www.curisoitycuhk.com](http://www.curisoitycuhk.com)

# MEET THE TEAM



*Co-editor in Chief*  
**Charlotte Ip**

If our minds were a tree, thoughts and memories would be its leaves – each similar but different, collectively a wondrous scene. Those we failed to cling to will fall, languish and be lost in the forgetful reds. The trees strip naked, our soul wanders, but so long as our yearn for knowledge burns, the lush green always returns.

Yet writers like us are greedy, we see all leaves their own legacy. So we fashion ourselves as gardeners, we paint them gold while the green lingers, lest they fall in nature's course, they shall live on as mystical folklores.



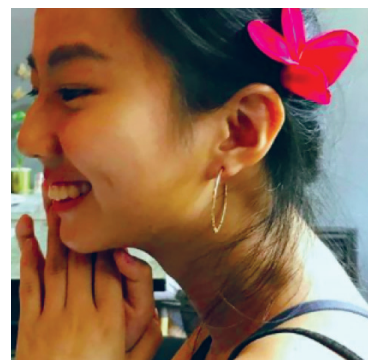
*Co-editor in Chief*  
**Buji Wong**

An introverted Math student who is intrigued by philosophies and theories. Love and appreciate the embrace of feelings. Super self-conscious. Constantly evaluate values and goals. Enjoy speeches, poems and debates. Ambitious to be someone between arts and science, sentiments and logic, literature and linguistics.



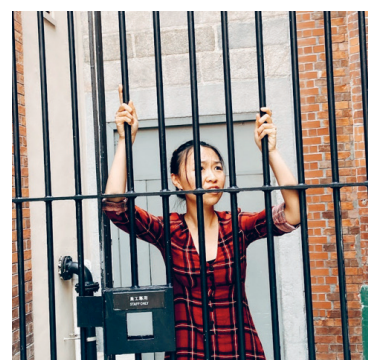
*Operations Manager*  
**Arianna Chong**

A human. Being. Lost in the vortex of nothingness, found in the harmonies of nature. An introvert who enjoys birdwatching and painting in her free time. Blessed with ignorance.



*Designer & Social Media Team*  
**Jessica Liu**

'Live the moment. Cherish the present. Anticipate the future. Frame the yesteryear.' I love sports, photography, laughing and drinking! And I'm always open to try new things.



*Writer & Webpage Team*  
**Evelyn Lam**

A bizarre educator-to-be. Prefer busy doing rather than busy planning. Eager to learn every single bit of knowledge in the world and be the light of the others.





Writer & Webpage Team  
**Myrmidon Kangara**

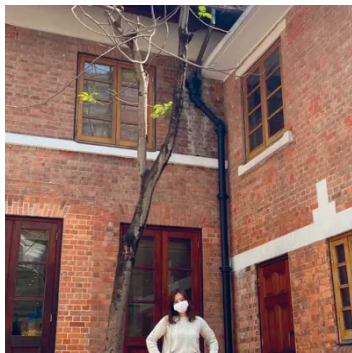
Hi Everyone.

My name is Myrmidon. I am a member of the Website Team and a writer for CUriosity.

I study law (it's tiring, thank you for asking) and I hope that by contributing to this magazine, I develop my own thoughts, rather than rehashing ideas that surround me wholesale, without taking care to reflect on them and make them my own. I do hope these ideas have refined my thinking, though. I also hope to dazzle you all with our vision for the CUriosity website. If you would like to make input (we love input!) we have a feedback form. Shameless plug, but why not?

I enjoy writing and reading, exploring unfamiliar places, listening to sad music and eating caloric desserts and then regretting it after. Somehow knowing I'll regret eating as much chocolate as manufacturers hoped I'd eat, in spite of their frankly disingenuous serving information, makes chocolate taste better.

I am glad to meet you all.



Writer & Social Media Team  
**Stella Chan**

'Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts.' My motto always reminds me to try anything interesting that happens in life. I enjoy the process of every journey more than the results. I like writing, hiking and cooking. Looking forward to meeting all of you!!!



Guest Writer  
**Jeric Chen**

A QFIN student who is 80% jocular, 20% serious. Enjoy chess, badminton, and reminiscing chats from dusk to day-break. Heart set on touring the world one day.

To write is a bliss and to read is no less. The world beyond the words is for us to seek, and the words themselves are for us to speak. As I always believe in, the simplest language can convey the deepest meanings.



Guest Writer  
**Karis Chow**

Hi there love, this is Karis.

-Right now looking forward to earning enough money so that I can retire ASAP and live a semi-reclusive life in the suburbs.

-Also holding out for a hero 'til the end of the night who's gotta be strong and fast and fresh from the fight

If in doubt, stay strange, stay weird.

Mankind didn't work all the way to where we are just for being "normal".

That's a privilege we have over animals: individuality.

You do you, darling.

Rawr.





*Guest Writer*

## **Patricia Lam & Priscilla Chan**

We are Priscilla and Patricia, year 4 students in CUHK. We enjoy exploring places around the world and learning about different cultures. That is why we like going to new restaurants and trying a variety of cuisines. We think this is a nice way to support local businesses and chefs, and get to know more about the food and taste of that specific culture. Whenever we have free time, we will scour for new places to try. Not only does this add flavor to our pallets, it also gives us something fun to look forward to after a stressful day of studying.



*Guest Writer*

## **Anna Ip**

A dreamer wandering between two worlds. Of what life is, and what life could be



*Guest Writer*

## **Govini Elvitigala**

“Why would you make out of words  
A cage for your own bird?”

A collector of pretty words – “wonders at wondering,” you know the like – and a friendly neighbourhood science student. I would love to compare collections sometime :)



*Illustrator*

## **Chan Tone Sum**

Hi guys, I am a year 3 communication design student! Like the other design and art students, drawing and designing are my biggest passions in life. Besides drawing, I am a nerd at exploring various kinds of activities, for example, embroidery, pottery, playing instruments, and even nail art haha. Oh, not to mention that I also love playing switch games!



*Cover Designer*

## **May Leung**

An architectural master student as well as an art and design lover! I love exploring new places and new things so that I can gain fresh ideas and enhance my creativity. “Work hard, play harder!” — my motto in life!



*Illustrator*

## **Emily Juhee Hur**

A System Engineering student who loves philosophy, humanities, education, and mathematics. I adore everything that is based on reason and logic. I challenged myself to be an illustrator with digital drawing, which is one of my numerous hobbies. My plan is to try everything I love before graduating from CUHK, and becoming an illustrator is one of them.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *CUriosity* team extends their sincere appreciation to the General Education Foundation for their full support and funding of our publication. We also wish to thank the following people, who provided valuable feedback that enhanced the content and quality of our writing:

Dr. Tjonnie Li (Department of Physics)  
Mr. Mike See (English Language Teaching Unit)  
Mr. Kelvin Goh (English Language Teaching Unit)

Finally, our warmest gratitude to Dr. Isabel Hwang (Faculty of Medicine) and Dr. Klaus Colanero (General Education Foundation), our supervisors, whose insightful and candid comments both encouraged and challenged us to think, to write, and to think like a writer.



Supervisor  
**Dr. Isabel Hwang**



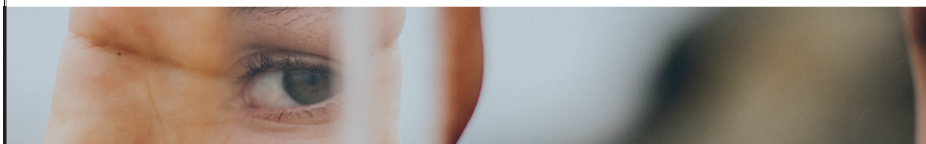
Supervisor  
**Dr. Klaus Colanero**



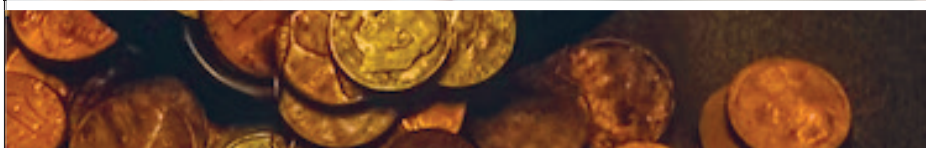
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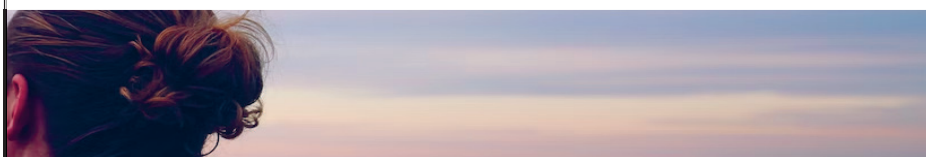
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# Deception

By Karis Chow

Hmmm... Deception...

What deception?

What is deception? Is it necessarily bad?

[Times New Roman looks the word up on the net.]

Now, Merriam-Webster says "the act of causing someone to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid"

Hmmm...but how do you know if something is true? You never know what you don't know, do ya?

No, we don't. We don't know. I don't know. What is true?

Now how do you perceive the truth? What we see is not always what we see.

Oh! Oh! Like how your hands would feel warm under room-temp tap water after holding a tub of ice-cream for an hour?

And how we never see the full pic-

ture of whatever we see? Literally and figuratively.

Ah, the way we can never see the entire view of our surroundings, and even if we can, we still can't count how many bugs are crawling in the grass.

Also no matter how a scene is carpet-searched, how many witnesses we can bring to court, how much evidence we present to the judge, there will always be something to the case we can never find out.

Exactly. None of our senses are built to prove anything, but to adapt according to our survival needs. They tell us what we need to know to survive, to live, which is not always necessarily the truth.<sup>1</sup>

I see. Is there a way of proving the truth though?

No.

Why?

Hold your horses. How are you

going to prove what you cannot comprehend? You don't even *know* what it should be, would be, or could be.

Wait, what?

[Calibri and Times New Roman pause for a while, visibly confused.]  
[American Typewriter is also confused.]

So, you mean to tell me that what we consider true is not really true, but a belief of something being true? Given is that we cannot comprehend the truth, therefore, none of what we understand can ever be the truth. Is this what you mean?

Huh? Oh ma gawd. This is some fucked up shit, man.

Language, Calibri. The thing is, the entire truth is a cluster of information so enormous, we are unable to perceive through our senses, or comprehend with our pea brains. Imagine: there is a case of murder. Very simple. Say, Human A was robbed

<sup>1</sup> Most likely inspired by Darwin's On The Origin of Species



by Human B and died. Human B stabbed Human A with a knife in the guts, ran away with the money, and Human A was left in a dark alley and bled to death. Is this all of it?

No. Not after the stuff you said.

We don't know if they had crossed paths before, their profiles, if there were witnesses or surveillance cams... I don't know what else should be known, I am no detective.

What if I tell you, no, they were complete strangers, their profile don't matter, there was a witness with a matching testimony, and the surveillance camera from a tuck shop across the street filmed the entire process, then, is my first description of the case the truth?

Ah, yes, it is true, but not the entire truth. We have extracted enough of it to arrest Human A.

Does this mean we only take what we need to get what we want?

I don't think you are wrong. Maybe put it this way: In this world of information exchange, we take what we can, need, and/or want, in order to fulfil what we need, and/or want.

And deception happens to be where we take what we want, in order to fulfil what we want, which is a deliberate act of partial extraction.





That I would agree.

Or you basically make up lies. Example: Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy.

So, back to the case, if you happen to obtain *all* information related to the case in whatever degree of relevance, including how dirty the water on the ground next to Human A's dead body was, where and how the knife was made, Human A's partner cheated on Human A with a human at the bar on the night Human A was killed, what Human B did for a science project in primary school... how long do you think it would take, and how much do you think you can remember? How would you have obtained all this? Can your eyes read into the past? How many people will have to be interviewed? How many of your interviewees can remember every single detail? What are you going to do about the details your "witnesses" forget?

Okay, hold up buddy I get what you mean. I can't, we can't, none of us can, and we settle for what we have and what we can get.

So, what if, just, what if, we can process and collect all that data, how can we prove its truthfulness, or the validity of it?

Now this I can contribute to. I don't believe there is even an absolute truth.

[Arial nods. Times New Roman and Calibri get up for another glass of water.]  
[American Typewriter is tired.]

[Cambria and Arial lie down on their recliners and patiently wait.]

Okay, we're back. Where were we, Cambria?

[Cambria leans in, while Arial sits on the ground with American Typewriter.]

The thing is, we prove hypotheses by performing experiments, right? We repeat it again and again until we reach a rather refined conclusion, if our funding, the government, and whatever could be in the way allow, the experiment can go on forever. But we can't. And neither would there be any sponsor willing to keep funding a never ending experiment with no concrete conclusion. Once again, we settle at the farthest we can arrive at, and take what we have.

So? What if we do have all the money and the time in the world?

The key here, is that we are not guaranteed eternity. Neither does eternity exist in our comprehensible world. If you had realised it, either you somehow never die, or it is not really eternity. Thing is, you DIE. And even if your offspring carry on the experiment for you, you still can't reach an absolute conclusion. You never know what is going to happen tomorrow, because it isn't tomorrow yet.

Say we flip coins. We all know there is <sup>roughly</sup> a 50% chance of getting a head, and 50% of getting a tail. Before the 100<sup>th</sup> flip, if we do so happen to be lucky enough to have flipped <sup>roughly</sup> equal times heads and tails, it would be 49:50 at the 99<sup>th</sup> flip.

We did not know it can be 50:50, and it could be 51:49. And if we were not lucky, it could be any other combination of 99. The thing is, when there indeed is tomorrow, we would always be stuck at the 99<sup>th</sup> flip.

Ah, like how we didn't know we would one day be able to fly, and the day before the Wright brothers invented the plane was the 99<sup>th</sup> day on this matter.

But that was a yes/no question, and the hypothesis was no to most of society. What if we ask a different question?

Okay. The sun rises in the east. General "truth". At least it is what we still believe. Have you seen the sun not rising in the east? However unlikely it may be, we cannot deny that it is not impossible to see the sun rising in another direction. The mechanics of the universe is way beyond our capacity to comprehend. We are constantly standing on the 99<sup>th</sup> test, and there will always be things we cannot verify or falsify.

Can I say that what you just said is not true?

You can. How are you going to prove it? I believe in what I say, to me, it is true. If you refuse to believe in it, to you, it will not be true. Even if we all agree the above is true, that still doesn't mean it is in fact true. What I perceive is not the entire truth, therefore, what I produce from it cannot be entirely true.

An example would be everyone being egocentric geocentrists before Galileo introduced heliocentrism. They thought what they believed in



was right, and it was not; we think what we believe in is right, and can soon be proven wrong at any given moment onwards.

That I agree with. Back on how to cope with it, I like to say that we are constantly riding on a tangent line to the truth.<sup>1</sup> It touches the truth, but it is plotted on infinitely close points to the truth. It's a matter of how much of the truth extractable you would settle on.

To believe, or not to believe, no?

The decision is yours.

Then, what's the point? Deception or not, nothing is real.

If whatever we have today can be ground to dust, what kind of joke-life have we been living?

What else is true?

What can I believe in?

What the hell are we doing with our lives?

Nothing matters.

Just a second, darling. That's the best part in life! You are completely free to choose what to believe in, where you wish your heart resides, where your faith lies, where you keep your best memories, and most of all, what you want to do with your life.<sup>2</sup>

It is somewhat an issue of *tə'mei.tʊʊ; tə'ma:.təʊ.* (tuh-may-to; tuh-mah-to). Believers choose to believe. Non-believers choose not to believe. Fence sitters choose to delay their decision. Indecision is already a decision.<sup>3</sup>

A bit like the *que será, será*<sup>4</sup> mentality.

[*Que será, será* plays softly in background]

Just remember, you hold the final decision to believe in what you want to believe in, and be that a "lie" or the "truth", it will be what you believe it to be.

[This is the next morning.]

[American Typewriter fell asleep after the last line.]

[Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial, and Cambria have yet initiated another discussion.]

[This marks the end of their discussion on "Deception".]<sup>5</sup>

[To be completely honest, American Typewriter has not done any research in particular, neither has A.T. kept track of where the other fonts got their ideas from. A.T. welcomes any help with sourcing and referencing.]

<sup>1</sup> From the Wikipedia page on Tangent.  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tangent>

<sup>2</sup> From the YouTube video: Optimistic Nihilism, Kurzgesagt, 2017

<sup>3</sup> Indirect quote from Ave, a friend of the author.

<sup>4</sup> Spanish phrase for "whatever will be, will be".

<sup>5</sup> The above conversation is partially inspired by Kurzgesagt Videos: Optimistic Nihilism, Time, Emergence, What Are You?, and What Is Something? And by Plato's book: Allegory of The Cave.

# THE PULSE NAMED SELF-DECEPTION

BY: ANNA IP

**In this article, the author demystifies the subject of self-deception. The author argues that self-deception arms us in face of the mystery of life. That in times of doubts, challenges and anguish, self-deception creates meaning in life.**

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“Take heed of self-deception,” they say. For self-deception is none other than envy at its worst. The venom of grandiosity, once injected, instantly infatuates the ego. As if rationality ruled the all-too-excited bliss. As if there was

an antidote. But the illusion of perfection of the person is soon dispelled by reality. Of preying. The venom gradually seeps into each organ. Until the foreign eclipses the host. Until the unruly pounds rule the clouded mind.





Until you are nothing but empty. Each syllable Elizabeth Holmes uttered with all her might. Each smile she mustered with all her charms. Each gesture she performed with all his strength. In the new Hulu's series, 'The Dropout' that beautifully narrates Holmes' life story, it is clear that the very deception that she had employed gradually became manipulative. Her deception to the world started off as a desperate stopgap, when her proprietary machine suddenly malfunctioned at the eve of an important pitch to potential investors. Portrayed by Amanda Seyfried and accompanied by intense music in the TV series, Elizabeth Holmes incessantly prodded, pricked, and thrust her fingers for blood samples to test the machine in complete disbelief. Until her fingers numbed, her mind exhausted, her dream shattered. As the TV producers perfectly depicted, a nightlong dread was ironically followed by an abrupt transition into epiphanic confidence. After hours of misery, she straightened her back and crossed her arms, proceeded to announce to her trust ally, Rakesh Madhava, that she was to reuse a saved test result from successful experimental trials in the past. If it had worked before, by logic it should now too. She managed to convince herself that her device failed only because it just so happened that there was an accidental mishap. There, the deception she buttressed earned her an investment of 165 million dollars. However, as her confidence in experimental trials later proved misplaced, the style of her deception evolved. As the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission indirectly remarked: Elizabeth Holmes misrepresented her technology by presenting to the world "what they hope it might do someday", instead of "what their technology can do today". This time around, her deception was located in her blind optimism of the future. In the latter half of the TV series, it became apparent that Elizabeth Holmes was so consumed by her deception that she didn't care to improve and bring her vision of the technology to fruition. As if her dream was the reality.

**Self-deception is bad.**  
**Very bad.**  
**Categorically bad.**  
**Period.**

I quickly scribbled on my whiteboard, "Avoid Self-Deception at All Cost" before going to bed.

**Rise and shine.** I sat in front of my vanity and looked into the mirror. Take heed of self-deception, I reminded myself. I stared at the reflection, as I raised my left hand and stroked my bangs to the back. Funny how the reflection is my clone. At my command, those lips stretch upwards in a forced handshake with the cheeks, until those teeth are brutally exposed to the chilling air. On my instruction, the habitual conclave of muscles on the forehead is dismissed, until each and every muscle fiber is left on its lonesome. It is all quite bizarre, no?



Source: Pexels

I shut my eyes to clear my mind. Mission code: Look-Into-The-Mirror-But-No-Deception take two. I opened my eyes again, only to find a flash of the harsh fluorescent lighting in my bathroom hurled on my skin. I spy with my eyes something huge and visibly dark on my nose. Agitated, I rambled, "those are just pores which obviously looks bigger having been washed with warm water." "It will definitely fade in a second," I added before quickly shaking my head and reminding myself yet again of my mission. No deception, dear. I swallowed the pool of saliva that had collected in my mouth and looked again into the mirror. Fine, they're blackheads. Shoot me.

In a faltering fight for hope, I looked into the mirror. Take three. Eyes wide open, I spy this time, something nude and disorderly in stark contrast to my dark brown iris. No self-deception. Very well, those aren't folds from my sleep, but are budding crow's feet. Voilà.

I propped myself up from my stool and placed my toes, the arch and the heel of my feet on the icy-cold floor. One part at a time, one foot at a time. I walked away from my bathroom, step by step, each step more burdensome and more wearisome. Each step emptier.

**Workout.** I got on the weight scale. 56 KG for a 5 foot 6. I put on my pink leggings from Lululemon and Dutch braid my hair like trainers on YouTube. As I rolled out my yoga mat, I was ecstatically anticipating an Instagram worthy workout.

Play, I pressed. Rhythmic music blared out of the TV stereos. I chanted with the YouTuber, "hands upwards, legs outwards" in this Jumping Jack routine. Before I knew it, I had internalized the motion and was completely immersed in this endorphin escape

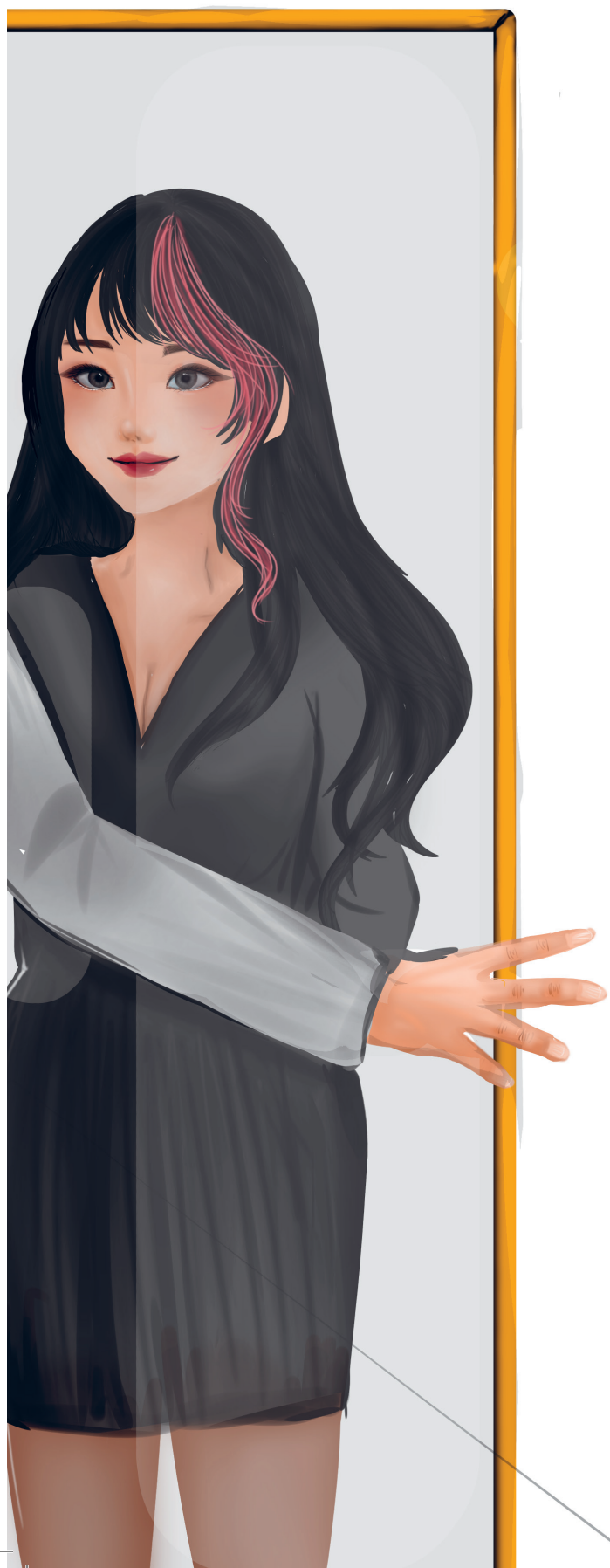
exclusive to me and me alone. Not too happy just yet, I warned myself. No self-deception! I took a deep breath and made an exit from my zone. I opened my ears again to find myself surrounded by a discordance of random notes. I opened my eyes to find myself in a wobbly posture. I reawakened my sensations, only to find myself drenched in sweat.

Workout over. I brushed my belly, in confidence that the subcutaneous fat under my skin had melted away in a brief twenty minutes. I pinched my belly, wishfully thinking that the fat had been squeezed out of my skin tissues. I raised my hands and smoothed them over my waistline, in full conviction that I had shredded a few pounds. In triumph, I bounced around the room. Wait a minute, no self-deception, I told myself. I tiptoed and landed on the scale. All bold and black, I see my good old foe: an Arabic number named 56.

I violently pulled my black tanktop off from my chest and stared blankly at it. Each drop of colorless sweat drowned in a pool of darkness.







Heat, water and minerals that once charged my body, now overpowered, seemed more tenuous and hollower than ever. Emptier than ever.

**Happy hour.** I put on my Black cocktail dress. Before I knew it, I was sipping my Pina Colada, while surrounded by friends. The centre of attention, all eyes on me. Every whisper heard. Every smile observed. Gazes feeding my yearning. For belonging. For affection. The time of my life.

No self-deception though, I said to myself. I gulped down the last of my Pina Colada. The cheers, chatters, the drumbeats and the howls gradually became inaudible, but it was only then that reality snapped in. Questions reared their ugly heads. Am I really enjoying this party, or is it the drink's doing? Do I even like these friends? What am I doing? Emptier than ever.

I went home, and briskly wiped the whiteboard. There I wrote, "Keep Calm and Self-Deceive". Deception paints, not the reality, but the potentials of human flourishing. Through appealing to a world that is possible, it motivates us to pursue

the best version of ourselves. With a drizzle of deception, we are granted hope and strength to ride the storm to make our dreams come true. Even if we end up not making it to the other side of the tunnel, trust me when I say that your ambition driven by deception will eventually meet the gentle waves of ocean that brings you to where you truly belong – even better than you could have ever imagined. For I know that in face of daily hardships, it takes daring courage to wake up every morning. And my seemingly absurd dream is what keeps me going every day. It is precisely this deceitful sense of identity that creates meaning for me in this futile lifelong journey.

Perhaps that is what Sam Shepard means by, "I believe in my mask – The man I made up is me – I believe in my dance – And my destiny."

#### References:

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission 2018, Theranos, CEO Holmes, and Former President Balwani Charged with Massive Fraud, viewed 2 April 2022, <<https://www.sec.gov/news/press-release/2018-41>>.





# Walking past Bleeding Beggars

By: Myrmidon Kangara

Not too long ago, I was walking along the footbridge that leads to the Immigration Centre in Wan Chai. Almost without thinking, I sidestepped a man who was begging on the footbridge. His foot had been bleeding, I could tell from the marks on his leg where he had bled. He lay there, twisted, and a small plastic cup beside him. Crowds passed in waves, but no one ever placed a coin in his cup. At least not when I passed. And after I passed, I didn't think of him. I barely thought of him as I passed. I noticed him, but then my mind was preoccupied. I am not sure if I have become desensitized to beggars and if I dismiss them as a mere part of the urban landscape. I saw another one outside Exit C of Prince Edward MTR Station. His left leg had been amputated, and he had a few coins in his cup.

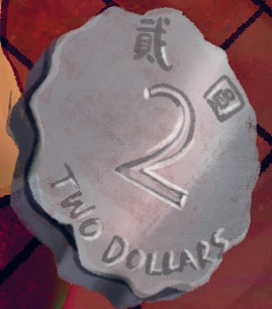
I have often seen street performers get more money than beggars. Perhaps people appreciate talent (or an appeal to it) more than they appreciate suffering. There is too much of the latter, and we all think of ourselves as suffering. We are suffering in our diets as we try to lose weight; we are suffering in our relationships as we try to balance what we give as opposed to what we expect to get; we are suffering in our families as we try to be deserving of our flawed parents; and we are suffering at our workplaces as we trade hours of our lives to our disagreeable bosses in exchange for unsatisfactory wages. Maybe that is why we don't think to give beggars the change that has spent a good few weeks at the bottom of our bags. Perhaps it is simply too inconvenient to gather the coins. After all, who is helping us? Even if the coins don't mean much to us, it gnaws

at us to alleviate someone else's suffering, when we have suffering of our own which needs alleviating. Perhaps that is why some people destroy reusables before they throw them away.

## **"Don't just stand there!"**

This reminds me of the Genovese syndrome in Criminal Law. At three in the morning, on March 13, 1964, a 28-year-old bartender by the name of Kitty Genovese was raped, robbed and stabbed outside her apartment building in Queens, New York as she returned home from work. Two weeks after the murder, the New York Times published an article, in which they detailed that 38 people watched and listened to her scream 'Help me' and yet, for thirty-five minutes, no one called the police or came to help Kitty.







One neighbour's reason for not intervening was he "didn't want to get involved." Others must've felt that it was safe not to act since surely, someone else would call for the police. This incident bears many of the flaws of tabloid murder - researchers soon discovered some inaccuracies in the New York Times report. Still, the Genovese case quickly became a morality tale, widely studied in philosophy and law. It prompted an inquiry into the bystander effect (or the Genovese syndrome, as it came to be called) which held that the more bystanders there are, the less likely any of them will intervene. Thinking back to the beggar on the footbridge, I thought about how some, out of the hoards who were passing, would surely donate, although if everyone thought this, then just as in the case of the bystander effect, no one might end up donating at all.

Social psychologists John Darley and Bibb Latane pioneered the empirical research on the bystander effect and devised a 5 step decision-making process on whose basis a bystander decides whether to intervene in an emergency.<sup>1</sup> First, they notice that something is wrong, then they define the situation as an emergency. They then decide whether they are personally responsible to act, they decide how to help and finally, they help. I suppose in the situation of beggars, it isn't quite an emergency is it? Destitution, poor health and hunger are dire

and regrettable states of being but they might not require the immediate action which is necessary for emergencies. Another decision-making model is the cost-benefit analysis, where bystanders weigh the costs and benefits of helping a victim, and they justify their decision based on which form of intervention will provide the best outcome for the bystander.

### Give to Caesar?

Perhaps in those few seconds that you walk past a beggar, and are genuinely concerned, you think about what it might mean to drop some coins in the plastic cup. Who knows what the money could be spent on? Food? Alcohol? Are beggars entitled to drown their sorrows in lager or is that a pleasure reserved only for the working classes? Perhaps you know that begging is illegal in Hong Kong, and can

carry a prison sentence of 1-12 months<sup>2</sup>, so you don't want to be involved in the illegal affair. Maybe you have read of criminal syndicates in mainland China recruiting disabled people and bringing them to beg in Hong Kong. You may wonder whether assisting the beggar encourages him to return? Does it also encourage others to frequent certain parts of the city, which may cause urban decay and spur on public unsafety? Or maybe you feel that as a taxpayer, you have already given to the state to take care of beggars so you do not feel responsible for this specific one. It is a tough business deciding whether to take beggars at face value, even if they are bleeding. And if you do decide to believe they are genuine beggars, whether you decide to intervene and assist, and how you will do so, is a whole different question. I have found that by the time you have made the mental journey



*An elderly beggar in Mongkok. Photo: Henrik Berger Jørgensen via Flickr.*

<sup>1</sup> Darley, J. M., & Latane, B. (1968) Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 377-383

<sup>2</sup> 1977 Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap 228 s 26A)





A beggar on Hong Kong's street. Photo: El Freddy via Flickr.

to the decision point, you find yourself already several yards away from the beggar, or having annoyed several people for having stopped in your tracks.

There may be some deception going around because no matter how we respond, we still think of ourselves as being kind. Our perception of ourselves as moral persons does not seem to change regardless of whether we assist beggars<sup>3</sup>. Feeling guilty for not intervening, justifying our non-intervention by inability, or explaining away our refusal to assist as the more sensible course of action are common strategies we use to reaffirm our perception of ourselves as moral beings following our interactions with beggars. We tell ourselves that we were more than mere spectators and that not in-

tervening doesn't mean that we don't care about the welfare of the underprivileged. This is all a part of how we reconcile our response to beggars with what we perceive a moral response should be.<sup>4</sup>

The last thing we look for when we are weaving our way through busy streets is a moral dilemma, which is exactly what beggars (bleeding or not) represent. We tend to just walk past them. Or we don't. And I hope I haven't come across as being unfeeling, I hope all beggars get the assistance they need. The point is that we stop or walk past, *seemingly* without rhyme or reason. But regardless of what we do, we still perceive ourselves as kind. And that may be where the deception lies.

I have detailed everything that goes through my mind when I see beggars. I do not usually donate to them, nor do I donate to the elderly or the disabled when I come across them with their see-through collection boxes. I believe in their causes, but I can't bring myself to give to them when I feel my glass is beyond half empty. This is a viable excuse for the time being, but it is one I will have to reckon with when my cup overflows. I like to think that at the moment, I make up for not donating to beggars by being charitable in other ways—by volunteering, and trying to be kind to others. Still, I find it difficult to rationalise my response to beggars as being kind - I feel guilty and uncaring for not donating to them. Thankfully, the feeling doesn't linger.

3 Dromi, S. M. (2012). Penny for your thoughts: Beggars and the exercise of morality in daily life. *Sociological Forum*, 27(4), 847-871

4 Batson, Daniel C., Elizabeth R. Thompson, and Hubert Chen. 2002. "Moral Hypocrisy: Addressing Some Alternatives." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83: 2: 330-339



# The Time When Myths and Truth Collide

*By Charlotte Ip*

## ***“Do not lie!”***

You probably hear that a million times from your parents, but they are lying to themselves - not because they might have a stickier track record than you, but because humans live on deception. Even if you vow to be a clear-headed logic freak, there is always one or two ungrounded narratives that beguile you, getting you so wind-up that they eventually become embedded in the collective consciousness.

About five years ago, the vast majority of Twitter users found themselves in the eye of a “fake news” whirlpool thanks to Trump. Suddenly, America is no longer great and almighty. Problems like discrimination and disparity still prevail, and the Liberals are not helping with their inclusive immigration policy, and Clinton embroiled in a corruption scandal. Trump’s loud and assertive voice gave the disillusioned Americans solace if not promise, a promise to “Make America Great Again”, a promise that arguably drives the country straight into four tumultuous years.

All controversies aside, Trump’s “fake news” campaign worked wonders in uniting the people by driving them to a single and simple purpose:

support Trump. Yet, Trump is far from the first to employ such a deceptive strategy. “Fake news” is in fact “much older than Facebook”, wrote Israeli bestselling author Yuval Noah Harari. The earliest traces date back to the ancient scrolls of civilisation - what we now refer to as “mythologies”.

## **GOD SPELT BACKWARDS IS DOG**

Today, mythology is commonly painted in a negative light denoting falsified supernatural accounts that are self-contained. If you think fallacious stories only await a fate of oblivion, you are fooled. Novelists and filmmakers can reap billions every year just by expanding on the mythological world and aligning it with the contemporary. Percy Jackson and the Marvel series (Thor and Loki in particular) are merely two successful cases drawing inspiration from the Greco-Roman and Nordic realms. So long as these franchises prevail, so will the controversial tales. If you grow up reading them, you’d probably wish they were real or at least be “fascinated” by them, while cognizant that they are but imaginary realms bred from masterful writing. Yet are we always rational when we believe?

Most of us grow by the Bible, and some regard it as the holy scripture of God. Dare claim the belief



“a myth”, you might be in for some frowns if not a debate by over 2.3 billion disciples. However, how are we sure this supernatural force is more legitimate than the Greco-Roman or Nordic pantheon? If you argue by the religion’s overwhelming popularity, you may stand as the “righteous” one against Qu’ran and Vedas believers—a word of advice, though: not the best way to confront the 1.9 billion Islams and 1.1 billion Hindus worldwide.

My professor used to joke around with the General Education course title “Gods Behaving Badly: Myths and Legends from Around the World” with quite a witty remark: “Is it **Gods** Behaving Badly or **Dogs** Behaving Badly?”. In retrospect, Gods and Dogs are more similar than their tricky spelling asserts. With a decisive word swap, paranormal instances are suddenly imparted with Godly implications, instead of being dismissed like a walking Dog in sight. Scriptures become the sacred and inviolable word of God(s), rather than folklores that endured the trials of time. Believers are no longer deemed “subservient Dogs”, but

purposed and enlightened followers of the God(s). Today, if you trek days and nights across the globe, just to pay tribute to an unfamiliar corpse’s toe, you will most likely be ridiculed. However, this used to be what saint veneration in Catholicism is like, in order for disciples to demonstrate respect and gain divine protection. As long as there is a widespread belief, there are no stopping myths from flourishing.

So, what is so enchanting about these potentially “elaborate fictions” that bestow in them such longevity?

## BRAVING THE UNKNOWN

We may have unique life experiences, but there are questions and chapters that we all inevitably stumble upon, that remain unanswered or confusing throughout human history. Myths can be our beacon of hope, providing us with the solace we crave, especially in trying times. In the latest *CUriosity* issue, “Death” was brought under the



limelight, inspiring propositions so numerous that unprecedentedly transformed the publication into a completely topic-relevant one. The reason is not hard to decipher: it's a collective episode of life, so intimate to every one of us that we all can develop our very own visions upon it, precisely where mythologies are bred.

Today, science still fails to determine our fate after death, but rather than being agnostic, most hang onto ancient wisdom, where Afterlife exists. Biblical or Qu'ran followers believe in Heaven and Hell, and where souls travel is decided by the superior God based on their behaviour in the past life. Catholics beyond that acknowledge an area known as the purgatory where souls await their judgement. Egyptians delved deeper into the judging: one's heart must be weighed on The Scale of Justice against a feather. If the former is lighter than the latter, then the soul can venture into paradise, otherwise, eternal doom awaits. Greeks divided the Underworld into three sections: Elysium for the heroic, Asphodel for the mediocre, and Tartarus for the wicked and where the notorious Inferno (9 rings of Hell) is located. In the far East where Buddhist and Taoist philosophies reign, the underground is further segmented into 18 layers—the lower the level one lodges, the more morally corrupt one is, according to the soul-piercing Yanluo Wang or Yama King. Fortunately, just like how prisons work, sinners are only required to dwell and withstand repeated torment for as long as their misdeeds are atoned. Then they reincarnate into the earthly terrain as new beings.

Surprisingly, despite being documented across various ages and regions, these religions all extol virtuousness (in spite of varied interpretations)<sup>1</sup> and lambast malevolence. Could it have been a mere coincidence? I don't think so. We regard one or the other narrative as myths or fiction because, surely, "we've never seen deities or unicorns". Even for scientific-minded believers who interpret the ancient manuscripts as metaphors for life, one cannot ignore that myths tend to simplify matters into black and white. Why would all "heroes" be promised an honourable afterlife in



*Egyptian scale of justice*

Elysium, while the unjust ("those who defied the Gods") be condemned to eternal torture in Tartarus? As you wonder, perhaps be honest and ask yourself: wouldn't you wish life was that easy? With limited capability to take matters into our own hands, many conveniently place faith in supernatural beings, spinning off tales that would keep them sane in this ambivalent and self-proclaimed "unfair" world. Besides, who knows if devoting your terrestrial hours to benevolence could indeed earn you a ticket to paradise!

## THE CHOSEN RACE

While religion (today) can be a matter of personal preference, other myths draw upon a perceived collective past shared by members of the community. Since history remembers, people have embraced the power of words in uniting the masses, by beckoning the human curiosity to their lineage. From old-time civilisations to metropolitans today, few could resist the appeal of divine heritage.

<sup>1</sup> Greeks considered valiance a virtue while Christians laud benevolence.



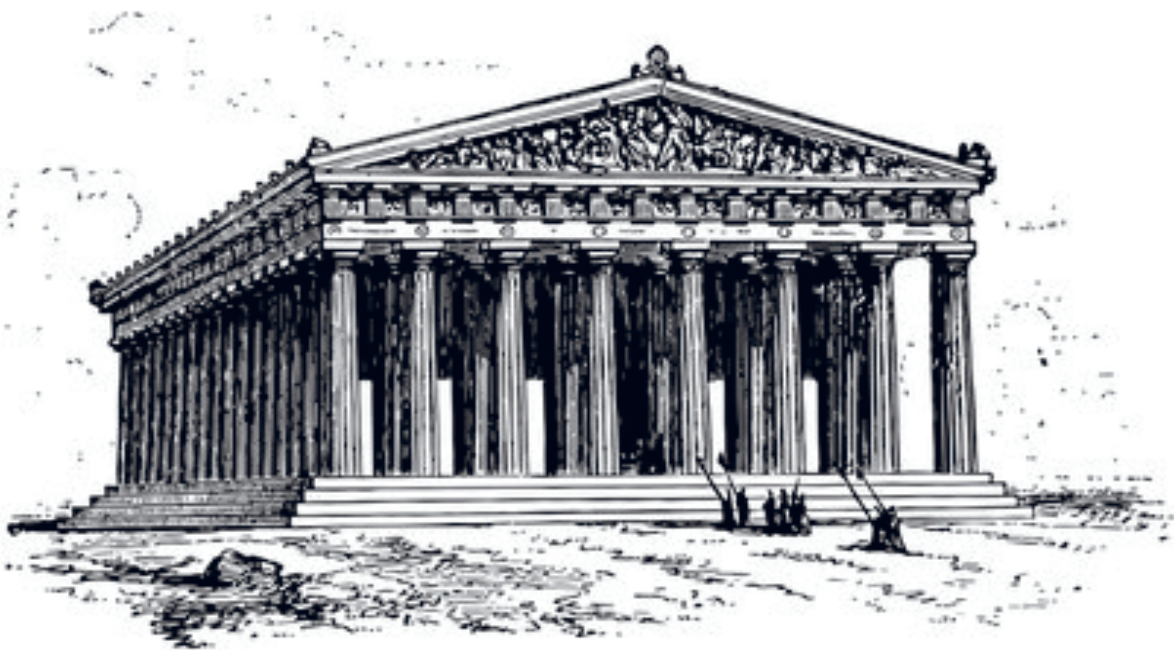


Photo: Parthenon (via Shutterstock)



Take the Greeks as an example. They believed that Mount Olympus was where the Olympian Gods dwell, which established their people as the “chosen ones”. However, due to the region’s mountainous geography, hampering national unity altogether, each city-state was said to have an Olympian patron. Some folktales even suggested that the guardians participated in founding the respective city-state alongside a mortal or were born there. For example, Corinth, a coastal city, was allegedly found by Poseidon, the Sea God, who became their patron. Rituals and monuments were also developed around said divinities, further strengthening the plot’s legitimacy. Across the years, unfortunately, only a handful survived the scour of invaders, but for those that (almost) did—the Parthenon, for instance—we cannot but marvel at their magnitude, the strongest testament to the mythologies’ value. Plus, we must thank them for creating the Olympic Games—it may begin as a tribute to Zeus, the Sky God, but any time today, the international event unites all under the same sky!

### YOUR MYTH, YOUR REALITY

Outsiders can say anything to demote resilient folktales to gibberish, mocking attempts to forge a shared past and culture at the expense of truth.

Perhaps modern Japan will change your mind.

At first glance, many might misbelieve that Japan is a homogenous nation before realising that it is impossible in the globalised era. This intuitive first impression is exactly because “Nihonjinron (The Theory of Japaneseness)” is at play. The theory posits that Japan is a unique society characterised by a single race and single culture. Group behaviour is highly emphasised which could underpin why the general population appears to act identically and rather harmoniously.

In Japan, many of what usually counts as personal choices are societal norms. Practising Shintoism, being stay-at-home mothers, even acting courteous and apologetic are just a few of the prominent examples. Rather than perceiving the inhabitants as being manipulated, perhaps it could reflect how much they yearn for belongingness – not simply to their country, but also to the international world.

*Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu*



Many might know that Japan lost tragically in the Second World War over half a decade ago, which led to the total disbandment of militarism, a belief that borrows generously from the Japanese mythology. The ancient book Kojiki suggested that Japanese emperors were descendants of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu and hence Japan was divinely protected. Therefore, when the Japanese emperor Showa surrendered in 1945, the humiliation the people felt was only conceivable. “Nihonjinron” displaces their disillusionment by attempting to redress Japan into a nation of unique culture, which only the pure Japanese are capable of comprehending. It invites those of the legitimate bloodline to comply with a set of features that “define” themselves, even taking advantage of their divine connection, albeit not as open to shun controversy. With Shinto Shrines and believers proliferating in town, it is reasonable to believe that the ancient myth is still alive in the Japanese’s hearts. Therefore, plenty of researchers speculated that “Nihonjinron” could be a reinvented myth of the past.

## HOLD YOUR HORSES!

Living in an analytical world, we are constantly seeking to prove people wrong. How satisfying it is to have expose all the flaws and fallacies in one’s conviction that he/she is eventually converted and brought to enlightenment! Yet, what if the cost comes in a complete meltdown of his/her world – a loss of purpose and identity? Is the truth genuinely that pivotal in this case? Or are you merely fulfilling your desire to appear smart?

Plus, it never hurts to spread stories that empower people to share kindness. Hence, next time you feel compelled to speak your heart, try to step into others’ shoes and think twice. After all, it’s impossible to dismiss all untruthful schools of thought, as there is always one or two that beguile you, getting you so wind-up that they eventually become embedded in the collective consciousness. So, perhaps you are not sharing the truth either! But that is all okay.



# Science in a World of Uncertainties: Demystifying Humanity with Professor Suzanne So and Professor Kelvin Tsoi

By Buji Wong and Charlotte Ip

Too often, we find ourselves caught up in an unhealthy deceptive loop, only in hindsight. Perhaps you wish you had spent time loving yourself rather than shoe-horning into the perceived archetype. Or you had taken a much-needed digital detox from the terrible news that dominated your Instagram feed every day. Or you never had constructed your self-worth around volatile genetic test results. Living in an era characterised by information explosion—some verified, others not so much—how can we judge what is to trust and what not? How can science and technology propel us to more reliable conclusions? What is the value of research in a world of diversity and irregularity? Over the past month, we donned the detective cape with two seasoned scientists, Professor Suzanne So from the Department of Psychology and Professor Kelvin Tsoi from the School of Public Health, who showed us the ropes to recognise misleading data through a full-bodied experimental design and most of all, how to address overwhelming information with caution and positivity.

***“What we mean by jumping-to-conclusions is that a person gathers very little information before they feel ready to reach conclusions about a certain belief,” explained Suzanne.***



*Schizophrenia Bead Test*

We formulate our beliefs based on what we experience sensually—simple, but what is the line between “I need more information.” and “aha, I got it”? We are not sure, but the beads task might serve as a benchmark.

In front of you are two jars, one with 40 red beads and 60 blue beads, the other with 60 red beads and 40 blue beads. Now, the examiner is going to hide the jars and draw one bead at a time from one of the containers consistently. The million dollar question is, which jar does the bead, red or blue, belong to? What’s noteworthy is that, for each bead taken, it will be immediately returned to the original jar before the subsequent bead is picked, so speculating by the proportion of beads presented may not help. So how many beads will it take to coax an answer out of you?



**Professor Suzanne So**  
Department of Psychology

As a well-established test to discern patients with schizophrenia, it has been replicated by many industry experts like Suzanne, who arrive at the same conclusion: “patients with delusions and schizophrenia jump to conclusions based on the first or the second bead...whereas healthy individuals tend to see more beads before they make their final decision.” Afflicted by the brain disorder, these clients became wound up in a world where everything is supercharged—background buzzes amplified into unbearable nuisance; mild footsteps distorted into angry stomps; warm smiles warped into cold sneers. Hypothesising that “jumping to conclusions reasoning bias” could be a potential disease factor, field specialists developed this simulative yet harmless experiment that also prompts reflection on how we intuitively react to and interpret information.

Today, this phenomenon lends itself best in the social media scene, where user-generated content takes over every netizen’s homepages. But Kelvin reminded us of the foremost question to ask before casting your vote of trust: “is data available good enough to explain [queries you have]?” Even after treating facts and figures for an extended length of time, Kelvin still prefers steering away from media-born numbers since he believed they are rooted in an attention-seeking mentality. It’s difficult to tell what is reliable and what is not, but so are statistics in general, therefore he advised us never to “rely [only] on data-driven conclusions”, a thought shared by Suzanne too.

So how do researchers navigate past the potential deception that lies in data received?

***“I do focus on ‘value’ because we are dealing with health data, how we can use health data to achieve some values. This is our focus,” proclaimed Kelvin, conviction written all across his face.***

While specialising in different health faculties, Suzanne and Kelvin both stressed the importance of understanding and respecting human nature. “Every individual is different—organ shape, size and age,” reiterated Kelvin throughout our brief chat. He was convinced that even machines as advanced as Artificial Intelligence could never replace manmade clinical decisions, but systematic healthcare could be achieved, “each human is a database, but we can’t find a database similar to you.”

Obtaining unconventional data is precisely what medical scientists like Kelvin are focusing on to enhance data significance. When Kelvin first engaged in digital health five to six years ago, what caught his eye was the rising trend of hypertension, an underrated killer that can readily morph into stroke and cardiovascular failure without proper intervention. Joining the ongoing campaign to construct a health management platform, Kelvin looked not at clinical data, but at volunteered information by patients and healthy individuals alike, including sleep quality, exercise and home blood pressure. This is because the environment plays a sizable role in the subject’s stress level, which could affect the “veracity” of results. With the participants’ mental state in mind, Kelvin and his team seek to collect data from multiple dimensions in hopes of driving richer value out of preexisting efforts.

If Kelvin is soliciting non-traditional data to achieve results of higher accuracy, then Suzanne does so by soliciting data



a non-traditional manner. “Implicit testing” is a common experimental design in cognitive psychology and neuroscience where researchers would not disclose the true intention as to why a certain test is conducted, Suzanne said, “because they know that this is what you are measuring, with the awareness, they may do something different which is not natural, not valid.” In a project where she hopes to uncover whether patients with schizophrenia are avoidant of social interactions, she showed the subjects computer-simulated faces of varying emotions and asked them to push and pull a joystick according to the colours of the pictures (e.g. push for sepia pictures and pull for greyscale pictures. Yet, all along none were aware that it was the reaction time differences between emotions of the faces (rather than colours of the pictures) that were captured, which

is believed to imbue Suzanne’s hypothesis with higher validity.

Maybe you have not had the chance to partake in these immersive games, but online personality tests work more or less similarly. Ironically, with the aim of understanding oneself through ticking boxes, we might find ourselves gravitating towards a social archetype. Cognisant that “social desirability” is constantly at play, researchers jump in with attention-checkers that switch previous questions around to detect inconsistent answers. Simply put, contradictory statements like “I consider myself sporty” and “I live a sedentary lifestyle” will simultaneously be present in the same questionnaire. If you happen to agree or disagree with both sentences, this might alarm psychologists that you are not answering truthfully or attentively. While these do not operate like an implicit test, they play tricks on your mind too, precisely because academics spend time understanding humans as themselves, rather than impassive datasets.

So far, consulting and acquiring a diverse range of objective data seems to have set scientists on a solid route to reach the truth. But does that mean our subjective emotions and perceptions mean nothing if they do not align with the device readings?

***“I am fine. Completely fine”, Suzanne’s patient insisted through his mouth guard, which eventually broke after incessant teeth grinding.***

Indeed, numerical data and objective measures form the basis of scientific research, but is everything quantifiable? Suzanne recounted having a patient who suffered from stress issues. When asked how he was feeling, the patient replied “I am fine. Completely fine” despite many years of insomnia and chronic pain he had been experiencing. How should we explain it when the patient’s body is showing symptoms, but the patient does not feel so? In fact, a lot of patients suffering from emotional problems do not know that these problems are the symptoms or do not realize them. Even if we want to quantify subjective experience, how? How do we measure “pain”, for example?

It would be rather easy to resort to purely physiological measures to make medical decisions, but the reality is way more complicated than that. If the patients are delusional, is their subjective experience trustworthy? Suzanne explains, “psychological concepts are, in essence, subjective”. Just because some subjective experience cannot be



**Professor Kelvin Tsoi**  
The Jockey Club School of Public  
Health and Primary Care

be quantified or put on a scale very accurately does not annihilate its value. “Even if there is a discrepancy between a subjective measure and a physiological measure of, say, mood, we may not have to choose one over the other, we can present both”. Especially in a clinical setting, we should not forget that the data is a patient, a living being. We should not blind ourselves in the box of pursuing population truth while neglecting the experience of the individual, which certainly carries some truth. One may argue, what if they lie? Indeed, there are lie detecting or attention verifying tests, but the basis of this interpersonal interaction between patients and researchers is Trust. “Like you are talking to me in an interview and you trust me for what I tell you right? So it’s not just psychology but it’s everything that is interpersonal. If there’s no trust, there is no communication”. It is true that we would have to be critical about the findings, but we would always have to assume something to be reliable before building theories upon them. And trust, especially in the field of clinics, is essential.

This trust is not one directional – Kelvin reminds us. In digital health, the practitioner’s integrity and credibility play a seminal role in guaranteeing especially the regular population’s active participation. There are compassionate volunteers who are willing to provide personal performance data, such as blood pressure and sleep quality, to the database. In the meantime, some individuals, the elderly in particular, may be sensitive to information regarding cancers – potentially due to their superstitions that listening to bad news can catch them bad luck. Even for those volunteers, they would also have to believe in the medical predictions from digital health to do justice to their hard work. So, researchers cannot be too ambitious in data collection, ensuring a sense of security and belief from volunteers. “We are not asking for genetic data. We are just asking for personal performance data including blood pressure and sleep quality. We don’t capture highly sensitive data like GPS”. On the other hand, doctors also received training in communication skills to present information and encourage patients to remain positive. Patients need to trust the practitioners as well.

***“We don’t want to mislabel people as schizophrenic when they are not... because it may be unhelpful for people to carry this label which they don’t have,” Suzanne explains, remarking that giving the right label to emotions and medical conditions is helpful but care is needed.***

However, even if we acknowledge the discrepancy between subjective and objective measures under the patient-researcher trust, what should we do about it? In the clinical setting, the two types of information are equally important. Statistical results give us a general view of the subject, but they are only the foundation of deduction, whereas profile analysis gives an individualized view and thus cannot be done without. That is researchers and clinics being cautious and respectful of the weight of the life of a being.

Therefore, there is a need to conduct more personalised analyses. Kelvin introduced personalised medicine in the field of digital health. Given a database of millions of patients, according to profile classification, medical experts can find a profile quite close to the patient and expect the corresponding results of treatment. At the current stage, many universities in the U.K, Kelvin mentioned, already collected a lot of blood samples, and constructed big databases. Even though personalised medicine is still at the stage of database creation, it is easy to acknowledge the intention of incorporating more detailed information and individualised analysis that migrates general statistics to individualisation.

After all, although we can never be absolutely certain about the data or conclusion from research, we would have to recognise the power of scientific inquiry. Indeed, they could bring up hypotheses and generalities on a large scale, in fields which require personalised attention, individualised studies would still be necessary. If we look at the differences among people, everyone is a unique case study whereas statistical grouping would give us a unified picture of humanity. The switches between these two perspectives are no small assignments and particularly challenging when the patient’s life is on the table.



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# White Lies: A Justified Deception?

*By Jeric Chen*



## DELICIOUS RISOTTO, OR NOT?

A heavenly smell brings you to the dining table at night. Your mom is there, laying platter after platter of appetizing food, until finally, saving the best for the last, she brings out a dish you have surprisingly not seen

before. Steaming creamy rice mixed with mushrooms with a drizzle of spring onion on the top.

Seeing your confused face, she smiles even wider. “Risotto.” She beams. “Try it.”

You spoon a mouthful of rice and stuff it into your mouth. Alas, unfortunately, it does not taste as promising as it smells or looks. Over-cooked, slightly under-seasoned, and a bit mushy too. It is completely understandable though. It is her first time, after all.

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You are all set to blurt out your truthful comments until you see your mom's keen expression, awaiting eagerly for your judgement. Without thinking, you swallow your words down with the risotto and put on a smile instead.

"Absolutely delicious."

### I LIE, YOU LIE, WE ALL LIE.

Now hold on a minute here. Let us turn back to that sentence you said. Isn't that a lie? Didn't you just do the "no, no"?

The undeniable truth, however, is that deception is everywhere. According to Pamela Meyer's TED Talk, we are lied to 200 times a day, and we tell a lie ourselves an average of 1 to 2 times in the same period.

Before you dismiss this as an elaborate bluff, hear me out here. Have you never blamed lateness on traffic congestion when it was really your own fault? Have you never falsely declared a dull, boring painting to be a graceful work of art? These may not be much, but truth be told; they are all lies.

Yes, that's right. I lie, you lie, we all lie.

The ability to lie has been granted to us ever since we could gather our own thoughts. Yet all these years growing up, this quirky skill has been mostly if not always depicted negative-

ly; the repetitive drillings from our parents, teachers and elders all deliver none other than one message—you should not lie. However, as far as statistics show and as we all realize, it is nothing near what we do.

### LOGIC OF LIES

Scientists might link lying to the brain. Some researchers have shown that three key parts -- the prefrontal cortex, the amygdala and the temporal lobe of our brains are stimulated to cope with the rapid surge of information we need to handle as we tell a falsehood. While these facts might marvel us, the question to our observations and concern is really the following.

### Why do we lie?

We all have a reason to lie, and we are all aware of it. At some point, we might have lied to evade consequences, lied to protect our self-image/esteem, or even lied for our personal gain. These lies are condemned, but there perhaps exists a broader picture, a sort of lie we can just so possibly tell.

Modern theories reveal just the thing. Psychologists have classified varying forms of lies, concluding the two major categories into antisocial and prosocial lies, or more simply, black, and white lies. No clear boundaries have been set, nor could there ever be due to the subjectivity of

"good" itself, but by definition, black lies benefit yourself, while white lies benefit others.

UC Berkeley-based magazine, Greater Good states that most of us develop the ability to lie at the age of 3. We start off by telling lies for our own interest, but as we grow older, we begin to lie out of empathy and compassion. A quote that captures it perfectly: a struggle between honesty and kindness. The article "Developmental profiles of children's spontaneous lie-telling behavior" points out this progression. Kindness wins, we lie, receive positive reactions from those we had lied to, and the cycle repeats.

Soon, our habits will provoke us to start lying out of tact (You look dazzling in that dress), psychological compensation (I failed my test because I had a splitting headache), power deference (I love my job so much), and relational stability (Oh yeah, I love bitter melon too. Clearly, I don't).

Contrary to bringing any harm, we only seem to perfect our social etiquette.

### DISADVANTAGED SOCIALLY IF YOU DO NOT LIE?

As quoted from the website Psychology Today, the article "Lying: Thoughts of an applied social psychologist" by Saxe, L., white lies are seen as a mark of civility and maturity.



Moreover, another article by Mark L. Knapp and Mark E. Comaden in the Human Communication Research shows that those who fail to tell white lies at the proper moment are considered socially inapt. Other research even prove that white lies improve trust and bonds. Our family, friends, even colleagues that realized we have lied for their sake have a higher fondness for us than other people who are 100% honest.

Psychologically speaking, we are warmed by these lies, even when they do not tell the truth, and even when we know so ourselves too. On the surface, no actual harm is done, and sometimes, we just need that little bit of comfort for ourselves.

### LYING IS JUSTIFIED?

At this point, you might be scratching your head. So, am I saying that lying is justified?

Let me recount some famous myths.

Six-year-old George Washington hacked his father's favorite cherry down with a hatchet but told the truth when confronted. His father praised his honesty claiming that it was worth more than a thousand trees. The young shepherd joked about a wolf eating his sheep, made the villagers fools for his own amusement and what happened? His sheep were really eaten.

The moral of these stories emphasizes the importance of honesty. At the same time, the nature of a lie is a matter of perspective, and with such subjectivity, it is hard to pinpoint whether a particular lie is righteous or not.

So, the answer to the question: Are white/prosocial lies always justified? No. They are not. Say you trick children that unicorns are real, won't they be disappointed to grow up and find that they aren't?

"So you're always honest," I said.

"Aren't you?"

"No," I told him. "I'm not."

"Well, that's good to know, I guess."

"I'm not saying I'm a liar," I told him. He raised his eyebrows. "That's not how I meant it, anyways."

"How'd you mean it, then?"

"I just...I don't always say what I feel."

"Yeah," he said. "So do lies, though."

### Sarah Dessen, *Just Listen*



### WE SHOULD LEARN TO LIE.

Therefore, a plausible conclusion to draw is that instead of saying "we should never lie", a better phrase would be "we should learn to lie". Sadly, unlike Mathematics, there isn't a set of theorems governing lying, and doubtfully will there ever be one. However, just like how we can employ our brains to lie, we can also utilize it for careful analysis and consideration for each lie we tell. I present the following two approaches.

## **5 W Approach**

The intention of a lie is the key in deciding the nature of a lie. Similar to writing a story, ask yourself the 5 Ws. Who are you lying to? What are you lying about? Are you lying on a suitable occasion or time? Most importantly, why are you lying?

If there is hesitation, or if you can't get pass these five questions and perceive harm in your lie, perhaps being honest would be better. After all, there is no wrong in telling the truth.

## **Long-term Consequences Approach**

A lie can be mild now, but chaotic in the future. Ponder on the future consequences your lie can bring, and weight it accordingly to the necessity of your lie now. Is lying about your friend's outfit necessary? Is lying about traffic necessary? Again, these are circumstantial, and it is up to our own experience, our intuition, and our critical thinking to assess the right moment to lie.

## **Concluding remarks**

We can lie, and at times, we should lie. That is the truth in our society. Yet lying, this unique crafty skill gifted to us may yield polar opposite effects depending on how we use it.

So, as I conclude, next time when your nagging mother instructs you never to lie, be sure to correct her and say "No, no, no, no, you should learn to lie".

Liar, liar, pants on fire. Well, I lied, you lied, we all lied. Our pants may have burnt down, or surprise, they are fine.



# A Fork for Thought in My Dietary Road

By Evelyn Lam

A great appetizer before sinking your fork into the meat

What kind of prison do you think is the worst? One with a hundred members of gang bullying you? One with no food or drink for days? I remember reading about a prison cell with height shorter than the average human height and space that only allows you to sit with your legs bent. You can never lay down or stand up straight. Needless to say, stretching out your limbs is out of question. I was totally overwhelmed. If you're thinking, 'this should be the cell of the crazy world war camp in the last century', I can tell you, NO. It is happening right now every day in this modern era in every "highly developed" democratic country.

The deadly eyes, the traces of struggles... all happened before my eyes. I can hardly erase them from my mind. I often go to the wet market with mum during weekends. Once, while she was picking a fish for dinner, I was looking at another fish in a cubicle half-filled with water. 'The freshest food is the one that's alive,' so the shopkeepers keep

the animals alive by all means at the lowest cost before selling them. The fish was rather flat in shape, not the flatfish kind which lays on the ground, but the one swimming "vertically". Its mouth was trembling as it wasn't fully covered by the water. It could not move forward or backward or spin around while restricted by the four acrylic boards. I wondered how long it had been trapped. Do animals have suicidal thoughts?

Well, we can never tell unless we become one of them, but some of them do have emotions, which can result in self-destructive behaviors, such as scratching itself, banging its head onto the walls, refusing to eat and so on. One typical example is the suicide of Kathy, a dolphin contained in a concrete tank at Miami Seaquarium. She intentionally stopped breathing and drowned herself. In September 2021, it was reported that a bear in a bear farm killed her son and then herself after witnessing the pain its son experienced while having its bile extracted<sup>1</sup>.

Despite limited research, veterinary associations<sup>2</sup> reveal that there are also cases in which home pet animals, with "comfy" living conditions according to our standards, suffer from stress and depression.

Does this happen only to those animals owned by nasty keepers? Not at all. The modern farming industry is generally appalling. Once I joined a VR experience (I said yes for a free donut) showing the whole process of turning a pig into decently packed pork in a supermarket. In the farm, when a male piglet is born, it will soon go through castration and tail docking, in the name of preventing chaos and enhancing meat quality, without any pain



Source: Pixabay

<sup>1</sup> News report on the suicide incidents:

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/16196885/dolphin-kathy-flipper-killed-herself/>

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/16220731/bear-strangled-cub-killed-self-farm/>

<sup>2</sup> American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior.

relief measures. They are crammed in an enclosure where they can hardly spin around without hitting their peers. When they are sent to the factory, their blood vessels are cut, and they are hung on hooks when they are still conscious so that the blood can be drained. These are all done in front of the eyes of their companions, who are going to suffer next. I could hear the scream, I could see how they struggled, I thought I could even smell the blood. Back to reality, the volunteer continued to show me the plight of other farm animals. The artificially giant chickens suffer from difficulties in breathing and walking. Their beaks are cut when they are born to prevent feather pecking. The cows are trapped in an area full of waste to give milk. That day, I couldn't put a single piece of meat inside my mouth.

I felt like one of the Nazi soldiers, witnessing the murders I consciously committed, knowing the innocence of the victims but distancing myself from the guilt as it is just an "order" assigned by the norm. This situation was similar to the well-known experiment by psychology professor Stanley Milgram. The participants were asked to act as teachers and administer an electric shock to students sitting in separate rooms for every wrong answer they provided, not knowing that the electric shock was actually fake. As the "teachers" could not see the "victims" but only the experimenters, most of them obeyed the electric shock order from the experimenters

even though they knew it could be fatal. Similarly, the far distance between the eating house and the farm allows us to withdraw from the crime scene and enjoy cheap and tasty flesh every day without guilt. The meat culture surrounding us exerts peer pressure on us. However, we all know by heart that suffering is happening every second to satisfy our appetite.

Consequently, we strive to gather evidence to justify meat consumption. Most meat-eaters justify their choice with the operation of the ecology that the stronger creature would dominate the others. Some Christians cite the Bible that God granted the animals as food for humans.

Some scientists investigate the body of our ancestors to prove that humans are designed to eat meat. Yet, after all, "consuming" and "torturing" are two different "actions". Consumption is a means of survival, which could be inevitable if available resources are limited, but the torture involved in meat production is unnecessary as it aims at maximizing profit only. Unfortunately, if you are consuming meat from your nearby markets, they are most likely to be from one of those hell-like farms. According to recent research, more than 90% of the animal farms in the US were factory farms while they accounted for 70% of those in the UK<sup>1</sup>. You can barely get rid of the brutality while having meat every meal.



<sup>1</sup> Recent research:  
<https://www.sentienceinstitute.org/us-factory-farming-estimates>  
<https://www.ciwf.org.uk/factory-farm-map/>





Despite the exposure to all of the truth above, unfortunately, I was too cowardly to go against the norm and confront constant bombardment from meat-eaters. Growing up in a culture embracing meat consumption, it is hard to confront meat-eaters without offending anyone because standing up for my choice is inevitably accusing them of cruelty or even immorality, which is not my intention. I might be mocked as a “leftard” who judges daily decisions from a moral high ground. I wasn’t ready to bear the possible criticisms like “plants may also have feelings” or “you are defying nature”, which could hardly be discussed in a few words. The media, especially advertisements, has long portrayed meat as a necessary input for health, which is not true. With a well-planned balanced diet, vegetarians can obtain an adequate amount of all nutrients provided by meat. A recently published study<sup>1</sup>, which spanned 32 years, even proved that having a plant-based diet can reduce the chance

of getting heart diseases by 52%. However, Rome wasn’t built in a day. Reshaping concepts of a deep-rooted culture requires exceptional endurance for repetitive explanation and confrontation.

What really transformed me was the kids. In my teaching practice, I was asked to teach a unit related to food. Of course, you would cover chicken wings, fish balls, steak and other kinds of meat. I hesitated for a moment when scrolling down the vocabulary list. Why are we teaching innocent kids to consume others’ body parts in a primary school? What if the children question the cruelty? How should I deal with this situation in the future? Telling the kids “yes, we are the murderers, but we treasure life”? Or “we do love animals, but they are too tasty to resist”? Children of all ages do have empathy for other lives. They could observe and experience the struggle as well. As a role model of these future pillars, the contradiction in

me would only be passed on to them and eventually shape a group of ostriches who bury their heads in the sand in face of struggle. I was finally persuaded by my professionalism to go against meat consumption. To encourage self-reflection while leaving the choice to my students, instead of delivering a startling speech, I seized every opportunity to elicit the imagination in my students. I spared some time to chat with them about the feelings of the animals that

were made into food. I started to design lessons related to animal rights. By learning their peers’ opinions and some related social issues, they did surprisingly have a second thought about their daily practices. It was my first time being amazed by the magic of education.

After all, consumers have the greatest power to alter the current animal farming practice by casting their votes for ethical products. As global citizens in this highly developed society, we ceaselessly pursue freedom and rights, accusing the regime of deprivation, debating to reach a higher moral standard. While reforming a system is more than difficult, why not start from reforming our own meal? It isn’t so persuasive when we’re fighting for righteousness but placing others’ lives under torture at the same time. Being a role model isn’t just the job of teachers but the responsibility of every citizen.

<sup>1</sup> Related study:  
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/more-evidence-that-a-plant-based-diet-protects-heart-health?c=1610715116635#Young-adulthood-diet-study>

## Indian Food Essay

by Patricia Lam & Priscilla Chan

### **First stop: Chaiwala**

As avid foodies, we love to explore Hong Kong food scenes and try a variety of food. And we came across an Indian restaurant on Wyndham Street, Central, upon a serendipitous encounter. What first caught our eyes was how enigmatic the design of the entrance is – a red monolithic door embedded in a cerulean blue wall, with the name of the restaurant “Chaiwala” engraved on a gold plate. This mysterious design somehow magically lured us into the venue. As we entered the restaurant, to our surprise, we were greeted by warm orange lights, soothing jazz, and vibrant colors of Indian designs. Unlike most restaurants, where the kitchen is usually hidden from the guests’ views, Chaiwala

proudly presents its sizeable open kitchen right before the dining area, showcasing guests with the process of the chefs’ work. Pass the kitchen is strips of linen intertwined with cute Indian-style dolls, stretching across the ceiling in the dining hall. Along with mellow light emanating from the pendant lamps, we were basked in a feeling of hospitality and coziness. The juxtaposition of what was presented outside versus the restaurant’s ambience gave us a feeling of novelty, and we could not wait to see what this place had to offer.

Chaiwala gives guests a wide variety of Indian cuisine to choose from. From New Delhi style butter chicken to Tandoori Veggie platter. If one of your friends is vegan, you can still easily find plant-based options here. For people who have difficulty picking what to eat, Chaiwala also offers a Dabbawala tasting menu. In India, especially Mumbai, a “Dabbawala” delivers hot food in Tiffin boxes from a person’s residence to their workplace. This tasting menu offers a selection of Chaiwala’s best dishes from different Indian regions, so guests can taste a wide range of flavours in one sitting.

One of our favourite dishes is the Rara Kheema Pav “Bom-

bay Bun”. It is a dish consisting of minced lamb and lamb chunks, served from hot buttered buns. The meat was juicy and tender, and the sauce was extremely flavorful. Paired with the meat and the fluffy and soft buttered buns, we were temporarily transported to heaven. This combination was a match made in heaven as the lightness of the bun balanced out the richness of the meat, and the savoury sauce seeping into the bread made it even more delightful.

Of course, we couldn’t leave an Indian restaurant without trying their naans. We got all three flavours– plain, buttered, and garlic. We ate them individually, as well as dipping them into the rich curry sauce from another dish that we ordered. The naan was charred and crispy on the outside but soft and warm on the inside. We devoured the naans within minutes, and we were all delighted with it.

### **Next stop: The New Punjab Club**

Suppose your palate is yet to be satisfied with a single meal at Chaiwala, and if that is the case, another Indian restaurant is waiting for you just a few blocks away on Wyndham Street. So, on one Wednesday night, we went to a Michelin 1 star restaurant, the New Punjab Club, for dinner.





The exterior of this restaurant is painted green, with the word “Punjab” engraved in gold. Green, in Indian culture, is symbolic of a new beginning and harvest, and this symbolism is echoed in the interior design of the restaurant. As the name suggests, the design of this 9-table restaurant is highly influenced by the owner’s homeland, Punjab. The restaurant’s interior screams exuberance and diversity, synchronising with Punjab’s culture under colonial influences. The paradoxical layout gives our eyes a refreshing experience.

That night, we were seated on a Victorian couch with red upholstery. We saw an array of Churchill tableware placed on the wooden table locally sourced from Punjab. On the wall were paintings by Pakistani artists, with themes ranging from portraits to modern abstract art. The thoughts put into the restaurant’s design could only be topped by the delicacy of the food they served that night.

The menu is meat-centric. For starters, you can choose from the array of nashta (breakfast snacks in India); for mains, you can choose from the list of tandoors (dishes cooked in cylindrical clay or metal oven). The keema pau (ground meat served with buns) at Chaiwala was delicious, but those at the New Punjab Club undoubtedly won the game. The mutton was perfectly spiced and tenderly cooked. The milk buns were served right from the oven, with the outer layer baked golden yellow and the inner layer still creamy white. As we bit into the crispy outer layer of the bun, we felt its soft, cloud-like inner layer landing on the tip of our tongue. The sweetness of the bun was followed by the savory taste of the mutton, allowing our tongue to experience an array of tastes. The potato crisp served together with the bun and mutton added another dimension of texture to the whole experience.

When we thought our taste buds could not be further indulged, we were served carrot sticky



*Keema Pau*

toffee pudding. Our eyes dazzled as we stared at the dessert on the table. The brown pudding was moist as it was bathed in gleaming sticky toffee. Sitting on the pudding was a scoop of coconut ice cream, with some peanuts intricately sprinkled on top. We quickly dug into the pudding, taking our first bite of the luxurious blend of flavors. The warmth of the pudding was accompanied by the refreshing yet soothing coolness of the ice cream. The taste of coconut blends just perfectly with the sweetness of toffee. Everything was just perfect, and we became silent as we devoured the dessert.



*Carrot Sticky Toffee Pudding*

### ***Chaiwala or the New Punjab Club?***

On just one street in Central already sit two authentic Indian restaurants that any Indian food lover should try. If you long for a chill night with good food, Chaiwala will be the ideal restaurant. Yet if you will like to splurge one day, go to the New Punjab Club and indulge yourself with the unforgettable dining experience that awaits you behind those green doors.

# Green Knights

**By: Govini Elvitigala**

## How much action justifies passion?

Earlier this week, an unusual model took to the Paris Fashion Week walkway. Dressed plainly but poised enough to belong on the runway, she wielded a banner declaring

**OVERCONSUMPTION =  
EXTINCTION**

She was no fashion model – she was a model activist. The only one to have made it into a heart of gaudy extravagance, reminding everyone that they did not live in a void separate from the consequences of their actions (Gallois, 2021).



Art of activists, inspired by Hozier's Nina Cried Power ft. Mavis Staples.

WAHOOOOOOOOOOO!!! Yes!!! I agree 100%! You are amazing! Remind them!!! I yelled internally upon seeing WWF's post about her. It was startling. It was BRILLIANT. More people needed to see it! But, just as with countless earlier posts of the like, I could not make myself share it on social media. And so, while news of her appeared and reappeared on my social media that day, my fingers hovered over Instagram and I have never been an activist, I have no right or reason to post about activists, I haven't even done anything for the cause! hovered around in my head. This indecision is why a certain movie that came out earlier this year stirred me.

*Gawain: "I'm not a knight.*

*Scavenger: But you said you were.*

*Gawain: I never said that. You said that. I never said I was a knight.*

*Scavenger: But are you?*

*Gawain: No! No, I'm not.*

*Scavenger: Oh. Well, you look like one." (Lowery, 2021)*



## ***The Green Knight (2021)***

The Green Knight (2021) is the best adaptation of the age-old Arthurian poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. It stays loyal to its source material while also weaving a bizarre and much more significant tale into the watcher's mind. It is a surreal film, with immersive cinematography and a subversive story that leaves the watcher reeling and confused.

Young Gawain is the nephew of frail, old King Arthur. Supine Gawain's mettle is yet untested when one day The Green Knight bursts in on Arthur's court and calls on the "boldest of blood and the wildest of heart" to "try with honour to lay a blow" against him, with the promise that in a year, he would return the blow. Not-a-knight Gawain, eager to earn his place by Arthur's side, is pushed to the challenge and beheads the unresisting Green Knight. The decapitated knight then picks his head up and returns to his distant abode to wait for Gawain to come and keep his promise. And so, in a year, we follow Gawain on his arduous quest to lose his head. (Lowery, 2021)

*Gawain: "Will I return?"*

*Gawain's Mother: When you return, you will come with your head held high. I promise, you will not come to harm. And, boy, my boy, do not waste this." (Lowery, 2021)*

## ***The Great***

The model activist, Marie Cohu

et, was the only protester who made it to the catwalk, while the others protested outside. The day ended with her being tackled and two other activists being arrested (Gallois, 2021). But that is normal, in fact, last month nearly 500 of them were arrested. Two years ago, 1700 were arrested (BBC, 2020). While the dates will probably not hold until the time you read this, non-violent activism by way of mass arrests is a timeless form of protesting, meant to disrupt the daily routines that distance us everyday people from serious climate panic. Mass arrests equal mass attention equal vital change. It is bold and wild. However, in Sustainababble #202: The Trembling Warrior, Gill Coombs, an activist who got herself arrested, said that not everyone has to be brave enough to get arrested in the name of change making. You should just do whatever you can, and ripples turn into waves – I'll do this good thing, you do it too, then maybe everyone will do this good thing and we will have saved the world. Except...

*Essel: "Are you really going to go?"*

*Gawain: Should I?"*

*Essel: I like your head better where it is.*

*Gawain: I gave my word. I made a covenant.*

*Essel: This is how silly men perish.*

When was Goodness ever enough?

## ***The Good***

To be Good is to be aware of the consequences of your actions - to be conscious and make the decisions that do not harm anyone (or at least do the least harm). Going meatless for a day, using Ecosia, refusing excess packaging - the Good is in the simple things. But Goodness is never enough. For Gawain, Goodness was not enough because he was a lazy coward who did nothing but lay around in brothels all day - he was not Good, so he needed to be Great. For me Goodness is not enough because when people lose lives and livelihoods to environmental crises, how is the simple Good anything but the bare minimum for being a decent human being? How can I do only the duty of every human and then call myself passionate about the environment? What did those small "Good" things I incorporated into my life even do? I am still going to crawl into my comfortable bed after typing this and everything will just... keep going. So, no. The simple Good everyone can do for the Earth is not enough.

I thought a Great thing – a thing that goes beyond "do no harm" to "do some good" – would be enough. I thought a protest, anything that feels solid, anything that I can show myself and say, "see I did something worthwhile!" would be enough.

*Lord Bertilak: “And this is all it takes for that part to be had?*

*You’ll do this one thing, you return home, a changed man, an honourable man? Just like that?*

*Gawain: Yes.*

*Lord Bertilak: Oh, I wish I could see the new you. But perhaps we will miss our old friend, and our fun, and our games.” (Lowery, 2021)*

“Solid,” “worthwhile,” “enough.” What a lie.

### **The Gain**

I have come up with a plethora of ill-thought ideas in my time, ideas that could have been Great if I had planned them out properly. But I did not and after every failure, there is always this lingering feeling that I deserved better simply because I had good intentions. It is an odd feeling, and a laughable one. But in the poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (of which The Green Knight is an adaptation as mentioned), Gawain is rewarded simply for good intentions. He is commended for keeping his promise to come to meet the Green Knight, excused his failure to keep a different promise, and let go with a nick on his neck. This is something we see often in the classic hero’s tale. Being rewarded not for success but for the process – the journey, not the destination. But not in this movie.

*Gawain: “This is...really all there is?*

*Green Knight: What else ought there be?” (Lowery, 2021)*

I once took part in something Great. A volunteer project to clean up a plastic spill.<sup>1</sup> Despite spending some three hours shovelling sand dotted with plastic pellets all I could think at the end of it was “is this really all there is?” What was 10kg of lentil-size plastic collected by some 20 people when 1680 tonnes had been spilled? Activists, climate and otherwise, do Great things knowing that in the end they might not have anything to show for it and they keep going. But me, all I can see are these green knights screaming “I tried! I tried! Why doesn’t that count for anything?!” at the end of the world. It is tragic but it seems realistic.

### **The Green**

When the action passion brings might have been for nothing at all, how much action justifies passion? How much should someone contribute to prove they are not pretending to be enthusiastic? How much action is needed to validate one’s passion to others, to oneself?

I really do not know. But I do know that there is no point in chasing after the feeling that one is doing enough – I for one will never find it.

*Lady Bertilak: “Whilst we’re off looking for red, in comes green.*

*Red is the colour of lust. But green is what lust leaves behind, in heart, in womb. Green is what is left when ardour fades, when passion dies, when we die too.” (Lowery, 2021)*

Accepting that I cannot validate my enthusiasm, if that enthusiasm disappeared this instant, I think I can shake out my routine to give a good-sized pile of green. Is it big enough? No. But now leaving “passion” to our green knights, this human is going to collect Good green things without keeping count. Good old duty, “doing no harm,” is not “enough”, but maybe attempting to be just a decent human being day in day out is in itself a worthwhile endeavour.

*Postscript: The Group – When the Great is Enough*

*Sometime after writing, I volunteered a second time at a different organization. Unlike my first-time volunteering when I solitarily shovelled sand and more sand, this time I worked alongside a group of passionate young environmentalists. At the end of it, a whole 10kg of plastic had been collected by just 20 people! Yes, much more had spilled but look at what we achieved!!...The people alongside whom you strive to “do some good,” they can make the Great feel enough.*

<sup>1</sup> Plastic spill from the May 2021 disaster where a cargo ship sank near our coast dumping 1680 tonnes of plastic pellets (nurdles) into our ocean. These lentil-sized floatable nurdles are how plastic destined for making your everyday goods are transported and this spill was not an isolated incident. For one, there was a similar, albeit much less disastrous, spill in Hong Kong in 2012. Cleaning up nurdles that wash up on shore before they are swept back into the ocean is important because marine animals mistake the nurdles for food and ingest them. Further, these nurdles absorb toxins, and their ingestion can lead to bioaccumulation of toxins in the food chain. The nurdles are bigger than sand particles, so you remove nurdles from the beach by sieving the polluted sand. The fields of plastic immediately following the spill were cleared out, but our beaches still have as many nurdles as they do seashells (McVeigh, 2021) (The Pearl Protectors, n.d.).





*Gawain about to get his head cut off by The Green Knight.*





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