

Lucy As Christ Figure: The Theme Of Sacrifice As Portrayed In The Film Lucy (2014)

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Abstract: Truth has always been preposterous for the worldly wise. Those who engage themselves with a quest for truth have never been accepted by the world and have been alienated and even put to death. The life and death of Jesus Christ is an example. The great men like Galileo Galeilei, the renowned astronomer, and Michael Servetus, the theologian and the first European to correctly describe blood circulation between heart and lungs, met with almost the same fate. The Hollywood movie Lucy portrays a similar character whose acquiring of the ultimate knowledge results in her dispersal into the universe putting an end to her existence as a human being. The paper is an in depth examination of the life and death of Jesus Christ, born in 6 BC, and Lucy, the heroine of a 21st century Hollywood movie Lucy. The following study is further a reflection on the theme of sacrifice portrayed in the movie through Lucy and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, both having certain aspects in common irrespective of the different ages in which they lived. This study attempts to compare and contrast the events in the life of both the characters and offers a critique of the claim of certain critics that the film is a vindication of Luciferian philosophy.

Keywords: sacrifice, self-crucifixion, Jesus Christ, Lucy, religion, omniscience

I. INTRODUCTION

Movies are usually categorized into various genres including science fiction, action, adventure, detective fiction, romance and so on. The movie under discussion has too many of it. It is predominantly a science fiction movie about an American woman who acquires the power of a drug called CPH4. It turns out to be a perfect blend of science fiction and action thriller. The movie discusses the drug CPH4, its power, its usage and its effects on the cerebral capacity of an ordinary human being. It deals with the aftermath of acquiring the potentiality to use 100 percent of one's brain as a result of the consumption of this drug. The heroine centric movie is an odyssey of Lucy from the "evolution to revolution" of the world.

Critical comments mention it as the dumbest movie ever made due to its emphasis on the myth that a normal human being in his lifetime uses only 10-15 percent of his brain capacity. Meanwhile, it is acclaimed as 'a full-out action movie-and a sober rumination on the nature of existence. It is

both things, effectively and sincerely'. The movie, despite of poor critical appreciation, won second and third places for best actress in the Village Voice Film Poll Awards and National Society Of Film Critics Awards respectively and also several other nominations such as the Best Action/Adventure Film in Saturn Awards, Visual Effects Society Awards and so on.

'Lucy' was 'written and directed by Luc Besson and produced by his wife Virginie Besson Sila for his company Europacorp'. Scarlett Johanson portrays the central character Lucy and it also stars Morgan Freeman, Amr Waked and Choi Min-sik. The 90 minutes entertainer was first released on 25th of July 2014 in US and became a box office success. The movie was shot in Taipei, Paris and New York City; it tells the story of a girl who was tricked into a drug mule by her boyfriend for the transportation of a very dangerous synthetic drug CPH4. 'She gains "psychokinetic" abilities due to the absorption of this nootropic drug into her bloodstream' when it leaks inside her abdomen. The drug affects her brain enabling it to use 100 percent of the cerebral capacity. The movie further shows the side effects of the drug which finally results

in the disappearance of Lucy into the universe.

The paper deals with a theme that highly opposes the argument of some critics who connected the movie with the Luciferian Philosophy based on the significance of the name Lucy as a human version of Lucifer. The trans-humanism portrayed in the movie also persuades them to this concept because the trans-humanistic trait contradicts the Bible. Therefore they call the movie *Lucy* as the 'modern futuristic by-product of Luciferian philosophy'. Another reason put forth by the critics is the notion of omniscience of God. In this movie, Lucy turns out to be an 'all-knowing' or omniscient and an omnipresent being which is against the Biblical perceptions.

An effort is made in this paper to bring about the analogies between the life and experiences of Lucy and Jesus Christ. Lucy the central character could be seen as ascending to a Christ-like divinity. The name of the central character Lucy is the name of the woman who is the first ever discovered ancestor of human beings and she belonged to the *Australopithecus afarencis* species in Ethiopia about 3.2 million years ago. Towards the climax of the movie, the heroine travels all through from the 21st century Lucy and ends up face to face with the "first human on the Earth", Lucy, touches her fingertips and goes back to experience the Big Bang. Throughout her life the major events that occurred had a lot in common with the life and death of Jesus Christ, his sacrifice and crucifixion. Thus, this analysis of the lives of both compares and contrasts the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as a self sacrifice for the goodness and liberation of the world from sins, with the selfless sacrifice of Lucy in the film. Both the personalities had the same intentions and acted differently with their varied reasons and situations. Thus, the paper mainly focuses on the idea of modern martyrdom of Lucy with reference to Christ.

II. LUCY AS A CHRIST-LIKE FIGURE

Like every other female Lucy was a young girl living and pursuing her studies in Taipei, Taiwan. She had a boyfriend whom she had started dating since a week and who worked for a group of gangsters working in the leadership of a person called Mr Jang (Choi Min-Sik) who dealt with the production and transportation of drugs. He trapped her into this and in spite of her opposition, turned her into a drug mule for its sale in Europe. They cut open her stomach and filled it with the CPH4 drug packets. Unfortunately, the drug leaks inside her and she begins to experience superhuman qualities like enhanced physical and mental capabilities including telepathy and telekinesis. She starts to have the ability not to feel pain and other discomforts of her life, her virtue of humanity being an exception. Her intellectual level increases at a rapid rate from the 10 percent to higher levels. The drug enhanced her brain usage and she gradually proceeds to attain the ultimate knowledge of all things including the universe as a whole. To impart all this information she approaches Professor Samuel Norman with the help of a local police inspector Pierre Del Rio (Amr Waked). She experiences the truths of all pervading principles of the universe and finally altered herself to sacrifice for the humanity.

Lucy the character begins a space time journey into the past witnessing all the changes that happened during the ages including urbanization and industrialization. And eventually she reaches the oldest discovered ancestor of mankind, Lucy. In a symbolic gesture, Lucy points her finger towards the other Lucy, the half-monkey. This is a cross reference to Michelangelo's mural where God creates Adam. The painting is also momentarily shown in the movie when Dr. Norman gives a talk on humanity's amazing accomplishments despite only using 10% of their brain power. Lucy touches fingertips with the ape and goes on to witness the beginning of time right from the Big Bang. After attaining 100 percent of her cerebral capacity, she disappears into the *space time continuum* where she propounds to the fact that everything is connected and existence is only proven through time. She tells the professor, "Time is the only true unit of measure. It gives proof to the existence of matter. Without time, we don't exist." And she triumphed the time and life through her cerebral capacity and finally offers herself. Thus Lucy turns out to be one with the universe after which she imparts a message saying, "I am everywhere."

Jesus Christ of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem in 6 BC. His crucifixion and resurrections are two most important events in the human history as per Christianity because it is said that the human race had the opportunity for eternal salvation through these two events. He led a life astray from the outside world for the first thirty years of his life before starting his public life that hardly lasted three years. His life and ministry are recorded in the four Gospels in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. They are also known as canonical Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He was entrusted with the purpose of liberation of human race from the bondage of sins through his self sacrifice. His self sacrifice saved the whole world. Jesus endured six trials – three by Jewish leaders and three by the Romans. Pilate tried to put the issue on a compromise but the Jewish priests accused him of having claimed to be God and they wanted him to be crucified which was the most disgraceful punishment of the time. And at last, he was crucified and died in Golgotha, Jerusalem.

Jesus lived a sinless life on earth yet he had to undergo crucifixion. God had said the punishment for sin is death. Since we all have sinned, we needed someone sinless to die in our place and become the saving grace of the world. He did it for us.

Both Jesus Christ and Lucy were normal people in the beginning who later underwent self sacrifice in different ways for various reasons. The traits they share in common come to light when we start comparing the lives of the two. Both fell prey to their fate by the betrayal of their loved ones. In Jesus' life, Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Judas kissed Him on His cheek for the enemies to identify Jesus. Later, He was chained and brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. Jesus was betrayed by His disciple while Lucy was tricked into drug mule by her boyfriend. Later, we see that due to the pricking of his inner conscience Judas commits suicide. In the movie, Lucy's boyfriend meets the same fate by being shot dead by the gangster Mr Jang. Moreover, Jesus Christ had to commit this self sacrifice in order to save the world from sins and

opened a way to eternal life or heaven.

The drug that caused Lucy's metamorphosis was also a product of the enhanced development in technology and industrialization. Thus, she was left with no other choice but to undergo the ill effects of the drug like Christ who was given no other option except crucifixion. Since she knew that the usage and consumption of drugs like CPH4 can harm human beings Lucy consumes all the unused packets of the drug so that not a bit of it remains to destroy another human life. This is an evidence that humaneness still pertained in her even after she abandoned all her human emotions and feelings. This can be seen in relation to Christ's affection for the world even after the world accused and crucified Him. Likewise, it was out of her compassion for the world, that is, to save the people from the fatal drug that, she ventures to sacrifice her life. She wants to see the end of this drug with herself and so she puts an end to all the individuals who prepare, transport and sell it.

The moment she recognizes the effects of the drug inside her body she contacts her mother for one last conversation because she knew she would not exist long in this world. She feels that throb inside her heart to thank and express her love for her mother. Now she is even aware of her mother's love right from the moment of her father's and mother's intercourse to her birth and she could even remember the taste of her mother's milk and the number of kisses that she got from her.

I feel everything. Space, the air, the vibrations, the people. I can feel the gravity. I can feel the rotation of the earth, the heat leaving my body, the blood in my veins. I can feel my brain, the deepest parts of my memory... (...)I remember the taste of your milk in my mouth. The room, the liquid... (...)And I want to thank you for the thousand kisses that I still feel on my face.

This love of Lucy towards her mother can be related well with the love of Jesus Christ for his mother. Jesus knows everything from his birth in this world as a human being till his crucifixion. Lucy traverses through all the ages and times and reaches the beginning of everything and witnesses the Big Bang from where the entire Universe started. The element of omniscience depicts the commonness between them. Lucy and Christ comprehend their death and purpose of life in advance. Thus, all their actions and words follow their resolution of self sacrifice. Christ on perceiving the agony of his mother, Mary, consoles her and hands her to the care of his most favourite and youngest disciple John. The book of John 19: 25-27 in Bible reports:

By the cross of Jesus stood His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Then Jesus, seeing His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing there, said to His mother, "Woman, there is your son." Then to the disciple He said "There is your mother." And from that moment the disciple took her to his home.

A justification for Jesus addressing His mother as woman can be that calling her mother while He is bleeding on the cross can break her heart. Therefore, to bring that feeling of indifference He called her so. The responsibility that Jesus Christ shows toward His mother is seen in Lucy because she comprehends the idea that she would die soon so that she can give all the information prevailed and sensed through her brain to the safest and worthy person else all the facts will be misused. Thus, she finds and hand over all the information

into the right hands i.e., the Professor Samuel Norman. As Lucy prepares to inject herself with the entire remaining CPH4 drug the professor says: "All this knowledge, Lucy – I'm not even sure that mankind is ready for it. We're so driven by power and profit. Given man's nature, it might bring us only instability and chaos." He said so as he was not sure whether the mankind was worth Lucy's sacrifice. According to him all this knowledge might be too powerful for mankind. He adds, "I just hope we'll be worthy of your sacrifice". The movie ends with Lucy's voice echoing: "Life was given to us a billion years ago. Now you know what to do with it."

After Lucy's disappearance the local police inspector who had been helping her all this while looks towards the sky in admiration, this is the same way we humans look at the heavens in the moments we seek God. She opens a way and imparted all the information leaving just an option; to act accordingly by seeking the knowledge she shared in the USB for the wellbeing of the world. Similarly, the guidance of Jesus Christ and his life pave the way to reach eternal life. His principles and ideas can transform the world into a better place.

III. LUCY: A MODERN MARTYR

Lucy, who was just a common girl turned out to be a martyr and her life turning out to be a self sacrifice for the world. Her sacrifice can be more rightly called as a self crucifixion of oneself. Her oneness with the universe shows the spiritual aspect of the film. In another way, we can say that her death is an oblation for the world in the altar of nature. Lucy at last disperses into the universe resulting in her oneness with it and the proof being her last message on the police inspector's phone: "I am everywhere". This message imparts the element of omnipresence in the movie. Lucy, after her metamorphosis and unison with the universe, becomes an omnipresent being. According to biblical references the only omnipresent being is God. Therefore, this observation of omniscience about Lucy imparts a touch of divinity hails her to her personality.

Lucy assumed a definite objective the moment she realised that the drugs have leaked inside her abdomen and it had started to affect her physique. So she chases the drug dealers to get details of other drug mules in order to obtain and destroy the left over with her life. The movie starts and ends with almost the same dialogue by Lucy. It begins with a thought provoking question, "Life was given to us a billion years ago. What have we done with it?"

Human beings are supposed to have definite purpose in life. This idea was emphasized by the teachings of Jesus Christ. So just like Christ, Lucy's purpose is to die for the humanity. By definition a martyr is "a person who is put to death or endures great suffering on behalf of any belief, principle, or cause" In this movie, Lucy lays down her life for a cause. Thus, Lucy is an epitome of martyrdom and she is a martyr. Lucy, who says "we never really die", is an epitome of the omnipresent Jesus Christ. Here Lucy transcends herself from the worldly and merges with nature-- she is "everywhere"!

IV. CONCLUSION

"Their blood has dried
and become rose petals.
What you feel brushing your cheek
is not only your tears but these.
Martyrs never regret
What they have done having done it."

Lucy, an ordinary college girl, ascends herself to martyrdom to save her fellow beings, the humanity, like Jesus Christ. She sacrificed her terrestrial life and transcends time and space to deduce herself into an all data USB. Thus Lucy, through her metamorphoses could be juxtaposed with Christ on the ground that they are two ordinary human beings who were raised to sanctity on account of the cause for which they sacrificed their life. Lucy transforms herself to be a martyr, crucified by herself in order to absolve humanity of the sin, the fatal drug. The film is built on an idea of sin, with its contemporary implications suggesting also at the same time its perennial ramifications as temptation, evil and vice in myriad forms, be it science, technology, and all kinds of experimentations, search for truth or knowledge, undertaken in a sheer spirit of adventitiousness, bypassing the quintessential,

namely, whether such an act on the part of human beings would in any way contribute a wee bit to the realization of truth, divinity, or any life-sustaining principle, positively and progressively as ideational to culture and civilization.

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