Volume 20 Issue 39
Originally issued as A8



Global Journal of human-social science: A
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 20 Issue 8 Version 1.0 Year 2020
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Dandyism and the Holy Fool Phenomenon as Two Extreme Aspects of Spiritual Quest

By Catherine B. Kolomeytseva
University, St. Petersburg

Resume- The article is devoted to the comparison of two outwardly dissimilar phenomena: the spiritual heroism of foolishness and the style of life of dandyism. A dandy is not only a fop and a coxcomb, an exquisitely dressed flannel, but a more deep understanding. Dandyism in its aspects is similar to the path of a Christian holy fool. The author comes to a conclusion about the religious component of dandyism, which brings it closer to the feat of a Christian holy fool.

Keywords: dandy, dandyism, holy fool, religious seeking, aesthetics, christianity, foolishness for christ.

GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 220499



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2020. Catherine B. Kolomeytseva. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Dandyism and the Holy Fool Phenomenon as Two Extreme Aspects of Spiritual Quest

Catherine B. Kolomeytseva

Resume- **The article is devoted to the comparison of two outwardly dissimilar phenomena: the spiritual heroism of foolishness and the style of life of dandyism. A dandy is not only a fop and a coxcomb, an exquisitely dressed flannel, but a more deep understanding. Dandyism in its aspects is similar to the path of a Christian holy fool. The author comes to a conclusion about the religious component of dandyism, which brings it closer to the feat of a Christian holy fool.**

Keywords: dandy, dandyism, holy fool, religious seeking, aesthetics, christianity, foolishness for christ.

I. Introduction

Any phenomenon usually has more than one interpretation; when considering this or that fact, the researcher should not forget about its hidden side. So, speaking of dandyism as a phenomenon in public life, the researchers often forget that dandy is not just an exquisitely dressed fop and flannel, dictating laws only for the formal side of life. Delving deeper into the questions of the definition of Dandyism helps to trace its roots in many areas. As Otto Mann points out in his article on this subject, "In the 19th century, this society prepares a new fate for itself as a result of the spiritual movement that took shape back in the 17th century and determines the character of the 18th"[1]. The mind of a previously "incompetent" person gains some "capacity", which is mainly seen in criticism of religious traditions. The Christian religion first reduced itself to a notion of reason and nature, and then to a philosophical idealism of Fichte and Hegel, an absolute spirit, the latter can be replaced. All this replaces The God who has become unnecessary"[2].

Daniel Salvatore Schiffer also refers to this fact, deriving the ideals of Dandyism from Nietzschean philosophy with its deification of man. At the dismantlement of society, there can be needs to create new forms of cultural, aesthetic, and religious life. This society's dismantlement does not necessarily occur only once in history if it develops in a spiral way. As Mann points out, "... the autonomy of man seems to had already been realized - in the ancient world of Greece. Then Christianity brought it to nothing. And from the XIV century again, a person appealing to antiquity began to realize the autonomy. The 15th and 16th centuries are now called the era of the Renaissance, the rebirth of man"[3].

The answer to such needs of the era was in two seemingly opposite phenomena: dandyism and foolishness for Christ. These, in my opinion, are two sides of the same coin: social crises, a need for change in morality. Dandy tries to establish himself as a universal personality, instead of God, looking for support on his own. Nevertheless, the formation of dandy happens at the level of fashion and social non-conformism. Sometimes the forms of dandyism even reach subtle hedonism, here are the words of Heine quoted by Mann: "We establish a democracy of equally beautiful, equally holy, equally blessed gods ... Give us nectar and ragweed, purple robes, precious incense ... we demand luxury and pleasure, a dance of nymphs, music, and comedies".[4] Nevertheless, Dandyism remains essentially a spiritual search for exceptional personalities. A critical view may not see anything in common with Holy Foolishness and dandyism, though I can recall many dandies ended their life searches in Religion. Huysmans approached Catholicism (his hero, Count Des Esseintes considered Jesus Christ the highest embodiment of the bliss), Oscar Wilde during his imprisonment Reading writes pro-Christian treatises (although he did not understand Christ completely canonically, closer to the ideal dandy then to a Christ), the poet Paul Claudel experienced religious ecstasies and so on.

Any of the universally recognized dandies was especially reverent about the topic of religion. Baudelaire gave a notion of a perfect dandy: "Dandyism prefers to appear in the transition period when democracy is not yet omnipotent, and the aristocracy is partially weak. In a swirl of time, it is more possible for the declassed, loathsome idle people, not yet devoid of their original strength, to conclude that it is necessary to create a kind of a new aristocracy. This aristocracy will be less prone to "destruction," because it should be based on the most precious and indestructible foundation, not achieved with labor or money, - on the

Author: Herzen State Pedagogical, University, St. Petersburg, Russia. e-mail: tillyriddle@yandex.ru

[1] Mann O. Dandyism as a conservative life form//M.: Magical Mountain magazine, 1998. Electronic Resource. (In Russian, the citation was translated in English by C. Kolomeytseva.

[2] Idem.

[3] Mann O. Dandyism as a conservative life form // M.: Magical Mountain magazine, 1998. Electronic Resource. In Russian, the citation was translated in English by C. Kolomeytseva.

[4] Mann O. Dandyism as a conservative life form // M.: Magical Mountain magazine, 1998. Electronic Resource. In Russian, the citation was translated in English by C. Kolomeytseva.

© 2020 Global Journals

gifts of heaven. Dandy is the last rush of heroism during the sunset"[5].

In Greece, during the Peloponnesian war, the commander and dandy Alkibiades became such an ambiguous figure. Later, in the 17-18 centuries, the emphasized pose of the dandy *nil admirari* (Latin), the non-presentation of feelings, the dandyism in its classical form, became a response to a world religious and philosophical pessimism originated in England[6]. Dandy stoicism is not just a position of reacting only to one's own "self," it is a form of a cultured and educated person's suffering in conditions of growing barbarism of the cultural world, suffering over problems of existence. How can dandy feel in such conditions? He challenges the society: deliberate mockery, frivolity, and shocking - this is the arsenal of dandyism. Turning to D. Schiffer, who wrote a work on the dandy, we also attribute here the "desacralization of the sacred" in the behavior of dandy, that is, "sacrificial destruction"[7]. R.K. Bazhanova, in her article on Dandyism and artists points out on a real dandy's code of honor, a philosophy of self-restrictions. She writes about a deliberate violation of permissible norms of behavior in society, as dandies had a penchant for it[8]. Of course, Beau Brummel's Dandyism is different from what can be called the Oscar Wilde's dandyism, so, for example, Christopher Fear in the article "Perindi ac Cadaver! The Philosophy of Dandyism "practically does not consider this a correct understanding of a conception[9]. Whatever point of view we hold on this issue, this or that dandyism from our point of view is more than just caring for a perfect suit. We also can take, for example, the consideration of dandy as a kind of oppositionist, an opponent of the ideology of materialism and consumption, as he was described in the article of Elsa Glick[10]. K. I. Zaryuta calls Dandyism "a whole world outlook with a certain practical and vital bias"[11] All these examples prove that Dandyism is a deeper phenomenon than it might seem at first glance.

Now let us turn to Foolishness. "A holy fool is a person who voluntarily chooses to hide his abilities, pretends to be devoid of virtues and exposes the world in the absence of these very virtues," this definition of the holy fool belongs to Andrei Vinogradov, Ph.D. (Hist.), Associate professor of the Orthodox St. Tikhon Humanitarian University[12]. The feat of the Christian holy fool is directed outward, into society, which distinguishes this form of religious person from a saint or a monk. Even though Foolishness for Christ is often associated with the Russian Orthodox tradition, we must not forget that such social behavior was widespread among cynics in ancient Greece, so Diogenes can be considered a stretch of the holy fool. These persons acted during the period when society was experiencing an acute spiritual crisis or was developing intensively and came to sharp religious issues. Holy fools were also in Byzantium, so it is difficult to call this phenomenon a typical Russian one; we list several names to illustrate the topic: Serapion Sindonit, Simeon of Ames, Vissarion the Wonderworker, Andrei Tsaregradsky and others[13]. The holy fool also chooses the position of rejection of social values, and a peculiar denunciation of the wrong way of society. "The holy fool condemns by deed, by demonstrating social vices to society as if he takes suffering for these vices. He subjects himself to vilification, and this point turns the situation around. By attacking established forms of social behavior or piety, the holy fool draws attention to the essence, actualizes the forgotten internal content of the forms," writes A. Vinogradov [14]. This mockery and attack makes such behavior similar to the gest of a dandy. A striking example is George "Beau" Brummel, who drew attention to an inner essence by referring to the costume. Using all the same formalized accessories and wardrobe details, he nevertheless managed through them to put himself above society, to expose degenerate values. Dandyism and Foolishness for Christ are similar in many ways, in particular, we can list:

a) The challenge to public behavior, rejection of the norms of society;
b) The use of speech maxims, aphorisms for exposing or expressing wisdom;
c) Playful, masked gestures, pretense (often the elders of Optina Desert pretended to be holy fools to avoid meeting with a large number of "worshipers," Saint John of Shanghai, Isaac Pechersky, Archpriest Nikolai Zalitsky appealed to foolishness as a mask)[15];
d) The tendency to extreme forms of expression;

[5] Baudelaire Ch. About art / M .: Art, 1986. In Russian, The citation was translated by C.Kolomeytseva.
[6] Weinstein O. B. Dandy: fashion, literature, lifestyle/M .: UFO, a series of "Culture of everyday life,"2017; Weinstein O. B. The Poetics of Dendism: Literature and Fashion // Foreign Literature, No. 3. M.2000. P.2-10. In Russian.
[7] Schiffer D. The Philosophy of Dandyism. M .: Publishing house of humanitarian literature, 2011.257 p. In Russian.
[8] Bazhanova R.K. Dandy and fashion: the boundaries of artistry// Researches of SPbGIK, 2007. El. Resource in Russian.
[9] Fear Christopher Perinde ac cadaver! The philosophy of Dandyism.
[10] Glick Elisa The Dialectics of Dandyism//Cultural Critique № 48, 2001. – P.142-144.
[11] Zaryuta K.I. Dandyism: the rules of style//Bulletin of the OSU № 76, 2007. P. 261-265. In Russian.
[12] Vinogradov A.Yu., Ivanov S.A. Blissful obscenities. The cultural history of the foolishness / M.: Languages of Slavic culture, 2005. - P. 76. In Russian. The citation was translated by C.Kolomeytseva.
[13] Kalitin P.V. Holy foolishness as a creative factor in Russian culture. El Resource in Russian.
[14] Vinogradov A.Yu., Ivanov S.A. Blissful obscenities. The cultural history of the foolishness/M.: Languages of Slavic culture, 2005. - P. 130-132. In Russian. The citation was translated by C.Kolomeytseva.
[15] Kalitin P.V. Holy foolishness as a creative factor in Russian culture. El. Resource in Russian.

© 2020 Global Journals

e) The desire for absolute and freedom [16].

The last paragraph needs some clarification. It is clear that the Dandyism ideal often did not imply the presence of God, but contemplated the omnipotence of the Absolute Style, the creation of God out of man (perhaps, closer to Nietzschean ideal). In contrast, the holy fools did not depart from the religious understanding of higher powers. Now we illustrate the conclusions about the desire for absolute and freedom in the following lines from the article on the Holy Foolishness: "Ivan the Terrible signed his letters to the monks of the Kirill-Belozersky Monastery with the pseudonym *Parfeny the Ugly* (*Urodivy*). The sovereign played. The sovereign envied the holy fools, whom the Lord himself had chosen to transmit to the people his Word. The holy fool can tell the truth to kings; he can afford obscenity and insults. The holy fool is free as a puppet ruled by God. And since he is not a judge to himself, his freedom is limitless, if not absolute"[17]. The dissimilarity of the two life positions is striking to anyone. If the saints and holy fools were distinguished by their rejection of worldly fuss and, especially, fashion, then the dandy, on the contrary, did everything possible to hypertrophy this side of ordinary life. It is appropriate here to quote Father John Sergiev (Kronstadsky): "If beautiful clothes were necessary for us, like a flower for any kind of herb, Heavenly Father would not leave us and would have dressed a thousand times better than roses and lilies or peacocks; but famously our clothing is a temporary coverlet or temporary dressing on a wound, because the clothing appeared as a result of sin when people learned their nakedness. So is it worth decorating dressings on a wound? Isn't it necessary to take care of how to heal the wound as soon as possible, that is, as soon as possible to cleanse itself of sins? Is it wise to sew expensive dressings on these sinful wounds and still be vain with these dressings, as something laudable?"[18] Thus, the holy fool does not give any importance to clothing; he walks in rags, while the formalistic and rather dead-end path is chosen by the dandy. Let's recall the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, who was also directly connected with the mentioned. In his youth, he was notable for the wisdom of the wardrobe and his dandyism sympathies, but later, he turned to religion. In his writings, Kierkegaard identified three stages in the development of the human personality: aesthetic, ethical, and religious. He considered the latter the highest stage of development[19]. A person can go through them both sequentially, in periods of youth, adulthood, and old age, and as a stage of spiritual development, one can stay on one during all the life or pass one or another of them to go higher. Seeing a dandy in this context, we will inevitably conclude that some of them remained at the aesthetic level without developing into a religious one. Whereas the others - Kierkjegaard himself, Huysmans, Claudel, Wilde by suffering have passed to the religious one. Towards the end of his life, Barbey d'Aurevilly became an ardent Catholic, a renewal of the Catholic faith of the 20th century. "Such a turning point can also occur in the face of the collapse of aesthetic being," says Otto Mann [20]. At the end of Huysmans's novel, the esthetician Des Esseintes turns his thoughts to Jesus Christ. Huysmans himself goes into asceticism, devoting himself to monasticism. History also knows examples of dandies that have moved to the ethical level; that is, they have accepted the norms of society and become conformal. If we take these two ways of dandyism as a pivot point, then a connection with Holy Foolishness can be revealed. Both that and another are spiritual searches of a person. The path of dandyism, like the path of Holy Foolishness, is a path of rebellion and disagreement with public morality, exposing its flaws through mockery and paradoxes, raised to an absolute degree, but of different characters. The dandy, as mentioned, has another ending of the path; in the end, there will not be necessarily religion or conformism. The desire to search for new aesthetic pleasures and extremes can lead to asceticism, as well as degeneration and evil. Here lies the root of the famous "Flowers of Evil" by Baudelaire, who was fond of this particular side of spiritual quest. Many dandies have remained in history not only as the smartly dressed geniuses of paradoxes but also as subsequently suffering from their obsessions people.

Therefore, in this point of view, dandyism is a path of the spiritual search for aesthetically gifted poetic natures. The difficulty of this path and its orientation towards the highest religious ideal makes the gracefully dressed aesthetes and holy fools in rags very similar in their strivings.

Bibliography

1. Bazhanova R.K. Dandy and fashion: the boundaries of artistry//Researches of SPbGIK, 2007. El. Resource. In Russian.URL: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/dendi-i-moda-granitsy-artistizma/viewer
2. Baudelaire Ch. About art / M .: Art, 1986. In Russian.
3. Buida Yu. Article for the site "Vernost. ru"// El. Resource. In Russian. URL: http://www.vernost.ru/jurodivye/Opinions/opinion8.htm

[16] Skuratovskaya A.P. Dandyism as the psychology of life creation// Culturology: Digest. – M, - 2001. -No. 4. - P. 80-81. In Russian.

[17] Buida Yu. Article for the site "Vernost. ru". El. Resource in Russian. The citation was translated by C.Kolomeytseva.

[18] Sergiev I. God or Mammon? The conversation at Week 3rd Pentecost. El. Resource in Russian. The citation is translated by C.Kolomeytseva.

[19] Kierkegaard S. Either/Or. A Life Fragment / M .: Academic project, 2019.P. 403-500.

[20] Mann O. Dandyism as a conservative life form // M.: Magical Mountain magazine, 1998. Electronic Resource. In Russian. The citation is translated by C.Kolomeytseva.

© 2020 Global Journals

4. Fear C. Perinde ac cadaver! The philosophy of Dandyism//El. Resource. In English. URL: https://www.academia.edu/3985689/The_Philosophy_of_Dandyism
5. Glick E. The Dialectics of Dandyism // Cultural Critique № 48, 2001. – P.129-163. In English.
6. Kalitin P.V. Holy foolishness as a creative factor in Russian culture. El Resource. In Russian. URL: https://izborsk-club.ru/606
7. Kierkegaard S. Either/Or. A Life Fragment / M.: Academic project, 2019.
8. Mann O. Dandyism as a conservative life form // M.: Magical Mountain magazine, 1998. El. Resource. In Russian. URL: http://www.metakultura.ru/vgora/kulturol/ot_mann.htm
9. Sergiev I. God or Mammon? Conversation at Week 3rd Pentecost. El. Resource. In Russian. URL: http://www.pravoslavie.ru/put/propovedi/ioannkronsh.htm
10. Schiffer D. The Philosophy of Dandyism. M.: Publishing house of humanitarian literature, 2011. In Russian.
11. Skuratovskaya A.P. Dandyism as the psychology of life creation // Culturology: Digest. - M. - 2001. - No. 4. - P. 80-81. In Russian.
12. Vinogradov A.Yu., Ivanov S.A. Blissful obscenities. The cultural history of the foolishness/M.: Languages of Slavic culture, 2005. - P. 76. In Russian. Zaryuta K.I. Dandyism: the rules of style // Bulletin of the OSU № 76, 2007. P. 261-265. In Russian.
13. Weinstein O. B. Dandy: fashion, literature, lifestyle/ M.: UFO, a series of "Culture of everyday life", 2017. In Russian.
14. Weinstein O. B. The Poetics of Dendism: Literature and Fashion // Foreign Literature, No. 3. M. 2000. P.2-10. In Russian.

© 2020 Global Journals