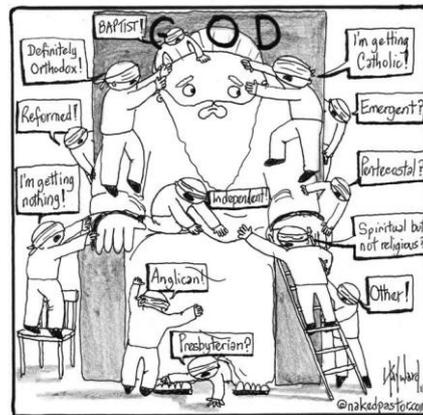
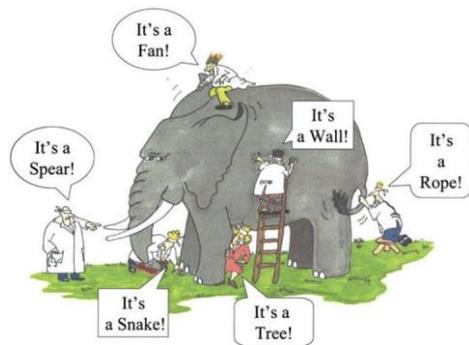


Final essay

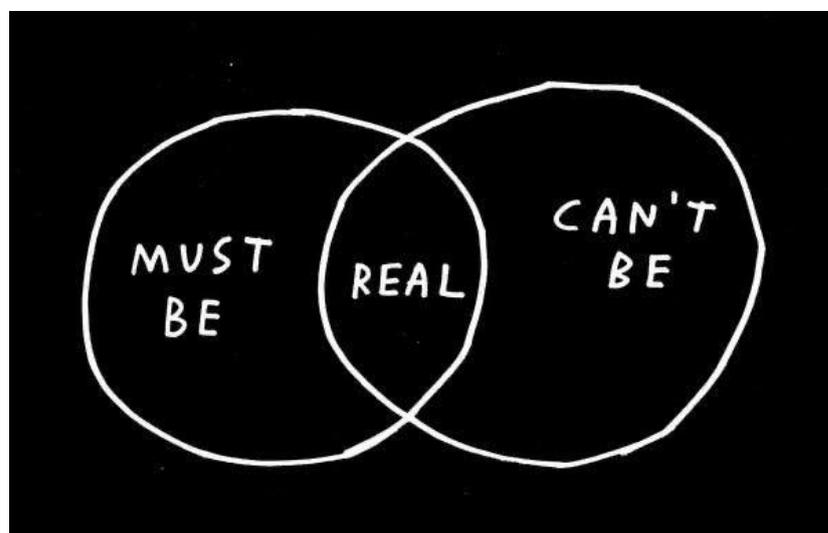
By Ahmed Umer Farooqi

Imaginary into real, real into imaginary

Submitted to : Mehbub Shah



What is imaginary and what is real? Google defines 'imaginary' as something that only exists in the mind and thoughts of someone and defines 'real' as something that is actually in existence. The definitions confused me a bit. If thoughts are imaginary, does it make our thoughts 'not real'? And if our thoughts are unreal, then are we even physically doing anything? I mean if whatever we are doing we think about it first. If I'm thirsty, I'll think about picking up a glass of water and bringing it near my mouth to have a sip. But if the thought process of doing something is 'not real' then what is that we see or hear or feel in our heads? Is it possible we are repeating our actions? Time is one moment. All the history and all the future is compacted in a single moment and that we are going over that moment again and again. Everything is repeating. This is just a theory. Another theory about time is that it is linear. We cant go back to moments that we pass. But what are memories? Memories are an imprint of a moment fed in our brains. Memories allow us to go back into time. But if our thoughts are imaginary and not real, then maybe the memories aren't as reliable as they seem. Memories can be altered. Its all in the control of our id and super-ego. Our self is being controlled by them.



I was reading 'Nothing to be frightened of' by Jules Barnes during the lockdown. Barnes writes a non-fiction assessment of his struggle with humanity and his family, with questioning the existence of God and also talking about where we all are headed. The title of the book speaks a lot about existence and non-existence, since the idea of 'nothing' is in itself full of meaning. Barnes measures the existing time of a person while comparing how long himself and his parents lived, ultimately talking about his future. Barnes questions if someone's parents lived this long, then will they live this long as-well or not and whether they will die as their parents died. Barnes has no expectation of an afterlife, but that is completely subjective. Subjective to what religion someone belongs to. In Islam, having faith in an afterlife is a major pillar of belief. But belief is based on having faith on the non-existence. That is if the non-existent is defined as something that can't be experienced through any of the senses but exists somewhere beyond the senses. A similar notion is addressed to in the book 'God and creative imagination' by Paul Avis, who asks the question if religion can exist without imagination. Barnes is also asking a similar question and he wonders if he would be better off if he had some sort of a belief system, as he also does not believe in the existence of God. He starts his book by saying,

*"I don't believe in God, but I miss him". – Julian Barnes*





Barnes also does a comparison between him and his brother. His brother is not afraid of dying and does not think about death as much as Barnes thinks about death. Death is something that is inevitable and and real. The book gave me a lot to think about and in a way made me come to the conclusion of what is real and what is imaginary. They are inter convertible or one of the same. Either can be a projection of the other. To understand we have to look for what is in between them. In the documentary the “Pervert’s guide to cinema”, Slavoj Zizek tries to answer the same question.

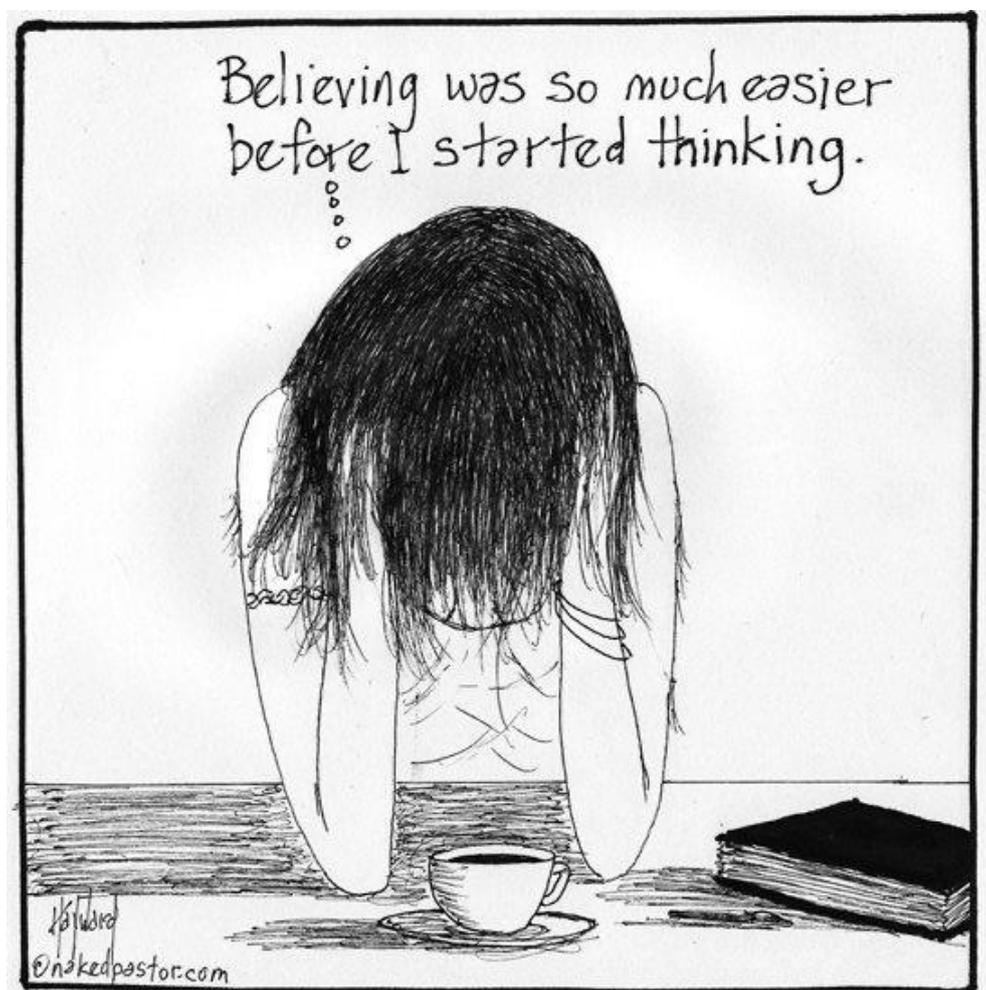
What is a movie? Movie or moving images, serves as the borderline of what is real and what is considered not real. Movies give us freedom to explore or experience our own imagination when we are making a movie. But when someone watches a movie, they get an access to the imagination of someone else. Movies become a voyeuristic doorway into someone’s mind, their thoughts.

Zizek looks into cinema and tries to focus the direction of this movie towards what is considered real and what is not. The thoughts of someone that are projected in the form of a moving image was once in their mind. If those thoughts are not ‘real’ then is mind even a thing to be considered ‘real’. Similar themes have been discussed in the book ‘Art in the cinematic imagination’ by Susan Felleman.

Cinema is a medium which can have a very great impact in changing the ideology or thoughts of the viewers and it has played a vital role in the political history of warfare. Even now, looking at Pakistani cinema, we are being exposed to a patriotic image of our nation and celebrating the national heroes while talking about getting under one flag. Cinema has always been used as a tool or a weapon to infiltrate minds. Zizek is aware of the cinematic history and he talks about it being exposed to a larger audience. The audience being the perverts, watching the thoughts bare. The border between the real and the unreal. The unreal is the virtual representation of the real. A projection of the unreal, into the real. Its equivalent to looking into someone’s window and exploring their life.



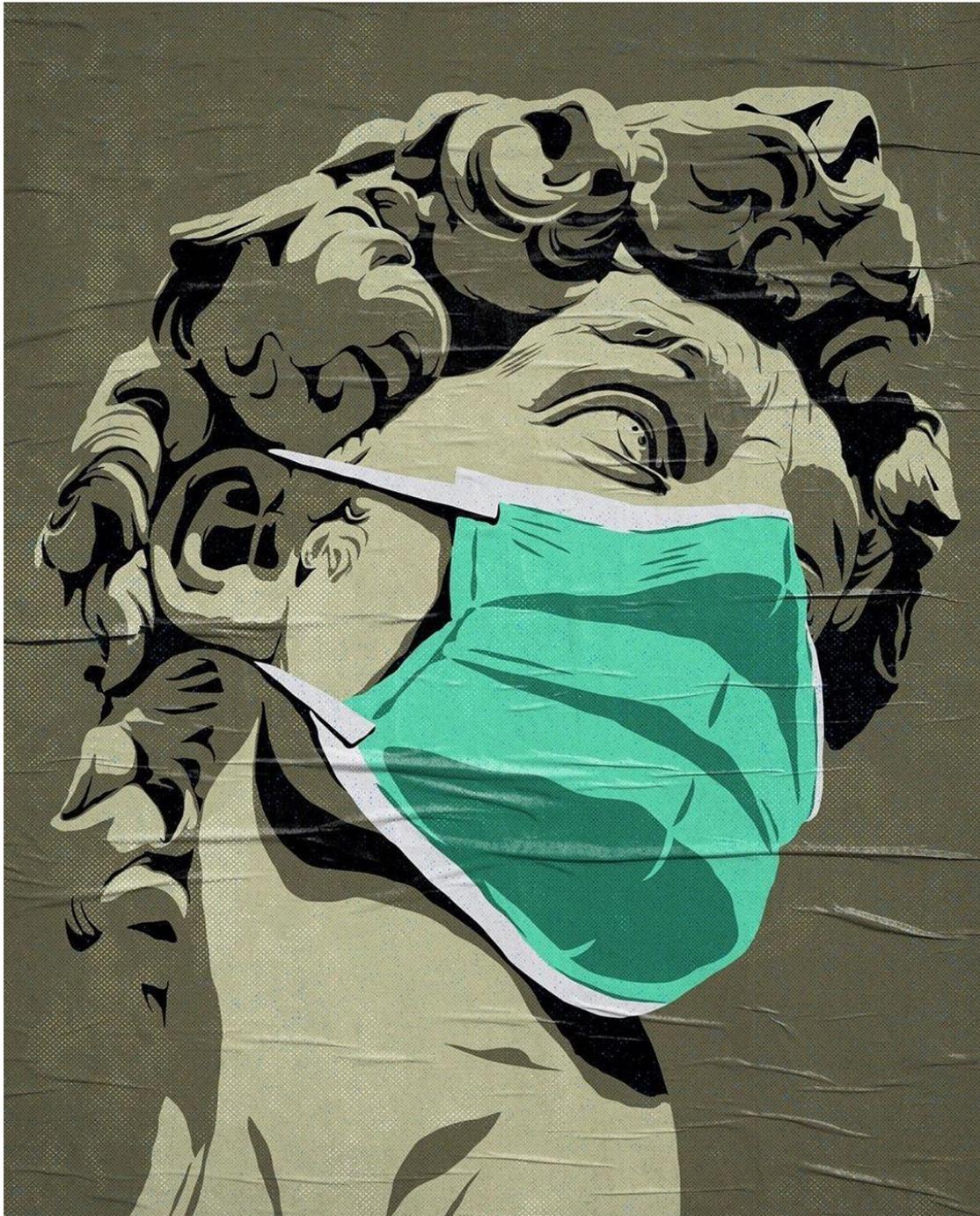
We live life as a witness. We see things around us. We are witnessing things happening and we immediately process them as real. What is real. Something real is that has happened in a physical form in-front of us. Or there is a document of it happening. Documents can be altered though. That may put its 'reality' into question. Unreal or imaginary is the projection of what is real. That maybe in our heads or in another form of a documentation. We are witnessing the situation around us and assuming things that we see are real. But there are many things that we don't see. Taking the current times in question, we don't see Covid 19. Its like an invisible idea that we are being threatened to be aware of and be afraid of. But consuming that information does not make it real. What makes it real are all the images of people dying we are seeing, the lockdown that we are living through and all the other information that we are exposed to through social media and other platforms. That is the 'real' representation of what is happening around us.



The world is witnessing some tough times these days, with the appearance of the Coronavirus. Life situations are changing rapidly. How should one process all this information that is changing every hour?

We cant see it but everyone is terrified. The virus is hitting us like invisible bullets. Is it something real or imaginary? People have become so paranoid that anything heard or seen about the virus and how to prevent is becoming a 'must to do' for everyone. Wearing masks

have become essential but they are required only if you are infected. No touching and social distancing is being practiced. Something imaginary has become the reality and creating a havoc. We carry sanitisers like we carry a mobile phone with us. I heard somewhere that drinking hot water may prevent the infection and that has made my throat dry. As I'm drinking too much hot water these days. Myths about how to prevent it are becoming viral rapidly and people are panicking. But, predictably, people are more panicked about the change in the economic situation. The economy for the rich and for the poor has always been different since capitalism.



I would conclude with a quote by John Berger from the book "Economy of the dead",

*"The living reduce the dead to those who have lived, yet the dead already include the living in their own great collective..."*

Berger talks about how capitalism has given birth to a modern form of egoism that has broken the interdependence of the living to the dead, or rich to the poor. Before capitalism all the living waited to be a part of the dead accepting their ultimate future, otherwise their 'living' was incomplete. I think this is a beautiful yet horrifying quote that talks about the abrupt change in the mindset of the rich and how they are trying and trying to avoid somehow to live forever and have a control on the poor. But that will not happen. This quote is optimistic in a way and gives hope that all this mindset of the rich is a bubble which will burst in time. The poor can not afford that bubble. They have a different kind of bubble. But eventually everyone has to be die. This is all temporary.

