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Dilemmas of the Kshatria in modernity

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Abstract

This paper will explore the dilemmas that the Kshatria, or psycho-spiritual warrior type (as understood by the Perennialist school of philosophy) faces in the context of modernity. The paper will first outline how those men who find their natural calling in violence where able, in the context of traditional, metaphysically oriented, societies to find transcendence through said calling. Thereafter will follow a description of how these paths have been closed off to the warrior type in the modernity, owing primarily to the disappearance of an empowered priestly caste to whom they may subordinate themselves. Finally, the paper will examine certain exemplary cases of Kshatria in the modern era and consider how these may serve as guides for individuals of this spiritual orientation today.

Keywords

Perennialism; Caste; Kshatria; Violence; Modernity

Introduction

In this paper, I will address the question of the spiritual dimensions of violence in the context of modernity through the lens of the ‘Perennialist’ school of philosophy. Specifically, I offer some considerations on the dilemma of the Kshatria or warrior type in the modern world. In what follows, I will briefly consider the Perennialist understanding of what a Kshatria is. Thereafter, the unique predicament of their role in modernity is discussed in contrast to that of other psycho-spiritual types. Before concluding, I will offer some considerations on how a Kshatria may handle the challenges of modernity.

What is a Kshatria?

Kshatria is a Sanskrit word normally taken to denote warriors in the Hindu caste system. However, from the Perennialist perspective of René Guénon, caste is not a specifically Hindu phenomenon, but one universally applicable to humanity in general (2001, pp.30-1) [1].

‘Caste’ denotes the doctrine that the chief determinant of one’s character is neither environmental nor biological but the complexion of one’s soul [2]. The existence of the soul preceding birth, the individual is born with an innate disposition. By virtue of this psycho-spiritual nature, each individual is ‘called’ to a particular type of work. This work is what is known as a vocation.

It can be found (in different forms) in all the world’s traditional civilizations, but it is Hinduism that offers the clearest and most detailed articulation of this doctrine. For this reason, I shall follow the Perennialist custom of using the Sanskrit. This does not imply the imposition of a Hindu worldview on other civilizations, or the decontextualization of a notion specific to that religion. Indeed, if so inclined, one could just as easily resort to Kshatria analogues as found in other traditions; for example, the Japanese *samurai* and warrior monks, the Second Estate of Western and Eastern Christendom, or the “*guardians*” of Plato’s ideal



state. It is worth noting that, in contemporary majority Muslim Indonesia, the word *ksyatria* is used not only to denote its own historical Hindu warrior caste, but also refers to the samurai as well as Western knights.

To the modern mind, the word ‘caste’ conjures up images of shocking social discrimination against so-called ‘untouchables’ in South Asia and, to a lesser extent, similar classes of people in Japan. Such phenomena are degenerated remnants of the traditional caste system so they should not inform our proper understanding of its true nature. In order to avoid such erroneous associations, it may be useful to think of a caste as a ‘psycho-spiritual type’. In its most accurate sense, caste is not a system of entrenched privileges but, rather, a way of understanding how human beings can fulfill their vocation in this life. In other words, living in a manner that is faithful to one’s true calling, thus benefitting both oneself and others in society.

The confines of this paper do not permit a thorough-going discussion of caste as a universal phenomenon. For the present purposes, it will suffice to discuss only the Kshatria and their relationship to the Brahmin caste. In essence, a Kshatria is a warrior and, in his psychology, a man (for Kshatria are indeed primarily though perhaps not exclusively men [3]) who finds his calling in the application of force. To get a sense of how an average person’s experience of violence differs from a Kshatria’s, one could read Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929/1987) back-to-back with Ernst Jünger’s *Storm of Steel* (1920/2004)[4].

In a traditional society the warrior caste governed the state under the guidance of the priestly or Brahminical caste. In modern vernacular, the warrior ruled while the priest reigned. The warrior’s vocation is characterized by action, ruling and administration of justice. The Kshatria is the caste of active politics. An exhaustive examination of all these dimensions of a Kshatria’s calling, and more specifically the challenges of pursuing this under conditions of modernity, would constitute an expansive project well beyond the scope of a single paper. Therefore, the present paper will focus on that dimension of the Kshatria’s calling that pertains to combat. The reasons for this are twofold.

Firstly, violence is the most central aspect of the practical manifestations of Kshatriahood as it is to be found, now more or less openly, now in more or less concealed, latent or implicit form, in all practical politics [5]. It is this undercurrent of violence which distinguishes, in a traditional society, the political engagement of a Kshatria from that of a Brahmin (if the shortcomings of this phrase in reference to the material/social impacts of the Brahmins spiritual authority may be forgiven). Demonstrating the centrality of violence to politics is beyond the scope of this paper, but I would direct the reader to Max Weber (1919/2015) and Carl Schmitt’s (1932/2007) respective definitions of the state and the political as support for this assumption.

Secondly, it is this aspect of a Kshatria’s calling which is most incomprehensible to the modern perspective. The modern mind either abhors violence or, far worse, glorifies it in terms that are an inversion of those proper to a Kshatria. This latter aspect is of particular concern in the present day, with rising nationalism globally, the return of war to Europe and escalating interstate tensions between major powers in East Asia and the Himalayan region.



For these two reasons, this paper will focus on this particular aspect of the Kshatria's plight in the modern world. I pray, therefore, that the reader does not forget that a Kshatria's vocation entails more than just this. Nonetheless, I believe that such a focus does not lead to a distorted image of the warrior's nature.

Throughout history, society has needed people with a capacity to employ often deadly force – and the Kshatria exist precisely to fulfill that role. This is not to glorify violence which, in itself, is routinely bestial and ugly. However, in traditional societies at their best, the Kshatria could deploy violence in such a way as to 'alchemically' transform what is otherwise something debased and dehumanizing into an experience of transcendence. For most people, engaging in violence has a corrupting influence on the soul – degrading them from a human to a bestial, or even demonic, level [6]. A Kshatria, by contrast, is predisposed in such a way that, given the proper context, he can approach violence – not with an attitude of desperate self-preservation or wanton bloodlust – but in a spirit of asceticism and self-sacrifice, thus transmuting his experience of it into something more noble.

What then of this context? Brahmins are the priestly caste whose psycho-spiritual orientation is towards a contemplative and intellectual (in the Thomistic sense of the word) experience of the transcendent. Their role as the 'head' of the social organism (a metaphor employed by the Hindu, Buddhist and Platonic traditions) is critical as it channels the upward spiritual orientation of those further down the caste hierarchy. The Kshatric person has an inborn predilection for action and violence. In order to realize their potential for transcendence, the Kshatria must subordinate himself to the wise direction of the Brahmin. Furthermore, the Brahmin restrains the Kshatria from preying on weaker psycho-spiritual types lower down the hierarchy than himself. This is seen, most clearly perhaps in the code of chivalry produced by the Catholic Church to restrain the *thumos* of the second estate. To borrow a metaphor from Allan Bloom (2016, p. 349), if the Brahmin caste plays the role of '*shepherd*' to the masses, the Kshatria are the '*sheep dogs*'.

In a traditional society, therefore, there is a place for the constitutionally violent to find a spiritually efficacious and socially acceptable manner to be faithful to their fundamental orientation through subordination to their superiors [7]. This submission to the Absolute's earthly representatives channels their violence into physical struggle as an outward means of provoking an inward struggle – or, using Islamic terms, having recourse to a lesser *jihad* in pursuit of the greater *jihad*. By acquiescing to the guiding light of the Brahmin, the Kshatria finds a path to transcendence opened up while serving to thwart the worst excesses of his destructive tendencies. The management of the Kshatria is much like that of a highly combustible fuel – beneficial if properly directed, disastrous if not.

Not only is spiritual realization through violence a means only available to those with a Kshatric spirit, but non-martial vocations would be spiritually unwholesome and inappropriate for the warrior. So, in a traditional society, the not-insignificant minority of men born with an aggressive and combative disposition can now pursue a means by which, to borrow from Buddhist parlance, their 'poison may be turned into medicine'.



The dilemma

Having understood the function of the Kshatria in a traditional society, we may better appreciate the difficulty they face living in modernity. I would assert that such men *do* live in modern times, for the institutionalization of caste at its best is not simply a creation of social convention but reflects the already existing differentiation of people into different psycho-spiritual types, which are integral to the human condition [8].

In the modern world, the Kshatria faces an unenviable plight. The dynamics of so-called 'progress' are such that the normal route for the Kshatria to fulfill himself have been cut off. Almost everywhere in the world, Brahmins have been unseated from their positions of dominance. Modern nationalism has substituted the fiction of 'the People' for the Absolute as its basis of legitimacy and the juggernaut state has monopolized all socially legitimate violence. Furthermore, the unique nature of the Kshatric spirit means that avenues for them to approximate a normal existence in modernity are fewer compared to opportunities available to other psycho-spiritual types. Finally, thinkers who are preoccupied with the manifold problems of modernity do not, generally, address the concerns of Kshatric individuals.

It is plain to see that Brahmins have been removed from their dominant position and banished to presiding over the private realm of religious belief. That is to say, temporal powers everywhere no longer subordinate themselves to spiritual authorities. Secular elites today do not derive their legitimacy from 'above' so to speak – by conformity to the Absolute – but rather from 'below' in that they aim to divine the supposed will of an abstraction called 'the People'. Buddhist monks who never used to bow to emperors now regularly salute national flags.

Thus, the Kshatria no longer have an empowered Brahmin caste to which they can submit as was the norm in traditional societies. I would expect that the reflexive response to the question 'What is a warrior in modernity to do?' would be to say that they should, of course, join the military. But the military is a place for soldiers, not warriors. The word *soldier* has practically an identical etymology to *mercenary*. The modern military has had every vestige of spirituality stripped from it, making it merely a profession. The most high-minded ideal that modernity can offer the average soldier is to die for their country – that is to say, for this spurious entity called 'the People' rather than for the highest reality. A soldier's loyalty to his commanders (and the politicians who command them in turn) stems from an expected allegiance to this deified mass. This stands in stark contrast to the Kshatria's higher obedience to sacred authorities, a faithfulness that stems from a devotion to that which is sacred. This alone can legitimize true authorities by either making them representatives of the Divine (as with the Pope) or by having the highest Brahminical authorities participate ontologically in the Absolute (as with the Buddhist Bodhisattva-King or the Ruist [9] Sage King) [10]. The corrupted orientation of the soldier's loyalty negates the spiritual possibilities afforded by war. Most conflicts in history have been motivated by the pursuit of glory and power for the state or, less edifyingly, material gain. However, they also possessed a spiritual dimension for those Kshatria engaged in combat. In some instances, the prime or even sole impetus behind their physical struggle was the pursuit of glory directed towards the Divine – at least among the nobler cohort of combatants. Examples that readily spring to mind include the early expansion of Islam across Western Asia, and the first Christian Crusades against the northern pagans followed, later, by offensives against the Muslims.



Again, this is not to gloss over the atrocities committed by both sides in these events. Rather, we wish to point to the ‘alchemical’ transformation made possible by pre-modern warfare, which allowed the raw brutality of conflict to be sublimated into something of enduring spiritual value. At its best, when violence is approached as a sacred asceticism free of hatred, combat can become a vehicle for reciprocal mercy – whereby combatants may afford each other the opportunity to enter Heaven as martyrs. The best example of this, to my knowledge, is the relationship of mutual respect – even admiration – between the Crusader Richard the Third and the Jihadi Saladin during the Third Crusade. All warfare is replete with tragedies. However, in its modern form, it has been stripped of opportunities that would otherwise have afforded ‘divine’ compensations for the cruelty of armed conflict. Combat today aims for nothing higher than the glory of the false deity embodied by the nation state or, even worse, base greed for lucre.

Perhaps one of the greatest claims of modernity is to have given humanity true ‘progress’ by reducing violence and armed conflict in the world [11]. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address this claim fully; suffice it to say that it is highly contestable. Apart from anything else, the decline in violence in most societies is primarily the result of a state’s ability to control its citizens, not an improvement of their characters. Accordingly, this so-called ‘progress’ – that is to say modern states’ more effective control or containment of violence – means that there are increasingly fewer avenues for the exercise of violence outside the state. This certainly is a good thing from the perspective of protecting the innocent, and not to be dismissed lightly. But our current concern is the plight of the Kshatria. Since the state monopolizes violence, there can be no question of the Kshatria being able to yield before the superior spiritual eminence of the disempowered Brahmin as was common in traditional pre-modern cultures. So, the Kshatria finds himself in an intractable dilemma. He cannot be professionally violent in service of the state as this no longer entails subordination to Brahmins, and neither can he find complete fulfillment in subordination to Brahmins as they now exist in their largely enfeebled condition. Indeed, living in the shadow of dominant, secular states, most Brahmins – in the name of self-preservation – would never countenance taking on a vanguard of warriors. If this strikes the reader as doubtful, I suggest they visit Mt. Hiei outside Kyoto to see what the reaction would be if someone were to request ordination as a warrior monk!

The situation is not quite so dire for Brahmins. It is still possible for most of them to live a life fully consistent with their calling, to a degree that is hardly imaginable for the Kshatria today. Furthermore, thinkers concerned with how to live traditionally in the midst of modernity – such as Ananda Coomaraswamy, Titus Burkhardt and Martin Lings – are themselves Brahmins. Partly as a consequence of this their writings are largely addressed to their own type. This leaves precious little guidance for the Kshatria stranded in the modern world. Perhaps the Perennialist School could be constructively criticized from this perspective. Given that Perennialists are Brahmins (and thus spiritual leaders), it is incumbent on them to offer the Kshatria assistance and guidance in their plight.

The deleterious effects of this absence of direction have been compounded by a host of pseudo-opponents of modernity who have stepped into the breach. A common trope among this class of thinkers is to glorify the Kshatria by claiming they can re-sacralize violence without the guidance of Brahmins. This can only serve to misdirect the Kshatria searching for a solution. If the role of the Brahmin can be said to allow the Kshatria to participate in the former’s realization of the Absolute (by way of subordination to a superior principle), the



erroneous glorification of the Kshatria leads him down the benighted path of becoming, in Platonic terms, a timocratic man at best and, at worst, a tyrant [12]. Sadly, it would appear that the latter is the more likely result. Perhaps the most well-known example of this today is Wahabism. Other examples include the various Buddhist heresies that flourished in Japan in the first half of the twentieth century [13] and, in the West, the pernicious doctrines of Julius Evola [14]. In all three cases, the ineluctable consequence has been terrorism – often of a particularly cruel and unrestrained variety [15].

What to do?

What, then, is a Kshatria to do when faced with the inescapable conditions of modernity, which are antithetical to their true calling? I have no conclusive response to this predicament. However, certain exemplary Kshatria over the past century have managed to find some degree of accommodation within modernity, and I will offer some reflections on the extent to which this (partial) resolution may offer a way forward to Kshatria who are acutely aware of their quandary.

A fascinating figure in this regard is the Baron von Ungern-Sternberg. The ethnically German Ungern was an officer in the Russian military at the time of the Russian Revolution. He was an ultra-conservative and, most remarkably, a convert to Buddhism. After the failure of the Russian Civil War to reinstate the Caesaro-papist monarchy, Ungern took his forces across Russia's southern border and seized outer Mongolia from what, at the time, was the Guomindang-ruled Republic of China. Thereafter, he reinstated the rule of the Buddhist clergy in Mongolia. It is, in part, to Ungern's actions that the current Republic of Mongolia owes its existence. What is significant about Ungern is that he cleaved tenaciously to a Kshatric manner of action. When the march of modernity robbed him of his master, he looked for another earthly representative of Heaven to whom he could transfer his loyalty.

Any account of Ungern reveals him to be a deeply 'thumatic', violent or even cruel man. But rather than allowing his 'liberation' from a sovereign to debase him into a tyrannical man – as soldiers without a commander may often be observed to do – he instead sought a new master to transmute his battle lust into a holy struggle. And yet, to follow a path like Ungern's is no longer possible today. He lived at the tail end of an era when the non-Western world was still largely traditional (albeit rapidly westernising, as Ungern experienced so cataclysmically in his native Russia). This vexed situation is captured in several works by René Guénon (a contemporary of Ungern), notably in *East And West* (1924/2004). While this period has passed and there remain practically no spiritual authorities to whom a Kshatria could transfer their loyalties, perhaps something of value can be gleaned from Ungern's own inner attitude to the plight of the warrior today.

A second, and perhaps particularly radical, example is that of Mishima Yukio. Mishima was a Japanese novelist from a Samurai family working in the aftermath of the Second World War. One of Mishima's chief concerns, though one he expressed more aesthetically than systematically, was how to live an authentic Kshatric existence in modernity. Ultimately, Mishima committed ritual suicide after a failed coup attempt to have the divinity of the Japanese emperor reinstated. There is disagreement among scholars as to whether this was a genuine attempt at a coup or one that was undertaken with no hope of success, so as to simply afford an opportunity for Mishima to seek a samurai's death with dignity. Either way – and without wishing to condone coup attempts anywhere – Mishima's actions are admirable from



the perspective of trying to live an authentically Kshatric life. It should be remembered that, in East Asian tradition, the emperor is an essentially Brahminical figure – analogous in the West, not so much to emperors, as to popes. It is difficult to denounce a Kshatria who demands that his master be a master, that he might have a Brahmin to whom he may submit himself. When Brahmins refuse, or are unable to, play their part as superiors, there is perhaps no better way for a Kshatria to serve his cause than this kind self-destruction which, in its own way, serves a symbolic purpose.

I'm unsure of what Mishima would have thought of what I am about to say, but it bears keeping in mind that Japan's departure from traditional norms occurred, not in 1945, but in 1868. The Edo period prior to that saw its own challenges to the Kshatria. The highly pacific nature of this era meant that there were no opportunities for combat wherein the Kshatria could test himself. The Kshatric solution to this challenge was to cultivate an inner attitude of absolute loyalty to those higher in the caste hierarchy than themselves. This attitude is crystalized in a famous work of this period, Yamamoto Tsunetomo's *Hagakure* (1716/2012), a text on which Mishima wrote a commentary (1977). It has not, to my knowledge, been commented on that this aspect of the *Hagakure* parallels another classical spiritual manual for the Kshatria – the *Baghavad Gita* (?/2008). Both of these texts place the emphasis on exhorting the Kshatria to embrace an inner attitude – to cultivate an absolute determination to fulfill their sacred duty or *svadharma* should the opportunity arise; an integral part of which is loyalty and subservience to a legitimate master. Currents like Wahabism and the political writings of Evola are – aside from their other destructive effects – detrimental to the spiritual well-being of the Kshatria as they deceive him into thinking that he needs no master.

The dilemma of the Kshatria in modern society is thus a truly unenviable one. The examples of Ungern and Mishima belong not so much to the present stage of modernity's descent, but to an earlier stage just past. Their example is instructive in terms of the inner attitude a Kshatria should take, but offers no signposts for the way forward when engaging with the world. Without purporting to address this question conclusively, we shall, before concluding, turn to an arguably counter-intuitive model as a guide to action.

We propose that the tradition of non-violence – as represented by Mahatma Gandhi, Lev Tolstoy, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Leymah Gbowee – may be of great spiritual value to the Kshatria. The examples of Gandhi and Tolstoy are already familiar to many, so don't need to be recounted. Gaffar Khan and Gbowee, on the other hand, are less well known. The former was a Pushtun Muslim leader in Gandhi's campaign of non-violent resistance to the British, while Gbowee was a Protestant peace activist in Liberia. Another exemplar – from a different milieu altogether – is that of Desmond Doss, who served as a combat medic in the United States Army during the Second World War. On the basis of his Seventh Day Adventist faith, he refused to carry a weapon but was decorated nonetheless for his bravery in saving many lives on the battlefield.

Setting aside the question of whether the aforementioned individuals embodied a 'warrior' ethos, [16], there is certainly something Kshatric about how Gandhi and Doss prosecuted their causes without belligerence. Their kind of action entails a highly 'thumatic' quest for justice in the face of violence. This is demonstrated, for example, by the Mahatma's insistence that non-violence should never be motivated by cowardice – when presented with a choice, force is always to be preferred over timidity [17]. Indeed, one is struck by the Kshatric vehemence of his statements regarding this question.



If the path of sacred violence has been closed to the Kshatria today, due to the disempowered status of the Brahmins, perhaps non-violent resistance to injustice offers an alternative path. Renouncing violence not only avoids the perils that can ensue – spiritual to himself, and material to others – when violence is engaged in without the guidance of a properly qualified master; it also affords the Kshatria an opportunity for realizing wisdom through self-mastery. The elements of bravery, resistance and justice in non-violent action are quintessentially Kshatric, but the complete self-denial of what comes naturally to the Kshatric vocation, namely violence, is itself – paradoxically – a fulfillment of the Kshatria nature, albeit from an unexpected quarter.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would make the following suggestion – with the understanding that further study and reflection is necessary to generate something really useful to the Kshatric man. The warrior type today is caught in a dilemma because the Brahminical caste has lost its supremacy, the assistance of which he requires to cultivate the correct inner attitude towards violence – both as a source of restraint and as an object of much-needed loyalty. So, the problem of the constitutionally violent man's place in modernity is not the lack of opportunity to engage in violence but, rather, finding the structures that foster a correct understanding of his inherently combative nature. The Kshatria in modernity should seek, first and foremost, to cultivate such a disposition if he is to find a fulfillment, in these profane times, that is worthy of his sacred calling.



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Notes

[1] For a further discussion of caste from a Perennialist perspective see Frithjof Schuon's *Castes and Races* (1982), and Ananda Coomaraswamy's 'The Bugbear of Democracy, Freedom and Equality' (1979, pp. 125-150), Coomaraswamy's 'The Religious Foundations of the Forms of Indian Society' (1983) and Chapter 6 in Part 3 of René Guénon's *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines* (2004). Although not an adherent of the Perennialist School (the title of his book notwithstanding) and criticized by Perennialists (e.g. Oldmeadow, 2011, pp. 158-159) Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945/2009), Chapter 8 may serve as an accessible introduction to the perspective on caste as a universal phenomenon.

[2] For a succinct exposition of this doctrine, see Plato, *Republic*, 415a-c.

[3] Albeit historical examples are difficult to call to mind. As for prominent figures, Hua Mulan and St. Joan of Arc may be pointed to, while at the mythological level the Amazons readily present themselves. In addition to this there is archeological evidence of female warriors in the Scythian culture. Additionally, Plato, at least on one reading, considers the existence of female warriors plausible.

[4] Remarque and Jünger both fought for Germany in the first world war, and both these books are novels based on their wartime experiences. Remarque's work is a paradigmatic example of the experience of war-as-hell while Jünger's is an equally paradigmatic example of war-as-calling. It bears keeping in mind that Jünger's experience of combat was a thoroughly modern one, devoid of spiritual dimensions. It is not, therefore, to my mind coincidental that Jünger, without the guiding light of spiritual leadership, became a fascist ideologue after the war. It does not make quite as good a companion piece to Remarque's work – but Jünger's *War as an Inner Experience* (1922/2021) is a clearer articulation of the Kshatric experience of combat in the modern context.

[5] Although this statement should by no means be read as an aspiration against pacifism.

[6] Afflictions such as post-traumatic stress disorder are a manifestation of this phenomenon that are readily recognizable in modern times.

[7] See, for example, Plato, *The Republic*, 442 b-d. That subordination to a superior is essential to the role of the Kshatria can also be seen from the very similar etymologies of the words 'knight' and 'samurai'. The root meaning of 'knight' is 'servant' or 'bondsmen' while the Chinese character for Samurai 侍 was originally used as a verb meaning 'to serve' before coming to denote the Kshatric caste in both China and Japan. It should be added that to achieve realization the Kshatria is not only mastered by another but must master himself. An excellent example of this is the Caliph Ali's feats of self-restraint on the battlefield. Nonetheless, such self-mastery is affected according to doctrines born and expounded to the Kshatria by Brahmins (for example, the self-mastery of a samurai on the basis of Zen principles taught to the samurai by monastics).

[8] This having been said, in line with traditional teachings regarding historical decline, it seems unlikely that there are many if any *pure* Kshatria in the world today. Most people of the modern world are of mixed caste in some sense. With this in mind, when I speak of 'Kshatria' from this point on I am using this as a shorthand to denote those whose spiritual complexions are ones wherein the Kshatric element predominates.



[9] Following Song Bin, I hold the term Ruist to be preferable to the more commonly used ‘Confucianist’ as it is closer, both literally and in spirit, to the original Chinese term.

[10] Compare such an orientation of loyalty to the mass below rather than the one above to twelfth century Samurai Hojo Shigetoki’s statement: ‘*When one is serving officially or in the master’s court, he should not think of a hundred or a thousand people, but should consider only the importance of the master.*’ (Wilson 1982, 38).

[11] For example, Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (2011).

[12] Plato’s *Republic* offers a taxonomy of four regimes (Monarchy/Aristocracy, Timocracy, Democracy, Tyranny) in descending order of quality, which Plato understands as macrocosmic representations of the organization of a person’s soul. For example, a Monarchy (where the Brahminical caste is dominant) mirrors in the macrocosm the spirit of a person where the reasoning part of the soul is dominant. A Kshatric man, deprived of the guidance of a Brahmin, can at best hope to have a soul that mirrors the timocratic state – at worst he will have one that mirrors the tyrannical state.

[13] For example, Nichirenism (not to be confused with traditional Nichiren Buddhism more broadly), so-called “soldier Zen” and militaristic, immanentized forms of Pure Land Buddhism.

[14] I would readily admit that there is much of value to be found in Evola’s writings, but his doctrines have on balance done more harm – spiritually and materially – than good.

[15] I make this qualification on the basis that scholars of terrorism make a distinction between instrumentally and organizationally violent terrorist organizations (Crenshaw 1987). Without making apologies for the former, they are more restrained in their use of violence – they will typically restrict their targets to military personnel, law enforcement and political decision makers, and are typically more amenable to negotiations to end their violence. The latter are those who are more wanton in their violence – more likely to carry out mass casualty attack on civilians without clear strategic objectives. Wahabi and Evolian terrorist groups typically belong to the latter category.

[16] I maintain an agnosticism on this question. In any case, Gandhi was born into a Vaishya family, not a Kshatria family. Tolstoy and Ghaffar Khan have better claims to being born into Kshatria families. However, one may well make the case that this far into the chaos of the *Kali Yuga*, birth tells us little or nothing of an individual’s caste.

[17] “I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.” (Kibriya 1999, 72)



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