

24/7 The Passion of Life

The „thelemic“ answer to Gibsons „Passion of Christ“

A broadside to the conditioning of society

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24/7 THE PASSION OF LIFE, a film about society's dealing with sexuality, about religion, moral and double-morals? A question mark, that the author of these lines consciously sets in this place. Too much in a hurry the known art of reviewing tries to give the film a simple stamp. A "label" of the protest for the scene of swingers, bondage and S&M activists, that threatens to dissolve the simple-minded borders between petty bourgeoisie and perversion. While both worlds do only stand for two sides of one same coin. Sadomasochism as a natural part of the sexual spectrum of a western shaped culture, between consuming and the longing for healing and salvation. The Dominatrix "Lady Maria" in this film notices the therapeutic relation between Religion and S&M as a consequent psychological defence mechanism: "...if you do not accept and live this part of you, then it will haunt you, day by day, and that would make you sick. Sick is not what you do. Perhaps the feelings of guilt, that were drummed into you, they might be sick."

That the scene of swingers and sadomasochists in the film are shown authentically, is not only due to the good research work of the film team, but also to the simple fact that "24/7 THE PASSION OF LIFE" is the first German movie that does not try to give the profession of the dominatrix the cliché of a fallen and criminalized "Lilith". The film gives much deeper answers than societal and moral criticism. The bonds made of religion, standardization constraint and double-morals, that society sets upon Lust, are on the other hand the same bonds that, in a materialized form, grant to the S&M pupil moments of Lust through liberation of pain. The essence of this exceptional film is being reduced, when an artificial duality is used as an instrument for criticism. In a society shaped by a religion, which postulates liberation through sacrifice and the pain belonging to it, 24/7 THE PASSION OF LIFE gets a therapeutic dimension.

The trinity of human existence, body, mind and soul is dissolved in the artificial trias of search for identity, sexuality and religiousness. The protagonists find themselves no longer in the conventional practice of religion, but through religious-sexual rituals. But they do not find ways out of the loneliness, nor salvation from the submission of sin in sex. But more in the last insight of acceptance of life, despite all search for meaning, deceptions and breaks.

It is about more, than the outward paradigms, that find expression as set of rules in culture and religion. The film rather shows that the core of these paradigms is threatened. There is no place to be found, where the human in his "being-so" finds admission, acceptance and Love. The apparently dark sides of the human, symbolized here through the sexual subculture, must be held in arcane, to make the lack of emotions bearable to the outward.

It is about spirituality. About the attempt of the human to find healing and happiness in his imperfection.

In Christianity the perfection of God, which the human is seeking for, is reached through spiritualization and idealisation of asceticism. This lead to an equalization of sexuality, reproduction and mortality, which enabled the healing, contrary to the pure spirit and the espousal with God. Sexuality became the "impure" form of reproduction assigned to the female. Repressed into the torture chambers of Inquisition, which find

their smooth, yet more harmless continuation in the S&M Studios of modernity. Christian rebirth through baptism, not the procreation, represents according to the moralizing doctrine, the best security for the future, that contributed in its clear ambiguity to a culture of death. 24/7 THE PASSION OF LIFE finds veritable lasting continuity through the equality of the spiritual birth, based upon spiritual intercourse, and the awareness of the physicality, based upon physical intercourse. Only the combination of both of them, take seriously the human in its entirety and pushes towards healing. Healing which the human is deprived of in our concrete society. The scene of sadomasochists and swingers tries, quasi like Prometheus, to save this "divine light" of accepted Being into their subculture.

The Prometheus of this work is the sheltered hotelier's daughter Eve. Marina Anna Eich, who once started her career at the Passion Plays of Oberammergau, performs convincingly the daughter out of a bourgeois milieu, who meets the dominatrix "Lady Maria" through a motorcycle accident, and goes on search for her erotic identity with Maria's help. Mira Gittner is brilliant as the Dominatrix "Lady Maria". Both let their experiences and longings with the Christian religion swing in a cacophony of the psyche. Longing to be understood, that is expressed in aesthetically stylized pictures of religious scenes. At the beginning of the film, the actors in posture of the holy family. Also fitting in, the bizarre scene, like the one of a theology student, who can only reconcile with God and his own sexual urges through a Christ-Crucifixion Performance. But the film doesn't provoke with the blasphemy of an infantile defence reaction against the constrictive violence of the Christian moral doctrine. Instead it reveals the intricate relation between our religion and a pain-lust sexuality.

Like in Mel Gibson's "Passion of Christ" the striving, suffering and death of the human is dealt with. Here the final ends up in a moment of redemption through pain.

In "vaginal windows" the new, reborn perspective of "Self-creation" as "Deus ex Machina" of thelemic philosophy is taken up at the end of the film. An attempt of reconciliation of Heaven and Hell, which is expressed through the scene where Eve, as a naked angel, arises from the vagina of the "eternal mother".

24/7 THE PASSION OF LIFE felicitous broadside of voluntaristic criticism, that shows the aberration of generally accepted conditioning.

There the theological message of the film becomes evident. The post-modern human with his inner conflict finds healing through the acceptance and awareness of his shadows. The standardized religion seems to fail here. So the human looks for his spirituality in other places. This theological quality can be accorded to the film rightfully: redemption can only be achieved entirely, and sexuality simply belongs to the entire human being. The question about God is raised subtly. Not so much the outward God, with his condemning power, who's perversion was only made possible by the birth of sexual subcultures, but rather the healing God, who can also be found within the human.

Touchingly Reber's film shows the search for salvation and sanctification with absurd comic scenes and melodramatic sequences. The confession of a theology student to the Dominatrix, the identification of the Dominatrix with Maria, and with the first mother of all Being, as well as the post-religious finding of meaning of the hotelier's daughter Eve who is shaped by the "wellness-culture" – all this leads in a world of mental self-creation through overcoming societal conditioning.

There is also the crucial point of criticism. A divine self-creation without God? A Matrix without model? This can and will not be possible for theology. Healing is not possible throughout one self. And this is also shown in the film.

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