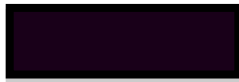


The Power of Interdependency



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J.K. Rowling, author of well-known fiction, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, once said, “Understanding is the first step to acceptance, and only with acceptance can there be recovery”. To understand means to be willing to accept and to accept means to trust. In the formation of a good relationship, trust is the benchmark, even between humans and animals. Relationship between humans and animals can be so terrifying when either side exhibits no sign of friendliness, or worse, poses harm towards each other. However, in the novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, the willingness to accept, trust and agree on the coexistence between humans and animals brings assurance to their survival as they learn to support each other. Pi and Richard Parker, in spite of the abundant observable differences they have, ~~they never lack similarities~~ <sup>have a great deal in common with one another</sup>. How can humans and animals possibly live together peacefully if there is no trust? If there is trust, how can it happen without one influencing the other? Influence is the key towards similarities.

Thesis

Therefore, the existence of interdependency between two entities changes the perception of one towards the other as trust begins to form. This can be proven through the mutual relationship between Pi and Richard Parker, introduction of animalism in Pi’s thinking mechanism due to his emotional weakness and his intensified grief of losing Richard Parker.

<sup>The</sup> Mutual beneficial relationship shared between Pi and Richard Parker stimulates the feeling of gratitude toward each other. Humans are social species that perceive cooperation as an indispensable instinct, and the hope of achieving a similar goal promotes cooperation which encourages positive interdependence between two separate entities (Seibt et al. 614). Richard Parker, though merely a Bengal tiger it is, is the sole companion alive that Pi can count on during his time <sup>in the</sup> at Pacific Ocean. Sharing the same

environment chained by struggles, thirst, hunger and despair, they both strive to survive by any means possible. As impossible as it may sound, the bidirectional reliance between Pi and Richard Parker, the fearsome animal, is the core support which bridges him through tough times physically and mentally. Animals are incapable of finding their own food when the surrounding environment runs out of easily available supply, let alone in a foreign environment encircled by sea. At critical moments, Pi's help comes in handy towards Richard Parker because Pi transforms himself into a zookeeper and makes it feel as if it is still living in a zoo, provided with sustenance regularly at certain hours (Martel 300). In the effort of creating a familiar environment out of the unfamiliar, Pi

reinforces the control he has over Richard Parker by planting the idea of him being its only source of food and water in its mind through psychological manipulation to mitigate its conscious vigilance. On the other hand, as much as Pi feels intense fear in the presence

of Richard Parker, he actively triggers its aggression to induce the concept of self-control in Richard Parker. <sup>By</sup> ~~besides~~ imposing his mastery to a point <sup>that</sup> even when <sup>he</sup> it feels agitated,

under no circumstances should he

~~it should not~~ show any harm ~~towards~~ Pi. Consequently, Richard Parker conveys a sign of contentedness as it lets out the chuffle of <sup>P</sup>*Prusten*, which is regarded by Pi as “a puff through the nose to express friendliness and harmless intentions” (Martel 216). In such a

cooperative relationship, behaviors posed by one side are highly likely to be congruent to the other's (Seibt et al. 616). Tamed behavior shown by Richard Parker will thus prompt

similar <sup>ones</sup> ~~deportment~~ from Pi. In this case, after getting positive responses from Richard Parker, Pi starts to understand the strong emotional link and bond he has with the tiger

that <sup>at</sup> ~~he~~ first fears. It seems to him that he no longer has to be afraid of it as it is now under his command. Just like a pet that a person keeps, Richard Parker, regardless of its

A bit of a run on sentence. Could have broken it up into a few sentences.

gigantic size, offers companionship and strength when Pi feels hopeless and ~~effortless~~. Evidently, Pi addresses his appreciation when he recalls the voice hidden deep down in his heart that he has never wanted Richard Parker to die as he says “a part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all” in spite of the danger it poses to his life (Martel 219). Affirmative interaction between two entirely distinct beings, Pi and Richard Parker, constitutes a win-win situation as they both benefit from each other respectively in terms of physical need and moral support. From enemies who fight to friends who work together, they show mutual appreciation and trust following the change in the way they regard each other.

In relation to mutualism-based gratitude discussed previously, it is apparent that emotional and spiritual weakness opens up an entry for Richard Parker to interfere with Pi's thinking mechanism. Interchangeable characteristics become observable between Pi and Richard Parker as Pi slowly adjusts his behavior to fit into the current environment which lacks supplies and basic necessities. Even though two beings are completely distinct in the beginning, due to adaptive behavior and stressful conditions, both may agree on common characteristics which enable them to endure the brutal environment as Pi concludes that “you must make adjustments if you want to survive” (Martel 292). Concept of self often involves <sup>an</sup> evaluative component which contributes to the forming of self-esteem. A change in self-esteem, be it to a higher or to a lower level, will propose various psychological problems (David et al. 446). Being physically drained as a result of sickness and insufficient <sup>supplies</sup> ~~supply~~ puts Pi in a vulnerable state. Driven by hunger, he is forced to commit actions that are considered wrong for him such as killing animals and consuming meats. The seemingly faulty actions cause Pi to experience guilt which further

suppresses his self-esteem. Subsequently, he is not only physically weak, but the hunger seems to have consumed his mental strength. Pi lets his self-esteem fall to an exceptionally low point when he persuades himself to ingest Richard Parker's excretion as a matter of extreme hunger, which he spits out after realizing that it is purely waste with nothing nutritional (Martel 287). Such a desperate move suggests that Pi is no longer defending his self-esteem as long as his survival is assured. From that point onwards, cognitive vulnerability makes Pi slowly leave his human behavior behind. Without him noticing, his behavior is gradually changing into the way Richard Parker acts. To point out the obvious, Pi's animalistic behavior comes to life when he devours his food ravenously as he recounts "that this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate" (Martel 303). The change in Pi's behavior is due to Interesting. the influence Richard Parker impinges on his mind. He adopts unconscious acceptance as a coping strategy without feeling the need to punish himself for behaving like an animal. Unconscious acceptance happens as he begins to be aware of his behavior, observes it and takes it in without making logical judgment (Rood et al. 74). Despite the fact that Pi actually feels horrible about the resemblance of his actions to an animal, he never truly regrets it nor feeling the urge to rehabilitate his human dignity under the circumstance of continuous hunger. The demolition in Pi's self dignity provokes the intrusion of Richard Parker's animalism into Pi's mind, weakening his humanistic behavior. Eventually, Richard Parker becomes the substituent towards Pi's destructed emotional and spiritual support, altering its position from a threat to an ally in the fight against death. To form an ally with a tiger and to rely on it emotionally, Pi definitely has trust in Richard Parker.

Following the interference of Richard Parker's behavior on Pi's thinking process, being strongly attached to Richard Parker intensifies the grief Pi experiences when Richard Parker abandons him after they come to shore on Tomatlan, Mexico. Strong emotional bond between a human and his companion makes the grieving process due to the loss of companion resembles the mourning experienced with loss of family member (Cordaro, 284). The sudden disappearance of Richard Parker after 227 days being together with Pi is too much for him to bear despite his fictional survival. He is not prepared to let go of Richard Parker because to him, Richard Parker is not only an animal now but rather a human or more precisely, a family member embodied in an animal figure of tiger. In further detail, the loss of Richard Parker is compared to the death of his own family and for the first time, Pi feels truly alone after Richard Parker leaves without a proper farewell (Martel 383). Richard Parker is Pi's restoration of hope because they forge an intimate relationship that resembles family tie due to the sharing of similar cultural background. It is the only one Pi has from his home country after he loses his entire family. However, just like what happens to Pi's family, Richard Parker leaves his side without mentioning goodbye. Its disappearance reminds him of his family and again, he feels the pain of losing every significant ones in his life. This is when Pi emphasizes on the importance of giving things an ending because "only then you can let go" (Martel 383). In another word, Pi will never be able to forget the death of his family due to the shipwreck accident. A part of him is clinging to the grieving as his heart fills with regrets for not being able to have proper farewell to his family nor Richard Parker before they separate forever. Pi's incapability of expressing his love towards his important ones before they vanish from his life leads to a journey without a round ending. This

What do you mean by fictional survival?

I don't think it's the cultural background of two totally different species that forged a close bond between these two.

How do you suppose a tiger says goodbye?

This concept is not clear to me. What is a round ending? Do you mean something that come to a full resolution?

contradicts his hope of “where we can, we must give things a meaningful shape” (Martel 383). Essentially, this whole idea of unsettledness is magnified and reminded of as Richard Parker springs into the jungle without even looking back at him despite the effort he spends to take care of ~~it~~<sup>him</sup>. In simpler terms, his grief of loss is induced by his dependency on Richard Parker which then redirects him to the memory of his family’s unexpected demise. Now, Richard Parker is no longer a carnivorous animal driven only by instinct. Instead, it becomes a reflection of Pi’s family who he genuinely loves and trusts. Pi is grief-stricken because his interdependency with Richard Parker comes to an ~~incomplete~~<sup>abrupt</sup> ending.

To sum up, this essay seeks to prove that the change in one’s opinion towards the other happens as they depend on each other mutually owing to <sup>the</sup> existence of trust. This is related to the feeling of gratefulness grown from <sup>a mutually</sup> beneficial relationship involving both sides, vulnerability in term of spiritual and emotional aspects which makes one permeable to the influences of the other, and the awful feeling of grief upon the loss of a close companion. Controversy arises when the idea of interdependency is misunderstood as a game of manipulation merely to gain benefits without the insertion of true emotions. Conversely, emotion is the expression of feelings ~~and unpretentiously~~<sup>and unpretentiously</sup>, Humans and animals are beings that are incapable of pure reasoning without letting their emotions interfere with their actions. In fact, it is clear that the mutualism between Pi and Richard Parker exists because they feel each other’s pain and learn to sympathize <sup>with one another</sup>. Therefore, there is an involvement of emotion even before they show cooperation with each other. Getting emotionally involved in a relationship forges the strongest and most powerful bond between two beings. Although they are not related to each other by blood, the



attachment <sup>can become quite</sup> is so close and genuine. ~~that one could never forget or deny~~. Conclusively, emotional bonds between two separate beings can be such astounding that it links to psychological change in the way they perceive each other.



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