

ENGLISH: *PARADISE ROAD*

The ability to compromise is important when responding to conflict.

Conflict is not an antithesis of peace but rather a disturbance in the tranquillity of moral and social order caused by the inherent proclivity of humans to believe our own delusions. In our lives, the ability to compromise when responding to conflict is highly necessary for progress and resolution. For the process of compromise allows the unique opportunity for opposing paradigms to mutually reach a harmony, and thus proceed forward with some sense of agreement. As Heraclitus poignantly illuminates, “The unlike is joined together, and from differences results the most beautiful harmony.” This suggests that conflicting ideals are intrinsic to human interaction; however, by uniting them through constant compromise, a liminal space of harmony can be formed that transcends previous misperceptions. In this way, the ability to compromise is imperative to conflict resolution, proving that a justifiable equilibrium between opposing ideals can be achieved. However, in certain circumstances, particularly when conflict threatens to destabilise the soul’s habitation of morality, compromise is not advisable. In these cases, our need to preserve our humanity counters the need for mutual agreement, therefore deeming compromise as not the pragmatic option.

Although many of us attempt to maintain our morality in times of conflict, our desire for personal safety and self-preservation is often challenged. As a result, compromise is necessary to protect our physical and mental virtue. This notion is crystallised in Bruce Beresford’s film, Paradise Road, which profoundly explores the inner conflict between an individual’s solipsistic desire for self-preservation and the soul’s habitation of moral dignity. Within the oppression of the camp, the women, in the nadir of their human existence, are forced to decide whether to relinquish their self-dignity and perform sexual favours for the nominal Japanese officers or maintain their virtues of humanity by enduring a seemingly endless cycle of corporeal starvation and torture. Many of the women, fearing for the own physical safety, make the somewhat justified compromise to have “food and soap” and guarantee basic nutrition. In the same way, Sister Wilhelmina’s actions, by rejecting her pious beliefs to save Adrienne Pargiter from death, illuminates how compromise is often imperative to prevent harm done to another. Beresford acknowledges the intrinsic primordial disposition of the human condition to seek safety when threatened and therefore contends that compromise is necessary to prevent the occurrence of harm. By understanding the fundamental need to compromise in such situations, we may then be able to defend ourselves against the harm associated with conflict.

Indeed, while our predilection towards disregarding the paradigms of another is considered an intuitive response when we responding to conflict, the ability to compromise often facilitates personal and societal progress. Through compromising, a more edifying and enlightened view of the world is achievable. In Bertolt Brecht’s aesthetically dialectic play, Life of Galileo, Galileo Galilei’s revolutionary praxis of empirical knowledge is polarised by the interdiction of the Church who attempt to maintain the secular power structure of social and religious class. As a result, Galileo, realising the human finitude of understanding and the parochialism of a temporal world forged from the Aristotelian design, compromises with his beliefs until he reaches the point of recantation. However, by understanding that the modalities of temporal existence become objects of knowledge and that knowledge is always limited by inherent parameters of authority, Galileo continues his experimental research in a clandestine manner. Such autonomy and pragmatism, sourced from his utopian desire for human liberation, ultimately allows Galileo to penetrate the boundary of human understanding and push both himself and society in the direction of progress and change. Thus, while we must constantly preserve our beliefs and morals in times of conflict, the ability to compromise is imperative for individual and societal evolution.

And yet, when our moral consciousness is challenged in adversity, to compromise is not advisable as it may lead to the abandonment of our fundamental beliefs and ideals. Instead, we must adopt a more considered approach where we maintain our own moral standards. In Paradise Road, Beresford explores the notion that the refusal to compromise with an opposing paradigm can

strengthen one's morality and therefore spark hope in conflict. By depicting oppression as the nadir of human existence, Beresford profoundly elucidates how hope, sourced from individual pragmatism, mutual belief and collective ambition, can act as a natural antidote to the inner conflict within the human psyche. Adrienne Pargiter, in understanding the consequences of compromise and submission, constructs an idyllic, though momentary, utopia for the women in the camp through her formation of a symphonic orchestra. In creating this beacon of hope, Adrienne, a woman whose inherent proclivity to serve is countered by her willingness to lead, becomes a preaching pulpit of moral consciousness to the nihilism of the weary women. Her preternatural courage and refutation of compromising juxtaposes the women's loss of freedom with the possibility of salvation. As a result, a radiant warmth of hope is formed within the camp, enabling the women to maintain the moral standards and not compromise with the Japanese authorities. At times, when our entire moral code is challenged by an opposing force, compromising can relinquish the remnants of our humanity. Therefore, we must preserve our moral dignity and defend our beliefs by adopting an approach that refuses the need to compromise.

In a more profound sense, compromise is often necessary to further human understanding. For when conflicting ideologies are united in harmony through compromise, we are able to integrate contrasting views to create a more holistic perception of the world we inhabit. As German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche profoundly contends, "There are no facts, only interpretations". Indeed, this suggests that nothing is objectively 'correct', and thus a compromise between conflicting perceptions must be considered for expansion of human understanding to occur. The phenomenon of globalisation, the concept of the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness, solidifies the notion of how dissonant perceptions progress human knowledge. The aesthetic dogma suggests that globalisation has promoted a global ecumene of persistent cultural interaction and technological transformation. In contrast, however, a more pragmatic doctrine adopts the outlook that globalism is not triumphant, where irredentism abounds and an egalitarian global village does not exist. Yet it is through the compromise, integration and balance of these perceptions that human understanding is offered a hope, where the drive for cultural diversity is in equilibrium with the uncontrolled reflexivity of society, where human thought is stimulated by human doubt, and where harmony is achieved from a constant compromise of antitheses. Through this, compromise essentially achieves concord, enabling the agent of mankind to mutually work together in order to further human potentiality. Thus, while we must always seek to develop our own paradigms of the world, the ability to compromise is necessary for the expansion of human thought and human possibility.

Thus, the ability to compromise is an essential facet of the conflict process, for it achieves a satisfying equilibrium between opposing paradigms and often enabling a progression of human thought and societal change. However, in the same way, when our moral rectitude is threatened by conflicting forces, compromise is not advised as it may relinquish our fundamental beliefs and ideals. In the words of English mathematician Alfred Whitehead, "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order". Therefore, by first preserving our moral standards and then using our ability to compromise, only then will we be able to observe the change in both society and ourselves.