

As Armin Houman once said, “Values are the definition of our actions in life”, and if thought about enough, personal values and beliefs do greatly influence one's way of thinking and decision-making process. A value is a long-lasting belief that is important to a certain person, ultimately becoming the standards that impact one's life's order of importance. On the other hand, a belief is, as you can say, the short-term version of a value that would only turn into a value once one's commitment to that belief grows and is now seen as an important quality to live by. Nevertheless, being able to recognize one's values and beliefs is a great task that requires self-awareness and the ability to view oneself from an unbiased standpoint. Doing that may seem difficult, but once done, it would allow one to see beyond one's initial thought process, essentially overcoming indecisiveness and allowing a fresh array of choices to take over. With this, six short stories, namely: *Federigo's Falcon*, *The Devil*, *The Last Leaf*, *The Faith Cure Man*, *Araby*, and *The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, through the use of character dialogue, actions, and mannerisms, put personal values and beliefs into play as each story's characters, though not all influenced by the same ethics, are overpoweringly driven by them in certain sections throughout the story.

Take faith for instance, it is an abstract concept, yet there are those who abide by their complete trust in something that may or not cause their downfall. And although faith in the context of the six stories may have two meanings -- faith without reason, reason without faith, *The Last Leaf* by O. Henry manages to explore the value of life and the inevitability of faith which tackles human adversities, whilst conveying the ideal balance of faith. The ideal balance of faith in *The Last Leaf* essentially revolves around two characters, Johnsy, who is the emissary of the pessimistic aspect of faith, and Sue, who represents the logical reasoning and hopeful side of faith. The sides are apparent in "Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?" and "Oh, I never heard of such nonsense," complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well?" as Sue refuses the dull-witted notion of Johnsy, and eventually driving Johnsy to fulfill her life once more in "Sudie, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples.". Still, despite the story completely assimilating the balance of faith, and as well was being an epitome of faith and hope, death, however, remains as the main character of the story, while life is built around it.

Apart from *The Last Leaf*, *The Faith Cure Man* by Paul Laurence Dunbar only manages to convey the first of the two aspects of faith aforementioned -- faith

without reason. Although they may have the same concepts of faith in both stories, in the case of Martha, she was not able to achieve the balanced ratio of logic and faith, ultimately labeling herself as the perfect target to scam for acting as a mother blinded of desperation. Martha's blind faith that influences her every move in an attempt to cure her daughter has deprived her of the rational thinking that she potentially needed in order to save her daughter. Martha's rash way of thinking that eventually lead to the uneven balance of rationality and faith is seen as she lets go of reason in "*Martha did not understand anything of what he was saying. She did not try to; she did not want to. She only felt a blind trust in him that filled her heart with unspeakable gladness. Tremulous with excitement, she doled out her poor dollars to him, seized the precious elixir and hurried away home to Lucy, to whom she was carrying life and strength.*". Had Martha not rely on her blind faith, and direct it towards logical faith in science and medicine, her daughter may have had a better chance at life. And with this, seeing how drastic the differences between those who choose to live negatively and positively by faith, it is only right to say that having a diseased mind is without a doubt more harmful than the disease itself, overall portraying that knowing one's values is important for it can play the dominant mindset and deciding role in one's life.

In like manner, just like blind faith, there is also what is called "blind love". The concept of blind love, in essence is idealizing the person you "love", causing you to give up anything for them, at the cost of losing yourself, and the story *Araby* by James Joyce perfectly illustrates that notion. Though experiencing blind love may have ended up as the narrator's all-time low as he now prioritized it amongst other matters, his coming-of-age or awakening to the harsh reality of the world would not have occurred without it. The narrator's "awakening" moment started as soon as he started showing interest in someone whom he did not interact with at all, only watching them from afar, but putting them above all else in the lines: "*Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door... I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her*" and "*I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood*". The story further plays out his deep infatuation with Mangan's sister as he now only thought of doing things for her in "*It would be a splendid bazaar; she said she would love to go*", wherein it coerces him, to a certain extent, to get to this bazaar that she is very much interested in as seen in his lines: '*If I go, I said, I will bring you something.*'. His deep "love" for her showed no bounds, even causing him to lose sight of the path about the truth behind their relationship, and eventually forcing him to uncover its reality that there was no other thing about their relationship other than mere friendship. His painful actualization process can be seen as he overhears a conversation at the bazaar in the scene: "The young lady changed the

position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder. I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark". In the end, had the narrator not realize that his love for someone, who is practically a "stranger", was what he was living for at that moment, he would've lost one to gain another, and that is losing the chance to gain a wiser perspective on life, but keeping that innocent first "love" of his kindle.

Subsequently, other than blind love in terms of puppy love, there is also blind "love" in terms of doing something out of humanistic pity, and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez shows us just that. As the story opens up when Pelayo and Elisenda discover an old "man" with enormous wings, their humane half or their "blind love" in terms of being human, emerges as they decide not to follow their neighbor's advice to "*club him to death*" for "*they did not have the heart to club him*". But after further investigation, little do they know their "love" for this man soon turned into the fear that drove their quest to conquer the sense of their inferiority over the aura mysterious things tend to omit. The realization of this fear surfaces as soon as they take a closer look and start to describe the man in "*He was dressed like a ragpicker. There were only a few faded hairs left on his bald skull and very few teeth in his mouth, and his pitiful condition of a drenched great-grandfather took away and sense of grandeur he might have had. His huge buzzard wings, dirty and half-plucked were forever entangled in the mud. They looked at him so long and so closely that Pelayo and Elisenda very soon overcame their surprise and in the end found him familiar*". Furthermore, the sense that the "man" is an "other" from a foreign place is strengthened as they tried to converse with him in "*Then they dared speak to him, and he answered in an incomprehensible dialect with a strong sailor's voice*". However, due to the need to satisfy some extent of their human pride, they eventually pass the man off as a sailor in order to give him an identity, instead of labeling him as something unknown in "*That was how the skipped over the inconvenience of the wings and quite intelligently concluded that he was a lonely castaway from some foreign ship wrecked by the storm*". And with this in mind, it is apparent that Pelayo and Elisenda's values and beliefs managed to play a big role for it has influenced and aroused the interests of many around them.

Additionally, in the same way that people often experience blind love for

someone, there are also those who devoutly offer their life's purpose for worldly items, such as money. In the short story: *The Devil by Guy de Maupassant*, we encounter two characters who live in their world of avarice, a world beyond help. On one side, we have La Rapet, an old washerwoman, who weighs the value of her greed over human life. Though in her case, she does not involve her own life, she measures materialism as the greater priority than the life of the mother, and as well as her own guiltless, crime-free life ahead. Be that as it may, La Rapet still took time to contemplate which of the two she values more in "*La Rapet was becoming exasperated; every minute now seemed to her so much time and money stolen from her. She felt a mad inclination to take this old woman, this, headstrong old fool, this obstinate old wretch, and to stop that short, rapid breath, which was robbing her of her time and money, by squeezing her throat a little. But then she reflected on the danger of doing so...*", but as the story progresses and just as stated previously, it is evident that she chose to live by her greed. On the other hand, the second character that values wealth over life is the mother, though this time she much literally puts her greed over her own life. The mother's avarice is present in "*And the peasant, in great distress, replied: "But I must get in my wheat, for it has been lying on the ground a long time, and the weather is just right for it; what do you say about it, mother?" And the dying woman, still possessed by her Norman avariciousness, replied yes with her eyes and her forehead, and so urged her son to get in his wheat, and to leave her to die alone.*", wherein the mother already knew what she most valued, allowing her to let go of the indecisiveness that should've come during a life or death situation. Consequently, as a result of valuing their infinite avid desire for gain, the two characters, by the means of dividing the human mind and allowing it to govern their choices, were able to clearly vision what they wanted even amidst human adversities.

In the light of great love for money, love for one's family can also drive you to focus and act solely for them, often leading to personal sacrifices. And although the two mothers in the stories *Federigo's Falcon* and *The Faith Cure Man* display a brilliant representation of familial love, their great love for someone alone, comes with their reason for self-sacrifice -- the ever-growing fear of losing them. When talking about familial love, family members often face challenges together, build an unbreakable bond, etc, all in all allowing that irreplaceable relationship to become the double-edged sword for Monna and Martha. In the case of Monna in the story *Federigo's Falcon*, her son, just as Martha's daughter, was facing death and had his dying wish of taking Federigo's falcon as his own in order to make him "feel" better. And of course, out of both the fear and the love from the connection they have as family, Monna had to make a decision whether to give up her pride and ask for the

only beloved falcon of Federigo or to give up on her son's life in "...*She also knew that it wasn't right, and so for a long time she just stood there. Finally, though, the love she had for her son convinced her to do it*". Likewise, Martha from the story *The Faith Cure Man*, was also presented with a similar situation, though this time, she initiated the plan of action in order to cure her daughter. Martha, without any hesitation, was able to spend her "poor" dollars on her daughter's health all due to her immense love along with the fear of losing her daughter in "*Tremulous with excitement, she doled out her poor dollars to him, seized the precious elixir and hurried away home to Lucy, to whom she was carrying life and strength.*". Martha's extent of her love is seen in the scene previously mentioned as "poor" here, which is also used in the text to describe their financial situation, goes to show that Martha can spend the remaining amount of money she has left even if it may take a toll on her lifestyle later on, just to cure her daughter. In either case, both Monna and Martha had to give up a bit of themselves in order for them to focus on saving their children, as love for their family is their most treasured value. Whether having to swallow their pride in order to get the chance of acquiring Federigo's falcon for the sake of a son's dying wish, or having to give up what's left of their fortune in hopes of saving their daughter, the two lived for their children until the time of their children's deaths for they were able to recognize their value, ultimately allowing them to take action without much thought given.

Given these points, it goes without saying that through the dialogue, course of action, and mannerisms of each character, the premises of one's life are led by one's values and beliefs. Being able to properly distinguish and settle one's values and beliefs from an unbiased standpoint essentially establishes a definitive course of action, allowing one to act accordingly even amidst times of human adversity. Though proven to be as complex and perplexing as it sounds, doing so ultimately drove the characters to calmly assess uncontrollable situations, whereas those who failed to perceive them led those situations astray. All in all, being capable of making out one's values and beliefs enables prompt-decision making, and as well as enabling a brand-new array of options to go through. With that, the saying "Values are the definition of our actions in life" is distinctly engrained into one's natural conduct, forcefully empowering them to conquer human consciousness and the resulting behavior that comes with it.