About

For years I have been in PhD. For years I have been working on this dissertation. I have asked myself and others many questions, as is natural. However, I have missed one fundamental question: What is a dissertation? This book history project with a philosophical and religious studies bent cannot proceed without that question. A dissertation is a book—and book history does not take for granted the physical, social, cultural, and intellectual reality of the book—the book as a force of historical change [1].

A Brief History of the Dissertation

In the neoliberal world of today [2], the dissertation is part of the attempt to measure quantitatively human productivity in order to increase it ever to infinity. A matter of assessment, and certification. In the age of copyright and the idea and reality that there is such a thing as intellectual property and much profit to be made—the dissertation is to be done by the PhD student alone—and to have originality. Unless converted into a book with a reputable academic publisher, it holds minimal value in the course of contemporary human knowledge.

In the early days of the dissertation [3]—before confidence replaced faith, when faith was in fellow humans and powers beyond human control and understanding, when a person's bank account and their certificates was not the entirety of their worth as a

human being—the dissertation was written by the supervising professor [8]; The student was the lieutenant defending it to show their ability to be knowledgeable. The disputation or as it is called today, defense, was a public event attended by heads of states and powerful patrons. A forum for the advancement of human knowledge. After the printing press, the thesis spread outside of the oral and manuscript tradition; most famous one being Martin Luther's. The dissertation was its own genre of academic publication, among journals and books—without the dissertation there was no early modern intellectual life.

With origins in the medieval universities [4, p. 35] and heyday in the early modern era [3]—by the end of the 19th century [4, p. 48] when Germany took the first step towards ethnolinguistic statehood [5]—the whole process became streamlined in the construction of the first modern research universities [3, p. 152]. The academic dominance of Germany started to spread this system. The young nation of America took the system [6] and in their dominance of half of the world spread it further [7].

Buddhadasa's lifelong fight against what he called "materialism" (วัตถุนิยม). Materialism as in spiritual decline and material flourishing. Man on the moon, and man sleeping on the street in the same world. I cannot in good faith write a dissertation in the contemporary sense about Buddhadasa—it is against everything he stood for—It is

an insult to my faith.

I am writing a dissertation in Martin Luther's sense. Buddhadasa is my professor.

I am his lieutenant defending our thesis. And Graham Law is my captain.

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