

The *Wednesday*



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Editorial

Rethinking Identity

It was fashionable during the last quarter of the last century to talk about weak thoughts and the end of grand narrative. All the old certainties seemed to have melted down and we were into a new world which also seemed brave and optimistic. This event was named post-modernism, the end of metaphysics and the end of ideology. There was also a change in the task of the intellectual and the philosopher. He is now no more conceived of as the organic intellectual, the committed intellectual with a big plan to change society and the world, an intellectual who is involved in class struggle or international liberation movements. Power had lost its grand position and old symbols and had become diffused and localised. The intellectual got involved in the archaeology of knowledge, as with Foucault, literary theorist, literary critic in the tradition of Edward Said, or involved in hermeneutics like Ricoeur, or deconstructed text like Derrida.

Philosophy tried to catch up with this move, especially in the continental tradition, with Lyotard's analysis of the post-modern condition and Vattimo's questioning the consequences of old debates about the end of metaphysics in Heidegger or the death of God in Nietzsche which may amount to the same thing. One might bring the dating of this event nearer by suggesting the student movement towards the end of the sixties and the collapse of communism by the end of the eighties (the end of the first ideological state).

All this went to serve the debate on identity and the new realities in Europe and the world. What replaced the old certainties or the traditional identities was a new set of fragmented identities along lines of gender, race and ethnicities. There was a weakening of old thought and global discourses. The old reference points in metaphysics or ideology had shifted. Identities became experimental and more and more

work was needed to ground these identities in an experimental weak way with weakened metaphysical grounding. But gradually these identities became fixed and entrenched and they affirmed themselves through a climate of political correctness. There is now the added worry that some old prejudices are re-affirming themselves in the aftermath of the Brexit, and some Nietzschean thought (and the weak thought that was developed out of his philosophy) could be useful in this debate.

However, there is now a sense that political correctness and these fragmented identities are not working. The debate around these issues gets politicised in its turn and labels are fixed as right, left, sexist, racist and many others. But what really gets lost in the debate is that we start with weak thoughts, experimental ones, and end up with dominations and mutual rejections in a game of will-to-power. This comes as much from the left as from the right. Rationalism can go too far, and irrationalism can do the same. In Islamic history, there was a period which is called the 'Crisis'. It was when the Caliph of Baghdad in the ninth century adopted the rationalist interpretation of the Quran and said that the Holy Book was not eternal with God but created. People lost their lives during this crisis at the instigation of the rationalists.

My point is that the rationalists who were all for freedom ended up suppressing freedom, much like the orthodoxy they were opposing. A similar thing can be said about the rationalist attack on religious symbols and practices in the French Revolution and the former communist countries. What is needed is more intellectual honesty and soul searching before anyone launches an attack on a view she or he cannot tolerate. Nowhere this is more true than in philosophy where the right to think, debate and voice one's ideas is so sacred.

The Editor

Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*

Fear and Trembling raises the issue of the transparency or isolation of the individual, and what can or cannot be communicated to others. Is it possible that we can explain all our decisions, motives and intentions or are there situations where this is impossible and all language fails? It is an unsettling book, that shocks us into confronting the strangeness and otherness of what we may have taken for granted. It raises several questions that are dealt with in this article which we publish in two parts.

DAVID SOLOMON

Part 1

When Kierkegaard wrote *Fear and Trembling*, which came out in 1843, he was in the middle of a personal crisis. He had been engaged to Regine Olsen, a young woman he had met a few years earlier. But he decided he could not carry through the marriage. In his journals he wrote of his unwillingness to subject her to the 'melancholy' and his intense habits of introspection. His partial disclosure of his motives hints at a reality that was more opaque and less directly expressed. All his life he had been haunted by his experience of difference and separateness, his sense of unreality that made it impossible, so it seemed to him, to live the universal themes of life of someone of his background: including transparency to others, career, and marriage. He knew that by breaking off the engagement, he had caused her intense suffering, and he felt guilty about this from then onwards. But his separateness and inwardness made it impossible for him to communicate or explain directly to her. Instead, in this work, he recounted the story of Abraham and Isaac, which we can see in one sense as a parable of his situation and as a way of conveying a secret explanation to Regine.

The story appears in *Genesis* chapter 22, when God appears to Abraham commanding him to take his son, who had been given to him in fulfilment of a promise that he would be a father of a whole nation, take him to a mountain and sacrifice him. In the story, Abraham obeys the command, and without a word sets out on his journey. He takes Isaac on a three-day journey to Mount Moriah, offering no explanation apart from an ambiguous reply to his son's question.

'Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.'

When they arrive at the mountain, Abraham binds his son and prepares to sacrifice him. Suddenly he hears the voice of God telling him that he knows that he fears him, and commanding him to sacrifice a ram instead



Regine Olsen and Kierkegaard

of his son. In this interpretation, we can read the laconic Abraham as standing in for Kierkegaard himself with Regine as Isaac.

On another level, *Fear and Trembling* transcends Kierkegaard's own predicament and becomes a consideration of the nature of faith itself, what faith is and how it relates or does not relate to ethics and the sometimes extreme occurrences of everyday life. It discusses the nature of faith through the story of Abraham and Isaac. This is explored poetically, with reflections, satire, imaginative stories and parables, comparisons to analogous stories in Greek literature, in the Bible and in history.

In his various works, Kierkegaard separates human existence into three stages: the Aesthetic, the Ethical and the Religious. But he does not try to construct a system to show how these three types are demarcated or fit into one another. This work is not an exposition of systematic philosophy, and he directs his ironic humour at philosophers who try to do so. Hence, he constantly takes aim at Hegel in this and other works. For him, there is no absolute observation point from which anyone can judge the place of faith in relation

to the ethical or to receive assurance that faith is distinct from aesthetic speculation and not some delusory temptation.

Many of Kierkegaard's works are written pseudonymously, that is from the point of view of an array of characters who are supposedly their authors. The 'author' of *Fear and Trembling* is a man called John de Silentio (John out of the Silence) who appears elsewhere in his works under slightly modified names. John occupies a position on the borderline of faith. He recognises that faith, represented pre-eminently by Abraham, is a wonderful thing; it is different from the ethical life and has been misrepresented and cheapened by the established religion of his own day. He has a presentiment of it, yet at the same time, he cannot understand it, see how it is possible. He cannot take a leap into faith. He is on the outside of it looking in, with longing, with admiration, sometimes ironically.

In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard / 'John' criticises the way that the story of Abraham and Isaac has been presented. It has been read backwards. According to this misreading, we interpret the story as if we know the result in advance. This is a cheap version of the

Philosophy

Abraham story which is peddled, one that does not express imaginatively what he went through. The conventional version stresses the fact that it was a ‘test’, and rushes forward to the result, which was that a ram appeared, and Abraham was allowed to sacrifice that. But these interpretations, putting the emphasis on the result, miss the point which was Abraham’s inward state in the time before that, the length of the ordeal, his anguish. He journeyed for three and a half days. It was not something no sooner announced than completed. He had to make preparations, saddle his ass, travel slowly with deliberation. What was going on within him during those three and a half days?

‘I would remind the audience that the journey lasted three days and a good part of the fourth, yea, that these three and a half days were infinitely longer than the few thousand years which separate me from Abraham.’

The passion that Abraham experiences is the product of a collision between what God had promised to him and continued to believe and the reality that confronts him. In his earlier life God has promised that he was to be a father of a nation, yet his wife Sarah and he are childless. Yet he continues to believe and at last, miraculously they are given a son. Now it seems that he has to give up his son, and by his own hand. But at the same time, he continues to believe in the promise made to him.

The dichotomy between his belief in the promise and the reality of what he has to do, reaches its height at the moment when he is about to kill his son, and before he hears the voice telling him that it is a test. The writer says that he can’t imagine this collision, it is too horrifying, unimaginable. He still believes even at the moment when he is about to plunge the knife into his son, that he will be the father of a people; he believes by virtue of the Absurd.

‘Who gave strength to Abraham’s arm? Who held his right hand up so that it did not fall limp at his side? He who gazes at this becomes paralyzed. Who gave strength to Abraham’s soul, so that his eyes did not grow dim, so that he saw neither Isaac nor the ram? He who gazes at this becomes blind. – And yet rare enough perhaps is the man who becomes paralyzed and blind, still more rare one who worthily recounts what happened. We all know it – it was only a trial.’

What marks out Abraham’s faith and faith generally is that belief is belief in this life



and not in some other world or other reality. The important thing is not the result of the story (it turns out to be a test, and Abraham can sacrifice the ram instead), but the state of mind, the turmoil that Abraham is going through up to the very final moment. He doesn't know what is going to happen, but he continues to believe in the promise, even though it seems totally contradicted by the reality.



Regine Olsen

That he is able to hold together the two worlds, the world of the promise and the world of actual reality together, is the passion of faith, which is inconceivable to the 'author', impossible for him to picture. The 'author' can imagine someone renouncing the world resigning the finite for the sake of the infinite, becoming what he calls 'The Knight of Infinite Resignation'.

'For the act of resignation faith is not required, for what I gain by resignation is my eternal consciousness, and this is a purely philosophical movement which I dare say I am able to make if it is required, and which I can train myself to make, for whenever any finiteness would get the mastery over me, I starve myself until I can make the movement, for my eternal consciousness is my love to God, and for me this is higher than everything. For the act of resignation faith is not required, but it is needed when it is the case of acquiring the very least thing more than my eternal consciousness, for this is the paradoxical.'

What he cannot understand is the opposite step that the 'Knight of Faith' has to make, which is the leap back from the infinite into the finite, because the Knight of Faith is at home in the world, but by virtue of the Absurd.

'... thus to live joyfully and happily every instant by virtue of the absurd, every instant to see the sword hanging over the head of the beloved, and yet not to find repose in the pain of resignation, but joy by virtue of the absurd – this is marvellous. He who does it is great, the only great man. The thought of it stirs my soul, which never was niggardly in the admiration of greatness.'

The story of Abraham raises problems about the nature of faith and the sort of temptations it might be subjected to. How did Abraham know he was not suffering from a delusion? How do we know that he was not a psychopath?

It questions the relationship of faith to the ethical life. Can faith be understood universally e.g. ethically (rationally)? If it can, then surely it is indistinguishable from ethics.

If it cannot, then it pertains to the individual who is in conflict with the universal and rises above it. If Abraham did not have the assurance of the ethical – universal morality – how could he be sure that he was rising

to a higher level of life and not sinking to a lower level of individual wilfulness and self-deception? If the ethical has the same character as man's eternal blessedness, and the ethical is the highest end or aim of humankind, then....

'Hegel is right when he regards the particular as "a moral form of evil" which is to be annulled in the teleology of the moral, so that the individual who remains in this stage is either sinning or subjected to temptation (*Anfechtung*). On the other hand, Hegel is wrong in talking of faith, wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against the fact that Abraham enjoys honour and glory as the father of faith, whereas he ought to be prosecuted and convicted of murder.'

This work raises the issue of the transparency or isolation of the individual, and what can or cannot be communicated to others. Is it possible that we can explain all our decisions, motives and intentions or are there situations where this is impossible and all language fails? Kierkegaard / 'John' leaves open the possibility that Abraham really is lost, that he is a murderer and nothing more.

We cannot be sure, but however we decide, we must not try to assimilate him into a comforting and familiar version of faith. Rather than that, the honest thing would be to treat his action in preparing to sacrifice his son as criminal or psychopathic, and not to insult him by pretending to honour him as the father of faith while at the same time trivialising the significance of what he did. Throughout this work Kierkegaard implies that for faith to exist, it does so in opposition to the universal, though in full knowledge of the universal.

'In the ethical way of regarding life it is therefore the task of the individual to divest himself of the inward determinants

and express them in an outward way. Whenever he shrinks from this, whenever he is inclined to persist in or to slip back again into the inward determinants of feeling, mood, etc., he sins, he is in a temptation (*Anfechtung*). The paradox of faith is this, that there is an inwardness which is incommensurable for the outward, and inwardness, be it observed, which is not identical with the first but is a new inwardness.'

Kierkegaard / 'John' raises questions about faith that he does not try to answer, that he seems to think philosophy cannot answer. *Fear and Trembling* is an unsettling book, that shocks us into confronting the strangeness and otherness of what we may have taken for granted. We reread the story of Abraham and Isaac, and explore or revisit these questions:

What do we mean by faith? What is faith for us? What is the direction of our faith, that is, what do we have faith in: God, humanity, history, or something very individual such as our own sense of reality and self-esteem in the world? Maybe we have had a turning point in our life, revelation. What would be the relation of our turning point or revelation to our ordinary subsequent life? Is it necessary to have faith? Do we choose to have faith or not have faith, and what are the consequences of our choice?

We can also see the whole work as only one person's perspective, John de Silentio's. Do we necessarily agree with his description of faith? Or is it just an outsider's construction of what it is?

In another article, I will discuss the different literary aspects of *Fear and Trembling*, its unique combination of satire, polemic, poetry, and philosophical speculation.

‘The Created World’ by Mohamed Mustafa Kamal



A Note On Hegel, The State And Religion

Was Hegel right about the Greeks and his interpretation of their state and religion? Was he right about the role of the state in morality? Was he religious in the Christian sense? These are some of the issues discussed below.

EDWARD GREENWOOD

In a footnote on p.247 of his book *The Religious Dimensions of Hegel's Thought* Emil Fackenheim points out that 'Unlike the Nietzschean death of God the Hegelian is followed by a divine resurrection.' It might be said of Hegel's philosophy that ever since its death was announced in the 1840s it has been in a state of perpetual resurrection. Hegel scholars have demolished several Hegel legends, in particular the legend that Hegel was a crude sycophant of the state, and that his view of freedom was exhausted by Russell's quip that all it amounted to for him was 'the right to obey the law.' Quick gross dismissals of Hegel's philosophy are then, out, but this does not mean that in the crooks and crevices of its great edifice there are not found statements which are highly objectionable. I want, in particular, to attack some remarks on p.94 of the Nisbet translation of the Introduction: Reason and History to the Lectures on The Philosophy of History published by Cambridge University Press in 1975.

Hegel makes the categorical statement 'Only in the state does man have a rational moral existence.' For Hegel the essence of the state is ethical life and, ultimately, religious life. These statements are categorical. Hegel does not consider any exceptions or objections. But there is an exception on the very same page. Hegel quotes the famous lines from Sophocles' *Antigone* 'The divine commands are not of yesterday, nor of today, no, they live eternally, and no one could say whence they came.' This is a famous statement of natural law as opposed to positivist law. It is

quoted in Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. It is also opposed to the historicist conception of law which began, according to Leo Strauss, with Rousseau and passed on to Hegel and others. It should be remembered that Hegel's interpretation of *Antigone* as a struggle not between right and wrong, but as a struggle between two rights was rightly rejected by the German classical scholar Kurt Von Fritz. Creon cannot be seen as a representative of the just state, as his irascibility and his treatment of Tiresias and others show. He rules by positive decree rather than by natural law. Antigone, on the contrary, acts according to the mores of the time: its *Sittlichkeit* as Hegel calls it.

Furthermore, when Hegel claims 'Man owes his entire existence to the state, and has his being within it alone' this seems stronger than a modest claim that we need to be brought up in a society which protects us in order to attain maturity. It ignores the function of the other institution Hegel discusses, namely the family. The family is protector and nurturer and the first initiator into the rational and the ethical, as is evinced by the example of Antigone herself. Moreover, Hegel completely ignores Pericles' statement in his funeral oration over the Athenian war dead in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Pericles' speech shows that Hegel is quite wrong to say that man 'has his being within the state alone.' Although Pericles says every citizen is expected to take part in politics, he earlier acknowledges that the citizens also have private business. He says: 'We do not get into a state with

our next-door neighbour if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of black looks, which, though they do no real harm, still hurt people's feelings. We are free and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deep respect.' (Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warned, Penguin Books, 1954, p.117) It is as well to remember that these words were spoken in that most fully politically participatory of states, the Athenian polis. As well as positive laws for protection against wrong, Pericles also acknowledges natural law when he speaks of 'those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break.' (*Ibid.*)

Most startling perhaps, is Hegel's ignoring of the fact that there is a great philosopher in antiquity devoted to reason who offers the complete antithesis to his views, but remains unmentioned and so unanswered, namely that foe of Plato, Epicurus. Hegel considers the life of the state and politics as the epitome of reason. He even regards the state as 'founded on religion'. He does not entertain the thought that a rational mind might reject these truths (*op.cit.* p.108). Epicurus, on the contrary regards the life of reason as rejecting both politics and religion as Hegel understands them. Not in state affairs, but in 'living hidden' with philosophically minded companions is what constitutes happiness for Epicurus. He is not an atheist, but rejects traditional myths about the gods. The gods are quite unconcerned with human beings. Moreover any religious notions of reward and punishment after death are completely rejected. The fear they inspire is deprecated. For Epicurus as a naturalist there is in the words from the chorus in Seneca's *Troades*, 'nothing after death.' It is not, then, surprising that in Michael Inwood's *A Hegel Dictionary* on page 262 in the entry on scepticism and stoicism we are told that Hegel in his *Lectures on Philosophy* regards Epicureanism as 'a sensualist unphilosophical doctrine, inferior to stoicism and skepticism.'

Finally, any theistic view such as that of Hegel cannot avoid the theodicy problem, namely the



Hegel

problem of reconciling the existence of an all-powerful Deity with the existence of evil and an apparently meaningless suffering. This problem did not arise for Epicurus because he did not believe in an intervening all powerful Deity. Surely no amount of Hegelian scholarly apology can deny that the way Hegel shoves aside what we may call the Job problem is astonishing in its insensitive inadequacy. On page 91 he says: 'But when we consider the fate which overtakes virtue, morality, and even religiosity in history, we must not fall into a litany of lamentations to the effect that the good and the pious often, or indeed in most cases, fare badly in the world, while the evil and wicked prosper.' It seems that misfortune 'should not be regarded as an essential movement within the rational order of the universe.' For Hegel it is an impertinence in the individual to contrast existence 'as it is with their own view of how things by rights ought to be.' This sentence might pass if one is a materialist like Epicurus who holds that nature is neutral and that the gods, if there are any, do not intervene in human affairs, but it cannot be held by one who calls himself a Christian without a large whiff of unfeeling complacency. Hegel's 'religiosity' is not really religious, and his God is a *Dieu Faineant*, or, to borrow a term from the Catholic William Desmond's *Hegel's God*, 'a counterfeit double.'

The Curse of the Gods

Mental illness from the Greek to the present time is the topic of a series of articles. Below is an introduction to the series.

NONA FERDON*

In the words of Aristotle, if one wishes to understand things, one must catch them at the moment of their birth and watch their development. If we now speak about philosophy it is because he coined the word 'philosophia, which can be translated as 'love of wisdom'. We are dealing with an historical phenomenon which arose at a particular point in time and has evolved to the present day.

Philosophical discourse originates in a choice of life as an existential option. It corresponds to the choice of a way of life which demands from the individual a total change of lifestyle with a conversion of one's entire being, and ultimately with a certain desire to be and to live in a certain way. It is a choice of a way of life which tends toward wisdom without ever achieving it.

The first Greek thinkers appear to us from the beginning of the six centuries BC, in the colonies of Asia Minor, and apparently in the town of Miletus. This intellectual movement then spread to other Greek colonies in Sicily and southern Italy. Gradually, southern Italy and Sicily became the centre of an extraordinarily vital intellectual culture. All of these thinkers proposed a rational explanation of the world. This was the first step (and a massive one) of Western civilization's turning away from the primal forces of a bewildering world.

But for one thing

Since time immemorial humanity has been dogged by mental illness and insanity. The deepest roots of psychiatry and psychology are to be found in the earliest dawning of human awareness. Greek tragedians realised insights about psychology which were not incorporated into medical theory in their own day and were not appreciated by psychiatric theory for over two millennia. Indeed 'odd behaviour' was not seen as 'mental' or 'illness' until relatively modern times.

In the first place, the victim was not even aware that he was 'ill' if he had 'lost his mind.' To appreciate the fact that 'it' was 'lost' appeared to those around him but not from the point of view the victim himself. Insofar as he had become gradually or suddenly unlike other members of the community and yet appeared sound in mind and limb might be obvious to those around him but seldom to himself. He was feared, not pitied and, with the propensities of primitive cultures, he was looked upon as a bearer of supernatural power. If it was a benign power or spirit that possessed him, he was naturally to be admired. If it were an evil spirit that had taken up residence in him he was indulged in order to mollify the evil one. In some way the 'mentally ill' individual was too sacred and good or too powerful and dangerous for anyone to venture to reduce him to the unpleasant state of normality.

The roots of Greek medicine grew out of the same psychological soil as that of other peoples, man's uncertainty and his obscure

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speculations on his place in the world. However the Greek genius was a rational genius. In the sixth century BC the group mind turned toward observations and a certain amount of experimentation. But this was not to last. Clinical psychology and psychiatry constitute only one specialised field. I would like to survey its historical against its various cultural backgrounds to learn the course of growth and development from very early beginnings to present day concepts and treatments and to see the role played by various philosophers and environments.

‘In the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as an ox and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers and his hands were like claws’.

That such illness was present even in the imaginary golden age of early man, 10,000s of years ago, yes even in the Palaeozoic Era the frightened man was driven to a realm of fantastic imagery. He was unable to think or to feel the outer world in and any terms except than those of himself and his group. He populated the world with imaginary beings – evil ones as well as useful ones, even as some of his own impulses and injuries, like many of his own needs, loves, and hatreds. His was probably the psychological origins of fantasies about good and evil, mystical cosmogony which had always been anthropomorphic. Illness was always mental in the sense that primitive man might have used the word ‘spiritual’, or rather ‘spiritualist’. His psychological energies were dedicated more to the problem of getting rid of the uncertainty and fear generated by illness and to finding realistic efforts to eliminate illness. The Celts’ world was filled with Pookas.

This trend was evident in 5000 BC in the days of Imhotep, father of Egyptian medicine.



Map of the Near East

There is an Egyptian stele in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris that relates the story of a princess of the 20th century BC dynasty of pharaohs. She had been afflicted with what has been called demonical possession. The god Kons is said to have cured her. In later times the mother of Samuel was apparently suffered from a severe neurosis. Saul suffered from recurrent depressions, both suicidal and homicidal. Ezekiel was told:

‘The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment or heart – a man or woman who hath a familiar spirit or that is a wizard, shall be put to death’.

And they were, by their tens of thousands. – or even more. The last victim to be recorded, Anna Goldi, was beheaded in 1782 in Switzerland.

It is my desire to investigate this process which includes the question of the soul, self-awareness, of consciousness and a free will. I intend to look at ancient and modern concepts of the ‘illness’, at theories of treatment, and at the terrible consequences throughout Western history. This will, I’m sure, ‘see me out’.

Being is change

Being is change. We are but a return
drawn to the source, on loan,
conglomerating thought
with rooted feelings,
yet bemoan the ever floating self.
We burn

all bridges to the past, a past that dies
as we advance, grow high
and long for skies.

Grasping to fly
leads to eternal quest.
We're searching prone
to find the heavens,
struggling alone
to reach the stars,
their brilliance, as they shine.
Are they but stone?

Preserve and save as trees
that fiercely guard their sap
sending it up in vigorous dreams,
branched out, forever rising
in green wide worlds.

Yet down below,
they strongly know the earth.
They hold it dear, by rooting underground,
their place of birth.

.....
Poem and Painting by
Scharlie Meeuws

**When storms unleash,
all dreams are blown apart.
As the days pass,
survival becomes art.
Ominous skies are filled with night.**

**A gust of wind, a desperate beating heart,
extinguished light, we all foresee the fall.
A brought down tree, the silence after all...
Yet deep below the new world germinates,
though still concealed and only to be guessed.
Being is change, it does not terminate
forgotten faces, flames that have blown out.**

**The stricken tree keeps growing heavenwards,
the heart aims for the stars,
to lighten what is stone.**



Two movements in the new millennium: The Revival of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Voegelin

What exactly is the place of pessimism in today's activist politics? Who still valued tradition? Is the self socially embedded as in G.H. Mead or is it consciously learned through recited narratives?

DAVID CLOUGH

Episodic Self

Galen Strawson proposed the episodic self in his 2004 book and this was closely followed by the debate between John Searle and Hubert Dreyfus. Dreyfus particularly seems influential now when one hears people like Mark Wrathall talking about Heidegger, although it is also true Wrathall seeks to resist oversimplifying this Dreyfusian view of Heidegger into simply that of a pragmatist. This point was made by Andrew Bowie. But as with Habermas the reception into US pragmatism can still get very powerful. Dreyfus's key book *Being in the World* also drew heavily on a reading of Merleau Ponty and also to an extent Kierkegaard, all of which suited my early interests.

But then so did the purveyors of a kind of tradition: MacIntyre, Taylor, Ricoeur and other thinkers like Iris Murdoch and Erich Voegelin. Even when thinkers like Murdoch worried, after Nietzsche, about the decline of religion (or Christianity) and started talking about Cupitt or Buddhism, her afterlife is her residual Platonism that Charles Taylor is said to draw on in his moral sources of the self. Some try to see parallels between her thought and Wittgenstein, just like what happens with Kierkegaard. But when Malpass and Wrathall edited their Dreyfus *Festschrift*, less obviously to me, Davenport and Rudd had launched *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre*, though I only saw the scope of this at a Hatfield conference in 2011. It allowed a variety of thinkers looking at Kierkegaard as a moral thinker to pick up a combination of virtue ethics after MacIntyre and a certain type of moral psychology.

Is Voegelin Coming Gently Back?

But interesting as MacIntyre's critique of Kierkegaard might have been in the first place what I was more interested in was the role of tradition in thinkers like MacIntyre and Gadamer, and how more critical thinkers interfaced with it. Ricoeur society was emphasizing more radical progressive themes (e.g. that he's no less progressive than Derrida. His politics is still French Socialism even after his sojourn in America) whereas I was interested in more conservative readings. Hayden White had seen parallels with Oakshott and some of the Voegelinians saw parallels with their key thinker. I found out later on that what they now call Imaginative Conservatism might have some parallels with Ricoeur's work on the imagination or the social imaginary. But in the context of French theory the parallel is not that easy to make.

The Eric Voegelin Society says: 'Voegelin dedicated his life to the study of widespread political violence and the devastation that results when totalitarian ideologies that closely resemble religions foster the notion that pursuing the creation of utopias on Earth is achievable and worth any cost, including death.' Having read the Voegelin enthusiasts writing in the 1980s and 1990s I found some more recent books still mention him but he is hardly a household name.

Waller Newhall's book *Tyranny: A History of Power, Injustice and Terror* talks about Strauss and Voegelin, and Mark Lilla does in the *Shipwrecked Mind*, but before long I realised this was because he thought Voegelin saw the error of his ways. Mark C Taylor's *After God*, but more surprisingly so



Voegelin



MacIntyre

does Alberto Toscano's *Fanaticism* and Latour's *Facing Gaia*. That the topic of gnostic retreats in a new age of theo-politics is I suppose the most obvious explanation for this. Even though Voegelin was seen in 1994 as just another obsolete cold war thinker some of his analysis may be becoming salient again.

Now I find post-critique and hermeneutic thinkers like Latour talking about Cosmopolis while Leftist accounts like Toscano's still talk about Thomas Munzter and the Anabaptists and he and Simon Critchley drew on Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. This might have led us towards the conclusion that the present century would be post-religious because it was post-apocalyptic but as we can see now this is not entirely what has happened. Jan Assman is another thinker who influences or occurs in Latour, as well as in Agamben who

writes on religion from an Egyptian perspective (e.g Moses and Akhenaten).

The place of the tragic, even Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* is not where it is at. If (or where) everyone was practising their own constructivist utopias the role of tradition is just in the way. Latour probably thinks the original Gaia talk is too anthropomorphic and catastrophist. The counter-narrative whether liberal or Marxist seems to be that we just keep going on producing equality and maybe more leisure-based production. Hans Blumenberg's *Legitimacy of Modernity* occurs strongly on the rationalist side in Habermas's engagement with religion of a source of value. It is in Latour too and there is a reference to a Voegelin - Blumenberg debate, but I am not yet fully clear where Latour is going other than redressing overt pessimism. Now I see a balance somewhere here.

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Heidegger Answers 'The Call'



'Der Ruf', 'The Call' had come
And you could not stay dumb.
So many words that just went round and round
In search of something that could not be found.
And yet, somehow, you died
Replete with fame, if not quite deified.
You left admiring followers to stare
Upon the throne
Which you alone,
Incomprehensibly profound
Had sat upon, by acolytes long crowned.
What could it be those prostrate there were seeing,
Could human beings really glimpse 'Being',
Or was what met their reverent stare
Just 'Nothingness' laid bare?

Edward Greenwood