

The *Wednesday*



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

Truth and Tolerance

Truth is an ambivalent concept. Theologians think it is the only concept that matters. Logicians are always trying to assess truth and what is involved in the concept. But it is its social and historical consequences that are worrying. Different parties claim they have The truth.

There are two concepts of truth, one exclusive and the other inclusive, without falling into relativism. The two concepts come into conflict in turbulent times, especially when suspicion and bad feelings, hate or the extreme situation of war, are causing great stress. Here, as in all dark times, the Owl of Minerva flies high to penetrate the darkness and to look towards a better future.

There was such a situation in the time of the philosopher Averroes, the famous commentator on Aristotle. Before him, in Andalusia there was a period of great achievements in philosophy, mysticism and literature when there was tolerance of diverse views. But by his time there was a reaction, with internal strife and war. Averroes found himself having to defend two causes that were close to his heart: philosophy and tolerance. These are both worth writing about but for this occasion we leave out his defence of philosophy and concentrate on his view of truth which is the basis of his concept of tolerance. He also became a victim of intolerance and for a while suffered humiliation and exile.

Averroes thought that truth in itself is one, but that there are two routes to it: one through revelation and the other through reason itself. Reason has the advantage of building its argument from proven primes, while revelation is taken on authority. Truth in its most pure and general conception is necessarily one, while revelation can take many forms according to the stage of history and the mode of thinking of the age or its individuals. It was the One God who

sent the three revelations of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The truth of these revelations cannot contradict itself, as Kant was later to notice with regard to practical reason. But the way the truth is delivered to the people varies. Truth in its abstract form is one and consistent, but truth as believed by the people and formed into creeds and laws, becomes particularised and specific. It also becomes open to distortions.

Averroes, perhaps, was looking to the glorious days of the great achievements in Andalusia where the three religions cooperated and produced such a wonderful mix of philosophers, poets, writers and doctors. Maimonides, his contemporary, was one such an example. But with the advance of the Reconquista, intolerance had already set in and the narrow mind of suspicion took over in all camps.

Strangely enough, when Averroes' views were translated into Latin, they caused great uproar in the different camps. Nowhere was this more obvious than at the Sorbonne, a century later, in the time of St. Thomas Aquinas. First Averroes' views were distorted. He was accused of saying that there are two truths, while he was saying that all truth in essence is one. Secondly, the proponents of Averroes' views, such as Siger Brabant, came under a heavy attack from St. Aquinas. This was going on inside the Sorbonne. The Bishop of Paris, Etienne Tempier, for his part, issued an edict condemning thirteen Aristotelian and Averroistic propositions as heretical and excommunicating anyone who held them.

What this shows is that when tolerance goes, and its basis is eroded, there is no limit to intolerance and the ever-shrinking mind. Truth should always be in the service of life and humanity and not a logical puzzle.

The Editor

Law and morality are closely linked. But are they the same? Do they coincide, or do they come into conflict? What is their basis? Is the Natural Law as well established as one might think? What about the concept of ‘inner morality’? Is there a difference between the actual law and what the law ought to be?

We are confronted daily with questions concerning human conduct and morality. Issues of law are inevitably linked to questions of morality. Sometimes there is a clear correspondence between the law and morality, for example when we say that homicide is illegal since everyone agrees that murder is morally wrong. But at other times what may be legally wrong, like parking on the wrong side of the road, may not be morally so or what may be immoral, like adultery, may not be illegal. Sometimes individual morality may come into conflict with the law of the country. When

These kinds of situations have been described by East European philosopher Slavoj Žižek in his writings. It also happens that the law may not be in consonance with the larger morality of the society. In the Apartheid regime of South Africa, the law was dictated and administered by a white minority discriminating against the black majority. Moral issues and legal judgements may severely polarise people into camps. This happened in the



Ronald Dworkin

United States when the Supreme Court gave the famous judgement in 1973 in the case of *Roe v Wade*. In this judgement it was held by the court that the abortion law in the state of Texas was unconstitutional since it violated the right to privacy. This judgement led to fierce debates between the two camps and Ronald Dworkin likened this war between anti and pro-abortion groups to America's version of the European civil wars of religion.

The Natural Law theorists from the time of Aristotle have argued that what naturally *is ought* to be. So, there is no conflict between what is the law and what it morally should be. Hugo Grotius asserted that even if God did not exist natural law would still matter. Natural law theorists all agree that human beings have natural rights by dint of being human which pre-exist any man-made laws. This belief in the pre-eminence of natural rights form the basis of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). John Finnis argued in his book *Natural Law and Natural Rights* that a valuable and desirable human life depends on certain conditions like knowledge, aesthetic experience, sociability, religion etc. He had an Aristotelian conception of life. He argued that a leader derived his authority from serving the best interests of the community. Principles of justice have to foster the common good.



John Finnis

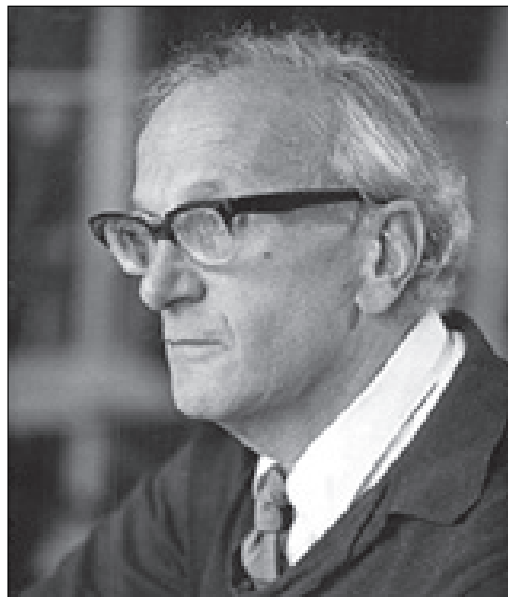
The philosopher David Hume argued against the Natural Law theorists and said that one could not derive an ought from an is. We cannot derive questions of value from questions of fact. But the view of the Natural Law theorists has formed the basis of the French and the American revolutions.

American jurist Lon Fuller argued that law has an 'inner morality'. He said that any legal system has to conform to certain basic procedural standards. He gave a list of eight such principles any legal system must observe. They are: generality, promulgation, non-retroactivity, clarity, non-contradiction, possibility of compliance, constancy, and congruence between declared rule and official action. In any system where these rules are not observed it cannot be said that law exists. But it has been argued by some that this list given by Fuller does not give a moral criterion. Even the worst regime may be observing these principles and yet be wicked morally. The Apartheid regime in South Africa did observe procedural fairness yet it promulgated atrocious laws. Fuller stressed a procedural natural law approach over a substantive natural law approach.

An important question that has engaged philosophers of law is whether immoral laws could be regarded as law. The laws made by the Nazi regime were later declared to be immoral



Lord Devlin



H.L.A. Hart

in the Nuremberg Trials. But Oxford professor H.L.A. Hart contended that the Nazi law of 1934 was a valid law. Hart is a well-known positivist and positivism as a school of thought holds that what is important is the law as it is or as it is posited. There is a difference between what the law actually is and what the law morally ought to be. He argued that it is important to keep these two separate in any analysis of law.

In Britain in 1957 the Wolfenden Committee which was appointed to examine homosexuality and prostitution concluded that there has to be a realm of private morality and immorality which is not the law's business. It recommended the decriminalization of homosexual acts between adults in private and prostitution.

The Committee was influenced by the views of John Stuart Mill who had argued that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over anyone against his will is to prevent harm to others. Lord Devlin argued in 1959 against the recommendation of the Committee that society has a right to punish conduct which is grossly immoral since society is maintained by a shared morality. Immoral acts undermine social cohesion, and this is so even if they are done in

private and do not harm anyone. But Professor Hart took issue with Lord Devlin and argued that society does not require a shared morality since in multicultural societies there may be competing ideologies. But he acknowledged that the law was sometimes needed to protect individuals from their own self. Law cannot allow the defence of consent to homicide. The same will be true for the argument requiring the wearing of helmets by motor vehicle users. Hart made a distinction between harm caused by public spectacle and offense caused by mere knowledge. On this argument of Hart's bigamy can be punished as a public act since it may offend religious sensibility. But private consensual sex acts by adults can cause offense only through knowledge and therefore may not justify any punishment.

Hart believed that laws are to be enacted to protect persons and their property. He did not believe in the concept of natural law. The most important aspect of law according to him is the existence of certain rules and procedures that are accepted by officials who are to implement them. He divided legal rules into primary and secondary rules. Primary rules proscribe violence, thefts etc. But when societies become complex there arises the need to adjudicate upon rules. Secondary rules are

rules of change, adjudication and recognition. He emphasized that rules or laws in a society must not only be obeyed by members of the society but officials who are in charge of implementing such rules must accept such rules from an internal point of view. Thus, there is a difference between a rule and a habit. He gives the example of chess players who all have the similar habit of moving the Queen in the same way, but they are not **just** moving the Queen. But from the internal point of view of the players they accept this manner of moving as a standard to be observed.

Hart also gave an example to distinguish between 'being obliged' and 'having an obligation'. When someone points a gun to our head and asks for money, we are obliged to obey but we have no obligation to do so because there is no rule which imposes such an obligation on us. He argued that a legal system exists if primary rules are obeyed in a society and the officials in charge accept the rules of change, adjudication and recognition.

The positivist view as expounded by Hart sees law as a system of rules. Judges decide cases by applying the facts of the situation to the rules laid down in the law or judicial precedents. But when there is no applicable rule to a peculiar set of facts, then the judge uses discretion to fill in the gaps in the law. Ronald Dworkin has challenged this view and has argued that law does not consist just of rules but also there are non-rule standards: principles and policies. A 'principle' is a standard to be observed because it is a requirement of justice or fairness or some other dimension of morality. A 'policy' is a kind of standard that defines goals to be achieved economically, politically or socially. In 'hard cases' when there are no guiding rules to apply, a judge then examines various principles instead of resorting to his discretion or personal preference.

Dworkin essentially argues against the positivist view that judges have discretion in such cases. But instead, he argues, there is always one right answer even in such a case where there is no applicable rule. Individual rights have to be balanced by examining various principles. Judges do not legislate but only enforce rights that have

already been enacted by the legislature in the form of laws. Hence judges have no discretion even in such cases. A judge merely has to interpret the rule from existing legal materials and if a clear-cut rule does not exist to guide her then she has to rely upon principles and policies. There is absolutely no scope for judicial discretion to fill in the gap, contrary to what the positivists claim.

Dworkin said that law is integrated with morality and lawyers and judges are working political philosophers of a democratic state. He argued, as discussed above, that the law contains a solution to every problem no matter how hard the facts of the case may be. The judge according to him, does not make law but only interprets it. For example, in a particular situation an impatient beneficiary under a will murders the testator. The question is should he be permitted to inherit. This question arose in the famous case *Riggs v Palmer* (1899). The will in this case was validly executed in favour of the murderer. But the question was whether a murderer could inherit. The existing rules did not have solution to such a problem but the court in New York held from drawing upon a principle of law that no person should profit from his own wrong. Therefore, a murderer could not inherit from his victim.

Through the example above, Dworkin argued that the court in giving its decision relied upon principles since there were no clear-cut rules applicable to such a case. He argues that when judges interpret and examine various principles and policies, they are inevitably examining the moral claims of a community. When the judge decides what is right in a particular situation it is so because it is in consonance with the institutional and moral structure of any society. But when the moral claims of a community are examined by any judge then there is a possibility that individual rights may be subordinated to the community's claims. It is here that Dworkin argues that the law should 'take rights seriously'. The rights of the individual cannot be subordinated to the interests of the community but instead rights should be regarded as trumps over community claims. Principles describe rights and policies talk about goals.

Crossing Boundaries: St George and Al-Khidr

In the wide arc of countries on the eastern side of the Mediterranean, St George takes part in a remarkable convergence of Christian, Islamic and Jewish religious practice, which started over one thousand years ago and continues to this day. Across the whole region there are churches, shrines and sanctuaries in which the Christian martyr St George, the Islamic figure of Al-Khidr and the Old Testament prophet Elijah are all venerated and often conflated. It is not uncommon for Muslims to visit Christian churches, and even have their children baptised to secure the protection of St George, and for Christians to visit Islamic shrines, and in some cases mosques, where St George and his Islamic counterpart, Al-Khidr meet together in a crossing of religious boundaries.

ADRIAN RANCE-MCGREGOR

Part 1

The cult of Al-Khidr not only shares holy places with St George but sometimes the two saints become merged in an inter-religious convergence, in which the shared devotions of Christians and Muslims are a shining example of acceptance and tolerance in a world where the prophetic religions often place a high premium on their being different and separate from each other.

In Islamic tradition Al-Khidr is associated with knowledge of the unseen or with knowledge that comes straight from God and confounds the wisdom of the wise. To the Sufi mystics Al-Khidr is one who has the direct mystical knowledge of God. This attribute is reflected in his commonly being identified as the unnamed person whom Moses encounters in Surah Al-Kahf (Surah 18) of the Qur'an. Moses and his servant meet 'one of our servants' a man blessed by God with supernatural wisdom who tests Moses who is seeking 'something of that consciousness of what is right which has been imparted to thee'. Moses asks Al-Khidr that he might accompany him on his travels so that he can acquire some of the saint's knowledge. Al-

Khidr agrees on condition that Moses promises not to ask questions and to be patient in his quest for knowledge. Al-Khidr then tests Moses with three seemingly outrageous actions designed to show that God's wisdom is greater than the wisdom of man, even that of the prophets. First of all he drills a hole in a boat to make it sink, then he kills a young man who appears to have done nothing wrong, and finally, on coming to a village where the people refused to offer hospitality, he spotted a wall that was about to collapse and, despite the lack of welcome from the villagers, he miraculously restored it to stability. Moses repeatedly breaks his promise not to ask questions and finally Al-Khidr explains his actions to the questioning Moses: he damaged the boat to save it being seized by a local king who was taking all the boats by force; he killed the young man who about the bring great grief to his parents on account of his wicked behaviour so that the parents might have a righteous son in his stead; and he restored the wall because he knew there was a treasure beneath it and he knew that it rightly belonged to two orphan boys and that it would be better if they did not discover it until they were grown



Al-Khidr walking on water

up and mature. In this way Al-Khidr establishes himself as one who has insight into the wisdom of God, and who realises that things are not always as they seem to mortals.

Al-Khidr shares a number of attributes with St George. Like the Christian saint he is regarded as a rescuer. For instance, before the word ambulance (ambulans) became common in modern Turkish, the vehicle was called 'Hizir' (Khidr). Like St George, Al-Khidr can also be a warrior saint: one modern account of the intervention of Al-Khidr is that of a Turkish soldier in the Korean war who when confronted by four Chinese soldiers shouted, 'Ya Hizir', whereupon Hizir appeared (as did St George at Antioch) with 100 soldiers. The Chinese were so frightened that they surrendered to the Turkish soldier who was then awarded a medal for bravery and in thanks for his deliverance he sent 40,000 liras to his home village where a bridge was built in honour of Hizir.

The 'Green One'

The name Al-Khidr means the 'Green One', and he is associated with the fertility of crops,

as is St George whose name means 'farmer' or 'man of the soil'. Indeed, George in this context can be rendered in Arabic as *fallāh*, which, with its pejorative connotations of a lower-class agricultural person, reflects the perceived lowly rural origins of the popular religion. As the emerging religion of Islam spread across the Middle East during the 7th century, it drew widely on existing myths and legends which most likely included those about Al-Khidr who was to be found in places associated with the forces of nature and the cycle of the seasons. Mountain tops, springs of water and dominant trees in the landscape are often associated with Al-Khidr. He is one of a small number of figures in Islam said to be immortal, which, in his case, derived from his discovery of the miraculous spring of life, and in this way, he reflects the 'immortality' of St George who during his martyrdom died and was raised again to life three times.

Al-Khidr is also well known for his facility for moving across great distances in an instant. According to the Jerusalem historian Mujir al-Din (d. 1521), every Friday Khidr prays in five different mosques - Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem



Mar Jirjis, Cairo

(al-Aqsa), Kuba and Sinai. There is a common aphorism in modern Palestine: 'Like St George wherever we go we meet him' refers to the power of St George, who like Al-Khidr can travel distances in an instant.

In 1555, the Flemish ambassador Baron Chiselin de Busbecq was travelling in Eastern Anatolia when one night he stopped at a Dervish lodge near the town of Amasya. The hosts told the visitors tales of a saint on horseback called 'Chederle' who killed a dragon to save a maiden and that the event took place nearby. De Busbecq wrote later that this saint was none other than St George and was thought also to be a companion of Alexander the Great. He considered these ideas to be confused and absurd but what he did not realise was that Chederle was also Hizir-Ilyas (Al-khidr/Elijah) and that what he had witnessed was the compound cult of Al-Khidr and the dragon slaying Christian saint. His record of the occasion is an early documentary confirmation

of the convergence of these Christian and Islamic figures.

Holy places in the Middle East venerated by Christians, both Orthodox and Catholic and Jews and Muslims, including Sunni and Shi'a, as well as Nusairis, Druzes and Yezidis, were closely studied in the early years of the twentieth century by two ethnographic researchers of religion, F.W.Hasluck and Taufik Canaan. Both men recorded the popular rural religion in the Levant before it became diluted by modern culture. There is a shrine of Mar Jirjis (St George) in the Muslim village of Al-Khader close to Beit Jala, south of Jerusalem. It is still a place of pilgrimage and is associated with curing of people suffering from madness and mental illness. The description by Taufik Canaan, who visited the site in the 1920s, provides an insight into the way in which Al-Khidr and St George converged at the sacred site to bring miraculous cures to Christians, Muslims and Jews.

As the reputation of the wonderful cures of this saint spread all over the country, sick of all creeds were brought to it from all directions. No sooner did they arrive than the priest chained them in the narthex (an external porch at the west end of the church). The heavy iron chain was fastened to an iron ring around the neck of the unfortunate creature, the other end of the chain being drawn through one of the two windows, on each side of the main portal, and fastened inside the church. In case three patients were sent at the same time the third one was placed in a small room built just west of the dome. The chain in this case went through a small window of the dome thus connecting the patient with the church. During the cold winter months, the patients were kept inside the church.

The practice of chaining people suffering from madness might derive from the New Testament story of the chained madman, whose name was 'legion'. Jesus performed the miracle by which the man was cured and released from his chains whereupon the spirits that had possessed him entered a herd of pigs that rushed over a cliff to its destruction. The practice of chaining was discontinued after the war of 1948 but the chain survived and in 1996 the remnants of the chain and its connecting wire were shown to the historian and travel writer, William Dalrymple. He had been told to look for a shrine which Christians consider to be the birthplace of St George, which Jews think of as the burial place of the prophet Elias, and which Muslims think of as the home of Al-Khidr. A Greek Orthodox priest, Fr Methodius, who looked after the church, confirmed that the church marked the birthplace of St George and that George was a great saint for the Muslim worshippers who came to pray. A chain is still displayed in the church at Al-Khidr during feast days. When asked, most people say that the chain was that which had bound St George (Mar Jiryis) during his persecution. Others associate it with Al-

Khidr and his horse and believe that the chain has the power to give you courage.

Just to the north of Bethlehem is a shrine dedicated to the fifth century CE saint, Mar Elyas (Elijah) at a monastery dating to the sixth century CE and belonging to the Greek Orthodox church. A two-day festivity around the saint's feast day is attended by Christians and Muslims who come to visit the shrine and to picnic in the surrounding gardens and olive groves. As at Al-Khadr there is a chain and pilgrims go through a ritual, placing around their necks three times and then stepping through it. A local story tells of the chain having been found below the monastery, and local people believe it was the chain that bound the saint.

The use of chains to seek healing for madness through St George is found elsewhere in the Middle East. A similar chain is to be found in the church of St George in Old Cairo, where to this day local Muslim women come and pray to St George/Al-Khidr. Muslim-Christian convergence involving St George and Al-Khidr is found near Mosul in Syria at the Syrian Orthodox monastery dedicated to Mar Benham, an 8th century Syrian saint, and also referred to as Dayr al-Kidhr (the Monastery of Khidr), where again there is evidence of the use of chains as part of the miraculous cures of madness. The monastery of Mar Benham contains an inscription to Al-Khidre in Uighur on the frieze over the tomb of the saint, and also at twelfth century panel showing a mounted St George together with a mounted Mar Benham. A sixteenth century German traveller was shown the remains of the dragon slain by Al-Khidr, the hoof mark left by his horse and the tomb of his groom and his sister's son.

- **A long version of this article will appear in a forthcoming book on St. George. References were removed for a lack of space.**

High fidelity

I listen to the old tracks in my bedroom
with a cup of green tea in hand
counting memories.

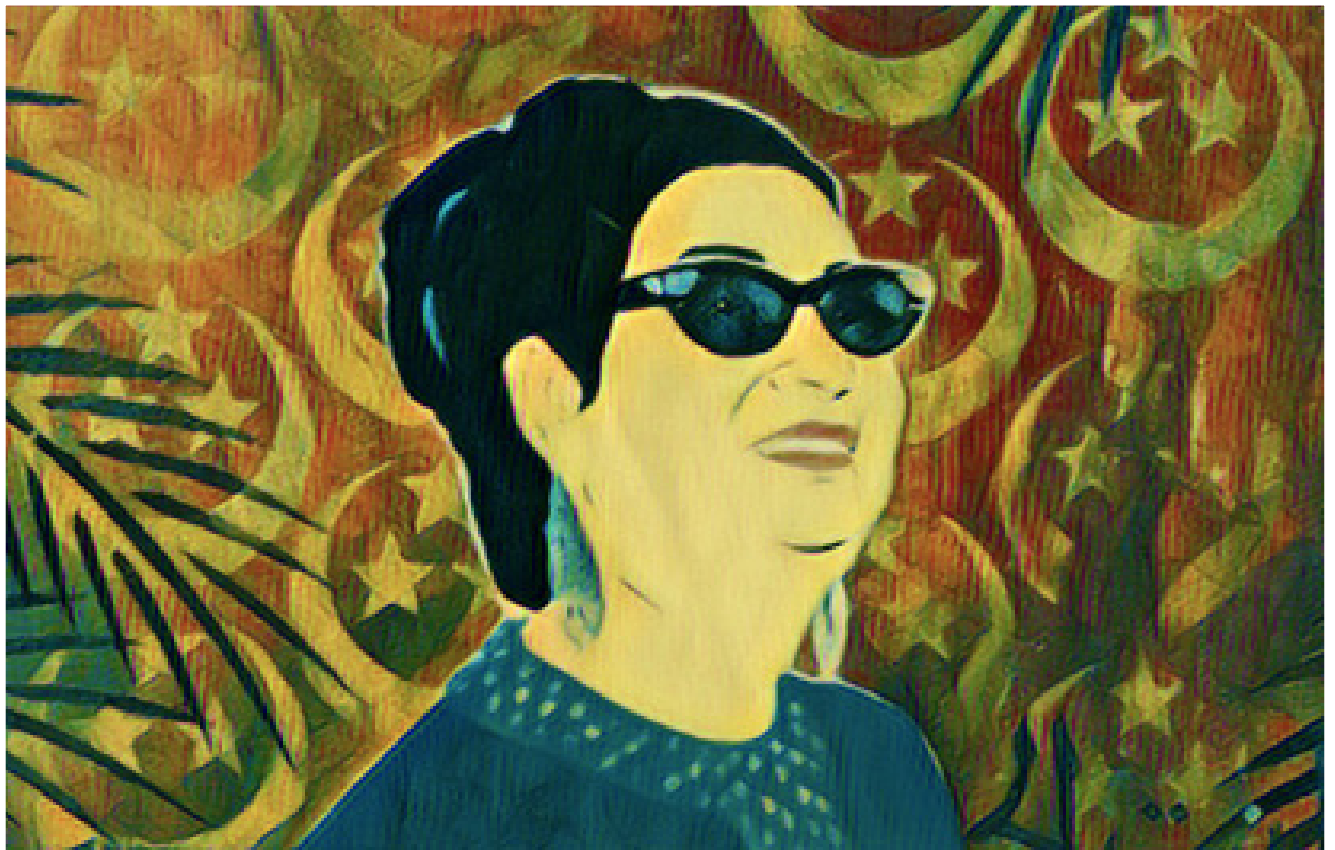
I pick them up with the sound
and the fading light until
both blend into an amalgam that floods

the furthest corner of my stored past
and lights it up, the heartbeat
of the desert, the heat under the starry sky,
the smell of campfire, where we all sat
smoking the nargila and listened to many old tales
of passion and destruction.

All comes floating back in this high-fidelity moment.
After last weeks lectures on Kahlil Gibran and Rilke
I enjoy peace, the slow pace of the day,
and my rank-ordering of all versions of Umm Kulthum,
the Star of the Orient's* many famous songs.

* *Kawkab A Sharq* (كوكب الشرق) 'Star of the Orient'.

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

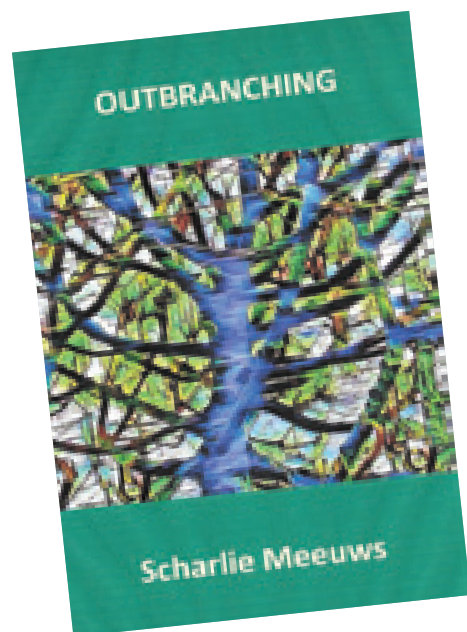


Star of the Orient : Umm-Kulthum

OUTBRANCHING

Outbranching, the new poetry collection
by *Scharlie Meeuws*
has just been published
by Cerasus Poetry, London.
You can order your copy through Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/OUTBRANCHING-Scharlie-Meeuws/dp/1790371848>



Motherhood and Feminism

The last issue of The Wednesday had— an extensive article on Motherhood by Mao Naka. The article raised lots of debate within the Wednesday group. Some of the debate was already published in the magazine and here is another comment.

DAVID CLOUGH

Chodorow (b.1944) looks at the generative power of mothering. But daughters are different to sons. Fellow analyst Jacqueline Rose criticises Chodorow for stressing the functional performance of motherhood so much that the idea of feminine fantasy gets lost, dissolved or lacks a distinct analytical angle, but it is this question of fantasy that Kristeva develops. So, comparing Chodorow and Kristeva involves contrasting the fantasies of maternity with the practices of motherhood. Although patriarchy interferes, there is a repressed desire in being female that is independent of it.

An entirely female community

Stabat Mater looks at the Virgin mourning her Son's death from two angles; Christian myth verses rational science. This is her own more private quasi Augustinian account of being a mother, but it produces a sense of radical paradox. It is true that in someone like Chodorow there are relational patterns, gendered dispositions that Butler also sees in constructivist performative terms and ideological preconceptions. But there are deeper unconscious aspects as well which take us closer to the world discussed already by Lacan at least around the hard –to-define nature of selfhood. But there are also differences. Where Lacan's Freud still saw maternity in terms of the repressed male Father, Kristeva will see the desire to have children from what amounts to a more lesbian direction as by making it relate not to the Father but the Mother where an implied homoerotic component is present. By giving birth (in fantasy terms at least) she repeats her own mother. But surely a Marxist or constructivist theorist can agree with that, without seeing the fantasy or patriarchy element. Instead of an originary Oedipal conflict we get a feminine imaginary about an entirely female community.

Before anything like the Oedipal conflict occurs, there is now a pre-imaginary phase, but something more like Lacan still occurs to produce the familiar alienation of language acquisition and images. This though leads to a greater sense of fear of ambivalence than one would find in Chodorow or in similar Marxist or Constructivist theory.

Butler and Performativity

So where does Butler fit as she explores the conditions in which gender might be constructed? She is influenced by French thinkers like Foucault but also Kristeva and Lacan, as well as Adorno. But performativity is new concept. Some of this is implied in late Foucault and maybe Deleuze. She also draws out the violence implied by much of this. She looks critically at de Beauvoir's constructivism built around an already sexed body; a concept she then breaks down or deconstructs.

Adapting Rich's title perhaps, one is not born a woman in any essentialist way but the idea that one becomes one is not enough. Essentialist feminism was what Toril Moi attacked in French theory and Butler attacks it even more. It is not a biological fact. Using Foucault's discourse, Butler seems to be dropping Kristeva's inner desires, in favour of practicing gender as act or performance. But she is philosophically a complex thinker, and this can seem an overly simple way of describing it. But it is very exteriorised and like other simpler constructivist accounts the inner self prized by Kierkegaard or Augustine is basically a felt illusion. But like Foucault it is a discourse of power or domination. Heterosexuality, for one thing, is seen as too dominant. She finds modern marriage with its excess display and consumption an easy critical target. But despite her critique, consumption and display has increased still further.



Jacqueline Rose



Mao Naka

A key point is that these performative gendered acts then badly clash. But she then turns to irony, parody and mimicry to reduce this effect. Erving Goffman is an ancestor if one looks for a simpler view. He too goes even further than Parfitt in reducing the importance of personal motivation in these transactions, but she is still more anti-humanist. Despite reading Lacan and Kristeva she doesn't handle passion well and maybe this illuminates her famous clash with Nussbaum in the latter's paper *The Professor of Parody*. The difficulty now is whether parody was insulting to Butler, but she now impresses Simon Critchley and others with her more ethical writing, beginning with *Precarious Life*.

Nancy Fraser critique of Kristeva

But what does Nancy Fraser say about Kristeva in her critique? To begin with Kristeva is one of those feminists who starts from Lacan, with whom Fraser feels very distant both intellectually and politically. There is also the problem of Foucault's discourse theory, what exactly do feminists want from this?

Discourse theory fits helpfully into cultural materialism, understanding Greenblatt's self-fashioning, so called 'New Historicism' and how oppressed groups might achieve a certain resistant solidarity. Also, how Gramsci's hegemony arises and the power of paradigms as ruling discourses.

But Chomsky and Lakoff seem satisfied merely with describing it as media bias. 'How circular and self-defeating is Lacan ultimately?' Fraser asks. But she then asks how has Lacan's Saussurian reading of Kojève's Hegel worked out for Anglophone feminism. But Fraser thinks all the various versions or attempts at post-structuralism end up still bound to what they are trying to escape from.

Maybe Saussure does help correct some Freudian deficiencies, but even in France there is an opposition between structuralism and pragmatism. But for Nancy Fraser this includes not Lyotard, but Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Foucault and to an extent Kristeva and Irigaray. Pragmatism supports the social practice view more than structuralism does. Kinship matters in Kristeva in a way that could be connected to anthropology but is it Levi Strauss or Evans Pritchard or Margaret Mead? What kind of anthropology is implied?

This helps with historical contextualisation. Instead of fixed structuralist constructions change can be described, as new practices are seen, as the pragmatists privileged action, as more important than belief or thought. Again, the agent's internal motivations, the Augustinian self and Kantian willing are being suppressed. The Marxist ideology, that the external really forms the internal, is still present.

Re-Learning Wisdom

Notes on the Wednesday Meetings Held on 28st of November 2018

PAUL COCKBURN

A suggested topic for this meeting was presented by Rahim Hassan. He suggested that philosophy has long since parted company with wisdom. It was Socrates who thought that the aim of philosophy is knowledge and virtue and that virtue is based on knowledge. It was a serious turn in human thought. Pre-Socratic philosophers were thinking on nature, but Socrates turned the question from nature to human conduct. But gradually philosophy turned towards epistemology, logic, metaphysics and there was little on ethics. There is also a double standard in some philosophers teach ethics and leading an unethical life.

Here is the proposal for the discussion and a few questions by Paul Cockburn that were put to the meeting before the discussion:

RH: Modern philosophy started from the individual (the Cogito, I or Subject). The Other becomes sometime part of the environment we meet and ethics, eventually, took the form of individualistic ethics, as in Existentialism. And when the individual is subsumed under the collective, as in Marxism, ethics is totally lacking. (This is on the theoretical level).

PC: There are two issues with Descartes: he was taken to split the mind from the body, and he did not write much on society. However, late in his life he did write the *Passions of the Soul*, based on his letters to Queen Christina of Sweden. In this work he studies passions such as love, joy, sadness, admiration, generosity and hate. Descartes does not think that to be 'passionate' is wrong, but we do have to control our passions. He thinks they can 'disrupt' our reasoning processes.



Julian Baggini

Descartes thought that animals are automata, and we discussed the differences between humans and animals. Are there animals that are self-conscious? Do humans differ from animals only in terms of complexity and degree? Is animal behaviour, particularly social behaviour, determined only by instinct? One view was that philosophers should be careful about making sharp distinctions such as mind/body, human/animal, the truth may be more complex and involve soft borders rather than hard ones. For us as humans some philosophers emphasize the freedom of the individual and subjectivity, but the growth of cities, states and society has increased the role of inter-subjectivity and community in our lives. How does the 'I' become a 'We'?

RH: There is an additional concern with scepticism. Descartes wasn't the first sceptic. Scepticism seems to question all our knowledge and conduct (with varying scope and degrees). This draws philosophy away from society (even if it is only the society of thinkers) to the individual. Ethics seems to lose again.

RH: Related to this topic is the view of the role of philosophy as Wisdom. Socrates thought that there is a Wisdom that is the aim of all knowledge. There is a close connection in his view between ethics and knowledge. But modern philosophy seems to have loosened this connection. You can be a Professor of philosophy but lead your life with no 'proper' ethical principles. Something has gone wrong. What is it? Do we need to rectify the situation? How?

PC: There are two aspects of philosophy. Julian Baggini writes in his recent book 'The Way the World Thinks' that Eastern philosophy (Indian, Japanese and Chinese) is more concerned with philosophy in terms of how we should live, and this has connections to religious beliefs. Western philosophy has this aspect to some extent, but is more concerned with 'what is the nature of reality'? So, can a philosopher who is immoral have insight into the nature of reality? Maybe he is not concerned with himself as a moral person or morality, he just uses his mental powers to investigate philosophical reality.

CORRECTION

Novalis' View Of The Universe

We received the following comment regarding the *Follow Up* in issue 72, P.10:

'I noticed that there is an error in the translation of the Novalis quote. I am sure that he is not saying what the English translation is saying. What exactly he is saying can only be determined if the missing parts of the German sentence are completed. Based on what is already there I intuit that he is saying actually the opposite of what the English translation says. I think this should be clarified.

Dr. Sebastian Berger'

We are grateful for the correction. It is more in line with Novalis' romantic view of the universe which is far from being mechanistic.

The Editor

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Website: Currently unavailable

Published by:

The Wednesday Press, Oxford

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Untitled Abstractions

The Iraqi Artist

Sadiq Toma

Date : Wednesday
5th December 2018
to
Tuesday
5th February 2019

Venue : The Room
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Tottenham Hale
London N17 9AS

