

ISIS, White right-wingers and postcolonial contingencies: the need for reading beyond

Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer*.

Recently *Charlie Hebdo* mocked the death of an immigrant Syrian child washed ashore in Greece. The mockery of death was seen globally as an attack against human values derived from Immanuel Kant's categories of absolute imperatives --- one can mock life but not death; one can mock adults but not children. But *Charlie Hebdo* had in fact mocked the rise of the ISIS. The hour is at hand when we need to look closely at ISIS and why it is like no other forms of the violence we have encountered before. It is no Augustinian *privatio boni*; the *ISIS* redefines the Aristotelian concept of the *polis* as that space where the *esse* of the Heideggerian *dasein* is defined not by *eudaimonia* but by being of the *esse* of evil. And as long as there is evil; there is the semblance of order, the feeling of something perfect and a trace of the good qua God; this latter is beyond the scope of this seminar. The demons in Milton's *Paradise Lost* are the most disciplined within the scope of the epic; in Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum*; the Nazi march alone has rhythm --- and with structures and categories are associated imperialism and the spectre of land-annexation. Wherever the physical occupation of land is concerned, we perforce have to refer to post-colonialism as a corpus. And with the arrival of the ISIS we have a terrorist organisation which has land at its disposal. The *ISIS* are not interpreting the *Quran* or the *Sharia*; they have returned to the Middle Ages and are propping up their imperialistic claims in the Middle East with theological and quasi-philosophical arguments. Unlike the *Al-Qaeda*, the *ISIS* has land and has carved out a nation for all Sunnis. By definition, one cannot be a Sunni Muslim without allegiance to a Caliph, who cannot in turn be a Caliph if he is without tangible territory. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi the chief of *ISIS* is a Caliph since he has territory already to rule over all of the world's Sunni Muslims. It is provoked by the *ISIS*'s medieval worldview that historians

like Nial Fergusson demand that the world be returned to their erstwhile white masters. Fergusson who began as a historian of finance has now erased the cultural work done by the likes of Ranajit Guha, Edward Said and Eric Hobsbawm. Fergusson is a Scotsman who believes post-colonialism to be partisan and therefore ridicules it in his works. This paper draws our attention that more than ever before we need the minutiae of the Subaltern Studies' group and the likes of Stieg Larsson to stop the march of this retreating world into what Pope Francis has rightly called the beginning of the Third World War.

Religion is a powerful discourse in so far as people remember the transcendent when they are overwhelmed with life. A person with terminal disease hardly thinks of Marx, Freud or Julia Kristeva but turns to Jesus, the Buddhas and to *Brahman* for succour. The lived aim of the *dasein* is to understand that living by itself is meaningless unless there is a *totem* to be embraced; the Kierkegaardian leap to faith is to be effected if one were to find meaning in life. The impulse to the sacred is natural to the *homo sacer* since the whole of post-Nazi Western philosophy is based on a knee jerk reaction to the rise of Hitler and the consequent retreat of philosophy into epistemology. Only the study of colonial structures is an exception and this is more history than philosophy in praxis. It is exactly this need for the sacred and the urge to find an absolute locus of control that has helped the rise of the *ISIS* in the Middle East and Neo- Nazi organisations in Europe. The schizoid state of being is good for discussion but does not bring peace in the here and the now. People want certainty and moral moorings --- seminars and academic discourses do not trickle down to the outside world as is often mistakenly believed. Academics is self-reflexive. Therefore, when Martha Nussbaum and Kwame Appiah imagined the world to be Hospitable through their appropriation of that *Torah* scholar, Emmanuel Lévinas and the ancient Greek Cynics; they (mis)read the world and the signs of the times. The lived reality of the world in the here and the now is one of rising violence where Agamben mistakenly imputes sacredness to

suffering; a project he failed to sustain in his 2015, *Pilate and Jesus*. In this book he confuses divine fiat with human agency. The sacred human person; the *dasein* within chronicity is now attacked by the *ISIS*. They have appropriated Heidegger within their theologies and discounting the schizoid configuration of the human person they have restructured it as a non-Freudian *pneuma* embodied within the *sarx*, entity struggling for *self-actualisation* (Maslow) within the certainties of the *ISIS*'s well thought out theologies. Whereas Modernism and Modernist movements ensured Munch's *scream* reach over to us through the centuries; *ISIS* re-establishes the joy of certainty which comes only with blind faith in dogma. The sacredness of Agamben's suffering man, the *ecce homo*, is reminiscent of the *Suffering Servant* found in the *Qumran Scrolls*, which Agamben himself is aware of. But this Christian sacredness is erased by the *ISIS* since suffering has no value within the worldview of their religious scholars. To simulate the Middle Ages, the Caliph has begun the selling of non-Sunni women in their open bazaars; the minting of currency with figurines of the Caliph and has recently brought out a whole manual on how slave-women should be treated by the *ISIS*. And this is exactly what the European Christian Right was waiting for: their thesis that the civilised world is being swamped by Muslims of colour is now proved right. German Right wingers have already asked for the point-blank shootings of Muslims entering Germany from Syria. And Nial Fergusson is now the historian of choice globally. He finds post colonialism a rant of pro-Islamic postcolonial scholars. And Fergusson was noticed much earlier by Stieg Larsson and the internet and especially, Reditt, is rife with rumours that Larsson was killed for sniffing out Islamophobes much before Larsson became famous or Europe was, as it were, flooded by Syrian wo/men. The agenda of both the *ISIS* and the European Right Wing are to annihilate differences and create a world where reading *Lolita* will be seen as reprehensible. Even in India we today have nearly forgotten our colonial heritage due to the flattening effect of the internet. The *ISIS* is recruiting here as fast as Indian humanists are

eager to de-contextualise literature from its postcolonial settings and in the name of hurting Islam; forget to trace the rise of the *ISIS*. We live in a world where to forget postcolonial studies is to forget the valuable insights we have received from structuralist interrogations of religion and the human psyche. To neglect either is to allow the likes of Musa Cerantonio wield power over us. Mockery is a healthy intellectual tradition; Jonathan Swift wanted us to eat little children as a way to reduce hunger and that is not far from what *Charlie Hebdo* did when they mocked the death of the wee immigrant. Fergusson and the Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi are men with no humour. The death of post colonialism is the death-knell of humour without which the literary object loses its vitality.