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God Stuck in Enlightenment Prejudices

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Abstract: This article is critique of the 13th chapter of on “God” of Yuval Noah Harari’s book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*. It betrays the Enlightenment’s closed-world of atheism and “dogmatic” prejudice against even the possibility of faith as an offense to reason. Enlightenment urges to critique everything came from the tradition which is a prejudice. The author believes in scientism with falling back algorithms recognizing mathematical patterns. He is stuck in Enlightenment rationalism estrangement from its own rational sense of life and hostility to the sense of the divine. As Derrida argues secularism is not secular but arises from Judeo-Christian faith and his rationality. Rationality is given. The given gives sign of an absence in the presence. The starry heavens above and the moral law within give thought of the silence which makes wonder at the ineffable other. The phenomenological look is closely related to the aesthetic

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look and moral look, it is not a look in order to enjoy aesthetically and morally but to discover and assume an aspect of the sublime and giving language to divine.

Keywords: Yuval Noah Harari, God of Enlightenment, Enlightenment Prejudice, Ineffable Other

Yuval Noah Harari is a Hebrew Israeli historian and professor in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Harari is gay, lives with his husband. Yuval Noah Harari in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* considers

humans have two basic types of abilities: physical abilities and cognitive abilities. He wrote in his book: “Man is simply animal, but in cognitive level he is not different.” “If you think you can tell the difference between human creativity and machine output, you are welcome to test your claim.” “Silencing annoying noises inside your head seems like a wonderful idea, provided it enables you to finally hear your deep authentic self. But if there is no authentic self, how do you decide which voices to silence and which to amplify?” For him art does not provide us with any ultimate (and uniquely human) Sanctuary. “Art is not the product of some enchanted spirit or metaphysical soul, but rather of organic algorithms recognising mathematical patterns. If so, there is no reason why nonorganic algorithms couldn’t master it.” His chapter on God in his book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*

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concludes, “We don’t need to invoke God’s name in order to live a moral life. Secularism can provide us with all the values we need.” “You will never find the truth.” The position of author is simply that of Enlightenment’s closed-world of atheism and “dogmatic” prejudice against even the possibility of faith as an offense to reason. Enlightenment urges us to critique everything which came from the tradition, which is a prejudice. This was everywhere taken to the extremes of free thinking and atheism.

Leading to Enlightenment

Harari cannot be considered a thinker who takes philosophy seriously nor does he follow a philosophical methodology. He is stuck in dataism and belief in scientism. “Science is converging on an all-encompassing dogma, which says that organisms are algorithms, and life is data processing.” Kant’s “starry heaven above and the moral law within” are acknowledged, but Harari is basically stuck with the Critique of Pure Reason. But he does not proceed to the moral law within and does not recognise that the Ought is within the Is of human interiority. His study of religions is purely historical and negative. In his court of reason God is accused of crimes of history of all religions and condemned to death. He is a humanist, but within the confines of Enlightenment ideology. He never bothers about the history of philosophy or the phenomenological thought with the hermeneutical thought of the consciousness of human personality. Why man returns to the truth of interiority or why poets invent Gods or names what is holy? I. Kant the inaugurator of enlightenment did try to reconcile the pure reason with the practical reason in his third *Critique of Judgement*. Truth, beauty and goodness meet in the Sublime.

The Crisis of Reason

Enlightenment is said to be mankind's exit from his self-incurred immaturity (Kant, 1996: 58). Immaturity is understood as the state of inability to make use of one's own understanding without the guidance of another. It is freedom to make *public* use of one's reason in all matters. A permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy (Foucault, (1984: 43-44). Rationality, which is often considered universal, is actually not unique and invariable. We use the word "rationality" only to mean rationality that is based on certain "necessity, style, axiomatics, institutions, community, and historicity" (Derrida, 2005: 121). Husserl is critical of this rationality and evokes, in the name of phenomenological reason, the inevitability of a transcendental pathology. As a sickness of reason for it is cut off from its roots. The medical model which distinguishes between "scientific medicine" and the "nature cure". Husserl wonders why we have never developed a "scientific medicine for nations and supranational communities." "The European nations are sick; Europe itself, it is said, is in crisis, (Die europäischen Nationen sind krank, Europa selbst ist, sagt man, in einer Krisis)" (Husserl, 1970: 270). The universal scientific reason produces this amnesic evil called objectivism. Reason itself produces this evil as if by an irresistible internal secretion that is nothing other than finitude. Husserl singles out objectivism and denounces it. Rationality can become an "evil" when specialized a one-sided (Husserl, 1970: 291). Scientific reason, in its very progress, spontaneously produces the crisis. It is reason that throws reason into crisis, in an autonomous and quasi-auto-immunitary fashion.

We must consider the historical and political climate between the two world wars, the rise of Nazism as well as

European fascism. This is absolutely necessary if we are to hear today what Husserl said then, if we are to understand him as historians and philosophers concerned about our current responsibilities. These responsibilities are at once different and analogous. The reason for the failure of a rational culture, however, as we said, lies not in the essence of rationalism itself but solely in its being rendered superficial, in its entanglement in “naturalism” and “objectivism”. Whether faith in reason remains, through and through, something rational—something reasoned or reasonable. Its estrangement from its own rational sense of life; its fall into hostility toward the spirit. The dignity of a reasonable being is incalculable as an end in itself. It is at once universal and exceptional. “Morality, and humanity so far as it is capable of morality, is the only thing which has dignity” (Kant, 1964: 102). Derrida says: “Without the absolute singularity of the incalculable and the exceptional, no thing and no one, nothing other and thus nothing, arrives or happens” (Derrida, 2003: 32-33). He concludes his critique enlightenment: “Reason reasons, to be sure, it is right and it gives itself reason, to do so, so as to protect or keep itself, so as to keep within reason . It is in this that it is and thus wants to be itself; that is its sovereign ipseity” (Derrida, 2003: 52).

Phenomenological Openness to the Divine

Sadly, Harari has misconstrued secularism from its roots for as Derrida rightly has argued it is not secular at all. “Faith has not always been and will not always be identifiable with religion, nor, another point, with theology” (Derrida, 2002: 48). The reason religion is dangerous is the reason it is indispensable: it opens our imagination to a beyond that has not yet come into view. Derrida said, “faith is not pure faith. It is already knowledge, that’s why, sometimes, you call me an atheist” (Derrida, 2007: 26).

Philosophy can show us the borders of the finite, but perhaps cannot transgress them. The centrality of the question of the divine to philosophical hermeneutics is best approached with its own kind of *via negativa*. Exclusive atheistic humanism is inhuman humanism. Phenomenological understanding opened the way of theology. If grammar tells me anything, it is theological. In the very act of knowledge the mind receives without mediation its essence from God. The term “ontology” describe as what appears in one’s phenomenological analysis of the thinking subject. Precisely, on the basis of critical self-reflection, a rich description of the structure of human consciousness, and a corresponding ontology of meaning as mediated through history. One is able to assert the findings of his phenomenological investigation as real, albeit within the confines of human interiority. Relevance of the question of God as such within always dialogical openness to the world. That beyond which nothing can be thought of can be poetically reached as the holy or the trace of the holy. It gives us no intelligible programme for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after, because God can only appear as a god in the dimension of the holy. This openness concerns the phenomenon of understanding. The treatment of human self-awareness must therefore be in the hermeneutic event of understanding. The self-structuring activity of the human mind, an interior dynamic, is certainly real. Human mind’s quest for understanding is therefore a constitutive element of what it means to be human. Phenomenology, can help us to explore the inner region of human experience and free modern man from the secularization of interiority. The self-structuring activity of the ethical subject is a way to introduce concepts of cause and effect, act and telos, and ultimately a *summum bonum* into an interior description of man. We can only understand finite humanity in

comparison with the presumably infinite divine. We are always thrown back upon the experience of life. This is a key to the question of the divine no less than to historicity.

That experience of the mystery of things calls ‘cosmic wonder’. In some way we sense that the world should make sense, that there should be a reason why things are the way they are, even a reason that gives us a sense of meaning and an understanding of our place in the universe. From the philosophical point of view, it is purported to uncover the real meaning of Being, and

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the still ‘unthought’ in the difference between Being and beings, or, to strip away the traditional theological appearance from the question of Being. We can think God without any condition, not even that of Being and to think God without pretending to inscribe or describe him as a being. Nothing is without ground. We can perceive the sense of the belonging together of Being and ground. Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word ‘God’ is to signify.

Thinker, Poet and Fugitive

Literature is the place where art and science merge” (Gadamer, 1995: 163). “Literature” is the category where Gadamer’s general norms governing all understanding become applied to writings in the arts and sciences in his attempt to provide a broader basis for hermeneutics: Every work of art, not only literature, must be understood like any other text that

requires understanding, and conversely, “hermeneutics must be so determined as a whole that it does justice to the experience of art” (Gadamer, 1995: 164).

In deciphering and interpreting it, a miracle takes place: the transformation of something alien and dead into total contemporaneity and familiarity. This is like nothing else that comes down to us from the past. The remnants of past life ... a written tradition, once deciphered and read, is to such an extent pure mind that it speaks to us as if in the present.... In it, time and space seem to be superseded (Gadamer, 1995: 163-164). Literary hermeneutics has as its basic task understanding texts such that “the dead trace of meaning” is transformed “back into living meaning” (Gadamer, 1995: 164). Heidegger explores the kinship between the poet and the thinker and their common dependence (in the sense just specified) on language. The thinker utters Being and the poet names the Holy (Heidegger, 1949: 360).” “To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive ... It is a necessary part of the poet’s nature that, before he can be truly a poet in such an age, the time’s destitution must have made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question for him. Hence poets in a destitute time must especially gather in poetry the nature of poetry.” (Heidegger, 1971: 94). He came to see modern man’s increasingly technological framing of the earth and all beings as our destiny. Every metaphysics and every technology finally deconstructs itself. Man will survive even after the last technological ding-dong of doom. But

as we live technology which may deconstruct itself like the expelled demon of a gospel story and leave its metaphysical shell intact and inviting. Or a technological demon may have been relatively benign if it had not been metaphysically or technologically yoked to the seven new demons it has invited into its house. May be the demons could fend for themselves if we would truly learn to exorcize their bad habitats. But this is what Heidegger means by overcoming metaphysics.

For if it is Heidegger's insight that every technology contains metaphysics, it also provides the space for poems. And Heidegger was certainly correct: many or most of the best modern or postmodern poets have in many of their greatest poems expressed or attempted to express what it is that is poetry. These have not been "how to" works. The exodus from the kingdom of means seeks one's own in the alien, to become at

home in it being driven to communism by love for human. We cannot but hear the sound of birth in the world. It is the sound of Life, the silence in which the Word of life keeps talking to us of our own life. If we hear the word that resounds unmistakably speaks, keeps talking about the Word of God. When anything appears, there is an epiphany. Appearing

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