

## The Dictatorship of Master-Narratives: Philosophy as a Form of Resistance

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper I argue that master-narratives, that is to say the great ideological and religious systems in the modern world, are essentially despotic. These systems are, in some cases, barriers to the prosperity of the individual; they impede the human progress and impoverish the soul and the mind. The dominant cultural and political discourses in the modern world produce a miserable version of human identity; they create an identity which is too close to fanaticism and xenophobia, and too far from aesthetics and creativity. To resolve this ontological impasse, the author of this paper suggests a return to creative philosophical-thinking whose aim is to give rise to an identity of creativity, open-mindedness, and beauty.

**KEYWORDS:** Existentialism, identity, hegemony, society, power, master-narratives, self-ownership, death of God, undecidability.

*“What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end.”*

F. Nietzsche

### 1 INTRODUCTION

What makes the world's identity? ... many beautiful things. There are flowers of many colors, birds of many species, and rocks of many kinds. Diversity is the basic feature of the world. The elements that make the world's identity are the product of millions and millions of years of evolution and adaptation. For this reason, the elements that make the world's identity are authentic, natural, and innocent. All these elements are living with each other in utter harmony and mutual complementarity. Everything is in its right place. Everything exists for others as well as for itself.

However, there seems to be a dissonance in the world. This dissonance is *man*. The biggest problem that man has with himself, with the world, and with his peers is his *identity*. Considering that, despite ten thousand years of civilization, man is in reality no more than a monkey who has lost his fur some million years ago, everything that man creates and every initiative he takes must be questioned. Among the many things that man has made are law, language, religion, and morality. These last three things are what basically make an identity. However, as history shows, instead of taking identity as one assemblage of traits that distinguishes one man from another and one society from another, this identity was, and is still, used as a pre-text for one man *to wage war* against another man.

### 2 THE SPEAR AND THE GOSPEL

Anthropologically speaking, there is no difference between making a spear and writing a gospel. Everything is man-made. Man creates a spear to hunt animals for food or to defend himself, but he also writes a gospel to give meaning to his existence and to put some rules to organize the game of life. In any case, everything that man creates, he primarily creates it for his welfare and his happiness. Yet, as history and facts show, this is not always the case. In many parts of the world, peoples' gospels and moral systems are impeding the progress of human development and reason. Can you imagine that the divide between Catholics and Anglicans was because Henry VIII wanted a divorce? Can you imagine that the conflict today between Shias and Sunnis was due to the conflict between Ali ibn Abi Talib and Muawiyah I about the Caliphate in 657 CE? Nowadays,

just as it used to be in the Dark Ages, there are people who are ready to pull the trigger on other people just because they have *different ideas* and different opinions.

Ideas, including religions which are no more than huge systems of ideas, are created for people to understand each other, not to persecute each other. In fact, all master narratives, that is to say all the great religions and political movements that make the story of life, started as ideas and theories, but they soon turned into big despotic machines that crush everything. For instance, Christianity started as a bunch of emancipatory ideas and fervent hopes of a persecuted Jewish community at the periphery of the Roman-Empire, but soon this bunch of ideas turned, in a few centuries, into a terrible institution which was behind the Crusades, the Inquisition, and many bitter civil wars around the world. The same thing can be said about other master-narratives such as those of Islam, Communism, and most -isms. Communism, too, presented itself as a liberating discourse; it wanted to free man from the shackles of capitalism, but it ended with sending the proletariat to Gulag camps in Siberia!

Every idea, no matter how sublime it is, can easily turn into a tool of persecution or subordination. For instance, the Enlightenment Age, which discovered the liberties, also invented many forms of body-discipline and thought control (Foucault 1979: 222). Institutions such as prisons, schools and medical institutions used power techniques, such as surveillance, training and examination to control people and maintain order (Foucault cited in Vintges, 2011: 100-1). However, these techniques of control that characterize modern societies create not only a prison for so-called "abnormal people" such as criminals, sexual perverts, and madmen but for "normal" people too (Foucault cited in Vintges, 2011: 101).

In many Arab countries, school is still used as an institution of social control and political domestication. It is used to reproduce the social status quo. Instead of going to school to learn about universal wisdom and to discover humanity's cultural heritage, students are exposed to only one mode of thinking and cogitating about things. Students are not allowed to build their identities according to their experience with humanity's intellectual and philosophical heritage; rather students are allowed to learn only what helps maintain the status quo and serve the interests of people at the top of the social pyramid.

### 3 ESCAPING THE MATRIX

There is something rotten about society. One should be cautious of one's own social group just as one is cautious of other stranger-groups. Society is *essentially* hegemonic. On the first day you are born, they give you a name; then they tell you what to eat, what not to eat, and what to worship. After that, you spend your whole life defending and *fighting for an identity that you did not choose in the first place*. Society is ideologically manipulative and ontologically misleading. You die on this bank of the river, they call you a martyr; you die on the other bank, they call you an enemy...or a terrorist. So, as a human being you are *nothing*; your value is measured by the extent to which you *serve* society; everything else is superfluous.

The hegemony of society and the dictatorship of its master-narratives do not stop here. The process of metamorphosis continues to take some serious surreal dimensions. No matter what you do and no matter how many sacrifices you make for society, society will not stop humiliating you even if you are a new convert. When you embrace the religion of others and you abandon that of your parents and grand-parents, you have to pay a double price. The first price is that of treason, and the second one is that of conversion. When you convert, they give you a hug. After that, they ask you to change everything in your life from what you put in your dish to the very personal name you hold. Thus, Muhammad may, for instance, change into Peter and Michael into Omar. The process of metamorphosis has no limits; it may go a little bit further to cut some skin from your body or to hang some piece of metal or wood around your neck for the rest of your life.

Belonging to a country or a culture is a mere geographical or *historical accident*. Most of the wars that have been fought, either for religious or political reasons, were fought for geographical and historical coincidences. If it happened that you were born in Tel Aviv, the first thing they teach you is to kill the first Palestinian you find in your way, and vice-versa. Cioran (1997) was absolutely right about the averageness of peoples; he said that to belong to a country or a tribe has no deep philosophical or spiritual significance. The only true community, Cioran claims, is "*la famille spirituelle*," but not the national or ideological one. For Cioran, a nation is without doubt a historical fact, but it is not a fundamental fact (Cioran, 1997: 708). One does not belong to a piece of land; one belongs to a system of values and ideas.

Whatever is constructed can be deconstructed, otherwise it becomes an idol. In other words, it becomes a menace. The most dangerous thing about an idea, an event or a system of values is when it presents itself as *transcendental*. Whenever an idea presents itself as being above history or a group of people think that their gospel has dropped from the sky, then be ready for civil war. The proponents of that idea do not see their idea the way you see it. If that idea is in reality no more than a mistake of the mind or the heart which became a golden calf, for its proponents it is the Truth incarnate.

The majority of Jews, Christians, and Muslims and all their factions are epistemologically sick. They have waged wars against each other for centuries. They have shed much blood about *Truth*. Most rabbis, priests, imams, Marxists, and all essentialism

oriented-minds have been under the influence of a serious intellectual disease: *logo-centrism*, the belief that the world as it is 'present' to us in everyday experience or in natural science constitutes the totality of *what there is* (Young, 2003: 193). The majority of Jews, Christians, and Muslims and all their factions are logo-centric because they have believed, and some of them still do, that Discourse, Reason, the Self and the World are *identical*. This is a serious philosophical mistake. Speaking about the world in a biblical or a Koranic language does not mean owning the world; it simply means trying to understand the world through the semantic system of the Bible or the Koran. Speaking about the world does not guarantee the *presence* of the World in speech; for speech, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim, is no more than a repertoire of dead metaphors. There is nothing in our experience of the world except that which is determined by the parameters of our language and our culture. The way reality presents itself to our minds is completely framed by the language we speak (Young, 2003: 193). We are the prisoners of our language (Whorf, 1956: 212-14) and our culture; we almost cannot think beyond the intellectual horizon of our historical epoch.

The book of the world is too huge to be contained by a human language; it is too complicated to be deciphered by human reason, for the world is the greatest language; *it is Reason itself*. Speaking and cogitating about the world is only making an interpretation of it. What is an interpretation? It is something similar to the way a kid reads a painting by some great painter. That reading is not absolute, but relative. It reflects the kid's intelligence, his social milieu, his religious education, his physical health, and many other things, but not the painting itself.

Ideas, beliefs, and identities do not drop from the sky. They are the products of experience, the effects of the body, and the chemistry of anxiety, hope, and desire. Hard science itself, as its intellectual history shows, is only an accumulation of facts and anti-facts; it works through a process of trial and error. It is no more than an interpretation and it does not have exclusive right to absolute truth (Caputo, 2007: 133). Moreover, the logic of science does not work through *confirmation*, but only through *falsification* (Karl Popper). Its main job is not to prove some theories, but only to disprove some theories.

#### 4 GOD IS DEAD

"God is dead," said Nietzsche. So what? ...So, there is no absolute center in the world. There is no overarching principle that explains our existence. Truth does no longer come down to Earth from the Heavens. There is no Truth in the world; there are only interpretations. Truth is *what we make*.

In the days of the Assyrians and the Greeks, the world was a property of the gods. Now, thanks to Prometheus, Sisyphus, Nietzsche and many other heroes, the world is ours. We inhabit a *cosmic democracy* where truth and meaning are constructed not through revelation but through dialogue, reason, and debate. Truth is no longer produced in temples or in caves in the mountains; it is produced in workshops and laboratories. The sages of the tribe are no longer old men with white beards, but the experts, philosophers, psychoanalysts, and engineers of both genders. Man is no longer the servant of God. Man is what he does with himself and his life. The ancient belief that we were created in the image of God proved to be wrong. As to the identity of each one of us, there is no God, there is no Qadar (Predestination), and there is no design. Man's existence precedes his essence (Sartre, 1945: 22). First you come to the world, and then you choose what you want to be. Your identity is a *project*. Everyone has the chance to carve their statue according to their talent and imagination. One can make out of oneself a beautiful work of art or one can just be a crude copy of some social figure.

Unfortunately, the individual in Arab societies does not have the right to be what he wants to be. Freedom which is the basis of human dignity and creativity is suspicious in our societies. Today, many people still think that the concept of freedom is of a *satanic substance*. Even people who break all the social laws and indulge in a life of "debauchery," do not totally detach themselves from all social chains. The eye of society is still haunting their subconscious. That is why in Arab societies so many singers and musicians, after enjoying the lights of fame and show-business, soon throw themselves in the bosom of religion.

There are three barriers in Arab societies that hinder individual self-fulfillment: the *dictatorship of Discourse*, the *averageness of the herd*, and the *lack of self-ownership* (Young, 2003:114). One should be careful when dealing with discourses. The history of discourses shows that discourse is not an innocent meaning-making system. Many discourses, such as Christianity and Islam, which started as emancipatory discourses, have done bad things to the development of humanity and its emancipation. These discourses themselves have been used on many occasions throughout history to legitimize slavery, women's oppression, and take away freedom of thought and speech.

There is a golden-rule that should be taught in every philosophy class in every high-school: *discourse shapes society as society shapes discourse*. Hegemony and indoctrination create a society of fools. No, they do what is worse than that; they make people applaud enthusiastically for those who made them fools. No matter how stupid an idea or event is, there is at the hands of social authority and hegemonic social groups a bunch of priests, imams, teachers, pseudo-philosophers and demagogues who are ready to make that stupid idea or event look as normal as a shining sun on a day of June. Throughout

history, the most basic ideological function of discourse has been *normalization*, the discursive process of making oppression, hegemony, and exploitation *look normal*.

Concurrent with normalization there is another function ideological function of discourse: *Standardization of thought*. Because power and hegemony are everywhere (Foucault, 1993: 334) and because discourse is used to legitimize domination and power, dominant groups in societies tend to control other groups by making people think only within a set of pre-determined parameters. Thus, in dictatorships, whether they are secular dictatorships or theocratic ones, people are brought up to be clones of each other. Authenticity and individual uniqueness are unthinkable. In fact, authenticity exists, but only as a word in dictionaries. What do exist in reality are many institutions for body-discipline, thought-control, and consent-manufacture.

One of the institutions that are utilized to reproduce the status quo in dictatorships is school. Philosophically speaking, school should be a window on humanity's cultural heritage and wisdom; it should give students the chance to acquaint themselves with the multiplicity of identities and cultures in the world. However, in Arab societies, for instance, school is a *machine of thought-control*; school curriculums are designed to reproduce the established social order by deleting certain forms of knowledge, including serious analyses of inequality, oppression, exploitation, imperialism, class struggle, that may raise critical questions about, for instance, capitalism (Apple, 1990). Textbooks are very modern, but only at the level of design and cover-making. In their contents, students are only presented with what people at the top of the social pyramid want them to learn. The knowledge that students receive is *too packaged*, too complete, too objective, and depicts the world as *static* and *unchangeable* (Joldersma, 1999).

Apple (1990) also points to the existence of a *hidden curriculum* whereby students are socialized and behaviorally conditioned to accept hierarchical structures of power in society. Classrooms, just like political life, are organized in an authoritarian way where students are conditioned to become passive, conformist, and obedient members of society, thus generating easily manipulated workers and passive, apathetic citizens (Shor, 1992).

School is the greatest security agency; it protects us from the monsters of history; it protects us from Richard I, from Hitler, from colonialism, from Ben Laden and from Donald Trump. Unfortunately, in the Arab societies schools play the role of fostering false consciousness among youth; they alienate kids from their real world; just like bad politics schooling in these societies is the art of turning human beings into monkeys.

The misery of the educational discourse automatically leads to the *averageness of the herd*; it leads to a society of puppets, a society in which individuals own smart phones and satellite T.Vs, but they also own stupid minds and suffer from a serious *lack of self-ownership*. In Arab societies, individuals rarely think out of the box. When one wants to make a decision, one has to look around and check the gaze of the others, or worse to go one thousand years back in time to seek advice from the dead ancestors. In these societies, people are conformist to the extent of experiencing some kind of "distantiality" (Heidegger cited in Young, 2003:114). People are so conditioned that they begin to feel extremely uncomfortable if they find themselves more than a little distance from social norms and religious beliefs.

Philosophically speaking, the individual in Arab societies does not own his mind, nor does he own his destiny. He has given his mind to the state or to the clergy and he has delivered his life to society. Giving your mind or your life to others to run it for you, instead of running it yourself, will only lead to a form of miserable being where you may possess everything except self-ownership.

## 5 WHEN AN IDEA BECOMES A VIRUS

Generally speaking, one should not trust the masses. They are impulsive, intellectually mediocre, emotionally dominated, and have short memory. These characteristics make them easy prey for demagogues and opportunists. In fact if one wants to govern a crowd, one does not need more than a myth, a bunch of wishful-thinking fallacies, and some strong feelings. These are almost exactly the ingredients that make the religious discourse in Arab societies.

When it comes to intelligent ideas, creativity, and wisdom, we should not expect much from religions. Religious ideas and beliefs are usually untestable, imprecise (Dawkins cited in Dalhomb, 1993: 91) and largely the product of indoctrination. One should also not forget that one usually follows the religion of one's parents and that the most important variable determining one's religion is *the accident of birth*. No one is born Christian or Muslim; this is the job of pure chance.

A discourse is not just a set of opinions, arguments, and beliefs. A discourse is also a set of feelings and attitudes. Therefore, behind every discourse there is a will and a desire. The will behind religious discourse, as Nietzsche claims, is a *sick* will. Because dealing with this world requires a healthy body and an iron will, and because some human-beings were not brave enough to cope with the difficulties of this world, they invented another metaphysical world which is the total opposite of this real world.

Marx said that religion is the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. This theory can be supported by a historical fact. In its golden age, the Roman Empire was an empire of power, of instincts and of the Coliseum, but when this empire weakened it gave rise to a totally different worldview: *Christianity*. The fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity was not a historical coincidence. The conditions of the death of the former are exactly the conditions of prosperity of the latter. Christianity is the antithesis of the Roman Empire.

The Roman and Greek Civilizations glorified the moment, the body, desires, action and imagination. In short, they worshiped Dionysus. The Christian civilization venerates eternity, the soul, purity, and truth. The Roman and Greek clung to this world. Christians invented another extra-terrestrial world. The former glorified life and flesh, the latter the angel and Paradise (Onfray, 2005:129). So, the maxims and theoretical bases of the religious discourse were, from the beginning, feelings of hate and guilt; hating life and feeling guilty of one's body and one's drives. No wonder then that the prominent figures in the religious world are physically ill and psychologically disturbed.

Most religious ideas are viruses of the mind (Dawkins, 1993:91). Take the idea of Truth; most Christians and Muslims claim that there is only one truth. For these two groups, Truth is exclusively Islamic or Christian. There is no third way. If you do not abide by the precepts of Christianity or Islam then you are on the wrong way. Being wrong, according to each one of these two metaphysical systems, should not be taken in an epistemological or abstract sense; it should be understood in a social and tangible sense. Thus being wrong entails many forms of punishment; these forms range from rebuking to being burnt at the stake. Punishment practice and social persecution depend on the historical era and the political mood of the epoch. In all cases, if you are different from me, you are unwelcome. Some people go a little bit further and wonder if those on the wrong way should stay on the face of earth. ISIS and co. have a clear answer for that.

Most religious ideas are created to be blindly put into practice. Because most religions claim that their beliefs are passed down directly from God to people, you cannot discuss them. *One cannot argue with God*. To tell the truth, there is only one valid idea in religious discourse: Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6: 31-35). All the rest, or at least most of it, is *garbage*. To sum up, one should be metaphysically modest; no one has the right to boast of belonging to this religion or that culture.

Any idea or a belief goes through three stages. First, it is created by a fertile mind or a dreamy soul; then it is supported by militants and fervent believers; finally, it is exploited by the powerful and the arriviste. Just as one should be careful about what one eats from one's dish, one should also be careful about what one puts in one's mind. There is a great deal of contaminated and poisonous ideas circulating in the air. Stay vigilant!

## 6 SOCRATES, JIMMY HENDRIX, AND THE PLUMBER

The modern world is *spiritually miserable*. We own a lot of satellites, a lot of laws, a lot of computers, a lot of information, a lot of sciences and yet we are less happy than the people of the Middle Ages. Our age is dominated by technology and economy. Westerners have deserted churches only to embrace stock exchanges. They have replaced indulgences with treasury-bills and swapped the Holy Spirit with ad valorem, and crosses with smart phones. They demolished the idol of the Son of God only to raise another idol: Mammon. It is crystal clear that we suffer from a serious shortage of wisdom and our metaphysical view of the world is not well-balanced. We suffer from "absolutisation." We have been giving too much importance to one aspect of existence and have forgotten that existence has many other sides and potentials. Westerners have been for a long time imprisoned in one narrow metaphysical view. They have thought for many centuries that *the act of living* consists mainly of conquering, hurting, exploiting, and getting rich. That is why the main historical achievements of Western civilization are not only the Industrial Revolution, colonialism, and capitalism, but also the atomic bomb and global warming. Westerners have been entrapped in the illusion that existence, just like the moon, is a flat illuminated disc. However, existence possesses an infinite "plenitude of facets," and we should not detain ourselves in one-dimensional way of experiencing reality (Young, 2003: 203-6).

A man's identity feeds on what he has in his mind and on what he has in his soul. In an ideal republic, no one is allowed to leave high-school without being exposed for some time to these two disciplines: *philosophy* and *music*. The former is used for cultivating the mind, the latter for cultivating the soul. Music has three benefits: it calms and refines the animal drives in the soul, it develops one's sense of harmony, and finally it can never be *ideological*. Drawing on this last point, Jimmy Hendrix once said that "music doesn't lie". This characteristic of music could be explained by the fact that music speaks a universal language; it is the true image of human spirituality and ontological purity.

Philosophy, too, has many advantages. It is the power to give form to the chaos of life. Without philosophy the world is but a mere ball of power and energy. What is more is that philosophy is not a mere disinterested pursuit of knowledge; it is the art

of combining logic, critical thinking, and creativity skills with refined taste to transform one's life (Deleuze cited in Colebrook, 2002: 11).

Philosophy is also a discourse of freedom; its main mission is emancipating people from the darkness and illusions of the cave. Master-narratives and religions in general always set some transcendental signified, some prophet or some saint whose steps you have to follow if you want to attain salvation. In philosophy, there is no prophet and no saint to follow. If there is anything in philosophy to follow, it is the *light of Reason*. In the religious discourse, salvation is always in the hands of some Krishna, some Jesus, or some Koranic figure, which means that salvation is always *outside of you*. In the religious discourse, salvation is always possessed by an *Other*. In the philosophical discourse salvation is inside you; if you want to save your soul, you do not need to raise your eyes up to Heaven. All you need is *to look within yourself*. Socrates has always been reminding us that "an unexamined life is not worth living." Moreover, salvation here does not mean evading the claws of the Devil; it simply means freeing oneself from prejudices, misconceptions, ideological indoctrination, social structures, and all bad thinking-habits.

Thus, if master narratives and religious discourses put the individual at the service of the army, the establishment, or the market, philosophy saves one from being one mere cow in a big herd of cows. It frees one from the yoke of social structures. Moreover, salvation cannot be attained by following the steps of any guru, but only by entering into a *dialogue* with any great mind, anytime, anywhere.

If most master-narratives present themselves as transcendental regimes of truth, philosophy presents itself as a form of humanism. In philosophy, there is no transcendental truth, no center, no single ground and no origin. In philosophy, entities such as truth, life, and identity are processes of becoming (Deleuze cited in Colebrook, 2002: 69) rather than *fixed* concepts. They are the outcome of our experience and history on earth. Thus, my identity, which is the sum of what I do with my mind, my body, and how I deal with other bodies, is a *historical how*, not a *trans-historical what*. In other words, my identity is open to the dynamism of history and it is not a simulacrum of somebody in Heaven or something in the World of Ideals.

All our problems are essentially philosophical. A world which works bad is a world with a philosophy which works bad. Fundamentalism, for instance, is nothing but bad thinking. ISIS is religious thinking gone mad. All other forms of extremism, prejudice and everyday banal generalizations are just bad philosophy.

Underneath every house there is a sewage system, underneath a civilization there is a set of concepts. Just as the sewer system of every house is likely to break down some day, so is the conceptual infra-structure of civilization. In both cases, the breakdown emits unpleasant smells and sends out excrement. Hence, there is a need for the intervention of a plumber. In the first case, the plumber is a technician who fixes pipes and mends sewers. In the second case, the plumber is a philosopher (Mahon cited in Humphreys, 2017) who repairs conceptual frameworks, changes frames of mind, and alters worldviews. In short, he cleans all the mess created by the greedy, the extremist, and the autocrat.

The greatest lesson that one can learn from philosophy is *metaphysical humbleness*. Despite what we think about ourselves, we are in reality no more than six billion monkeys trotting along the surface of a little planet in a far distant corner of the universe. A black hole, an earthquake, a comet or any natural catastrophe can easily put end to the human noise in a few seconds. Two thousand and four hundred years ago, Socrates claimed that all he knows is that he knows nothing. So, the world is too complicated and too big to be contained by a given civilization or understood by a given culture.

One of the signs of intellectual awakening is when one gets rid of capital letters. When it comes to coping with the thorny issues of life, one should cling to an attitude of De-capitalization, which means that one should deal with things as best as one can without using capital letters, making final authoritative claims, and without seeking a Knowledge of the Secret. One should have the guts to jump directly into the waters of undecidability (Caputo, 2001: 127). So, when one, for instance, writes Islam with a capital "I" or Reason with a capital "R", or Enlightenment with a capital "E", I know on the spot that one has *epistemologically gone astray*. The history of cultures and discourses shows that almost every culture and civilization presents itself as the apogee of civilization or the end of history, but facts show that every culture and every civilization is but *a mere opinion* in the book of history or *a mere voice* in the play of humanity. Nothing is absolute, everything is limited and contextual.

Dogmatism is a sign of intellectual misery. Critical minds are essentially *nomadic*. They never settle down in one specific place. They are always looking for new conceptual lands and for new ontological experiences. They move from one paradigm to another. Critical minds have always been great travelers. Travelling, be it geographical or intellectual, saves one from *mind closure*. When one opens one's mind and one's soul to new ideas and new winds from other hills, one discovers that the air one breathes in one's town is not totally fresh; one also finds out that one's town or country is but *a mere village* among thousands of villages and one's culture is but a mere color among thousands of colors. Be humble! If your god is made of glass, do not stone other people's gods.

The history of ideas and theories shows that few ideas can be considered as constant universal laws. All other ideas and theories are prone to revision and reconstruction. No idea or worldview is above time and space. One should assume an *attitude of undecidability* when dealing with the issues of the modern world. What is undecidability? It is a kind of uncertainty about who we are and what we believe in; but uncertainty here is not a lack of self-confidence; rather it is a kind of intellectual humbleness. Undecidability is recognizing that we do not have final answers and firm attitudes about what is going on in the real world. So, questions must remain open and undecidability should be the principal attitude, for undecidability protects identity and faith from *mind closure* (Caputo, 2001: 130).

## 7 CONCLUSION

There is no clean blood and there is no white culture. Everything is hybrid. How can I identify myself with one culture or another? I have been brought up in a Muslim family and I have absorbed quite a large amount of metaphysical stuff from the Koran. However, I feel that a nineteenth-century atheist-thinker such as Schopenhauer or Nietzsche is metaphysically closer to me than any other Arab or Muslim thinker. I also, from time to time, drop a visit to Christian and Buddhist canonical texts; the *Sermon on the Mount* and the *Tao Te Ching* are always on my mind. I have also spent a large part of my life in the company of Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans. Thus, in addition to bearing a Hebrew name and descending from an Arab family, I also strongly feel that I am Greek.

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