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# PEGASUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAUX ROUND TABLE FOR MORAL CAPITALISM  
NETWORK LOOKING AT BUSINESS ABOVE THE CLUTTER AND CONFETTI



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# Introduction

This issue of *Pegasus* is an invitation to seek the truth. We include a response to Pope Francis's new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, on human community, an inclusive understanding of humanity as proposed by Qur'anic guidance and a reminder of the need to maintain our ability to center, written by William Butler Yeats in his poem, "The Second Coming."

First, the encyclical of Pope Francis, written as human fears and passions taking advantage of new technologies, are subdividing the larger community into more tribal collectivities suspicious of one another, asks us to search through dialogue and encounter. The objects of that search are two: that we become wiser persons and that we become better neighbors to one another.

Secondly, Professor Muhammad Hashim Kamali, Founding CEO of the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies Malaysia, has graciously provided us with a short comment on recognition of human dignity in the Qur'an.

Thirdly, our colleague Richard Broderick, a poet himself, tells us about Yeats in his search for insight and his fears of the dark side of human nature as set forth in his poem, "The Second Coming."

Borrowing from Yeats, we might say that the Caux Round Table seeks to be of encouragement to the best among us not to lose their conviction and to speak with passionate intensity so that the center will hold.

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# ***Fratelli Tutti – An Encyclical of Pope Francis***



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On October 4, Pope Francis issued a new encyclical addressed to the human family providing us all with wise understanding of how our individualism is at once precious for our creative freedoms and yet burdened with moral obligations to engage with others.

This encyclical is welcomed by the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism (CRT) in that what the Pope writes expressly validates our methodology of dialogue and discourse in formulating ethical standards for business, governments and civil society and in implementing those standards by promoting vocations of service in secular settings.

## **1) Importance of the Encyclical**

The encyclical rejects, for very good reasons, the prevailing intellectualism brought into our world through the culture and systems of modernization – what Max Weber famously called the rational/legal archetype of authority.

Weber also intuited that a rationalized and legalized world would be full of “disenchantment,” not utopian well-being. French philosopher Jean Francois Revel once remarked that “Utopia is not under the slightest obligation to produce results: its sole function is to allow its devotees to condemn what exists in the name of what does not exist.”

Rational legalist cultures and institutions have no moral constraints. Friedrich Nietzsche had understood just that truth when he confessed that all that is rational only feeds the appetite of nihilism to critique and turn all human life over to the will to power and a struggle of the strong to oppress the weak. He reasoned that reason taken to extremes within itself can end up conceptually anywhere, but also nowhere real, except in its influence on our minds and so on our actions. Disconnect reason from context and it can degrade and destruct the good.

The nihilism exposed by Nietzsche has cleared away many fields and forests of human belief leaving our modern world subjected to systemic narcissism – just another version of a culture which promotes survival of the fittest.

As an Athenian conqueror said to the defeated people of Melos: “The strong do what they will; the weak what they must.”

Where power without mores animates our ambitions and seeking possession of its capabilities beguiles our hearts, we forget the moral sense.

Where the self reigns supreme, the moral sense easily surrenders to every demand of the insecure ego and the grasping id.

Yet, ironically, narcissism and the will to power actually undermine our individualism. With quiet desperation, we seek solace in tribalism, in group identity – in submission to what has more power than we have on our own. Thus, the rise of the modern state, as history personified in its leader – a Lenin or a Hitler - or in the party.

Where nihilism sets the table for narcissism, the warning Yeats gave in his poem, *The Second Coming*, is wise to heed:

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

In his encyclical, Pope Francis is calling us back from the edge of despair where we stand at the border of that psychic realm where dying souls struggle with their self-made afflictions. He is asking us to recall our better selves which are in communion with others through love and caring works, engineered by an enlightened spirit. Pope Francis calls us to remember that within, we have a charisma which transcends power and narcissism and which bends rationality and legalism towards justice.

With that spirit, we reconcile personal conviction with responsibility. We are here for ourselves and also for others; we can't have one and not the other and be happy.

The encounter with others is and must be reciprocal, an exchange. Otherwise, the abutting of persons mostly leads to an imposition of one on the other, unilateral and superficial, and that imposition can be merely ignoring the other.



## **2) Summary of the Encyclical**

Pope Francis sets the stage for his presentation of ideas and recommendations with reference to Saint Francis who, he reminds us, called for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, a caring which acknowledges, appreciates and loves each person. He seeks to make his encyclical an invitation to dialogue among all people of goodwill.

## **Dark Clouds Over a Closed World**

What Pope Francis calls “dark clouds” coming over our world to make it more difficult for us to see others as we should, a “fragmentation” of the human family. The darkness he sees is walls of separation, built and maintained through self-absorption.

He points to the rise of a “myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism” as one such dark cloud, facilitating new forms of selfishness and a loss of the social sense. He sees globalization as connecting us, but not making us brothers and sisters, leaving individuals as mere consumers or bystanders by the side of economic power. He considers this a “cool, comfortable and globalized indifference,” leaving us on a road of “disenchantment and disappointment, isolation and withdrawal.”

Our world, he says, is racing ahead, but without a shared roadmap.

The Pope wants us to learn from the pandemic that neither economic growth nor our political regimes can free us from egoistic self-preservation, at all cost to others.

He exposes the results of a “deconstructionism” which encourages human freedom to create anything and everything, leaving in its wake a drive to consumerism and expressions of empty individualism. This superficiality he denominates as a new form of “cultural colonialization,” this time oppressing history with a license to marginalize good values.

In many countries, he says, elites use hyperbole, extremism, ridicule, suspicion, relentless criticism and polarization to subject citizens to the hubris of the powerful. Debate degenerates into disagreement and confrontation.

The Pope faults economies for a readiness to discard persons for the sake of higher profits. Wars, terrorist attacks and racial and religious persecutions destroy the humanity of mind and heart which should be preserved as the world fights piecemeal a “third world war” leading people to “withdraw into their own safety zone.”

He advises that digital communications are not a salvation. The constant surveillance of people’s lives leads us to dehumanize them, laugh at them, belittle them and manipulate them. Digital communications also serve campaigns of hatred, exposing people to the risks of addiction, isolation and loss of contact with concrete reality. “Digital connectivity is not enough to build bridges. It is not capable of uniting humanity.” It offers a form of bonding that encourages remarkable hostility, insults, abuse, defamation and verbal violence destructive of others. “Social aggression has found unparalleled room for expansion through computers and mobile devices.” The digital platforms also favor encounters among those who think alike, shielding them from debate and knowledge of reality.

With digital connectivity, we each can separate ourselves from what we dislike, find distasteful or threatening. We live more easily than ever before within the confines of our own minds.

“Indeed, the media’s noisy potpourri of facts and opinions is often an obstacle to dialogue, since it lets everyone cling stubbornly to his or her own ideas, interests and choices, with the excuse that everyone else is wrong. It becomes easier to discredit and insult opponents from the outset than to open a respectful dialogue aimed at achieving agreement on a deeper level. Worse, this kind of language, usually drawn from media coverage of political campaigns, has become so widespread as to be part of daily conversation. Discussion is often manipulated by powerful special interests that seek to tilt public opinion unfairly in their favour. This kind of manipulation can be exercised not only by governments, but also in economics, politics, communications, religion and in other spheres. Attempts can be made to justify or excuse it when it tends to serve one’s own economic or ideological interests, but sooner or later, it turns against those very interests.” (201)

We need, he writes, the ability to sit down and listen to others.

### **A Stranger on the Road**

Pope Francis then expounds on a parable told by Jesus – the story of the Good Samaritan. This is the moral foundation of his encyclical. The parable relates how a man was set upon by robbers, who stripped him, beat him and left him half dead by the side of the road. A priest of high status and a Levite with elite privileges came along, saw the man lying there and passed him by. Then, a Samaritan, a man, a foreigner, came near the beaten man and, on seeing him, took pity. He stopped, bandaged his wounds, put him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and paid for his care.

Jesus asked: “Which of the three passersby was a neighbor to the wounded man?” Pope Francis asks us who are we – neighbors or bystanders?

He acknowledges that “all of us have in ourselves something of the wounded man, something of the robber, something of the passersby and something of the Good Samaritan.”

We are constantly tempted to ignore others, but, he says, should rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, as builders of a new social bond. Each day, we have to decide whether to be the Good Samaritan or an indifferent bystander. “Let us “foster what is good and place ourselves at its service.” “Let us seek out others and embrace the world as it is.” “Each day offers us a new opportunity, a new possibility.”

### **Envisaging and Engendering an Open World**

“Let us seek out others and embrace the world as it is, without fear of pain or a sense of inadequacy, because there we will discover all the goodness that God has planted in human hearts.” (78)

“Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfilment except in the sincere gift of self to others. Nor can they fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons: I communicate effectively with myself only insofar as I communicate with others. No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love. This is part of the mystery of authentic human existence. Life exists

where there is bonding, communion, fraternity; and life is stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity. On the contrary, there is no life when we claim to be self-sufficient and live as islands: in these attitudes, death prevails.” (87)

“In the depths of every heart, love creates bonds and expands existence, for it draws people out of themselves and towards others.” (88)

“Yet if the acts of the various moral virtues are to be rightly directed, one needs to take into account the extent to which they foster openness and union with others. That is made possible by the charity that God infuses. Without charity, we may perhaps possess only apparent virtues, incapable of sustaining life in common.”

“Every society needs to ensure that values are passed on; otherwise, what is handed down are selfishness, violence, corruption in its various forms, indifference and, ultimately, a life closed to transcendence and entrenched in individual interests.” (113)

### **A Heart Open to the Entire World**

“Complex challenges arise when our neighbour happens to be an immigrant. Ideally, unnecessary migration ought to be avoided; this entails creating in countries of origin the conditions needed for a dignified life and integral development. Yet until substantial progress is made in achieving this goal, we are obliged to respect the right of all individuals to find a place that meets their basic needs and those of their families, and where they can find personal fulfilment. Our response to the arrival of migrating persons can be summarized by four words: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. For it is not a case of implementing welfare programmes from the top down, but rather of undertaking a journey together, through these four actions, in order to build cities and countries that, while preserving their respective cultural and religious identity, are open to differences and know how to promote them in the spirit of human fraternity.” (129)

“The different cultures that have flourished over the centuries need to be preserved, lest our world be impoverished.” (134)

“It should be kept in mind that an innate tension exists between globalization and localization. We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes. In the first, people get caught up in an abstract, globalized universe... In the other, they turn into a museum of local folklore, a world apart, doomed to doing the same things over and over, incapable of being challenged by novelty or appreciating the beauty which God bestows beyond their borders.” (142)

“Life without fraternal gratuitousness becomes a form of frenetic commerce, in which we are constantly weighing up what we give and what we get back in return. God, on the other hand, gives freely, to the point of helping even those who are unfaithful; he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good (Mt 5:45). There is a reason why Jesus told us: “When you give alms, do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, so that your alms may be in

secret” (Mt 6:3-4). We received life freely; we paid nothing for it. Consequently, all of us are able to give without expecting anything in return, to do good to others without demanding that they treat us well in return. As Jesus told his disciples: “Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give.” (Mt 10:8) (140)

## **A Better Kind of Politics**

“In recent years, the words “populism” and “populist” have invaded the communications media and everyday conversation. As a result, they have lost whatever value they might have had and have become another source of polarization in an already divided society. Efforts are made to classify entire peoples, groups, societies and governments as “populist” or not. Nowadays it has become impossible for someone to express a view on any subject without being categorized one way or the other, either to be unfairly discredited or to be praised to the skies.” (156)

“Everything, then, depends on our ability to see the need for a change of heart, attitudes and lifestyles. Otherwise, political propaganda, the media and the shapers of public opinion will continue to promote an individualistic and uncritical culture subservient to unregulated economic interests and societal institutions at the service of those who already enjoy too much power.” (166)

“The fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market freedom. It has also shown that, in addition to recovering a sound political life that is not subject to the dictates of finance, we must put human dignity back at the centre and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need.”

“Here I would once more observe that politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy. Although misuse of power, corruption, disregard for law and inefficiency must clearly be rejected, economics without politics cannot be justified, since this would make it impossible to favour other ways of handling the various aspects of the present crisis. Instead, what is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis. In other words, a healthy politics... capable of reforming and coordinating institutions, promoting best practices and overcoming undue pressure and bureaucratic inertia. We cannot expect economics to do this, nor can we allow economics to take over the real power of the state.” (177)

“In the face of many petty forms of politics focused on immediate interests, I would repeat that true statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. Political powers do not find it easy to assume this duty in the work of nation-building, much less in forging a common project for the human family, now and in the future. Thinking of those who will come after us does not serve electoral purposes, yet it is what authentic justice demands.” (178)

“This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity. Once more, I appeal for a renewed appreciation of politics as a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.” (180)

“At a time when various forms of fundamentalist intolerance are damaging relationships between individuals, groups and peoples, let us be committed to living and teaching the value of respect for others, a love capable of welcoming differences and the priority of the dignity of every human being over his or her ideas, opinions, practices and even sins. Even as forms of fanaticism, closedmindedness and social and cultural fragmentation proliferate in present-day society, a good politician will take the first step and insist that different voices be heard. Disagreements may well give rise to conflicts, but uniformity proves stifling and leads to cultural decay. May we not be content with being enclosed in one fragment of reality.” (191)

“For this reason, it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others. Good politics combines love with hope and with confidence in the reserves of goodness present in human hearts. Indeed, authentic political life, built upon respect for law and frank dialogue between individuals, is constantly renewed whenever there is a realization that every woman and man, and every new generation, brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies.” (196)

### **Dialogue and Friendship in Society**

“Some people attempt to flee from reality, taking refuge in their own little world; others react to it with destructive violence. Yet between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option: that of dialogue.” (199)

“Authentic social dialogue involves the ability to respect the other’s point of view and to admit that it may include legitimate convictions and concerns. Based on their identity and experience, others have a contribution to make and it is desirable that they should articulate their positions for the sake of a more fruitful public debate.” (203)

“We need to learn how to unmask the various ways that the truth is manipulated, distorted and concealed in public and private discourse. What we call “truth” is not only the reporting of facts and events, such as we find in the daily papers. It is primarily the search for the solid foundations sustaining our decisions and our laws. This calls for acknowledging that the human mind is capable of transcending immediate concerns and grasping certain truths that are unchanging, as true now as in the past. As it peers into human nature, reason discovers universal values derived from that same nature.” (208)

“There is no need, then, to oppose the interests of society, consensus and the reality of objective truth. These three realities can be harmonized whenever, through dialogue, people are unafraid to get to the heart of an issue.” (212)

“Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter. I have frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions.” (215)

“We have to stand in the place of others, if we are to discover what is genuine, or at least understandable, in their motivations and concerns.” (221)

“All this calls for the ability to recognize other people’s right to be themselves and to be different. This recognition, as it becomes a culture, makes possible the creation of a social covenant. Without it, subtle ways can be found to make others insignificant, irrelevant,

of no value to society.” (218)

## **Paths of Renewed Encounter**

“The path to peace does not mean making society blandly uniform, but getting people to work together, side-by-side, in pursuing goals that benefit everyone. A wide variety of practical proposals and diverse experiences can help achieve shared objectives and serve the common good. The problems that a society is experiencing need to be clearly identified, so that the existence of different ways of understanding and resolving them can be appreciated. The path to social unity always entails acknowledging the possibility that others have, at least in part, a legitimate point of view, something worthwhile to contribute, even if they were in error or acted badly. We should never confine others to what they may have said or done, but value them for the promise that they embody a promise that always brings with it a spark of new hope.” (228)

## **Religion at the Service of Fraternity in Our World**

“It should be acknowledged that among the most important causes of the crises of the modern world are a desensitized human conscience, a distancing from religious values and the prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies that deify the human person and introduce worldly and material values in place of supreme and transcendental principles. It is wrong when the only voices to be heard in public debate are those of the powerful and “experts.” Room needs to be made for reflections born of religious traditions that are the repository of centuries of experience and wisdom. For religious classics can prove meaningful in every age; they have an enduring power to open new horizons, to stimulate thought, to expand the mind and the heart. Yet often they are viewed with disdain as a result of the myopia of a certain rationalism.” (275)

### **3) The CRT and the Moral Sense**

From the start, the mission of the CRT really has been to confront what Pope Francis calls “dark clouds over a closed world.” The CRT has tried to drive away the clouds with guidance for moral reflection and principled action, reflection and action which can bring enlightenment and community closer to our daily lives.

The CRT Principles for business, government and civil society organizations presume, as does Pope Francis, that human persons have a moral sense, an inner compass which can be stimulated and put to work as a guide to decision-making. The CRT principles agree with Pope Francis that following the moral sense leads to encounter and engagement with others.

Having a moral sense is a predicate for dialogue, a foundation for social living. The moral sense makes us sociable and human. The Good Samaritan activated his moral sense, while the Priest and the Levite did not. The moral sense in each of us creates the possibility for us to love another, to be neighborly and to show charity in the economy and in politics.

Pope Francis says: “Saint Paul describes kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (*Gal 5:22*). He uses the Greek word *chrestótes*, which describes an attitude that is gentle, pleasant and supportive, not rude or coarse. Individuals who possess this quality help make other people’s

lives more bearable, especially by sharing the weight of their problems, needs and fears. This way of treating others can take different forms: an act of kindness, a concern not to offend by word or deed, a readiness to alleviate their burdens. It involves speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn.” (223)

The moral sense makes it possible for us to overcome “consumerist individualism” by which “Other persons come to be viewed simply as obstacles to our own serene existence; we end up treating them as annoyances and we become increasingly aggressive. This is even more the case in times of crisis, catastrophe and hardship, when we are tempted to think in terms of the old saying, “every man for himself.” Yet even then, we can choose to cultivate kindness. Those who do so become stars shining in the midst of darkness.” (222)

The CRT Principles for Business call for encounter and engagement with stakeholders. Stakeholder capitalism or moral capitalism is very far from the “neoliberalism” and instrumental market efficiency which Pope Francis scorns. It puts to work in the economy the moral vocation called for by Pope Francis in this encyclical.

#### **4) The Principles for Government**

But it is the CRT’s Principles for Government which most align with what Pope Francis seeks to stimulate in the world around him. The morality of politics and government under these CRT Principles is the “better kind” of politics which Pope Francis envisions.

The first general principle for government advocated by the CRT requires that **discourse ethics should guide application of public power:**

“Public power, however allocated by constitutions, referendums or laws, shall rest its legitimacy in processes of communication and discourse among autonomous moral agents who constitute the community to be served by the government. Free and open discourse, embracing independent media, shall not be curtailed except to protect legitimate expectations of personal privacy, sustain the confidentiality needed for the proper separation of powers or for the most dire of reasons relating to national security.”

This is a practical principle designed to achieve a politics of discourse and engagement and not a politics of extraction of money, power and status from society to the detriment of others.

The fundamental principle for just government advocated by the CRT is that **public power is held in trust for the community:**

“Power brings responsibility; power is a necessary moral circumstance in that it binds the actions of one to the welfare of others.

Therefore, the power given by public office is held in trust for the benefit of the community and its citizens. Officials are custodians only of the powers they hold; they have no personal entitlement to office or the prerogatives thereof.

Holders of public office are accountable for their conduct while in office; they are subject to removal for malfeasance, misfeasance or abuse of office. The burden of proof that no malfeasance, misfeasance or abuse of office has occurred lies with the office holder.

The state is the servant and agent of higher ends; it is subordinate to society. Public power is to be exercised within a framework of moral responsibility for the welfare of others. Governments that abuse their trust shall lose their authority and may be removed from office.”

When politicians and public servants are deemed to hold an office of trust, they are placed in relationship with a duty to be loyal to those benefiting from the powers held in trust and a duty to use those powers with due care. Both loyalty and due care require the trustee to encounter and know the beneficiaries of the trust and seek their welfare and best interests and not those of the trustee himself or herself.

Thus, trust relationships embody the dynamic of encounter, kindness and reciprocal engagement so important to Pope Francis.

The Pope noted in passing that “Today, no state can ensure the common good of its population if it remains isolated.” (153)

Similarly, the CRT Principles for Government advocate that **global cooperation advances national welfare:**

“Governments should establish both domestic and international conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; live together in peace as good neighbors; and employ international machinery and systems for the promotion of economic and social advancement.”

## **5) The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with Christian Communities**

A recent initiative of the CRT has been to facilitate the study by Christian and Muslim colleagues the covenants made by the Prophet Muhammad to respect and protect Christian communities. The similarity between the openness of the Prophet to encounter and engagement with Christians and the teachings of Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* is remarkable.

The Prophet Muhammad did not, to use the words of Pope Francis, “wage a war of words” with Christians “aimed at imposing doctrines upon them.” (4) The Qur’an, as it came from him, did not align fully with Christian beliefs. Yet, in his covenants with them, the Prophet Muhammad transcended his differences with Christians and did not seek to let such divisions create some kind of apartheid and enmity between him and them.

Not unlike the Good Samaritan, the Prophet Muhammad did not avoid having respect and showing care for Christians, their churches and pilgrims, but offered the protection of his power and his faith that they might continue to prosper as devout Christians. He did not

desire conflict with Christians and saw them with goodwill within the context of caring human relationships. He gave them esteem and showed an appreciation of the value of Christians, though they were the “other” in many points of faith and doctrine.

Pope Francis calls this stance “social friendship.” (99) Again, to use the words of Pope Francis, Prophet Muhammad acted from “a healthy openness” which never “threatened” his identity. (148)

## **Conclusion**

The advocacy of the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, of Pope Francis expects much of each one of us. It rests on insights and concerns very close to those which have emerged so many times in the work of the CRT.



# Human Dignity in Islam and its Impact on Our Society

by Professor Muhammad Hashim Kamali

Islamic history has witnessed varying modes of Muslim-non-Muslim relations. Contemporary Muslim societies are seeing occasional lapses into negative approaches to others and hearing intolerant advice. Here, we place the issue of who is to be respected in the larger context of Qur'anic guidance on human dignity.

The most explicit affirmation of human dignity (*karamah*) in Islam is found in the Qur'anic verse where God Almighty declares: "We have bestowed dignity on the children of Adam ... and conferred upon them special favours above the greater part of Our creation" (17:70).

This verse is self-evident in its recognition of inherent dignity for all human beings, without qualification of any kind. The Qur'an commentator Shihab al-Din al-Alusi (d.1854) thus wrote that "everyone and all members of the human race, including the pious and the sinner, are endowed with dignity, nobility and honour, which cannot be made exclusive to any particular group or class of people."

A question arose as to the criterion of this dignity. There are many references in the Qur'an that God created the humans "in the best of forms," (64:3), and ranked them in spirituality above that of the angels (7:11). In about a dozen other places, the text is expressive of God's love for His human servants. Thus, the recurrent phrase "truly God loves- *inna-Allaha yuhibbu*" those who are just; those who are good to others; those who are conscious of Him and so forth. Then, also God's illustrious affirmation that "I breathed into him (Adam) of My Spirit" (38:72). Could any of these be the criterion of this dignity? The Prophet's companion Ibn 'Abbas, famed for his insight into the Qur'an, commented that the criterion of this God-given grace was none other than the nobility of reason and the unique human endowment with this faculty.

The scholastic debate that later arose over the universality or otherwise of human dignity was tainted, however, by developments pertaining to war and peace and views on the alleged division of the world into Abode of Islam and Abode of War. The universalist camp, spearheaded by the Hanafi school of thought, maintained that the inviolability of human dignity (*'ismah*) pertains to the fact of being a human and that this also creates a legal basis for the protection of all basic human rights. It is further added that fighting the unbelievers in the Qur'an is contextual, often referring to warlike situations and hostility between the pagans of Mecca and the nascent Muslim community of the time.

The communalist camp that found many followers among the other leading schools of Islamic law maintained that dignity is attached to Islam. Thus, it is stated that fighting the unbelievers in the Qur'an is often couched in a general language which supersedes the grant of *'ismah* to them. The unqualified language of the Qur'an on human dignity was thus subjected to questionable interpretations. Yet, many prominent scholars in all schools, including Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Shafi'i), Ibn Rushd al-Qurtubi (Maliki) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (Hanbali), have supported the universalist position on human dignity and *'ismah*.

Twentieth century Muslim commentators have also gone on record to say that dignity is not earned by meritorious conduct; it is established as an expression of God's grace as a natural and absolute right of every human person as of the moment of birth. It is God-given, hence no individual or state may take it away from anyone. As for the question of whether dignity also recognizes a criminal, the answer is yes, with the proviso, however, that it is partially compromised to the extent that a court decision on punishment may be enforced, even if punishment involves some erosion of dignity, but beyond that, the personal dignity of prisoners must be observed.

As for treating others with dignity, the Qur'an and hadith enjoin fraternity and affection with everyone, within and outside the family, especially with one's neighbours, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The believers are enjoined to speak to everyone with courtesy and tact (2:83); and "when you speak, speak with justice." In numerous places, the Muslims, indeed all people, are enjoined to avoid harbouring ill-feeling, rancour and suspicion against one another.

In their dealings with the followers of other faiths, Muslims are ordered to do justice and be good to them, so long as they do not resort to acts of hostility and oppression (60:8). The general guideline that applies to everyone is also stated that "there shall be no hostility except against the oppressors" (2:193). The Prophet has endorsed this to say: "People are God's children and those dearest to Him are the ones who treat His children kindly." He has also said: "Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him speak when he has something good to say, or else remain silent."



At this time of heightened Islamophobia and misinformation about Islam, we need to highlight those of Islam's messages that promote social harmony and good relations within our society and with all those that are supportive of amicable relations.

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# What Rough Beast

by **Richard Broderick**

William Butler Yeats is deservedly one of the most famous poets in the English language. The son of a well-known painter, his career spanned almost 50 years, beginning in the Art for Arts Sake movement of late 19<sup>th</sup> century England and lasting well into the experimental era of symbolism, automatic writing and the militant rejection of the metrical and stylistic constraints of traditional poetic forms.

He was also something of an eccentric. His interest in mysticism and the occult led him to join a group known as the Golden Dawn whose tenets were inspired and informed by the work of the legendary 19<sup>th</sup> century mystic, Madame Blavatsky. Many of London's younger writers, artists, poets and thinkers passed through the gates of the Golden Dawn before its appeal diminished with the full-blown onset of 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism. Perhaps the most famous (or infamous) member who shared his presence with Yeats and many others with a taste for the occult was Aleister Crowley, who rose to the heights of notoriety during a time many of the "unenlightened" assumed he was the Anti-Christ, if not Satan himself. It isn't certain if Crowley embraced either role, though he certainly craved the notoriety – and publicity – these ideas spawned, creating his own religion and claiming to be the prophet who would guide the world.

Though he moved on from Golden Dawn, Yeats continued to follow a somewhat atypical path. Over the course of his life, which ended with his death in 1938, he molded his own vision of the occult and its role in artistic expression. Spurned by his one great romantic love, Maud Gonne, he married her daughter, who was about half his age, a young woman whose very name, Georgie (nee Gonne) Yeats, was far from mainstream. Georgie would go on to partner with Yeats in his continued explorations into the occult, including writing while in a trance and composing a never-completely finished book capturing Yeats own vision of the occult and its critical interactions with the "real" world. Yeats, who abhorred the effects of mass culture, also flirted with fascism, though he moved away from that particular distraction long before the outbreak of the Second World War. In the meantime, Yeats managed to find the time and energy to serve in the Oireachtas Éireann, Ireland's new – and first ever – democratic parliament.

For a man we might assume had a very high opinion of himself, Yeats could also display flashes of a surprising degree of humility.

Fresh from publishing his first collection of verse, a very young Ezra Pound made his way to London where he sought out a meeting with Yeats, then at the height of his fame. After graciously granting Pound's request for a get-together, Yeats even more graciously sat in his London apartment and listened quietly as Pound lectured him on the need for him to break from traditional forms and adopt the free verse, pointedly political themes and other new-fangled schemes typified, of course, by Pound himself. Yeats not only listened and began moving toward a new style of writing, but hired Pound as his personal secretary.

The author of some of the already best-loved poems in the English language like “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” and the breathtaking tribute to love, “When You Are Old,” whose first verse perhaps the most beautiful stanza ever written:

*“When you are old and tired and filled with sleep  
And nodding by the fire, go and take down this book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look  
Your eyes once had, and of their shadows deep...”*

Yeats tirelessly continued to experiment with his poetry. In the end, while there is certainly a resemblance in style and personal preoccupations between the work he wrote early in the 20th century, his late work fits comfortably into the school of 20th century modernism.

His most famous poem (though, some would argue not necessarily his best), one that has been borrowed as the title of books and referenced as an allusion in plays, movies and even rock songs, is undoubtedly “The Second Coming.” Even if you’ve never read or heard of it, you’ve undoubtedly encountered iconic images like “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.” and “What rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

Yeats began composing this turbulent poem in the even more turbulent year of 1919. The new Soviet Union was struggling through a civil war that eventually claimed three million lives; the Versailles Treaty blamed Germany for initiating the First World War (which, in fact, was triggered by Austria’s invasion of Serbia in the wake of the Archduke Ferdinand’s assassination in June 1914 on the streets of Sarajevo – but no matter), levying ruinous demands for reparation on the new Weimar Republic. Mussolini had founded the world’s first “Fascist” party in 1914, declaring fidelity to the “National Socialism” espoused by 19th century revolutionaries like Garibaldi and in 1922, took control of Italy. In 1919, meanwhile, Soviet-style republics were declared in Bavaria and the region around Berlin, both quickly and murderously crushed by the Freikorps, units of decommissioned (and generally unemployed) German veterans that provided the fertile and deadly seedbed for Hitler’s SA. By then, German fascists had also adopted the wholly inaccurate term “National Socialism,” while rejecting any element of socialism and turned their country into a one-party state.

Yes, indeed, quite the unstable period!

While it would certainly be an exaggeration to propose that these past several years are as rich as 1919 was in its interlocking elements of grievous loss, economic worry and political upheaval, there certainly are parallels. The pandemic has cast a global shadow over the physical health of us all. Economic uncertainty blossomed in 2008, seemed to settle down for a few years, but now, in large part because of Covid-19, has cast its own shadow over every aspect of life. The outburst of demonstrations and riots following the death of George Floyd spawned their own profile of fear, anger and reaction.

Perhaps most troubling of all, highly nationalistic regimes with a strong authoritarian streak have taken root in countries as diverse as India, Hungary, Brazil, Poland and, of course, the U.S. Each of these follows an all too familiar pattern of denouncing the free press, establishing their own

media channels of propaganda and signaling out sub-groups in the population to blame for the country's troubles.

Small wonder, then, as we move toward a new decade, that 100 years after Yeats composed "The Second Coming," more and more people are drawn to the poem's mysterious combination of fear, hope and warning.

And so here it is to read, reflect and ponder, Yeats' most famous poem.

### **The Second Coming:**



Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?



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