

MANCHESTER
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22 February 2010
Samuel Alexander S2.9
9am-2pm

CENTRE FOR RELIGION AND POLITICAL CULTURE doctoral seminar

Schedule

- 9.00 Coffee and Croissant Reception
- 9.20 Welcome
- 9.30 Andy Crome
- 9.50 Stephen McBay
- 10.10 Sevcan Mirik
- 10.30 Break
- 10.40 Clare Greer
- 11.00 Mohsen Ghasemi
- 11.20 Theodros Assefa Teklu
- 11.50 Lunch at Umami
- 1.20 Kyle Gingerich-Hiebert
- 1.40 Ruth Hadley
- 2.00 Farewells



ANDY CROME

Apocalypse and Forgetting in Russell T. Davies' *Doctor Who*: Apocalyptic literature and film is often less about the change or revelation it purports to unveil, instead being focused on making sense of the contemporary world, of calling readers or viewers to refocus their attention and re-imagine their response to a contemporary crisis. This paper briefly examines apocalypse in Russell T. Davies' *Doctor Who* (2005-2009). The "anywhere/anytime" format of the programme has allowed the writer to explore both pre- and post-apocalyptic worlds several times during his tenure on the show. This paper argues that Davies has used apocalypse for both dramatic and political reasons in his writing. These run from parodies of traditional Protestant eschatology to the use of apocalyptic themes to re-imagine 9-11 and the Iraq war. I argue that Davies' work imagines the post-apocalypse world as marked by a renewed focus on the family, a return to cohesive, traditional family units marked by strong filial bonds. The apocalyptic crisis thus acts as an event through which characters are reminded of the importance of the nuclear family. This acts as a dramatic mirror to the way the programme's return has been reported in the popular press, as heralding a return to "family viewing" and invoking a picture of a "forgotten" Britain. At the same time, however, there is a reluctance to embrace the finality of the apocalypse. Davies' use of the apocalyptic constantly defers the "end", emphasising the way in which his human characters forget both the events and the lessons which apocalypse can teach.

STEPHEN MCBAY

Martyn on Galatians 3:27-8: J. Louis Martyn argues in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* that the apostle closes the loop on all previous knowing in Galatians 3:27-8. In this passage the audience is presented with a new time and world eclipsing the old in a real and elemental way. It is not a flight of fancy but a philosophical polemic upon Aristotelian *t'anantia*, the Jewish Law, and to a lesser extent the theology of early Christian enthusiasts. All three of these groups relied upon what later might be best described as antinomies. The eschatological subjugation is not accomplished by signs and wonders, but the abolition of antinomies through which Greek and Jew alike had constructed their worldviews. In their place a new creation was claimed; a new cosmos was seen and proclaimed by Paul in the time after the apocalypse of the faith of Christ, in the presence of the Spirit, who had begun a war of liberation with an end in sight.

SEVCAN MIRIK

The Problem of 'Religious Experience' with Reference to Soren Kierkegaard and Muhammad Iqbal: Religious experience can be defined as any experience carrying as its content the presence of something divine or transcendent. It is commonly known as an occasion that is unusual in the sense that it does not fit in with the norm of life experiences, and its connection is with the individual's awareness of the divine and transcendent. The problem of religious experience is entirely a subjective phenomenon; therefore studying it objectively is a difficult task. Kierkegaard (d. 1855) and Iqbal (d. 1938), who are widely-read and influential scholars from the Western and Islamic traditions respectively, are two significant departure points for gaining a greater insight into the understanding of the term 'religious experience' in the Eastern and the Western scholarly traditions in the modern era. The simple fact of Muhammad Iqbal's departure from the mainstream of Islamic understanding, as established by traditional scholars, in the perception of religious experience as well as Kierkegaard's emphasis on the experience of 'single individual' can be taken as the starting points for analyzing and comparing the different approaches to the problem in those two traditions. Key texts: Kierkegaard, Soren, *Fear and Trembling*, and *Philosophical Fragments*. Iqbal, Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi, 2008. James, William, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Routledge, London, 2002. Duzgun, Saban Ali, "Tecrübe, Dil ve Teoloji: 'Dini Tecrübe'nin Teolojik Yorumu", *Kelam Araştırmaları*, 2:1 (2004), pp. 27-46.

CLARE GREER

Imagining the End of History: Gillian Rose argues that social relations are constituted by their foundation in bourgeois private property relations, which, in modernity, are Kantian in nature. Since Kant, Rose argues, modernity has experienced an *aporia* in law, an underlying rift that constitutes the beginning of *all* subsequent thought and action. The *aporia* is the result of Kant's disconnection of law from divinity or nature (the sources of 'classical natural law'), and his subsequent attempt to re-ground law in human reason alone ('idealist natural law'). In Kant's secularising move, argues Rose, 'the freedom of rational beings is defined in opposition to the necessity of the spatio-temporal world'. Transcendental philosophy *regulates*, but cannot conceive of the phenomenal realm which it regulates. It stops short of claiming to be an empirical account of reality. By separating the question of fact and the question of right, designating empirical 'fact' as 'unknown', Kant has created a world-view in which problems and disputes are perpetually returned to the transcendental 'courtroom' of reason.

The task of philosophy after Kant, Rose suggests, is to reconcile the two realms of law. But she opposes as illegitimate all attempts to impose formal law on the *content*, and such misuse of law is a primary target of her critique. There are two questions which arise here for the question of apocalypse. Who makes the law? And where is law grounded? Rose argues that it is property laws, and our definition of one another as legal persons that returns us to the courtroom. There are contemporary attempts to think through environmental decision-making in terms of the self-other dualism (Butler, Levinas), but Rose offers a non-dualistic approach, in which self and other converge on a third point, a generalised account of laws and norms as mediated in the philosophy of history, and constitutive of human and social relations. Rose's work on the middle suggests that the reason that we can find it difficult to imagine beyond liberal democracy and the end of history is because we're so determined by legal property relations. When Schelling wanted to illustrate the problem of infinity he pointed to the English national debt. He was joking, but I will suggest that there is a parallel between Rose's Hegelian idea of infinity at 'eternal deferral' in the courtroom of abstract law, and the apparent willingness of Western populations to keep capitalist structures continuing indefinitely despite dire predictions of long-term environmental disaster. Is the reason why it is so difficult to imagine beyond the end of history that we are so bound up in law and tradition, and property, that we see one another as legal beings and cannot get beyond this abstraction? Key texts: Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Athlone Press, 1981) and William Desmond, 'Autonomia Turannos: On some Dialectical Equivocities of Self-determination' in *Ethical Perspectives*, 5 (1998): 233-252.

MOHSEN GHASEMI

Derrida and Supplementary Writing: In this paper I am trying to expand the way Derrida attacks Socrates' privileging of speech and undervaluing of writing. To Socrates although writing is a remedy to the self-present speech and memory, it is essentially poisonous to it. Not only does Derrida show that writing is privileged, but also he insists that it is dominant over speech and the latter is a kind of writing, or what he calls language. The system of writing to Derrida is based on the difference between the signs and letters, whether these signs are in written form or vocal. Writing is departed from the presence of truth and has fallen into the structure of supplementary. It does not mean that that self-present truth is speech because speech, also for the reason that Derrida discusses through the Freudian idea on memory, is already a separated form of writing. It means that speech is not autonomous and self-sufficient. So, in the final part I will study Freud's theories on memory and the interpretation of dreams which to Derrida follow the system of writing. Freud's idea on memory and dream (and what Derrida nominates as writing) pursues the function of the supplement in that they are not from the individual's inner subjectivity.

THEODROS ASSEFA TEKLU

The Ideologised Middle: My particular interest in this discussion will be about the intersection between collective memory and identity – which I opt to call *the ideologised middle*. Paul Ricoeur in *Memory, History, Forgetting* and *Ideology and Utopia*, discusses how the fragilities of both identity and memory open up an opportunity for ideology to insinuate itself in this middle. Oftentimes, debates over identity claims and collective memory raise epistemic issues such as those that pertain to objective historiography. My question here is whether Ricoeur's insight helps us to ingratiate ourselves into the economy of affectivity (motivation/intention), beyond the cognitive terrain (factuality; truism and falsity), in our understanding of collective memory. Simply put, can we perceive contestations over (the memory of) the past as contestations over ways of taking the past forward (about intention)? I would like to open a discussion as to what extent can discourse on identity and memory be possible without making reference to ideology?

KYLE GINGERICH-HIEBERT

Metz on Dangerous Memory: The development of Johann Baptist Metz's *new* political theology owes a great deal to the work of the Frankfurt school. In particular, Metz's account of dangerous memory is indebted to the work of Walter Benjamin for its theoretical formulation. Significant for Metz is the anamnestic structure of reason that keeps track of the progressive amnesia that piles wreckage upon wreckage. Equally significant for Metz is the work of Ernst Bloch, whose attempt to wrest the choked elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition from the clutches of deified despotism serves as a springboard for Metz's own elaboration of an apocalyptic eschatology that is the very horizon for understanding how Christianity represents a dynamic way of becoming a subject before God in history. However, the question is how the critical-disclosive power of the Christian *memoria* and the immanent expectation that apocalyptically shapes Metz's eschatology can precipitate the kinds of liberating activity that he claims are at the heart of the Gospel?

RUTH HADLEY

Educating for Tolerance, Remembering to Forget: *"In his vision of the millennium, Jorge Luis Borges writes: 'God has no need (...) Of orbs of light or of suites Of thrones, powers or cherubim (...) Or of ancient water tasting of birth. His mercy needs no garden Nor memory and hope, light'. Here we do need memory and hope."* (Address by Mr Federico Mayor at the 1992 International Conference on Educating for Tolerance: The Case of Resurgent Anti-Semitism). Calls for tolerance frequently allude to the memory of intolerance. We are repeatedly forewarned that 'those who forget the past (the Holocaust, the Rwandan/ Bosnian/ Armenian genocide...), are condemned to repeat it.' Memory of inhumanities past, in other words, is considered integral - indeed the justification for - the peaceful and harmonious order presupposed by contemporary 'tolerance talk'. (Specifically, 'good memory' - memory conceived to accurately remember the 'actuality' of past events - as opposed to 'bad memory', understood rather to forget or distort 'actuality', leading to intolerance.) The paper queries this distinction between good and bad memory and the concomitant link with tolerance and intolerance. At the same time, rather than making the categorical statement that 'we do need memory' in order to secure 'peaceful and harmonious' relations, nor, neither, claiming like Borges that our vision of the millennium requires no need of memory at all, the paper proposes the paradoxical usefulness of the notion of 'remembering to forget'.