

“Truth” and the possibility of resilience for women in Arab society

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The murder of women based on accusations of so-called “family honor/honor killing” is common in Arab society and in others around the world². The murder is often carried out by one or more men from the woman`s family who "enforce the rules" of “family honor”. Hence the intent is the dignity of the men.

Here the collective has an absolute belief in one truth, one that eliminates and ignores the existence of individual truth in the name of absolute norms. In such societies, religious or totalitarian secularism erases the individual, and in so doing undermines the resilience of everyone.

According to J.-A. Miller “... Lacan introduces as a suspicion, ... the true depends only on belief”³. Lacan states: “After all, the belief in the true is what psychoanalysis and religion have in common, at least in the religion that calls itself the true religion ...”⁴. This leads to a question: could moving from a collective *belief in truth* to the truth of each one open up a possibility for women’s resilience in Arab society?

My basic assumption is that this belief in “absolute truth” not only legitimizes the murder of women, but also harms every individual in society as it erases the human image and the private space of each one.

I believe that, when a society in the name of God, grants superiority to the man, as the one who rules according to the rules of religion, this leads to patriarchal structures that control state institutions, the education system, the family system, the relations between individuals in society, and finally, the attitude of the individual to himself. These structures dominate and are unavoidable precisely because they are “God given” and thus not open to challenge.

Here I believe that Arab society has a difficulty advancing because it has not separated religion from state and has continued to believe that control of the feminine body is the symbol of family, social and national honor. It is in the name of God, impossible to criticize, that such patterns of relationship are maintained - without ignoring at the same time attempts to bring about changes.

All such religions endorse a patriarchal doctrine that positions women as less than men, as a subject whose worth is judged in relation to the service she provides to men. In the blessings of dawn in Judaism, for example, every man says: “Blessed is he who made me not a woman”⁵.

1. Clinical therapist, member of a cartel on “ L’esp d’un laps in an age of Urgency”

2. <https://www.haaretz.co.il/st/c/prod/heb/global/homicide/>

3. J.A.Miller, (22.11.2006) L’orientation Lacanienne III, 9, from the Hebrew translation.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Shacharit prayer



In stark contrast Lacan said, “The woman does not exist,” and also “there is no signifier of the woman”⁶. Here is a vision of the woman as more true and more real by virtue of the fact that the phallic signifier does not define an “all”. Women exist one by one, and indeed it could be argued that the feminine position is one which is particularly open to the challenges of the false universes and the discontent of our time.

In summary, the question asked above remains unanswered. However, I believe that solving the problem in Arab society begins with separation religion from a state, freeing itself from absolute religious beliefs and the patriarchal-hierarchical order that accompanies it. Clear boundaries must be set between the collective and those belonging to the individual in order to preserve the independence and dignity of the individual within the community.

As Lacan has taught us, absolute truth leads to totalitarianism and this implies acknowledging a responsibility in responding to phenomena like “honor killing” and more generally in strengthening female resilience in patriarchal society.

6. Lacan, VII (2005 [1972-73]). “More”, Seminar 20, Resling, Tel Aviv.