

Editorial Foreword

THE ETHICS EFFECT If current trends hold, we can expect several good years of scholarly attempts to make sense of ethics, both public and private. Fascination with this topic has crept in with recent debates about the social construction of the religious and the secular, concepts that are now benefiting from a fresh round of critical reassessment. Although secularism has lost much of its authority in these debates, one rarely feels that the critics of secularism are speaking as or for people of faith; indeed, strong and public commitment to a particular religious identity as a motivation for scholarship, or a consequence of it, is still a minority tradition. In the (secular) academy, one is nowadays more likely to encounter faith statements among devout secularists, who have been reduced to the status of believers! In the lead essay of this issue, we meet an intellectual who, writing from the moral edges of Chinese society, turns these metropolitan trends upside down.

Stefan Henning introduces us to the writings of Zhang Chengzhi, an ethnologist, historian, and novelist whose portrayal of the Zheherenye, a Chinese Sufi order, doubles as a critique of the contemporary Chinese regime and the moral traditions that support its authoritarianism. Zhang is a Muslim, and his research on the Zheherenye order, whose leaders were often martyred in conflicts with Chinese imperial armies, convinced him that Islam made resistance to government, and to evil, possible in ways the teachings of Mao, and the much older Confucian traditions, could not. Henning traces the evolution of Zhang's political and artistic career, exploring his diverse engagements with Abrahamic thought. Oddly enough, Zhang's status as a moral renegade and critic of reigning ethical systems drew him to the work of Nietzsche, who can hardly be described as a man of faith (in the Abrahamic vein). But the voice of prophecy, Henning argues, can be heard in the writings of both men, and this similarity, discernible across great cultural distances, teaches important lessons about the relationship between political and ethical discourses.

THE PIOUS MODERN Modernization theory has been widely criticized for its failure to predict the rise of Islamic movements. The fact that modernity and Islam have become regular bedfellows is not what progressive nationalists predicted during the early decades of the Cold War, when political Islam was neutralized, considered retrograde or irrelevant, in much of postcolonial Africa and the Middle East. Today, the conspicuously modern and the conspicuously Muslim are a mutually constituting pair, but as two of our essays show, they are not always a happy couple. They undermine and enable each other; and each is keeping its options open.

Ousman Kobo traces the counterintuitive relationship between Wahhabism and secular modernism in West Africa. In Ghana and Burkina Faso, local Wahhabi clerics, most of them trained in the Arab world, introduced a reformed Islam that rejected the social and religious traditions associated with Tijani Sufism. Because they identified these traditions with backwardness and superstition, the Wahhabis found willing followers among local Muslims who had received secular, Western-style educations. To the Western-educated, a more modern form of Islam—one that could stand up to English and French critiques of Islam as a stagnant belief system—was attractive. Desire for an Islam free of African cultural accretions, Kobo argues, functioned as an “elective affinity” between Wahhabis (widely considered conservative) and local secular elites (widely considered progressive). This relationship was vulnerable to changes in how Wahhabism and African Islamic traditions were viewed in the larger society, and Kobo recounts the process by which this special relationship was eventually undone.

Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr studies the complex interactions between piety, nationalism, and transnational politics in Lebanon and Iran. The medium of these interactions is genealogy, the literal calculation of patrilineal descent. Shi'i leaders use genealogy to establish ties to Jabal 'Amil, a region located in south Lebanon that has, for centuries, been associated with Shi'a learning. As Shaery-Eisenlohr demonstrates, transnational Shi'i leaders in Lebanon are judged by the quality of the pedigrees that connect them to Jabal 'Amil, especially when they are from families that have recently migrated from Iran. Musa al-Sadr, who was born in Iran and spoke Arabic with a Persian accent, was constantly required to defend his Lebanese identity, which he did by stressing his family's ancestral ties to Jabal 'Amil. The Iranian state, meanwhile, defends its support for Hizbullah and its other involvements in Lebanese politics by emphasizing centuries of transmigration between the countries' Shi'a elites, a process that has created a shared tradition of piety and struggle. National loyalties, Shaery-Eisenlohr argues, are intensified, not erased, by these transregional, highly politicized claims to genealogical authenticity.

THE ORIENTALIST VARIATIONS The intellectual power of Edward Said was immense, and the best evidence of it was his ability to define, for an entire generation of scholars, what Orientalism meant, and what connotations the term Orientalist would carry. If Orientalism had multiple forms, and Orientalists came in many shapes and colors, it was better, in the post-Saidian world, not to be too closely associated with any of them. There were many good reasons for this structure of feeling, but one could easily argue that it placed a damper on the study of Orientalism, even as it strengthened a principled wariness of Orientalism's effects. Three of our contributors focus on the wide range of motivations, sources, and applications that have shaped the discursive field we now refer to as Orientalism. In doing so, they reacquaint us with the diversity of Western engagements with worlds beyond Europe.

Raf Gelders calls into question the (now) conventional assumption that Orientalism was primarily shaped by the colonial enterprise. European Christian accounts of India were already well formed, and were popular among the literate classes, long before the colonial period. Medieval and early modern depictions of India, made in the absence of any real capacity to rule over the region, tended to focus on the Brahmins, who were interpreted as good priests, or bad, depending largely on what authors thought of priests in the Christian world. The key terms for depicting India as a Hindu civilization, dominated by a Brahmin caste, took shape centuries before the colonial era and were carried into it. These beliefs, Gelders argues, were rooted in the Latin Christian world's desire to interpret Others in Christian terms, to see in them variant or corrupted forms of Christian society. A better understanding of how later, more stereotypically Orientalist ideas developed, Gelders concludes, will require a more serious engagement with these older, precolonial worldviews.

Paul Manning discusses the proto-ethnographic accounts of Circassian society written in the 1830s by Longworth and Bell, two English travelers and political adventurers who wanted to help Circassians resist Russian domination and establish an independent (but British-friendly) Circassian government. In contrast to one of the defining tenets of Saidian Orientalism, which privileges a strong distinction between Self and Other, these British authors, but especially Longworth, portrayed Circassian society as very similar to English society, complete with liberal institutions (like a parliament), freedom-loving yeomen, and, alas, a less than admirable class of hereditary nobles. Russian observers, likewise, described Circassian society as essentially like dynastic Russia, complete with serfs, nobles, princes, and lacking only a Czar, which Russia could provide. Longworth's attempt to make the Circassians seem familiar to English readers was in part advocacy, but it also enabled him to explain, more vividly, how Circassians were distinctive. The representational models he developed, Manning argues, resembled Evans-Pritchard's segmentary lineage models of the Nuer, which appeared a century later. The reasons for this likeness, Manning concludes, lay as much in romanticized English notions of country life as they did in any generalized features of tribal society.

Alexander Morrison weighs contradictory claims about Orientalism by comparing Orientalist scholars and administrators in Russian Central Asia to those in British India. Said had little to say about Russian Orientalism, but it flourished as a rival to British variants. Charting the careers of several Russian Orientalists, Morrison argues that in Central Asia, as in British India, Orientalist knowledge grew out of collaboration with "natives," a process many students of Orientalism discount. If Orientalism is taken to misrepresent the Other (an argument that Said seemed to consider both essential and, at times, irrelevant), then the effectiveness of certain Russian Orientalist

administrators, which Morrison argues was demonstrably related to the depth and accuracy of their local knowledge, is difficult to explain. Although negative, Othering assessments of Central Asians were part of Russian rule, popular Orientalism was not uniformly endorsed by Orientalist scholars, and the Russian administration, unlike that in India, was reluctant to deploy Orientalist knowledge in governance, even though the interpenetration of Orientalist scholarship and colonial governance was greater in the Russian case than in the British. These patterns, Morrison concludes, bespeak the need for a more critical appraisal of standard claims about Orientalism as knowledge and power.

THE PRIVILEGE-CENTERED POLITY For much of the last decade, political theory has been fixated on issues of citizenship, usually defined as both a right and a form of belonging. Less attention has been given to the matter of privileges, to special claims on the person, or the state, which are not rights and are not available to every citizen. A state polity centered on rights is normal in today's world, but one centered too obviously on privileges, and dedicated to their protection, is likely to be described as "failed." When states (or economies) collapse, the centrality of privileges emerges in the clear; great effort is expended to control them, and massive profits and powers come to those who succeed in this strategy. The fall of the Soviet-dominated socialist bloc was a laboratory in which this process could be studied, and recent upheavals in the neoliberal financial order are yet another playground for the politics of privilege. Our final essay provides analytical tools for thinking about these moments of instability and the gains and losses that define them.

Venelin I. Ganey constructs an alternative interpretation of the early years of post-socialism by drawing on Max Weber's notion of "political capitalism." This concept is often used to describe situations in which corruption or collapse enable political actors to reap immense economic benefits without sustained, systematic, or rational economic activity. To create a more specific understanding of political capitalism, Ganey draws not only on *Economy and Society*, but also on Weber's political writings published during and after World War I. In these essays, Weber argued that the will and efficacy of the state—as a guarantor and distributor of rights, as a controlling context in which larger bureaucratic institutions can function—are demolished in cases of political capitalism. External agencies and fragments of the state can then successfully vie for control over privileges, dispensing with rights altogether, or transforming them into privileges. To exit conditions of political capitalism, Ganey argues, postsocialist societies were compelled to reinvent their state formations. Future attempts to portray these transitions as "success stories," he concludes, will have to make sense of what political capitalism was and how it shaped democratization and economic reforms.