

Publicerad 2012-05-17 00:57 av Olof Lagerhorn

I started this essay in January and wrote most of it that month. The dramatic events in Europe, and especially in Greece, the last weeks and days, made me complete it. It's worth remembering everything Greece and it's people have given us.

Iron and Irony.

When I first published this essay, I happened to write about Margret Thatchers present life and situation in past tense; for that, I deeply apologize.

Which are the forces that make history? I guess it's fair to say that iron has been one of them; but what about irony? When I studied at Drew university, Madison, New Jersey, USA (Bachelor of Arts in spring-82; major in Political Science.), I took an evening-class in painting. Our teacher, Nicholas, was an American of Greek origin, and besides being a very good art-teacher, Nicholas personalized to quite an extent the idea of a Greek philosopher; at least in the sense that I and some of the other students of the group conceptualized it.

As I mentioned Nicholas was a good teacher, not only because of the way his advice added depth and vigor to our brushes,. At least as much was due to the fact that he constantly presented and commented ideas and thoughts about everything moving and turning between heaven and earth; creating a palette of colorful stimuli that also had a positive impact on our work. At that time I wasn't familiar with the term "flow" and what it stood for in a scientific and creative setting; neither do I think the majority of the class was. But I think it's fair to say that under these lectures, we were strolling on the borders of it.

Nicholas "trick" was to wait until the turpentine had reached a certain level in our brains. That's when he suddenly came up with some quite provokative statement. So one evening he just said: I think the most powerful force in history is irony. I thought of it as a cool and quite intriguing statement; a good thought-provoker, and it resulted in all kinds of reactions in our class, ranging from outright denials to developing spin-offs. After class though, I didn't pay any more attention to it.

Then, many years later, in the historical turmoil of 2012, as my eyes happened to fall on the ads for the movie "The Iron Lady", about former British prime-minister Margret Thatcher, Nicholas words about the power of irony, through some associative flash came back to me. The title of the movie seems pretty accurate. Due to its inherent qualities and its immense importance in shaping history, iron turns into a quite natural metaphor to signify a political leader like Thatcher with a steadfast and determined character, and who, for good and bad, greatly influenced the shaping of society and peoples lives. (The fact that I haven't seen the actual movie, tends to create a minor-irony within this very essay!)

Lots of people, like myself, would also say quite rigid and with a certain lack of flexibility in her thinking; not to mention, at least seemingly, a scaring lack of empathy and compassion towards people in Great Britain, living in severe and harsh circumstances. On the other hand, certain aspects of her determination to liberalize and modernize British society were necessary and good.

So what about irony? Is it also one of the wheels or engines of history, or just a past-time decoration we indulge in, when history slows down for a while to catch its breath? Well, if irony is to say something in such a fascinating and clever way that the listener suddenly realizes that your point is quite the opposite, thereby making it stand out much clearer, then irony is definitely a branch of the big, wide and wonderful tree of humor, with roots deep into the well that waters our capacity to find workable solutions.

In being that, irony is forever, hopefully, genuinely and intriguingly interwoven not only with politics, but with most aspects of human life. So is humor and irony by definition serving only good causes? Without getting entangled in an endless discussion over the pure nature of what is good and what is bad/"evil"; what is true and what is not true, let's just make it clear that, yes of course, they can be misused by and made to "serve" a ruthless dictator or a torturer. Still, on the whole though, I'm confident that humor and irony through their exquisite capacity to turn subjects and objects up and down, back and forth and all the way around, over time will give decent and humane causes the upper hand.

Was humor an integral part of Thatchers work as Prime minister? Of course it was. I'm convinced that all people have a sense for humor. Then there's a universe of potential misunderstandings to navigate; gravitational waves that might bend and twist space, time and intention many times around sometimes leaving us, in a seemingly paradoxical sense, wiser, yet fumbling again for the loose ends of the thread.

Said with all respect to Margret Thatcher as a human being, considering that in her present situation, she is completely dependent on the solidarity and good-will from other people, gives her "indifference" to poor people in Great Britain a quite sad and ironic dimension.

I don't know where Nicholas is today, but I do hope that he is still teaching art and creative thinking; at some university, college, art-school, study-circle or workplace. I'm sure that he is well-informed regarding the economic and political crisis in the EU; not to mention the severe situation for Greece. I'm confident about that Nicholas then take into consideration the enormous importance influences from ancient Greece, have had on the shaping of Europe.

Now, to quite an extent that is a myth, in the sense that Greek philosophers, scientists and statesmen were greatly influenced by thoughts and ideas since long prevalent in other ancient high-cultures. So in a way, it's more correct to say that "Europe" was influenced and partly shaped by a wide range of other cultures and societies. Still, due to conscious considerations, trade-routes, wars and temporary empires, many of these ideas came together, were developed, fused and put into practise in the city-states.

A good example of that is the rudiment of democracy in ancient Athens. And what might be most important: at the time and for centuries to come, the Greek and Hellenic civilization was immensely more advanced than its counterparts in what was to become Europe. In that sense, Greece had and still has an emblematic role in what constitutes Europe.

So in accordance with that excellent invention called freedom of thought and speech, I grant myself the right to formulate Nicholas, and Drew university's gift to me:

model your soul into a form and fill it with iron. Then head on, narrow-minded, in-trenched in group-think, with no intention whatsoever to listen to other people's thoughts, views, feelings and knowledge; despise the very idea to even try to see, something, from their perspective, and you are on the road to disaster.

Or, found a steady ground; a shield of solid iron. Then move and drive freely on it; talk to each other; listen with an open mind, and then ask about anything you don't understand. Then discuss: let the sharp thoughts go back and forth, embedded in humor and good will. And whenever someone presents a different view, within sensible and reasonable limits, it's not a threat; it's an opportunity.

That's when Nike's wings fill your sails.

Wherever Nicholas is, I'm almost certain that he is teaching; because that's part of his destiny; to teach. And suddenly Nicholas says: I guess you have noticed that the EU is desperate in trying to save Greece. And then he smiles.

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