

ARISTOTLE, SARTORIAL SIGNS, POLYVALENCE AND POST-MODERN MEANINGS: FROM MAN-SIGN TO A WOMAN-SIGN

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АРИСТОТЕЛЬ, ЗНАКИ ОДЕЖДЫ, ПОЛИВАЛЕНТНОСТЬ И ПОСТМОДЕРНИСТСКИЕ СМЫСЛЫ: ОТ ЗНАКА МУЖЧИНЫ К ЗНАКУ ЖЕНЩИНЫ

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ABSTRACT. According to Aristotle, prior to becoming a social and political animal, man had been a sign-producing animal. Millennia later, Charles Peirce would complement Aristotle's theory by having introduced the concept of a **man-sign**. The post-modern, 21st-century modified Islam has given birth to a new version – **woman-sign**. The current niqab wearers living in the West have widened the traditional semiosphere by causing a significant transformation of **the former religious sartorial sign** into a secular symbol of Otherness, Defiance and certain rejection of the West. A symbolic protest against the West within the boundaries of the West has been initiated by the current niqab-wearers who allegedly do it voluntarily.

The Niqab tradition migrated from the territory of the strictly antiquated patriarchal control, having changed its meaning, potency and role in the 21st-century modern societies who hosted millions of migrants from the Middle East and Asia. This paper, relying on the Aristotelian doctrine of signs and **facial semiosis**, examines the process of decoding and usage of these **sartorial signs** since antiquity, i.e. the appearance of a veil, its varying meanings and deployment of veiling throughout history, in different times, traditions, and geographical territories.

It alludes to the danger of misinterpreting the veil (niqab, burqa, chador, etc.) as a **simple sartorial sign** in the current context of the post-modern battle for “the right god” and the overall resurgence of the Religious in the secular post-modern societies.

KEYWORDS: nature/culture; signs (sartorial, religious, cultural, dangerous, true, false, perfect); semiotics; semiosis; semiosphere; biosignification.

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РЕЗЮМЕ. Согласно Аристотелю, до того, как стать общественным и политическим существом, человек был животным, производящим знаки. Тысячелетия спустя Чарльз Пирс дополнил теорию Аристотеля, введя концепцию человека-знака. Постмодернистский модифицированный ислам XXI века породил новую версию – знак женщины. Нынешние носители никаба, живущие на Западе, расширили традиционную семиосферу, вызвав значительную трансформацию бывшего религиозного знака одежды в светский символ инаковости, неповиновения и определенного неприятия Запада. Символические протесты против Запада в границах Запада были инициированы нынешними владельцами никаба, которые якобы делают это добровольно.

Традиция ношения никаба мигрировала с территории строго устаревшего патриархального контроля, изменив свое значение, силу и роль в современных обществах XXI века, которые принимали миллионы мигрантов из стран Ближнего Востока и Азии. В этой статье, опирающейся на аристотелевскую доктрину знаков и фациального семиозиса, рассматривается процесс расшифровки и использования этих искаженных знаков со времен античности, то есть появления вуали (паранджи), ее различных значений и развертывания культуры закрывать женское лицо на протяжении истории, в разные времена традиций и их географического распространения.

Это намекает на опасность неверного истолкования никаба (паранджи, чадры и т.д.) в качестве простого знака одежды в нынешнем контексте постмодернистской битвы за «правильного бога» и общего возрождения религиозных форм в современных светских обществах.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: природа/культура; знаки (искаженные, религиозные, культурные, опасные, истинные, ложные, совершенные); семиотика; семиозис; семиосфера; биосигнификация.

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Charles Peirce.

Introduction

Despite the fact that the deployment of veiling and its powerful social signification have been known since the remote antiquity, in the West, it has been an **unfamiliar verbal** and **sartorial sign**. The 1987-edition of Webster's New College Dictionary did not even have the entry "niqab". By 2015, all major English and other dictionaries had displaced the familiar term "veiling" with the Arabic borrowing "niqab." This lexical metamorphosis in itself became a sign of a **macro-cultural shift** and a signifier of a new socio-political and cultural climate. The dictionaries' statistical effort simply recorded the "legitimate birth" of the new verbal sign, standing for the new relationships in all societies, both in the West and the Middle East, and a definite clash of cultural traditions and values. **The verbal sign**, registered in the dictionaries of the current global *lingua franca* – English, has alerted to the new reality of its existence and impact beyond the boundaries of the Moslem World. Recent Migrations of Moslems to the West have brought "niqab" to the centre of societal discourse, both public and private. Niqab has arrived in Paris, Madrid, London, Marseille, Berlin, Rome, Toronto, Montreal, etc. In this connection, the freedom of religion-clause has proven to be a bit antiquated and prone to misinterpretations, offering support to this new **sartorial** and **cultural difference**, despite the notional separation of the Church and State.

On November 13, 2015, Canadian judge allowed Mrs Ishaq, a Moslem woman from Pakistan to wear her Niqab, which was, to the bewilderment of many Canadians, completely covering her face at the Citizenship ceremony. Instead of the usual black niqab, the woman wore a colorful print niqab to celebrate the occasion. The judge chose to interpret her niqab as an **exotic sartorial sign**. Was it? Let us explore the **semiotic possibilities** of this now rejuvenated and modified old popular sign, making recourse to the ancient customs, interpretations and uses, while taking into account some new post-modern meanings.

1. Aristotle on the Face-sign

Human face, capable of signifying the widest possible gamut of emotions, physical states and human inner expression, is known to produce over 20 000 possible new signs, and it remained open in most civilized ancient and modern societies. Face-sign became the most indispensable instrument in visual recognition, public and private communication and standard daily decoding, and traditional semiosis. **Decoding the face-sign** is one of the most ancient techniques and forms of non-verbal communication. Prior to producing new signs, humans first learnt to

decode signs, using this most **universal natural sign** – Face – the best example of a sign, serving as a bridge between Nature and Culture [A.Makolkin, 2015:573]. In his treatise *Physiognomonics*, Aristotle recorded the established ancient methods of interpreting the **face-sign** and the cultural stereotypes associated with it. His ancient treatise offers explanation of this most popular **natural sign** in terms of the ancient cultural conventions and mythologies. For example, through the lenses of the ancient Greek culture, philosophy and medicine, Aristotle stated that the “eye paradigm” was seen as a very significant part of the face system. Thus,

*gleamy eyes stood for courage;
blinking eyes for cowardice;
pale and vacant eyes for dullness of the senses;
wide open eyes for imprudence;
droopy eyes signify softness and effeminacy as well
as dejection of spirits; snarling grin - surliness(irritability);
small lustrous lucid eyes signify slyness and lasciviousness;
small eyes also stand for small-mindedness and impropriety
[1984, vol.I: 1246-1247].*

The attention devoted to the **eye paradigm** of the face simply registered the most popular and predominant **face-decoding** used by people over millennia. Unable to read human mind, humans attempted to do so by reading the face, trying to guess the intentions of others during contact and communication.

Biosignification and interpretation of the body signs has been always clearly divided along the lines of Nature and Culture, so was and still is its modern interpretation. The physical qualities, such as shape, color, belong to the **natural semiosphere** while propriety or surliness, imprudence or cowardice to the **cultural semiosphere**. People have historically relied first on the natural signs or **biosignification** for the construction of culture, most concepts or preconceived notions being developed after prolonged observations and decoding the natural signs. Aristotle’s statements reveal not so much his personal opinions, but rather standard mythologies, created in the process of interpretation of signs in remote antiquity:

*Small eyes mean a small soul, by congruity and
on the evidence of the ape; large eyes lethargy as in cattle [ibid.].*

This example of ancient mythologized decoding displays the most prevalent interpretative base – **man/animal paradigm**. Man, as a higher species, had been accredited with more privileged qualities, but, compared to an animal, he was granted a lower status. The ancient facial semiotics heavily relied on the comparison of men and animals who stood for symbols of barbarism and civilization. Decoding the face-sign was not only done for the sake of man/animal comparison and elevation of humanity, but also for an aesthetic or medical appraisal. Face that has always stood as a marker of health in medicine must have entered medical semiotics earlier than other parts of the body. For instance, protruding eyes were known to be the familiar

markers of a thyroid dysfunction which ancient Greek doctors knew how to diagnose very early.

Ancient Greeks had correct, as well as many incorrect, results of facial analysis. Aristotle recorded the erroneous stereotypes regarding smallness, be it eyes, face sizes – “faces like those of a Corinthian or Leucadian” [1984, vol.I: 1242]. Later, misinterpretations of the face-sign led the ancient people to the ethnic or racial bias, used by modern Europeans even in the 19th-20th centuries. Aristotle charted the proto-map for the **dangerous ethnosemiosis** or racism when **false signs** or incorrect face decoding would later become **the** foundation of the racial theories in modern societies. Face-sign, since the early days of human history, could and would serve as a prominent marker of undesired or despised Otherness, offering a pseudoscientific measure of one’s intelligence and justifying the reasons for hate and discrimination. It has played and still plays the most significant role in our daily communication, societal functioning, identification, criminology, customs procedures, medical examination, and personal life. All is based on the openness of the face, the exposure of this natural sign, contrasting the closed faces of the nomads in the African deserts and Moslem women in Asia, Africa, and Middle East, and now, paradoxically, some post-modern migrants to the West.

2. Hegelian Facial Semiosis and His Perfect Sign

Millennia after Aristotle, Hegel (1770–1831) returned to the Greek semiotic models, some of which had been discarded even in antiquity. In his search for the **ideal sign**, Hegel suggested to turn one’s gaze to the eye, his **main signatum** and the nose located in the upper part of the face which he naively perceived as the most significant semiotic features. Next, Hegel suggested to pay attention to the mouth, another important **facial seme** which, as he believed, had to be shaped in such a way that it would allegedly reveal the “spiritual significance” in man and so that

in the formation of one’s mouth it was possible to read the significance and richness of one’s mind and heart [1975:736].

Hegel advocated the primacy of the aesthetic form in the accordance with the Hellenic dictum of proportion and equilibrium. In his analysis of humanity, Hegel also relied heavily on the Greek **civilized/barbarian paradigm** which he even extended to hair, another alleged sign of civilized species:

The barbarians let their hair flat or they near it cut all round, not waved or curled, whereas the Greeks in their ideal sculptures devoted great care to elaboration of locks, a matter in which modern artists have been less industrious and less skilled [ibid.: 737].

The Hegelian theory of civilization and civilizing, based on the aesthetic function of a

sign, continued to promote the historic marking of Difference between man and animal, between the civilized and barbaric nations, traditional in all ancient nations but particularly advocated by the ancient Greeks. His doctrine of a **perfect sign** would anticipate the Anglo-German racist 20th-century theories founded on the Greek biosignification typology. It would have been impossible without the open face. The **open/closed paradigm** in his theory superseded the concept of a superior race, advocated intensely in the 20th century. “Greekness” as a perfect sign entered the pseudo-semiotics of the fascist bent along with the Hegelian ideal and perfect signs, or special face-sign interpretation.

3. Mask as a Cultural Aberration

Facial semiosis and decoding, impossible with a covered face, fascinated men since time immemorial and were most popular among humans. Masks used as shields in military battles or theatrical performances had been actually an aberration in the West and East, as attempts to intervene with the natural biosignification and create the secondary semiosphere or **cultural signification** above the natural sign–Face. They often mimicked various types of human and animal faces and facial expressions. The ancient mask of the tribal rituals in various cultures carried new communicative information and was used for entertainment, didactic, religious or socio-political purposes. Even the most primitive societies were aware of the **facial semiotics**, practicing it in daily life during contact with others, and trying to overcome the barriers in transmitting and decoding information. The natural face-sign could falsify the meaning and message, confuse the perceiver while a mask could not – its meaning and message was static and singular. Mask had a limited semiotic capacity, being just a single copy of a single meaning of the natural face-sign and, thus, a **transparent sign**, with a specific clearly understood message. The mask on the theatrical stage was subordinated to a rigid system of a play plot, with a designated pointed message and intended transformation of a person into a desired fictional character.

For centuries, theatrical masks enabled male actors impersonate females on stage, complemented by make-up and sartorial signification. Chinese theatre had introduced a new dimension via the usage of a make-up, and with it, a new paradigm, based on the absence or presence of the make-up. According to Karole Brusak,

Make-up in Chinese theatre is used as a sign that sets apart complex and exceptional characters. Not all players are given make-up, only those acting second or third group parts(jing and chou); honorable men (sheng) and women (dan) are never made up [K.Brusak,1976:64]

Chinese stage directors understood that make-up or “writing on the face” changes the biosignification of the natural face-sign, producing and adding a cultural signification for the stage. Make-up in the skilled hands becomes a mask-making device or a **semiosis-triggering instrument** and new face construction, enabling to deconstruct the original face to the desired image by displacing or de-emphasizing certain

selected facial features, colors, tones and shapes.

Masks and make-up were forms of covering the natural face, or **proto-veiling versions** for the purposes of creating a new face-sign on stage. In the military conflicts, the shields, covering the face, had different functions – to protect the face from mutilation and intimidate the enemy. In ancient Phoenicia, some masks with the images of a lion, the proverbial king of the animal kingdom, were very popular in battles, having a double purpose– to protect the warrior and psychologically affect the enemy. Yet, females were never veiled as we could see on the excavated stone sculptures from the area. Nor were they veiled in ancient Sumer, even older civilization, uncovered in the mid-20th century when cuneiform inscriptions had been deciphered in mid-sixties.

4. Sartorial Signs

The most visible transcultural, transhistoric and transspacial features of human culture are the **sartorial** or **vestimentary signs**, forming a special universal cultural layer. They reflect the most complex social, political, economic, religious and cultural specificities, attitudes, relationships and cultural processes in human society. The sartorial iconography derives its significatory or semiotic power from the universal mimetic principle of human reasoning which, in turn, displays the gradual and lengthy transition from Nature to Culture. The basic mimetic impulse of *Homo sapiens* is assuredly behind the prehistoric costume, modeled after the most natural vestimentary signs– fur coats of animals. The stone age- man must have reinvented the natural costume of the nearby living animals or copied their natural sartorial signification. Eventually, in the process of human advancement, the skins and fur coats of animals would be replaced by man-made attire. Original primitive sartorial human signs may have been invented even before the verbal signs, copying the natural signification and was the primary stage of human sign production or the plausible genesis of the sartorial signs [A.Makolkin, 2008:139]. Contemplating about this stage, Gerald Heard stated:

*Nature had stripped him [man] of a decent coat,
so he stole it from other animals [1924:41].*

If the vestimentary signs had been inspired and borrowed from animals, the new verbal signs produced by man elevated him among other species, forcing to incorporate the more ancient non-verbal signs into daily life and activity. Aristotle was convinced that language and memory made man most advanced among the animal species. The capacity to create verbal signs, speak and “remember at will” were, in his view, uniquely human qualities. Only a man, a biological creature, was able to raise oneself above one’s biology, gradually produce and transmit Culture. Admitting the biological affinity of man to other species, Aristotle elevated man as a producer of Culture.

He argued that despite the similar biological beginning, common physiological functioning of the body, man, thanks to his unique Mind, has removed and separated oneself from the animals. If Nature had been keeping man within her boundaries,

related and in close proximity to the animals, Culture, the product of human imagination, was solely human creation that has liberated humanity from its biological chains. It has endowed man with the capacity to leave animals and one's own animalistic past behind. The ascent of man happened due to the solely human capacity "to remember and recall the past at will," leading to the production and selection of new signs. The **ascent of man** from Nature to Culture was accompanied by the transformation of sartorial signs, their incorporation into the verbal society where they would acquire new semiotic functions. The sartorial signs became helpful instruments in the construction of a complex society, establishing and maintaining order and stratification, and distribution of power. The impulse to differentiate between people, designate different roles in society revealed itself in the respective sartorial signification. Dressing, in the course of cultural evolution, became a sign of civilization, with **the vestimentary difference** (applying the Derridian term), sustaining the desired Difference and Privilege. For instance, the wealthy, the powerful, the privileged, who employed others to serve them and exercise labor, were dressed, while the slaves, the laborers, were naked.

Traditionally, the sartorial imperative was maintained to establish the social hierarchy and designate social roles— the uniform for police, military, medical personnel, firemen, construction workers, marine etc... The existing **different vestimes** prove and reaffirm the enormous power of sartorial iconography, constantly reminding about its role and meaning in society. Even fabric (silk for the kings and wool for the peasants) has served and still serves as a marker of social status. The sartorial choices are also predicated by the cultural customs and social occasions – dress for the wedding, baptism, funeral, regular church attendance, home rest, leisure, sunbathing or hospital stay etc. In the process of civilizational advances, the non-verbal sartorial signs have been significantly modified, multiplied, and perfected, still remaining profoundly important and indispensable in societies.

Economics in modern societies is greatly dependent upon the sartorial trends and signification. The attire is used for basic protection against elements, personal decorum, theatrical performance, social marking and stratification, and its universal utility and aesthetic quality are traditionally exploited by the sellers of even such non-vestimentary items as food, cars, computers etc.. Attire has been historically deployed in religious rituals and customs – the robes of the priests, monks, nuns, and servants of the church. The vestimentary signification has undergone the millennia old metamorphosis – from the purely pragmatic, protective function to a social, political, religious symbolism and instrument of power. It was never static, changing its meaning and application. For instance, having accepted tunic, Romans regarded long sleeves as barbaric, along with "bonnets for women which were virtually unknown in Rome" [U.Ruthe, 2014: 502-3].

The **naked/clothed paradigm** was known and exploited by humans early on. The ascent of man was, in a way, concurrent with the need to protect the body from the elements and to signify propriety. The fig leaf, the first most primitive vestimentary sign, stands in our collective memory as an act of civilizing and ennobling *homo-sapiens*. Since then, the naked/clothed paradigm has always dictated

the vestimentary code and even moral conduct – the naked Etruscan dancers versus the toga-clad Roman senators. The Etruscan slaves, for instance, served meals naked during festivals [G.Ripke, 2014:489]. The distinction between the naked and the dressed or the taxonomy of nakedness has been a marker of the agreed predominant morality, propriety and manners. The permitted nakedness titillated the senses of the aristocracy at the balls, receptions, festivals– the low cut female dresses or sculpted male legs to accentuate or simulate nakedness in a tight hosiery. This was a sartorial code for the upper classes in most European countries for centuries. Sartorial styles were also used as markers of ethnic difference. For instance, the Romans tried to differentiate themselves from the Galls by rejecting the Gallic ensemble which included a round bonnet and a long- sleeved dress. Colors were used as markers of religious distinction, being not permanent, sometimes purple, red or yellow to identify Jews or Christians in the 15th century Europe.

5. Veil as an Instrument of Control

Veil, as a vestimentary sign, was known since antiquity. However, the most advanced Mediterranean society of Phoenicia did not have veiling as evidenced by the excavated sculptures in the ancestral Tyre, Byblos, and the colonial sites in Greece and Cyprus. Nor was it adopted in Sumer, as we mentioned earlier. One finds veiling later, in Babylonia and ancient Israel where veil traveled with the liberated slaves. The Old Testament records this type of social marking in *Genesis* 38,14-15, in the story of Tamar. When Judah meets Tamar “he thought her to be a harlot for she covered her face.” It means that the veil in ancient Israel signified an objectionable social class, being a marker of stratification. From Babylonia and Israel, the veil traveled later to Rome where it was used for marking vestal virgins and being a sign of chastity instead of sinfulness. In general, in ancient Greece and Rome, the veil was not used until the adoption of Christianity when it was adopted for the religious orders of nuns, having acquired a new meaning. In the New Testament, the *Corinthians* Chapter has a clause regarding veiling,

Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head– it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil herself, she should not cut her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil [Corinthians,II,5-6]

Christian custom did not require to veil women all the time but only during prayers in the House of God, being a mark of piety and devotion only.

From ancient Babylonia, Israel and Christianized Europe veil traveled to the areas, conquered by the Arabs, who in the 7th century adopted Islam, the late version of the Abrahamic religion. The meaning changed – the veil became a marker of the shielded femininity and total submission of women to men. Only women were veiled, veil became a marker of gender. The historic facial communication and interpretation were blocked by veil. The significant paradigms, such as eyes, mouth, nose, forehead disappeared with the veil. Eyes, occasionally seen through the veil, could no longer

signify in the new context. While males continued to use face as a means of communication women were deprived, being denied original biosignification. Veil became a marker of female silence. Historically human face was also an aesthetic marker, a sign of beauty and means of attraction. The converts to the new Abrahamic religion re-introduced the forgotten pre-Hebraic customs and modified them. The Moslem women had to be veiled to disguise their alleged excessive eroticism, thus, protecting males from their sexual power. They became “new harlots.” The tribal polygamous societies embraced the Mohammedan religion in the 6th-7th centuries AD, not yet having to come to monogamy. The limit of four wives prescribed by the Prophet simply introduced some regularity and a certain measure of control into the otherwise chaotic sexual behavior, but the Islamic sexual policy privileged men and it would become the basic fundamental difference between the ethical code of the Hebrews and Christians. Veil in Moslem societies has remained an instrument of patriarchal control, oppression, and misogyny.

6. De-veiling and Paradoxical Spread of New Symbolism

Paradoxically, the enlightened 20th century not only failed to see permanent de-veiling, but the veil even has made a victorious comeback, having spread all over the globe in the most unexpected places. Currently, we witness proliferation of the **veil-sign** even in the secular European societies. Veil and head scarf in post-modernity have acquired new meanings, having seized to be the symbols of ethnicity, gender or piety, but became the political **markers of solidarity** with the radical Islam. Ironically, in the age of feminism, the most oppressed strata of society, the women, revived the symbol of historic oppression in the liberal free Western societies.

De-veiling was never initiated by women. Historically and traditionally powerless, they could not reject the sign of oppression on their own, it was done for them by the enlightened and free-thinking men. The oppressive *chador* or full veil in the Moslem Central Asian Republics was taken off after the 1917-October socialist revolution, enabling millions of women acquire education, social and family equality in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan [A.Makolkin, 2008:48]. De-veiling also accompanied the abolition of polygamy, forced child marriages and criminalization of the old behavior endorsed by Islam. In 1926, Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) (1881–1938), during his presidency, conducted the de-veiling in Turkey as the first step in modernization of this Moslem country. Having granted equal rights to women, Ataturk followed the Swiss model and introduced the new civil code. In 1936, the de-veiling started in Iran, in 1956, in Algeria, upon the French initiative. The same year, Prime Minister of Tunis, Habib Bourguiba introduced a new civil code which abolished polygamy, forced marriages, having also granted women the right to divorce and obtain full social equality. In 1966, he staged public de-veiling, having earned the title of “liberator of women” [B.Naboudrae, 2014:160].

Under the detested Sadam Hussein, the Iraqi women, had actually been liberated, having been given the right to free public education and equal participation in society, and being de-veiled. So were the Syrian women under the Baath pro-

Marxist party who had made an unprecedented progress in this pro-secular Arab society, ahead of the numerous other Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

7. Veil as a Cause of Public Discord

With the growing migration of Moslems to European, predominantly Christian or secular countries, the old **religious sign**, the veil, had been paradoxically resurrected. Currently, we witness the daily parade of veiled women in Britain, Germany, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain... Surprisingly, many are not forced to do it by their families, they wear it voluntarily, in the streets, schools, libraries, and all the public places. Now even a special bathing costume – burquini – has been constructed to accommodate Moslem women on public beaches. The Australian woman-designer reports substantial profits from such an inventive post-modern sartorial construct. The polyvalence of the veil grows, so are the numbers of wearers, ages, professions across the globe.

France, a strongly secular society, in fact, the most powerful defender of secularism in the world, encountered the most resistance from her citizens of Moslem faith and from her Western liberal allies and friends. But France has been a land of the most educated public, cognizant of semiotics and science of interpretation. In France, earlier than in other Western European countries, the elite and educated public did not interpret the veil naively, just as another sartorial choice, a female exotic garb. The French who had absorbed over 5 million Moslems into their midst during the last two hundred years, treated the veil as a **potent religious and political sign, a propaganda tool**, a form of silent indoctrination and social provocation. The veil in France has been correctly interpreted as a **dangerous cultural sign**, a marker of Difference, Cultural Defiance and even Hate. It was and is being worn with the awareness of the religious freedom and laws, protecting the rights of the wearers and with the purpose of fighting the alleged discrimination. Contrary to the mythology, all the French citizens do enjoy equal rights and 50% of all French cultural figures are of Moslem origin (coming from Moslem countries or being the children of Moslem immigrants). French language and respect for the French culture are the main prerequisites for acceptance. However, when the schools in Marseille, Paris, Toulouse, etc. became copies of the educational establishments in Moslem countries, as far as the new dress code was concerned, the teachers and public servants began to protest against the veiling, France had to fight back.

In 2004, France introduced a very progressive law, forbidding all the religious symbols in all public places, which included prominent crosses, stars of David and veils. It simply stated:

In public schools, the carrying of signs or dress through which students ostensibly manifest a religious belonging is prohibited [Christian Joppke, 2009:34].

It summarized 15 years of struggle over these sartorial signs of multiple meanings. Similar battles had to be waged in Germany and Britain where Moslems also tried to

maintain the sartorial code of their countries of origin. Head scarf and veiling began to signify a political stand, the provocative intent for cultural segregation in their new abode and lack of desire to be absorbed by a host society. Most Moslems who settled in the West insisted on preserving their dress code as a form of **defiant signification** and even tried to defend this right in courts. For instance, there was in Germany a famous Feresta Ludin-case when a teacher insisted on wearing her veil in the classroom, and in Britain, a similar Aishah Asmi-case in 2006. The teacher did not wear a full veil at a job interview when she applied for her job but insisted on wearing it afterwards and challenged the School who objected to her insistence on wearing the veil in court [C.Joppke, 2009:101]. The Court and Education Board had to spell out the reasons that “the facial expression reinforces the spoken word” and open uncovered face “is indispensable in teaching” [ibid.].

Insisting on a veil to be worn in public and defended as a right by European citizens of Islamic faith seems to be a covert struggle for the spread of Islam in Europe, a sign of silent solidarity with the current radical Islam, a defiant rejection of assimilation in the host societies and a provocation in the post-modern Western societies. The elaborate semiosis of veiling has acquired a highly significant socio-political role. Behind the barbaric military theatre of ISIS there stands a highly hostile fanatical ideology of superiority of Islam, Islamic civilization and the intent to restore Moslem rule in Europe, i.e. the so-called Al-Andaluz complex. The events in Paris, Moscow, Beslan, Nice, Berlin, Brussels, London and Manchester point out to the connection with history, to the Middle Age-drama of the Islamic conquest and occupation in Spain which lasted from 711AD up to 1492 AD when the cultural genocide of Spanish Christians and further conquest of Europe had been stopped after a prolonged military struggle.

Currently, we experience the global cycle of detour when civilization makes a turn into the universe of disabled interpretation. What was clear to Aristotle or later to the Romans has now become obscured by the revived religious dogma, the antiquated laws of religious freedom due to their abuse, and the resulting misinterpretation. Aristotle distinguished between the signs that “cause truth and the signs that cause belief,” leading to the misconceptions, erroneous interpretations and flawed social behavior. This idea would be partly picked up by the Romans. Long before the adoption of Christianity, the Roman poet Lucretius (99-55BC) made the most profound, nearly prophetic observation when he bluntly and clearly stated:

*Religion breeds Wickedness
and that has given rise to wrongful deeds* [2007, B.I:4].

Lucretius did not underestimate the power of the Religious but he still believed in human Reason and semiotic skills when he wrote:

*And so potent was religion in persuading do wrong
Sooner or later, you will seek to break away from it* [ibid.: 5].

In his *De Rerum Natura*, the longest European poem, Lucretius courageously

condemned religion and produced his grand Ode to Human Reason and Aristotelianism.

At the moment, of all European countries, only France stands staunchly on guard for the correct semiotic interpretation of the veil and new woman-sign of modernity, defending open face and facial semiosis and against ideological undermining of the French and all European cultural traditions. In the province of Quebec, similar Bill 21 forbidding the display of religious symbols in public government offices and schools has passed just this June, 2019, after eleven years of struggle and to the disapproval of the rest of Canada. Most Canadian government officials mistakenly continue to treat niqab and other religious symbols as vestimentary signs.

Conclusions

The current discourse on veil(ing) and the new term “Islamophobia” obfuscates the centrality of the facial semiosis to human communication and relationships in society, as well as the paramount role of the open face. Veil worn in the West is not just another exotic sartorial sign but an extremely potent cultural, religious, and social sign, the marker of a defiant and provocative Otherness and Difference which Western societies had already condemned in remote antiquity. It does signify the obvious clash of civilizational cycles which naive or shrewd politicians exploit for their own tactics and try to impose on average citizens. If women in ancient Sumer and Phoenicia did not use veils, why Western post-modern women have to?

We need Aristotle, Prometheus, Lucretius, Cicero and Ovid to re-denounce the Religious in our troubled post-modernity. The clause of religious freedom seems to be antiquated today and should definitely be subject to re-interpretation, private delusions cannot become a collective public norm. Secularism has to be defended on all levels in the name of civilization.

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