

Ahed Tamini, Imprisoned for Having Slapped an Israeli Soldier. Calls for Human Solidarity In Support of Palestinian Children

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Ahed Tamimi, 16, slapped an Israeli soldier, in her own yard, after her cousin was shot in the head. She's detained for eight more months after a closed-door trial.[i] The soldier who shot her cousin, putting him in a coma, was not reprimanded.

As I write, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is again covering Malala Yousefsai. She was shot in the head in 2012 and made a hero. She was demanding her right to education.

Palestinian kids are shot every day for the same thing: demanding their rights. But Palestinian kids don't exist. They don't count. Most remarkable about Ahed Tamimi's story is that we've heard it. [ii]

Colonization, Frantz Fanon argued, has logic. If you participate, even mentally, certain people don't exist. You can kill them, or see them killed, without being bothered. You're human. They're not.

It raises a question, mostly ignored: How do you know the non-persons, the ones you've erased, so it doesn't matter when they're shot in the head? How do you know you don't even see them: unarmed children, demanding human rights?

Ancient Chinese philosopher, Chuang Tzu, tells a story: The keeper tells the monkeys they'll get three chestnuts in the morning and four at night. The monkeys are furious. So, the keeper offers four chestnuts in the morning and three at night. The monkeys are happy.[iii]

The end is the same: seven chestnuts. But the monkeys are on board: a better result. "Three in the morning" is famous. It is key to Taoist philosophy. Some say it is about thinking at two levels, or about equality, and balance: The monkeys' perspective is included. The result is the same.

The story is supposedly about "two roads". But it is not easy. Chuang Tzu's anecdote is deeper than it seems to those who've been duped by a moribund liberal worldview. Chuang Tzu cared about what is lived. He valued simplicity and humility, but not for moral reasons. It was for truth.

We think better about the world, and live better in it, when we can feel our connection to it and to others. "Three in the morning" is not about thinking. It is about creation and loss.

The keeper recognizes the monkeys. He thinks they matter. Herein lies the challenge. Chuang Tzu, like the Buddha, and Marx and Lenin, knew knowing is a challenge, worth investigating. Chuang Tzu wasn't an anti-imperialist, like Fanon. He was just smart. Realistic.

His focus is the *existential*, not just intellectual, grasp of reality. It's a lost art, thanks to centuries of European intellectualist, individualist liberalism, more damaging than Trump.

When Ahed Tamimi is asked what would improve the lives of Palestinian kids, she says human solidarity, from across the world.[iv] She is a child who knows what many political scientists do not: A question about truth matters more than a future vision: How do you envision a future when you can't even see the people that future is supposedly for?

Some say Ahed Tamimi inspires hope for the Palestinian cause. Jean Paul Sartre, following Fanon, calls resistance an act of self-creation. It is more urgent, and interesting, than hope.

Hope is belief: something to look forward to. It can be understood differently, and is in some traditions, but in happiness-obsessed "developed" societies, it is an opioid. It denies evidence. You hope because you don't, and won't, see what is there, in front of you. Antonio Gramsci called it lazy.

You sacrifice truth at an "alter of enthusiasm". When cancer patients are urged to hope, it means: Believe in your own survival no matter what. Don't see those who are dying around you. You're not like them. Or so you should believe.

It ignores an important point. Marx knew it. His dialectical view is scientific. We *get* to truth through connection, with the world and its inhabitants. *Felt* connection. It is not always comfortable. Marx did not provide a model of the future society, but he showed how to discover truths.

It's not through hope. I had a student come to me once in despair. She was in first year and had heard university authorities going on about success. She said, "I don't know how to distinguish myself from 7 billion people on the planet". It is how she'd understood "success".

I tried to explain that it is more interesting to know how she is the same as all those people. Shared humanity. It is not what we teach. We hardly believe in it. Ahed Tamimi knows the power of connection, more sustainable and motivating than abstract hope. We can learn from her.

The Peruvian philosopher José Carlos Mariátequi, understanding imperialism, said "deliberation and votes" could not bring justice to Latin America. He admired enlightenment philosophers but knew they didn't understand dehumanization. They want to count votes without admitting they don't even see the people who might vote, let alone understand what they'd vote for if they existed.

It is not for nothing that Chuang Tzu is still seen by some as China's greatest philosopher. Anyone who sees what he writes as simple misses the questions. But we can learn them from Ahed Tamimi, if we dare.

Or, we can learn from Ana Belén Montes, who has been silenced, in the US, for just this reason.[v] Please sign the petition [here](#).

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Susan Babbitt is author of *Humanism and Embodiment* (Bloomsbury 2014).

Notes

[i] <https://www.thedailybeast.com/exclusive-interrogation-video-surfaces-of-palestinian-teen-activist-ah-ed-tamimi>

[ii] "One story, two narratives" *The Listening Post* Aljazeera March 3 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWEGUHpafsY>

[iii] <https://www.scribd.com/document/331816897/The-Way-of-Chuang-Tzu-by-Thomas-Merton-pdf>

[iv] *The Empire Files with Abby Martin* (Telesur) Jan 10 2018

[v] <http://www.prolibertad.org/ana-belen-montes>. For more information, write to sarahnes@cubarte.cult.cu or cincoheroes@listas.cujae.edu.cu

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