

LUVAH

JOURNAL OF THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION



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Luvah: Journal of the Creative Imagination

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Introduction: Luvah as the Journal of the Creative Imagination

Farasha Euker

Imagination is the star in man, the celestial or supercelestial body.¹

Imagination, or “Poetic Genius”,² in the terminology of William Blake, truly is the star in any human, though sadly it is a star that seems to be on its last days. It cannot be so, because the imagination is a faculty of the soul and the soul is indestructible, but a multitude of veils have covered the light that should be everyone’s imagination. This journal aims to recover the pristine imagination for a humanity dealing with the onslaught of modernity. Sacrifices must be made in one’s life, for one cannot fully devote one’s self to both the outer world and the inner world at the same time. We can only hope that this endeavor ignites a spark in the hearts of many a serious seeker, spurring them to choose the interior life as opposed to the worldly life.

Luvah is inherently interdisciplinary, dealing with such diverse topics as politics, international relations, literature, philosophy, and religion. Expect to see many views contrary to those you have been socialized to believe. Just as the Zen master must sometimes hit the student or insult the Buddha, our articles may, at times, shock our readers into profound “aha! moments”. We must explore our psyches in a Cartesian manner. Doubt can lead to the truth, just as in the case of Saint John’s dark night. This journal aims to expose the uninitiated to the Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, Jewish, Jain, and Islamic doctrines, while at the same time providing insights that may surprise or inspire the experienced academic and/or seeker. While we focus on intuitive ways of knowing in the religions, we are just as open to engaging with cutting-edge social theory. Ultimately, our perspective can be termed *philophantasia* (love of imagination), and we are open to an engagement with all philosophies, religions, and thinkers, past, present, and future, that adore the life of the imagination. If one, and only one, shortcoming were to be pointed out about modernity, it may be the lack of intuition as a valid epistemological source.

As generally used, the term heterodox means deviance from the norm or any opinion or doctrine at variance with an official doctrine. Orthodox comes from the Greek word *orthodoxos* (*Ορθόδοξος*) meaning having the right opinion. If you pay attention, you can see that these two terms—as generally used—are not mutually exclusive. We must never fall into the logical

1 Martin Ruland, *Lexicon Alchemiae* (1612)

2 William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 1

pitfall of assuming that just because a doctrine has more adherents or support in some official manner that it is correct. Within every faith there have been numerous marginal groups, groups driven to the edge of extinction, and victims of genocide. Some of the most heterodox groups and individuals were some of the most true, some of the most truly orthodox. Mansur Hallaj aimed not only to understand the truth, but to become the Truth. It is no accident that Hallaj was a Qarmati³ sympathizer. It is no accident that Hallaj and Suhrawardi⁴ met the same fate⁵. The ruling elites wanted to silence the truth and to banish it from this world, but truth is eternal. *Luvah* aims to present this truth to a wide and varied audience. If you read an article and it stimulates the opinion-producing part of your brain, please write to us and tell us your thoughts.

Running through the articles in this journal, one will notice certain influences and inspirations, including Plato, Simone Weil, William Blake, Ibn ‘Arabi, and William Morris. These are some of the editors’ favorites, but the journal is by no means limited to an exegesis of their writings. In the last fifty years, we have all lived in an intellectual wasteland. Our minds are turning into deserts. This journal is a contribution to the re-building of our collective cultures, which could become oases from modernity, which, hopefully, will grow and someday contribute to the “de-colonization of our minds”⁶, and the liberation of our souls from the torments imposed upon us by the instruments of the late-capitalist ideology. “Welcome to the desert of the real!”⁷

However much you feed a wolf, it always looks to the forest. We are all wolves of the dense forest of Eternity. —Marina Tsvetaeva⁸

Luvah is important because it presents an alternative worldview that is staunchly opposed to those ideologies and forces that ensure that life in the modern world is strangely akin to living in the horrors of a sci-fi created alternate universe. What can one say, save for “the horror”? Humanity has divine and monstrous natures. The monstrous side has been referred to as an animal nature, but animals don’t kill, rape and destroy for fun. Some humans are above animals simply in their capacity to destroy. As such, dolphins could be said to have ethical superiority over humans. Perhaps dolphins should be our masters. Can we really consider ourselves superior to the animals? The human species is superior, can claim superiority for certain in one thing only: destructiveness. Animals are content to live their simple lives. They live happily in other realms. In the Islamic tradition, even the trees are said to praise God, but humans tend to forget. In some stories, even Satan was not a disbeliever or a hypocrite, but was simply a great monotheist who refused to bow before humans.⁹ Look at what we have done over the past century. Now ask yourself, was Satan the arrogant one, or are we? The answer should be apparent. Humans are the one creature to forget the Divine. They fight

3 An early Ismaili sect of Islam that advocated the abolition of private property.

4 Muslim philosopher and founder of the Ishraqi school of philosophy, which has been greatly important in the Eastern Islamic world.

5 Execution.

6 See Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizing the Mind*.

7 See Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*

8 Cited in Breyten Breytenbach, *Notes from the Middle World*, p. 95.

9 See Jabez L. Van Cleef, *The Tawasin of Mansur Al-Hallaj*.

against not only the Divine, but also the Earth, the animals, others of their species, their families, and even themselves with their radically self-destructive tendencies. Perhaps, it would not be such a surprise if the churches of today became shrines to a deity of the dollar tomorrow. Money is no longer real, but is virtual. We live in the world of reified capital taking the form of the concrete god that Nietzsche supposedly killed off long ago. The irony of the modern era is that while machines become more and more real we become more like things.¹⁰ We must re-learn how to be. We must forget our socialization, our indoctrination. How? Look to the animals! Become a bird, floating to new heights you never before imagined. You will see that the less you have, the more you are. *Luvah* is not a wing that will help you take flight, but we may be the key that unlocks your cage, leading from the dark night of modernity to the light of truth.

I learned the grass as I began to write,
 And the grass started whistling like a flute.
 I gathered how color and sound could join
 And when the dragonfly whirred up his hymn,
 Passing through green frets like a comet, I knew
 A tear was waiting in each drop of dew.
 Knew that in each facet of the huge eye,
 In each rainbow of brightly churring wings,
 Dwells the burning word of the prophet—
 By some miracle I found Adam's secret.¹¹

Truth is no longer valued in the modern world. We live in a virtual world; one in which all appearance has become reality, and all that was real is now simulated. Everything from our modes of transportation, to our patterns of language has become farther and farther removed from reality. "*Veritas numquam perit*,"¹² but in this decadent age it has, to the great detriment of all living beings. There is no postmodern era. What is so readily called the postmodern is in fact simply the hyper-modern. There is nothing whatsoever to justify classing ourselves in a new era. Ultimately, if you want to look at this through a simple lens there are only two eras: The traditional and the modern, represented visually through the use of an axis. The x axis represents the modern and the y axis represents the traditional. The traditional world sought to transcend this mundane existence through religion, art, philosophy, and architecture, hence the upward representation. The modern world is the opposite. Moderns deny all that is transcendent, even if it goes against the rationalism which they hold so dear. The future human is the cyborg, yet this is not postmodern. It is a fundamental mistake and a grave error to juxtapose the modern to the postmodern, thinking that one is better than the other, for they are both one in the same, only so-called postmodernism is the latest development in the modernist project. The world is in tatters, the environment in shambles, and life is quickly becoming unbearable. Solutions? Perhaps a radical re-education of all humans, similar to the re-education featured in *A Clockwork Orange*.¹³ Oh yes, technology is so great that it cannot even solve the problems that would not exist without modern technology. We

¹⁰ Paraphrasing Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p. 153.

¹¹ *I Learned the Grass as I Began to Write*, Arseny Tarkovsky.

¹² Truth never dies.

¹³ I am stating this sardonically, though it is possible that oppressive education needs equally oppressive re-education.

have so much more today than any previous generation, yet one important thing is missing: Happiness! Perhaps, it is time to radically revise what we mean by culture. Looking around, one fails to see anything civilized about civilization. The places of mass congregation, far from being centers of enlightenment, are, in fact, bastions of barbarism.

Service to a homeless person is service to God, yet the way of action is in no sense ideal; it is only necessary because of the corrupted nature of the world. Ideally we would all be solitary gnostics, striving for Nirvana. It is interesting to note how backwards things seem to be in this world. The only truly Marxist revolution was the anti-Marxist revolution in Poland.¹⁴ Perhaps the best way to save the world is not by acting, but by following the Daoist principle of wu-wei¹⁵. Perhaps we should follow the dictum attributed to Gandhi that we must “be the change we wish to see in the world.”¹⁶ For a thinking person, the divine Name must be all-important. By withdrawing into our selves and nourishing our souls through the Name, we may begin to embody the attributes of the One in this realm of contingency. How could we try to save the world, if we ourselves need saving? First we must become the microcosmic reflection of all that is good, and in this process we become like beacons of light, shining as examples for all to see and emulate. Just think of it: if even a small percentage of the world’s population begins to focus on Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, they will no longer practice violence and conspicuous consumption and will embody attributes such as compassion (*ar-Rahman*) in their daily lives. If we want to change the world through violence, we ourselves will become violent creatures who could not help but repeat the atrocities of the last century. On the other hand, if we are non-violent—even to the animals, compassionate, and full of love for all creatures, we could not help but be generous and compassionate. Perhaps quietism is the best way after all. All who read this should find time to spend in the refuge of nature, the greatest and most universal of all revelations.

Life on this planet isn’t as agreeable as it could be. Something obviously went wrong on Spaceship Earth, but what? [...] [S]omebody must have started playing around with seeds and plants and invented agriculture. It seemed to be a good idea[...] [b]ut life became more complicated, and toilsome.¹⁷

Everything changes! We are both essentially the same as we always were and fully different from a few days before. *Luvah* is a dividing line, an invisible line in the sand, stretching across the expansive deserts that are our lives. The past is the past, but it also is the future, for the future would be nothing without the past. Are we free? Can we shape our own destiny? I no longer know, but *Luvah* will ask these questions, and sometimes questions are more important than answers. Perhaps the past is a weight around our necks holding us too closely to the ground and not allowing us to fly freely. We are candles, flames, and butterflies. Just like a burning candle we retain our essences, though the accidents surrounding our beings may change. The Buddhist and Hindu views are equally true, being two sides of the same Truth, for the eternity and indivisibility of the soul, and change, suffering, and impermanence are

¹⁴ The ‘Arab Spring may be another example, though it seems to have been co-opted by reactionaries.

¹⁵ Non-acting action.

¹⁶ It is doubtful Gandhi stated these exact words, though they do epitomize his life’s work and principles.

¹⁷ p.m., *bolo’bolo*, 1-2

equally real. As the Buddha states, “Life is suffering,”¹⁸ but, is suffering to be our destiny? Perhaps the horizontal dimension must always be the dimension of pain, but that is not all there is. There is a vertical dimension from which we can cut the chains that bind us, setting our souls free to fly onward and upward. *Luvah* is a cartography of the self to the Self. Nothing is as it seems: the good is the bad and the bad is the good, and in the end we are all alone in the universe until we meet the One. We are not angels to rely solely upon God for help; we are humans, deeply flawed creatures left to fend for ourselves—and judging by the state of society, we are doing a terrible job—in this world. Liberation is in the palm of our hands, salvation is within us, and “God is closer than our jugular veins” (Qur’an L, 16), but our future is our own responsibility, and society’s future is our collective responsibility. When Sartre stated that “Hell is—other people”¹⁹, he had a point. Heaven is easily attained for one who only talks to the animals and trees, but we live in a world of people and they tend to drag us down.²⁰ That is part of the test, for evil exists on this planet only because people exist on this planet, and capitalism seems to magnify that evil, so in these times one must be a saint merely to maintain a shred of goodness. Can we have a new revolution, one without guns or harm to any living being, a goodness revolution, where all humans treat all other humans (and other living beings) with the respect they deserve? Failing this, we are alone. Let us have revolutions of one, or a few, then create autonomous zones where equality, dignity, and respect for all living creatures are the paramount values. Let us return to the search for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in a world filled with lies, ugliness, and evil. And if I am to be alone in this search, in this resurrection of such antiquated ideals, then so be it. I can seek the Real in a solitary form just as Milarepa and the great mystics of the past sought the Real.²¹ Perhaps we can save ourselves. Let the search begin with *Luvah*.

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18 The first noble truth.

19 Cited in Adrian Hoven and Andrew N. Leak, *Sartre Today: A Centenary Celebration*, p. 169.

20 Though some, such as our loved ones and spiritual guides, may do quite the opposite!

21 In the Islamic tradition even those alone can rely on Khidr, the *Green Man*, for guidance.

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