



ART OF APHORISM

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Annotation. The article describes the research on art of aphorism and its interpretation by various scientists in the home and foreign languages.

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Nearly all books of aphorisms, which have ever acquired a character, have retained it," John Stuart Mill wrote in 1837, aphoristically — that is to say, with a neat if slightly dubious futurity.(" How wofully the reverse is the case with systems of gospel, " he added.) We prefer collections of sayings over big books of gospel, Mill allowed , not just because the contents are always short and generally funny but because the maxim is, in its algebraic condensation, amicro-model of empirical inquiry. Mill noted that " to be unsystematic is of the substance of all trueness which rest on specific trial, " and that there is, in a good maxim, " generally verity, or a bold approach to some verity. " So when La Rochefoucauld writes, " In the mischance of indeed our stylish musketeers, there's commodity that doesn't disaffect us, " he's offering not a moral instruction saying " Take pleasure in the mischance of your stylish musketeers " but a testable observation about what Mill nominated " the workings of habitual egoism in the mortal bone. " The maxim means We do take pleasure — not in every case, maybe, but more frequently than we might admit — in the mischance of our stylish musketeers. We don't absorb sayings as esoteric wisdom; we test them against our own experience. The empirical test of the maxim takes the form first of horselaugh and also of life, and its nonpublic tone makes it candid, not pessimistic. sayings live because they contain mortal verity, as Mill saw, and reach across walls of class and period " Old men delight in giving good advice as a consolation for the fact that they can no longer set bad exemplifications, " another La Rochefoucauld classic, isn't only humorous in its tidy reversal; it's also still rather conclusive, as we watch the drift from contrariness to response in every generation.

sayings come at us in so numerous forms and from so numerous ages that one might suppose an academic study of sayings would aim to give them a family tree — tracing the emergence of the humanistic maxim from its solemn white- bearded forefather, the adage; the descent of the clever, instigative apothegm from its sly guerrilla ancestor, the fable(the form that allowed Jesus to spread subversion while acting simply obscurely elegant). And also we might learn how those after forms have spawned similar contemporary marketable descendants as the one- liner and the





meme. But Andrew Hui's new study, " A proposition of the maxim From Confucius to Twitter "(Princeton), does commodity oddly and interestingly different. The kind of facetious conception about mortal geste that Mill considers an maxim to be is largely absent from Hui's book.(So is Mill's essay on sayings.) On the whole, Hui condescends to the apothegm of mores, and to what we typically suppose of as the golden age of sayings, the seventeenth century in France, whose jottings he finds marked by " the frothy air of elite social networks. " rather, the history he has written is devoted to commodity more like what we generally call " aphorisms " — as in the aphorisms of the Buddha in the Dhammapada or the aphorisms of Confucius in the Analects, not the polished bon mot but the partial and frequently cryptic utterances of oracles, exponents, and rabbis. Still, buy the premise and you 'll enjoy the bit, as David Letterman, an proverb of feathers himself, used to say. Once the anthology accepts this further extensive and murky description of the maxim, much of interest follows, written in that thick, demonstrative, and largely non-aphoristic style which is called good jotting in academia.(Not that it isn't good jotting of a kind; it is, of a kind.) " doctrines come and go, theologies rise and fall, but the maxim abides, " Hui announces. His heroic apothegmatic bow takes us not from the chilly La Rochefoucauld to the facetious Wilde but from the elliptical Pascal to the gnomonic Nietzsche, both of whom translated their doctrines in brief bursts of memorable obscurity. The bow ends with modernist numbers similar as Cioran and Calvino, who are at formerly oracles and jesters. Hui indeed poses, a little apologetically, the question Are tweets anything like the classic maxim? It's a interpretation of the artistic intelligencer's favorite question, " What has Twitter done to our minds and lives?, " and though it'll look antique thirty times from now, just as the endless fussing about the meaning of music vids and Atari games in the nineteen- eighties looks antique moment it is one that the Twitter-tormented are bound to wonder about.

Mill and Hui do meet on the right question, though Why is spiritual wisdom set up in partial form more reliably than in extended dogma? Why is it that the aphorisms last, indeed when their methodical surroundings don't? We know Jesus ' parables better than we do the doctrine of the Trinity, though the ultimate is far more central to Christianity, just as we know Zen monks ' koans better than Zen friary practices. Indeed Socrates ' wisdom comes down to us in recorded counterpunches. The primitive situation of the religious life isn't the hermit jotting down his exposures in a palace but the master speaking partial trueness to a circle of startled scholars with pencils. The apothegmatic byword falls from the schoolteacher's lips, and gets written down and repeated and also participated.(numerous of these must have been retrospectively created some of the general aphorisms credited to Jesus may have been drawn from a force of common knowledges.) Mill's scientific- inclined answer is that we fete the maxim, with its proximity, its turn toward palpable experience, as the preferable volition to dogma. That's why we've Jesus giving us apologies of sowers and mustard seeds, of houses erected on beach and gravestone, rather than





explanations of how he might be God and man and spirit each at once. The anthropological answer is that, although we typically suppose of persuasions as sets of absolute rules, an equivocal riddle is actually a more practical tool for spreading the faith, since it can mean numerous effects to numerous people. What did Confucius mean when he remarked on the ceaseless inflow of a swash? commodity pessimistic (since the inflow of time is impregnable, don't ever suppose you can master it), or commodity auspicious (the advance of effects can't be impeded)? Well, it can mean more or less what you like; great religious and ethical aphorisms, unlike great religious systems, tend to be ample enough to accommodate numerous readings. They're the escape clause written into the contract with God.

The further mystical appraisal of the maxim is that the scrap captures all we can hope to see of the godly. Our macrocosm and the God within it are too big to be ranged; we see Him or Her most easily in casts, the way that ants see humans. The idol of Hui's story, aptly, is an backer of this view, the seventeenth-century French mathematician and Jeremiah Blaise Pascal. Pascal's non manner, with little brought to a conclusion, isn't an unfortunate failure but a deliberate defiance of Cartesian system-structure. The illogic of one cryptic scrap colliding with the coming cryptic scrap vindicates soul over system. (Max Beerbohm formerly suggested, in this spirit, that Sappho's work doesn't survive in fractions but was written in fractions.) Pascal's great maxim "The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing" announces a purposeful romanticism of small corridor, which don't have to cohere to vibrate.

The taste for the partial as an charge of fallacious ambition is carried over to Pascal's great successor, the nineteenth-century German proverb Nietzsche, for whom the scrap was also a way of thumbing his nose at big thinkers with finished doctrines. Nietzsche saw a direct connection between his hops of faith, or non-faith, and the apothegmatic form, jotting, "In the mountains the shortest way is from peak to peak but for that one must have long legs. sayings should be peaks — and those who are addressed, altitudinous and lofty." As with Greek tabernacles, so with doctrines the seductiveness of the scrap, seen up near, leads to the pathos of the ruin, seen from a distance.

Is the maxim — empirical or mystical, funny or partial — a living form? For important of the once century, we'd have answered no, but suddenly we feel to be living through a reanimation of the maxim as a tone-sufficient thing. The Scottish minstrel Don Paterson has published three justly praised books made up of nothing but. Among his stylish "It's monstrous to suppose of our parents having coitus, because we also have to suppose of them conceiving us... Hard enough to live with the exile without replaying the scene of the eviction"; "A lyric with one line wrong is like a Rubik's cell with one forecourt wrong what it's precisely not is one move down from completion"; "Amazing that the chess timepiece no way set up a more general operation. A further enlightened society would have made it as necessary to discussion as shoes to walking." Contemporary in style, Paterson's sayings still have an onus of





the history. The mortal lores are each too mortal, and one of the trueness is that the tone- assured heterosexual maxim — the confident statement about the nature of the “ love of women ” and so on(“ In some barbarous part of me, every hubby poses an poke ” is one of Paterson’s) has to ring a pariah’s bell these days, and wear smirching dread quotations, not to mention classes. Since a conception about life is also, always, a half-verity about it, the missing half of the verity frequently registers further clangingly now than the half that’s there.

“ Brevity is the soul of wit, ” Shakespeare’s Polonius says, issuing the topmost unintentional maxim in literature at the time, scholars say, the line meant simply that brevity is the substance of useful intelligence, and, of course, it was uttered as part of a designedly long- winded speech. But it now captures — by the accident of the elaboration of English, similar that “ wit ” now means humor — a subtler verity a joke is bettered by contraction.

Conclusion

The aphorism, in the course of history, can be taken as the epitome of the rational or the epitome of the illogical. It can be compressed and tone- contained wisdom, or it can be a broken scrap designed to show that ours is an formerly shattered world. But, whatever it is, it’s always an epitome, and seeks an substance. The capability to elide the extraneous is what makes the maxim bite, but the possibility of inferring backward to a missing textbook is what makes the maxim lyrical. We're told that, in reading, environment is everything, but the maxim reminds us that there's joy, too, in the freedom from environment. We don't ask which of La Rochefoucauld’s musketeers made him jealous — the study lands independent of its circumstance. Oscar Wilde’s stylish maxims are generally funnier when taken down from the designated speakers in his plays. sayings supply the same kind of pleasure as the first morning on a new islet a reprieve from feeling too deeply bedded in a time or place. Where big books remind us of how hard the work of understanding can be, sayings remind us of how little we've to know to get the point. aphorisms see what systems can't.

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