



Box 1—Public face-recognition in a democratic setting has a history of parading statements. With no pun intended, it is a type-face. When mediated by common technological platform—like writing, loose types, or computers—it is public matter (*res publica*) in that sense. It can be subject to political machinations because it constitutes a regime in itself.

The conundrums of *public face-recognition*, is today at the crossroads and centre of a variety of troubles: **a)** democratic voting; **b)** digital perception [tinker/tamper]; **c)** the demise of modern infrastructures. It comes with the budgetary corporatism, that follows from public saving: one does not cross one-another's budget lines. This applies both at the individual and the institutional levels. In some countries there are still "safety-nets". In many countries there are none. It features a movement toward a situation in which the only political unity that exists, is the unity-under-a-face.

What rules elections, under such circumstances, are *elective affinities*: selecting the closest fit to the perception of what one is condemned to by necessity. Conceiving a *common home*—in the language of the ancient Greeks—as a unity under a *public face*, by the entities that are isolated in each their void. Management made public (as in 'new public management') sails under the motto: you are free to do the job in whichever way you can, while remaining absolutely obligated to your budget and the public face. One may ask: why the epithet *new*? What does this novelty conceal?

Why not just *public management* (in the sense of management applied to the public sector)? It is likely because public management is embarrassingly close to what it is: the application business management from the *private sector*—the separation from the public sector applied to the *state*. Which means that if we drop the *New*, then *Public* is the next to fall: corporatism is management applied to the public sector. And what we end up with is management: *the logic of corporate thinking applied to the public sector*. This is the present context of the rally under a public face.

It is the context of a problem drawn up by Emmanuel Levinas—his phenomenology of *the firstness of the face*: which starts with the unrepresentable and then turned away and hidden (Hester Panim—the hiding of the face): "And Jacob saw Laban's face; and behold, we are not with him, like three days ago." (Gen./Ber. 31, 2—וַיִּרְאֵהוּ יַעֲקֹב, אֶת-פְּנֵי לָבָן; וְהָיָה אִינּוֹן עִמוֹ, כְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשָׁם.) *V'hine enenu imo*—and behold we are not with him; *kitmol sh'loshim*—like three days ago. This literal translation is different from current/handed down English translations of the same passage. Reflexive.



For instance: "And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as beforetime." While this translation appears to say that in Laban's change of face there is an indication of a change in his attitude toward Jacob, the literal translation indicates a change of attitude toward Laban: "We are not with him." Who is that *we*? Is it *us* who are reading, a heavenly tribunal, an academic *we*, a royal *we*? "... *we are not with him, like three days ago.*" No matter which one it is, Laban has effectively lost public support.

It is an instance of public face-recognition in the Old Testament/Torah, which for some reason most translations have omitted. It features an instance of the appearance of *res publica* as a face: the change between Laban and Jacob becomes a *public matter* at this precise point in the Torah. Public authority enters a process of detachment/dissolution (through

Box 2—This illustration from the net page bible art is used as a header for an explanation of the passages in Gen./Ber. 31.2: "And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before" An instance of multiplication of Jacob before the writ (caught in the middle of a change in perspective regarding Laban). Behold the *transitive we*.

growth, development and explanation [*anaptúxis*] from a personal/patriarchal authority: first from Laban, and next from Esau (Jacob's brother). Public matter is gradually brought to exist in its *own right* (leaving Laban, Esau Pharaoh, Amalek behind—faces/names best forgotten).

Of course, there is also King Saul and King Herod. The change of face indicates a change in the trust that is put in them: from the face of the sovereign, to the face of the usurper. *Behold, we are not with them, like three days ago*. This as opposed to the face in which we trust, which is precisely *not* imposed. The counterpoint to this is when there is *no we*, and that for this reason the imposed face becomes acclaimed: because *there is no alternative* (as said late Mme. Thatcher)—a reason why the Biblical backdrop stays a credible tale of politics, is that it are so passionately negated.

It is lived out in denial, and therefore passes on. Hence it becomes surreptitiously a key to what is going on, in narrative terms of statehood, sovereigns and governments. It is a gross misunderstanding that this political narrative should *itself* be true/false: since its function is to *reveal* the truth, rather than containing it. Which is why it has been feared (and also hated). In the West it is a candidate beginning of critical theory. Thus, the turn in how we read the verse “And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as beforetime.” Jacob's attitude.

So, it is Laban loosing face. Of course, Laban would sense this; hence the pursuit when Jacob left in stealth with his people and livestock. Laban wanted to at least catch Jacob in *some* wrongdoing, hence the story of the Teraphim (the idols which Rachel had taken out of spite, and without Jacob's knowledge, that led to her untimely death at childbirth). At the other end of the journey, Jacob met his brother Esau (who was coming at his encounter with a troupe of armed men) with 7 small droves of animals and people. Jacob himself walked in the rear of the seven flocks and said to Esau:

כִּי עַל-כֵּן רָאִיתִי פְנֵיךָ, כְּרֹאֵת פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים--וַתְּרַצְנִי: literal translation *because therefore I saw your face, as I saw the face of God—and you pleased me*. One bible translation: “forasmuch as I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.” It appears that the differences in translation are systematic, and move in a particular direction. It is a though the translators did

not make out what the sentence means, and so transformed it so that it makes sense to them. Because Jacob makes no show of power. Yet, it is Jacob who is pleased. It is Esau who is studied and evaluated.



In the literal translation it appears that it is the pact between G-d and Jacob is preempted. His judgement is preceded by acts of kindness. Yet, the passage is in tension with Moses' ulterior testimonial as G-d says: וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֶת פְּנֵי כִי לֹא יֵרְאֵנִי הַחַיִּים וְחַי in literal translation—*and he said, “you will not be able to see my face, for the living man will not see me.”* Is the seat of G-d's face within the living wo/man? Does one see G-d's face as it leaves? Did Laban see G-d's face leave?

Caesura: did he see himself unmasked by Jacob? Did Laban hate him for it? What is anti-Semitism? When does *being seen* amount to a public acknowledgment of dismissal? What happens when a computer-screen becomes a vehicle of public face-recognition? That is, beyond face recognition in a technical sense indigenous to computers, but hinged to the mediation and materialisation of the *political subject*. Is the regimen of the technical image also unavoidably a political regimen?

Box 3—Photogravure can be simply seen as the *revelation* of photography. That is, a way of materialisation of the photographic media, through an array of machine-operations hatching a distribution of attitudes to the same picture (Finns Photography Brooklyn 1962): *La Kahina*.