

Universal Themes and Messages in Gibran's *The Prophet*

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Abstract:

Gibran's masterpiece, *The Prophet* (1923), is a volume of twenty-eight prose-poems full of sayings representing wisdom of a prophetic quality. The book's chapters deal with the universal themes of all aspects of life love, marriage, children, etc. It is considered as a full representation for a comprehensive survey for all the meanings on earth, (Bushrui, 1998; Acocella, 2008; Buck, 2010). Bushrui asserts that the language of *The Prophet* represents the unity in diversity as a passionate belief in the healing power of universal love and the unity of being (ibid, 1988: 68). The study will attempt to identify the universal themes underlying the text with the core of micro and macro levels. The theoretical grounding for this study draws upon the fact that the book has become so popular in many cultures is an indication the extent of interest in positive ideology which presented universal themes and messages appeal. Waterfield declares that *The Prophet* has not been out of print since it was first published, and has sold more than ten million copies in English language alone. It has also been translated to more than twenty-five languages (Waterfield: 1998:257). The universal themes and messages that emerge from the writings show an absence of the in-group versus out-group distinction that is often evident in other Gibran's works.

Keywords: Gibran, *The Prophet*, semantic macrostructure, universal themes

Introduction

Gibran, the author of *The Prophet* emigrated with his family from Lebanon to USA on 25th of June 1894 to escape political persecution and poverty. He is credited as having enriched the English and Arabic literature with masterpieces that offer an enduring appeal by virtue of their rich and harmonious blend of East and West (Acocella, 2008; Buck, 2010). According to Bushrui (1988), Gibran represented the best of both worlds. Although his parents were staunch Christian Maronites, Gibran suffered from the bitter denunciation of both religious and political injustice, which brought about his exile from the country, and secluded him from the church. His continued refusal to accept injustice is reflected in the ideology and philosophy that underlie his literary work.

In *The Prophet* (1923), Gibran looks at the world with the eyes of the wise man who wants to build a better society and lead people to the real way of life. The teachings delivered by the prophet (Al-Mustafa) before his departure from the imaginary city of Orphalese are said on the purpose of answering the last or ultimate questions of life. Al-Mustafa, which in Arabic means the chosen one, is one name among many names used to refer to the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). It would appear that choosing the name Al-Mustafa does not come arbitrarily, but because of the influence of Islam and Sufism upon Gibran's mind and soul. Actually, this could be regarded as the high idealism of Gibran. Bushraui and Jenkins (1998) assert that "No less influential for Gibran were the views of the Sufi poets; in particular Jalal al-Din Rumi, honored among many as the greatest mystical poet in history" (p.77).

The study makes use of the relevant findings of various approaches to discourse analysis (DA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) in investigating aspects of semantic and rhetorical coherence in the data with relation to the social domains in *The Prophet*. Critical discourse analysis is envisaged in this study as a means for a purposive end: as a problem-solving apparatus.

Text vs. Discourse

Though discourse and text are the central theoretical entities in the domain of discourse analysis, their status and dimensions have remained in dispute and have fluctuated with each influential linguistic trend. One problem in this respect is that the term *text* is commonly used in a variety of ways. Van Peer (1989) cites the following uses of this term: (a) a record; (b) a literary work of art; (c) a composition; (d) a (set of) meaningful utterance(s); (e) a linguistic structure of two (or more) sentences (ibid. 275). While the last two definitions allow every kind of language-use to be termed text, the first and third definitions suggest that texts must be written. Moreover, three of the above definitions (a, d, and e) do not distinguish texts from other kinds of language-use, while the second definition excludes non-literary texts. Relevant to this issue is the *overlap* between the notion of text and discourse. Although these two terms are not synonymous, some linguists see very little difference between them and use them, more or less, interchangeably. Others draw strict demarcation lines between them by restricting the term discourse to *spoken* utterances and reserving the term text to *written* pieces of language use. Still others see either one of these two terms as the theoretical construct verbally realised by the other. This overlap is complicated by the fact that research in discourse analysis/text linguistics is not restricted to the domain of linguistics alone, but has been carried out also by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, sociolinguists, conversational analysts, anthropologists, literary critics.

The present paper aims at exploring the universal theme and global message that underlie the discourse of Gibran's best known masterpiece *The Prophet*. It explores the most important information conveyed in the text by spelling out the semantic macrostructures (van Dijk, 1985; 2001) of the text. The ultimate aim is to try to explore how far the universal appeal of *The Prophet* is ascribable to the universality of its themes and messages, then moving to the higher global macro structural level to represent its themes and messages. The third stage consists of defining which universal themes are addressed, in what way, and the characteristics of their appeal. The last aim is to explore whether or not there is any textual evidence pointing towards in-group versus out-group separation.

Aspects of Text

As a distinctive linguistic unit of organization, *TEXT* is a highly complex phenomenon of communicative interaction representing a world with relevant social and institutional contexts (Halliday, 1985, xvi). The complexity of text can be shown by the fact that the overall meaning of a text is not simply the sum-total of the cumulative meanings signalled by its individual sentences, clauses, phrases, words, and morphemes. This is because these operational units of textual realization obtain additional signalling values and functions by virtue of: (i) becoming parts of a higher level of organization, (ii) contracting a web of structural and semantic (inter)dependencies manifesting a specific texture, (iii) the functioning of the whole of the text as an appropriate unit of communication in its environment. Therefore, a communicative message does not consist of units, but of a goal-oriented units-in-relation (K. Callow & Callow, 1992:8).

According to Callow & Callow, a text cannot be adequately comprehended unless its constitutive units *cohere* or *hang together*. The human mind can only grasp what relates coherently both to our existing knowledge and to the rest of the text (ibid.). Therefore coherence is the fundamental property of textuality. A discourse is coherent whenever its sentences are easily related to one another. Coherent passages enable us to identify the general *thread* of discourse and the way the individual sentences *fit together* to achieve this purpose (Carroll, 1986: 213). So, coherence characterizes all the *appropriate* forms of language use by defining its unity. However, the characteristics of this unity are not straightforward; in fact they are *complex* and *multidimensional*. The problem of defining the true nature of coherence and its constitutive elements is highlighted by Chomsky (1968):

Just what "appropriateness" and "coherence" may consist in we cannot say in any clear or definite way, but there is no doubt that these are meaningful concepts. (ibid. 11)

This quotation shows that while the presence of discourse coherence is uncontroversial, it is not always easy to determine its constitutive elements, especially if we understand coherence in its wider all-inclusive sense as the constructive standard of textuality with its multi-level: phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, stylistic, rhetorical, and pragmatic aspects. Different approaches have been taken in the study described to determine the constituents of coherence as a text-formation concept, all having their own terminological distinctions. In this section some of the influential linguistic approaches will be briefly sketched by grouping relatable trends together on the basis of their general affinity rather than their chronological order.

Semantic Coherence

Semantic coherence is both *local* and *global*. Local semantic coherence accounts for the microstructural level of the relations between the sentences or propositions of the discourse. It establishes the meaningful intra/intersentential connections signalled by: word-order, sentence-order, the use of connectives, sentential adverbs, verb tenses, and pronouns (van Dijk, 1985:108). Besides the linear ordering of the propositions, there is the additional hierarchical organization of the underlying semantic structures: their spatial, temporal, and conditional connections.

In contrast, Global coherence is concerned with the meaning of larger discourse chunks or whole discourses which cannot be defined in terms of local coherence conditions mentioned above. This is because global coherence is concerned with the *topic* or *theme* of the whole discourse (i.e. its “*macrostructure*”) (ibid. 115). A macrostructure is a theoretical reconstruction of the higher level global meaning that is derived from the propositional sequences of the text by a number of “*macrorules*” (1981: 4). In other words, the macrostructure is the semantic information that gives the discourse its overall unity. Frequently, such underlying macrostructures are given by the text itself in the titles, summaries, or announcements.

Since the individuals’ world-knowledge, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, interests, and goals of communication are not identical, differences in assigning global meanings to the same discourse may occur, stemming from different evaluations about what is relevant or important information for the discourse. However, these subjective variations often manifest enough overlap to guarantee successful communication and interaction (van Dijk, 1985: 117).

As previously outlined, a semantic macrostructure is the reconstruction of the topic or theme of a discourse. It spells out the most important semantic information of the discourse as a whole. A macrostructure of a discourse is the function of the respective meanings of its sentences derived by semantic transformations that map sequences of propositions of the text onto the sequences of macro-propositions at the more general levels of meaning. Such mappings are operations that select, reduce, generalize, and re-construct propositions into fewer, more general ones through the recursive application of the information-reduction macro-rules. These transformational rules are semantic interpretation rules which allow a further interpretation of the sequences of a whole discourse in global propositions that characterize its overall meaning (van Dijk, 1985: 115-6).

Theme and Format of *The Prophet*

The most obvious theme in the text is that of teaching and preaching. Gibran believes in the prophet’s role as a dispenser of social wisdom, this is shown by other interlocutors in the text who treat, talk about, and interact with Al-Mustafa as a prophetic person. He acts as an orator who wants to teach people moral, wise, and humanistic lessons. People of Orphalese ask him to speak to them, and give them of his truth so that they can pass his words as a teacher from one generation to another. Widdowson (1975: 116) asserts that the author’s style arouses the receiver’s feelings by using appellative expressions that make a precise description for literary meaning.

The text of *The Prophet* is divided into twenty-eight chapters or subtexts (henceforth: T) that deal with the most important aspects of life and society. Each T discusses an autonomous subtitle topic in a variable number of verse-lines. Accordingly, the verse-line has been considered as the basic unit of the bottom-top analysis conducted hereunder.

T1: *The Coming of the Ship*; T2: *Love*; T3: *Marriage*; T4: *Children*; T5: *Giving*; T6: *Eating and Drinking*; T7: *Work*; T8: *Joy and Sorrow*; T9: *Houses*; T10: *Clothes*; T11: *Buying and Selling*; T12: *Crime and Punishment*; T13: *Laws*; T14: *Freedom*; T15: *Reason and Passion*;

T16: *Pain*; T17: *Self Knowledge*; T18: *Teaching*; T19: *Friendship*; T20: *Talking*; T21: *Time*; T22: *Good and Evil*; T23: *Prayer*; T24: *Pleasure*; T25: *Beauty*; T26: *Religion*; T27: *Death*; T28: *The Farewell*.

Chapters are composed of a variable number of verse-lines, ranging from a maximum of a hundred and fifty (T28), to a minimum of ten (T19).

It is worth mentioning that the Gibranian verse-lines assume quite unconventional forms, with the following characteristics:

- a) Put at the start of a separate line, each verse line invariably begins with a capital letter, ending either with a stop punctuation (period; question-mark), or a non-stop punctuation mark (colon; semi-colon; zero punctuation) e.g.:

*And you who would understand justice, how shall you unless
you look upon all deeds in the fullness of light?*

*Only then shall you know that the erect and the fallen are but
one man standing in twilight between the night of his pigmy-
self and the day of his god-self. (T12)*

- b) Lengths of verse lines vary from a minimal non-sentence (e.g. *And you, vast sea, sleepless mother, (T1:21)*), to more than one compound-complex sentence (e.g. *Too many fragments of the spirit have I scattered in these streets, and too many are the children of my longing that walk naked among these hills, and I cannot withdraw from them without a burden and an ache (T1: 7)*).
- c) No specific rhyme-scheme is sought; rhythm variation is the norm.

One interesting aspect of the *The Prophet* is it is generally re-told as conversations in the setting of a crowd asking questions and responses being extemporaneously given in complex verse form by Al-Mustafa.

Except for T1 and T28, all the other twenty-six chapters take the form of a question raised by one member of the crowd of followers – who gather around *The Prophet* before his departure – followed by Al-Mustafa's answer, which takes the form of an uninterrupted speech. The first chapter introduces Al-Mustafa, who has lived in the city of Orphalese for twelve years awaiting the ship that will take him back to the isle of his birth. When the ship arrives, the people of Orphalese come to bid him farewell, and a seeress called *Almitra* (the only follower named in *the Prophet*) entreats him to provide answers to all those questions that his followers seek his advice about before his departure. Al-Mustapha obliges, and his answers comprise the texts of the next twenty-six chapters. The last chapter offers Al-Mustafa's farewell speech.

Universal Appeal in *The Prophet*

At this level, the analyst can readily see that the semantic information spelled out by the macrostructures in the subtexts represent Al-Mustafa's formulation of certain fundamental truths and values which may be considered as universal themes. These define the wise aims which the prophet wants his audience to observe about the topics they ask, as given hereunder.

Unshakable Belief in Love and Life

It could be argued that the most prominent universal theme in the text of *The Prophet* is its persistent faith in *love* in its relationship to *life* and to most human activities that are dealt with. As a lexical item, *love* recurs for (64) times in the whole text, being the highest recurrent general theme, followed by *life* (35 instances). When dealing with *love* as a discrete topic, the text

stresses its purifying office. In addition, love is closely related to the appreciation of life as a whole, and to the noble feeling of gratitude, and happiness. In *marriage*, the text praises the sharing of togetherness with that of keeping space and love. Love is also required in dealing with *children*. Love and life are also paired with *work* - which is defined as noble love that fulfills life, binding the worker to the other and to God – and with *friendship*.

Much have we loved you. But speechless was our love, and with veils has it been veiled. (T1)

Love teaches the appreciation of life, gratitude, and happiness. It frees and purifies the soul because love is self-sufficient. True love does not mean seeking peace and pleasure only it is self-sufficient as well. Al-Mustafa recommends his audiences to follow love though it may be painful. Love is sacred; it envelops completely to satisfy the desire to enjoy it in peaceful tenderness.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning. When you love you should not say, "God is in my heart," but rather, I am in the heart of God." Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself. (T2)

Togetherness of marriage requires keeping both love and space, not a bondage to possessive domineering.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone , Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. (T3)

Children require parent's love, but not their imposed thought because children cannot be a replica of their own parents.

Your children are not your children . They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you (T4)

Work requires love; it binds oneself to the other and to God. All work is noble; it is *love made visible*. Moreover, working with love needs caring, tenderness and joy. It is better for those who cannot work with love to become beggars.

Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy. (T7)

Friendship can provide love, warmth, knowledge, assistance, and peace. A friend satisfies the human need for reciprocal love and thanksgiving.

Your friend is your needs answered. He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving. (T19)

Gibran asserts that friendship needs the frank disclosure of the self. It can realize sharing without words. When parting with a friend, one need not grieve because the absence can make one's love clearer. Self-preservation

Glorification of All Human Beings

The second prominent universal theme in *The Prophet* is the belief in self-preservation, immortality and the God-self aspect of all human beings. God is mentioned in (25) places throughout the whole text, always in relation to human beings, whether individuals or groups. The idea of man as the image of God is pervasive in the text e. Its function is to glorify humanity and emphasizes trust in all humans e.g. *Like the ocean; like the ether; and like the sun.* Degradation of the status of human beings is totally rejected, even in prayer (T23).

Like the ocean is your god-self.

It remains forever undefiled.

And like the ether it lifts but the winged.

Even like the sun is your god-self;

It knows not the ways of the mole nor seeks it the holes of the serpent.

But your god-self does not dwell alone in your being. (T12)

Gibran, through his mouthpiece Al-Mustafa, teaches his readers how to arrive to a greater self, Godhood and self-fulfillment. He clarifies that God only listens to those words that belong to Himself.

Nassar and Gibran claim that "The Prophet is an extended flight on the wings of a dubious idea that Gibran derived from Blake, Whitman, and Nietzsche, that the evolving godliness in man is god enough for exultant worship" (Nassar, Eugene Paul 1980:29). They cite verses from Gibran's *The Madman*:

My God, my aim and my fulfillment; I am

thy yesterday and thou art my tomorrow.

I am thy root in the earth and thou art

my flower in the sky. (The Madman, p. 10)

In the following verses, the theme calls for the unity of religions and the oneness of mankind *who are born of the mountains and the forests.* Even the seas, forests and mountains pray to God and one can hear their prayer in the stillness of the night, saying in silence:

*We cannot ask thee for aught, for thou knowest our needs
before they are born in us.*

*"Thou art our need; and in giving us more of thyself thou
givest us all." (T23)*

It must be emphasized on the importance of the emotional worship in which Gibran harbours toward self-superiority and Self-transcendence. He defines the prayer as the expansion of self in the living ether:

*For what is prayer but the expansion of yourself into the living
ether? (T23)*

Praying is not of Man alone, but also of mountains, forests and seas. Gibran parallels Man with the most three greatest things that God created.

And I cannot teach you the prayer of the seas and the forests and the mountains.

But you who are born of the mountains and the forests and the seas can find their prayer in your heart. (T23)

Obviously, the *expansion of the self* might mean self-infinite perfection, which brings it to a growing consciousness of the greater self. It is Gibran's mystical experience and his aspiration transforms self into a greater self and becomes a godlike figure.

And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God. (T7)

You are good when you are one with yourself.

Yet when you are not one with yourself you are not evil.

For a divided house is not a den of thieves; it is only a divided house.

And a ship without rudder may wander aimlessly among perilous isles yet sink not to the bottom.

You are good when you strive to give of yourself.

Yet you are not evil when you seek gain for yourself. (T22)

In the sub-text *Crime and Punishment*, Gibran asserts that man is essentially good; however, wrong-doers are still human beings. Inhuman wrong-doing is committed unconsciously by the deformed aspect of man. Wrong-doing harms other people as well as the wrong-doer himself but each person has an undefiled God-self.

And for that wrong committed must you knock and wait a while unheeded at the gate of the blessed.

Even like the sun is your god-self;

But your god-self does not dwell alone in your being.

Much in you is still man, and much in you is not yet human,

And of the man in you would I now speak.

For it is he and not your god-self nor the pigmy in the mist, that knows crime and the punishment of crime. (T12)

Committing wrong deeds bars the wrong-doer from the gate of the blessed. Crime is committed because of the silence of all the community, when one stumbles he falls for the benefit of those behind him and for those ahead of him. Wrong-doer is no less human than the righteous. Crime requires the attention and care of the totality of the social system because all people proceed in life together.

So the wrong-doer cannot do wrong without the hidden will of you all.

Like a procession you walk together towards your god-self.

(T12)

Justice cannot be fulfilled because some are honest in flesh but thieves in spirit. The erect and the fallen are but one man, both are standing on a par in between his god-self and pigmy-self.

And you who would understand justice, how shall you unless you look upon all deeds in the fullness of light?

Only then shall you know that the erect and the fallen are but one man standing in twilight between the night of his pigmy-self and the day of his god-self. (T12)

Appreciation of Joy

The third prominent universal theme in the text is that of appreciating joy (24 instances). The feeling of joy is made relevant to the topics of love, marriage, children, work, giving, pain, friendship, prayer, and death. Gibran allocates a separate and distinguished part to *Joy and Sorrow*.

When Almitra asks the prophet about the marriage, he recommends wife and husband to be *joyous*, he says:

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, (T3)

Gibran talks about the relation between generosity and jubilation or joy. The prophet tells his followers that those who give all are the true believers in life bounty and are the truly rich people.

There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward. (T5)

He asserts that giving without return is godly and it is better to give when unasked than when asked for seeking needy is joyful.

*It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding.
And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving. (T5)*

Gibran realizes that joy is inseparable from sorrow; each heightening or lessening the balance of the other. Here, Gibran is under the influence of Nietzsche's book, *Thus Speak Zarathustra* (1891), Friedrich Nietzsche says: "*I laugh because I am afraid if I don't laugh, I may start weeping. My laughter is nothing but a strategy to hide my tears*". Gibran says:

*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears. And how else can it be?
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy. (T8)*

When Gibran has been asked about the pain, his answer goes to deepest core of spiritual, mental, and physical pain. A birth of child is almost a pain but with joy, all races and nations are born from the pain. Joy and pain are essential aspects of religions like Islam, Christianity, Jewish (Judaism), Buddhism and Zoroastrianism; that means the relation between joy and pain is known by almost the whole world, they offer universal beliefs.

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.

Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so must you know pain.

And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy; (T16)

Al-Mustafa tells the youth that friendship can bring joy into someone's life; the joy of companionship is spiritual inspiration. Friendship does not mean seeking hours to kill, but making hours alive. Friendship allows sharing joy, laughter, pleasure, and refreshment.

For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is unacclaimed. (T19)

Ay, I knew your joy and your pain, and in your sleep your dreams were my dreams. (T28)

The prophet teaches his followers the joy of praying and the power behind it. Human beings, regardless of their religions, need to pray when they are satisfied and joyful as well as when they are in distress and in need.

You pray in your distress and in your need.

Would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance.

For what is prayer but the expansion of yourself into the living ether? (T23)

Appreciation of joy is so much spread between man-kind and nations. Gibran draws attention of his readers, who have enjoyed *The Prophet*, to a universal humanist joy which is relevant to all cultures and times.

Belief in Freedom

The fourth salient universal theme in *The Prophet* concerns freedom which is defined as worship (T14) and liberation from the chains of social norms. The concept of freedom is the main concern of individuals and nations; each seeks to achieve freedom, on both personal level and at the level of the state. Human beings are hailed for their readiness to sacrifice everything to gain more and more freedom.

In truth that which you call freedom is the strongest of these chains, though its links glitter in the sun and dazzle the eyes. (T14)

Gibran emphasizes that the freedom is the strongest of chains. Free people rise above their wants and grieve. Al-Mustafa teaches his audiences that one cannot be great unless become free, and therefore freedom alone can innovate and build a conscious and great society. Though human beings are born free, they remain slaves to the cruelty laws enacted by their predecessor.

Gibran's ideology on freedom is teetering between Sufism and smi-Socialism; he thinks that freedom should arise against the racism in order to restore humanity to divine justice.

For how can a tyrant rule the free and the proud, but for a tyranny in their own freedom and a shame in their won pride? (T14)

Gibran allocates a full chapter for *Freedom* in his book *The Prophet* saying that the liberation and freedom can be only achieved by pain to arrive what should be in future. Gibran is willing to remain logical and realistic with his readers.

Equality and Goodness of All Human Beings

Equality and solidarity prevail throughout the whole text of *The Prophet*. When Gibran enumerates the things that the prophet wants the addressees to avail themselves at by transcending the barriers of the city, the prophet does not characterize the audience as, say: “ignorant” or “sinful” people who deprive themselves of such great things as “peace”, great “remembrances”, “beauty”, etc. Instead, their need for these spiritual attributes is presented in the form of recurring questions: “*Have you beauty*”, “*Have you peace*”, “*But you, children of space*” ...etc. Then, the addressees are encouraged to explore the greatness of exploring nature beauty through a series of sentences wherein negation is used to assert their keeping to the desired course of action: “*You shall not be trapped, nor tamed, etc.*”, all sentences are reinforcing positive stance.

Another technique used to unite the prophet’s cause with that of the addressees is that of positive nominalizations to “the other”: the audience members are characterized as: “*children of peace, restless in rest, and bondless*”. Such a strategy enhances the relationship of solidarity and mutual value-sharing rather than initiating a negative hegemony of one party over the other.

But you, children of space, you restless in rest, you shall not be trapped nor tamed. (T9)

Of the good in you I can speak, but not of the evil.

For what is evil but good tortured by its own hunger and thirst? (T22)

You are good when you are one with yourself.

Yet when you are not one with yourself you are not evil. (T22)

Belief in the goodness of all human beings is dispersed in almost all subtexts, recurring (20) times. There is even a good side in the unjust, wicked, and bad:

You cannot separate the just from the unjust and the good from the wicked; (T12)

Humans are good in countless ways; yet, they are not evil when they are not good. Gibran considers people who are in harmony with themselves are good but when one is not in harmony with oneself, one is not evil.

You are good in countless ways, and you are not evil when you are not good.

In your longing for your giant-self lies your goodness: and that longing is in all of you. (T22)

Participants in the whole text are only two parties: i.) the Prophet (Al-Mustafa), and ii.) his followers (interlocutors). This means that there is no third party characterised as the “Other”

(who does not belong) in opposition to “Us” (van Dijk, 2008:18). In addition, Gibran refers to himself as a *peace maker* using the pronoun “I”:

Would that I could be the peacemaker in your soul, that I might turn the discord and the rivalry of your elements into oneness and melody. (T15)

There are some references to the speaker (the Prophet) in the first person pronouns “I”, or “we” overall almost referring to the addressees or allegory as personification.

Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather, "I have found a truth."

Say not, "I have found the path of the soul." Say rather, "I have met the soul walking upon my path." (T17)

And now you ask in your heart, "How shall we distinguish that which is good in pleasure from that which is not good?" (T24)

The pronoun that refers to Al-Mustafa is “he”. The addressees (the followers of the Prophet) are referred to in (457) instances, either via “you” or “your”. Finally, the pronoun “us” occurs also referring to the addressees themselves. This determines that each text doesn’t draw any ideological division between “Us” and “Them”. One may legitimately conclude that the whole text of *The Prophet* draws no conceptual division between Us and Them, i.e. it advocates positive universal ideology. Distribution of co-reference types to participants shows that the text does not create a barrier between the stature of the speaker and his audience in that the prophet does not pause himself as a dominating authority over his audience, nor is there a separation between “us” and “them”, which unite together.

Global Macrostructures in *The Prophet*

At the next higher level stand the global macrostructures of the subtexts. These are derived through the recursive application of the macro-rules to each set of the macrostructures given above. Some subtexts allow the derivation of a single global macrostructure; others are too complex to be summed up into just one global macrostructure. Regardless of their number, all global macrostructures represent the gist of each subtext, or its fundamental message as shown hereunder.

(T1) THE SHIP OF AL-MUSTAFA THE CHOSEN AND BELOVED: Waiting for twelve years in the city of Orphalese, the Prophet’s ship comes to take him back home. The people of Orphalese ask the Prophet to tell them of his truth about the following topics before leaving.

(T2) LOVE: Love purifies and teaches life-appreciation, gratitude and happiness.

(T3) MARRIAGE: Marriage requires sharing togetherness while keeping space and love.

(T4) CHILDREN: Children belong to future life, requiring their parents’ love and stability.

(T5) GIVING: Giving everything without seeking any return is godly since all possessions are subject to loss.

(T6) EATING AND DRINKING: Eating and drinking sustain the eternity of life and nature.

(T7) WORK: Work is noble love that fulfills life, binding to the other and to God.

(T8) JOY AND SORROW: Joy and sorrow are inseparable, each complements the other.

(T9) THE HOUSES: Let not the physical limits of houses prevent people from enjoying the greatness of nature.

- (T10) THE CLOTHES: Clothes cover shame against the eyes of the unclean, but they conceal natural beauty and shackle freedom.
- (T11) BUYING AND SELLING: The body and soul of all people can find enough food on earth if exchanged in justice and charity.
- (T12) CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: Wrong-doing, forced by oppression, harms other people as well as the wrong-doer himself. Man is essentially good; therefore, remorse can be more harmful than punishment. Crime is the responsibility of all the community since all people proceed in life together. True justice cannot be fulfilled because some people are honest in flesh, but dishonest in spirit.
- (T13) THE LAW: Man-made laws soon become obsolete and cannot stop free people from seeking freedom and happiness.
- (T14) THE FREEDOM: Freedom is a faith worthy of sacrifice to attain greater freedom.
- (T15) REASON AND PASSION: Man, like God, needs to rest in reason and move in passion for the harmonious sustenance of life.
- (T16) THE PAIN: Pain is a bitter healing medicine that requires acceptance.
- (T17) SELF-KNOWLEDGE: Self-knowledge requires diving into the depths of the multifaceted aspects of the self.
- (T18) THE TEACHING: Good teachers make their students think and discover by themselves.
- (T19) FRIENDSHIP: Friendship is a natural human need to frankly share love, assistance, knowledge, and pleasure with other human beings.
- (T20) THE TALKING: Talking helps one to share one's thoughts and feelings with friends by keeping truthfulness.
- (T21) THE TIME: Time is infinite, but let today embrace the past with remembrance, and the future with longing.
- (T22) GOOD AND EVIL: Humans are good in countless ways, but when good is left un-nurtured, evil steps in.
- (T23) THE PRAYER: Man needs to unselfishly pray, whether in joy or distress, by pronouncing God's words.
- (T24) THE PLEASURE: The giving and receiving of pleasure is a human need that requires no rebuke.
- (T25) THE BEAUTY: The charm of beauty is always realized in people and through people.
- (T26) THE RELIGION: Religion is found in all deeds and reflections, not in riddle-solving.
- (T27) THE DEATH: Death and life are one, save that death means resting with God in joy.
- (T28) THE FARWELL: The Prophet thanks the people of Orphalese for their generosity and faith in him, praises them; then he bids them farewell and sets out in his ship after promising to come back again.

All the messages above tackle basic cultural functions that seem to be acceptable to most competent human beings. They offer universal beliefs and messages that can be usefully adopted to organize human actions due to their beneficiality to human beings and because they cannot be justifiably disputed. They basically define what is universally good and bad for all societies at large as far as the topics under discussion are concerned.

Conclusion

A quick glance at the universal themes and messages above, it goes without saying that there can be no room in the totality of *The Prophet* for in-group versus

out-group separation of human beings. Indeed the premise that all human beings are good and possess god-selves taken as the point of departure in this text completely rules out the possibility of any such separation. Significantly, as has been pointed out above, even the wrongdoers and the evil people are defended as human beings forced by circumstances to do what is not in their essential good nature. Moreover, Gibran's messages offer the addressees with insightful understanding of many vital subjects that are not available otherwise, wherein aspects of truth and reality are powerfully balanced with those of high poetic imagination. The final result is a charm-like beauty that appeals to everyone, regardless of one's religious beliefs, by bringing harmony and peace to those who seek a source of solace and rationality in this irrational world. Such totally positive attitude toward humanity that stresses the goodness and equality of all human beings can legitimately be considered as one very significant factor in the popularity of *The Prophet*. This shows that the methodological apparatus of Critical Discourse Analysis functions as tool for unraveling positive ideology as well as the negative one.

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