

Islamic Principles, Inclusivity and Revitalisation in Conceptual Frameworks for Western Social Work



Sara Ashencaen Crabtree

Abstract In considering the important contribution of Islamic principles and perspectives to social work, which has encompassed to-date both the etic (outsider) and an emic (insider) positionality, a dialectical stance is offered in this chapter. This takes a fused ‘etemic’ approach, where Islamic religious and cultural concepts are critically examined in a dialogical application towards and excursus of an adaptive understanding of how these abstracted notions can play out within a social work context. To this end, the following concepts: *’umma*, *zakat*, *’izza* and *al-insān al-kāmil*, which are Islamic beliefs or Muslim cultural practices, are discussed as offering powerful and evocative socio-cultural-religious constructs that can serve to illuminate professional social work. Such insights, however, are subject to caveats and qualifications regarding the contentious appropriateness of this kind of abstracted, discursive application as well as whether such concepts can or should be adopted in some fashion within social work. However, the International Federation of Social Work’s (IFSW) global definition of social work provides a useful porous framework for such a legitimate exercise in the IFSW’s attempts to depart from narrow ethnocentrism to both recognise and embrace the cultural diversity that constitutes this global profession.

Keywords Islamic principles · IFSW · Dialectics · Social work

Introduction

The growing social work interest in Islamic principles and perspectives has largely focused on two trends to-date; firstly, promoting an understanding of what these entail in order to better orient the etic (outsider) perspective towards developing greater cultural awareness and sensitivity. Secondly, the development of a reflexive dialogical forum, where Muslim academics (primarily) have sought to contribute to social work paradigms by adding Islamic approaches and lenses to mainstream

S. A. Crabtree (✉)
Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK
e-mail: scrabtree@bournemouth.ac.uk

models from an emic (insider) position. In this chapter, a dialectical position is taken which draws from each of these two different emic and etic impulses in what (Heaslip et al., 2016) describe as a fused, ‘etemic’ model. Here the question is posed regarding what it may mean to incorporate Islamic precepts and values into current social work normative practices.

This endeavour consciously avoids a rehearsal of the conventional comparative exercise towards religiously-based values and those of social work (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). Instead, religious and cultural concepts that dictate, prescribe or proscribe normative behaviour are reflectively explored here in relation to contemporary social work practice. Through this somewhat unfamiliar, and occasionally, unapologetically jarring juxtapositioning of normativities, the discursive space for a new discourse emerges. In consequence, from this location social work ontologies can be viewed more clearly as both constructed and constrained ‘givens’, from where ‘other’ value systems are scrutinised, in effect a professional ethnocentrism. The etemic lens enables a dialectical transformation to occur where these ‘othered’ schemas and ontologies are applied to survey social work from an alternative position where the familiar and assumed is rendered unfamiliar and morphologically permeable.

Progressive International Agendas and Sociopolitical Obstacles

Historically, social work has travelled a convoluted journey and this within a comparatively short space of time, to emerge with an ambitious articulation of itself as an international, global profession embracing plural practices within one unified corpus. On this pan-global journey, social work’s origins can be traced from centuries-old fragmented, localised and religious-based care towards qualified, expert-based, secular and human-rights orientated operations (Payne, 2005); returning now to a strong interest in recognising and accommodating the domains of spirituality and faith (Parker et al., 2018). This spiralling evolution in the profession is briefly discussed with the aim of providing a contextual platform from which to critically reflect on the religio-cultural concepts familiar to Muslims universally.

Here the International Federation of Social Workers’ (IFSW) global definition provides useful discursive ground for a discussion of the hypothetical inclusion and adaptation of reframed Islamic concepts into the profession for wider social work engagement with values and diversity (IFSW, 2014). While it is not suggested that a wholesale adoption of unfamiliar and religious precepts is automatically beneficial to social work (and indeed there are many caveats to observe in any such undertaking), exploring different perspectives as potential assets can strengthen the profession when threatened by uneven professional progress globally, along with the hazards of tenuous identity and the fragmentation of its autonomy, as is explained further.

Paths towards enhanced living by individuals, families and communities are multiple and complex, in being shaped by sociocultural forces and political constraints that enable or disable individuals, families and communities. The IFSW (2014) global definition of the profession provides a useful reference point for expanding the wider inclusion of indigenous knowledge in social work to include religio-cultural perspectives, which could be argued to be implicit to an understanding of what indigenous beliefs may entail:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels. (IFSW, 2014)

If we assume, as the IFSW proposes, that social work is indeed a global profession (rather than a plurality of globally disconnected, welfare-orientated, social impulses), then a unified profession could be visualised as one bearing multiple heads bending in different directions, according to the environmental milieu and the vectors of national priorities and concerns. Yet the corpus of social work is, albeit not uncontested, composed of a vast, complex but generally unified, organic whole. It both embodies and emanates those social work principles, values and codes of ethical conduct that the IFSW would seek to recognise as representing the global profession across the entire entity.

Although this is an affirming and idealised vision of the profession, we must also fully acknowledge the tensions inherent in social work, as both an instrument of the state, as well as a valuable, empowering and subversive tool for those it serves: clients, service users and communities, including practitioners themselves (Parker & Doel, 2013). These tensions are not held in equal balance but are weighted and slanted according to the pressures exerted within societies.

Although social work history carries some notorious examples of dramatic and catastrophic failings in the profession, more prosaic examples can also illuminate the pernicious and insidious effects of social milieus of discrimination and oppression, clarifying how these are played out in social work. The therapeutic or community-empowering role of practitioners can often be eclipsed by a policing role – a necessary function in many ways, but which also acts as a prism of suspicion through which groups may be judged as deficient or dysfunctional. It has now been many decades since the new professional zeitgeist prompted Lena Dominelli (1994) to raise awareness of institutionalised racism in, predominantly, White middle class British social work's interactions with Black, predominantly working class families.

Today, Muslim minority ethnic (ME) groups occupy a somewhat similar terrain, as requiring extra state attention and scrutiny, where social work treads an uneasy path (Guru, 2012). The position of Muslim ME groups in Europe can be said to be that of the outsider – more or less tolerated according to each society, but where generally such groups occupy lower socio-economic strata compared to the general

population, with a concomitant relationship to higher unemployment and lower education status (Bowen et al., 2013; Calvo et al., 2014; Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006; MCB, 2015). Nor is the private domain of the home immune from state surveillance, for in the UK, for example, Muslim parenting has been problematised as being a contributory factor in inculcating beliefs and practices that are framed as opposed to prevailing social values (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). This view of Muslim parenting as forming a potential security risk has become the focus of British counter-terrorism policies that seek to identify radicalisation at source (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2017) with a particular and pernicious focus on the so-called 'radicalisation' of Muslim youth (Hargreaves, 2018). Here social work, the teaching and health professions are viewed as having an important, surveillance state role to play.

In contrast to the general acceptance of other ME groups in Britain, the position of Muslims remains on the tenuous margins of inclusion. Islamophobia and state suspicion has increased a sense of isolation and vulnerability among Muslim ME groups in which social work has been implicated (Guru, 2012). Such individuals and groups are consequently subject to shifting discourses surrounding questions of identity, belonging, rights and citizenship, in conjunction with the perception and experience of marginalisation (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2014, 2017).

Compounding the impact of intolerance and prejudice, decades of neo-liberal ideologies spreading unevenly across the Global North, have caused gradual withdrawing of state support in citizens' lives and the associated inexorable emptying of the public purse. So-called financial 'cutbacks' imposed by governments fray the fabric of society still further, exacerbating social tensions that in turn create resentment as well as deprivation (Standing, 2011; Fukuyama, 2018). Esping-Anderson's (1990) typologies of European welfare may still carry recognisable features, and while state generosity varies widely across nations, the neo-liberal ideology of austerity has crippled public services in other countries, leaving many people without the support services they desperately need (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018).

Social Work Responses: Pedagogy and Practice

Individual social workers are, of course, in the frontline of dealing with the impact of such privation. Nonetheless, however committed to the values and ethics of the profession and to anti-oppressive approaches they may be, social workers are normally part of bureaucracies underpinning service development and provision, which are now often part of the problem rather than the solution (Parker & Doel, 2013). Challenging prescribed notions of social work, as endorsed in professional education, is problematic in practice contexts, where the individual is dwarfed in comparison with the state-mandated Goliath which has the power to dictate what professional practice should look like, who 'deserves' services and who should be monitored by 'services'. Today, unlike many of its European neighbours (Parker & Doel, 2013), social work in England has become increasingly circumscribed and is

now focused on ‘safeguarding’ in child and adult services. Such a prescriptive social work role primarily focuses on ‘negative freedoms’, to paraphrase the philosopher, Isaiah Berlin (1969). These constitute freedoms *from* being maltreated, abused or killed, which although obviously of critical importance, do not address those positive freedoms that are allied to initiating possibilities that help people to more than *survive* in life, but actually to *thrive*. Moreover, there is a tendency to shape social work students and pedagogic content to the form dictated by employers for *their* purposes, rather than to strive to actively meet and surpass global professional standards to the wider benefit of society (Lyons & Manion, 2004).

Accordingly, even the most aware and skilled of social workers may find themselves operating in milieus and organisational structures that may not of themselves be particularly enlightened or emancipatory. Most practitioners carry out their functions within agencies that are directly or indirectly influenced by the state. There are but few examples of social workers operating autonomously and they practice at an individualistic rather than corporate level (Tucker et al., 2006). Even those operating as independent, private practitioners in the US now function in a national context that most liberal Europeans would regard as both internally and internationally representing a highly divisive and dangerous political regime (Fukuyama, 2018).

Dehumanised ‘Others’

The hazards are all the greater therefore for ME groups who are deliberately targeted by irresponsible political leaders as dehumanised objects for public contempt and fear. Muslims are among the primary targets of such inflammatory rhetoric. Migration, as well as terrorism both abroad and at home, has been constructed as the dominant problem upon which much political rhetoric and policy is aired; particularly if this refers to Muslim migrants fleeing from parts of the world riven by terrible conflicts and violence, economic and ecological hardship, bigotry and persecution (Bowen et al., 2013).

Impeached US President, Donald Trump, has become notorious for divisive pronouncements as well as highly controversial actions that are perceived to be profoundly hostile to Muslim-dominated nations. Boris Johnson, the populist British Prime Minister, and himself no stranger to Islamophobic posturing, was reported as the source of a recent 375% rise in hate crimes following a typically facetious comment concerning Muslim women. His comments added to the impression in the UK that Muslims are essentially different and potentially aggressive and therefore open to pre-emptive attack. In the UK, so entrenched is a negative attitude towards Muslim citizens particularly and ME groups generally, that within the governing party in Britain, Baroness Warsi, a Muslim peer, has called the Conservative Party “institutionally Islamophobic.” (Sabbagh, 2018) In the December 2019 UK General Elections, the crushing defeat landed on the Opposition Labour Party under Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, was thought to be partially owing to accusations of anti-Semitism in the Party, although Labour was often viewed in the past as a natural

home for many Jewish voters. Both these trends are arguably not a coincidence but part of a much bigger, nationalistic, and polarised xenophobic trend infecting Europe today, and other former bastions of democratic tolerance and multiculturalism, now moving towards demonising citizen ‘others’ as different and unequal.

What lessons for social work can therefore be learned from Muslims? This rhetorical question is posed in the pedagogic light, embraced by many in social work, of the great value of learning directly from service users, who are experts about their own lives and conditions (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018). What new insights can social workers gain from seeing through lenses that are inspired by religious conviction in their ubiquitous interactions with the social world – interactions that are ideally viewed as a means to a daily enacting of grace.

One must of course not over-romanticise piety given, as we know, the many evil deeds performed in its name. However, inspiration and elevation for practitioners can be achieved by reflecting upon the diverse and different ways of being and seeing, in which empathy, so much spoken of in social work, can be employed as the epistemological means through which we can, if only temporarily, step into this other ontology of being.

Social Work and Faith

In reviewing the development of social work from its earliest professional incarnation, two examples are normally mentioned: firstly, the case work-focused British Charity Organisation Society of 1869 and later, the development of social work in the USA through Jane Addams (Frampton, 2019). However, these cannot be separated from a far older history of social and medical welfare in Europe, including institutional care. Those early roots of care were grounded in faith as practiced within the enclosed male and female orders of the Church, although in Arab dominated societies, such as Moorish Spain, skilled, specialised hospitals prophesied the later dominance of medical expertise (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016).

This historical purview enables us to place the religiously influenced ideas of the great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, and the focus on valuing moral agency, as making a huge contribution to social work ethics (Banks, 2006). The profound contribution made by Felix Biestek (1961), a former Catholic priest, developed further the ethical social work relationship, portrayed as the client’s or service user’s quest for restoration or reformation of the self, ultimately towards growth and wholeness – with or without the help of a deity.

Although welfare and indeed social work itself originally grew out of established religious commitment (Prochaska, 2006), it was during the second half of the twentieth century that these religious roots began to be viewed as anachronistic and irrelevant to a human rights-based discourse. Religion and faith would be dismissed in the Westernised profession as irrelevant baggage that served, if indeed it had any point at all, to maintain an entrenched status quo of the condescending privileged and the succour-seeking, alms-receiving needy (Payne, 2005). Christianity was also

viewed as being even more culpable and unwanted than other faiths, being cast as the dominant religion of the White, hegemonic, Imperial West (Parker et al., 2018). Greater tolerance and interest were shown towards other spiritual beliefs, while Christianity became a dirty word in the social work lexicon, alienating many covertly pious, diverse Christian social workers (Parker et al., 2018).

At the time there was little interest in or knowledge expressed about Islam in connection with the profession, apart from the occasional journal paper reporting on unfamiliar cultural practices in remote parts of the world (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999, 2007; Al-Shamsi & Fulcher, 2005; Hodge, 2005).

By the turn of the new millennium, however, much greater professional interest was beginning to be given towards the importance of spiritual worldviews for many service users (Furness & Gilligan, 2010; Warden et al., 2016). Gradually religion, faith and spirituality would be viewed as another essential domain of human existence that social workers should explore along with other personal characteristics and identities. Hunt (2014), in the meantime, made explicit the link between routine social work assessments of spirituality and professional adherence to social work values and principles.

The time was ripe to bring Islamic perspectives to the attention of the profession, as forming the experiences and expectations of so many service users of diverse ethnic heritage and background offenders (Ashencaen Crabtree & Baba, 2001). These numbers include White British converts. Notably Islam has become one of the dominant faiths among offenders (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016).

Reflecting on Islamic Concepts

To return to the rhetorical questions posed earlier, potentially Islamic perspectives can go further than merely being accepted by the profession, but more radically still, could help to transform social work itself. A counterpoint to this development could question the cultural or national applicability of this suggestion or whether this might serve to push other perspectives to the periphery. An additional warning is the danger of idealistically falling into the fallacy of believing that the unfamiliar must be superior to the known, that it is others who hold truths that are denied to us or that the balance of power conforms to a polarised hierarchy of superior or inferior positions (Razack, 2009). Instead, in weighing the relative merits of new approaches and ideas, a critical approach must remain to the fore. Nevertheless social work as a socially organic and responsive profession needs to be adaptive to societal and cultural changes, particularly when the views of Muslims are marginalised by socio-cultural reasons, other than numerical or demographic significance (MCB, 2015).

Fortuitously, the social work professional imperialism that Midgley (1981) warned of is dissipating in influence as other nations develop indigenous or authenticised expertise (Ling, 2007). Thus no longer does social work pedagogy flow unidirectionally from the West to the East, the Global North to the South, but new knowledge is now also flowing back (Ashencaen Crabtree & Williams, 2012).

Those nations which formerly occupied the position of learner are now are leaders within their own right and willing to share their practice wisdom with us (Baba et al., 2011).

Revitalisation of professional social work is then both much needed and wanted. This is particularly so in the light of so-called ‘new challenges’ to use a well-worn cliché, by which is often meant newly perceived dangers and pitfalls or novel approaches to dealing with entrenched problems and difficulties.

Semantic subtleties apart, the rhetorical question remains: how can Islamic perspectives play their part in a renaissance of professional revitalisation? In terms of the incorporation of some of the values, perspectives and worldviews shared by so many Muslims across the world, we must retain clear recognition of the complexity of social work morphologies and the overarching aim to bridge, if possible, diverse nations and multiple archipelagos of practice, as promoted by the IFSW.

A useful beginning is therefore to reacquaint ourselves with some key Islamic concepts and principles, to review everyday practices relating to these; to both problematise and subject such concepts to a pedagogic process of reflection (Fook, 2007). The exercise might then be not only to transform social work practice by incorporating Islamic concepts, but equally, how these concepts can be rethought, reframed and re-offered in a dialectic that forms a transformative critical praxis.

The Concept of ʿUmma

ʿUmma refers to the community of Muslim believers in Islam. It acts as an articulation of transcultural faith in the context of a global religion, developed within a historical, geopolitical context where Islam was one new religion competing with many others (Waines, 2003). ʿUmma defines the identity and the conceptual and spiritual space for Muslims, the transglobal ‘we’ that in principle unites the Muslim world linking Turkey to Indonesia, the Sudan to Syria, and Yemenis to Malaysians.

ʿUmma separates the ‘us’ from the ‘them’, providing a sense of global identity with fellow Muslims and empathy for them. The so-called collateral damage of the two Gulf Wars reminded the Muslim world that imperialism still exists (Ashencaen Crabtree & Williams, 2012). Even more brutally, the terrible fate of traumatised Palestinians affects all Muslims globally through a sense of a unified ʿumma, in addition to any normal humanitarian sympathy for suffering. However, rhetoric should not obscure harsh realities whereby the holism of ʿumma has clearly and abjectly failed in terms of the appalling carnage inflicted on fellow Muslims by the Islamic State (ISIS, *Daesh*) (Cockburn, 2015) and the current war of attrition inflicted on the Yemen by Saudi Arabia.

Nonetheless, ʿumma is potent as well as poignant; however, in its sense of distinction, it also carries the inevitable risk of a reduced identity with fellow humans of other backgrounds and beliefs. The Christian New Testament story of the Good Samaritan who takes pains to help an injured individual from another religious

group and one moreover, that despises Samaritans, offers an example of why over-identification with one's own group acts as a weakness as well as a strength.

Social work also deals with these dichotomies of identity, of the 'us' and 'them' variety; and where the boundaries that separate social workers from others are often clearly demarcated. Here we may think in terms of the professional observation of territories and status: social work practitioners are often quick to mark out their professional turf, seen as explicitly differing from that of other professionals; and this is especially necessary in medical contexts, where a plethora of different professional groups can encroach or crowd out the unique social work remit. Strong distinctions can be made between the status of qualified and unqualified social workers even when similar work is undertaken. The quest to establish professional regulations in many countries is another means of drawing boundaries, stemming from situations where graduates from social work and diverse disciplines have been regarded as virtually on a par (Baba et al., 2011), or where social work has locally suffered from not publicly holding professional kudos (Parker et al., 2012). A significant separation is also observed between social work practitioners and social work academics, where the former are viewed as actually doing the job and the latter merely adding commentary.

The guarding of professional distinctions is likely to be of less significance to service users and clients seeking help and where the expertise and esoteric knowledge of the professional inevitably carries an aura of separation from the lived experiences and knowledge of the service user. The power differentials of professional social workers can be used both efficaciously or to reinforce control and manipulation. The recognition of the need to bridge the divide in the professional-laity dyad is acknowledged (Smith, 2008) and beyond the theorised there have been concerted attempts to overturn this in practice settings, particularly through movements like that of Radical Social Work. However, state control over social work services, its pronouncements and diktats, can too easily undermine professional trust in both the systems they operate in and the consumers of those systems – service users themselves – feeding into a perverse cycle of distrust and misunderstanding that distorts the so-called helping relationship (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018).

Even if social workers sometimes feel beleaguered, isolated and stigmatised in their own particular context, tapping into collectivities of support which reinforce a sense of vocation and purpose is not merely inspiring, but essential for professional resilience. Thus an *'umma* could also relate to the globally dispersed, but universal body of social workers in all their diverse array and practices. This concept offers a potential framework by which the definitional universality of social work, as provided by the IFSW Global Definitions, can be realised by recognising that, apart from abstract adherence to a vision, social work is fundamentally embodied in the daily practices and agentic actions of individual social workers as a united mosaic of a social work *'umma*.

The Principle of zakāt

This differs from the other concepts discussed here in constituting one of the five sacred pillars of Islam that all Muslim believers must submit to. *Zakāt* refers to undertaking the obligatory taxation of believers in the form of alms (charity) to the poor and needy. *Zakāt* has been viewed as similar to other forms of charitable giving across the Abrahamic triumvirate of Judaism and Christianity. However, *zakāt* is subtly but crucially different. In the old English ballad of Lazarus and Devesus, often better known as a melody by the composer Vaughan Williams, the tale provides an unambiguous moral, Christian lesson on the importance of charity. In the ballad the rich and feasting Devesus is appealed to by the beggar Lazarus seeking some scraps of food. Instead, Devesus sends his men out to harass and whip Lazarus from his door – an action that is signified as indisputably cruel and wrong. To drive the moral home, the two men die the same night and Devesus is unsurprisingly consigned to hellfire and devilish torment, while Lazarus is received into heaven. The ballad lays out the uncompromising Christian argument that to save one's soul, one should sacrifice a few of one's worldly goods to help the needy.

The difference between *zakāt* and Christian charity is that the receiver of alms in the Islamic perspective purges the giver of the toxic corruption of their wealth and that wellbeing is thus something shared holistically and in kind throughout the community (Dean & Khan, 1997). The somewhat one-sided Christian notion of charity is turned on its head in this conceptualisation of *zakāt*, where it is conceivably a charitable act to *receive* wealth rather than just to *bestow* it.

A *zakāt*-focused view of social work repositions the community, not just individual service users, as central to social work concerns, where, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, the community has been squeezed out of the professional equation. This is of course a neo-liberal ideology and one famously encapsulated by the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher in 1987, whose doctrine was thus memorably stated: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." (Keay, 1987) Repudiating that view by re-centring the community as a living, organic entity by which one measures the social and cultural wellbeing of people, to employ Bourdieusian theorisation (Bourdieu, 1986), carries echoes of the socialist ethos of the former Radical Social Work movement of the 1970s (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009). By repositioning social work as an integral part of the living community, as being accessible, approachable and engaged, this locates social work as a community asset and more easily yields support where it is needed. It also serves to purge social services of some of its worst pretensions and mendacities in alluding to resource gatekeeping as equality of service and political neutrality as professional objectivity.

‘Izza (Honour)

A highly controversial notion to include in any conceivable juxtaposition with that of social work is that of *‘izza*; with this in mind and with all caveats and qualifications, I argue that there are some interesting analogies to be drawn, as will be explained further. *‘Izza* refers to honour or respect but is a concept more likely to be interpreted through a cultural rather than a religious lens. *‘Izza* is not a religious principle and Islam as a faith does not condone an *‘izza*-type response. Moreover, attitudes and behaviour that resemble *‘izza* extend beyond the Muslim world to other societies as well. Yet despite these qualifications, *‘izza* does carry cultural legitimacy in many Muslim communities. It has been transported to non-Muslim societies under conditions of migration, where, in this regard, owing to the challenges of maintaining cultural identities and status in non-Muslim dominated societies, it may remain a tenacious and toxic element of social control of certain community members in migrant enclaves; where the rationalisation of religious and cultural values is often used to perpetuate its existence (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). Thus *‘izza* is by no means an obsolete and obscure social manifestation, but is the present cause of the deaths of thousands of people every year (Irfan & Cowburn, 2004), as in, for example, the case of Banaz Mahmud (Füuse Films, 2013).

‘Izza is embodied within the porous boundaries of the personal and public self (Goffman, 1990) in which ‘honour’ is extrinsically enacted rather than intrinsically experienced. *‘Izza* is consequently agentic in being related to action within the social and familiar sphere and is initiated or enacted where there is conflict arising from questionable public reputation. In this sense, it is somewhat like... the old culture-bound phenomenon of *amok*, known in historical Southeast Asia, where a situation of self-perceived mortification becomes overwhelming to the degree that within that culture psychological pain is released in an explosion of gratuitous violence by the individual (Spores, 1988; Ashencaen Crabtree, 2012). *Amok*, which inspired the English phrase ‘to run amok’ (denoting uncontrolled fury, chaos and confusion), is no longer a noticeable phenomenon, beyond the notoriously common tragedies of murderous shooting sprees of innocent bystanders in the US.

‘Izza is primarily enacted by the powerful upon the powerless and marginalised in the immediate community, typically those embodying patriarchy, exerting absolute control over female relatives (daughters, sisters, nieces, wives etc.), or those perceived to be in some way deviant, such as relatives who fail to conform to heteronormative standards of behaviour (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Notoriously, therefore, it has often been blamed as the motivation behind serious domestic violence, predominantly towards female relatives, and is commonly described as ‘honour-based violence’ where it is believed that the public stain of dishonour is thus wiped out in the eyes of others (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). It should be pointed that the term almost seems to excuse the cruelty and gravity of the crime in its implications of moral righteousness, and thus preferable nomenclatures include ‘shame killings’ or simply and starkly ‘femicide’ (Dias & Proudman, 2014).

Social work would, in theory, completely reject the rationale and enactment of *‘izza*, and its value base would seem to lie at a polar extreme to such violent manifestations of toxicity. Yet in some senses, an *‘izza*-type response is not unknown in the profession. Social work codes of practice, like *‘izza*, act as public declarations of professional conformity and adherence that are punishable, if transgressed by individual social workers. Violence within the profession may not be physical, but it does involve retribution in the form of reputational discrediting, jeopardised job security, livelihood precarity, loss of status and likely expulsion from the profession. It accordingly offers violence in the form of moral opprobrium, public disgrace and professional rejection.

However, professional *‘izza* can also be enacted through media exposure of the serious abuse or death of some unfortunate individual in receipt of social work care. Irrespective that their harm came at the hands of those normally outside of the profession, it is often the profession that is held to account, such as in the atrocious case of the abused and murdered infant, ‘Baby P’ (Jones, 2014). In the UK, such exposés are likely to result in individual practitioners being publicly named and tried by the media. As Foucault (1977) might note in his analysis of discipline and punishment, the scapegoat social worker will be punished and vilified through this ritualised enactment of social condemnation, which serves to exonerate the corporate body, who can thereby wash its hands of the crime, through the sacrificial cleaning of the stain and thus a restoration of honour.

The risk of such a fate inevitably acts as an effective deterrent against social workers moving into high risk areas of practice, specifically Child Protection, where there is a significant staff shortage in the UK (Pile, 2009). A destructive, punitive *‘izza*-type response therefore needs to be challenged by regulatory bodies in order to protect practitioners from automatic blame and responsibility, not only as a matter of rational fairness but in order to protect the integrity of social work practice. Mistakes are undoubtedly made by social workers and terrible things do happen, regardless of good social work intervention or exceptionally rarely at the hands of actual social workers, whose stigmatised, scapegoat role (Burke & Parker, 2007) becomes the lightning rod for a public display of social revulsion and repudiation.

Al-insān al-kāmil (The Complete Human)

This concept moves us away from the dramaturgical, as Goffman (1990) would frame *‘izza*, in being a donned, externalised display, in this case of aggressive subservience to social norms. Instead, we are returned to the inner domain of the individual conscience. *Al-insān al-kāmil* in Arabic refers to perfection or excellence and relates to individual agency in demonstrating inner faith through enacted deeds. Viewed additionally as the promotion of human dignity, it is integrally tied to a spiritual quest in keeping with the holism of Islam.

Despite contention and localised variations in custom, the accepted principles and rituals act as a guide for individuals to follow the ‘straight’ path. This is one that

promotes aspiration to the ideal and complete human, *al-insān al-kāmil*, and, in conformity with the other monotheistic religions, seeks to lead believers to eternal life (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016, 30–41).

The concept in its wider sense is one that most social work practitioners would find immediately recognisable in its exhortations towards acknowledgement of self as a moral agent in the world with a duty and (hopefully) a commitment towards social responsibility. It fits well with social work principles linked to professional codes, which are in turn ideally internalised by the individual as not only being aspects intrinsic to the social work identity but implicitly personal as well. At its least, *al-insān al-kāmil* provides moral guidance, which resonates with social work (and those of allied professions) by harnessing the almost visceral, emotional motivation of practitioners to help others.

Al-insān al-kāmil reminds us that we are engaged in a private pilgrimage towards, if not *the* good, goodness as a locus of identity (this for the profession can equally be viewed in religious, spiritual or humanitarian, secular terms). The principle can inspire and propel each practitioner to strive towards the best in the profession by connecting them to an authentic and courageous mission to root out that which is disruptive, dysfunctional, harmful and plain wrong, in order to seek out that which is its virtuous, diametrical, binary opposite. Heterogeneity and diversity are recognised, but the fundamental principles towards authentic goodness and the need for moral courage are in keeping with the notion of the human condition as moral in a spiritual or humanitarian sense. Thus articulated and internalised, it could be used to rearm practitioners in their commitment to the social work mission of service to humanity (Beckett & Maynard, 2005), as a compelling call to uphold as the first professional priority: justice and equality.

Concluding Remarks

I do not promote or endorse any assertion that social work should, as a matter of principle, uncritically absorb wider sociocultural or religious beliefs and values. Nonetheless, social work fallibilities towards ethnocentrism and often an over-dependent and unequal reliance on governments to define our unique territory does periodically require us to step back, rethink and re-imagine social work. Evidently, there are other ethical and moral perspectives in the world that may be unfamiliar but are closely congruent with the spirit of social work values and its mission. Thoughtful deconstruction of the essential meaning of these perspectives can and should be undertaken with a view to possible judicious employment of them where it appropriately enriches both social work theorisation and practice.

As we know, the IFSW definition recognises and promotes diversity of thought and practice, including that of indigenous perspectives. Religio-cultural beliefs and principles can also make a very important contribution to the evolution of a progressive, united, global profession; one which, moreover, may not logically stand as separate from indigenous worldviews in many cultures. However, as in the case of

the Islamic principles examined here, this is not just a unidirectional contribution, but is multi-directional. In the process of critical reflection by viewing these introduced concepts through a social work lens, a revitalising potential may be revealed that illuminates an adaptive power and strength offering wider benefits. This untapped potential goes beyond the boundaries of faith communities or cultural interpretations, reaching to us through a deeper professional nuanced inclusivity, feeding into the strength and richness of the moral, intellectual and practical purpose that defines all that is best about this remarkable social work heritage.

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