

The following text is a draft of the first two parts of my forthcoming (2014) work, *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God*. Part one dealt with good and evil in the context of the Christian tradition. Part two deals with good and evil in the context of Islam, jurisprudence, and my philosophy of pathei-mathos especially in relation to the concept of honour. Part three deals with questions relating to religion, law, and the reformation of individuals; and in the fourth and final part I present some tentative conclusions.

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Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God

Introduction

For the past three or so years, as I developed my 'numinous way' and then last year refined it into the philosophy of pathei-mathos, I have reflected more and more on questions concerning good, evil, honour, God, and religion and ethics in general; related as these matters are (at least according to my fallible understanding) to our nature, and possible development, as human beings, and thence to matters such as society, culture, and the jurisprudence by which modern societies function, or endeavour or aspire to function; and manifesting, as answers to such questions should, at least some explanations concerning the evidence that we human beings possess, and have possessed for thousands upon thousands of years, a paradoxical character, capable of - and having done - both honourable and dishonourable deeds, of being both 'good' and 'bad'.

Thus some of the questions of concern are: (i) what is 'good' and 'bad'; (ii) have the definitions and thence the theology and epistemology and the morality of religions, over millennia, enabled more and more of us to avoid doing or causing what is 'bad'; (iii) what, if anything, can or perhaps should replace such definitions, such theology, such epistemology, such morality - such religions - for those who do not or cannot accept such religious answers and the guidance so offered; (iv) does jurisprudence - and thence The State - offer an acceptable alternative; and, perhaps most importantly, as I have endeavoured to intimate in some other recent musings, (v) can we as a species change, sans a belief in some reward or the threat of punishment - be such karmic, eschatological, or deriving from something such as a State - or "are we fated, under Sun, to squabble and bicker and hate and kill and destroy and exploit this planet and its life until we, a failed species, leave only dead detritic traces of our hubris?" [1]

Today - thousands of years after the births of Lao Tzu, of the Buddha, of Moses, of Jesus of Nazareth, of Muhammad - horrid things still happen every minute of

every day to people who do not deserve them, who have done nothing dishonourable. Horrid things caused by other human beings, and it certainly seems to me that we, as a species - en masse, world-wide - cannot seem to prevent ourselves from doing what is bad, here understanding and accepting, initially at least, 'the bad' as that which harms or kills or causes suffering to others. All we seem to have done is manufacture more excuses for ourselves and for others in order to try and justify the harm done, and the killings and the suffering caused, and thus

"...latterly, in the name of some country, or some nation, or some political ideal, or some cause, or on behalf of some-thing supra-personal we believed in, we sallied for to war or did deeds that caused suffering, death, destruction, and inflicted violence on others. Defending this, or attacking that. Invading here; or colonizing there. Dreaming of or determined to find glory. Always, always, using the excuse that our cause, our ideal, our country, our nation, our security, our prosperity, our 'way of life', our 'destiny', hallowed our deeds; believing that such suffering, death, destruction as we caused, and the violence we inflicted on others, were somehow justified because 'we' were right and 'they' our foes, were wrong or in some way not as 'civilized' or as 'just' as us since 'their cause' or their 'way of life' or way of doing things was, according to us, reprehensible."
[2]

But is 'the bad' really that which harms or kills, or causes suffering to, others, and if so, is it necessary - moral - to qualify this understanding by appending 'without just cause' to it, and what, therefore - as others, from the *Jus Papirianum* attributed to Sextus Papirius to Augustine of Hippo to Thomas Aquinas and beyond, have sought to define - is a 'just cause' so that 'the bad' is then understood to be "that which harms or kills or causes suffering to others without just cause".

Part One

Good and Evil - An Early Christian Perspective

Given the influence of Christianity over individuals in the West during the past two millennia, especially in terms of eschatology and jurisprudence, it seems apposite to consider how the concepts of 'good' and 'evil' are presented in Christian scripture.

In Genesis 3.5 it is written that:

ἦδει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐν ἧ ἂν ἡμέρᾳ φάγητε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, διανοιχθήσονται ὑμῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, καὶ ἔσεσθε ὡς θεοὶ γινώσκοντες καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν. [3]

What, therefore, is meant by γινώσκοντες καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν? Most translations - modern and otherwise - provide something akin to "knowing good and evil" which we, after two thousand years, presume to associate with some theological ideation such as 'the forces/realm of good' contrasted with (or verses) 'the forces/realm of evil' as if both have or can have an existence independent of the physical world and independent of ourselves, an existence or a force associated, or seemingly associated, with a being described, in the Hebrew scriptures, as שָׁרָפָה - a serpent - and in LXX as ὄφις, a mythological creature familiar to readers of Hesiod's *Theogony* [4] and from myths and legends concerning the oracle at Delphi and the Πύθων, which is both curious and interesting given that שָׁרָפָה can signify divination (qv. Genesis 44.15, for example) and the whisper (the hiss) of a soothsayer or an enchantress.

But, in respect of this 'good and evil', might the Greek of LXX - and the Hebrew text - suggest something other than such a theological ideation? That is, how might the Greek text have been understood in its time?

The Greek of LXX contrasts κάλος with πονηρόν. Now, κάλος is classically understood (as often in Homer) as 'what is pleasing' (as in pleasing to look upon) and that which is considered beneficial and/or admirable (as in admirable deeds); whence what is beautiful/healthy and what is noble or honourable. Classically understood, πονηρόν is 'wearisome' (as in Hesiod, for instance in reference to the tasks that Hercules has to endure) and also what is considered dishonourable or cowardly, as in Sophocles, *Philoctetes* v.437 - πόλεμος οὐδέν' ἄνδρ' ἐκὼν αἰρεῖ πονηρόν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς χρηστοὺς ἀεὶ (battle does not willingly take cowards, but - as of old - the honourable).

The classical meaning of the Genesis text - of the Greek still understood at the time of LXX (c. 250 BCE) and before later interpretations [5] - might therefore seem to suggest some contrast between what is beneficial/admirable/beautiful/noble/honourable and what is wearisome/cowardly/dishonourable.

Interestingly, the sense of the Hebrew text of Genesis 3.5 seems to follow the sense of the Greek, or vice versa [6] - יָדָעַי טוֹב וְרָע . That is, "knowing tov and rah," with טוֹב suggesting pleasing, pleasant, beautiful; and רָע suggesting adversity, unpleasant, harmful, injurious.

In Genesis 8.21, πονηρόν also occurs, again usually translated as some abstract 'evil' - man's heart is evil from his youth, and so on - even though the

classical/Hebrew understanding of the term suggests the former more personal sense of dishonourable/injurious, as does its occurrence in the New Testament, as, for example, in Luke 6.45 where it is - interestingly - contrasted not with κάλος but with ἀγαθός, and where the context - of a healthy (a good, κάλος) tree not bearing rotten/bad (σαπρός) fruit, καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρὸν - also suggests not some abstract (demonic) 'evil' but a dishonourable (a bad, cowardly) person bringing forth some-thing bad, burdensome, dishonourable, and thus unhealthy, as rotten fruit is unhealthy and harmful, and with Luke 6.43-5 therefore translated thus:

For no healthy tree brings forth rotten fruit just as a rotten tree cannot bring forth healthy fruit. For each tree is judged by its fruit. A good person from the store of good in their heart brings forth what is good, and a bad person from their bad store brings forth what is bad; for it is because of an overflowing heart that the mouth speaks.

Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν δένδρον καλὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν σαπρὸν, οὐδὲ πάλιν δένδρον σαπρὸν ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν, ἕκαστον γὰρ δένδρον ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καρποῦ γινώσκειται· ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας προφέρει τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν· ἐκ γὰρ περισσεύματος καρδίας λαλεῖ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ

This 'healthy tree' and 'rotten fruit' make sense, for how can a tree be evil? Similarly, the contrast of πονηρόν with ἀγαθός also makes sense in referring to a bad person and good person, for ἀγαθός is classically understood as brave; honourable; well-bred (as often in Homer) and as implying a personal quality, such as prowess, excellence, in some-thing - or good at some-thing - as in The Agamemnon of Aeschylus:

ὅστις δ' ἀγαθὸς προβατογνώμων,
οὐκ ἔστι λαθεῖν ὄμματα φωτός,
τὰ δοκοῦντ' εὐφρονος ἐκ διανοίας
ὕδαρῃ σαίνειν φιλότῃτι.

Yet to he who has a good knowledge of his herd
A person's eyes cannot conceal what is a feeble begging for friendship
Behind a pretence of reasoned good judgement. (vv. 795-798)

and as in Oedipus Tyrannus by Sophocles:

ὄραξ ἴν' ἤκεις, ἀγαθὸς ὦν γνώμην ἀνήρ,
τοῦμόν παρῖεις καὶ καταμβλύων κέαρ;

Observe where you have come to with your prowess in reason
By me giving way and blunting my passion. (vv. 687-8)

The scriptural contrast of rottenness and health is also evident, for instance, in Romans 12.21:

μη νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀλλὰ νίκα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν

where ἀγαθός is contrasted with κακός rather than with πονηρόν. Although the verse is often translated along the lines of 'Do not let evil conquer you, instead conquer evil with good,' classically understood, κακός is what is 'bad' in the sense of some-thing rotten or unhealthy, or - the opposite of κάλος - what is displeasing to see. κακός is also what is unlucky, a misfortune, and/or injurious, as for example in The Agamemnon

τὸ μὲν γυναῖκα πρῶτον ἄρσενος δίχρα
ἦσθαι δόμοις ἔρημον ἔκπαγλον κακόν

Primarily, for a lady to be separate from her mate -
To remain unprotected by family - is a harsh misfortune (vv. 862-3)

Given the sense of ἀγαθός previously mentioned (with reference for example to Luke 6.45) and this sense of κακός, then Romans 12.21 might suggest: "Do not let what is rotten win; instead, overpower what is rotten with what is good," and good in the sense of beneficial and healthy, so that an alternative would be "Do not let what is harmful win; instead, overpower what is harmful with what is healthy."

Similarly, Romans 12.17 - with its contrast of κακός and κάλος - would imply:

Do not render what is bad with what is bad; rather, show concern for what all see is good.

μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες, προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων·

Understood thus, the impression is not of 'fire and brimstone' preaching but of something rather gentle, something much more human and appealing and understanding of human nature; something evident, for example, in the well-known passage (Romans 13.10) ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται· πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη: love brings no harm to the neighbour; love is the completion of the law.

Furthermore, it is this love which is healthy and good; which can 'overpower what is harmful', what is bad.

What these examples reveal - and many other examples from Christian scripture could be adduced - is not abstract, impersonal, theological concepts

of 'good' and 'evil' but rather something personal that individuals can relate to and understand, and it is tempting therefore to suggest that it was later, and theological, interpretations and interpolations which led to a harsh dichotomy, an apocalyptic eschatology, a 'war' between an abstract 'good' and 'evil', and that with such interpretations and interpolations - much in evidence in the persecution of alleged heretics - the simple gospel message of the health of love was somehow lost for a while, to be, later on, re-expressed by people such as William Penn, who wrote, in his *Some Fruits of Solitude*, "Let us then try what love can do."

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Notes

[1] *Blue Reflected Starlight*. 2012

[2] *qv. A Slowful Learning, Perhaps*. 2012

[3] Septuaginta - Vetus Testamentum. c. 250 BCE.

[4] *qv. the Chimaera* (vv. 319ff), described as having three heads, one of which - ἦ δ' ὄφις - was a serpent, a dragon: ὄπιθεν δὲ δράκων.

[5] The current consensus is that LXX was written around 250 BCE, give or take a few decades. This is the Hellenistic era of Euclid and Archimedes; a period when Homer was still recited, and the classic tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and others, some two or more centuries before, were still understood and appreciated, just as the language of Shakespeare - and his plays - are understood and appreciated today. This appreciation of classical Greek literature continued into the Roman era and beyond, with the cultured Cicero, for example, often explaining classical Greek terms for his Latin readers, and with Marcus Aurelius - Roman Emperor a century after the time of Jesus of Nazareth - writing his 'meditations', Τὰ εἰς ἑαυτόν - in the same (possibly Attic derived) κοινή Greek as that of LXX and the New Testament.

It is therefore seems likely that the scribes of LXX - and possibly those of the New Testament - were also familiar with the earlier classical literature.

[6] The date of the Hebrew scriptures has been much discussed. The earliest fragments of extant texts of both LXX and the Hebrew scriptures currently known suggest that LXX is slightly (but not much) older than the written text of the Hebrew scriptures of which papyrus fragments survive. However, according to Jewish aural tradition the scrolls of the Torah were first written c.

1000 BCE and thus would predate LXX by many centuries.

Part Two

Good and Evil - A Muslim Perspective

The classical and the early Christian sense of a human, and a natural, and not an abstract, dogmatical, good and bad, briefly outlined in part one, is also found in Islam: in the Quran, in the Sunnah, and in Shariah. For the sense of 'the bad' - الخبيث - is of what is rotten, unhealthy, dirty, unclean, defective; with the sense of 'the good', of 'good things' - الطيبات - being pleasing, pure, healthy, natural, beautiful, noble.

Consider, for example, Surah 5, Ayah 100 of the Quran:

قُلْ لَا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ
الْخَبِيثِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

A fallible 'interpretation of meaning' [1] is:

"The dirty and the clean are not alike even though, being ubiquitous, what is dirty may entice [أعجبك] you." [2]

In Surah 61, Ayah 12, 'good' - طيبة - is what is beautiful, pleasant:

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٢﴾

" [Allah] will forgive your transgressions [ذُنُوبَكُمْ] and guide you to Jannah wherein are rivers, cascading down, and those beautiful

dwelling set within perpetually-flowering gardens. And this is the success that matters." [Interpretation of meaning]

Consider also Surah 2, Ayah 267:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنفِقُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا
أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ
بِتَّخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ ۗ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٢٦٧﴾

"From what We give you from the earth and from the good things you have earned - disburse; but do not look toward [تَيَمَّمُوا] disbursing those defective things, which you would never take [for yourself] unless your eyes were closed." [Interpretation of meaning]

As with the New Testament, what these examples reveal - and many other examples could be adduced - is not abstract concepts of 'good' and 'evil' but rather something that is understandable by individuals and related to themselves and the world around them [3].

Jurisprudence and Society

Islam and Christianity have both developed traditions relating to the scope, detail, intent, and the implementation, of the laws necessitated by a society [4] - a jurisprudence - as well as traditions, or doctrines, concerning the nature of the authority that has or asserts it has the power to enforce such laws, and which laws often seek to criminalize 'the bad' and thus offer an interpretation of 'the good' and 'the bad'.

The traditional Christian view, evident in the Catholic tradition, is one of not only canon law but of the exercise of spiritual influence, direct and indirect, over civil authority to the extent, for example, that the Code of Justinian of 529-534 CE begins with *In Nomine Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* and (i) enshrined in law the authority of the Church, (ii) enshrined in law the requirement that all persons subject to the jurisdiction of the code be Christian, and thus that society be a Christian one; and (iii) detailed in law what constituted heresy.

For Muslims, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) - the textual sources of which are the Quran and Sunnah - is a legal and an ethical guide to what is good and what is

bad; that is, to what is halal (beneficial) and what is haram (harmful) from the perspective of the only success that, for a Muslim, matters: the success of being guided by Allah to dwell in the perpetually-flowering Gardens of Paradise, wherein are rivers, cascading down.

Being a legal as well as an ethical guide, fiqh deals not only with religious worship but also with civil, business, and domestic, matters such as transactions, ownership, funds, and inheritance, and thus provides a framework for a society whose aim is to assist Muslims who live together in a particular area to know and follow the precepts and the way of life revealed by Muhammad: to do and inspire what is good, and avoid and dissuade others from doing what is bad, *تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ* (Amr bil Maroof wa Nahi anil Munkar) [5].

However, it seems to me that the problem with jurisprudence, Muslim and Christian, is and was our fallible, human, understanding of the revelation, of the original message; a problem classically understood in Islam by the distinction made by Muslim scholars between fiqh - our fallible understanding and attempts at interpretation - and Shariah, the divine and perfect guidance given by Allah, based as fiqh (classical Islamic jurisprudence) is on the principles of acceptance of diversity (of scholarly opinion), on custom [6], and on reasoned deductions by individuals that are stated to be fallible and thus not immutable. A distinction that allows for reasoned change, accepts the necessity of diverse opinions, the necessity of individual independent scholarly judgement in trials, arbitrations, and determining penalties, and manifests both the non-hierarchical nature of the religion of Islam and the original understanding of the good and the bad.

In modern times, in the Muslim world, this necessary distinction between fiqh and Shariah, this allowance for reasoned change based on diverse scholarly opinion, and the necessity of individual independent scholarly judgement in trials, arbitrations, and determining penalties, often seems to be overlooked when attempts are made by governments in Muslim lands to introduce 'Shariah law' with the result that inflexible penal codes and immutable penalties are introduced backed by the claim, contrary to fiqh, that such governments have a mandate to impose and enforce such dogmatical interpretations as are an inevitable part of such government-sponsored codified law.

Even in the past this distinction between fiqh and Shariah, and the need for an acceptance of a diversity of scholarly and reasoned opinion, was often neglected, especially by powerful rulers or ruling cliques, leading to societies which were Muslim in name only where 'the good' came to be more the embodiment of the will or the desire or the need of the powerful, the

privileged, than it was of the original religious revelation, and where 'the law' became inflexible, impersonal, and often corrupt, with regular conflict between the powerful, the privileged within a society and/or between societies, and which conflicts were sometimes justified by appeals to a particular religious interpretation. Similarly with Christianity, as shown by the tumultuous conflicts - religious and civil, and causing immense suffering - within the West since the time of Justinian.

Thus does the original meaning - the message - of the revelation seem to become somewhat lost; the message, in the case of Christianity, of love and humility, of redemption through suffering (crucifixus), of Ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ [7]; the message, in the case of Islam, of an individual reliance only on Allah, of Adab [8], of respect for diversity and custom.

Which leads to the question as to whether a jurisprudence based on a spiritual revelation works, given the nature of such a religion and the fact that it seems that our paradoxical human nature and our societies were not effectively changed, and have not been effectively changed, by such jurisprudence, or at least not changed for long. Do these religions - does religion, spirituality, in general - require, demand, that the believers reform, or try to reform, the world? If so, is that contrary to such personal, human, notions of the good and the bad that have been described above? [9] Is two thousand years - in the case of Christianity - a sufficient time to judge such change, such societies, such jurisprudence? Is one and a half thousand years - in the case of Islam - a sufficient time to judge such change, such societies, such jurisprudence?

The problem seems to be that for revelatory religions such as Islam and Christianity the priority is salvation of the individual and thus the distinction made between this, our mortal, life and the next; a priority and a distinction that has, for centuries, been used to explain, and often justify - by individuals, governments, factions, and authorities - harsh deeds and practices, and harsh punishments and policies. Thus, what has tended to occur is that such salvation has become a 'just cause', used for century after century to justify or to try and justify (i) the persecution, torture, and killing of those deemed to be heretics, (ii) wars (bellum iustum), conflicts, and violent religious schisms; and (iii) the harsh treatment of 'non-believers'. All in the name of, for example, 'saving souls', and/or based on the belief, the interpretation, that this is what God has commanded; for such suffering and horrors that are caused or occur in this life are really of lesser importance than being admitted into Heaven. Hence the concepts of martyrdom and of us bearing our misfortunes, our pain, our suffering, the horrors inflicted by others and on others, because of the hope, the promise, the reward, of an everlasting life in eternal bliss.

The Modern State

Such an understanding - such questions and such answers regarding religion and religious jurisprudence - are not new, and led, centuries ago, to the idea of the secular State, to the theory of governance termed liberal democracy, and to a new or at least a revised jurisprudence [10]. That is, to such sentiments as are expressed in the 1776 Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

The focus is not on salvation, not on Heaven or Jannah, but on Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. A focus, a governance, a jurisprudence, and a sentiment, that have certainly changed the West, and some other parts of the world, for the better. As I have mentioned elsewhere:

"The simple truth of the present and so evident to me now - in respect of the societies of the West, and especially of societies such as those currently existing in America and Britain - is that for all their problems and all their flaws they seem to be much better than those elsewhere, and certainly better than what existed in the past. That is, that there is, within them, a certain tolerance; a certain respect for the individual; a certain duty of care; and certainly still a freedom of life, of expression, as well as a standard of living which, for perhaps the majority, is better than elsewhere in the world and most certainly better than existed there and elsewhere in the past.

In addition, there are within their structures - such as their police forces, their governments, their social and governmental institutions - people of good will, of humanity, of fairness, who strive to do what is good, right. Indeed, far more good people in such places than bad people, so that a certain balance, the balance of goodness, is maintained even though occasionally (but not for long) that balance may seem to waver somewhat.

Furthermore, many or most of the flaws, the problems, within such

societies are recognized and openly discussed, with a multitude of people of good will, of humanity, of fairness, dedicating themselves to helping those affected by such flaws, such problems. In addition, there are many others trying to improve those societies, and to trying find or implement solutions to such problems, in tolerant ways which do not cause conflict or involve the harshness, the violence, the hatred, of extremism." [11]

Interestingly, many of the 'multitude of people of good will, of humanity, of fairness' dedicated to helping those within such now secular societies, and many of those trying to improve those societies, are people of faith: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist... Which perhaps explains, or partly explains, why Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Islam have begun, by the necessity of interaction and by social practicalities, to adapt to the changes that the modern State - with its liberal democracy and modern jurisprudence - has wrought over the past two centuries; changes manifest, for example, not only in an increased standard of living for many (especially in the lands of the West) but also in attitudes, perception, and expectation, especially in relation to human rights. A change that has begun to lead many Christians, and some Muslims, to re-discover the simple message of their respective - and in many ways quite similar - revelations; a change that has led others to reject the more harsh interpretations of their faith and seek reform within their faith (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim); and a change which is leading others to question whether such messages of revelation are even compatible with the rights, the life, the liberty, and the happiness, of certain people, such as those whose love is for someone of the same gender.

Good and Evil - The Perspective of Pathei-Mathos

The pathei-mathos of individuals over thousands of years, often described in literature, poetry, memoirs, aural stories, and often expressed via non-verbal mediums such as music and Art, has resulted in an accumulation of insights; what we might with some justification describe as a culture, which, while often redolent of the spiritual, is not religious. That is, not doctrinal, not codified, not organized, and not presenting or manifesting a theology. A culture that is supra-national, containing as it does, among many other treasures, the observations of Lao Tzu, Siddhartha Gautama, Ovid, and Mohandas K. Gandhi; the thoughts of Aeschylus, Sappho, and Sophocles; the writings of Marcus Aurelius and Jane Austen; the allegory, the mystery, of Jesus of Nazareth; and, importantly, the experiences - written, recorded, and aural - of those who over the centuries have endured suffering, conflict, disaster, tragedy, and war, and who were forever changed by the experience.

As often in respect of a culture, as with a religion or a spiritual Way of Life,

individuals may favour some insights over others, and may and probably will differ over how certain insights should be understood or interpreted. As for me, I find in this vast cultural treasure three important things.

First, an understanding of the impermanence of temporal things; of how abstract ideations - given some practical form and maintained via striving human beings - over decades and centuries always by their nature wreck havoc and cause or contribute to suffering often despite the decent intentions of those who brought them into being and maintain or maintained them; and of how all such forms, in the perspective of millennia, 'hath but a short time to live'.

Second, that even the modern State with its liberal democracy and its jurisprudence and its benefits and positive change, is not only impermanent but also, for some, a cause of suffering, of havoc, and that the benefits and the positive change do not necessarily offset such suffering, such havoc, as are caused, as have been caused, and as may continue to be caused; and that it is for each one of us to decide how to, or whether to, engage with such an impermanent form, by and for example following the moral advice given some two millennia ago - Ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ - and/or by perhaps trying to improve those societies, "in tolerant ways which do not cause conflict or involve the harshness, the violence, the hatred, of extremism."

Third, that there is in this culture of pathei-mathos a particular ethos: the tone of harmony, ἀρμονίη; of a natural balance, or rather of how certain human actions are hubris - ὕβρις - and not only disrupt this needful harmony but also cause or contribute to suffering. Of the importance, and perhaps the primacy, of human love; of how Eris is the child of Polemos and Hubris, and of how a lovelorn Polemos follows Hubris around, never requited. Of how the truths of religions and spiritual ways are, in their genesis, basically simple, always numinous, and most probably the same: guides to living in such a way that we can rediscover the natural balance, appreciate the numinous, and avoid hubris.

All of which lead to an understanding of (i) how good and bad are not 'out there' and cannot be manifest or assumed to be manifest in some form, by some ideation, or in 'them' (the others), without causing or contributing to or being the genesis of suffering, but instead are within us as individuals, a part of our nature, our character, our φύσις, and often divergently expressed; and (ii) of how, in my view at least, personal honour and not a codified law, not a jurisprudence, is the best, the most excellent, way to define and manifest this 'good', with honour understood, as in my philosophy of pathei-mathos [12], as an instinct for and an adherence to what is fair, dignified, and valourous. An honourable person is thus someone of manners, fairness, reasoned judgement,

and valour; with honour being a means to live, to behave, in order to avoid committing the folly, the error, of ὕβρις; in order try and avoid causing suffering, and in order to rediscover, to acquire, ἀρμονίη, that natural balance that presences the numinous (sans denotatum and sans dogma) and thus reveals what is important about life and about being human.

For, in effect, the truths concerning honour and dishonour, and of our propensity for both honour and dishonour, are the essence of what we can learn from the supra-national, the living, and the thousands of years old, human culture of pathei-mathos.

David Myatt
2013

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Notes

[1] The fallible interpretations of meaning that are given here are mine.

[2] In respect of *أَعْجَبَكَ*, qv. Surah 9, Ayah 85 - *وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ* - do not let their wealth and their children enchant you. That is, do not be impressed by their wealth and marvel at their (apparently fine) offspring.

[3] It is to be expected that some, or many, will find this conclusion of mine regarding good and evil in Christian scripture and/or in Islam a controversial one, as no doubt some will query my (fallible) interpretation of the texts, and which interpretations often avoid conventional readings, for three reasons.

First, to hopefully give some readers a sense - an intimation - of the vibrancy, the immediacy, that I find in the texts that I have endeavoured to translate/interpret here, and endeavoured in the past to translate/interpret elsewhere.

Second, as I noted in *Explanation Of Humility and The Need for Tolerance* with respect to the Quran and *الرُّعْبَ* :

My, admittedly fallible, view now - after some years of reflexion and study - is that, in an English interpretation of the meaning of a work as revered, and misunderstood, as the Quran, English words in common usage must be carefully chosen, with many common words avoided, and that it would sometimes be better to choose an unusual or even archaic word in order to try and convey something of the sense of the Arabic. Thus, with a careful interpretation common

misunderstandings of the text - by non-Muslims unversed in Arabic - can possibly be avoided, especially if - as might be the case with unusual words - the reader has to pause to consider the meaning or make the effort to find the meaning, if only in a glossary appended to the interpretation. A pause and/or an effort that is suited to reading a work revered by millions of people around the world.

Hence why in the matter of Ayah 151 of Surah Al 'Imran, my interpretation of meaning, employing just such an unusual English word with a literary provenance, was:

Into the hearts of they who disbelieve We shall hurl redurre because they, without any authority revealed about such things, associate others with Allah; and for their home: The Fire, that harrowing resting place of the unjust.

Third, to perhaps inspire some to scholarly consider, again, both the text themselves and the accepted interpretation(s) given that in my view translation/interpretation of texts to English from an ancient (no longer spoken) language or from a text revered in the way the Quran is (i) not 'an exact science' but more akin to an art to be approached with (a) an artistic appreciation of what was (in the case of ancient texts) a living vibrant language and in the case of the Quran is a poetic and numinous language, (b) with a certain humility, and (c) with a lack of preconceptions about the accepted 'meaning' of certain words and which accepted meanings are often only the attempts of others in the past to approximate an assumed meaning, and (ii) that the rich diversity, vibrancy, and flexibility of the English language has, in my view, been much underused, and an underuse that has sometimes led to bland interpretations of texts.

[4] Society is understood here, as elsewhere in my philosophy of pathei-mathos, as a collection of individuals who live in a particular area and who are subject to the same laws (or customs) - whether written or aural - and the same institutions of authority, however that authority has been obtained and is manifest.

Jurisprudence is understood here as describing a systematic (often codified) system of law - written or aural, and whether practical, implemented, or theorized - and the scope, nature, and intent of those laws. The *Jus Papirianum* attributed to Sextus Papirius and the Code of Justinian are thus examples of jurisprudence.

[5] Surah 3, Ayah 110.

[6] One of the five principle maxims of Islamic jurisprudence (which five principles are regarded as expressing the essence of fiqh) is لعادة محكمة . That is, that the customs of a society or culture are important and a factor to be considered if they do not conflict with the guidance of Quran and Sunnah.

[7] Matthew 22:21. Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's.

[8] The importance of Muslim Adab - the manners, the morals, the culture, of Muslims - in defining and understanding Islam is something that many non-Muslims, especially those critical of Islam, are either ignorant of or dismiss.

An appreciation of Adab can be gleaned from reading Bukhari's book *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* and also An-Nawawi's collection *Forty Ahadith*.

[9] qv. Part Three.

[10] Important parts of this jurisprudence concern international law and laws relating to human rights.

[11] *Notes on The Politics and Ideology of Hate* (2012)

[12] qv. *Conspectus of The Philosophy of Pathei-Mathos* and *Recuyle of the Philosophy of Pathei-Mathos*.
