

So Much Sadness

It all seems so very sad. To watch the same mistakes being made day upon day, year after year, decade after decades. As if the lessons of our thousand of years old human culture of *pathei-mathos*¹ have not been learned or not been presented or more often that so many of us are somehow in *physis*, in our human nature, innately immune to such a learning. For these lessons are the lessons of fairness; of empathy, of tolerance, and of compassion, voiced for example thousands of years ago in *The Beatitudes*.²

But so many, unheeding, continue in their individuality to lie, cheat, steal, use violence and even commit murder to satiate or to express some personal desire. Thus do so many still collectively, often under the guidance of a few or of some elected or unelected demagogic leader sally forth of behalf of some -ism or -ology or on behalf of some modern Nation-State, to wreak havoc upon, to kill, those, the others, declared to be enemies for whatever purpose or from whatever motive.

While some continue to 'hold the line' between individual deeds of fairness and what is unfair³ for how long will that line hold and can it ever cover the impersonal deeds of governments and of modern Nation-States who as evident since 1914 in two world wars, in conflicts such as Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Algeria, Yemen, Ukraine, Palestine and now Gaza, continue to wreak havoc upon, to kill, those, the others, declared to be enemies for whatever purpose or from whatever motive?

I have to admit I do not have any answers. All I have is a sadness born of my own *pathei-mathos*; a fallible *weltanschauung* rooted in that personal *pathei-mathos*. But - given how I am still perceived by those who, having judged me and accused me according to my past deeds, declared me to be an enemy, and thus how I am perceived by many others who believe those accusers - such sadness of mine and such a *weltanschauung* seem to have no current value.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

TS Eliot: *The Waste Land*

David Myatt
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1. I define 'the culture of *pathei-mathos*' as the accumulated *pathei-mathos* of individuals, world-wide, over thousands of years, as (i) described in memoirs, aural stories, and historical accounts; as (ii) have inspired particular works of literature or poetry or drama; as (iii) expressed via non-verbal mediums such as music and Art, and as (iv) manifest in more recent times by 'art-forms' such as films and documentaries.

The culture of *pathei-mathos* thus includes not only traditional accounts of, or accounts inspired by, personal *pathei-mathos*, old and modern - such as the *With The Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* by Eugene Sledge, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and the poetry of people as diverse as Sappho and Sylvia Plath - but also works or art-forms inspired by such *pathei-mathos*, whether personal or otherwise, and whether factually presented or fictionalized. Hence films such as *Monsieur Lazhar* and *Etz Limon* may poignantly express something about our φύσις as human beings and thus form part of the culture of *pathei-mathos*.

2. See the Appendix.

3. *Holding The Line*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230809145904/https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2023/08/08/holding-the-line/>

Appendix

The Beatitudes The Learning On The Hillside

Τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον εὐαγγέλιον
The Gospel According To Matthew
5:1-10

Text

- 1 Ἴδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ·
- 2 καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων·
- 3 Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
- 4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.
- 5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
- 6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.
- 7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
- 8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
- 9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
- 10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Translation

- 1 Observing the multitudes, he ascended the hill and, having sat down, his disciples approached him.
- 2 Then, a revelation, for he instructed those there by saying this:
- 3 Fortunate, those humble with spiritus, for theirs is the Kingdom of Emphyrean.
- 4 Fortunate, those who grieve, for they shall have solace.
- 5 Fortunate, the gentle, for they shall acquire the Earth.
- 6 Fortunate, those who hunger and thirst for fairness, for they shall be replete.
- 7 Fortunate, the compassionate, for they shall receive compassion.
- 8 Fortunate, the refined of heart, for they shall perceive Theos.
- 9 Fortunate, the peaceable, for they shall be called children of Theos.
- 10 Fortunate, those harassed due to their fairness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Emphyrean.

Commentary

1. ὄρος. Here a hill, rather than a mountain.

2.

ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ. I take this metaphorically as in a disclosing or a revealing, not literally as in "opening his mouth."

those there. Although the Greek text does not explicitly state the fact, the context suggests that Jesus addressed both the multitude and his disciples.

3.

μακάριος. A difficult word to translate since "blessed" has acquired particular (sometimes moralistic) meanings as a result of nearly two thousand years of exegesis, while "happy" is rather prosaic. The context - as in ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν - suggests "fortunate".

πτωχός. Usually translated as "poor" which however has too many exegetical and modern connotations, and does not express the metaphorical sense here which implies being "humble" in respect of τὸ πνεῦμα.

τῷ πνεύματι [...] τῶν οὐρανῶν. In respect of τὸ πνεῦμα as the spiritus (rather than as the Spirit) and οὐρανός as Emphyrean (rather than Heaven), cf. my commentary on John 1:32, [1] from which this an extract:

οὐρανός here is always translated as 'heaven' although the term 'heaven' - used in the context of the Gospels - now has rather different connotations than the Greek οὐρανός, with the word 'heaven' now often implying something explained by almost two thousand years of exegesis and as depicted, for example, in medieval and Renaissance Christian art. However, those hearing or reading this particular Greek gospel for the first time in the formative years of Christianity would most probably have assumed the usual Greek usage of "the heavens" in the sense of the "the star-filled firmament above" or in the sense of "the sky" or as the abode of theos and/or of the gods, ἐν οὐρανῷ θεοί [...]

It therefore seems apposite to suggest a more neutral word than 'heaven' as a translation of οὐρανός and one which might not only be understood in various 'classical' ways by an audience of Greek speakers (such as the ways described above) but also be open to a new, and Christian, interpretation consistent with the milieu that existed when the Gospel of John was written and first heard. That is, before the exegesis of later centuries and long before post-Roman Christian iconography. Hence my suggestion of the post-classical Latin

term Empyrean, which can bear the interpretation of the abode of theos and/or of the gods, of "the sky", of the "the star-filled firmament above"; and a Christian one suggested by Genesis 2.8 - παράδεισον ἐν Εδεμ (the Paradise of Eden) - and also by shamayim.

5. πρᾶος. Gentle - in the sense of mild, balanced, temperament - rather than "meek".

6. δικαιοσύνη. Fairness. Not some abstract, legalistic, "justice", and not "righteousness" which word has over centuries acquired sometimes strident and disputable moralistic meanings as well as implying a certain conformity to accepted (and disputable or dogmatic) standards.

7. ἐλεήμων. The classical Latin term misericordia - used by Jerome, and the origin of the English word merciful - expresses the sense well, which is of συμπάθεια (sympatheia, benignity) resulting in compassion. Cf. Luke 11.41 (πλὴν τὰ ἐνόητα δότε ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντα καθαρὰ ὑμῖν ἐστίν), Acts 10:2, κτλ.

8.

οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ. Literally, those whose hearts are clean, in the physical sense, as in having undertaken a ritual cleansing of the body. Cf. Corpus Hermeticum, Poemander 22, [2] where as in Luke 11.41 - qv. ἐλεήμων in v. 7 here - it occurs in relation to compassion, the compassionate:

παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια, καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἰλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῆ στοργῆ

I, perceivation, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

In respect of καθαροῖς, I prefer *refined* here - as in the Corpus Hermeticum - rather than 'pure' given the disputable nature of the term 'pure' and the connotations acquired over centuries be they religious, sanctimonious, political, or otherwise.

θεὸς. For reasons explained in my commentary on verse I of chapter one of The Gospel According To John - and in my commentaries on tractates from the Corpus Hermeticum [2] - I transliterate θεὸς.

9. οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί. The peaceable ones, which includes pacificators - those who are pacificatory, and thus who are conciliatory and who actively seek peace - and those who have a peaceable disposition.

10. διώκω. Harass, rather than "persecuted" which has acquired too many modern and especially political connotations. Cf. John 5:16, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐδίωκον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τὸν Ἰησοῦν, ὅτι ταῦτα ἐποίει ἐν σαββάτῳ, "and thus did the Judaeans harass Jesus because he was doing such things on the Sabbath."

My interpretation, based on John 5:16, is that those who are harassed are so on account of (ἔνεκα) their fairness, not because those who are harassing them disparage or hate fairness in general.

David Myatt
30.iii.18

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Notes

[1] My translation and commentary - of chapters 1-5 - is available at <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf>

[2] D. Myatt. *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates. Translations And Commentaries*. 2017. ISBN 978-1976452369. Gratis pdf: <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf>

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