

Denotata, Physis, And Pathei-Mathos

Part One

Misunderstanding Denotata In Myatt's Philosophy Of Pathei-Mathos

A Particular Perceivation

A certain misunderstanding of David Myatt's weltanschauung of Pathei-Mathos seems to have arisen based on Myatt's use of terms such as acausal, abstractions, and denotatum {1} which does not seem to take into account matters such as the following:

1. That Myatt's weltanschauung was developed and refined over a period of some years (c.2011-2017) and was based primarily on his outré experiences over some four decades, which refinement led him to write in 2022 that

"my weltanschauung is just my weltanschauung; representing my attempt to apprehend the physis of human beings; to understand the causes of suffering and how suffering can be alleviated; and understand the nature of the numinous and what it means and meant, and thus whether the numinous is embodied in theos, however understood, or in human virtues such as compassion, empathy and honour which thus might obviate the need for a belief in something supra-personal be that theos or some -ism or some -ology." {2}

In effect, his weltanschauung of Pathei-Mathos is a mystical perceivation and not an academic philosophy. {3}

2. That his classification of his insights using terminology such as ontology, epistemology, and ethics - as in for example his statement that "the ontology of beings [...] is often obscured by denotatum and by abstractions, both of which conceal physis" {4} - is only a temporary guide for readers since his focus is primarily on empathy and pathei-mathos as a means to knowing, both of which are personal, of the immediate moment, and which knowing, as he writes many times, cannot be extracted out from that personal experiencing to form the basis for anything supra-personal be it a denotata or some -ism or some -ology. {5}

That is, ontology itself is an abstraction, a denotatum, which empathy and pathei-mathos take us beyond. In this respect a simile might be Wittgenstein's 'ladder'.

3. That what applies to terminology such as ontology applies to his use of the acausal and his division of our physis, following his understanding of the Corpus Hermeticum, into masculous and muliebral. That they are also useful denotata to explain what is as it now is and has been but are ultimately discarded by the wordless knowing of empathy and pathei-mathos.

4. That his comparisons and examples derived from ancient Greek texts and philosophy - most of which he cites in Greek and provides his own translations - are of the insights of some others with which he finds some correlation with his own insights, eschewing as he does in his iconoclasm and resonance with Greco-Roman culture the modern practice in academia of citing works by philosophers of the past few centuries and more recent texts by academics.

The Mysticism Of Mr Myatt

The statement by Myatt, quoted above, that his weltanschauung is his

"attempt to apprehend the physis of human beings; to understand the causes of suffering and how suffering can be alleviated; and understand the nature of the numinous and what it means and meant, and thus whether the numinous is embodied in theos, however understood, or in human virtues such as compassion, empathy and honour which thus might obviate the need for a belief in something supra-personal be that theos or some -ism or some -ology," {2}

is a succinct description of his mysticism; that is, of his personal perceivation of what is conventionally termed 'Reality', of Being and of beings. Which perceivation is of the numinous capable of apprehension, sans denotata, by means of empathy and pathei-mathos, obviating the need for theos (a supreme divinity) and for theoi (the divinities of various ancient religions, pagan and otherwise) and obviating the need for not only ideologies of whatever kind but for religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism which rely on the interpretation, the exegesis, of some text or texts. {6}

For Myatt, this apprehension of the numinous is manifest in the personal behaviour of individuals through the compassion, humility, and tolerance born of empathy and through the fairness, the reasonableness, of personal honour.

As noted in *Conspectus of The Philosophy of Pathei-Mathos*, empathy:

"inclines a person toward certain virtues; toward a particular type of personal character; and disinclines them toward doing what is bad, what is unfair; what is harsh and unfeeling; what intentionally causes or

contributes to suffering. For empathy enables us to *directly perceive*, to sense, the φύσις (the physis, the nature or character) of human beings and other living beings, involving as empathy does a translocation of ourselves and thus a knowing-of another living-being as that living-being is, without presumptions and sans all ideations, all projections." [My emphasis] {7}

Furthermore, empathy is inextricably linked to pathei-mathos {8} and that there is what Myatt terms a 'local horizon' to empathy:

"The 'local horizon of empathy' is a natural consequence of my understanding of empathy as a human faculty, albeit a faculty that is still quite underdeveloped. For what empathy provides - or can provide - is a very personal wordless knowing in the immediacy-of-the-living-moment. Thus empathy inclines us as individuals to appreciate that what is beyond the purveu {9} of our empathy - beyond our personal empathic knowing of others, beyond our knowledge and our experience, beyond the limited (local) range of our empathy and that personal (local) knowledge of ourselves which pathei-mathos reveals - is something we rationally, we humbly, accept we do not know and so cannot judge or form a reasonable, a fair, a balanced, opinion about. For empathy, like pathei-mathos, lives within us; manifesting, as both empathy and pathei-mathos do, the always limited nature, the horizon, of our own knowledge and understanding." {10}

"[a]s a personal human faculty empathy has a personal horizon and thus cannot be extrapolated from such a personal knowing into some-thing supra-personal be this some-thing denotata, including an ἰδέα/εἶδος, or an axiom (ἀρχή) or a source (αἴτιος) for some 'revelation' or ideology or similar manifestations constructed by and dependent on appellation." {11}

In regard to the numinous Myatt writes:

"In contrast to Otto et al, my understanding of the numinous is that it is primarily a perceivation, not a personal emotion or feeling, not a mysterium, and not an idea in the sense of Plato's εἶδος and thus is not similar to Kant's concept of a priori. As a perceivation, while it includes an apprehension of what is often referred to as 'the divine', 'the holy' - and sometimes thus is an apprehension of theos or theoi - it is not limited to such apprehensions, since as in the past it is often an intimation of, an intuition concerning, the natural balance of ψυχή; a balance which ὕβρις upsets. This natural balance - our being as human beings - is or can be manifest to us in or by what is harmonious, or what reminds us of what is harmonious and beautiful." {12}

Which brings us to what seems to be a neglected aspect of his weltanschauung: the natural balance, harmony, ἁρμονία, for which he often uses the Taoist-derived term wu-wei which he defines as being "used in my philosophy of pathei-mathos to refer to a personal 'letting-be' - a non-interference - deriving from humility." {13} That is, from the humility revealed by empathy.

His 2018 essay *Towards Understanding Ancestral Culture* elaborates on this notion of balance where he provides an example not only from Ancient Greece but from Tractate IV:2 of the Corpus Hermeticum, and from Ficini's *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, written in Latin and published in 1489,

"Correctly understood, Δίκη - and δίκη in general - represents the natural and the necessary balance manifest in ἁρμονία (harmony) and thus not only in τὸ καλόν (the beautiful) but also in the Cosmic Order, κόσμος, with ourselves as human beings (at least when unaffected by hubris) a microcosmic re-presentation of such balance, κόσμον δὲ θείου σώματος κατέπεμψε τὸν ἄνθρωπον. A sentiment re-expressed centuries later by Marsilii Ficini: Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona, 'How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presented therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned'.

This understanding and appreciation of ἁρμονία and of κόσμος and of ourselves as a microcosm is perhaps most evident in the Greek phrase καλὸς κάγαθός, describing as it does those who are balanced within themselves, who - manifesting τὸ καλόν and τὸ ἀγαθόν - comport themselves in a gentlemanly or lady-like manner." {14}

Which ancient notion of καλὸς κάγαθός he mentions in his two 2017 monographs *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* {15} and which comportment succinctly describes how his weltanschauung could be manifest in the world.

Gentlemanly And Lady-like Behaviour

As described earlier, Myatt's mystical apprehension of the numinous is manifest in the personal behaviour of individuals and this behaviour amounts to an individual comporting themselves in a gentlemanly or lady-like manner; a comportment which has a long history in European culture from the idealized medieval chivalry of Morte Arthure to fictional Regency characters such as Mr Darcy, Elizabeth Bennet, Colonel Brandon, and Elinor Dashwood, to the 1940s Clive Wynne-Candy and Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff.

In his 2014 essay *The Consolation Of A Viator*, Myatt indirectly references the character of Mr Darcy:

"For most of my life - and to paraphrase what someone once wrote - I have been a selfish being, prideful and conceited, and would still be so were it not for the suicide of a woman I loved." {16}

In the final paragraph of his autobiography *Myngath* he concludes that "a shared, a loyal, love between two people is the most beautiful, the most numinous, the most valuable thing of all." {17}

Such personal sentiments ground, and in my view express the essence of, his weltanschauung and have apparently been somewhat neglected in discussions of Myatt's 'philosophy' of *pathei-mathos*. For it is not an academic philosophy divorced from the realities of human life but the life-experience of someone who, learning from both diverse experiences and decades of scholarly study, has distilled that learning into the understanding that in order to presence the numinous we do not need religions or any -ism or -ology or abstractions but have only to behave in a certain cultured way: with manners, fairness, honour, humility, and compassion.

Which attributes of personal character are, to use Myatt's term, descriptors not abstractions:

"A descriptor is a word, a term, used to describe some-thing which exists and which is personally observed, or is discovered, by means of our senses (including the faculty of empathy)." {13}

Hence why Myatt aptly describes his 'philosophy' as a "mystical individualistic numinous way," and as "the way of striving to cultivate, striving to live by, the virtues of humility, empathy, compassion, honour, non-interference, and self-restraint. A very individual way..." {18}

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{1} It should be noted that in many of his writings Myatt often idiosyncratically uses *denotatum* as an Anglicized term for both singular and plural instances. However, I shall use *denotata* for the plural and *denotatum* for the singular.

{2} *Some Questions For DWM, 2022*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/05/dwm-questions-may-22.pdf>

{3} We have appropriated the term 'perceiveration' from Myatt's translations of and commentaries on tractates of the *Corpus Hermeticum* where he explains that he uses it to translate the Greek term *voũç* in place of the conventional translation 'mind', explaining his reasons in his article *Concerning ἀγαθός and voũç in the Corpus Hermeticum* - <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/03/24/concerning-ἀγαθός-and-voũç-in-the-corpus-hermeticum/> - and in his commentary on v.2 of the *Poemandres* tractate where he describes *perceiverance* as:

"a particular type of astute awareness, as of one's surroundings, of one's self, and as in understanding ('reading') a situation often in an instinctive way. Thus, what is not meant is some-thing termed 'mind' (or some faculty thereof), distinguished as this abstract 'thing' termed 'mind' has often been from another entity termed the body." <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf>

{4} *Towards Understanding Physis*. Included as an appendix in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, fifth edition, 2018, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/numinous-way-v5c-print.pdf>

{5} See for example *Some Questions For DWM 2014*, included in *One Vagabond In Exile From The Gods*, 2014, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/one-vagabond-pathei-mathos.pdf>

{6} In many of his writings Myatt has explained that the need for and practice of exegesis leads to suffering through reliance on a particular interpretation and through the conflict of competing interpretations which can lead to accusations of 'heresy'. See for example (i) the 2017 text *The Way Of Jesus of Nazareth: A Question Of Hermeneutics?* <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/09/30/the-way-of-jesus-of-nazareth/> and (ii) the 2019 text *Two Metaphysical Contradictions Of The Modern West* which is included in his text *In Defence Of The Roman Catholic Church*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/in-defence-rc-1.pdf>

In his 2018 essay *From Mythoi To Empathy* - included as an appendix in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, fifth edition - he wrote that the local horizon of empathy

"and the fact that empathy is a human faculty mean that the apprehension is wordless and personal and cannot be extrapolated beyond, or abstracted out from, the individual without losing some or all of its numinosity since the process of *denotatum* - of abstraction - devolves around the meanings assigned to words, terms, and names, and which meanings can and do vary over causal time and may be (mis)interpreted by others often on the basis of some idea, or theory, or on some comparative exegesis. It therefore follows that the numinous cannot be codified and that numinosity cannot be adequately, fully, presenced by anything doctrinal or which is organized beyond a small, a localized, and thus personal level; and that all such a supra-local organization can ever hope to do at best is provide a fallible intimation of the numinous, or perhaps some practical means to help others toward individually apprehending the numinous for themselves." <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/numinous-way-v5c-print.pdf>

{7} included in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, fifth edition, op.cit.

{8} *The Mystic Philosophy Of David Myatt*, third edition, 2021, p.5. <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/myatt-philosophy-third-edition.pdf>

In his *Some Questions For DWM*, 2022, Myatt writes that the third edition of *The Mystic Philosophy* provides "a reasonably comprehensive overview" of his weltanschauung.

{9} As often, Myatt uses an alternative spelling: here *purveu* (from Middle English) instead of the now conventional 'purview'. See *On Idiosyncratic Capitalization and Spelling*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/on-idiosyncratic-capitalization-and-spelling/>

{10} Included in *Sarigthersa*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/dwmyatt-sarigthersa-v7.pdf>

{11} *Numinosity, Denotata, Empathy, And The Hermetic Tradition*, 2022, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2022/03/17/numinosity-denotata-empathy-and-the-hermetic-tradition/>

{12} *From Mythoi To Empathy*, 2018. Included as an appendix in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, fifth edition, 2018, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/numinous-way-v5c-print.pdf>

{13} *Vocabulary of the Philosophy of Pathei-Mathos*, in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, op.cit.

{14} The essay is included as an appendix in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, op.cit. Myatt translates the quotation from Tractate IV:2 of the Corpus Hermeticum as "A cosmos of the divine body sent down as human beings," writing in his commentary:

"That is, human beings re-present, presence, the 'divine body' and are, of themselves, a reflection of the cosmic order itself. This, and the preceding line, express a fundamental part of ancient and Renaissance hermeticism: human beings as a microcosm of the cosmic order and the divine." *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf>

{15} (i) *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/classical-paganism-v2-print.pdf> (ii) *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/tua-es-diaboli-ianua.pdf>

{16} The essay is included in *One Vagabond In Exile From The Gods*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/one-vagabond-pathei-mathos.pdf>

{17} *Myngath*, 2013, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/david-myatt-myngath.pdf>

{18} *In Defence Of The Roman Catholic Church*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/in-defence-rc-1.pdf>