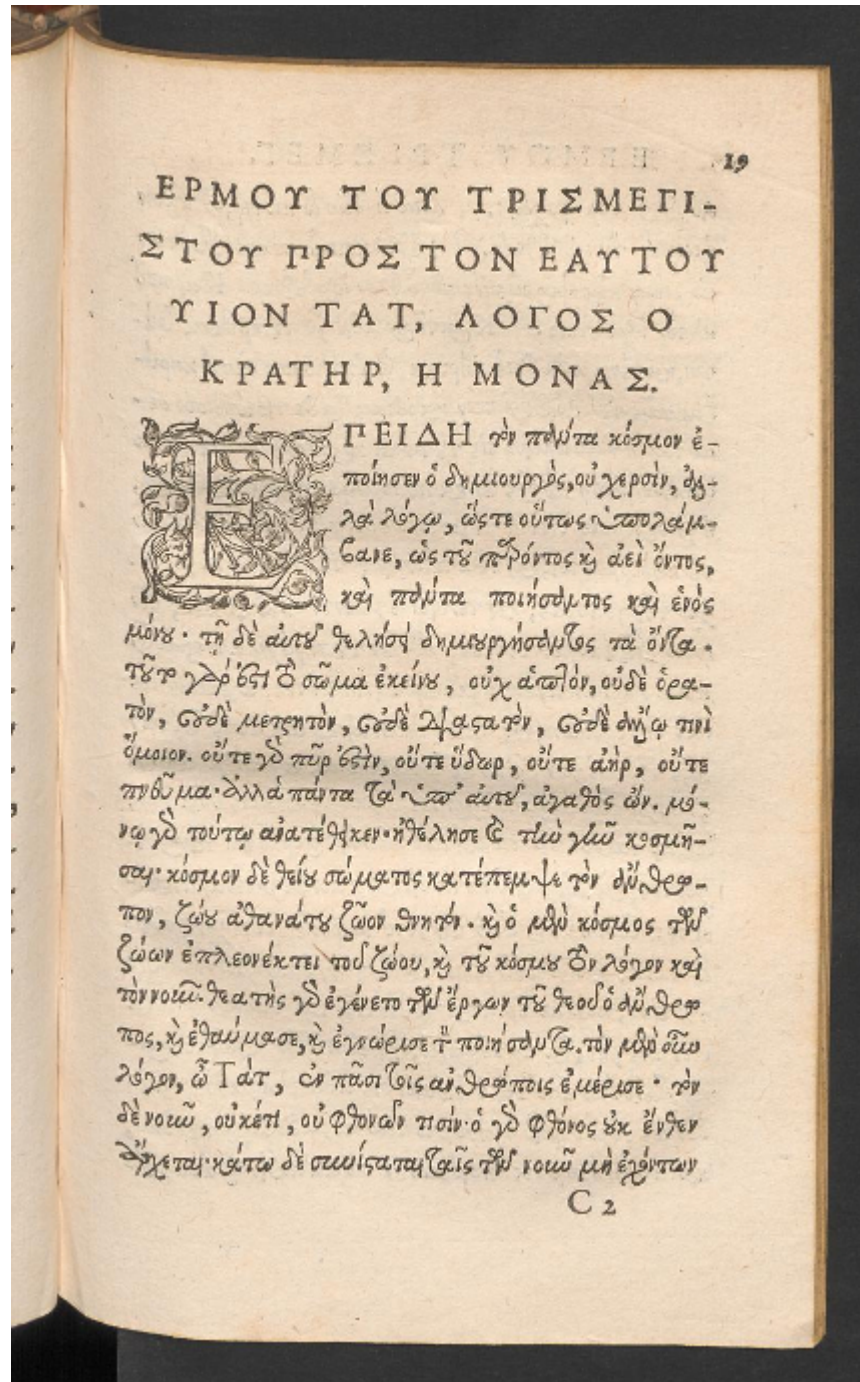


# Sarigthersa

## Some Philosophical And Autobiographical Essays

David Myatt



κρατῆρ ἢ μονάς, Tractate IV, Mercvrii Trismegisti Poemandres, Paris (1554)

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## Preface

Ða sceolde se hearpere weorðan swa sarig þæt he ne meahte ongemong oðrum mannum bion (XXXV, 6)

This work consists of some philosophical and - as the title indicates - autobiographical essays and extracts from private letters, 2014-2015, compiled together and published since (as I wrote in one essay) I do so still chunter on partly in hope of expiation.

The essay *Towards Understanding Physis*, and the two notes on the Metaphysics of Aristotle - 987β and 1015α, and dealing as they do with physis - are intended to compliment not only my essay *Personal Reflexions On Some Metaphysical Questions* (included here), my translations of the Poemandres and Ἐρὸς Λόγος tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, but also my philosophy of pathei-mathos in which physis plays a central philosophical role.

The compilation was first published in a printed edition in 2015 (ISBN 978-1512137149) and for this reformatted gratis Open Access version I have corrected some typos and updated the references to my translations of and commentary on tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum.

DWM  
2022

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### I. Towards Understanding Physis

Since the concept of physis - φύσις - is central to my philosophy of pathei-mathos, it seems apposite to offer a more detailed explanation of the concept, and my usage of it, than I have hitherto given, deriving as the term does from Ancient Greece and used as it is by Heraclitus, Aristotle, and others, and occurring as it does in texts such as the Poemandres and Ἐρὸς Λόγος tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum.

As I mentioned in my translation of Aristotle, Metaphysics 1015α [1] - and elsewhere - physis is usually translated as either 'Nature' (as if 'the natural world', and the physical cosmos beyond, are meant) or as the character (the nature) of a person. However, while the context - of the original Greek text - may suggest (as often, for example, in Homer and Herodotus) such a meaning as such English words impute, physis philosophically (as, for example, in Heraclitus and Aristotle and the Corpus Hermeticum) has specific ontological meanings. Meanings which are lost, or glossed over, when physis is simply translated either as 'Nature' or - in terms of mortals - as (personal) character.

Ontologically, as Aristotle makes clear [2], physis denotes the being of those beings who or which have the potentiality (the being) to change, be changed, or to develop. That is, to become, or to move or be moved; as for example in the motion (of 'things') and the 'natural unfolding' or growth, sans an external cause, that living beings demonstrate.

However, and crucially, physis is not - for human beings - some abstract 'essence' (qv. Plato's ἰδέα/εἶδος) but rather a balance between the being that it is, it was, and potentially might yet be. That is, in Aristotelian terms, it is a meson - μέσον - of being and 'not being'; and 'not being' in the sense of not yet having become what it could be, and not now being what it used to be. Hence why, for Aristotle, a manifestation of physis - in terms of the being of mortals - such as arête (ἀρετή) is a meson, a balance of things, and not, as it is for Plato, some fixed 'form' - some idea, ideal - which as Plato wrote "always exists, and has no genesis. It does not die, does not grow, does not decay." [3]

According to my understanding of Heraclitus, physis also suggests - as in Fragment 1 - the 'natural' being of a being which we mortals have a tendency to cover-up or conceal [4].

Furthermore, physis is one of the main themes in the Poemandres tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, for the author seeks "to apprehend the physis of beings" [5] with physis often mystically personified:

"This is a mysterium esoteric even to this day. For Physis, having intimately joined with the human, produced a most wondrous wonder possessed of the physis of the harmonious seven I mentioned before, of Fire and pneuma. Physis did not tarry, giving birth to seven male-and-female humans with the physis of those viziers, and ætherean...

[For] those seven came into being in this way. Earth was muliebral, Water was lustful, and Fire maturing. From Æther, the pneuma, and with Physis bringing forth human-shaped bodies. Of Life and phaos, the human came to be of psyche and perceivation; from Life - psyche; from phaos - perceivation; and with everything in the observable cosmic order cyclic until its completion...

When the cycle was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings - all male-and-female then - were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral." [6]

Physis is also personified in the Ἐρὸς Λόγος tractate:

"The divine is all of that mision: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis For Physis is presented in the divine." [7]

## The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos

As mentioned elsewhere, what I have termed the philosophy of πάθει μάθος (pathei-mathos) is just my weltanschauung, developed between 2011 and 2013 after I had, upon reflexion, rejected much of and revised what then remained of my earlier (2006-2011) 'numinous way' [8].

In the philosophy of pathei-mathos, physis is used contextually to refer to:

- (i) the ontology of beings, an ontology - a reality, a 'true nature' - that is often obscured by denotatum [9] and by abstractions [10], both of which conceal physis;
- (ii) the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being, which is of us - we mortals - as a nexion, an affective effluvium (or emanation) of Life (ψυχή) and thus of why 'the separation-of-otherness' [11] is a concealment of that relationship;
- (iii) the character, or persona, of human beings, and which character - sans denotatum - can be discovered (revealed, known) by the faculty of empathy;
- (iv) the unity - the being - beyond the division of our physis, as individual mortals, into masculous and muliebral;
- (v) that manifestation denoted by the concept Time, with Time considered to be an expression/manifestation of the physis of beings [12].

My concept of physis is therefore primarily ontological and rooted - as is my philosophy of pathei-mathos - in the pagan culture of classical, and Hellenic, Greece.

David Myatt  
March 2015

Notes

[1] qv. Chapter V for my translation of, and notes on, the relevant part of 1015α.

[2] See Chapter VI, below, and also Chapter IV: *Personal Reflexions On Some Metaphysical Questions*.

[3] πρῶτον μὲν αἰεὶ ὄν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον (Symposium 210e - 211a).

[4] See Appendix 1.

[5] Pœmandres 3; qv. my *A Translation and Commentary*. Included in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. ISBN 978-1976452369

[6] Pœmandres 16-18.

[7] Ἱερός Λόγος 3; qv. my *Ἱερός Λόγος: An Esoteric Mythos*. Included in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. ISBN 978-1976452369

[8] Refer to my *Concerning The Development Of The Numinous Way*, 2012.

[9] In my philosophy of pathei-mathos, I use the term denotatum - from the Latin, denotare - not only (i) in accord with its general meaning which is "to denote or to describe by an expression or a word; to name some-thing; to refer that which is so named or so denoted," but also (ii) as an Anglicized term which can denote both singular and plural instances.

[10] An abstraction is a manufactured generalization, a hypothesis, a posited thing, an assumption or assumptions about, an extrapolation of or from some-thing, or some assumed or extrapolated ideal 'form' of some-thing. Sometimes, abstractions are generalization based on some sample(s), or on some median (average) value or sets of values, observed, sampled, or assumed.

Abstractions can be of some-thing past, in the present, or described as a goal or an ideal which it is assumed could be attained or achieved in the future. Abstractions are often assumed to provide some 'knowledge' or some 'understanding' of some-thing assigned to or described by a particular abstraction.

[11] Refer, for example, to my *The Error of The-Separation-of-Otherness in The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, 2012.

[12] *Time And The Separation Of Otherness - Part One*. 2012.

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## Addendum

### Some Notes on Heraclitus Fragment 1

#### Text

τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων

καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὀκοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῖμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει·  
τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λαμβάνει ὀκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιούσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὀκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπιλαμβάνονται

## Translation

My translation of the fragment is:

Although this naming and expression [which I explain] exists, human beings tend to ignore it, both before and after they have become aware of it. Yet even though, regarding such naming and expression, I have revealed details of how Physis has been cleaved asunder, some human beings are inexperienced concerning it, fumbling about with words and deeds, just as other human beings, be they interested or just forgetful, are unaware of what they have done.

## Comments

### 1. λόγος

In respect of fragments 80 and 112 I have suggested that it is incorrect to interpret πόλεμος simplistically as 'war', strife, or kampf [1] and that, instead of using such words, it should be transliterated so as to name a distinct philosophical principle that requires interpretation and explanation with particular reference to Hellenic culture and philosophy. For, more often than not, such common English words as 'war' are now understood in a non-Hellenic, non-philosophical, context and explained in relation to some ideated opposite; and in the particular case of the term 'war', for example, in contrast to some-thing named, explained, or defined, as 'peace' or a state of non-belligerence.

In respect of fragment 1 [2], does λόγος suggest a philosophical principle and therefore should it, like πόλεμος, be transliterated and thus be considered as a basic principle of the philosophy of Heraclitus, or at least of what, of that philosophy or weltanschauung, we can adduce from the textual fragments we possess? Or does λόγος, as I suggested in respect of fragment 112 and 123 [3] imply: both a naming (denoting), and a telling – not a telling as in some abstract explanation or theory, but as in a simple describing, or recounting, of what has been so denoted or so named. Which is why, in fragment 39, Heraclitus writes:

ἐν Πριήνηι Βίας ἐγένετο ὁ Τευτάμεω, οὗ πλείων λόγος ἢ τῶν ἄλλων [4]

and why, in respect of λέγειν, Hesiod wrote:

ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,  
ἴδμεν δ' , εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι [5]

I contend that fragment 1 also suggests a denoting, in the sense of expressing some-thing by denoting it or describing it by a 'name'. That is, that λόγος here does not refer here to what has often be termed Logos, and that the 'ambiguous' ἀεὶ [6] is not really ambiguous at all.

For one has to, in my view, take account of the fact that there is poetry in Heraclitus; a rather underrated style that sometimes led others to incorrectly describe him as ὁ σκοτεινός, the ambiguous (or the obtuse) one, and led Aristotle to write:

τὰ γὰρ Ἡρακλείτου διαστίζαι ἔργον διὰ τὸ ἄδηλον  
εἶναι ποτέρω πρόσκειται, τῷ ὕστερον ἢ τῷ πρότερον, οἷον ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ αὐτῇ τοῦ συγγράμματος:  
φησὶ γὰρ "τοῦ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι ἄνθρωποι γίνονται":  
ἄδηλον γὰρ τὸ ἀεὶ, πρὸς ποτέρω δεῖ διαστίζαι. [6]

It is the poetic style of Heraclitus that I have tried, however badly, to express in my often non-literal and rather idiosyncratic translations/interpretations of some of the fragments attributed to him. Hence my interpretation of the first part:

Although this naming and expression [which I explain] exists – human beings tend to ignore it, both before and after they have become aware of it.

The 'which I explain' being implicit in the sense of λόγος here as a naming and expression by a particular individual, contrasted (as often with Heraclitus) rather poetically with a generality; in this instance, contrasted with human beings - 'men' - in general.

### 2. ἀεὶ

In my view, "tend to" captures the poetic sense of ἀεὶ here. That is, the literal - the bland, strident - 'always' is discarded in favour of a more Heraclitean expression of human beings having an apparently rather irreconcilable tendency - both now and as in the past - to ignore (or forget or not understand) certain things, even after matters have been explained to them (they have heard the explanation) and even after they have discovered certain truths for themselves.

### 3. διαιρέων and Φύσις

I take the sense of διαιρέων here somewhat poetically to suggest not the ordinary 'divide' but the more expressive 'cleave', with it being undivided Physis that is cleaved into parts by "such naming and expression" as Heraclitus has

revealed. That is, Heraclitus is not saying that he has described or expressed each thing 'in accordance with its true nature' (or divided things correctly, or something of the kind) but rather that the process of naming and categorization is or has divided Physis, obscuring the true nature of Being and beings, and it is this process, this obscuring, or concealment, of Physis - of cleaving it into separate parts or each thing, 'each' contrasted with a generality [7] - that he has revealed and is mentioning here, as he mentioned it in fragment 123:

Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ

Concealment accompanies Physis [8]

Which is why I have transliterated Φύσις as referring to a general philosophical principle of the philosophy of Heraclitus, or at least of what, of that philosophy or *weltanschauung*, we can adduce from the textual fragments we possess.

#### 4. πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων

In respect of ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, the Homeric usage [9] is, for me, interesting as it implies a proverbial kind of saying rather than just 'words' and 'deeds':

Τηλέμαχ', οὐδ' ὄπιθεν κακὸς ἔσσει οὐδ' ἀνοήμων,  
εἰ δὴ τοι σοῦ πατρὸς ἐνέστακται μένος ἠΰ,  
οἷος κείνος ἔην τελέσαι ἔργον τε ἔπος τε

Telemachus - you will not be unlucky nor lacking in resolution  
If you hereafter instill into yourself the determination of your father  
Whose nature was to accomplish those deeds he said he would.

Furthermore, I take the sense here of πειρώμενοι poetically to suggest a "fumbling about" - as the inexperienced often fumble about and experiment until, often by trial and error, they have gained sufficient experience to understand and know what they are doing and what is involved, which rather reminds one of a saying of Pindar [10]:

γλυκὸν δὲ πόλεμος ἀπείροισιν, ἐμπείρων δὲ τις  
ταρβεῖ προσιόντα νιν καρδίᾳ περισσῶ

#### 5. ἐγερθέντες and εὔδοντες

Given that, as mentioned above, there is poetry in Heraclitus, I am inclined to avoid the literal, and usual, understanding of ἐγερθέντες and εὔδοντες, particularly given the foregoing πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων which renders such a literal understanding not only out of context and disjointed but decidedly odd.

Human beings forgetting things when they sleep? If, however, and for example, ἐγείρω here poetically suggests alertness, an interest or excitement - as ἦγειρεν in the Agamemnon suggests an alertness and excitement, an interest in what has occurred, and thence the kindling of a pyre [11] - then there is, as often in Heraclitus, a flowing eloquence and that lack of discordance one might expect of an aphorism remembered and recorded long after the demise of its author.

DWM  
2013

Notes

[1] *qv. The Abstraction of Change as Opposites and Dialectic, and Some Notes on Πόλεμος and Δίκη in Heraclitus B80*

As mentioned in *The Abstraction of Change as Opposites and Dialectic*:

"In addition, Polemos was originally the δαίμων [not the god] of kindred strife, whether familial, or of one's πόλις (one's clan and their places of dwelling). Thus, to describe Polemos, as is sometimes done, as the god of conflict (or war), is doubly incorrect."

[2] *qv. Sextus Empiricus: Advenus Mathematicos VII. 132*

[3] Regarding 123 - Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ - *qv. Physis, Nature, Concealment, and Natural Change, e-text 2010*

[4] "In Priene was born someone named and recalled as most worthy - Bias, that son of Teutamas."

[5]

We have many ways to conceal - to name - certain things  
And the skill when we wish to expose their meaning

[6] Aristotle: *Ars Rhetorica*, Book 3, chapter 5 [1407b]

[7] As in Homer et al, for example *Iliad*, Book VII, 215 -

Τρῶας δὲ τρόμος αἰνὸς ὑπήλυθε γυῖα ἕκαστον  
But over the Trojans, a strange fear, to shake the limbs of each one there

[8] qv. my *Physis, Nature, Concealment, and Natural Change* [Notes on Heraclitus fragment 123], e-text 2010

[9] *Odyssey*, Book II, 272

[10] Fragment 110

[11] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 296-299

σθένουσα λαμπὰς δ' οὐδέπω μαυρουμένη,  
ὑπερθοροῦσα πεδίον Ἀσωποῦ, δίκην  
φαιδρᾶς σελήνης, πρὸς Κιθαιρῶνος λέπας  
ἤγειρεν ἄλλην ἐκδοχὴν πομποῦ πυρός.

The torch, vigorous and far from extinguished,  
Bounded over the Asopian plain  
To the rocks of Cithaeron as bright as the moon  
So that the one waiting there to begin that fire, jumped up

Note that here the watchman is not awakened from sleep.

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## II. Some Conjectures Concerning Our Nexible Physis

Given that we human beings are a sentient species, an interesting question is whether we have, over the past three thousand years, fundamentally changed. Changed in physis sufficient to enable us to avoid what our thousands of years old human culture of *pathei-mathos* informs us is unwise. For example, around 700 BCE

Hesiod wrote:

σὺ δ' ἄκουε δίκης, μηδ' ὕβριν ὄφελλε:  
ὕβρις γάρ τε κακὴ δειλῶ βροτῶ: οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλὸς  
215 ῥηιδίως φερέμεν δύναται, βαρύθει δέ θ' ὑπ' αὐτῆς  
ἐγκύρσας ἄτησιν: ὁδὸς δ' ἐτέρηφι παρελθεῖν  
κρείσσων ἐς τὰ δίκαια: Δίκη δ' ὑπὲρ ὕβριος ἴσχει  
ἐς τέλος ἐξελθοῦσα: παθῶν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω

You should listen to [the goddess] Fairness and not oblige Hubris  
Since Hubris harms unfortunate mortals while even the more fortunate  
Are not equal to carrying that heavy a burden, meeting as they do with Mischief.

The best path to take is the opposite one: that of honour  
For, in the end, Fairness is above Hubris  
Which is something the young come to learn from adversity. [1]

Certainly, in the many intervening centuries, some individuals - from adversity, or otherwise - have learned to avoid hubris and be fair, as is evident in our ever-growing human culture of *pathei-mathos*. But have we as a species, en masse, learned anything physis-changing - and learned by ourselves or by virtue of being instructed or educated - from the likes of Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristotle, Pliny, and Cicero; from the Rig-Veda; from the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama and Lao Tzu; from the gospel narratives of the life and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; from the music of JS Bach; from the art of Botticelli, Hokusai, and van Gogh; from the literature of the likes of Jane Austen, Solzhenitsyn, and Mariama Bâ; from the thousands and thousands and thousands of armed conflicts, wars, and invasions, of the past three thousand years; from the individual stories of suffering - of rape, torture, murder, starvation, theft, humiliation - traumatically recounted year after year, decade following decade, and century after century?

If we human beings - we mortals - have in sufficient numbers so learned and so changed, is that change qualifiable? My own, admittedly fallible, view is that it is qualifiable; with my tentative suggestion - the conclusion of some years considering the matter - being that it is by how we as individuals perceive, how we understand, and how we humans as a result of such a new perceivation externally manifest (in terms of, for example, our societies, our attitudes, and our laws) the muliebral virtues and thus the position of women and gender roles in general. Qualifiable in this way because - at least according to my own learning, and my understanding of the culture of *pathei-mathos* - of our nexible physis.

For our physis - our being, as mortals, and thus our character as individuals - is not only subject to enantiodromia:

"[to] the revealing, the process, of perceiving, feeling, knowing, beyond causal appearance and the separation-of-otherness and thus when what has become separated - or has been incorrectly perceived as separated - returns to the wholeness, the unity, from whence it came forth. When, that is, beings are understood in their correct relation to Being, beyond the causal abstraction of different/conflicting ideated opposites, and when as a result, a reformation of the individual, occurs.

A relation, an appreciation of the numinous, that empathy and *pathei-mathos* provide, and which relation and which appreciation the accumulated *pathei-mathos* of individuals over millennia have made us aware of or tried to inform us or teach us about," [2]

but also, as I have mentioned elsewhere, because my thesis is that

"it is the muliebral virtues which evolve us as conscious beings, which presence sustainable millennial change. Virtues such as empathy, compassion, humility, and that loyal shared personal love which humanizes those masculous talking-mammals of the Anthropocene, and which masculous talking-mammals have - thousand year following thousand year - caused so much suffering to, and killed, so many other living beings, human and otherwise." [3]

Considered in such qualifiable terms, there do appear to be some promising signs: for it does seem that several modern societies are - via more and more individuals acquiring a new perceivation and thence a new understanding - slowly moving toward that equality between men and women, that rejection of stereotypical gender roles, and that recognition of the importance - of the necessity - of the muliebral virtues; which, combined, manifest an enantiodromiacal change in our human physis and which change, which balancing of the masculous with the muliebral, consequently could evolve us beyond the patriarchal ethos, and the masculous societies, which have been such a feature of human life on this planet for the past three thousand years, genesis as that ethos and those societies have been of so much grieving.

Which leads to interesting questions, to which I admit I have no answers. Questions such as whether we can, en masse, so change, and whether - if we can so change or are so slowly changing - it will take us another three thousand years, or more, or less, to live, world-wide, in societies where fairness, peace, and compassion, are the norm because the males of our species - perhaps by heeding Fairness and not obliging Hubris, perhaps by learning from our shared human culture of pathei-mathos - have personally, individually, balanced within themselves the masculous with the muliebral and thus, because of sympatheia, follow the path of honour. Which balancing would naturally seem to require a certain conscious intent.

What, therefore, is our intent, as individual human beings, and can our human culture of pathei-mathos offer us some answers, or perchance some guidance? As an old epigram so well-expressed it:

θνητοῖσιν ἀνώϊστων πολέων περ οὐδὲν ἀφραστότερον πέλεται νόου ἀνθρώποισι

"Of all the things that mortals fail to understand, the most incomprehensible is human intent." [4]

Personally, I do believe that our human culture of pathei-mathos - rooted as it is in our ancient past, enriched as it has been over thousands of years by each new generation, and informing as it does of what is wise and what is unwise - can offer us both some guidance and some answers.

September 2014

Notes

[1] Hesiod, Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι [Works and Days], vv 213-218. My translation. Some notes on the translation:

a. δίκη. The goddess of Fairness/Justice/Judgement, and - importantly - of Tradition (Ancestral Custom). In this work, as in Θεογονία (Theogony), Hesiod is recounting and explaining part of that tradition, one important aspect of which tradition is understanding the relation between the gods and mortals. Given both the antiquity of the text and the context, 'Fairness' - as the name of the goddess - is, in my view, more appropriate than the now common appellation 'Justice', considering the modern (oft times impersonal) connotations of the word 'justice'.

b. Μischief. The sense of ἄτησιν here is not of 'delusion' nor of 'calamities', per se, but rather of encountering that which or those whom (such as the goddess of mischief, Ἄτη) can bring mischief or misfortune into the 'fortunate life' of a 'fortunate mortal', and which encounters are, according to classical tradition, considered as having been instigated by the gods. Hence, of course, why Sophocles [Antigone, 1337-8] wrote

ὥς πεπρωμένης οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγὴ  
mortals cannot be delivered from the misfortunes of their fate.

c. δίκαιος. Honour expresses the sense that is meant: of being fair; capable of doing the decent thing; of dutifully observing ancestral customs. A reasonable alternative for 'honour' would thus be 'decency', both preferable to words such as 'just' and 'justice' which are not only too impersonal but have too many inappropriate modern connotations.

d. νήπιος. Literal - 'young', 'uncultured' (i.e. un-schooled, un-educated in the ways of ancestral custom) - rather than metaphorical ('foolish', ignorant).

[2] *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, 2013. ISBN 9781484096642.

[3] *Some Questions For DWM*, 2014.

[4] *Vitae Homeri, Epigrammata V*. My translation.

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### III. Just Passing By

It is one hour past noon on a somewhat typical English Winter day: a morning of rain and gusty winds, and not that cold, but with that dull light brought by overcast skies which - together with the dampness wrought by hours and hours of rain and with trees bereft of green - makes one to dream, if only for a moment, of those warm lightful days of Summer.

So here I am, fortunate in so many ways compared to so many in so very many other places; free, following a repletful meal, to sit within a house at a desk and muse again on certain metaphysical questions, with music of centuries past - *Lachrimae Antiquae*, by Dowland - having been reproduced by almost magical modern means, just ended; while, elsewhere in the world, the usual mayhem, violence, suffering - and killings - continue. And continue in the name of one cause, one dream, one hope, or another; continue in dutiful service, many times, of one interpretation of one faith, or another; or, as so often, continue because of that primal servitude as when a man betakes a woman to force himself upon her just because he wants to or because he can.

No empathy, there; present and past. No restraint, however wrought or brought: human, δαίμων, wyrdful, consciential, divinity, or divine. No culture of *pathei-mathos*, or at least no personal lessons learned therefrom. But of course there are, they always are, the inevitable excuses from so many for so much suffering done: words and speeches; dogma, ideology, demagoguery, deceit. For there is this idea, this manifesto - or that. And, whatever the words, the descriptions, the idea, the ideology, whatever the excuses, someone - so many - suffer. I know, for I have been there, done - and said and written - that, decade following decade. I know all the excuses, all the primal feelings, all the dogma, the ideologies: the violence, the mayhem, the deaths, the hatred, and the incitement of the division - the separation-of-otherness - that so divides.

How, then, I ask - partly in hope of expiation - can we ever hope to end this? This repetition of so causing suffering, generation following generation, millennia after millennia. Yet again I admit that I do not really know, although I have this feeling, born of my own suffering-causing past, that it is our surety - our certainty-of-knowing - that does so mislead and has so misled we fallible, we so error-prone, human beings; conveying to us as such surety surely does that sense of purpose that can so vitalize our so short mortal lives. For I sense that it is a personal empathy that we need; not words; not some surety whose genesis is some ideology, some idea, some speech, some manifesto, some philosophy, some book, some cause, some fervent religious faith, or even some idealistic dream of a better future wrought by having to do certain things 'now'.

A need for the empathy that engenders in us such a *sympatheia* with another living being that their fear is our fear, their pain our pain, their grief our grief, and their joy our joy; and not in some airy-fairy way but such that we feel - bodily, mentally - exactly what they do. How, then, could we hurt them, those others who are ourself? How, then, could we cause anyone to suffer? How then could we humiliate them, deprive them of dignity? How then could we manipulate and deceive them? How then could we torture, do violence to, and kill, them? How, then, could we sally forth to war to injure and to kill?

A few such empathys already exist; perhaps have always existed, or maybe have slowly emerged a millennia - or more, or less - ago. Empaths: those who physically feel the pain of others in a particular part of their body; those who sense, who feel, what eyes or voice convey or try to conceal. Those who, so feeling, so sensing, are become or can be so sensitive that they quite often have to reclusively keep themselves away; sometimes more at peace, in their empathy-bred humility, with animals and Nature than with others of their human kind. Some empathys naturally born; perhaps slightly more by *pathei-mathos* made. Are such empathys, then, our future? An evolutionary leap? And if so, can or even should such empathy be developed in others? Or should we - however well-intentioned we consider ourselves to be - not, and never again, interfere at all, but rather let whatever comes-into-being come-into-being, in its own way and in its own species of worldly, human, time?

Empathy seems to me to be the kernel of that way of living, that personal character, that perhaps all spiritual ways, and all mysticism, have sought, and do seek, to encourage. Manifest as this is in compassion, humility, a gentleness, and an appreciation of the numinous: of a placing of ourselves in perspective, of we as fallible mortals prone because of our hubris to upset the natural balance. But empathy needs no deities; no god or God; no concept of sinner and saved; no heaven, and no mechanism such as rebirth and karma. There is empathy, and that is all.

An empathy engendering a silent interior deeply personal knowing, beyond words, of the illusion of our self. Of how 'we' are but one connexion to all that is, was, or ever will be. Of how the connexions encompass the Cosmos and not just our planet, Earth. A knowing that we are visitors just passing by; of how our connexion is presenced, temporarily, here where and how we are; and of how it can flux, change, to be what it could be, embodied perhaps in - as - some part of Nature here, or as some type of life somewhere in a galaxy near or far distant. A knowing of how it is, or seems to be, our sense of self that closes this our connexion to our potentiality of being some presenced emanation of future life, and how that connexion is or can be kept open, alive, by a feeling for the life, the beings, the worlds, the Cosmos, beyond our microcosmic mortal selves. But how can those living in poverty - or who are homeless, or hungry, or dispossessed, or oppressed, or abused, or sick, or traumatised or injured by conflict and war, or subjected to brutality and injustice - appreciate, let alone consider how they might live by, all this? It is just mysticism; devoid of practical purpose to those in need of the basics, the staples, of life and day to day living.

Why, then, do I chunter on, pondering on empathy? Partly in hope; partly in expiation. But mostly because it is all I now seem to have; as an artist or musician have their artisements. Long gone now those deeds born of a desire to change the world through action, for all I personally wrought through my certitude-of-knowing was suffering. And such knowing, such an intuition of understanding, as becalms me now makes me to see the longer, the more millennial, view; of a Cosmos changing as it changes entirely independent of us few terrans here, and of how nations, States,



empires, tyrants, dogma, ideology - and even a cherished faith - pass away; the only seeming constant "a mysterium esoteric even to this day" [1], our human nature, jumelle as it is in essence, and why we (apparently uniquely among life presented here on Earth) are, as one ancient metaphysical tract expressed it, 'deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal'. For we might also well ask, as the student of Pœmandres did: "You who are earth-bound, why do you embrace death when you have the means to partake of immortality?" [2] The means, that is (at least according to my fallible and limited understanding), of empathy.

January 2014

[1] Corpus Hermeticum, Pœmandres, 16. Translated by DWM: *Pœmandres*, included in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. ISBN 978-1976452369.

[2] Corpus Hermeticum, Pœmandres, 28.

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#### IV. Personal Reflexions On Some Metaphysical Questions

The cosmogony described in the *Ἱερός Λόγος* tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum answers certain interesting and important metaphysical questions in a particular and ancient way:

Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία. ἀρχὴ  
τῶν ὄντων ὁ θεός καὶ νοῦς καὶ φύσις καὶ ὕλη, σοφία εἰς  
δειξίν ἀπάντων ὧν· ἀρχὴ τὸ θεῖον καὶ φύσις καὶ ἐνέργεια  
καὶ ἀνάγκη καὶ τέλος καὶ ἀνανέωσις [...]

τὸ γὰρ θεῖον ἢ πᾶσα κοσμικὴ σύγκρασις φύσει ἀνανεου-  
μένη· ἐν γὰρ τῷ θείῳ καὶ ἡ φύσις καθέστηκεν

The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.

The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceiver and Physis and Substance:

The sapientia which is a revealing of all beings.

For the numinal is the origin: physis, vigour, incumbency, accomplishment, renewance [...]

The divine is all of that mision: renewance of the cosmic order through Physis

For Physis is presented in the divine. [1]

All such 'theological' answers - from classical Greco-Roman paganism and mysticism to Gnosticism to Christianity and Islam - lead us to enquire (i) if Being - whether denoted by terms such as acausal, born-less, θεός The One, The Divine, God, The Eternal, Μονάς - can be apprehended (or defined) by some-things which are causal (denoted by terms such as spatial, temporal, renewance), and (ii) whether this 'acausal Being' is the origin or the genesis or 'the artisan' [2] or the creator of both causal being (including 'time', and 'change') and of causal living beings such as ourselves.

That is, (i) has causal spatially-existing being 'emerged from' - or been created by - acausal Being, and (ii) are causal beings - such as ourselves - an aspect or emanation of acausal Being?

My admittedly fallible understanding now, after some years of reflexion and based as it is on my limited knowledge, is that formulating such a question in such terms - causal/acausal; whole/parts; eternal/temporal; ipseity/unity; emergent from/genesis of - is a mis-apprehension of what-is because such denoting is 'us as observer' (i) positing, as Plato did, such things as a theory regarding 'the ideal' [3], and/or (ii) constructing a form or abstraction (ἰδέα) which we then presume to project onto what is assumed to be 'external' to us, both of which present us with only an illusion of understanding and meaning because implicit in such theories and in all such constructed forms are (i) an opposite (an 'other') and (ii) the potentiality for discord (dialectical or otherwise) between such opposites and/or because of a pursuit of what is regarded as 'the ideal' of some-thing. Hence, perhaps, why Heraclitus is reported to have written:

εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα

One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord.

[Fragment 80]

πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ' εἰμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα

All by genesis is appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] with beings bound together again by enantiodromia.

[Diogenes Laërtius, ix. 7]

In effect, our innate assumption of our existence as sentient individuals - separate from 'the other', be that other Being itself or other beings - leads us and has led us to formulate and to strive to answer certain metaphysical questions in a particular way. That is, from the position of an 'observer' whose answers are dependant on postulated concepts described or denoted by words such as 'time', 'change', God, theos/theoi, and 'the ideal'.

Is it therefore possible for us to discover our being, our physis - in effect, know Reality and discover the meaning of our existence - without such postulations, be they metaphysical or theological or otherwise? My fallible answer, based as it is on my limited knowledge and my own experience, is that it is possible; and possible by means of empathy and

pathei-mathos. However, by necessity - given the personal (local) horizon of both empathy and pathei-mathos [4] - the knowing so revealed is (i) only our personal fallible answer, and also is (ii) always sans denotatum [5], a wordless empathic knowing that cannot be expressed (by words, terms) without in some way distorting it or denuding it of such numinosity as has been personally discovered (revealed) by empathy and pathei-mathos.

For empathy and pathei-mathos incline us to suggest that ipseity is an illusion of perspective: that there is, fundamentally, no division between 'us' - as some individual sentient, mortal being - and what has hitherto been understood and named as the Unity, The One, God, The Eternal. That 'we' are not 'observers' but rather Being existing as Being exists and is presenced in the Cosmos. That thus all our striving, individually and collectively when based on some ideal or on some form - some abstraction and what is derived therefrom, such as ideology and dogma - always is or becomes sad/tragic, and which recurrence of sadness/tragedy, generation following generation, is perhaps even inevitable unless and until we live according to the wordless knowing that empathy and pathei-mathos reveal. In this matter, Heraclitus perhaps had something interesting to say, again:

τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἑόντος ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόσασιν, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῦμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἄνθρώπους λαμβάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται

Although this naming and expression [which I explain] exists, human beings tend to ignore it, both before and after they have become aware of it. Yet even though, regarding such naming and expression, I have revealed details of how Physis has been cleaved asunder, some human beings are inexperienced concerning it, fumbling about with words and deeds, just as other human beings, be they interested or just forgetful, are unaware of what they have done. [Fragment 1]

What, therefore, is the wordless knowing that empathy and pathei-mathos reveal? It is the knowing manifest in our human culture of pathei-mathos. The knowing communicated to us, for example, by art, music, literature, and manifest in the lives of those who presenced, in their living, compassion, love, and honour.

Germane to this knowing is that - unlike a form or an abstraction - it is always personal (limited in its applicability) and can only be embodied in and presenced by some-thing or by some-one which or who lives.

That is, it cannot be abstracted out of the living, the personal, moment of its presencing by someone or abstracted out from its living apprehension by others in the immediacy-of-the-moment, and thus cannot become 'an ideal' or form the foundation for some dogma or ideology or supra-personal faith.

### **Plato, Art, and The Ideal**

Since art can wordlessly communicate to us the wisdom, and the knowing of Reality, revealed individually by both empathy and the culture of pathei-mathos, it seems apposite to briefly consider Plato's rather influential notions of τὸ καλόν (of beauty) and of 'the ideal'.

As Isocrates wrote of Helen of Troy:

κάλλους γὰρ πλεῖστον μέρος μετέσχεν, ὃ σεμνότατον καὶ τιμιώτατον καὶ θειότατον τῶν ὄντων ἐστίν.

Of all things valued, numinous, and divine, she had the greatest share: beauty. [Encomium, 54]

However, with Plato, τὸ καλόν becomes impersonal, even when the subject he is writing about is human 'nobility'. That is, it becomes something unrelated to what is personally known and proven (revealed) by what is real (as for example in the deeds of a real-life individual). For Plato, it is related to or manifests ἀρετή ('virtue'), which in his philosophy becomes a hypothesized abstraction which a person may or may not possess and which, it is claimed, can be 'brought into being' by other abstractions, such as a Republic.

Thus, in Phaedo (78b), Plato writes about αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν and about αὐτὸ ἕκαστον ὃ ἔστιν: that is, of 'abstract' (true, ideal) beauty and of 'abstract' (true, ideal) being. In Kratylus 389d he has Socrates talk about 'true, ideal' naming (denotatum) - βλέποντα πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο ὃ ἔστιν ὄνομα.

Also in Kratylus (386d-386e), Plato has Socrates say:

μήτε ἐκάστῳ ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ἐστίν δῆλον δὴ ὅτι αὐτὰ αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ἔχοντά τινα βέβαιόν ἐστι τὰ πράγματα

Each being has their own mode [of being] which is constant, and which is neither caused by nor related to us.

Furthermore, he writes that:

πρῶτον μὲν ἀεὶ ὄν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον, οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον

Firstly, it always exists, and has no genesis. It does not die, does not grow, does not decay.

(Symposium 210e - 211a)

ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ ἀεὶ ἐπανιέναι, ὥσπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρώμενον

Starting from that beauty, that person must - because of such beauty - always as by a ladder move on, upwards.

(Symposium 211c)

While many other examples could be adduced, it does seem evident that Plato posits some abstraction - whether described by him in terms such as ἰδέα, εἶδος, or involving αὐτὸ (i.e. form, ideal, 'true'/of itself) - and which abstraction, because it has no genesis, does not die, does not grow, and yet which invokes change - a moving-on by, or discord resulting from, the pursuit of such an ideal by individuals - is independent of and often damaging to our living (and thus numinous) reality as individual diverse human beings possessed of the faculty of empathy and able to learn from the culture of *pathei-mathos*.

In contrast, when Aristotle, in an oblique reference to Plato, writes τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἶδη τάξις καὶ συμμετρία καὶ τὸ ὠρισμένον [6] he is referring to what is real, what actually exists - ὥστε διὰ τοῦτο ὀρθῶς οἱ γεωμέτραι λέγουσι καὶ περὶ ὄντων διαλέγονται καὶ ὄντα ἐστίν: διττὸν γὰρ τὸ ὄν.

That is, to the beauty of geometry as manifest, for example, by geometers when - as in Euclid's *Elements* - they make logical deductions from schemata and harmony and consonancy. Aristotle goes on to write that τὸ καλόν is especially revealed (δείκνυμι) in mathematics: ἃ μάλιστα δεικνύουσιν αἱ μαθηματικαὶ ἐπιστήμαι.

Also, when Aristotle deals with ἀρετή he considers it a μέσον (meson, median, a balance between 'being' (actually existing) and 'not-being' (a potentiality), qv. *Metaphysics* 9.1051a) and thus discards Plato's εἶδος of an abstractive 'good' and 'bad'. Which discarding was an excellent philosophical beginning given how Plato's abstractive 'ideal' of some-thing with its implication that a person "must - because of that ideal - always as by a ladder be moving on, upwards," is and has been the genesis of discord and suffering.

Empathy and *pathei-mathos*, however, emphasize the importance of living in the "immediacy of the personal, living, moment", sans the pursuit of some ideal or of some assumed perfection; with what is 'good'

being not some abstraction denoted by some faith, dogma, ideal, ideology, or by some collocation of words, but rather is a function of, a wordless revealing by, our personal, our individual, empathic horizon, by our *pathei-mathos*, and by the collected human *pathei-mathos* of millennia manifest as that is in the culture of *pathei-mathos*. Which revealing is that what-lives is more important than any ideal, than any abstraction or form, with 'the good' simply being that which does not cause suffering to, or which can alleviate the suffering of, what-lives, human and otherwise.

Thus the 'meaning' of our physis, of our living, so revealed, is just that of a certain way of living; a non-defined, non-definable, very personal way of living, only relevant to us as an individual where we -

appreciating our human culture of *pathei-mathos*, and thus appreciative of art, music, literature, and other emanations of the numinous - incline toward not causing suffering and incline (by means of empathy, compassion, and honour) toward alleviating such suffering as we may personally encounter in the "immediacy of the personal, living, moment".

March 2015

The genesis of this essay was some correspondence, in February and March 2015, with an academic, and which correspondence concerned certain metaphysical questions. I have paraphrased parts of, or utilized quotations from, or rewritten certain passages from, several of my replies. All translations (and errors) are mine.

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Notes

[1] Myatt, David, *Ἰερός Λόγος: An Esoteric Mythos*. Included in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. ISBN 978-1976452369.

[2] In respect of *theos* as artisan (δημιουργόν) qv. the *Corpus Hermeticum*; for example *Poemandres* 11.

[3] qv. Plato, Art, and The Ideal, below.

[4] 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 purview 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.

[5] Denotatum - from the Latin, denotare - is used here in accord with its general meaning, which is "to denote or to describe by an expression or a word; to name some-thing; to refer that which is so named or so denoted." As an Anglicized term denotatum can denote both singular and plural instances

[6] *Metaphysics*, Book 13, 1078a. "The most noticeable expressions of kalos are schemata and harmony and consonancy."

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## V. Some Notes on Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015a

### Text

ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἢ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἢ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ αὐτά: ἢ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσα πῶς ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.

### Translation

Given the foregoing, then principally - and to be exact - physis denotes the quidditas of beings having change inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changes predicated on it. For physis is inherent change either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.

### Commentary And Notes

*physis*. φύσις. A transliteration, since (i) this is a fundamental philosophical principle/term that requires contextual interpretation, and (ii) the English words 'nature' and Nature not only do not adequately describe this principle but also lead to and have led to certain misunderstandings of Aristotle in particular and of classical Greek culture in general.

*quidditas*. οὐσία. Quidditas - post-classical Latin, from whence the English word 'quiddity' - is more appropriate here than 'essence', given the metaphysical (ontological) context and given that 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical connotations. An interesting alternative would be the scholastic term haecceity. As with physis, quidditas is a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation.

*change inherent*. The expression ἀρχὴν κινήσεως is crucial to understanding what Aristotle means in respect of physis. In regard to κίνησις, since Aristotle here does not mean 'motion' or 'movement' in the sense of Newtonian physics (with its causal concepts of force, mass, velocity, kinetic energy), and since such physical movement is what the English words 'motion' and 'movement' now most usually denote, then alternatives must be found. Hence the translation 'changement'.

For what Aristotle is describing here is 'change', as for example in the natural development, the unfolding, the growth, of some-thing living that occurs because it is living; because it is possessed of Life and which Life is the ἀρχή of the change, the 'original being' (the φύσις) from whence being-becomes to be often perceived and classified by us in orderly ways.

What is described is an a-causal change, of being-becoming - of being unfolding - and thus fulfilling the potentiality of being within it. Hence why here Aristotle writes ἀρχὴν κινήσεως, which describes the potential change inherent in certain beings. 1 That is, the a-causal origin of beings-becoming, or having become, and which beings (having changed, developed, unfolded) we then perceive and classify in orderly ways 2, such as by shape or usefulness to us, or by a notion such as causality: in terms of physical- 'movement'. Which is why, in Aristotle, there is a relation between φύσις, μορφή, and εἶδος - εἶδος in the sense of 'perceiveration' and not, as in Plato, denoting an abstract 'form' or an 'ideal' - διὸ καὶ ὅσα φύσει ἔστιν ἢ γίνεταί, ἤδη ὑπάρχοντος ἔξ οὗ πέφυκε γίνεσθαι ἢ εἶναι, οὕτω φαιμέν τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν ἔαν μὴ ἔχη τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν μορφήν.

Thus φύσις is what is a-causal in beings and which acausality is the origin of the 'natural' order that unfolds because of the potentiality of being to become, to presence in the causal, whence to be perceived by us in various orderly arrangements and/or arranged in terms of usefulness, and which arrangements/usefulness include τὸ καλόν - and thus schemata, τάξις 3 - and ἀρετή.

*substantia*. ὕλη. I have chosen to use the etymon of the English word 'substance' - qv. substantia in Thomas Aquinas, Sententia libri Metaphysicae - to again (i) emphasize the need for contextual interpretation in respect of a specific philosophical term, and (ii) to avoid whatever misunderstandings may arise from the modern (non-ontological) connotations of words such as 'matter' and 'substance'.

*as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changes predicated on it.* καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. The sense of γένεσις here implies a 'coming-into-being' rather than just 'generation', just as φύω implies a being 'burgeoning' - unfolding, revealing itself (its physis) - rather than just 'growing'.

*the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.* The Greek word ἐντελεχείᾳ is compounded from ἐν ελεῖ ἔχει and the sense here - in relation to ἐνυπάρχουσα - seems to be twofold: of a being as an unchanged being, and of what a being has become (or is becoming) as a result of a change, for both types of being actually exist, are real. One exists as a being as it is and has remained, and one exists as the being it has become (or is in the process of becoming) through the potential for change inherent within it. Thus, for Aristotle, physis denotes the being of both types of being.

March 2015

[1] In respect of ἀρχή as implying what is primarily inherent, qv. 1012b-1013a.

[2] As Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Sciendum est autem, quod principium et causa licet sint idem subiecto, differunt tamen ratione. Nam hoc nomen principium ordinem quemdam importat; hoc vero nomen causa, importat influxum quemdam ad esse causati." Sententia libri Metaphysicae, liber 5, lectio 1, n 3.

[3] Regarding 1078a, τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἶδη τάξις καὶ συμμετρία καὶ τὸ ὠρισμένον (the most noticeable expressions of kalos are schemata and harmony and consonancy), my view - given the context - is that τάξις here is best translated as "schemata", rather than "order" or "arrangement" both of which are vague, open to misinterpretation, and unrelated to the context, which context is mathematical beauty. Similarly, ὀρίζω (to me) suggests consonancy, echoing as that (now somewhat obscure) English word does both by its use by, among others, Shakespeare (Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2, 286) and also by its relation to the almost 'mathematical beauty' of some music (as evident for example in the counterpoint of JS Bach).

Furthermore, just because the Greek has συμμετρία it does not necessarily follow that the English word 'symmetry' is an appropriate translation, considering how the word symmetry is now used and has been used, in the West for many centuries, and especially in relation to art (in terms, for example, of objects and the human body).

Given that Aristotle in 1078a is referring to geometry in particular and mathematics in general, then an appropriate translation is 'harmony' - as in "a collation of representative signs or marks, so arranged that they exhibit their agreement and account for their discrepancies or errors." A harmony, in other words, that is most evident (as I mentioned in my essay) in Euclid's Elements, as schemata and consonancy are therein evident, most of the contents (theorems) of which book - deriving from people such as Pythagoras - were known to Aristotle.

Thus, a translation such as "the chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness" can in my opinion lead to projecting onto Aristotle what he may not necessarily have meant; and projecting onto in respect of how we now, over two thousand years after Aristotle, understand and use such common English terms. Hence, also, why I sometimes use obscure English words (which may suggest a relevant meaning) or transliterations (as in physis).

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## VI. Some Notes on Aristotle, Metaphysics, 987β

### Text

Σωκράτους δὲ περὶ μὲν τὰ ἠθικὰ πραγματευομένου περὶ δὲ τῆς ὅλης φύσεως οὐθέν, ἐν μέντοι τούτοις τὸ καθόλου ζητοῦντος καὶ περὶ ὀρισμῶν ἐπιστήσαντος πρώτου τὴν διάνοιαν, ἐκεῖνον ἀποδεξάμενος διὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ὑπέλαβεν ὡς περὶ ἐτέρων τοῦτο γιγνόμενον καὶ οὐ τῶν αἰσθητῶν: ἀδύνατον γὰρ εἶναι τὸν κοινὸν ὄρον τῶν αἰσθητῶν τινός, αἰεὶ γὰρ μεταβαλλόντων. οὗτος οὖν τὰ μὲν τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ιδέας προσηγόρευσε, τὰ δ' αἰσθητὰ παρὰ ταῦτα καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα λέγεσθαι πάντα: κατὰ μέθεξιν γὰρ εἶναι τὰ πολλὰ ὁμώνυμα τοῖς εἶδεσιν.

### Translation

Now, when Socrates occupied himself with ethics, giving no heed to Physis while seeking for what was universal therein and being the first to consider definitions, he [Plato] not only supported that approach but also favoured other existents rather than that consideration of percipient things, since [for him] it is not possible to have a standard for percipient things since they undoubtedly are liable to change.

These other existents he termed Forms, saying that each and every perceptible thing - being related to them - was so described because of them. For the generality, similarly named, have their being by participating in those Ideals.

### Notes

*universal.* καθόλου.

*physis.* φύσις. The usual translation here is 'Nature' as if 'the natural world' - and the physical cosmos beyond - are meant. According to my understanding of Aristotle, that is wrong. For, given that in Book 5, 1014b-1015a φύσις λέγεται ἕνα μὲν τρόπον ἢ τῶν φυσόμενων γένεσις οἷον εἴ τις ἐπεκτείνας λέγοι τὸ ἕνα δὲ ἐξ οὗ φύεται πρώτου τὸ φυσόμενον ἐνυπάρχοντος [...] - Aristotle describes in some detail the various meanings of physis, it is logical to assume that he is here probably using the term ontologically as described there. Hence a transliteration is preferable.

Thus, my understanding is that Aristotle is here critical of Socrates and Plato because - in their pursuit of abstractive definitions - they neglected physis: that is, neglected being and the potentiality of being to 'change' as in and for example (a) the motion (of 'things') and (b) the 'natural unfolding' or growth that living beings demonstrate.

*percipient* (things). αἰσθητός. Usually translated 'sensible' (things/entities), but qv. Book Three, 999b - εἰ μὲν οὖν μηδὲν ἐστὶ παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα οὐθέν ἂν εἴη νοητὸν ἀλλὰ πάντα αἰσθητὰ καὶ exist ἐπιστήμη οὐδενός εἰ μὴ τις εἶναι λέγει τὴν αἰσθησιν ἐπιστήμην - where it is clear that Aristotle means percipient/perceivation. [qv. also Book One, 980a - πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει σημεῖον δ' ἢ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἀγάπησις.]

The distinction - between percipient (a person who perceives) and sensible (perceptible by the senses) - may be subtle, but in my view is important for one relates to a person while the other relates to 'types of being'.

*perceived.* Hence why Aristotle goes on to mention the reason for Plato conjecturing his 'theory of forms' - because, according to Plato, individual percipients have changing and variable perceivers of 'sensible things'.

*undoubtedly liable to change.* ἀεί γε μεταβαλλόντων. For ἀεί as the more subtle 'liable to', 'subject to' (change) - rather than the bland 'always' - qv. Heraclitus Fragment 1 and Herodotus Book 2, 98.

*Forms.* ἰδέα. Since Plato often used ἰδέα and εἶδος interchangeably, 'idea'/'ideals' is also a suitable translation here, whence εἶδος as used by Aristotle would be 'form' rather than an 'ideal'.

*for the generality, similarly named, have their being by participating in those Ideals.* κατὰ μέθεξιν γὰρ εἶναι τὰ πολλὰ ὁμώνυμα τοῖς εἶδεσιν.

A rather obscure passage, which Aristotle goes on to explain is because Plato himself was rather vague in respect of what he meant by 'participation' (μέθεξις).

March 2015

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## VII. Notes On The Fourth Tractate Of The Corpus Hermeticum Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἢ μονάς

### Chaldron Or Monas

The title given to the fourth tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἢ μονάς, requires some consideration if it is to be translated without using English words that have, in the centuries since the text was written, acquired meanings which are not or which may not be relevant to or representative of the metaphysics, and the cosmogony, of such an ancient text; with an injudicious choice of words more often than not resulting in the modern reader projecting certain interpretations upon the text, as might be the case in translating, without some comment, κρατῆρ as 'basin', cup, or 'mixing bowl', μονάς as 'monad', and Τάτ as Thoth.

In respect of κρατῆρ, a more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - translation, given the esoteric nature and antiquity of the text, would be chaldron (an alternative spelling of 'cauldron'), since basin, cup, and 'mixing bowl' are not only too prosaic but also do not conjure the appropriate archetypal imagery: of the primal artisan-creator coagulating and mixing primal substances - qv. tractate III, ἱερός Λόγος - to produce, to bring-into-being by means of Logos, the cosmic order and thence mortal beings.

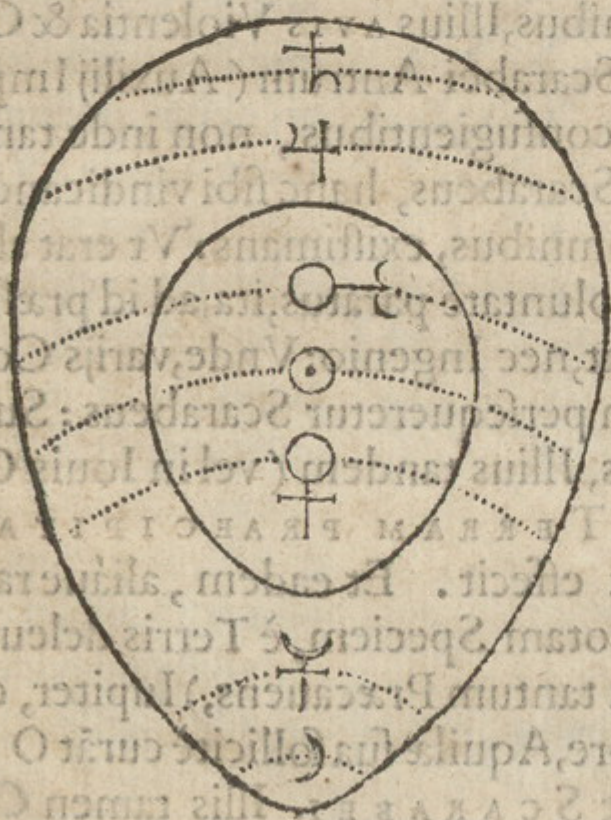
In respect of μονάς, the transliteration monas would be more appropriate - and certainly more subtle - than 'monad' given that the term monad is now so often associated with such weltanschauungen as those termed Pythagorean/neo-Pythagorean and Gnostic, an association which may or may not be relevant here.

Furthermore, monas has a long and interesting esoteric usage, including (somewhat recently) by John Dee in his *Testamentum Johannis Dee Philosophi summi ad Johannem Gwynn, transmissum 1568* - a text included (on page 334) in Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, Containing Severall Poeticall Pieces of our Famous English philosophers, who have written the Hermetique Mysteries in their owne Ancient Language*, published in London in 1652 - who wrote "our Monas trewe thus use by natures Law, both binde and lewse", and who also entitled one of his works *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp, 1564), in which work he described (in Theorem XVIII) a septenary system somewhat similar to that of the Poemandres tractate [1].

ficiunt. Quem Numerum, duabus adhuc alijs rationibus: ex præmissis vt nos elicere possumus: ita Cabalisticis Tyronibus, eundem commendamus eruendum: breuitati sic Studentes: Eiusdē tamen Magistralis Numeri, variam productionem artificiosam, Philosophorum dignam Iudicantes Consideratione. Nec vos, aliam, hīc, Mystagogiam Celabo, Memorabilem. **CRUCEM** nostram in duas alias literas, se Distribui Passam, Videntes: Si, vt Numeralem earundem virtutem quodam modo perpendimus prius, ita vicissim nunc **ILLARVM VERBALEM VIM**, **CVM IPSA CRUCE**, **CONFEREMVS**, quòd inde Oriatur **LUX: VERBVM**, Finale & Magistrale (ex illa **TERNARI**, in Vnitate Verbi, Conspiratione & Consensu) cum summa Admiracione, Intelligemus.

## THEOR. XVIII.

**EX** duodecimo & decimotertio Theorematis nostris colligi potest, Cælestem Astronomiam, **INFERIORIS** esse quasi Parē-



tem & Magistram.

Subleuatis ergo in Cælum oculis Cabalisticis (ex Prædictorū Mysteriorū Theorica Illuminatis) talē

ad amussim nostræ

**MONADIS**, conspiciemus **ANATOMIAM**: In NATV-

**RAB LVMINE**, VI

**TATQVE** sese sic nobis semper ostendē-

tem. Et suo pte **NV-**

**TV**, Secretissima hu-

**E** iusce

In respect of Τάτ, while there is no disputing that Thoth is meant, what may or may not be implied by the name Thoth is whether or not there is a primarily Egyptian genesis for the metaphysics and the cosmogony of this particular tractate. For what does 'Egyptian' mean in the context of the Corpus Hermeticum, written when Egypt was a post-Ptolemaic Roman province where Hellenism still thrived? That is, is the text propounding a metaphysics and a cosmogony primarily redolent of indigenous, pre-Alexandrian, times, with Hermes Trismegistus simply a Hellenic name for the ancient Dynastic deity Thoth, and thus with the Greek Hermes possibly being a son of that ancient Egyptian deity?

Or is the text redolent of a classical metaphysics and a cosmogony; or of a Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony; or of some syncretism of Egyptian (pre-Alexandrian) weltanschauungen with Hellenic mysticism? Or has the author (or authors) of Ἐρμού πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς simply used the name of an ancient deity - Thoth - in order to appeal to

an audience of Hellenized Egyptians, or Greeks/Romans dwelling in Egypt, or because it seemed to add some esoteric gravitas to the text? Or, as the title might be taken to imply - of Hermes to Thoth - is it a text intended to inform Egyptians (Hellenized or expatriate Greeks/Romans, or otherwise) about Greek/Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony, with Thoth thus regarded, symbolically, esoterically, or otherwise, as the son of the Greek divinity Hermes?

In this matter, I incline toward the view - based on some forty years of study of the Corpus Hermeticum and similar mystical and esoteric texts, classical, Hellenic, medieval, Arabic and otherwise - that what is imparted in this tractate, as with the Poemandres and the *ἱερός Λόγος*, is primarily a mystical, and - for centuries - aural, Greek tradition, albeit one possibly influenced, over time and in some degree, by the metaphysical speculations of later philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle.

That is, that in *Ἐρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς* and *ἱερός Λόγος* and *Ποιμάνδρης*, we have an intimation of the metaphysics and the cosmogony taught to initiates of that (or those) ancient and aural and pagan Greek mystical tradition(s) mentioned by writers such as Herodotus. And an intimation that is not - a few borrowed illustrative terms notwithstanding - in any significant and metaphysical manner deriving from or influenced by Biblical stories or by early Christian theology or by indigenous Egyptian culture. In the matter of a pagan Greek mystical tradition, the opening of the fourth tractate is, metaphysically, very interesting:

Ἐπειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγῳ ὥστε οὕτως ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου τῆ δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα

Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos, you should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, as One only, who by thelesis formed all that is. [2]

For it is incorrect and misleading to write about those three tractates - and most if not all the other tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum - as being in any way indigenously Egyptian. Rather, their genesis - the tradition they represented - was the Greek culture of post-Alexandrian Egypt, a cultural influence so evident in the numerous papyri found in places such as Oxyrhynchus, containing as such papyri do verses from Homer, Sappho, Menander, Sophocles, and other Greek authors.

January 2015

Notes

[1] *qv.* my translation of and commentary on the Poemandres tractate, included in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. ISBN 978-1976452369

[2] In respect of my translation:

*artisan.* δημιουργόν. *qv.* my translation of and commentary on Poemandres 9 [Poemandres, A Translation and Commentary. 2014]. The theme of an artisan-creator, and their artisements, is common to the third tractate (*ἱερός Λόγος*) as well. That the tractate begins by using the term artisan, rather than theos, is perhaps significant.

*that Being.* The construction of the Greek here implies the conventional "you should understand him as..." although how such a human-type gender could be adduced from or manifest by how the 'body' of the artisan-creator is described in subsequent verses is an interesting and relevant metaphysical question. Can, or should, a 'body' that cannot be touched, that cannot be seen, that cannot be measured, that is not separable - οὐδὲ διαστατόν - and thus which is not conventionally 'human', be described as male? It is to suggest such a metaphysical question (and the limitations of ordinary language) that I have here, and here only, departed from convention and used 'that Being' instead of 'him'.

There is also an interesting and perhaps relevant mention, in the second tractate of the Corpus, of the one, the being, who - like an artisan - constructs things:

ὁ οὖν θεὸς <τὸ> ἀγαθόν, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὁ θεός. ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα προσηγορία ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ πατρός, πάλιν διὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν πάντων. πατὴρ γὰρ τὸ ποιεῖν.

Thus theos is the noble and the noble is theos, although another title is that of father because the artifex of all being. For it is of a father to construct.

*presential.* πάρεμι. Presential - from the classical Latin praesentia - means "having or implying actual presence", as manifesting (as being presenced) in a locality or with an individual, and is thus more apposite here than the rather bland word 'present'. Cf. the use of 'presenced' in *ἱερός Λόγος* 2, et sequentia.

*One only.* ἑνὸς μόνου. A formulaic mystic phrase, implying uniqueness. Cf. ordinary usage in Plato, Crito 47, ἢ ἑνὸς μόνου ἐκείνου [...] ἑνὸς μόνου.

*thelesis.* θέλησις. Given what follows - τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἄπτόν, οὐδὲ ὄρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν - a transliteration to suggest something other than a human type 'will' or 'desire'; such as 'disposition'. That is, Being (whatsoever of whomsoever Being is, in terms of gender and otherwise) is predisposed to craft - to presence -



being as beings: as immortals (deities), as mortals (humans) and otherwise, *qv.* *ἑρὸς Λόγος*, *Poemandres* 8 ff, and *Poemandres* 31:

οὗ ἡ βουλή τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων

whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts.

*formed.* As an artisan forms their artiselements, and thus manifests their skill, their artistry, in what they produce. That is, the artisan-creator has formed, crafted, being (all existence) as beings.

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## VIII. Extremism, Terrorism, Culture, And Physis

### A Question Of Being

Disinclined as I am, and as I have been for many years, to comment on recent events, I have - after much reflexion - decided to respond to certain questions asked of me, given that several friends and diverse individuals (communicating through correspondence forwarded to me through intermediaries) have expressed an interest in my opinion about some recent events in France because of my forty years of (now regretted) practical experience of extremism [1] and extremists and which experience included not only being an advocate, as a Muslim, of what has become known as 'Islamic extremism', but also of being a neo-nazi activist and ideologue who preached and who advocated subversion, insurrection, hatred, and terrorism.

The recent events in France, where seventeen people were killed at four locations between the 7th and 9th of January 2015 - and similar events on other lands, from September 2001 (9/11) onwards - have led many people to speculate about the problem of, about causes of, and what may be required to prevent, such acts.

My admittedly fallible view, derived from my personal decades of experience, is that simple cause-and-effect answers are rather misguided, however naturally instinctive and/or politically expedient they might be - and/or however effective (or perhaps necessary) some of them might be in the short-term: of years, of a decade or more. For I incline toward the view that the long-term solution does not lie in more legislation, or in more security measures, or in idealizing one culture over and above another (as in the West verses Islam), or in invading other lands, or even in attempting to combat 'extremism' by means of advocacy of a 'moderate' interpretation of some religion or some political ideology. Rather, the long-term solution lies in understanding our basal physis [2] as human beings and then considering how - or even if - that basal physis can be changed, evolved.

For the reality - the truth - of our being is that we humans can always find, and have always found - century after century, millennia after millennia - some cause or some ideology or some ideation or some interpretation of some religion or some dogma or some leader to allow us to express, to live, what is solely masculine [3]. For as I know from my own experience and involvements such an expression, such a living, vivifies, excites, and has so often provided us (or a significant portion of us) with a sense of purpose, an identity, and thus given our lives meaning.

Thus, for that significant portion of us, it is our basal nature - our basal character - as human beings which is at fault, the cause; not some current or past harsh interpretation of some religion or of some weltanschauung; not some 'extremist' ideology, per se; not some failure to tackle extremism; not some deficiency of law nor some failure (of intelligence, or otherwise) by the Police or by some State security service. That is, the harsh modern interpretation of a religion such as Islam (manifest for example in al-Qa'ida and in groups such as ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fil 'Iraq wa ash-Sham), or the extremism manifest in nazism and fascism (past and present) are symptoms, not the cause.

For it is my considered opinion - fallible as it is and based as it is on what (admittedly limited) knowledge I have of the circumstances - that the perpetrators of recent events in France simply found, in a harsh interpretation of Islam, something which not only gave them a sense of purpose, a goal - which gave their lives meaning - but also provided them with an excuse to behave according to their physis or what they believed their physis should be: to be what they were or had become or should become. That is, lacking that empathy - such compassion and such honour, such muliebral virtues - as would have engendered within them a feeling for, an intuition of, and thus an appreciation of, innocency [4] and of individuals as individuals and not as abstracted 'enemies' or as somehow 'inferior' to them or as a means whereby what they believed in, or desired (such as some after-life), could be achieved.

In other words, a harsh modern interpretation of a particular religion hallowed what is masculine to the detriment of what is muliebral, making such a basal, such an unbalanced, masculine physis an ideal to be imitated and strived for, and which masculine ideal included the notion of a personal immolation, via *kampf* and a dishonourable disregard for the innocency of others, as a means to some posited goal. An unbalanced masculine physis also evident in - and idealized by - the ideologies of communism, nazism, and fascism, and in and by the 'puritanical' and inquisitorial interpretations of Christianity centuries before.

How then can that basal physis be changed or evolved? How can the masculine be balanced with the muliebral thus avoiding such unbalance, such bias toward the masculine, as has brought so much suffering recent and otherwise? All I have is a rather philosophical, quite long-term, and quite personal answer. Of, in terms of individuals, the development by individuals of empathy and the cultivation of the virtue of personal honour; and, in terms of society, *Studia Humanitatis*: that is, education to form, to shape, the manners and the character, of individuals by not only

acquainting them with such topics as are, and were traditionally, included in that subject, but also of them being educated in such knowledge concerning our physis as our thousands of years old human culture of pathei-mathos has bequeathed to us [5].

January 2015

Notes

[1] As I have explained in many of my post 2009 writings, by extreme is meant to be harsh, so that I consider an extremist is a person who tends toward harshness, or who is harsh, or who supports/incites harshness, in pursuit of some objective, usually of a political or a religious nature. Here, harsh is: rough, severe, a tendency to be unfeeling, unempathic, uncompassionate.

Hence I consider extremism to be: (a) the result of such harshness, and (b) the principles, the causes, the characteristics, that promote, incite, or describe the harsh action of extremists. In addition, a fanatic is considered to be someone with a surfeit of zeal or whose enthusiasm for some objective, or for some cause, is intemperate.

[2] I use the term physis (φύσις) as a revealing, a manifestation, of not only the true nature of beings but also of the relationship between beings, and between beings and Being. Physis is often apprehended (and thus understood) by we humans as the nature, the character, of some-thing; as, for example, in our apprehension of the character of a person.

[3] By the term masculous is meant certain traits, abilities, and qualities that are conventionally and historically associated with men, such as competitiveness, aggression, a certain harshness, the desire to organize/control, and a desire for adventure and/or for conflict/war/violence/competition over and above personal love, compassion, and culture. In my view, extremist ideologies manifest an unbalanced, an excessive, masculous nature.

Masculous is from the Latin masculus and occurs, for example, in some seventeenth century works such as one by William Struther: "This is not only the language of Canaan, but also the masculous Schiboleth." *True Happiness, or, King Davids Choice: Begunne In Sermons, And Now Digested Into A Treatise*. Edinbvrgh, 1633

[4] I use the term 'innocence' to refer to a presumed attribute of those who, being personally unknown to us, are therefore unjudged by us and who thus, as honour requires, are given the benefit of the doubt. For this presumption of the innocency of others - until direct personal experience, and individual and empathic knowing of them, prove otherwise - is the fair, the reasoned, the honourable, the cultured, the virtuous, thing to do.

[5] Refer to my May 2014 essay *Education And The Culture Of Pathei-Mathos*, and my more recent *Some Conjectures Concerning Our Nexible Physis*.

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## IX. The Manner of My Dying

The truth is that I am not of any significance, particular or otherwise: being only another emanation of ψυχή; one so fleetingly presenced on this planet we terrans have deigned to term Earth; one whose dying and death is just that of another mortal some years past three score; someone who out of choice has lived these past years alone, as reclusive and as empathically and as unconnected as he could; someone with few possessions whose final abode might well be either a small room in some temporary dwelling-place that was not even his own or some outdoor location he the vagabond just happened to be then passing-by.

For I am, and have been for a while, living a rather eremitical life, partly in expiation for my suffering-causing past, partly to avoid inflicting myself on others (prone as I know I have been to hubris, error, and selfishness) and partly to try on a daily basis to remember - to feel - the numinosity of life and so live (to try to live) with that personal humility that such an awareness of the numinous often inclines us toward.

This simple way of living is simply my Officium Divinum, sans prayer directed toward some supra-personal divinity. A way of living that I feel rather necessitates being unconnected with people. Just another old man of greying hair whose past several years have been devoted to metaphysical speculations, a listening to classical music, and such wanderings or travels or walks or pottering bicycle rides (on a roadster) as the ageing body allows. There is thus a certain inner and outer gentleness; possibly an eccentricity; certainly a desire for solitude and a desire not to speak except as politeness requires. Often a wordless apprehension of the numinous, and that slowness that three score years and more naturally occasions. In brief, there is an appreciation of mortality, and a particular sense of history that places me in the perspective of the vast Cosmos, home as I sense the Cosmos to be of much other sentient life. Thus a realization of how insignificant - in such a cosmic schemata, and in terms of the suffering that still blights our Earth - I and my personal problems are; and of how one's own dying is just a fact of Nature, nothing to be feared or try to delay, for θάνατος δὲ τότε ἔσσεται ὁππότε κεν δὴ Μοῖραι ἐπικλώσωσ' [1]

Yet there is no loneliness; for there is and has been much beauty here these past years in such a reclusive existence; a beauty found not just in the remembering of lovely times past; not just found in the memories of women loved and lost; and not just in the realization - following sleep - of being still alive. For there is the beauty of the fresh air of a Winter's morning when after those few hours of sleep one ventures forth to greet the trees, the birds - the Life - in those nearby woods. The beauty of Summer when, in natural warmth, one sits on grass, on a hill above the fields, to see - to feel - the blue of the sky and hear the peaceful silence there.

The beauty of Spring when the Dawn Chorus builds and swells, and one perhaps hours later walks country paths to meet and politely greet the parents of those their children who exude such youthful innocent vigour and joy that there

arises a spontaneous warmth, within. The beauty of two young women, oblivious to some who stare, who walk holding hands along a Spanish seaside promenade, so obviously, so very obviously, tenderly in love and whose presence in their passing-by all that Σοφία embodied and who thus recall to me the numen of our human life:

ἔγω δὲ φίλημ' ἀβροσύναν [...] τοῦτο καί μοι  
τὸ λάμπρον ἔρωσ ἀελίω καὶ τὸ κάλον λέλογχε [2]

There is therefore no sadness as one might expect in my living and my dying alone, as there will be no one there - following my death - to mourn my passing, just as the mode of disposal of the lifeless physical body is not important. Which is all how it should be, for me; how I wish it. No fear, no fuss, nothing of any significance. For, as I wrote nearly four years ago, there is:

The moment of sublime knowing  
As clouds part above the Bay  
And the heat of Summer dries the spots of rain  
Still falling:

I am, here, now, where dark clouds of thunder  
Have given way to blue  
Such that the tide, turning,  
Begins to break my vow of distance  
Down.

A woman, there, whose dog, disobeying,  
Splashes sea with sand until new interest  
Takes him where  
This bearded man of greying hair  
No longer reeks  
With sadness.

Instead:  
The smile of joy when Sun of Summer  
Presents again this Paradise of Earth  
For I am only tears, falling

January 2014

Notes

[1] "Our ending arrives whenever wherever the Moirai decide." Attributed to Καλλίνου, as recorded by Ἰωάννης Στοβαῖος in Ἀνθολόγιον (c. 5th century CE)

[2] Sappho, poetic fragment: P. Oxyrhynchus. XV (1922) nr. 1787 fr. 1 et 2

I love delicate softness:  
For me, love has brought the brightness  
And the beauty of the Sun...

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## X. Memories Of Manual Labour

Recalling happy memories of past years is perhaps a useful therapy during those seemingly long night hours when one is confined, in a foreign land, to a hospital bed and cannot, for a variety of reasons, enjoy the peace of sleep. During two such occasions, not that long ago, I found myself dwelling on my years of outdoor manual labour; on some four decades of cycling English lanes, tracks, and roads; and on the years spent running in the hills of South Shropshire and in places such as the Lake District.

In retrospect, this dwelling on such times quite surprised me, given my past married lives, my past predilection for the company of women, and the very many times I had been subsumed with love, or a passion, for a particular lady and had enjoyed with and because of them nights, days, weeks, sometimes months, of blissful happiness. Perhaps, I wondered, such a dwelling during such conditions revealed something about my character. Of how I am an outdoor, country, person by nature who by choice would choose to work alone; and someone perhaps too selfish, and too self-absorbed, to be a happily married man.

Suffice to write, now, that the memories that brought the most inner peace were those connected with outdoor work. Of those Summer days in Shropshire when - in the large garden of my employer - we would all sit down to enjoy our outdoor lunch prepared by his wife. Of days spent, over a decade later, on a farm in warm or hotful Sun, alone in a twenty-five or thirty acre field, forcing bamboo canes - many six feet in length - by hand into often hard ground next to recently budded trees planted in rows.

Of the dry dusty days of laying irrigation pipes and setting up the 'rain gun' sprinkler system with its large hose reel, enjoyed especially when the pump was the old Ford tractor with water drawn from the nearby river home to

Kingfishers and bounded by many weeping Willow trees. Of, in early Spring, those cold days when the few of us out in the fields would sit around an open fire to eat our lunch.

Of those six straight weeks worked without a day off one Spring when, delayed by bad weather, we were finally able to prepare the soil and plant. Of those flash floods that flooded the lane beside one of the fields of the farm and of the car that became stuck, requiring two of us to bodily lift the lady driver out and carry her to dry land to later on fetch the tractor and tow her car from that lane back to the unaffected main road.

Of the days spent one Autumn using a hand-held 'thumper' to erect new fence posts. Of the hours, the days, the weeks, spent alone in fields hoeing the weeds out by hand from between the planted trees with my 1950s hoe whose long hickory handle years of use had made smooth. Of - years before, on another farm - the restful needful lunch (washed down by local cider) that followed hours of mucking-out pig sties by hand using a shovel and a barrow wheeled up a plank onto a trailer, hitched to a tractor, which when full I drove away then tipped to form or join another pile ready for the muck-spreader...

Had I then - during those years - the understanding and the self-insight I believe I now possess perhaps my life would, could, should, have been quite different and I would not have caused the suffering, and the deaths, that I caused. But was that person, so happily working in such places, the real me? Yes, I do feel so, now. How then - why then - did I always seem to (after months, a year, or several years) drift away from such work back to occupy, preoccupy, myself with some political or some religious machination? It is just too easy, too trite, to say or write that I was a 'complicated' person. More truthfully, I was flawed, unhealthy. Suffering from extremism: for that infection wrought an inner dissatisfaction, and so greatly disturbed my psyche that I felt I had 'a duty' to do, and pontificate about, certain things. For that infection caused me, as so many others, to have that hubriatic certainty-of-knowing that engenders violence, hatred, terror, and oppression. I, as so many, had exchanged that real outdoor world - which centuries of toil had created - for some idealistic, ideological, dream we carried around in our head:

We are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw

Our land, the dead land, while we extremists wreck havoc among the living land that provides us with the means to live and which, were we only to know it, nurtures the numinous from whence derives the culture that keeps our human hopes, our very humanity, alive.

For me - as for many others century following century - pathei-mathos was a cure. Yet there is not, and cannot be, any absolution: I was an ideologue, a leader, a fanatic, who enthusiastically taught, proselytized, persuaded, propagandised, and incited. Thus I alone was responsible for what I said, what I wrote, and what I did - for the suffering caused - during my extremist decades, just as I alone was responsible for the hurt my selfishness, my self-absorption, personally caused to others: wives, lovers, partners, family, relatives, and friends.

There appears to be, however, one small consolation, at least for me. Which is that such outdoor work - and reflexion upon it - slowly provided, slowly built within me, the insights and the feelings that led to that 'numinous way' I refined, after 2011, into my philosophy (or perhaps more correctly, into my weltanschauung) of pathei-mathos. Insights and feelings greatly added to in 2002 when I began work on another farm, and which work first led me to seriously doubt my commitment to the Muslim way of life, and write letters containing words such as these:

There is a lovely, simple, pleasure here in this field. Spring is most certainly here: in the meadow fields, seedlings of the late Spring flowers push up through the tufts of grass whose frost-bitten ends are joined by shoots of new growth.

Already some flowers bloom in the grass: there, a Dandelion; there: almost two circles of Daisies. And, to compliment the calls and songs of other birds, the loud repeating call of the Parus Major.

It is good to be here, with an unobstructed view of the sky, and I watch the clouds, borne as they are on a still cool breeze that begins to chill my hands, a little. But there is Sun, warm, when the altocumulus breaks. On the horizon in the North, beyond the tall old Oak, small Cumulus clouds drift toward the hills, ten miles distant. Thus am I again - for these moments - at peace with myself, this world, listening as I do to a large flock of Starlings who chatter among themselves in the trees across from the drainage ditch, there by the copse of Ash, Oak, and a few young Beech [...]

Work, yes there must be work: toil enough to keep that balance. And work with these my hands, outdoors where lives the silence that I love as I feel the weather, changing, bringing thus an empathic living for me, in me, and for this life that lives around, emanating as it does in this grass, those trees, the clouds, the soil, the water, those flowers, the very sky itself.

But, as so often with me, the insights, the feelings, were swept away by not only my tempestuous inner need to do what I considered was then my duty but also by a life-long love of, a desire for, challenges, pontification, and conflict. Such insights, such feelings, were always - sooner or later - so swept away. Until that fateful day one May.

"The defining moment, for me - in terms of understanding myself, in terms of understanding politics and the error of my decades of extremism - was the tragic personal loss of a loved one in May 2006. In the hours following that event I just knew - tearfully knew without words - my own pathetic failure; what I had lost, what was important. Thus there came upon me that day a sense of overwhelming grief, compounded by a remembrance of another personal loss of a loved one thirteen years earlier. For it was as if in those intervening years I had learned nothing; as if I had made the life and the dying and death of Sue, in 1993 - and of what we shared in the years before - unimportant.

I have no words to describe how insignificant, how worthless, I felt that day in May 2006; no words to describe, recall, retell, the remorse, the pain. Suffice now to recount that my life was never, could never be, the same again. Gone - the arrogance that had sustained me for so many experiential decades. Gone - the beliefs, the abstractions, the extremisms, I had so cherished and so believed in." *No Words Of Mine Can Describe The Remorse*

How stupid, how very stupid, I have been: for almost all of my adult life. That it required the shock, the personal trauma, of the suicide of the woman I loved to break my arrogance, my selfishness, my self-absorption - and cure me of my need for challenges, pontification, and conflict - most certainly reveals a lot about my character. That apparently jumelle nature of a person who found peace, contentment, in working outdoors with his hands but who also could not, in his weakness, resist that arrogant desire to zealously interfere in the lives of others, to propagandise and proselytize; an interference, a proselytism, born of a hubriatic certainty that he 'knew', that he 'understood', or that he had discovered the right way (political or religious) of living for others, and therefore had some sort of duty to act, wrecking havoc and causing suffering as he did so, always making excuses for himself. For every and any cause does so hallow havoc.

See with what heat these dogs of Hell advance  
To waste and havoc yonder World, which I  
So fair and good created, and had still  
Kept in that state, had not the folly of Man  
Let in these wasteful furies [1]

February 2014

[1] Paradise Lost, Book X, vv. 616-620

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## XI. A Perplexing Failure To Understand

Being a slightly revised extract from a letter to friend,  
with some footnotes added post scriptum

One of the multitude of things that I have, for years, failed to understand - sans any belief in an all-powerful supra-personal deity - is why I am still alive while people like Sue and Fran - and the millions of others like them - died or were killed, too early. For they neither caused any deaths nor inflicted any suffering on another living being, human and otherwise, while I - and the millions like me, worldwide - continued to live despite having so caused, directly and/or indirectly, deaths and suffering. And in my case, directly and indirectly as my documented so lamentable extremist amoral decades - of violence, hatred, incitement, of being a "theoretician of revolution/terror" - so clearly reveal.

Yet - over twenty years after the death of Sue, and almost ten years since the death of Fran - here I am, still breathing, still pontificating. And all I have - despite years of interior reflexion - is a feeling, an intuition: of the how and why our thousand of years old human culture of pathei-mathos is important because - or so it seems to me - it might bring (at least to some others) a wordless intimation of one possible answer to such a perplexing question.

For it is a culture that includes, for example, such diverse artissements as the Oresteia of Aeschylus, the Lamentations of Jeremiah by Thomas Tallis, and the life - and death - of people such as Jesse James, Mohandas K Gandhi, and Edith Cavell; and which culture, enshrined as it is in Studia Humanitatis, can perchance teach some of each new generation that valuable lesson about our human physis, jumelle as our physis is [1] and thus paradoxical as we honourable/dishonourable (often hubriatic) mortals are:

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ  
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν:  
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,  
πολλὰ δ' ὃ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,  
ἀρνύμενος ἦν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων.  
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὣς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ:  
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,  
νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελίοιο  
ἦσθιον: αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ

The Muse shall tell of the many adventures of that man of the many stratagems  
Who, after the pillage of that hallowed citadel at Troy,  
Saw the towns of many a people and experienced their ways:  
He whose vigour, at sea, was weakened by many afflictions  
As he strove to win life for himself and return his comrades to their homes.  
But not even he, for all this yearning, could save those comrades  
For they were destroyed by their own immature foolishness  
Having devoured the cattle of Helios, that son of Hyperion,  
Who plucked from them the day of their returning [2]

A lesson about ourselves which so many others have attempted to communicate to us, as recounted in a certain tragedy:

οὕτω δ' Ἀτρέως παῖδας ὁ κρείσσω  
ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ πέμπει ξένιος  
Ζεὺς πολυάνορος ἀμφὶ γυναικὸς  
πολλὰ παλαίσματα καὶ γυιοβαρῆ  
γόνατος κονίαισιν ἐρειδομένου  
διακναιομένης τ' ἐν προτελείοις  
κάμακος θήσων Δαναοῖσι

Τρωσί θ' ὁμοίως. ἔστι δ' ὄπη νῦν  
ἔστι: τελεῖται δ' ἐς τὸ πεπρωμένον

Thus were those sons of Atreus sent forth  
By mighty Zeus, guardian of hospitality, against Alexander  
On account of that woman who has had many men.  
And many would be the limb-wearying combats  
With knees pushed into the dirt  
And spears worn-out in the initial sacrifice  
Of Trojans and Danaans alike.

What is now, came to be  
As it came to be.  
And its ending has been ordained [3]

and as described - millennia ago - by a certain poetess:

φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν  
ἔμμεν' ὤνηρ, ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι  
ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδου φωνεί-  
σας ὑπακούει  
καὶ γελαίσας ἰμέροεν, τό μ' ἦ μὰν  
καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν  
ὡς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε', ὡς με φώναι-  
σ' οὐδ' ἐν ἔτ' εἴκει,  
ἀλλ' ἄκαν μὲν γλῶσσα <ἔαγε>, λέπτον  
δ' αὐτίκα χρωῖ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,  
ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδ' ἐν ὄρημ', ἐπιρρόμ-  
βεισι δ' ἄκουαι,  
<έκαδε μ' ἴδρωσ ψῦχος κακχέεται / κὰδ' δέ ἴδρωσ κακχέεται> τρόμος δὲ  
παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας  
ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης  
φαίνομ' ἔμ' αὐταί

I see he who sits near you as an equal of the gods  
For he can closely listen to your delightful voice  
And that seductive laugh  
That makes the heart behind my breasts to tremble.  
Even when I glimpse you for a moment  
My tongue is stilled as speech deserts me  
While a delicate fire is beneath my skin -  
My eyes cannot see, then,  
When I hear only a whirling sound  
As I shivering, sweat  
Because all of me trembles;  
I become paler than drought-grass  
And nearer to death [4]

and as, for example, described by the scribe of an ancient Hermetic MS:

Solum enim animal homo duplex est; et eius una pars simplex, quae, ut Graeci aiunt οὐσιώδης, quam vocamus divinae similitudinis formam; est autem quadruplex quod ὑλικὸν Graeci, nos mundanum dicimus, e quo factum est corpus, quo circumtegitur illud quod in homine divinum esse iam diximus, in quo mentis divinitas tecta sola cum cognatis suis, id est mentis purae sensibus, secum ipsa conquiescat tamquam muro corporis saepta.

Humans are the only species that is jumelle, with one aspect that foundation which the Greeks termed οὐσιώδης and we describe as being akin in appearance to divinity, and yet also being quadruplex, termed by the Greeks ὑλικός and which we describe as worldly; whereby from such is the corporeal [body] that, as mentioned, is of - in humans - the divinity, and in which is that divine disposition, to which it is solely related, that is in character a singular perceivration and untoiling since enclosed within the corporeal. [5]

But will we - can we - mortals, en masse, read, listen, reflect, experience, and so learn? Or will we, as our tragic history of the past three millennia so seems to indicate, continue to be divided - individually, and en masse - between the masculous and the muliebral; between honour and dishonour; between war and peace; between empathy and ipseity?

I do so wish I knew. But all I have to offer, now in the fading twilight of my own mortal life, is an appreciation (perhaps contrary, these days, to οἱ πλέονες) of what some schools, independent ('private') or otherwise, still fortunately do understand is the importance of a 'classical education', and what may possibly be apprehended by such poor words of mine as this:

Here, sea, Skylark and such a breeze as rushes reeds  
Where sandy beach meets  
To meld with sky

And a tumbling cumuli of cloud  
Briefly cool our Sun.

I am no one, while ageing memory flows:

For was there ever such a bliss as this  
While the short night lasted  
And we touched kissed meshed ourselves together  
To sweat, sweating, humid,  
Fearing so many times to fully open our eyes  
Lest it all really was  
A dream  
But Dawn arrived as it then arrived bringing with its light  
Loose limbs and such a reminder  
As would could should did  
Make us late that day for work.

So, here: a tiredness of age  
Brightened by such a June as this  
When sandy beach meets  
To meld with sky  
And that tumbling cumuli of cloud  
Briefly cools a Sun

For there are so many recollections of centuries of a so human love, so many memories of years - centuries - of hubris and dishonour, that I can now only live each slowly passing daylight hour *modus vivendi*:

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices  
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices  
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel [6]

January 2015

[1] Pœmandres (Corpus Hermeticum), 15:

καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ζῶα διπλοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. ἀθάνατος γὰρ ὢν καὶ πάντων τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων τὰ θνητὰ πάσχει ὑποκείμενος τῇ εἰμαρμένῃ

Which is why, distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to *wyrd*

See also Sophocles, *Antigone*, v. 334 & vv. 365-36:

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἄνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει...  
σοφὸν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων  
τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἔρπει

There exists much that is strange, yet nothing  
Has more strangeness than a human being...

Beyond his own hopes, his cunning  
In inventive arts - he who arrives  
Now with dishonour, then with chivalry

[2] Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 1, v. 1-9

[3] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, v. 60-68

[4] Sappho, Fragment 31

[5] Asclepius, VII, 13-20

[6] TS Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*

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## XII. Finis: In Loving Memory of Susan and Frances

(Being A Slightly Revised) Extract From A Letter To A Friend)

In the vanity of the so many effusions of recent months and years - the missives, essays, translations, poetry, letters - was a forgetting of what *pathei-mathos* so personally, painfully, revealed, for me: the need, the necessity, to be alone, reclusive, yet remembering day following day the multitudinous mistakes, the selflessness, and the suffering-causing hubris, of my past and of how and why that which was the genesis of such hubris still perhaps lurks within me, ready to

heave forth – again – in such moments of forgetfulness and temptation. No God, no deities, no supra-personal divine being – no religion ancient or otherwise – to rely on, to provide answers, and remove through expiation, submission, prayer, belief, and love, such a heavy burden of such self-knowing as so often brings to me a certain self-loathing.

Thus, for me, every form of human contact, beyond the politeness required with strangers in the immediacy of a moment, has therefore and now to be abandoned; just as there must be no further effusions seeking as such effusions surely do to showcase a certain vainful pride.

For despite my hopes I have so easily – so very easily, month following month these past few years – strayed from what I should have been and now must be: silent, eremitic; living day to day as a vagabond, mindful of my mortal insignificance in the vastness of the Cosmos and dying when and how I die, clutching as I then hope to do the memory of that numinous beauty of personal love which I so briefly and so fortunately shared with several other humans before I in my hubriatic stupidity and selfishness ruined everything.

Ða sceolde se hearpere weorðan swa sarig þæt he ne meahte ongemong oðrum mannum bion

9th April 2015

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## Appendix

### Reputation and Rumours

As someone who has acquired a particular (in my view, unwarranted) reputation regarding a particular matter, and been the subject of various rumours in respect of that matter and various other matters, I am rather reminded of a certain passage of *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* by Boethius:

Plures enim magnum saepe nomen falsis vulgi opinionibus abstulerunt; quo quid turpius excogitari potest?

Furthermore, and interestingly, in Chaucer's translation of Boethius that sentence leads on to one of the first recorded usages, in the English language, of the word rumour:

For manye han had ful greet  
renoun by the false opinioun of the poeple, and what thing  
may ben thought fouler than swiche preysinge? For thilke folk  
that ben preysed falsly, they moten nedes han shame of hir  
preysinges. And yif that folk han geten hem thonk or preysinge  
by hir desertes, what thing hath thilke prys eched or  
encreded to the conscience of wyse folk, that mesuren hir good,  
nat by the rumour of the poeple, but by the soothfastnesse of  
conscience? And yif it seme a fair thing, a man to han  
encreded and spred his name, than folweth it that it is demed  
to ben a foul thing, yif it ne be y-sprad and increded.

Book III, vi, vv. 5-15. (Early English Text Society, 1868)

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All translations by David Wulstan Myatt  
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