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Hospitality and Pain

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HOSPITALITY AND PAIN

Ivan Illich

I want to explore with you a phenomenon that I consider constitutive of the West, of that West which has shaped me, body and soul, flesh and blood. This central reality of the West is marvelously expressed in the old Latin phrase: Corruptio optimi quae est pessima - the historical progression in which God's Incarnation is turned topsy-turvy, inside out. I want to speak of the mysterious darkness that envelops our world, the demonic night paradoxically resulting from the world's equally mysterious vocation to glory.

My subject is a mystery of faith, a mystery whose depth of evil could not have come to be without a corresponding and contrary height in the history of salvation. But listen carefully! I do not speak as a theologian, but as a historian. In the Roman Catholic Church's more recent tradition, you imply teaching authority that derives from the hierarchy when you claim to speak as a theologian. I do not claim such a mandate.

For over forty years, I have been reading Scripture, the Church Fathers and the great spiritual masters of the Christian tradition. My main purpose is to sustain my faith while I contemplate the horrible mystery about which I shall now speak. Only in that literature do I find the sustenance to keep alive my sense of humor. I shall speak, then, about fidelity and sin, about faith and its perversion, as a historian finds them incarnate in the flesh and in institutions.

I want to speak about the cross, about the crucifix in history. I shall describe how this cross was transmogrified from a memorial to the bloodiness of God's Incarnation - and thus a guiding image of the consequences for each of the faithful - into a symbol for the myriad evils that western society's organization and technology seek to eliminate. I must, therefore, insist on the point that I speak as a historian, as one who chooses as his theme for study the various embodiments throughout western history of a central mystery of our faith.

The first part deals with the history of hospitality, Greek, Hebrew and Christian. In this setting, I shall describe the first institutionalization of hospitality towards the middle of the fourth century, A.D. At this time, under Christian influence, the very first community-financed hospices for the homeless were built. I shall direct my attention to the effects of well-intentioned hospitalization or, institutionalization, on the practice of hospitality since that time. I find that the former is a radical inversion of the latter.

The second part looks at the successive emergence of pity, mercy and compassion, the last understood in its strong, original sense. To tell this story, I must delve into the history of the body in pain. Compassion, as a lived experience, becomes possible only at that historical moment when pain has been disembedded from the huge and varied matrix of suffering in which it had been diffused. The historical mutation of body pain during the late Middle Ages is a condition for the appearance of that compassion which was embodied in the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi. I shall point out the origins of what in medical circles is called "the management of pain." I shall further argue that the self - which shares in, that is, embodies Christ's suffering in its flesh through compassion, and conscience - which leads both to torture and to pain management - all flow from the same source.

The third part will describe the first hospitals in which compassionate mercy found its social form in the late eleventh century. For the first time in history, the sick were given a status and a place as a class within the city, rather than being expelled, and this incorporation was made through the agency of the hospital. In the atmosphere of this merciful compassion, disease and pain could be interpreted as a vocation, by those affected and by those who served them. Hospitalization was the social expression of a new way of conceiving and perceiving the human body that represented a profound break with the past. I will argue that this new body born in a spirit of compassion was later transformed in the epoch of Leibnitz and Descartes into the object that now demands humane treatment.

We simply assume that there are places where people can find shelter and care when they have lost their family, gone mad, become sick or do not fit within a household. We take this so much for granted that we must make a great leap of the imagination to recognize that such refuges were never envisioned outside western post-classical society. The very first institutions for providing asylum were established by Christian bishops around the year 314, during the time of Constantine. It seems clear to me that in those societies which then sought to provide such public shelters for "care," the previously universal human practice of hospitality withered.

An experience related by the late Cardinal Jean Daniélou captures this complex historical truth simply. A Chinese friend of his, after becoming a Christian, made a pilgrimage from Peking to Rome on foot. In central Asia, he regularly found hospitality. As he got into the Slavonic nations, he was occasionally welcomed into someone's house. But when he arrived among the people of the western churches, he had to seek shelter in the poorhouse, since the doors of homes were closed to strangers and pilgrims.

Let me take the Odyssey as our witness to the hospitality of pre-literate Greece. When Odysseus landed in Ithaka, finally reaching home, Athena

> Speaking no more ... touched him with her wand,
> shriveled the clear skin of his arms and legs,
> made all his hair fall out, cast over him
> the wrinkled hide of an old man, and bleared
> both his eyes, that were so bright.
>
> (Odyssey, Bk. 13, ll. 410-414)

She made it impossible for Odysseus's subjects to recognize their lord.

As he crawls up the cliff beyond the shore dogs threaten to tear him to pieces, but Eumaios the swineherd calls them off.

> The forester now led him to his hut
> and made a couch for him, with tips of fir
> piled for a mattress under a wild goat skin,
> shaggy and thick, his own bed covering.
> ...
> ... friend,
> rudeness to a stranger is not decency,
> poor though he may be, poorer than you.

> All wanderers
> and beggars come from Zeus. What we can give
> is slight but well-meant - all we dare.
>
> (Odyssey, Bk. 14, ll. 30-39)

By definition, the stranger belongs to the category of beggar. And the stranger (xenos) is any needy man who speaks a Hellenic tongue. Zeus makes all Greeks alike, leveling them. "To level" is the root meaning of ghosti, the root from which guest, host and hostility are derived. Zeus is the divine guestmaster, the meaning of hos-pit - Eumaios, hos-pit-able in his hut. The second part of the word, pit or pot, means "power," more precisely "the power holder," the master of the house, the clan, the place, totally "he himself." This meaning is still alive in the "ipse dixit" of the Pythagoreans, and in the Slavonic peasant speaking to his lord as "sam"; or "he himself," by which the Russian peasant speaks of his lord. Eumaios, for his guest, is gos-po-dar. Here, he personifies not an individual ego, but the house, the house over the threshold of which he leads the shipwrecked Odysseus, leading him from the outside in.

The threshold is most probably the first altar. Wherever cultures have moved out of the cave or the lean-to, building walls which distinguish outside from inside, ceremonies centering around the threshold appear. To be fully human means to experience the way, the bridge and the door. The way is far more than a path left by deer. It is a road built to close the distance between here and there, now and later. When the road leads over a river, it is called a bridge, and the road builder becomes a ponti-fex, a sacred pontiff. But the door leads even more deeply into the human condition because the wall that it opens is itself made by man. Unlike the road or the bridge, it separates two kinds of space, inside from outside. On the threshold stands the host, ipsissimus, the Irish "himself," as the prototype of the priest.

Among Arabs, while the guest is still outside, his host takes the lamb, ties its feet together, lays it over the doorstep, and with his knee upon the animal slits its throat. And he stays in this position until all the blood has run out over the threshold.

Windows are made to let the sun in and, in the Song of Songs, to allow the lover to gaze on his beloved. They are for looking out, sometimes used to expose oneself to others. But he who climbs in, by a way other than the door, is a thief and a robber (John 10), and should be thrown out. Up to the sixteenth century, defenestration remained the ritual through which one got rid of usurpers from within the palace.

Helen's spouse Menelaus kills Pisander, who had violated her hospitality. He strikes Pisander and "... the bone above his nose cracks. His gore-bedaubed eyes fall to the dust around his feet." Over his wounded body, Menelaus addresses his prophecy to Troy:

> Cowardly she-wolves that you are, you feared not the
> anger of dreadful Jove. He is the avenger of abused
> hospitality who will one day destroy your city. While
> you were my guests, you stole my wedded wife and
> wickedly carried off my treasures.
>
> (Iliad, 13,601-627)

The victory over Troy was the judgment of divine vengeance on abused hospitality. Genuine hostility can only occur with the kind of equals who are received as guests. And the hospitality extended to guests is always based on xeno-philia, the love of xenos, the other Greek. It cannot be offered to the barbaroi, babblers, who speak no language a Greek can understand.

With the rise of the city-state, the concept of guest-worthiness expands. Beyond the threshold of each house, there appears a new kind of threshold at the city gate. Foreigners arrive there as legates or representatives of another city. To receive them, a new charge comes into being - the pro-xenos, the guestmaster whose name survives in proxénétisme, the function exercised by the keeper of a brothel. With this first step towards the institutionalization of hospitality, there had to be a formal delegation of the hosting authority. The proxenos offers a solemn welcome to the ambassador, but is it more noble than that offered the stranger by the swineherd?

With the expansion of the city, a growing number of its new residents were no longer strangers, but not yet citizens. Solon created a legal status for them, that of par-oikos, co-dweller. He does not participate in the ecclesia, the citizen assembly, but Zeus, under the new title of Zeus Paroikos, establishes a status for them in the Olympiad.

Each new definition of stranger - them - revealed a new dimension of the first person plural - us. In this way, new strange groups acquired subjective, personal status within the community, groups to be addressed in the second person plural, while the outsider, the third person, could - in contrast - be distanced into the great pool of the impersonally referred to objects. The primitive clarity of the opposition between the two kinds of persons, the welcome stranger and the at best tolerated barbarian was obscured.

During the third century, B.C., the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek. The translators used "paroikos," although they knew that no Greek word would accurately convey what it means to be a stranger in Israel. The Greek lives as a guest. Early Greeks peopled the underworld with shadow-souls who emerged for a time into the light of the sun. In the Hellenistic age, the soul was spoken of as a visitor from above. It is glued to the body, or nailed to it. With sticky wings, it lives in a cage, a prison or, at best, an inn. There is a consistency between perception of impermanence under the sun - and in the house of the host. This lyrical presence of the Greek is incomparable to that of the Jew, who has one life in which he is totally embodied.

When Jahweh called Abraham from Ur in Chaldea something new erupted in history: a vocation to estrangement, a unique estrangement between a people and God. Through the covenant, Abraham has only one claim, that to asylum. The mispaha, the tribes that bless themselves in Abraham, are social anomalies, monsters. The covenant makes them freaks among both sedentary and nomadic peoples. Both groups are equally foreign to Israel, disgusting (nokri) even. Both are at home on the earth under the tutelage of strange gods, and their women are bizarre (zar), dangerous temptations for the Jew whose covenant calls him to live as a stranger. As the glory of Sinai floats in a misty column, the Shekhina that leads the Jewish caravan, so the Jew is ger, spiritually unsettled.

Towards other gerim, the Old Testament demands a hospitality that goes to extraordinary lengths. What is due the gerim is not just the festive reception of a passing guest that puts him under the nomad's protection for the three days it takes to digest the host's food. Far beyond this, the ger deserves a limitless alliance with the host, Israel. Abraham's faith is unsettling because it converts existence itself into a longing:

> Who is it, Lord, that will make his home in thy
> tabernacle, rest on the mountain where thy
> sanctuary is?
>
> (Ps. 14.1)

A radically new social entity comes into existence as the result of Abraham's faith, a people which, both as kin ('am) and as governed (gaj), seeks its identity in estrangement because it is on its way to the tent of God. And this God reveals himself as a jealous deity, like a mother or a loving woman. Unlike the gods and goddesses of other peoples, who protect them as they are, where they are, Jahweh offers - nay imposes - nothing less than a constantly teasing "not yet." Jahweh's call displaces Abraham and his house. They shall no longer have a place of their own; they shall dwell, wherever they are, in the presence of the Lord. The possibility of a social existence uncircumscribed by thresholds is a result of Israel's faith.

The Apostle Paul calls Abraham the father of faith. The Koran calls him Ibrahim ben Azar, the first Muslim who came to Mecca as a pilgrim to build the Ka'aba. Mohammed speaks of himself as Abraham's descendant, as the leader of all who seek hospitality under the tent of Allah. The Koran enjoins: "If a polytheist seeks protection with you, extend it to him until he understands the word of God." According to one tradition the Prophet, interpreting the Koran, understood this passage to mean, "The hospitality extended by the least of all Muslims ties the protected to all of them."

They have all abandoned the kind of home that the other gods protect. And having set out toward the tent of Allah, they have also dropped the otherwise universal distinction between xenos and barbaroi, those worthy and those unworthy of hospitality. Any stranger who seeks asylum by touching the tent post or a child can be taken along on their journey.

The New Testament brings the revelation that this tent of God has been pitched on earth in the flesh of his son. A Syrian witness writes: "Indutus parietem nostrae mortalitatis, latuit" - behind the wall of our mortality, he hides. Clement of Alexandria speaks of Christ's flesh as the windows and door through which the logos reaches us. Another early Syrian Father describes his flesh as a door that makes a unity of two totally different worlds. Pseudo-Isidore says, "Veiled by the flesh, he is forever just beyond the wall."

The covenant makes the Jew Jahweh's invited guest on his way to the feast and a stranger to the people of this world. The Jew loses the power to offer hospitality as other peoples do each in the shadow of their respective deities. Along with this Jewish ancestor, the Christian too is homeless, and his life style too is "inhospitable" in the mode of hospitality flowering under the aegis of Zeus. But the Gospel divests him even further, giving him "only" the Samaritan as example. He sees the victim of the mugging, beaten up in the gutter; he must stop, abandon his road, take up his newly-found neighbor in his arms.

He is called to recognize that instead of hospitality he can give himself. By vocation, then, the Christian is unsettled and homeless, equally with his ancestor a pilgrim. He is called to live like Jesus, his brother, who has no place to lay his head, but who gives of himself bodily to the point of death on the cross.

The community that comes into existence sees itself as the new Israel, a continuation of the people of God. But much more fundamentally, it conceives itself in a new image, that of a brotherhood.

"Brother" was the most common term used among early Christians to refer to one another. Only generations later would the brotherhood be called "the church."

This brotherhood was experienced as something quite new, without precedent. Christians were not brothers because a city was their common womb, as in Plato, or because the earth/cosmos was their mother, as with the Stoics. Christians called each other brother because of their common vocation to recognize God as their father, the God who adopts them. And this brotherhood comes into existence through individual acts of mercy.

Major studies on the Latin usage of early Christians by two scholars, Hélène Petre and Christine Mohrmann, help us to understand the brotherhood.[1] Their research reveals that adelphos and frater take on the full richness of their meaning only through two actions: The liturgical integration into the brotherhood by the osculum pacis, the mouth to mouth (literally, con-spiratorial) kiss; and by partaking of the same loaf, thereby being incorporated into one body. The use of the term is clearly different from any reference to a biological sibling, from the vague sympathy expressed by Stoics and, of course, from the meaning common in Hellenistic men's clubs. Adelphos was free of any connotation of status, gender or origin.

The hope expressed in the Our Father bespeaks this brotherhood, faith in the coming of the Word. The Word was made flesh, and pitched his tent among us. The world treats him as a stranger. He is laid in a manger because there is no place for him at the inn. And he comes for outsiders. He said, "When you give a dinner, do not ask the neighbors ... they might send you a return invitation. Rather, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind..." Until the third century, "brotherhood" was the principal term for this motley crew gathered by hope. For them, there were no barbaroi nor xenoi, only co-travellers, gerim. Strangely, Mexicans on pilgrimage to Guadalupe or Chalma still use a Spanish version of an Aztec term, as genderless as adelphos, to address each other intimately: marchante, wayfarer.

By the second quarter of the third century, reliance on divine adoption and belief in mutual brotherhood lose the central significance they had during the preceding two hundred years. A generation before Constantine brother, as the ordinary form of address among Christians, disappears. Henceforth, the term is used by bishops for their fellow hierarchs. Brothers are the members of the clergy, or of the newly formed communities of monks. In a crass subversion of the command in Matthew 23.8, "call no one father," the latter becomes the designation or title of bishop and abbot.

Remarkably, bishops were not satisfied with the title of abba, father. They soon came to call themselves educators, coining a term that institutionalizes the new father in motherhood! In classical Latin, the verb educare means nursing, and consistently demands a female subject. When the word is used to describe a man's action, it means that he is playing wet nurse to an infant. Educare means the care of in-fantes, that is, non-speakers, babblers. The traditional saying goes: "Educat nutrix, docet magister." The wet nurse educates, it is the master who teaches or instructs.

With the shift from a brotherly mouth-to-mouth conspiracy towards a hierarchically structured nurture of babes by a male club of bishops, a new kind of guestmaster comes into existence in the person of the bishop. Under episcopal leadership, Christian communities organize xenodocheia, separate houses offering hospitality in the name of the community at large. Thus the fourth-century

[1] Hélène Petre, Étude sur le vocabulaire latin de la charité chrétienne (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1948). Christine Mohrmann, Étude sur le latin des chrétiens (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1958-1965), 3 vols.

Church disembeds hospitality from the household. It becomes a specialized practice ordinarily and normatively exercised through an agency acting in the name of the faithful.

Some Church Fathers claim that this became necessary because the ardor of Christian charity cooled. Chrysostom speaks for others, urging all the faithful of his community to return to the old ways, keeping ready in their homes beds of straw, food and candles for those who have no roof over their head.

> You give shelter to soldiers who defend you in this world's warfare, but you will not do as much for poor strangers ... Set apart one room in your house for that guest, for Christ: appoint one of your servants - and don't be afraid of choosing the best - to look after it and wait on the beggars and the sick. Or, if you will not do this, at least give Christ shelter with the mules in your stable. You may well shudder! I am saying this to shame you.[2]

But from his time the flophouse is and remains characteristic of organized Christian communities, an institution unlike anything previously known, quite distinct from the caravansary of the Islamic world.

To apply our notion of hospice or hospital to anything known in Greek or Roman antiquity is anachronistic. Excavations in Pompeii have shown that physician's homes often included a special room in which a couple of sick could be housed. Temples allowed pilgrims to sleep or, more precisely, "to incubate" in their precincts for several days. As I mentioned above, Greek city states formalized hospitality for foreign ambassadors. But special shelters for those in misery are nowhere mentioned. Not one inscription relating to such an institution has come down to us.

The tavern of antiquity existed for the traveller who lacked sufficient prestige or dignity to count on hospitality, but who possessed the few coppers demanded by the caupo. The latter catered to him by offering cot, wine, women, and hay for the animals. He was an outcast, marked with the infamy associated with harlots, actors and pimps.

The combination of some of these services, organized under the rubric of Christian xenia, hospitality, appears quite suddenly around 313. With the new legal status of the Church, the institution of the xenodocheion spreads throughout the Empire in barely half a century. By the time of Julian the Apostate, it can be documented in urban areas from Asia Minor to Gaul. When Julian attempts to reconvert the Empire to its pristine gods, he explicitly urges his governors to maintain this one Christian practice. In a letter to the (pagan) Archpriest Arsacius, he writes,

> If Hellenism [paganism] is not making the progess it should, the fault is with us who practise it ... Do we not see that what has most contributed to the success of atheism [Christianity] is its charity towards strangers ... ? ...
>
> Establish numerous hospices in every city, so that strangers may benefit from our charity, not only those of our own number, but anyone else who is in need ... For it is disgraceful that not a single Jew is a mendicant, and that the impious Galileans [Christians]

[2] Homily "On Acts," 45, 3-6 in Migne, Patres graeci (PG) 60.318-319. English text and commentary in Donald Attwater, St John Chrysostom (London: Harvill Press, 1939), pp. 67-68.

> maintain our poor in addition to their own, and that our needy are seen to lack assistance from us.[3]

Only death prevented him from decreeing the establishment and maintenance of such institutions through the tax monies of provincial governments.

Then, within two hundred years of its origins, the novel social entity of the xenodocheion became the symbolic and organizational instrument of a social transformation. Patlagean, an eminent scholar of Byzantine history, finds this institution fostering "... a social classification built on poor vs. rich with poverty not only a material and economic condition, but also a legal and social status ..." Such an arrangement constituted "... a privileged establishment for the Church ..." endowing "... it with the means of sustaining the burden of relief which the Byzantine Emperor could henceforth devolve on it."[4] This innovative juridical status of the poor, the connection of the poor as group or class within the Church, and the subsequent relationship and dependence of the Church on the Emperor will come down through the centuries as a problematic model of religio-secular power, formalized in Justinian's new codification of Roman law. This triangular bond between the poor as class, the Church as social agency and imperial power as sovereign in temporal welfare henceforth affects with various results the great spheres of Christianized culture - Byzantium until its conquest by the Arabs; the Carolingian version of empire; the recently converted peoples of Bulgaria and, later, the Russian north. Notwithstanding their growing differentiation, Greek, Roman and Orthodox-Slavonic medieval cultures share this in common: They recognize the poor as a class and, through them, the church as a this-worldly agency. Abraham has been left far behind.

Michel Mollat of the Sorbonne has made the history of poverty his lifetime project. He shows that the poor as a socially recognizable class first appear within this early Byzantine context. In earlier times, Roman law had acknowledged the existence of humiliores, those who receive a different punishment, for example, for their crimes. For the same crime the noble might be sent into exile, the lowly one into the mines. They were subject to different matrimonial laws and taxed at different rates. But these humiliores, as members of a status, had grown out of the institution of the paroikia, mentioned earlier. They should not be confused with the miserable, the beggar, the traveller, all of whom were treated by the law as total strangers, a kind of barbarian within. Unlike slaves, who were some citizen's property and, as such, enjoyed the protection of the law, the riff-raff were nobody's property, total non-persons before the law. The fact that the new institution, the xenodocheion, treated these legal non-persons as its legitimate inmates, forced Justinian to grant them legal status, sometime around 530. The historical subject of a large part of western history, the poor, came into conceptual existence through this route. The institutionalization of the host in the bishop as paternal nurse in charge of care rather than hospitality also contributed to the redefinition of the guest as social charge or inmate.[5]

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[3] Robert Browning, The Emperor Julian (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 179. Greek text in J. Bidez, Oeuvres complètes (l'Empereur Julien) (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1960), vol. 1, pp. 144-147.

[4] Evelyne Patlagean, Structure social, famille, chrétienté a Byzance, IVe-XIe siècle (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), p. 71.

[5] Michel Mollat, The Poor in the Middle Ages (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

Hospitality extends to equals. Equality once recognized, the guest is led over the threshold into the house. The relationship is protected by the God common to both guest and host. The fraternal sharing that takes place over the grave of a Christian martyr occurs under the sign of peace. Peace meant conspiracy in the acceptance of martyrdom, and union with the one who has already joined the Lord through a violent death. Hospitalization, offered by the xenodocheion, is neither the ancient xenia nor the Eucharistic feast. And a word to express its motive needs a couple more centuries to appear.

When the Emperor Julian holds up those whom he calls "atheists" as an example for neo-pagan reform, he singles out the humanitas they practice toward strangers. But the word hardly fits. In his day, humanitas mainly meant kindness and, in more exalted speech, "a bleeding heart." In any event, Julian cannot be blamed for the choice of this word, humane-ness. Christians had not yet coined a strong word for their actions. Latin was still a pity-less language. It had no words to translate the Hebrew expressions of Jahweh's feeling toward his people.

In Exodus (34,6-8), four of these words appear in one sentence: "A God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." The first of these words speaks of God's tenderness (rahum). The root meaning of this word refers to the womb or, more precisely, what the womb does when it is excited by love. The second speaks of clemency, magnanimity and forbearing (hanum). The third, hesed, bespeaks unbreakable love and fidelity. The fourth, emed, refers to the solidity of love, its truthful justice. These Hebrew terms taken together express the mood in which Jahweh, the totally other, constantly invites the children of Abraham to his tent. The relationship he promises is beyond hospitality; it indicates a bridal, compassionate condescension.

When the Torah was translated into Greek, eleos - or even eleomosyne - was frequently used to translate each of these four terms. No ordinary Greek speaker could ever suspect the carnal, passionate, rich word fields into which the single Greek word was supposed to lead. Plato considers eleos, which might mean pity, to be a moral defect. Aristotle judges pity to be a deficiency when felt by an adult. According to him, it might be tolerated in children and the old. For Seneca and other Stoics, it is a disease of the soul; Cicero shares this opinion. But he takes pity to be a somewhat admirable weakness with which a skillful lawyer should know how to play.

There was no model for this kind of institution, no word for the motive that would lead to its establishment, and no Biblical term for the institutionalized exercise of personal charity. Given this absence of a strong word, Christians had to look around for some term. The Latin words, stipes, sportula or largitio all mean something like a tip, a handout or bakshish. Slowly, then, a new formation, misericordia meaning mercy, came into use. The old Greek eleomosyne, as its close synonym, came to mean alms. And as the xenodocheia became the standard social form to provide for the poor, in the name of mercy almsgiving displaced hospitality.

For half a millennium, the xenodocheia remained the principal institutions for the provision of merciful shelter. In the East, they became large. A major house was reserved in Byzantium for the reception of the sick poor alone. This may have happened under the influence of Islamic medicine, which had developed the maristan, a special place for the care of the sick. This made more effective treatment possible, gave the doctor a chance to test various therapies and, above all, helped the physician in the instruction of his students. Nothing like this developed in the Latin church. Xenodocheia primarily became homes for pilgrims, or simple houses often of one room, and attached to each bishopric for the recovery of a dozen publicly recognized poor, usually old.

Monastic Benedictine hospitality dominates this period in the West. The guest who comes to the door of an abbey is received as if he were Christ. The abbot washes his hands, sometimes his feet,

then leads him over the threshold to a cell. The treatment of guests is a major section in most monastic rules. But some indicate that guests received in the name of Christ could be robbers. One rule states that the guests must be watched day and night by two strong monks, one of whom will rise with the guest if the latter feels the need to relieve himself in the garden. During these centuries the monasteries generally succeed, but only for their own members, in preserving some of the character of Christian fraternity, along with the tradition of pagan hospitality inherited from the past.

The next major mutation in the practice of charity as it relates to hospitality occurs in the twelfth century. Mercy, which had grown out of pity, itself grows into compassion. The desire to share the bodily pains of the crucified Lord made present in the sick leads to the creation of the first hospitals - in the narrow sense - in the Western Church.

The first such place was opened in Jerusalem in 1195 by the Knights Hospitallers. It was founded by crusaders who had seen Greek hospitals in Byzantium. Since its location was in the midst of Islamic doctors, it is highly probable that the founders knew the Islamic maristan also. It was close to the pilgrims' hospice for which Charlemagne had obtained the protection of Moslem princes. It was planned to give refuge to crusaders who were wounded, sick or too old to return home.

Almost simultaneously with the Palestine foundation, the first establishment consecrated by perpetual rule to the care of the sick appears in Europe. This group, calling themselves Antonites, followed the Rule of St. Augustine since it was more flexible than that of Benedict, and thus better suited for a community organized for service rather than for prayer.[6] They were approved by Pope Urban II, and their statutes (in the form preserved from 1477) ordain "that the hospitality of the house shall be extended to no one unless he be touched or mutilated by the fire of St. Anthony." This is gangrenous ergotism, the ignis sacer (holy fire) of antiquity, renamed by the new community in honor of the relics of the Desert Father, Anthony, whose body was a treasured possession of the new institution in Vienne. The brothers understand their vocation as sharing the sufferings of those touched by this one disease.

At about the same time, lepers are "rediscovered." From being exiles, they are redefined as persons deserving compassion. Carolingian legislation of 757 had established leprosy as grounds for the annulment of marriage.[7] As soon as someone was recognized as a leper, he incurred civil death, could not stay in his house any longer than the time needed to sell his furniture, and had to keep himself apart, staying with those similarly afflicted.

Now, four hundred years later, the spouse of a leper is expected to follow him. New groups of lay-religious dedicate themselves to lifelong compassion in the service of lepers. Those who join the new fraternities break all bonds with family, friends and home, and can never return. The new compassionate mercy attempts to reverse the established paternalism. The Rule of the Hospitallers says:

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[6] Henry Chaumartin, Le mal des ardents et le feu Saint-Antoine (Vienne la Romaine: Les Presses de l'Imprimerie Ternet-Martin, 1946). See especially ch. 4, pp. 53-75.

[7] "Si quis leprosus mulierem habeat sanam, si vult ei donare comiatum ut accipiat virum, ipsa femina, si vult, accipiat. Similiter et vir." Henry Leclercq, "Lèpre" in Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie, Fernand Cabrol & Henry Leclercq, eds. (Paris: Librarie Letouzey et Ané, 1929), vol. 8, second part, col. 2578-2590. With bibliography.

> The sick, when he arrives, shall be received as follows. He shall first confess his sins to the priest and be piously nourished with the Eucharist. He shall then be carried to his bed and installed there as the Lord. He shall always share the fare of the brothers, but he shall be served first.[8]

> As late as 1230, a law in East Prussia stated:

> Be a man laden with sick women, children, brothers, sisters, or domestics, or be he sick himself, then let them be where they lie, and we praise him too if he would burn himself or the feeble person.[9]

Here the idea is that heaven had marked for vengeance those who fall sick; illness is proof of divine wrath. The General Chapter of the Hospitallers, however, evidenced a very different spirit. In the seventh clause of their statutes, adopted in 1181, they decree that the

> ... Commanders of the houses should serve the sick cheerfully, and should do their duty by them, and serve them without grumbling or complaining, so that by these good deeds they may deserve to have their reward in the glories of heaven.[10]

Among the customs of the Order, the ceremony of initiation provided for the usual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and then spoke of the respect due the sick:

> Also we make another promise, which no other people make, for you promise to be the serf and slave of our lords the sick. And to each of these things he [the candidate] should reply: "Yes, if it please God."[11]

These documents recognize a special presence of Jesus in bodily deformity and pain. Here, mercy has grown into full-fledged compassion.

Under Justinian, the institutionalization of mercy in the form of the xenodocheion had been instrumental for defining the poor as a juridically recognizable class within the Eastern Orthodox Empire. They did not occupy this place in the West where, arguably, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries at least, the poor did not constitute a distinct class. But precisely during the twelfth century, the institutionalization of compassion was instrumental in an analogous social creation, that of the sick as a visible social group within the city. During the previous millennium, signs on the skin - due, perhaps, to scrofula, wundbrand or poisoning as much as to Hansen's disease - excluded the "leper"

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[8] The Latin text can be found in K.V. Sinclair, ed., The Hospitallers' "Riwle" (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1984), p. 73. The complete text in English: E.J. King, The Rule, Statutes and Customs of the Hospitallers. 1099-1310 (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1934), pp. 26-27.

[9] Edgar E. Hume, Medical Work of the Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1940), p. 29.

[10] Hume, p. 29.

[11] Hume, p. 33.

from the city. Now, in the twelfth century, what had been a stigma of exclusion becomes the visible mark of a special divine vocation. The exclusive monastic fraternity of monks and nuns is expanded to include a new group of Christians.

The hospitalization of compassion also gave a new personal status to those marked by deformity. While the Hospitallers of the early twelfth century symbolically install the newcomer as the Lord, the Antonites accept him as a novice, one who seeks lifelong admission to a religious fraternity. After fasting for several days and spending the nights in a cave near the bones of the saint, the novice is examined for the physical signs of ergotism. Then, after prayer, he is solemnly served his first cup of the wine of St. Anthony, the saint vinage.[12] This was an alcoholic potion containing those analgesic and vasodilatory herbs which Gruenewald depicted in his painting of Christ's crucifixion, the one destined for the altar of Isenheim, the centerpiece of an Antonite ward. Having gone through the ceremony, the man or woman affected by the morbus infernalis lived for the rest of their lives under obedience to other cripples, all equally victims of fungus-infected rye bread. In some cases, the gangrene was arrested, and a few members of the "fraternity" relaxed in the pleasures rather than the pains of their flesh. Their offspring were then treated as children born to people who had forsaken the world and marriage. But most came to the hospital to die.

By rule, the beds of the sick were oriented towards the altar in the center of each ward. This altar was surmounted by a cross. By mid-century, the naked body of Christ was nailed to it. And for these centuries, Christ's body is the central icon of the body in pain. To speak of the history of pain which compassion helped to disembed as an exquisitely unique evil among all the burdens we can suffer, the iconography of the crucifix is the illuminating guide.

Crucifixion is a mode of execution by torture that Roman law reserved for the humiliores and slaves. Jesus was killed on a cross. However, for six hundred years, Christians shied away from representing him in his humiliation, torture and shame. Not one of the ancient cycles representing sacred history and the life of Jesus in the mosaics of Ravenna, Rome or North Africa contains a depiction of the crucifixion. Under Constantine, the cross becomes the insignia of Christian victory. On the altar or carried as a cult object in procession, it was devoid of a corpse. Indeed, it was often made of gold, and studded with jewels. One of the very few exceptions is the well-known graffito from the Palatine, traced on the outside of what must have been a school or a brothel. It shows a crucified body with the head of a donkey. Beneath it an orant is sketched, and the words, "Alaxamenos adores his God," are scribbled. It was probably meant as a blasphemous joke, certainly not as the representation of God's love.

The first full-fledged portrayal of the crucifixion is a drawing in the so-called Rabula Codex, a Syrian manuscript. All the Gospel details are depicted: The two thieves, the soldiers throwing dice for the cloak, Longinus with the lance, Mary the mother and John the beloved apostle, the mourning women, the sun and moon hiding their faces. But the figure of Jesus is a symbolic iconogram rather than a picture. Unlike the naked thieves, he is veiled in the long mantle (columbium). The breast wound shows that his body is dead. But his open eyes and the halo around his head reveal the glory of divinity ever present in this body. The work is a Christological statement of the Council of Chalcedon: There are no signs suggesting torture or pain.

In the first millennium, Christians do not focus on the bodily pains suffered by Christ in his passion. Certainly one reason for this is the fact that they had no term fitting the word field of modern

[12] Chaumartin, Le mal des ardents, p. 33.

English pain. Pain directly denotes an ache in the body, and only obliquely emotion or feelings. The Greek words, lype, algos and nosos directly mean a state of the soul. And the Old Testament, one long story of woes and miseries in which Israel comes to recognize the hand of the living God, simply has no one word that directly refers to the body in pain.

A second reason for silence during this first millennium is specifically Christian in nature. The second century brings a crucial turn in the history of joy and pain. Christians, in an existential fashion, distinguish something they call joy from the pleasures of this world, which they want to relinquish. Where Greek opposed lype (the word that comes as close as possible to the English "pain") to pleasure, Christians claim to find joy in submitting to excruciating execution. The word that Latin made available for this latter experience is poena. Greek and Hebrew had no word like it. Poena stresses pain inflicted on the body and that is experienced as the result of malevolent intent. Christians accept the extreme of this violent invasion as an inevitable condition for being united with their Lord in his death and resurrection.

Conversion to the kingdom preached by Jesus meant for his disciples something akin to a bodily move into a new dimension. In this new world, martyrdom became the visible horizon within which a new kind of this-worldly existence was lived. Baptism meant leaving the fleshpots of Egypt for the intensely experienced presence of the desert. One was immersed in a vale of tears. On the skyline rose the cross. The Christian expected execution as the appropriate ending of his or her life. This mode of experiencing aliveness is certainly strange to what we, today, generally know. But its historical existence is clearly documented in many court proceedings. Pliny the Younger speaks of Christian thick-headed obstinacy, which disgusts him. For him, these people are simply repugnant.[13] They are vulgar show-offs, according to Marcus Aurelius.[14]

But after Constantine, there is little chance for such a death. The new little sects where people still call each other brother - the hermits, monks and nuns - re-define martyrdom by calling themselves martyrs of peace time. By mortifying the flesh, they try to die to the world and be buried in the desert - with their Lord. They suffer with patience. Paciencia takes the place of the martyr's passio. A fortiori, the cross remains, next to the martyr's palm leaf, the emblem of victory.

There are other reasons why Christians were reluctant to display Christ on the cross. The fear of portraying the holy which led to the iconoclast controversies paralyzed the will to picture the supreme event that took place in the flesh, namely, the death of Jesus. Also, doctrinal uncertainties about Christ's body in that liminal stage between death and resurrection created doubts about the appropriate way of representing it. But here I want to introduce a very different kind of reason: the parallel emergence of what I would call a new sense of self, together with a new sense of pain, in

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[13] In a letter to the Emperor, Trajan, Pliny writes, "If they persisted [admitting they were Christians], I ordered them to be punished at once. I could not doubt that whatever might be the nature of their opinions, such inflexible obstinacy deserved punishment." Alfred Church & W.J. Brodribb, Pliny's Letters (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., n.d.), Letter # 97.

[14] In Meditation XI, #3, he writes: "How blest is the soul that is ready, if needs be to quit the body at this very moment, equally prepared for extinction, dispersal or continuance! But let this readiness be the result of its own judgement, not of sheer obstinacy as in the case of the Christians. Rather let us meet death with such reasonableness, dignity and unaffected simplicity as to persuade even the beholder to do likewise." The Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, trans. by John Jackson (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). Marcus Aurelius is thinking of deliberate suicide, and contrasts that with the voluntary martyrdom of certain Christians. See A.S.C. Farquharson, The Meditations of the Emperor Marcos Antoninus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), vol. 2.

medieval western Christian culture. This change is clearly seen in the artistic embodiment of pain in the man on the cross.

Significantly, the initiative comes from Byzantium. The Council of Trullanum, so named because it was held in the Trullan hall of the imperial palace in Constantinople, in canon #82, decreed that the human figure of Christ rather than the image of a lamb should be on the cross. From the fifth century, the figure of a lamb or a bust of Christ was put on the cross. The whole figure of Christ had become universal by the time of the Council (692), but the older form was also still found.[15]

Within the same century Christ's body, attached to the cross, appears first in central Italy, and then throughout the Latin church. However, this body on a cross remains veiled in the columbium - shroud, sometimes reminiscent of the vestments of a priest or king. A century later, the picture is rarely missing in a church. By the nineth century, the columbium disappears, the corpus is undressed, down to the loincloth. From then until the eleventh century this naked body is found, but it is not common. More importantly, the denuded flesh is used as a symbol of a dead body in which divinity is alive, notwithstanding the open side.

During the twelfth century, the body becomes even more important than the cross. But the image of the person remains a sign, a symbol. In Scivias, the illustrated masterpiece of the visionary Benedictine nun, Hildegard, you see water and blood spurting from the heart into a chalice held by the Ecclesia, figured as a woman standing next to the Crucified. His salvation flows down upon an altar fixed below the cross. Christ is portrayed as the second Adam from whose side she, Ecclesia, the Christian community, is born as the second Eve.[16]

But then, within Hildegard's generation, the iconogram of the Savior gives way to the realistic representation of a tortured man. As far as excruciating pain can be pictured, it is shown above every altar during the late Middle Ages. Once more the history of the perceived body, and the history of bodily pain, together pass a watershed. Just imagine the crucifixion of the Isenheim altar, painted by Gruenewald, which I mentioned earlier. The limbs of Jesus are gangrenous, contorted, discolored - like those of the dying patients, to whom the indescribable light that infuses the painting speaks of the mystery of salvation through pain.

This transformation of the Crucified in the twelfth century speaks clearly about the birth of compassion from heroic mercy. The word compassion also does not appear in the thesaurus of classical Latin. It is found in Tertullian, the Vulgate and Ambrose. But it becomes a central motive only in the sermons of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. He instructs his monks to search for the wisdom of the heart by becoming martyrs through compassion with the Word. About the same time, Elizabeth von Schoenau is the first of a long line of women who experience long drawn-out visions of Christ's passion through which they suffer with him. Women, who with few exceptions cannot become crusaders, visit the Holy Places of the Passion in the cloister of their own heart, and soon the via crucis becomes a solemn devotion. So intense is the compassion of Angela of Foligno that the burning tears she cries leave traces on her cheeks. Clara of Montefalco feels unbearable pains throughout her body each time she is privileged to witness the crucifixion in her visions. It is this generation which discovers that under the appearance of bread and wine the actual flesh and blood of Christ are bodily present. By the end of the

[15] Charles J. Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), vol. 5, p. 234. On the older forms of crucifixes, see Hefele, Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte (Tübingen: 1864), vol. 2, pp. 265ff.

[16] Saint Hildegard, Hildegardis Scivias (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), 2 vols.

twelfth century, several thoroughly sensible and strong Benedictine nuns experience the Eucharist as a way of suffering with Christ.

Modern philosophy says that no one can actually feel the pain of another; it can only be believed. I do not want to challenge this assertion, nor do I have to in order to explain what is happening at this particular moment in western history. Compassion with Christ, for these late medieval mystics, is faith so strong and so deeply incarnate that it leads to the individual embodiment of the contemplated pain. The Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi witness to the enfleshment of his faith in the Incarnate God who faces him from the cross. I do not want to say that any of these women and occasional men loved Christ less than those of earlier generations - Origen, who wanted to be co-crucified with him, or Paul or Ignatius of Antioch. All I suggest is that a new age provides them with a different kind of embodiment. What has been called the appearance of the western self, personal individuality, makes it necessary for them to experience the embodiment of this self. The new separateness of the I from the we provides these first modern Europeans with a new kind of skin in which experience can be embodied in a new way. By embodying compassion in the exercise of bodily mercy to their sick neighbor, the sense of body-specific passion and torture was disembedded, so to speak, from the totality of human miseries and burdens.

Early on then, faith in the Incarnation of the Word of God leads to the discovery of bodily acts of mercy as distinctively Christian behavior. In the century between Hildegard and St. Francis, it leads Christian experience one step further: Compassion with Christ, whose wounds Francis recognized in the suppurating stumps of the beggar whom he kissed. That bodily pain of the other that no medical treatment can reach became a central theme of western culture - through compassion.

But the very disembedding of pain through compassion also bore the mysterious seeds of corruption. Simultaneous with the embodiment of compassion during the late Middle Ages runs a new, unprecedented social concern with the techniques of inflicting pain. I cannot avoid speaking of torture. But, emphatically, I am not suggesting that in some physical sense the instruments of poena became more effective. I only want to show how they were henceforth used by the torturer for a new, darker purpose.

Judicial torture was known in Greece and Rome. It was inflicted on slaves, barbarians and non-persons. All these, according to ancient philosophy were, after all, like beasts. The latent anthropology demanded that they be managed like animals. The only way of breaking them was to tear their flesh from them, since they had no home from which they could be exiled, nor grace of status of which they could be deprived. Judicial torture remained a legal recourse up into modern history. Only in the nineteenth century, was it finally taken off the books in Naples and the Papal States.

Judicial torture vents the angry sovereign's fury on the disobedient subject, inscribes his will in the wretch's flesh through mutilation, or totally extinguishes him in an exemplary way. Inquisitional torture, however, which appears together with the stigmata, is something completely other. It is also different from the torture used to assist interrogation, to make the thief confess where he has hidden the stolen goods.

Inquisitionary torture is not an adjunct to interrogation because it makes interrogation a constitutive element of the pain it inflicts. In a maddeningly disorganized but brilliant book, Elaine Scarry makes this point even better than Amery before her.[17] The new kind of torture seeks to destroy

[17] Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Jean Amery, At the Mind's Limits (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

the world of the victim, and to objectify this destruction in a confession. Inquisitionary torture presupposes the embodiment of the new western self in the very same way in which true compassion presupposes it. But while compassion seeks the loving incorporation of the brother's pain in one's own body, inquisitional torture seeks the destruction of this historically constituted, late medieval self.

When Job is tempted by Satan, he is challenged to be unfaithful to the covenant with Jahweh, not with the destruction of self. In the modern phrase, his self is not at issue. When the Christian martyr is tempted, he is threatened with anathema from his brothers, exclusion from the body of Christ. But the western Inquisitor uses poena, pein, pain to undo the self, together with the self's world.

To understand this depth of horror, which became possible through the love that engendered compassion, it is important to distinguish pain and pain. Pain can be borne, suffered and endured only as long as this evil that has come upon me is not altogether I, as long as it hurts. Torture aims to produce something deeper. There are some forms of pain that alienate the tortured so thoroughly that he can no longer recognize that "this thing which grips me is not I." When this happens, the tortured cannot stand himself any longer. He does not suffer, but is submerged in pain; he cannot live with himself any longer. This state is something more than the result of an efficient technique. Orwell puts it well when he makes betrayal of love the necessary condition for the extinction of self, the self threatened by fear of the rats (1984). The confession at which torture aims is the act of recognition that the tools of the state have created a new reality that the individual must be conformed with to find him- or herself.

Compassion and torture are in no way mutual cause and effect. But they both witness to a unique embodiment of the self that emerges only in western cultures. What the historian can document about them cries out for an explanation. I can only find this in the faith of successive generations in our past - they believe that God in his mercy wanted to be compassionate with us. This faith led to the hospitalization of mercy and to professional care. It led to compassion and to the attempts to manage pain. It led to the "human" condition today in which all technologies become so invasive that only in something which I would call techno-fast can joy be found.

Let me add one more word. The history of pity, of mercy, of compassion, as well as of hospitalization, medicalization and ever more subtle forms of torture makes me certain that the West - its origins and culture - cannot be understood without looking attentively at the pursuit of glory and the depths of horror which, in their extremes, lie far outside the amplitudes that Plato, or even Job, could perceive.