

PEACE BY OTHER MEANS

Symposium on the Role of Ethnography
and the Humanities in the Understanding,
Prevention, and Resolution of Enmity
Part 2

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Introduction: Greco-Latin Findings

The emphasis was ethnological in the first installment of this symposium, and the main question was how, in the ritual and conceptual repertoires of tribal cultures, we might find resources that could be brought positively to bear on our own ways of thinking about enmity and its resolution.¹ In this second installment, partly to indicate the symposium's range, our focus is European and historical, and the question is what resources the centuries of thought and practice before the Peace of Westphalia might hold for modern peacemaking and peacekeeping. Europeans have so persistently sought to abandon those resources—the fraternal ideal of Christendom, the centripetal and assimilative classical tradition, the at least notional subordination of the state to a cosmopolitan church and empire, the preemptive contravention of nationalism and provinciality by ecclesiastical and imperial multiculturalism, chivalric traditions (such as the battle of champions,

1. See “Peace by Other Means, Part 1,” *Common Knowledge* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 412–89.

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in lieu of war, and the pitched battle, when violence is inescapable), the noncompetitive economics of feudalism, and the institution of dynastic marriage—that a cavalier might conclude that the *intent* of the European age of reform had been to render peace impossible and violence unlimited.² Since the fratricide of 1914–45, Europeans have struggled to retrieve some of these discarded resources in new forms (“Charlemagne” is the moniker of the *Economist*’s EU columnist). Still, Rome and Aachen possessed a gravity, a magnetic pull, for which Brussels emanates no substitute.

“The Classics! it is the Classics, & not Goths nor Monks, that Desolate Europe with Wars,” William Blake wrote in the early 1820s, but his Romanticism was not less bloody-minded.³ The docile poet of “The Lamb” (“He is meek, & he is mild; / He became a little child. / I a child, & thou a lamb”) was also author of a call to arms that, set to music by Hubert Parry, has become the alternative national anthem of England. George V himself said he preferred Blake’s “Jerusalem” to “God Save the King,” whose lyrics are so bland and genteel. Blake’s poem is a hymn to class warfare and an incitement to chiliastic violence. Its famous curse on industrialization—“dark Satanic Mills”—is not only a way of saying that English factories were ugly, unfair to labor, and ecologically unsound. It is also a way of saying that the Enemy of God and mankind is living openly in our midst. Accordingly, the zealous bard takes up the cross and commands an imaginary squire: “Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold! / Bring me my Chariot of fire”:

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England’s green & pleasant Land.

A half-dozen years after blaming “The Classics!” for Europe’s desolating wars, Blake was preaching a Crusade against the infidel at home. But holy war, jihad—it bears mentioning—is not a Greco-Roman category. The nomenclature “Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem” was the only thing Latin about the First and Second Crusades.

According to Richard Ned Lebow, writing in the present issue of *Common Knowledge*, classical thought about war and peace was a function of classical

2. In the August 2, 2014 issue of the *Economist*, a favorable review of Mark Greengrass’s book *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517–1648* contains the following caveat about the book’s title: “The implication, which also flows through much of the text, is that the overthrow of Christendom was something to regret, not celebrate. Mr Greengrass is right that the wars of religion, especially the horrendous Thirty Years War, were costly in lives and treasure. Yet the escape of much of Europe from the dead hand of a corrupt and backward-looking Catholic church was surely

an essential precursor of the continent’s success over the next 300 years. The Reformation may have led to much blood being split, but it also made modern Europe” (64). The adversative “but” in that last sentence makes my point effectively.

3. William Blake, “On Homer’s Poetry” (c. 1822), available in the William Blake Archive at www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/work.xq?workid=homer&java=no, accessed June 30, 2014.

psychology. His view bears comparison with that of Peter Sloterdijk's *Rage and Time*, but the origins of both views may be found in E. R. Dodds's *The Greeks and the Irrational* and in Nietzsche's writings on Greek culture of the "tragic age."⁴ Their common observation about the Greeks (though Lebow does not share Nietzsche's sense of momentous difference between the Greece of Sophocles and that of Socrates) is that classical thought about war and peace is immune to wishful thinking about human nature. They might even agree with Jenny Diski's formulation that the world itself "is immune to benign liberal longings."⁵ Lebow, like Sloterdijk, focuses his analysis on the Greek word *thumos*, for which there is no equivalent in English, though translators try to make do with the misleading words "spirit" and "spiritedness." John Maynard Keynes's term "animal spirits" comes perhaps closer, as does Nietzsche's "will to power."⁶ *Thumos* is the fundamental drive (or, as Dodds describes it, the "permanent organ of mental life") behind Achilles's *menos* in the *Iliad*—his self-assertive and self-interested rage.⁷ The Greco-Latin tradition as a rule directs attention to the presence of desires that we might rather not have (or would prefer that *others* not have, so that we might have and satisfy them unopposed).

This Greek variety of realism about human nature is never cynical, and in Greek literature it often leads to unexpectedly creative and unstinting acts of accommodation and fellowship. Agamemnon satisfies the *thumos* of Achilles by appealing to an even deeper irrationalism, suggesting that, at the time he had offended Achilles, he was daemonically possessed. Dodds devotes a famous chapter, "Agamemnon's Apology," to this episode and deserves credit for showing that "these words of Agamemnon's" are not "a weak excuse or evasion of responsibility . . . for at the end of his speech Agamemnon offers compensation precisely on this ground—'But since I was blinded by *ate* and Zeus took away my understanding, I am willing to make my peace and give abundant compensation'." Achilles accepts what seems to us a preposterous explanation for Agamemnon's behavior, but we are not to conclude that he is "politely accepting a fiction in order to save the High King's face."⁸ I agree with Dodds that Achilles has no interest in letting Agamemnon off the hook; still, he may accept the "fiction" so that, his conflict with Agamemnon now terminated, he can rejoin the battle and avenge Patroclus's death. I would say that Agamemnon himself cues us to the formal, procedural, or ritual quality of the scene by rising to address the assembly "not in the midst of them," as king of kings, "but where he had been sitting."⁹ Agamemnon's ges-

4. Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time: A Psychopolitical Investigation*, trans. Mario Wenning (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

5. Jenny Diski, "However I Smell," *London Review of Books*, May 8, 2014, 20.

6. John Maynard Keynes, *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936), 144.

7. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 8.

8. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 3.

9. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974), 459–60 (bk. 19).

ture is calculated to suggest his equality as a man with Achilles and the other warriors—it suggests, in other words, his voluntary embrace of humiliation. In parallel with and, we may assume, as a consequence of this gesture, Achilles then addresses Agamemnon by his titles “Excellency” and “Lord Marshal.” (Achilles, in his immediately prior speech to the assembly, addressed his superior, with no honorifics, as “Agamemnon.”)

The “ceremonies,” as Achilles terms them, conclude with Agamemnon slitting a boar’s throat in sacrifice and swearing, in an address to Zeus, Earth, Helios, and “the Furies underground,” that he never laid a hand on Briseis, the mistress whom he had taken from Achilles (465). Formally, Achilles accepts Agamemnon’s implausible word but then goes on to address Zeus in a speech that rebukes Agamemnon one last time:

Father Zeus, you send mankind
prodigious follies [*atai*]. Never otherwise
had Agamémnon stung me through and through;
never would he have been so empty-headed
as to defy my will and take the girl! (465)

As Dodds insists, there is indeed no polite acceptance of a diplomatic fiction here: Achilles’s acceptance is *impolite*. But even if neither Achilles nor Agamemnon believes that “Zeus and Fate and a nightmare Fury” had overwhelmed the high king’s goodwill, both men may well credit the psychology underlying that explanation (460). The passage that Robert Fitzgerald renders “Never otherwise had Agamémnon stung me through and through,” Dodds translates as “Else the son of Atreus would never have persisted in rousing the *thūmos* in my chest.”¹⁰ Daemonic passions, existing objectively, independently of the psyche, may invade from outside and possess a weak or otherwise susceptible man, but there is also a *thumos* internal to men that is as potent as any daemon. Two kinds of psychological dynamic, one objective and the other subjective, are acknowledged and finalized in a public ritual of confession, concurrence, sacrifice, and oath taking, followed by the resumption of alliance and, eventually, joint military action.

Would a king and assembly of warriors in the Greek world of the Iron Age have had at their disposal a repertoire of gestures, feints, and negotiation scenarios as sophisticated as those I would attribute to them? Cultures in which circuitous candor is the norm—from Genesis 23.3–16, where Abraham bargains with the “sons of Heth” over a piece of real estate, to *As You Like It* 5.4.86–98, where Touchstone commends yet ridicules the procedures of courtly peacemaking—seem always to possess such repertoires. I would add, however, that scenarios can also be improvised, as one gesture is met by another of the same kind (or else is refused or indirectly criticized). “Rituals are not fixed,” as Mary Douglas writes:

10. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 3.

“Discrepancy between the situation being enacted and the form of expression is immediately reduced by change in the latter.”¹¹ Sara Forsdyke’s contribution to our symposium offers an example of change under pressure. She writes of a religious cult in ancient Chios dedicated to Drimakos, a slave hero who was worshipped not only by slaves but also by their masters. Reading backward from an etiological narrative, Forsdyke posits a conflict whose resolution must have come in the form of a treaty, negotiated by the slave hero, that settled what slaves and masters owed each other. Peace between such naturally opposed classes of people was judged, by the class in power, to justify their worshipping a social inferior who had outwitted and tamed them. (Why? *Paris vaut une messe*.)

Likewise, in Yvonne Friedman’s article on Crusader diplomacy, we find evidence of creative improvisation on the part of both the European Christians and the Muslims whom they came to exterminate or expel from Jerusalem. Despite the declaration on both sides of jihad, a series of legal fictions allowed for the negotiation of “temporary”—that is, long-term but (for theological reasons) not permanent—agreements and *modi vivendi*. What Agamemnon’s apology, the hero cult of Drimakos at Chios, and these Crusader *budnas* share is a recognition that there are diplomatic problems that no amount of negotiation based on the rational consideration of material interests will ever resolve. Irrational elements of the psyche are engaged and require propitiation; there can be no recourse to ideals, principles, or abstractions—most especially not to justice—when the aim is to achieve peace.

A ceremony in pursuit of peace was improvised recently at the Vatican. Given the prominent role of the patriarch of Constantinople, we might say that the ritual was Greco-Roman. Pope Francis had tried to corral Presidents Peres and Abbas into praying for peace with him, extemporaneously, during his visit to the Holy Land, but the Israeli and Palestinian governments are never quick to improvise in their relations with each other. The pope was able to cajole them, however, into joining him a fortnight later, together with representatives of the Jewish and Muslim religious establishments, for a ceremony at “my home in the Vatican.”¹² The Franciscan custodian of the Holy Land, who was tasked with devising the ritual, was not called on to improvise *ex nihilo*: Jews and Christians worship separately, every day, in the building on Mount Zion that houses both the Cenacle and the Tomb of David. Likewise, at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Jews worship in one area and Muslims in another part of the complex. The Tomb of Samuel the Prophet, in the West Bank village of Nabi Samwil, is located beneath an eighteenth-century mosque that was formerly a church, but there is also a small synagogue in the underground chamber. A pastor, a rabbi,

11. Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 21.

12. As quoted by Vatican Radio on May 26, 2014. See www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-invites-presidents-abbas-and-peres-to, accessed July 6, 2014.

and an imam are currently raising funds for the “House of One,” where Christians, Jews, and Muslims will worship in separate chambers under a single roof in—of all places—Berlin. Saint John Paul II convoked a World Day of Prayer in Assisi for all religions in 1986, and his successor Pope Benedict XVI repeated the gesture on its twenty-fifth anniversary.

For Pope Francis’s convocation, held in the Vatican Gardens on June 8, 2014, the three religious communities were invited to choose their own texts to recite. The Jewish readings included Psalm 8, in which God is thanked for founding “a bulwark because of your foes, / To silence the enemy and the avenger,” and Psalm 25, where God is asked to “consider how many are my foes, / and with what violent hatred they hate me.” Psalm 25 also asks God to shame those “who are wantonly treacherous,” which I took to refer, as I watched the proceedings online, to the pope and those who had organized the service. The “foes” of God and Israel were, more blatantly, the Palestinians and other Muslims, whom God was asked to “silence.” But the Muslims present were not silent, and their texts were no more appropriate to the occasion than the Jews’ were. The Muslim prayers concluded: “Remove injustice against the oppressed in this land [Palestine], feed its people who hunger, and secure them against fear, and keep them from evil and evil doers, from unjust aggressors, O Lord of the Worlds.”¹³ It was not difficult to identify the “unjust aggressors” and “evil doers” of that prayer. Only the Christians, on this occasion, did not have their fingers crossed. Nor is it difficult to say why the Vatican Invocation for Peace accomplished so little: if all the prayers uttered had reached their destination on high and were granted, nothing at all on the ground would have changed. Indeed, as I write, one month after the Vatican ceremony, Muslim-Jewish relations in the Holy Land are reaching ever new depths.

So what did you expect? אמרת לכם, *حو همهمة*, were among remarks heard, after the service had concluded, from those around the world who believe that negotiations, based on rational consideration of material interests, are the only means of attaining peace. That category of persons coincides almost exactly with the one that Mary Douglas defines as suffering from “one of the gravest problems of our day”: “the explicit rejection of rituals as such.”¹⁴ “Loyalty to my Bog Irish ancestors,” Douglas continues, “would not in itself lead me to defend ritualism. Without being Irish, any anthropologist knows that public forms of ritual expression are not to be despised” (25). For those forms to have their “magical efficacy” (26), she explains, “efficacious symbols” must “be correctly manipulated” and “the right words . . . pronounced in the right order” (28). To do so improvisationally,

13. All of the texts are available at the Holy See Press Office website: press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2014/06/07/0415/00948.html#Testi%20in%20lingua%20inglese, accessed July 6, 2014.

14. Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 19.

as Pope Francis can attest, is no easy thing. On the other hand, having seen the magic ourselves, we know that it can be done.

When Elizabeth II arrived in Dublin on May 17, 2011, she opened “a new era in the history of these islands” by disembarking from the Queen’s Flight dressed entirely in emerald green. The queen of Ulster proceeded at once to a garden of remembrance devoted to those who had died fighting the British for Irish independence. There, she laid a wreath in a gesture that the press termed “unspoken but colossal.”¹⁵ At a state dinner the next day, at Dublin Castle, the seat of British power in Ireland for centuries, the queen wore a gown with shamrocks embroidered on the sleeves and commenced to speak in Irish. Even Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Féin, expressed admiration. The *Guardian* reported that the queen’s

words of Gaelic at the start of her speech at the state dinner on Wednesday evening—“A Úachtárain agus a chairde” (“president and friends,” immaculately pronounced)—were an unexpected gesture. Mary McAleese, the Irish president, who was sitting beside the Queen, turned to others at the table open-mouthed, exclaiming “wow.” The speech, with its apology for “things we wish had been done differently or not at all,” was greeted across the Irish political spectrum with near universal praise. Her words, calling for forbearance and conciliation and the loosening of the knots of history, striving to create a more harmonious relationship, “close as good neighbours should always be,” led all the Irish papers. All were full of praise for the address, which was delivered in front of dignitaries from both sides of the Irish border, including the taoiseach Enda Kenny, the Unionist first minister of Northern Ireland Peter Robinson, religious leaders including Cardinal Seán Brady, the Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney, Irish rugby star Brian O’Driscoll and various Irish former prime ministers. They gave the Queen rapturous applause and a standing ovation.¹⁶

The author of this *Guardian* report was clearly no ethnographer. The body language at the state dinner was more remarkable than the words spoken, and the queen did not, as the reporter claims, apologize. She said: “To all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past, I extend my sincere thoughts and deep sympathy. With the benefit of historical hindsight, we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently, or not at all.” From the BBC footage, it is clear that no one present that evening could have doubted that “not at all,” pronounced with emphatically raised eyebrows as she looked up from her script, meant that the queen wished her ancestors and countrymen had never set foot in Ireland bearing arms. An apology would not have had the same effect, for

15. See the *Daily Mail* online at www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1387878/Queen-Ireland-visit-opened-new-era-century-bloodshed-distrust.html#ixzz2xrzToWAP, accessed April 8, 2014.

16. See the *Guardian* online at www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/may/19/queen-ireland-visit-respect-adams, accessed April 4, 2014.

she herself was guilty of nothing, and the text of an apology would have been an artifact of the Cabinet Office, a merely political statement about nothing better than politics.

Instead, the queen in effect repealed history, having the magical power to do so, not so much because her ancestors had made so much of the history that she sought to repeal, but because she made no mention of Lord Louis Mountbatten, her favorite cousin, her husband's uncle, and the mentor of her heir apparent, assassinated in 1979—"blown 'to smithereens,'" along with his fourteen-year-old grandson, by the Provisional IRA. The IRA had taken credit, immediately after the bomb blast, in a public statement: "This operation is one of the discriminate ways we can bring to the attention of the English people the continuing occupation of our country."¹⁷ Martin McGuinness, a former commander of the Provisional IRA, is now Northern Ireland's deputy first minister. He shook hands with the queen at a charity reception in Belfast in 2012, then again at a state dinner in 2014, held at Windsor Castle in honor of Michael Higgins, the Irish president. The BBC reported that

Mr McGuinness told RTÉ that he had been moved by words and deeds during [Queen Elizabeth's] visit to the Republic of Ireland, the first by a British monarch in the history of the state. "I was tremendously impressed by the very solemn way that she commemorated those Irish republicans who lost their lives in the struggle for independence, how she acknowledged the importance of the Irish language and, probably most important of all, when she acknowledged that she had wished that things had been done differently or not at all," he said. "That was very, very impressive and I think that it is quite clear that this is a woman that is playing a leadership role."¹⁸

What distinguishes the queen's ritual improvisation, on behalf of peace in Ireland, from the pope's, on behalf of Israelis and Palestinians, is her constitutional role as both the embodiment of national *thumos* and the object of her subjects' continuous humiliation. That Pope Francis understands humility is obvious, but of humiliation Queen Elizabeth's knowledge is personal and intense. What it takes to achieve and then maintain peace is the magic of gracious self-humiliation on the part of those apparently in power. The sovereign's robing room at Westminster Palace, where the queen goes each year to prepare for the opening of Parliament, is decorated, for her edification, with the parliamentary death warrant for King Charles I. When Black Rod, the sovereign's emissary, arrives at the House of Commons to announce that the members' presence is required in the House of Lords to hear the Queen's Speech, the door is slammed

17. BBC News report, August 27, 1979, available online at [news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/27/newsid_2511000/2511545.stm](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-26919992), accessed July 6, 2014.

18. BBC News report, April 8, 2014, available online at www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-26919992, accessed July 6, 2014.

in his face. When at last he is admitted to the House of Commons, the summons that Black Rod issues is met with ritually obligatory (but often heartfelt and derisive) laughter, followed by halfhearted obedience. The Queen's Speech is written for her by the Cabinet Office, and, as she defines the government's legislative program from the throne, her prestige is bent to the ruling party's service. In each of these gestures of humiliation, worked out since the Restoration of 1660, the peace settlement between Parliament and the Crown is reenacted in public. It is in this way, apparently, that regicides and fratricides are surmounted and their recurrence successfully contained. The same apotropaic magic is effected whenever the sovereign rises to sing "Jerusalem," Blake's alternative to "God Save the Queen." Blake was not simply a republican but a Gnostic, millenarian, antinomian anarchist, in sympathy with the French and American Revolutions.

It was reported in the Israeli press, on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee in 2002, that a founder of the State of Israel had remarked, at an embassy party, that he wished Israel/Palestine had remained a British mandatory state. Shimon Peres, despite the effect of champagne, may have meant what he said. Or rather, what he said might mean this: the Holy Land can never be at peace until its raging *thumos* is pacified and the value of self-humiliation is understood.¹⁹

—Jeffrey M. Perl

19. Arguing, in the July 16, 2014 issue of the *New Republic*, that "the burning of the Palestinian boy [Muhammad Abu Khdeir] must not be eclipsed by the struggle against the aggressions of Hamas," Leon Wieseltier adds that the "maniacs who perpetrated the crime did not, in their ideas and words, come from nowhere, from no politics, from no culture. The top-to-bottom revulsion in Israel at what was done in the forest near Jerusalem, a sincere revulsion, does not end the matter. Regret, if it is to be

genuine, cannot be efficient." Wieseltier does not name a suitably inefficient means of expressing regret, but Jewish tradition has one: a mandatory fast, observed forever. There is a yearly fast on the anniversary of the murder of Gedalia ben Ahikam. How differently would matters stand between Jews and Palestinians today if the rabbinate of Israel had proclaimed a mandatory fast for the murder of Muhammad Abu Khdeir?