The Apocalypse Of Peter
Bremmer, Jan N.; Czachesz, István

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2003

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

Copyright
Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Take-down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): http://www.rug.nl/research/portal. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.
IX. Does Punishment Reward the Righteous?
The Justice Pattern Underlying the Apocalypse of Peter

LAUTARO ROIG LANZILLOTTA

Introduction

In a famous part of his Zur Genealogie der Moral Nietzsche criticised Dante's naivety in writing the inscription 'auch mich schuf der ewige Liebe' above the entrance of his inferno. According to him, the motto 'auch mich schuf der ewige Hass' above the gateway to the Christian Paradise might have been much more fitting to describe the retaliatory morals of Christianity. The statement by Thomas Aquinas

1 A rather free translation of Inferno III.5-6, 'fecemi la divina potestade, / la somma sapienza e 'l primo amore'. See Zur Genealogie der Moral 1.15.

Aquinas' statement in Summa Theologica, Suppl. 94.1 (similarly in Sentent. IV, 50.2.4) is surprising. Firstly, he does not seem to be at all concerned by the fact that if the other's suffering is necessary to complete it, the bliss of the blessed cannot be perfect. Perfection is complete in itself without the need of external stimuli to improve it. Secondly, it is also surprising that he is not even made uneasy by the idea that rejoicing at the suffering of others might diminish this perfection. The only reference to the issue is an indirect one, since it appears in his second objection and is, actually, related to the perfection of vision. He states, indeed, that since Aristotle (EN X.4) affirms that the perfection of vision depends on the perfection of the visible object, it might seem odd to assume that the perfection of the blessed can be affected by the extreme deformity of the suffering of the damned. His solution to this objection is far from convincing. He begins by stating that 'Nothing should be denied the blessed that belongs to the perfection of their
that the torment of the damned will enhance the happiness of the blessed in heaven and the mockery at the gruesome suffering of the pagan on the day of the Last Judgement imagined by Tertullian (*De spectac.* 30) illustrate, in his view, the continuity of a mode of thinking already present in *Revelation*.

Although Nietzsche's polemical analysis of Christian morals and his interpretation of Christian love as arising from 'ressentiment' have been challenged in several important works during the past century, none of them has objected to his premises. Nietzsche's sharp criticism of the misanthropic psychological background of Tertullian's and Aquinas' utterances indeed holds true. If the idea of righteousness or bliss is not based on any objective notion but on a compensatory inversion of the present situation of injustice and despair, it is dangerously apt to take the form of a triumphant elevation over the suffering of others.

The function of comparison as a basis for knowledge is only valid for imperfect mortals who, as such, must base their understanding on always partial perceptions. Given that the blessed have already achieved their perfection, comparison is likely to be unnecessary, since complete understanding of everything in one single act of apprehension is inherent to perfect knowledge. See Bayle's opinion, note 55 below.


6 See Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 275. In situations of injustice or suffering accompanied by the feeling of incapacity to overcome by other means what he positively experiences as injustice, the suffering individual comforts himself with the imaginary and future inversion of the current situation, in
As a matter of fact, the relevance of the issue restated by Nietzsche goes far beyond the strict borders of Christianity. Pleasure at the other's misfortune has indeed been a central problem in ancient (and modern) Western culture and seems to be characteristic of societies with a competitive structure. As the individual's social and self-esteem are not pre-established but are largely dependent on his own skills in acquiring status tokens, in the long run comparative value tends to replace intrinsic value. In such an axiological context, objects are no longer valued according to an autonomous scale of values that measures the relationship between the individual's expectations and achievements. Rather they are valued according to a heteronomous and social scale of values that measures not the value of the object in itself but what it represents for the social whole. Even if deceitful, since the other's desires cannot be our own desires, such a value structure reveals itself as positive insofar as it responds to social dynamism and this in turn redounds to cultural change and development.

However, it also has negative sides. Once started, the inertia of comparative evaluations is difficult, if not impossible, to stop. As individuals are used to valuing both objects and themselves on the basis of comparative processes, they are apt to extend these comparative criteria to domains where their application is rather questionable. The evaluation of the happiness or misfortune of others is one of these domains. Blinded by their comparative Drang, and obsessed with preserving and improving their status, individuals are likely to perceive the bliss or despair of others as obstacles in their quest for social (and self-) esteem. Envy and Schadenfreude are the concomitant effects of such a misanthropic evaluation of reality in which individuals experience the life of others as an obstacle to, or as an implement for, their self-realisation. Human joy or pain, qua joy and pain, no longer count, since they are valued not intrinsically but comparatively. The other's joy diminishes our own joy and gives us pain; the other's pain in turn gives us joy. Such is the psychological structure criticised by Nietzsche.

which his wrongdoers become the victims and he in turn contemplates their suffering.

7 For a thorough analysis both of this evaluative structure and its psychological implications, see D. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, 2.2.8-9.
Although all Nietzsche’s critics adhere to his reproving of this deceitful value-structure, they all exclusively comment on Tertullian’s morbid malice, as though his case was exceptional. Such compensatory pleasure at the other’s misfortune, however, is not as isolated as some might think. One of the most obvious examples of a compensatory kind of justice, the Lazarus parable, appears already in the New Testament, and there are also enough references documenting its presence both in patristic texts and in later medieval theologians. In the same tenor as Tertullian and Aquinas, all these passages insist that the punishment of the damned is offered as a spectacle to the blessed either as a compensation for their sufferings on earth or as a means to fully understand both God’s justice and their own bliss.

8 Tertullian is the favourite scapegoat for those who comment on the issue. See, for example, Scheler, Das Ressentiment, 57-8 and note; Camus, L’Homme, 30-1. Furthermore, Thomas Burnet, De statu mortuorum & resurgentium tractatus (London, 1733) 307, quoted by D.P. Walker, The Decline of Hell (London, 1964) 30. As Tertullian offers the most exaggerated and aggressive version of the idea, and as his personality presents enough pathological traits, commentators seem to consider him a rather exceptional case of hatred and impotence. Scheler even takes Tertullian’s case as the most obvious example of one of his categories of resentful types (‘the apostate’, see Scheler, Das Ressentiment, 57ff).

9 Lk 16.19-31. The inconsistency of the justice pattern defended by this parable is obvious from the fact that the attitude of the rich man in the afterlife seems to be morally superior to that of Lazarus. Indeed, his concerns regarding the future of his brothers seem to contradict the orthodox view, according to which the damned are irrecoverable. The problem did not escape the attention of Bonaventure and Aquinas, who attempted an explanation of this peculiarity: the rich man actually desired everyone’s condemnation, but knowing that this was not possible, he wanted his brothers to be saved rather than anyone else. However, as Leibniz, Théodicée III, 154, pointed out, the argument is rather weak. See Walker, The Decline, 34.


11 Cyprian, Ad Demetr. 30.2; Tertullian, De spectac. 10; John Chrysost-
The obvious conclusion for all these authorities is, therefore, that this spectacle cannot but produce pleasure. That the idea is not restricted to the Middle Ages is further supported by the testimony of similar utterances in Bellarmine, Francis de Sales, and even Pascal

Now the question arises whether apocalyptic literature, by contrasting the sinners' despair with the bliss of the righteous, pursues the spectacle of the other's suffering as a means of providing a similar compensatory or vindictive kind of justice. This goal is indeed explicitly or implicitly presupposed by numerous texts and it has been suggested that the idea originates in the context of oppression due to persecutions suffered by the Jews in the last two centuries BC. The theme, however, also appears in later Christian apocalyptic texts, in which case the Sitz im Leben can hardly be adduced to explain its appearance. Moreover, the emergence of vengeance desires in a Christian context is rather peculiar, since they seem to contradict the principle of neighbourly love, which sought to supersede the anthropological dualism that in antiquity ruled the individual's relationship with the other.

The aim of this paper is to consider the position adopted by the original Apocalypse of Peter (ApPt) with regard to these issues. Is the reversal of fortune displayed by ApPt a simple compensatory inversion...

mos, l Cor. (PG 61, 471.49ff); Jerome, Hom, in Le 16.26; Augustine, Civ. Dei 22.22; Enchr. 94.24; Gregory the Great, Hom. 40.291-301 (CCSL 161, 405); Petrus Lombardus, Sent. IV, 50.7 (PL 192.962).

Bellarmine, De aeterna felicitate Sanctorum IV.2; Francis de Sales, De l'amour de Dieu IX.8; Pascal, Provinciales IX.


The most obvious example appears in the Arabic Apocalypse of Peter, a rather late text without any connection with the Apocalypse of Peter. See A. Mingana, Apocalypse of Peter, Woodhroke Studies 3/2 (Cambridge, 1931) 141: 'Who avoid the sins of the body and shine with the qualities of heart – I mean the priests and deacons, who fear me and keep my commandments – I have prepared for them gorgeous garments and diadems, and I will place them in the mansions of heaven which overlook the sufferings of the abyss, in order to double in that day their joy and their pleasures'.

See Mt 5.38ff.
sion of the injustice experienced by its writer and its intended readership? Or is it rather an effect of the triumph of justice, which, substituting an unjust system for a just one, extends punishment and reward to sinners and the righteous? Within this scope, the first section evaluates the psychological impact of this reversal on the reader in order to determine whether it is reactive or not. Attention is consequently paid to the question of whether the value system of the reader is so intrinsically mixed with what he reads that a compensatory inversion is strictly necessary in order for him to reorganise his own values and self-esteem. The second section analyses the notion of justice underlying ApPt on the basis of the emotional responses to the other's suffering appearing in the text. The third section, finally, attempts an explanation of the varying attitudes to the other's suffering attested in different versions of ApPt.

I. Is the Reversal of Fortunes Necessarily Reactive?

One of the most profound analyses of the individual's response to the 'spectacle' of the other's misfortune handed down from antiquity is without doubt the Platonic analysis of the pleasure provided by the comedy in the *Philebus*\(^\text{16}\). For our present study the interest in Plato's approach arises from the fact that, in analysing the spectator's responses to what he sees on stage, he transcends the mere representation searching for an explanation in his vital experience. From the point of view of the individual's emotional responses, the line separating fiction from fact seems to be rather irrelevant. Accordingly, the effect of the reversal of fortune (περίπεται) displayed by the plot of comedy on the psyche of the spectator is strongly determined by the same evaluative structure that governs his daily life. His evaluation of the hero's misfortune is intrinsically mixed with his own experience, namely with his self-esteem, with his fears' and expectations".


\(^{17}\) As has been pointed out by H.G. Gadamer, *Platos dialectische Ethik. Phänomenologische Interpretationen zum Philehos* (Hamburg, 1983 [1931])
This approach determines Plato's condemnation of the pleasure provided by the ridiculous (τὸ γελοϊον). In his view, this pleasure is clearly malicious, for our soul experiences a peculiar mixture of pleasure and pain when laughing at the misfortune of others. The idea behind such a statement seems to be that, as individuals establish their values on the basis of comparative processes, their emotional responses are inversely proportional to the fortune of others. Due to the competitive spirit that dominates his idea about his neighbour, the individual's subjective evaluation of the suffering of others transforms into pleasure what, from an objective point of view, is clearly evil. Whereas, considered in itself, the pain of others cannot but produce distress, when compared with our own situation it enhances our happiness. This psychological structure explains why at the scenic representation and at the 'tragedy and comedy of life' (Phlb. 50b) the individual re-acts by envying the other's fortune and rejoicing at his suffering. This latter statement implies that the pleasure of the ridiculous, namely the pleasure at the suffering of others, is necessary in order to remove the pain that their apparent happiness had aroused.

Is it possible to establish a parallel between the emotional responses aroused in the spectator by the plot of comedy and those experienced by the reader of ApPt? Is the system of values of the reader so involved in the reversal as it is in the case of the spectator of the comic περιπέτεια? A comparison of both genres will help us in establishing similarities and differences.

1.1. Similarities Between the Scope of Comic περιπέτεια and the Reversal of Fortune in ApPt

The moral educational purpose of apocalyptic literature seems to be evident from its subjects, its characters, and its scenarios. The oppo-

150, the Platonic analysis is certainly pertinent to the question of the aesthetics of the comic, but his paramount importance arises from his subtle understanding of the individual's attitude to the circumstances of others.

tion between good and evil, and their consequent reward or punishment, seems to be its most visible goal. An ἀγαθός or 'righteous individual', with whom the reader/listener identifies himself, is acquainted, thanks to a divine figure (in ApPt, Jesus), with the future of humankind, the description of which mostly focuses on the impending suffering and punishment of a mean character. The scenario of the Last Judgement in ApPt displays before the eyes of the righteous a complete inversion of the unjust state of things according to a system of values implicitly defended by the text. Despite the apparent advantages and success of the wicked, and the visible disadvantages of the righteous, ultimately reward and punishment bring about the moral triumph of the latter. The eventual fall of the unrighteous brings to order the preceding chaos of an inverted system of values by means of appropriate retribution for their injustice. A fake ἀγαθός, actually a true κακός, is brought down to his real condition.

In comedy, as Plato envisages it in the Philebus, we see the development of a mean character who, due to ἄγνοια or 'ignorance', overvalues himself at the beginning of the play. Even if during the representation the spectator becomes aware of the ignorance that causes the hero's over-evaluation, not so the hero who persists in his error. At the end of the play, however, his fall returns the hero to his proper place in the current scale of values. In his περιπέτεια, his position moves from extreme happiness to its opposite, disgrace. Although at the beginning of the play the spectator feels momentarily brought down to an inferior position, at the end, and thanks to the inversion, he occupies a superior one. His feelings consequently move in an inverse direction to those of the protagonist, going from the extreme of φθῶνος or 'envy' of the threatening superior position to the opposite malicious pleasure of seeing this danger disappear. Although for Plato this pleasure is just another aspect of envy, in Aristotelian terminology ἐπιχαίρεκακία is the term used to name this emotional response, namely 'the pleasure of seeing the destruction of that which had aroused envy'.

19 See W. Szilazi, Macltt und Oknmacht des Geistes (Bern, 1946) 94. Furthermore, M. Mader, Das Problem des Lachens und der Komodie bei Platon (Stuttgart, 1977).

20 Aristotle, Rh. 1386b34-1387a2. The Platonic analysis received deini-
Different though they may be, we must admit, at a general level, certain parallels in the nature of the apocalyptic and the comic. The obvious reversal in the positions occupied by spectator/reader and protagonist in the current system of values in both genres brings them close to each other. Both in comedy and in apocalyptic literature, spectator and reader represent the normative value in the displayed value systems, this standard measure being the touchstone for correct behaviour. Consequently, the original arrogance due to ἄγνοια, which characterises both the fallen hero of comedy and the punished sinner of apocalyptic literature, is corrected eventually through the knowledge they acquire by their suffering.

1.2. Differences Between Comic περιπέτεια and the Reversal of Fortune in ΑpPt

However, once these general parallels have been established, we must refine the analysis, focusing on the relationship between the displayed value system and that of the society in which the spectator/reader lives. This issue is essential, for the spectator's frame of reference is what determines his evaluation of the reversal and the psychological impact it may have on him. A closer analysis from this point of view reveals certain differences concerning the degree of involvement of the spectator/reader in the development of the plot.

To begin with, the παιδικὸς φόβος exploited by the plot of comedy is not as παιδικός or 'unreal' in apocalyptic literature. Comedy recreates, within a stable value system, the whole development of a character from his original arrogance to his ultimate fall. The fallative support from the Aristotelian statement that ἐπιχαίρεται or 'Schadenfreude' (together with αἰσχύνται or 'shamelessness' and φθόνος or 'envy'), unlike other affections, do not admit a mean (EN 1107a8 ff). Ever since, the condemnation of 'Schadenfreude' has been unanimous, not only among pagan writers (Plautus, Stichus 207ff; Cicero, TD 4.20; Horace, Sat. 1.4.78-9; Seneca, De ira 3.5.5; Plutarch, De Herod. malign. 15, p. 858; Epictetus, Diatr. 2.16.45; Alcinous, Didasc. 32.4) but also among Christian authors such as Jerome (see P. Antin, 'Textes de S. Jerôme [et d'autres] sur la joie du malheur d'autrui', Vigiliae Christianae 18 [1964] 51-6; cf., however, Joly, Christianisme, 175 and note 10 above); Ambrose, In Luc. 8.14 and Augustine, Enar. in Ps. 96.11, In Ps. 108.20.
of the comic hero restates the legitimacy of the current system of values, since the discrepancy between his self-esteem and his real personal value is corrected on the basis of the normative value that proceeds from the very same system of values. In this sense comedy can be described as conservative\(^2\), since it purports and protects the status quo with regard to values. In the case of apocalyptic literature, however, the day of the Last Judgement describes the fall of a real danger, namely the fall of the transgressors of God’s law, persecutors and oppressors. This fall of the unrighteous implies the superseding of the unjust current system of values by a righteous one. Apocalyptic literature might, from this perspective, be called revolutionary, since it suggests a radically different system of values based on a new normative value. The intrinsic differences are easy to perceive.

Concerning values, comedy defends the current system denouncing the futility of those who pretend to surpass the 'golden mean' with which the spectator identifies himself and on which his social universe is based. Apocalyptic literature, on the other hand, denounces the injustice of the current system of values, aiming at its substitution by an ideally righteous one.

Concerning the implication of the spectator/reader, comedy is complete in itself. It represents a situation familiar to the spectator from his daily experience and, accordingly, he only has to place himself in effigie in the action. His position does not change from beginning to end and it is precisely this apathy that explains his need of the other's suffering. By contrast, in apocalyptic writing, the reader is directly involved in the action. The περιπέτεια displayed in the text is the imaginary inversion of the current situation of injustice; it is the desired reversal of a perverted system of values that will make possible not only the punishment of the unrighteous but also the proper acknowledgement of the reader’s own value.

Consequently, it is not the reversal itself that is malicious, but rather its objective. In comedy the correction of the overvaluation is not satisfying enough, because the ultimate goal is not an attack on the system of values but rather on the very arrogant individual. The

malicious laugh of the spectator is strictly necessary in order for him to remove the pain produced by the apparent superiority of the hero. Similarly, Tertullian imagines his mockery at the pagans' suffering together with the reintroduction of Justice in the Last judgement. It must be noted, however, that in the latter case, his malicious mockery seems to compromise the justice he is claiming. By revengefully (or pleasantly) laughing at the suffering of others, the individual actually gives his assent to the injustice he is apparently denouncing and simply implies an inversion of roles between wrongdoers and victims.

In apocalyptic texts, however, the case seems to be different, since it is the injustice of the current system that is questioned. In the case of ApPt, therefore, the main goal of the reversal may not be the unrighteous suffering individual, but rather the injustice of the world in which righteous and unrighteous live. Naturally, the substitution of a perverted system by a righteous one implies reward for the former and punishment for the latter; but these might be simple effects concomitant with the restitution of justice.

2. The Concept of Justice Underlying ApPt

It seems obvious that before proceeding to state or reject pleasure at the other's suffering as a constituent moment of ApPt's concept of justice we must consider the ideal righteous system the text implies. In order to do so I will focus on the emotional responses of those who witness the punishments. As the seers represent the community of the righteous protected by God's justice, the reader necessarily identifies himself with them and consequently their reactions are equal to his reactions.

2.1. Emotional Responses to the Other's Suffering

ApPt pays special attention to the spectators' responses to the suffering of the wicked. In ApPt 3 E22, the righteous, the angels and Jesus

see the punishment of the damned. In 7.10 victims of murder view the punishment of murderers; in 8.3-4 aborted children not only witness but also participate in the chastisement of their parents and, similarly, in 8.5-7, victims of infanticide take part in the prosecution. Furthermore, in ApPt 11.4 E, children and virgins see the chastisement of sins committed by children and, finally, in a somewhat different tone, 13.2 states that the righteous will see the torture of the damned.

Strikingly, however, the attitude of the spectators is far from being unanimous. On the basis of their responses two groups may be distinguished: those who a priori reject the suffering of the damned and those who, implicitly or explicitly, accept it.

2.1.1. Rejection of the Other's Suffering: Compassion in ApPt 3 E.

"Ἐλεος" or 'compassion' is the first emotional response to the others' suffering we encounter in the Ethiopic text. In c. 3, after Jesus has shown the future of both the righteous and sinners, the torments of the latter distress all those present (3.3): 'We saw further how the sinners will grieve in intense torment and anguish so that all of us watching it began to weep, the righteous, the angels, and even Jesus himself'. Although the latter weep, it is only Peter who is impelled to act by his feelings. His protest is not delayed (3.4): 'Lord, let me repeat what you said about these sinners, that it would have been better for them if they had never been created'. If this idea is a paraphrase of Jesus' words in Mt 26.24\textsuperscript{23}, its contents and implications are, as we will see, rather different. Jesus' severe rebuke shows that Peter seems to be questioning the sense of the creation of evil if some are exclusively destined to undergo eternal punishment (3.5): 'Peter! Why would you say such a thing, that they should never have been created? You are rebelling against God!' Peter's compassion at the sight of human suffering and existential protest against the need for pain rely on a sense of φιλανθρωπία or 'humanity', a sympathy with his fellow humans that a priori rejects a dualistic view of man, opposing the righteous against the unrighteous.

In his answer, Jesus urges Peter to check himself until he has considered whether these punishments happen to be deserved or not:

\textsuperscript{23} Similarly Mk 14.21.
'When you saw how the sinners will lament on the final day it made you sad. But now I will show you how by their actions they have transgressed against the most High' (ApPr 3.7 E). The measure of the punishment, according to Jesus, strictly correlates with the measure of their transgressions. His urging Peter to pay attention not only to the sufferings but also to the nature of the sins that provoked them relies on the notion of distributive justice.

The passage consequently displays three different notions or degrees of ἐλεος. The first kind, a rather passive and pathological compassion, is represented by the weeping of the seers. In this case, the emotional response does not necessarily impel the person to act, because the suffering individual is not the one who provokes it. Rather, it is the objective idea of pain and suffering that moves the person.

A second kind, Peter's ἐλεος, involves both the pain and the suffering individual. His compassion presents an active character as a result of a rational process aiming to understand the circumstance of the other and the character of his suffering\textsuperscript{24}. The result of this process is an emotional response that combines the act of 'being troubled along with' the pain of the other (συνάθρομα) with a kind of 'fellow feeling' or συμπάθεια\textsuperscript{25}.

The third kind of ἐλεος is the measured emotional response defended by Jesus' words. Whereas the first kind was defective and Peter's is excessive, the third kind represents, in his view, the only proper emotion, for it considers not only the pain and the suffering individual, but also the notion of merit upon which distributive justice is based. According to this notion of justice, ἐλεος is only likely to appear in those cases where the other's disgrace happens to be undeserved. It is interesting to note that Jesus' restriction presents a strict parallel to the Aristotelian definition of ἐλεος in the Rhetorics as 'a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful,

\textsuperscript{24} For a similar differentiation see Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theol. \Pi/II}, 30.1c, 2c, and 3c. Compassion is an affection if it is simply a \textit{motus appetitus sensitivi}, but in turn is a virtue if its appearance is accompanied by reason, namely if it is a \textit{motus appetitus intellectivi}.

\textsuperscript{25} See W. Burkert, \textit{Zum altgriechischen Mitleidsbegriff} (Erlangen. 1955) 61.
which befalls one who does not deserve it. But the notion of merit or \( \dot{\alpha} \xi \dot{i} \alpha \), which is the only normative value permitting the distinction between justice and injustice, is also essential to the notion of retributive justice that seems to assign punishment or reward. Since Jesus’ words focus on this principle of merit, one may assume that his demonstration aims to arouse in Peter the proper satisfaction of seeing justice fulfilled. Aristotle calls this emotional response νέμεσις or 'righteous indignation' and defines it as 'feeling pain at undeserved adversities and prosperities and pleasure at those that are deserved.'

One should keep in mind, however, that Peter expresses his compassion even before he has been acquainted with the sins that, in Jesus’ words, justify the punishments. He consequently not only questions the meaning of evil in the context of God's creation but also the meaning of a justice that for some implies unceasing torture.

2.1.2. Approval of the Other’s Suffering. In his gruesome sightseeing Peter is not only allowed to witness the punishments; he can also see how other seers contemplate their application. Rather differently than Peter and the righteous, this group of seers is not moved by the sight of the punishments and approves, whether implicitly or explicitly, of the torment that is taking place. Sometimes their attitude is silent contemplation – as it is, for example, in 7.10: 'The angel Ezrael brings the spirits of the murdered victims so they can watch the punishment'. The absence of any explicit reaction by the seers clearly indicates, in my opinion, that the objective of their presence is not so much satisfying their revenge desires as letting them see that, despite appearances, justice at last prevails.

Another curious example is ApPt 11.4 E, where children and virgins, who are not directly involved in the crimes, contemplate the punishment of sins committed by children. In this case, the presence of a public seems to be intended to achieve a corrective or preventive goal: 'Again the angel Ezrael brings children and virgins to show them those who are being punished'. As in the former case, the seers are simply spectators of a rather mechanical functioning of justice.

---

26 Aristotle, Rh. 1385b13 ff.
27 Aristotle, Rh. 1386b14-5, ἀδίκον γαρ τὸ παρὰ τὴν ἁγίαν γιγνόμενον.
28 Aristotle. EE 1233b24-5.
that gives to each according to his deeds.

At other times, participation by the seers is more active. This is the case with the aborted children (8.3-4), who participate in the punishment of their mothers, and with the victims of infanticide, who personally accuse their murderous parents (8.6-7). These are the only two exceptional cases where justice seems to slide into personal retaliation, and this shift may be due to the horrible nature of the crimes.29

Within this group of approving reactions one may also include those utterances by the damned themselves admitting their guilt and the justice of their punishment. The first passage appears in 7.11: 'The killers will say to them together, "God's sentence was just and right because we heard that we would come to this place of retribution, but we did not believe it".' Similarly in ApPt 13.6 E: 'God's decision is correct for we heard and learned about the goodness of his decision and each of us has been paid back matching what we have done'.

2.2. Are These Attitudes Incompatible?

Now the question arises whether these seemingly opposite attitudes by the seers are dealt with as incompatible with one another or rather as compatible. Do approving reactions seek to rule out compassion or are both emotional responses conceived of as legitimate responses to the sight of punishment? Scholars are normally inclined to accept the former possibility. On the a priori assumption that Jesus' answer intends to rebuke Peter's compassion, they seem to consider that approving reactions by the seers are a suitable support for this rebuke. This is the case, for example, in R. Joly's approach to the issue. In a large collection of patristic medieval texts documenting what he calls 'compensatory sadism', namely the pleasure at the other's suffering, he includes a version of ApPt 13.2 E, according to which the sight of the torment of the damned will avenge the righteous. As Joly does not mention the problem of 'compassion' in chapter 3, one might

29 Cf. section 3.2 below.
30 Joly, Christianisme, 171-82.
31 Joly, Christianisme, 173. See below, however, for the correct reading of the passage according to more recent editions.
conclude that for him approving reactions rebuke compassion and that, consequently, they were directed at stating the need, even the right, of the righteous to take revenge on the sinners. As, one may presume, compassion and revenge exclude each other, he tacitly implies that Peter's compassion (that is, human compassion) is overruled by divine justice. Oppression and persecution account, in his view, for this peculiarly vindictive conception of divine justice.

Other scholars have attempted an inclusive interpretation: although approving reactions do not completely rebuke Peter's compassion, they do correct it. According to Buchholz, for example, ApPt tried to solve the dilemma over mercy and justice. The question, implicit in ApPt 3 E, as to whether God is merciful, receives, in his view, a proper answer when the righteousness of punishment is acknowledged even by the sinners: God is merciful but he is also

A similar approach is to be found in Bauckham's most thorough and erudite studies on our text. In an effort to integrate what for him are incompatible attitudes toward the application of justice, this scholar takes the salvation granted by the Rainer fragment (R) to be a solution for an assumed 'conflict between justice and mercy'. In his view, mercy can only be fair after the victims have received a compensation for their suffering through the suffering of the unrighteous.

32 Buchholz, Your Eyes, 338.
34 This document is a fragment of ApPt that belongs to the Rainer Collection. It was first published by C. Wesseley, 'Les plus anciens monuments du Christianisme: Écrits sur papyrus Il', Patrologia Orientalis'18/2 (1924) 345-511 at 482-3, who thought it belonged to the Acts of Peter. It was first identified as a section of ApPt by K. Prümm, 'De genuino Apocalypsis Petri textu: Examen testium iam notorum et novi fragmenti Raineriani', Biblica 10 (1929) 62-80 at 77-8. It has also been published and translated by M.R. James, 'The Rainer Fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter', JTS 32 (1931) 270-9; see also, idem, The Apocryphal New Testament (Oxford, 1955) 521. For more recent interpretations of the fragment see below.
Furthermore, he thinks that it is only the victims themselves who can request mercy for their oppressors. Therefore, instead of a desire for personal vengeance, it is the Sitz im Leben of persecution that explains the need for such a peculiar solution to the problem of theodicy. Punishment of the damned and rejoicing by the righteous are, in his view, nothing but the fulfilment of God's justice.

2.2.1. Problems With These Views. This approach to ApPt's conception of justice presents, in my view, some problems.

2.2.1.1. Restrictive Interpretations of Peter's Compassion. Common to all these views is the fact that they apply a minimising interpretation of Peter's compassion in which his emotional response is exclusively evaluated from the perspective of the justice pattern implied by Jesus' answer. Since Peter's compassion appears to be excessive when compared with the νέμεσις stated by Jesus, interpreters attempt to integrate it into the framework of distributive justice. Obviously, as soon as compassion and justice are considered as polarities within a relationship, the following are the only possible solutions: justice overrules compassion, or mercy is subordinated to justice, or mercy is interpreted as forgiveness.

2.2.1.2. Textual Problems: 'Compensatory Sadism' in ApPt? At the same time, Joly's interpretation of ApPt's concept of justice is based on an erroneous scholarly correction of a copyist error in ms P of the Ethiopic text. As Buchholz has shown, the text in 13.2 does not read: '(Les justes) verront ceux qui les auront haïs, alors que le supplice les vengera pour toujours', as Joly wants, but rather: '... and they will look at the one(s) who cursed it (scil. eternal life) while he takes revenge on them'. In this sense, the text does not suggest the satisfaction of vindictive desires in the righteous, but simply states that they witness the punishment of the wicked.

2.2.1.3. Conceptual Problems: A Justice Owed to the Victims? As far as the conception of a justice owed to the victims is concerned,


36 See Buchholz, Your Eves, 340-1.
such an interpretation of the theodicy dangerously slides, in my view, from a general to a particular notion of justice. From this perspective, God's justice is no longer the materialisation of righteousness, but simply a compensation owed to particulars. And, naturally, this implies that punishment and reward are no longer effects of the restitution of justice, but rather its cause.

As Jesus' programmatic words to Peter already announce, however, viewing the punishments is intended to demonstrate the correlation between sin and retribution. Jesus' urging Peter to consider the notion of merit is not a statement about the need of revenge for the victims of injustice, but rather a claim for the righteousness of punishing transgressions of the law. Consequently, a strict distinction must be made between vengeance and retributive justice.

Revenge as a form of retribution\(^{37}\), on the one hand, establishes a polarity between injured and offender that concerns them as individuals, and it is ruled by the principle of harm done, not of culpability, since it is the act itself and not responsibility for it that provokes revenge. As far as retributive justice is concerned, on the other hand, the guilty party is considered as a member of a legal community. Since a given body of law regulates retribution through punishment, retributive justice punishes not the harm done against individuals but transgressions of this law. The application of the so-called 'mirror punishments' in \(\text{ApPr}\)\(^{38}\) shows that it is not the acts that are punished,

\(^{37}\) Vengeance is sometimes considered an archaic form of retribution; see E. Klinger, 'Revenge and Retribution', in M. Eliade (ed), The Encyclopedia of Religion 12 (New York and London, 1987) 362-8 at 363. A first step towards the regulation of justice appears in the \(\text{ius talionis}\) that, even if historically related to vengeance, was directed at regulating the unmeasured application of retaliation. The application of \(\text{talio}\) was restricted to cases of non-fatal bodily injuries and referred to a codified numerical equality in every punishment, which assured a strict correlation between injury and punishment.

\(^{38}\) The \(\text{talio}\) therefore should not be confused with the so-called 'mirror punishments'. A strict differentiation between both was first urged by J. Weismann, Talion und öffentliche Strafe im mosaischen Rechte (Leipzig, 1913) 337 and more recently by B.S. Jackson, 'The Problem of Exod XXI 22-5 (\(\text{ius talionis}\))', VT 23 (1973) 273-304 at 281 note 1; and H.-W. Jungling, ‘„Auge für Auge, Zahn für Zahn“. Bemerkungen zu Sinn und
but the guilt that sinners have acquired through their transgressions. The precise correlation between sin and punishment reveals a clear codification of norms of behaviour as well as the stipulation of a suitable chastisement for contravening them. But punishment, it must be clear, is intended to chastise not so much the harm done against individuals as the harm done against the community. The fulfilment of God's justice concerns the injured individual only insofar as he belongs to the legal community that protects him with its body of law.

This distinction between mere revenge and retributive justice is essential, I think, in order not to confuse the application of justice, which as such is only concerned with righteousness, with the potential satisfaction of the injured party when seeing justice fulfilled. The justice of hell and the concomitant suffering of the damned are not a justice owed to the righteous, but rather a justice owed to righteousness. The suffering of the damned is nothing but a consequence of the restitution of justice that extends reward and punishment to the righteous and unrighteous.

2.2.2. Implications of These Approaches. In spite of the scholarly efforts to exclude personal vengeance from the motivation of the apocalyptists, the above interpretations of theodicy at work in our text seem to imply the existence of a vindictive notion of justice in ApPt and its intended readership. If God's justice is a justice owed to the righteous (= oppressed) and if, hence, they ought to rejoice to see

---

Geltung der altestamentlichen Talionsformeln', *Theologie und Philosophie* 59 (1984) 1-38 at 4-5 with note 10. In spite of D. Fiensy, 'Lex Talionis in the Apocalypse of Peter', *HTR* 76 (1983) 255-8, *ApPt* does not display the lextalions, but rather 'mirror punishments' and these were not exclusive to the Jewish world. For the distinction between genuine and false talio, see R. Haase, 'Körperliche Strafen im altorientalischen Recht', *RIDA* III, 10 (1963) 73.

In addition, if the final restitution of God's justice in *ApPt* equals the moral triumph of the righteous, the moral superiority of the latter cannot be simply established on the basis of the suffering of the unrighteous without becoming an elevation over the pain of others. As this restitution of justice implies the righteous' axiological promotion, they are now too far above the suffering of the damned to rejoice at their punishment. Instead, this suffering is likely to diminish their joy at seeing justice fulfilled.
God's justice done (= suffering of the damned), it seems to me that this justice is on the verge of becoming simple revenge⁴. From this perspective ApP might seem to pursue a compensatory goal, namely that it would provide the satisfaction of seeing oppressors and persecutors finally vanquished and humiliated.

It must be noted, however, that if this were indeed the case, this peculiar conception of the theodicy would confirm malicious pleasure as a constitutive element of its sense of justice. True, the argument of external pressure might explain why vindictive justice takes place, but it does not excuse its existence. On the contrary, such a statement actually supports Nietzsche's argument of the 'hate creating values’⁴¹ making justice equivalent to Max Scheler's description of 'ressentiment' as a soul's poisoning, resulting from the long repressed wish to avenge oneself combined with the consciousness of being incapable of carrying this out⁴².

2.3. An Alternative Explanation for the Different Attitudes of the Seers

2.3.1. The Attitudes of the Seers are Compatible. However, the attitudes of the seers are not necessarily incompatible. This is proven by the fact that approval by some seers does not actually rule out compassion by others. Despite all utterances stating the righteousness of punishment, compassion finally prevails and punishment is remitted. Thus, one might rightly conclude that compassion and approval, far from excluding, actually complement each another. As a matter of

⁴⁰ Bauckham himself seems to acknowledge this equation. See 'The conflict', 136: 'It is important to realise that, difficult though it may be to exclude altogether a desire for personal vengeance from the motives of the apocalyptists, the essential motive was the wish to see God's justice done. If hell is the triumph for God's justice, setting to rights the injustice of this world, then the righteous ought to rejoice to see it' [Similar difficulties in defending this joy of the righteous are in Thomas Aquinas, Sentent. IV, 50.2.4c]; 'The Apocalypse', 234: 'We should also remember the overriding context of persecution, so that, especially in the author's mind, justice is due to the martyrs against those who have persecuted and betrayed them.

⁴¹ Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral 1.8.

⁴² Scheler, Das Ressentiment, 38ff.
fact the incompatibility of these attitudes disappears as soon as one challenges the assumption that Jesus' answer intends to rebuke Peter's emotional response (below).

It is my conviction, therefore, that in the original *ApPt* compassion was not dealt with as a mere counterpoint to retributive justice, but rather as a central issue that could seriously challenge the meaning, the measure, and the duration of punishment. The essential significance of compassion in our text is certainly indicated by the thorough treatment of the issue in *ApPr* 3 E. Its pivotal function, however, is further emphasised by the fact that the motif of compassion is placed before and after the sight of the torments of hell. The compassion of the righteous at work in *ApPt* 3 E and in R, by introducing and closing, respectively, the sight of pain and the suffering of hell, intentionally functions as a frame intended to mitigate the predominance of punishment and suffering in the application of divine justice.

### 2.3.2. Peter's \( \varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \omega \varsigma \). In order to understand the horizon of Peter's \( \varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \omega \varsigma \) properly, one must keep in mind that, as stated above, he expresses his compassion even before he has been acquainted with the alleged reason for suffering. Even if Jesus urges him to observe the principle of merit, he must already be aware of the fact that the suffering of the damned is due to punishment, for he tells him (3.4): 'Lord, let me repeat what you said about the sinners'. In so doing, his use of Jesus' words about Judas presents an obvious shift\(^{43}\). As has been pointed out, nowhere except here is the idea applied to all those being punished\(^{44}\). More important, however, is the fact that the scope of Jesus' words is radically changed. Whereas in the New Testament they express the severe and certain punishment that will come upon the traitor, here they express rather the opposite, that is, they question the meaning of the punishment itself\(^{45}\). Peter's words (3.4) 'it would have been better for them if they had never been created' represent an existential protest against the meaning of suffering. If the damned were created, just as he was, by a merciful God, how is it possible

---

\(^{43}\) See section 2.1.1 above.

\(^{44}\) Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 290.

\(^{45}\) Similarly in *1 Clem* 46.7-8 and *Hermas* vis. 4.2.6.
that, whereas he will enjoy the bliss of the righteous, his fellow creatures will have to endure unceasing suffering? Peter's preoccupation, consequently, concerns the problem of suffering and pain within the context of God's creation and not the question of whether this suffering is deserved or not.

2.3.3. Jesus' Rebuke. It is obvious, however, that Jesus' answer is especially concerned with the second issue. Does this mean that he rebukes Peter's compassion? It has been pointed out that this is indeed the case. According to some scholars, compassion is rebuked either because it is cheap (for it does not consider the demands of justice) or because it is precipitated. But is this really so? It must be noted that, if this is the scope of Jesus' words, his reply fails to give a proper answer to Peter's preoccupation. Jesus does show him the correlation between guilt and punishment, but this does not properly satisfy his existential concerns.

The solution to this problem is that Jesus' words are not directed at rebuking Peter's ἔλεος, but at showing him that his concerns regarding God's compassion are unfounded. Instead of rebuking Peter's compassion, Jesus intends to show him that God is certainly merciful, although his mercy is essentially different from human compassion. According to Jesus' words, Peter's protest is simply due to his lack of insight into its working and development. Whereas human compassion is concerned with pain and suffering, God's mercy is primarily concerned with justice. As a guarantee of righteousness, God gives to everyone according to their deeds, thus reward for the righteous and punishment for the unrighteous. His law a priori establishes a norm of behaviour that assures bliss for those who respect it. Transgressions of this norm, however, automatically generate unrighteousness and punishment. Bliss for the righteous and punishment for the unrighteous are but effects of the same measured application of justice.

God's impartial and righteous attitude, however, is not that of an inflexible judge and his νέμεσις thus does not exclude mercy. As he is aware of the compassion of the righteous, he grants them the possi-

Buchholz, Your Eyes, 292; Bauckham, 'The Apocalypse', 233.
bility of interceding for the damned. Mercy, therefore, can rather be seen as the very culmination of his restitution of righteousness.

Since the salvation granted by $R$ is the result of intercession by the righteous due to their compassion, it seems clear that Peter's compassion cannot be rebuked. Rather divine νέμεσις and ἔλεος by the righteous are two sides of the same conception of justice.

2.3.4. Approval for Punishment: The Role of the Audience in Judicial Ceremonies. But if Peter's compassion is not rebuked and if, consequently, approval for punishment both by victims and guilty is not intended to correct or restrict the horizon of his feelings, one must explain why it appears in our text.

The most obvious explanation comes from the meaning, application and scope of justice by punishment and from the essential role played by an audience in legitimating its functioning. As the public represents the community, both as potential source for and as a potential victim of transgressions, its presence is important not only to assure the exemplary function of punishment, but also, and especially, to complete with its testimony and approval the materialisation of justice. In his study on the modern conception of justice and imprisonment, Michel Foucault has pointed out that the presence of the public and admission of culpability by the guilty are essential elements by means of which justice is self-legitimated. Regarding the role of an audience, he recognises that the status of the public is an ambiguous one. On the one hand, the audience is a passive spectator of the exemplary punishment; on the other, it is an active participant inasmuch as its testimony is a guarantee of the fulfilment of justice, in which the public to a certain extent participates. Regarding the admission of culpability by the guilty, its function is so important that medieval and latter chronicles frequently include such self-inculpations, whether real or composed ad hoc, in order to suit an inherent necessity in the fulfilment of justice.

48 For ancient parallels to this, see Bauckham, 'The Apocalypse', 232.
49 Foucault, Surveiller, 68ff. The suitable effect of these confessions by the guilty is proved by the existence of a genre of 'last words of a con-
Both elements are clearly exemplified in our text. \textit{ApPt}\textit{E} presents the viewers both as passive spectators and as more active participants in the administration of justice. At the same time, admission by the guilty appears at least in two passages. We may conclude that approval for punishment in \textit{ApPt}\textit{E} is not intended as a counterpoint to Peter's compassion. It is simply an inherent element in the development of the justice at work in \textit{ApPt}.

3. Different Conceptions of \textit{Justice} in \textit{ApPt}'s Transmission

3.1. Salvation for the Damned in the Rainer Fragment

It was M.R. James who, by comparing \textit{ApPt} 14 E with R and \textit{SihOr2} 330-8, first suggested that the maker of the Ethiopic version had consciously altered the 'dangerous doctrine' of the sinners' salvation. The idea that the sinners will be recipients of grace and will eventually be saved, which also appears in the Coptic \textit{Apocalypse of Elias, Epistle of the Apostles} 40, and in Thecla's intercession for Falconilla in the \textit{Acts of Paul}, might have been rejected on the grounds of theological objections\textsuperscript{50}. Ever since, his view has been widely accepted. Buchholz, for instance, carries out a meticulous comparison of R and \textit{ApPt} 14 E, in which he shows how the Ethiopic text succeeds in eliminating the theory of salvation by applying a small number of changes. These involve, firstly, the suppression of the words \textit{εκ τῆς κολύσεως 'from out of punishment'} and \textit{μετὰ τῶν ἄγιον 'with the saints'}, for these last words implied that others besides the saints would receive a share in righteousness. Secondly, they also affect the verbal tense of the future \textit{αἰτήσωνται 'they will ask'}, which appears in Ethiopic as the past tense \textit{'they have asked from me'}, and the phrase \textit{βάπτισμα demned' and by the importance of leaflets as a means of propaganda concerning the righteousness of justice in a given process (\textit{ihid.}, 69): 'La justice avait \textit{besoin de ces apocryphes pour se fonder en vérité. Ses décisions étaient ainsi entourées de toutes "preuves" posthumes'.}

The Just Pattern 151

εν σωτηρία 'baptism in salvation', which was changed to 'baptism and salvation' by the Ethiopic text in order to avoid the idea that the damned could be saved. Bauckham also accepts the text provided by R as original for ApPr and the salvation granted in R is essential for his interpretation of the notion of justice in ApPr.

Disagreement, however, concerns the way in which salvation should be interpreted. The text of R reads:

I will give to my called and my elect whomsoever they request of me out of punishment. And I will give them a beautiful baptism in salvation from the Acherousian lake, which is said to be in the Elysian field, a share in righteousness with my saints.

Two readings of this salvation have been proposed. The first interpretative line construes it as a form of universal salvation. Although the request for pardon might be interpreted as proceeding from friends and relatives only, the text seems to imply that no saved person could be happy as long as any are being punished. The second interpretative line is represented by a restrictive construction of salvation. According to this view, punishment of the wicked can only be remitted if the victims of persecution and oppression, by forgiving their oppressors, ask for it. Thus, salvation is limited to those unrighteous who are forgiven by their victims. Note, however, that this last reading implies a considerable interpretation that restricts the meaning of two key references in R. On the one hand, the words τοῖς καλήτοις μου καὶ ἐκλεκτοῖς ('to my called and elect') are taken to mean 'victims of oppression'; on the other hand, the words ὅν Εαυ αἰτήσωνται μῷ ('whomsoever they request of me') are interpreted

51 Buchholz, Your Eyes, 349.
53 Buchholz, Your Eyes, 348. See Bayle. Éuvres Div. III, p. 863: 'Il y a même je ne sais quoi qui choque notre raison dans l'hypothèse que les Saints du Paradis tirent en partie leur félicité de ce qu'ils savent que d'autres hommes sont tourmentez & le seront éternellement'. For the idea that punishment of the damned diminishes the joy of the righteous see the arguments by the 'Choir of Innocents' in G. Papini's Judizio Universale (Florence, 1957) 1257-9.
55 Emendation by James ('Rainer Fragment', 271) confirmed by SibOr2 331.
as 'oppressors'. Furthermore, the motivation of the righteous when requesting salvation for the damned does not seem to arise from forgiveness but rather from compassion, as clearly implied by the thorough treatment of the issue in ApPt 3 E.

Since our text includes no explicit restrictions with regard to salvation, one might rather expect it to be as comprehensive as the compassion of the righteous.

3.2. The Emphasis on Vengeance in the Ethiopic Text

The document provided by R clearly shows that the maker of the Ethiopic version was especially interested in eliminating from chapter 14 every trace of the idea of the sinners' salvation. That this idea was not theologically acceptable to all is also reflected by a scholion to SibOr 2.331, which rejects it on grounds of Origenism.

One is therefore likely to think that this tendency to affirm the need of an everlasting vengeance also affected other sections of the text. This might indeed be the case in those passages of ApPt E that insistently state that punishment will last forever. Thirteen passages of the Ethiopic text present such an assertion. Seven of these cases, however, do not appear in the parallel sections of the Akhmim Greek fragment (A). Most interesting is the fact that the Bodleian fragment (B) supports A in two of these cases. In spite of its shortness and precarious condition, B exactly corresponds with ApPt 10.6-7 E, a section in which two of these statements, without parallel in A, appear. Thanks to the testimony of B, which is supported by A, it is possible to see how a reference to the incessant character of punishment (B: καὶ ἀνανα汽油στῶς ΝΠ[μ]ζουνιν τη[ν] κολασιν; A 33: καὶ

56 The refutation of SibOr 2.331 (quoted by Bauckham, 'The Conflict', 148 and note 53) appears in ms Ψ. Polemic undertones also appear in the passages by Chrysostomos. Jerome, Augustine and Aquinas referred to above in notes 2 and 11.

57 ApPt 3.2, 6.6, 6.9 (twice), 7.8 (by the damned), 7.11 (by the damned), 8.9, 8.10, 10.3, 10.6, 10.7, 11.9, and 13.3.


μηδέποτε πανόμενοι τῇς τοιαύτης κολάσεως) is transformed by ApPtE in an affirmation of the eternity of punishment. Likewise, 10.7 E introduces a similar statement without any correspondence in Greek.

It must also be noted that the two passages quoted above, presenting a curious slide from retributive justice to personal retaliation, are missing from the parallel passages of A as well. Of course, this does not necessarily imply that they are an original addition by ApPtE, but this possibility cannot be excluded.

3.3. The Discordant Position of ApPt 13 E

Accepting the correction of ApPt 14 E according to the mentality of R puts ApPt 13 E in a rather discordant position. In the first place, this chapter affirms that the righteous impassively witness the punishment of the damned, and this punishment is explicitly described as vengeance (Ethiopic). In addition it includes one of the references to the everlasting character of punishment, which, as stated above, have a doubtful status in ApPtE. Furthermore, the request for mercy by the damned is severely rejected by Tatirokos, who instead applies increasing torment. Although all these elements perfectly fit within the framework of ApPtE, and consequently in the Ethiopic version of chapter 14, they hardly agree in general with the mentality of R and in particular with the theory of salvation.

Since ApPt 13 E and 14 E present one and the same mentality and conception of justice, one might assume that c. 13 underwent revision as well. Despite the lack of textual evidence, this hypothesis gains some support, suggesting a possible Platonic influence on the whole section. Platonic traces are evident both in the corrective function of punishment and in the consequent eventual remission of the sinners. The conception of injustice as an infirmity and chastisement as a cure, which appears already in Protagoras 324a-b, is further developed by Gorgias 526b-c, which divides the guilty into curable and incurable and attributes an exemplary and corrective function to punishment. All these elements are blended in a more precise scene.

60 James, 'A New Text', 367-8 already compared the three texts; see also Buchholz, Your Eyes, 145ff, Bauckham, 'The Apocalypse', 210.
by Pkaedo 112e-114b, where the purificatory function of the Acherousian Lake is brought to the foreground. It has been suggested that the doctrine of the sinners’ salvation in R might have been inspired by the purification of the curable sinners in Pkaedo 114b61. Similarly, the contrast between the righteous and unrighteous in ApPt 13 E might have presented, before its revision, a scene inspired by Phaedo 113d where all souls, whether righteous or unrighteous, are conducted to the place of judgement before the subsequent consignment of the guilty to the Acherousian Lake62.

It might be objected that retributive justice, as stated in ApPt, and corrective justice, as implied in these Platonic passages, rely on different conceptions of guilt and responsibility. Whereas the former is directed at punishing transgression as such, the latter is concerned with correction and prevention. We must admit, however, that, as soon as the possibility of salvation appears, the function of punishment is essentially changed. The prayers of the martyrs asking for forgiveness for their persecutors instead of punishment (Acts 7.60) rely on a similar concept of guilt conceived as a deficient condition that might be improved with proper care. This approach to injustice is parallel to Peter’s ελεος in ApPt 3 E. Based on a different notion of guilt, Peter simply rejects the pain in itself as a possible solution for it. His compassion implies a holistic view of man (cf. Mt 5.44) that rejects a division of humanity into two groups on the basis of the principle of merit and on the concept of guilt as a stigma.

3.4. Possible Intention(s) of the Original ApPt

Given the obvious transformations undergone by ApPtE, and the lack of a reliable touchstone to prove all key passages, it is difficult, if not

61 See Bauckham, ‘The Conflict’, 145-7, who also quotes parallels from apocalyptic literature (ApMos 37.3; ApPaul 22-3), where the Acherousian Lake also presents a purificatory function; see Copeland, this volume, Ch. VII.

62 According to E. Peterson, ‘Die “Taufe” im Acherousischen See’, Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis (Rome/Freiburg/Vienna, 1959) 310-32 at 323-4, the imprecision concerning the consignment to the Acherousian Lake in the Elysian field is due to the fact that it replaces here the river of the water of life in the Jewish Paradise.
impossible, to establish a definitive explanation for the goal and meaning of the other's suffering in the original *ApPt*. Notwithstanding, it is evident that the vindictive pleasure of rejoicing at the sinners' suffering hardly fits in text that focuses on the notions of ἐλεος and νέμεσις and eventually grants the sinners salvation. As the emphasis on vengeance and on everlasting punishment seems to proceed from later stages of the text's transmission, two hypothetical interpretations might be considered:

According to the first interpretation, *ApPt* considered punishment and suffering as strictly necessary in order to provide the expiation of guilt. This first hermeneutic line is easier to argue and to support on the basis of the textual evidence. By emphasising the notion of merit, Jesus stresses the idea of responsibility and consequently the freedom to act right or wrong. If ἐλεος is only likely to appear when the other's suffering happens to be undeserved, νέμεσις or 'righteous indignation' is the only possible attitude of the righteous when suffering is due to punishment. This conceptual context implies the notion of community and the need to correct and prevent transgressions of the law therein. Utterances by the damned referring to their ignorance or to their incredulity concerning the future application of justice might point in this direction. These two mentions, together with the admission of their injustice by the guilty in *ApPt* 7.11 E and 13.6 E and the explicit example of preventive punishment in 11.4, might be easily reconciled in a text defending the corrective goal of punishment. The final salvation, granted in R, is a suitable conclusion for such a text.

According to the second (more radical) interpretation, Peter's compassion intended to reject altogether the idea that *any* man deserves eternal suffering. Although weaker attested and more difficult to demonstrate, this interpretation is nonetheless interesting. Peter's compassion and existential protest in *ApPt* 3 E might reflect a reaction against the application of justice by means of punishment and a step towards an inversion of the principle of retribution as stated in *Mt* 5.44-865. Such an attitude might be evidence of a new concept of

---

63 *ApPt* 7.8 E.
64 *ApPt* 7.11 E.
65 Klinger, 'Revenge', 366, interprets this new principle in line with Rom
justice that intended to supersede by means of the principle of neighbourly love a dualistic division of humanity. From a legal point of view, this new notion of justice might reflect the effort to overcome both particular applications of justice intending to chastise the harm done by means of retaliation or by talio and a more general conception of justice intending to chastise culpability by means of retribution. From the point of view of theodicy, the Early Christian idea of neighbourly love might have tried to supersede the dualistic division of humanity into two irreconcilable groups, viz. the righteous vs. the unrighteous, on the basis of the notion of merit. By a priori stating an existential community of mankind, and by considering that injustice originates in ignorance, the text might have rejected the idea that pain and suffering can be a solution to the problem of injustice.

It is important not to overlook the fact that, according to both interpretations, the text presents the conflict between the notion of punishment and suffering and the Christian principle of love. In both cases, either the corrective function of punishment or the a priori neighbourly love tries to limit the duration and prominence of pain in the fulfilment of justice. Far from defending a reactive notion of justice, the original text might have rejected suffering in itself as a solution to the problem of injustice. And this attitude is exactly the opposite of ἐπικαιρεκακία or 'malice'.

4. Closing Remarks

These last considerations show that a distinction between 'justice' and 'reactive justice' exclusively on the basis of those who claim it is 12.20 and thinks that retribution continues to be retribution but is put on a new level: the guilt of the guilty party becomes a means of conversion. However, as Max Scheler has pointed out, the combination of Jesus' precept about offering the other cheek with Salomo's metaphor that 'coals of fire' are thus heaped on the enemy's head, implies a rather different objective. See Scheler, Das Ressentiment, 61: ‘...wie auffällig sehen wir hier die von Jesus ganz anders gemeinte Demut und Feindesliebe in den Dienst eines Hasses gestellt, dem Rache nicht genügt, der erst in der tiefen Beschamung des Feindes und deren äußeren Zeichen, dem Erröten bis zur Stime usw., in einem Ubel viel tieferer Schicht also, als es der Schmerz des Gegenschlages ware, seine Befriedigung findet'.
rather narrow. The only difference between the sense of justice of the oppressors and the oppressed concerns the real or ideal character of the value systems they defend. In the so-called 'right' kind of justice the measure is stated according to the current system of values. In the so-called 'reactive' one it is stated according to an ideal system. However, the fact that the restitution of justice is accompanied by a reversal of fortunes does not imply a reactive or compensatory notion of justice, since this inversion might very well be a simple effect of the triumph of justice and not its first cause. Attention consequently must be paid to the underlying justice pattern and to the question of whether reversal of fortunes is a precondition or an effect of righteousness.

Camus has rightly remarked that not every rebellion implies a resented view of reality. Only when it aims at a simple inversion of the roles might one call it resented. By contrast, in real rebellion rejection of injustice and suffering is not accompanied by the wish to see others suffering the same. It simply offers a new alternative according to its new view of the world. As an example of the former we may recall the quoted passages of Tertullian, of Aquinas, and the psychological background of comedy. As an example of the latter we may take the case of the ApPt.

Regrettably enough, the principle of neighbourly love, by a priori stating the existential community of the individual with his fellow men, goes against the principium contradictionis so pleasant to our polar thought. If this was in fact the doctrine defended by the original ApPt, its hypothetical perversion down through history is not difficult to understand.

Camus, L'Homme, 31: 'La révolte, au contraire, dans son principe, se borne à refuser l'humiliation, sans la demander pour l'autre. Elle accepte même la douleur pour elle-même, pourvu que son intégrité soit respectée'.