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# In Defense of the Pure Pilgrim: *De Re Defensionibus Peregrini Castiori*

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Does the pure pilgrim exist? Probably not as a person, but the idea of a pure pilgrim is very much alive, although under threat. John Muir (2002), environmentalist and mountaineer, argued that there is a proper way to climb a mountain. By analogy, there is a virtuous way, allowing for meaningful, spiritual experiences which can be applied to proper peregrination. The early medieval ascetic understanding of pilgrims (St Jerome c. 347-420), was that of wandering monks, forsaking the bustling cities as to immerse themselves in the mercy of Christ in the solitude of the country (Webb, 2002). In modern times, pilgrimage has become rather a process of self-exile, of social and physical isolation, time used to try to come closer either to God or to one's self. However, the concepts of *authentic pilgrimage* and *pure pilgrim* seem to be anachronistic, waning in popular pilgrimage culture. The Camino, traditionally the apex of the idea of pure pilgrimage, has now been 'app'efied' and commoditised, so that being a pure pilgrim is near-impossible from the perspective of the comfort needs of the modern post-pilgrim. The model of personal transformation, through suffering, avoidance of comfort and overcoming obstacles, seems to many to be unnecessary, even laughable. Yet, for an activity to have any meaning, one must not skirt the perceived rules that make that activity possible (Suits, 2005). The goal of a pilgrimage is not to arrive at the destination, but to arrive *by means of* being a pilgrim. The medieval pilgrims wanted to show God their willingness to make sacrifices in hope of salvation, which idea C.S Lewis (2012 [1952]:145), contends, saying that as long as pilgrims are thinking of a reciprocal relationship with God, this relationship remains skewed. The pure pilgrim must then be simply pure rather than presumptuous.

**Key Words:** authentic, flow, meaning, pilgrim, psychology, spiritual

## Introduction

Soren Kierkegaard, the famed Danish philosopher of the early 1800s, disliked supplying authoritative answers to questions. Instead, he would write about topics from different points of view, under different pseudonyms, and leave the answers up to the reflection and interpretation of the reader. For example, one of his most famous works was entitled *Either/Or*. In the first part he describes the life of a 'Don Juan' devoted to the aesthetic pleasures of sex, food and bachelorhood. He is uncritical, and merely presents the passions and the loneliness. In the second half, Kierkegaard describes married life, and what it is like to be a 'family man' with home and children and responsibilities. Any argument as to which life is 'better,' or to be preferred is never offered. Rather, Kierkegaard believes he has communicated the information indirectly, and lays it there for the reader to contemplate.

The topic of this paper will be presented in the same spirit; namely, we will present arguments both for and against the idea that an authentic pilgrimage is best accompanied by struggle and discomfort. It will be left to the readers to make up their own minds—given their own unique circumstances, and the varying nature of different kinds of pilgrimages.

## Part One: Pilgrimage, Comfort and Struggle

### *Muir and Mountain Climbing*

John Muir, famed environmentalist and mountain climber, argued that there is a proper way to climb a mountain (Ewart, 1999). Similarly, one could argue that there is a proper way to go on pilgrimage. These sentences are not meant to express criticism, or moral judgements. Rather, they express the idea that some

methods of mountain climbing, or pilgrimage, are more likely to produce the kinds of spiritual experiences that the participants are supposedly seeking.

When Muir argued that there is a proper way to climb a mountain, he meant a virtuous way that would make possible the meaningful, spiritual experiences he was seeking. Muir argued that some ways of climbing a mountain are more likely to develop a virtuous character than other ways. He adopted a self-imposed ethic of Spartan minimalism, self-reliance, and a need to test oneself through adversity. These practices were necessary, he thought, to achieve his goals of transcendent connection to divine nature. His purpose could be achieved only by climbing in the ‘proper’ way, which included an ascetic disregard for the comforts of food, shelter and unnecessary gear and clothing. He never climbed for glory, but merely for the satisfaction of accomplishment. Other climbers, who might disregard his advice, have a narrower scope of experience, and are unlikely to experience the religious peak experiences that he regularly did.

Similarly, there is a proper way to go on pilgrimage. The activity is supposed to be a challenge. Traditionally, if one carries their own bags; walks the route without shortcuts; and adopts the appropriate frame of mind, then this will build character by struggling against weaknesses. Using a suitably athletic metaphor, Thomas Merton agrees:

*Souls are like athletes that need opportunities worthy of them, if they are to be tried and extended and pushed to the full use of their powers* (Merton, 1998:92).

The stakes are high. ‘Never before had I lived life so intensely,’ writes Robert Mullen, ‘as I had on the Camino’ (Mullen, 2010:198). Nancy Frey, also writing about the Camino de Santiago, notes that ‘In many cases making the pilgrimage becomes for participants one of the most important experiences of their lives’ (Frey, 1998:7). Like Muir, Camino-walkers report experiences of ‘transcendent spirituality’ (Frey, 1998:4), and ‘symbolic death and resurrection’ (Frey, 1998:188). Pilgrimage often results in what Abraham Maslow called ‘peak experiences’ which are at the ‘core’ of every religion (Maslow, 1970:19). Quoting William Blake, Maslow describes these experiences as involving a ‘unitive consciousness’ (Maslow, 1970:68). Such experiences ‘can be so profound and shaking ... that it can change the person’s character ... forever after (Maslow, 1970:59). If you do things right on a pilgrimage, you will have a heightened awareness, you will be intimate with nature and the morning

flowers; your body will be tired in ways that make you feel more alive; you will be participating in a tradition that might stretch back in history for a thousand years or more; and you will better understand the world and your place in it.

Pilgrimage can change a person in significant ways, but it takes some effort. The point of a pilgrimage is not merely to arrive at a destination, but to arrive by way of being a pilgrim.

This idea of an authentic pilgrimage, however, seems to be waning, at least amongst practicing pilgrims, and in the popular culture. For example, describing his pilgrimage in a popular book about the Camino de Santiago, Hape Kerkeling sneers at communal shelters, and often takes buses for convenience (Kerkeling, 2006). In a film about the Camino de Santiago, a pivotal scene involves the main character drunkenly dressing-down a pilgrim by reminding him that he carries a credit card (*The Way*, 2010). The very idea of a ‘pure pilgrim’ seems anachronistic in this modern world of jet aircraft, gortex rain coats, and bank machines. Pilgrims are tempted to skip the boring parts, or the challenging parts, or the merely inconvenient parts. They take taxis and buses, or simply send their baggage on ahead. Megan Havard notes that these ‘pseudo-pilgrims’ are often ridiculed by other pilgrims who consider them to be ‘loud .. pretenders’ (Havard, 2017:7-8). The concept of a pilgrimage that aims at personal transformation through suffering, through the process of overcoming obstacles, and through the avoidance of comfort seems to be forgotten.

While there are familiar literary and cultural examples of those who eschew comfort, the reasoning behind this preference is not always perspicuous. Edward Wilson, the Antarctic explorer, and member of Robert Falcon Scott’s doomed expedition, for example, expressed his vague unease with the life of comfort in a letter to his wife:

*I am getting more and more soft and dependent upon comforts, and this I hate. I want to endure hardness and instead I enjoy hotel dinners and prefer hot water to cold and so on—all bad signs and something must be done to stop it* (Wilson, 2002:9).

Aspley Cherry-Garrard, a member of the same Antarctic expedition, urges people not to live the comfortable life of a shopkeeper, and writes with longing about his days of hardship and near-death, in his memoir fondly entitled *The Worst Journey in the*

*World* (Cherry-Garrard, 1922). Herman Hesse also worried about the soporific effects of the comfort of feather pillows, 'well-heated rooms,' and hot water bottles that have been purchased at the cost of one's spiritual peace (Hesse, 1970:30-31).

Yet, the reasons for this dislike of comfort are not always clear. To others, experiencing suffering or discomfort *unnecessarily* seems incomprehensible, and comparable to self-flagellation and hair shirts. Pico Iyer, for instance, reproaches the

*tunnel vision [of] the low-budget traveler who would rather sleep on a bench and eat stale grass than pay 50 cents for the bourgeois comforts of an inn* (Iyer, 1988:27).

A pilgrimage can be unpleasant in many ways. It requires a break from everyday experiences, and this can create angst and loneliness. It can be physically exhausting and painful. But despite the unease that a difficult journey requires, one of comfort is often less rewarding. Without a challenge, a pilgrimage has less meaning, and is less likely to achieve the desired psychological transformation, described by Phil Cousineau as a more attentive way of seeing (Cousineau, 1998:xxiii); and by Frey as 'learning to see with new eyes' (Frey, 1998:181). Spiritual, meaningful experiences are less likely to happen on a luxury cruise, than on a difficult journey. Part One of this paper will spell out some of the reasons why. This will be defended with philosophical argument (games & grasshoppers; experiential knowledge), and psychological evidence (self-integration; flow).

### ***Games and Grasshoppers***

Bernard Suits has argued that the 'supreme good' of a human life is attained by means of playing games (Suits, 2005:7), and by a 'game' he means 'a voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles' (Suits, 2005:55). By way of example, he describes the game of golf as an attempt to get a golf ball into a series of holes on the putting green. The game would have no meaning, however, if the player simply walked up to the hole and placed the ball inside. The whole *point* of the game is to accomplish this result by means of golf clubs. One agrees to this *completely unnecessary* obstacle to one's goal for the sake of playing the game which one determines to be a worthwhile activity. If, at some point, a player skirts the rules by throwing their ball closer to the hole, or by lying about their score, they have not achieved their expressed aim of a game well-played. Rather, they have ceased to play the game altogether.

Alasdair MacIntyre illustrates a similar point about the value of a well-played game by distinguishing between external goods, and goods internal to a practice (MacIntyre, 1981:188). One can play the game of chess, for example, for the external rewards, which everyone can understand, like winning, fame and fortune. If these external rewards are one's only motivation, then one can achieve them by cheating. However, there is another kind of good that is attainable only within the practice of the game of chess. This internal good, of experiencing a game well-played, requires adherence to the rules of the game, and cheating would necessarily defeat this goal.

To return to the mountain climbing analogy, the goal is not just to arrive at the summit, but to climb mountains according to the ethos of mountain climbers. Suits asks us to imagine Sir Edmund Hillary arriving at the top of Mount Everest only to find an English gentleman who has taken an escalator up the other side (Suits, 2005:8). Such an event would not diminish Hillary's achievement, because the internal good of a successful summit is available only to the climber. Climbing, and pilgrimage are 'the kind of activity in which rules are inseparable from ends' (Suits, 2005:41).

Similarly, the rewards of a traveller's paradigm are internal to the 'game' chosen. Only a tramp can appreciate the radical freedom achieved by traveling cheaply with no plans. Only a pilgrim can escape routine thinking by voluntarily accepting the everyday trials that accompany the road to their destination. Pilgrims who skirt the rules have replaced the internal goods of a pilgrimage with external ends that they think are more important, such as efficiency, adherence to a pre-determined time-table, money, comfort, and keeping up with others.

A pilgrim sets out by *willingly accepting the challenge* of walking to their destination in a certain manner. The attitude is all important. William James, philosopher and psychologist, once compared the life of a prisoner in a jail cell, with that of a monk in a hermit's cell. Both confinements are outwardly similar, yet the latter is meaningful while the former is not. The William James Association uses this idea in a prisoner-art program meant to help prisoners adjust to confinement (William James Association). It is the attitude assumed by the occupant that makes all the difference. This is what differentiates walking a thousand kilometres on a pilgrimage, and accumulating the same distance on a treadmill. The mental attitude of a pilgrim involves humility, grace and gratitude. Humility in the understanding of one pilgrim's place in the universe;

the decentering of an individual's pride; grace in the acceptance of a tradition; and gratitude in one's participation in it. By skirting the rules, pilgrims have left the game, and have ceased to be pilgrims. Instead they have become tourists seeking easier pleasures.

### ***The Benefits of Seeking Struggle over Comfort***

In *a Philosophy of Walking*, Frederic Gros uses language that parallels the discussion of games and obstacles. He writes that walking is 'a form of voluntary servitude' (Gros, 2014:4). To an outside observer, writes Gros, this act of deprivation seems absurd. However, the walker knows that such struggle is rewarded both physically and mentally. 'When walking in this mode we discover the immense vigour of starry night skies, elemental energies, and our appetites follow' (Gros, 2014:6). It is a way of accessing the simple human pleasures of a good appetite and a thirst quenched, that Thomas More described as the true pleasures, in his vision of *Utopia* (More, 1984), and that anyone who has walked a good deal can attest to from first-hand experience. Gros continues to expand on the benefits of difficult walking:

*During long cross-country wanders, you do glimpse that freedom of pure renunciation. When you walk for a long time, there comes a moment when you no longer know how many hours have passed, or how many more will be needed to get there* (Gros, 2014:9).

Conrad Rudolph describes much the same mental state in his insightful book about the Camino de Santiago, *Pilgrimage to the End of the World*. Rudolph describes a state of mind which he calls 'pilgrim's mind,' and argues that it can only be attained by 'those who are long on the trail' (Rudolph, 2004:26). He writes that the physical hardships and discomforts, combined with the community experience of close living with other pilgrims, are 'conducive to inducing' the mental state of a pilgrim (Rudolph, 2004:38-39). His descriptions of this mental state include a sense of time standing still; a more acute awareness of colours, tastes and sounds; a sense of the surreal; the perception of the universality of unique everyday experience; and the individual forgetting their own existence as they are lifted outside of themselves. Hence, this state of mind brings about an increased likelihood of spiritual experiences.

He supplies a few examples of his own experiences of heightened perception, including seeing the morning dawn as if it were a 'living version of some late Van Gogh landscape' (Rudolph, 2004:22). He

acknowledges that one need not be on a pilgrimage to experience the world this way, yet he notes that 'they don't often happen with either the regularity or the strength that they did on the pilgrimage' (Rudolph, 2004:23). He attributes this poetic vision directly to the 'rigors of the road' (Rudolph, 2004:25). In an explicit defence of the pure pilgrim, he concludes:

*This is why the pilgrimage must be done on foot, never on bicycle; why you must stay in refugios, not in hotels; and why the journey should be long and hard* (Rudolph, 2004:34).

Frey disagrees with this thesis. Her interviews with pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago reveal that neither the length nor hardship of the journey are necessary for spiritual experiences like those described above (Frey, 1998:134 & 214). Even 'part-time' pilgrims, she notes, can be transformed by their continually contemplating the journey between stages (215).

The psychological evidence, however, may suggest otherwise. As mentioned above, such transformations without struggle are always possible, but less *likely* to occur.

### ***Psychology: Self-Integration***

There appears to be much psychological evidence to support the thesis that happiness comes not from comfort, but from struggle, and specifically from the psychological self-integration that comes from actively solving problems. In *Coming Into Existence*, Raymond Rogers writes that 'the pleasure of living emerges from its difficulties' (Rogers, 1967:108), and 'increases with the difficulty of the undertaking' (Rogers, 1967:121). Tourists in general, and pilgrims in particular, should remember this when they are tempted to forgo obstacles in their path, and instead seek an easier, or more comfortable path. A pilgrimage will no doubt place individuals in situations that are not an unalloyed good. At times such as these, Rogers explains, our current 'self-integration' is disturbed and challenged. Responding to this requires self-growth, and a re-negotiation between yourself and the world, with an active redefinition of your identity, and conscious choices about your values. To avoid such opportunities is to passively allow the world to flow past you without affecting you. It is to once again distance oneself from one's body and its place in the universe. In contrast, it is in responding to difficulties that creates experiences of meaning and significance (Rogers, 1967:44).

The idea is that one's life project should be to become an autonomous, self-aware individual with a self-consistent set of principles, values and beliefs. To do

this requires actively responding to life's challenges, and not avoiding them by seeking comfort. It is accepting risk in exchange for the chance of renewal.

### **Maslow's Peak Experiences**

Similarly, the psychologist Maslow describes meaningful, religious 'peak experiences' in terms of integration; namely, 'to have a clear perception of the universe as a whole ... and that one has his place in it' (Maslow, 1970:59). Like Rudolph, he describes a mental state of 'tremendous concentration' (60); a perceived 'distortion of time and space (63); and 'ego-transcendence (62) (Maslow, 1970).

Such profound experiences are not easily achieved in one's everyday life. They often require a sustained consciousness or activity, rather than an interrupted stepping in and out of such activity. Peak experiences 'can be earned by long, hard work' (Maslow, 1970:xv-xvi), but there can be no 'shortcuts' (x). The life-changing effects of peak experiences, writes Maslow, in a sentence that could serve as the thesis of Part One of this paper about pilgrimage, result only if an individual 'truly lives them' rather than impatiently taking shortcuts (Maslow, 1970:34). The work is worth it, however, because *not* having peak experiences is to be 'not fully functioning,' and not 'fully human' (Maslow, 1970:32).

### **Psychology: Flow**

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's studies on the psychology of 'optimal experiences,' or 'flow experiences,' can help elaborate the connection between struggle and the inducement of poetic experience. Like Rogers, he argues that people are happiest when attempting to achieve goals that require 'struggling to overcome challenges' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:6). By surveying individuals in the midst of their everyday experiences, he discovered that people are happier when they are totally involved in a challenging experience. When one is immersed in activities that stretch their skills, and require total concentration, they reach a mental state which he calls 'flow.' As an example, he asks us to imagine:

*what the sailor holding a tight course feels when the wind whips through her hair, (with) ... sails, hull, wind, and sea humming a harmony that vibrates in the sailor's veins* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:3).

The Victorian John Ruskin was a proponent of sketching as a way of concentrating one's mind while traveling. Mick Smith and Rosaleen Duffy write that:

*The many beautiful sketches that someone like Ruskin produced on his personal travels were not just records of the architecture... They were an integral part of the aesthetic and moral learning process of travelling; they represented a kind of **ethical labour** that he thought helped people develop necessary virtues* (Smith and Duffy, 2003:48-49) (emphasis added).

Pilgrimage can be full of such absorbing activity—if one participates in it. There is satisfaction in solving difficulties; and absorption in physical rigour and strength expended; and there is absorption in the activity of breathing as one takes in the beauty of one's surroundings. It is the involvement with the challenge itself that is likely to result in optimal experiences; and the avoidance of challenge that likely eludes them.

### **Experiential Philosophy**

Decades earlier, the philosopher Henry Bugbee Jr. provided philosophical grounding for these psychological observations of flow experiences (Bugbee, 1958). Bugbee argued that there is a type of understanding that cannot be gained through reasoning, but only imparted by experience. When one is completely absorbed in a task, and actively participating in their surroundings, one is completely immersed in the present in such a way that they become open to 'fundamental truths' of existence (Bugbee, 1958:40). He calls this experience 'swamping' in reference to a favourite memory of his involving mucking about in boots amongst spring puddles (Bugbee, 1958:42). During such experiences, the individual is transformed and overcome with wonder and appreciation of things. He writes that in such a state of commitment to an activity, there is 'no mistake about the gladness of being in the swamp or the immanence of the wilderness there' (Bugbee, 1958:43). This kind of insight into the necessity of existence arises from the complete and total response to it; and this insight might occur in the daily activities of pilgrimage like laundry, tending blisters, awareness of one's own bodily fatigue, breath, hunger and thirst, and the engagement with what Frey calls 'a community of souls united by the rhythm of their feet' (Frey, 1998:15).

The lesson that a pilgrim might take from these ideas of 'flow' and 'swamping' is that one should not be seeking comfort. When individuals take on something challenging and difficult, they have more meaningful experiences than when they avoid such trials. Struggle provides an opportunity to expand ourselves.

There are those who might think that these thinkers and writers are asking too much of pilgrims when they emphasize the virtues of discomfort. However, these fears should be eased with a reminder that a 'challenging activity' is relative to an individual. Havard writes that 'we all must exist on some sort of continuum of pilgrimage gravitas' (Havard, 2017:8). For example, to achieve flow, a person must find the level of challenge appropriate to their skills. To become immersed in existence, one must be engaged in an activity, not overwhelmed by it. If an individual attempts to climb a mountain which requires skills and fitness levels beyond their capabilities, it is not a challenge that will expand and stretch their character, but rather, one that would likely defeat them. The secret to finding flow is to find the right fit on the margins of one's proficiency. It should be difficult, but not impossible.

On the Camino de Santiago, pilgrims will see many notices for taxis that advertise 'FAST AND CHEAP' transport to the next village. However, 'fast and cheap' should not be the spirit of the pilgrim who is seeking a meaningful experience.

## **Part Two: The pure pilgrim: Theorising the dichotomy between asceticism and tourism**

Research into the matter of fulfilment gained from pilgrimage, indicates that there are many ways and means to achieve fulfilment, and that it relates to one's physical ability and religious outlook regarding pilgrimage. Without trying to define a pilgrim, it is important to know what a particular pilgrim is and what the pilgrimage is for. When one takes a look at catalogues of ancient pilgrimage, it is realised that there were a great variation of reasons for pilgrimage and how they were carried out.

With regard Muir and Mountain Climbing, there is a parallel to this in a Greek variation of pilgrimage. One of the many forms pilgrimage taken in Greek Antiquity, was the *oreibasia*, a pilgrimage up to the mountains, going on foot, the hard way. This had as goal to better please the gods, since the bigger the effort the happier they were with the efforts of the mortals (Elsner and Rutherford, 2007:18-19). It also means that, across cultures, there are people who place great value on asceticism related to pilgrimage or religion, a drive for seeking the pure and getting rewarded for it by the deities, or in the monotheistic sense, by God.

*Oreibasia* and related forms, of course, apply to a certain kind of pilgrim, healthy and fit, who is able to walk the full length of, e.g. one of the Caminos leading to Santiago. But it also applies to the person in a wheelchair who does a part of a pilgrims' trail at home, because that would also mean reaching the limit of that person's physical ability.

As was stated in Part One, it essential that one is in the mental state of being a pilgrim. This is indeed probably one of the most relevant conditions for pilgrimage, otherwise it would be a sports' event. Nonetheless, there are significant differences in pilgrimages. For the Camino, it is the transformational process during the way, enhanced by the physical intensity of it, leading to the idea that this kind of pilgrimage can only be done in one way. The question remains if the fulfilment of having successfully accomplished a great physical challenge has anything to do with the original purpose of the Camino; namely, reverence to St James. Even at present, the purpose of the Camino is not making it to the end as a physical challenge, but using the physical element to achieve a purpose, established before one sets out. Whether one takes two months or four days to achieve that purpose, is then the point of discussion of what is a pure pilgrim.

### *Theoretical Discussion on the 'pure pilgrim'*

Who sets the standards by which we can measure the pure pilgrim? There have been some attempts in Early Christianity, among others by St Jerome (c. 347-420), and in a later stage, by people like Berthold of Regensburg (c. 1220-1272), to give meaning to the concept of the pure pilgrim. In the fourth century, St Jerome had already noticed that the concept of the pure pilgrim was a difficult one to maintain. One of the modern ideas about the pure pilgrim is that one needs to avoid as much as possible becoming a tourist, because that destroys the idea of purity, as luxury and comfort do. St Jerome had also realised that pilgrimage and tourism go hand in hand (Sumption, 2003; Bitton-Ashkelony, 2005). He further knew, but nonetheless disagreed with, the idea that people went on a pilgrimage not for the glory of God and the patron-saints as their one and only motive. Sumption (2003) further describes a remark made by the historian Jacques de Vitry (1180-1240), who noticed that there are light-minded and inquisitive persons embarking on a pilgrimage who lack the devotion. Instead, they are led by curiosity, seeking novelty. These would fall in the modern category of post-pilgrims (Munro, 2017), whereby it is fully accepted that being a pilgrim is also being a tourist. Over the millennia that the concept of

pilgrimage exists, people have made a pilgrimage for personal reasons, searching for identity, self-discovery or meaning in life, healing, spiritual encounters and therapy outside prescribed and organised religions (Reader, 2007).

When travel became less cumbersome and dangerous, approximately from the fifteenth century onwards, tourism, lightly disguised as pilgrimage, becomes more affordable for a wider segment of the population, confirming in hindsight the reason for the aforementioned resentment of Berthold of Regensburg against this kind of pilgrimage which had lost its purity (Karlsaune, 2002). Berthold has given us a non-existential definition of pure pilgrimage, as it had to contain the following elements: true sorrow for true sin, sincere confession, contrite prayer and genuine penance. Without these qualities, he thought, a pilgrimage was not a pilgrimage and was without value as there was little place for God and a lot of space for everything else. This must also be seen from the point of view of the Early Christian Church, where a prime motive for going on a pilgrimage was triggered by a rejection of Roman urban values, such as tourism (Sumption, 2003). It may be presumed that the idea of Salvation did not pair with the leisure and pleasure of tourism of the day and with other goals of pilgrimage, such as healing, fulfilling of vows or seeking forgiveness. St Jerome, with his austere and fundamentalist point of view condemned tourism. For him, the pure pilgrim must be as a monk, who ought leave the mayhem of city life behind him and withdraw to the solitude of the country, leaving himself to the mercy of Christ. In this view, pilgrimage equalled a process of self-exile, the asceticism of social and physical isolation. Even time at leisure must be used to try to come closer to God. St Jerome did not tolerate the tourist in the pilgrim, although by travelling to the pilgrimage shrines of Rome and Jerusalem, or any other shrine for that matter, inevitably the pilgrim acquired an element of impurity, i.e. tourism, because they partly depended on an existent 'hospitality' infrastructure for travel, food, safety and shelter. We can learn from the reaction from St Jerome that he already struggled with the concept of the pure pilgrim in Christ, pushing it into an ideal format, presumably obtainable only by a few. It is also obvious that the social side of pilgrimage, as opposite to the ideal of asceticism, was tourism and leisure, institutions already fully developed during the time of St Jerome. This is understandable, because pilgrimage, in all its facets, and the subsequent development of tourism, predated Christianity by about 70,000 years at least (Mithen 1996; Lewis-Williams 2011; Rossano 2010). Within

the context of St Jerome's austere notion of the world, he might have just understood it as a consequence of paganism in a period when pagans switched over to Christianity but kept very essential parts of their former religions. Besides the reason for the pilgrimage—a vow, an inner need, the need to feel closer to God and many more reasons, and the longing for the perceived benefit—there must be the mental disposition to be a pilgrim. In summary, the pure pilgrims of the past

- had true sorrow for true sin,
- made a sincere confession,
- engaged in contrite prayer and genuine penance,
- were like monks, withdrawing to the solitude of the country,
- left themselves to the mercy of Christ a process of self-exile,
- made sacrifices at shrines, for the purpose healing, fulfilling of a vow, penitence etc.,
- underwent the asceticism of social and physical isolation,
- had to be use time at leisure to try to come closer to God.

There seems to be an element of competition in the idea of being a pure pilgrim. In pilgrimage, the competition is with oneself, not with others, as a sacred aspect of competition is between the pilgrim and God, otherwise it becomes just a sport, very far removed from the original, Western Christian goal of a pure pilgrim. When Havard (2017:7-8), during her fieldwork, recorded that some who thought themselves to be the 'real' pilgrims ridiculed others as 'pseudo-pilgrims' and 'loud ... pretenders', it showed either a terrible naivety or the serious defect of ignorance combined with arrogance of those regarding themselves as the one and only true pilgrims. This leads to the presumption that there are actually rules for the Pure Pilgrim, placing the pure pilgrim in a kind of exclusive club, with a strict monitoring of one's purity according to a benchmark. However, the *Compostela* is the same certificate for everybody and rewarded for the minimum effort of 100 km on foot, not for a maximum effort of asceticism. Of course, in the past it was simply understood that when someone arrived at Santiago, there must have been a certain amount of sacrifice and suffering on the road. It was only with the popularisation of the Camino that voices were heard of people who worried about the motives and efforts of the participants.



Medieval pilgrims, in hope or expectation of salvation, showed their willingness to God to make the required sacrifices. C.S Lewis (2012 [1952]:145), contends that, as long as pilgrims are thinking of a reciprocal relationship with God, this relationship remains skewed. The pure pilgrim must then be simply pure rather than presumptuous. This 'hard way' must also be placed in the context of one's physical abilities, and the idea of setting rules to pilgrimage as a game makes it painfully clear that there are many kinds of pilgrimages. The discomforts of walking long distances belong to the package of traveling, not necessarily to pilgrimage. Within the perspective of fulfilment, a terminal cancer patient who can just make the last four stages of the Camino Frances, from Sarria onwards, and in the end reaches Santiago, will feel elated in very much the same manner as the very fit participant who has gone through many hardships and a much longer road. For both, the register and intensity of that feeling of being a pilgrim, and what is achieved, could be similar. Although those who went the way of asceticism, without slacking or deviating from the austere path, may feel a purer pilgrim than those who did not.

This emotion of belonging and achievement is cemented in facets of social identity (Schwartz *et al.* 2011), where the cognitive aspect regulates the recognition of belonging to a group, in this case pure pilgrims, but is subdivided here for the sake of argument into two groups, the superfit who choose the road of austerity and terminal cancer patients, who choose their own austerity according to their remaining fitness. For both groups there is an evaluative aspect, namely the recognition of the value attached to each group both by insiders and outsiders. Outsiders may admire participants in both groups in equal measure and would make no judgement on who is the purest. With regard to the emotional aspect, regulating the attitudes towards insiders and outsiders, the superfit pilgrims may feel purer because their physical state allowed them to go the whole Camino the hard way, possibly leaving them with a feeling of superiority towards those who could or did not do the Camino in a similar manner, as noted above in relationship to the research of Havard. This is of course of no consequence to the terminal cancer patients, who had a different goal in mind and may feel spiritually fulfilled while physically wrecked. These identity constructs and self-assessments are key issues for discussing this dichotomy between fit and unfit pilgrims and their purposes for engaging in a pilgrimage, as it seems that there are various physical, religious, spiritual and

social factors leading to the self-assessment of the pure pilgrim.

## Perspective

Possibly, we can come to a conclusion about what is a pure pilgrim at present. The issue of pure pilgrimage is that it seems to be a forced form of pilgrimage which was not very common in Antiquity, and that the pure pilgrim was modelled to the idea of suffering, Salvation and Damnation, aspects absent from the pagan religions, but fully known to St Jerome.

The loss of the pure pilgrim, leads to another question, namely, that authenticity in pilgrimage is a debatable matter. When we look beyond Western Christian pilgrimage, there have been many forms of ancient pilgrimage which had nothing to do with the desired asceticism of the pure pilgrim. We therefore need to narrow down and try to define the meaning of the pure pilgrim on an authentic pilgrimage. And this brings us back to Berthold of Regensburg. However, in modern times, this may not be fully relevant, as our religious outlook has changed over the centuries and we are not capable of understanding that medieval frame of mind any longer. We may think so, and give it a certain interpretation, but that is as far as it gets. The modern pure pilgrim is inevitably also a tourist, as we make use of an extended infrastructure which did not exist in the past. Someone from the North Americas for instance, can only start being a pure pilgrim with the first step on the Camino, compared to someone of the past who had to walk from Amsterdam to Santiago, instead of flying from Chicago to Santiago. Probably, the pure pilgrim of today has a common element, that of asceticism, but a different outlook towards the religious or spiritual side of the matter.

In contrast, a pilgrimage to Lourdes is not about the travel to Lourdes at all (plane, train, automobile), but the transformation, or in many cases, the confirmation of their religious state, when being at the shrine of Our Lady. This all fits in neatly with the human yearning for fulfilment in faith-based undertakings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Morinis, 1992; Rountree, 2002; Timothy and Olsen, 2006). The Roman Catholic pilgrim to Lourdes will fulfil the requirements of the pure pilgrim as set, among others, by Berthold of Regensburg, while the aspect of asceticism is present in their disability or ability, but they do not cover large distances as on the Camino. The Lourdes pilgrim is also away from the town centre, in a natural and calming surrounding of the sanctuary. However, as

soon as they return to the town above, they are tourists again. In a post-pilgrimage setting, they are still pure pilgrims because of their intentions.

In view of the above-mentioned 'fast and cheap' fun-packages of the Camino, there are also more serious part-time approaches, for those who do not have the time to walk the whole Camino in one stretch. A number of companies offer to divide the Camino over a number of sections, so that, over time, one could still complete the Camino.

How many participants along the Camino, who go through great pains and efforts, are doing this for the traditional values of the pure pilgrim as mentioned by St Jerome or Berthold of Regensburg? It may be proposed here that that number is relatively small, but those who, as described in Part One, are seeking asceticism through physical challenges to arrive at a spiritual maximum, must be increasing every year. These are then the new pure pilgrims in the era of post-pilgrimage, with a modified religious outlook within a very authentic, traditional and historical sense of hardship, comparable to the *orabasia*.

We have probably arrived at a departure from the past, whereby the religious purity is more present in the 'static' pilgrimage to Lourdes, according to prescribed religion, and the physical purity, leading to a spiritual experience as a pure pilgrim during a 'dynamic' pilgrimage such as the Camino. This idea is endorsed by Collins-Kreiner who writes that 'the differences between tourism, pilgrimage, and secular pilgrimage are narrowing' (Collins-Kreiner, 2010:443); because '[r]eligious and secular pilgrims often share the trait of searching for a mystical or magical experience' (445). Although it is hoped that there are still good numbers of Roman Catholic participants available to maintain the traditional religious outlook of the Camino, so that part of the authenticity has its own continuity.

There is a trend noticeable that the Camino is, at least partly, becoming a secular pilgrim's route, with its own sets of transformation. Here the pilgrims are not aiming at coming closer to God, but to themselves, as a healing process. Pilgrims to Lourdes are in this respect very conservative and try to absorb as much spirituality and religious sentiments as possible, in view of their fulfilment. A secular visitor to Lourdes is as a fish out of water and would only look around in bewilderment, not understanding what is going on. From our personal experience, secular tourists complain a lot about the commercialisation of the village but fail to understand the spiritual benefits of the pilgrims down in the

sanctuary. In this respect, the Camino is literally much more straightforward.

In Part One, the authors argued that a pilgrim is more likely to have 'spiritual experiences' if they accept the challenges rather than skirt them. In Part Two it is acknowledged that the psychological transformations brought on by physical challenges are not necessarily grounded in belief in religion, or belief in God, or a world beyond appearances. The true pilgrim does believe these things, (like belief in St. James at Santiago or Our lady at Lourdes), and that is the reason they are on the pilgrimage. So, there need be no physical challenge involved at all! It is an internal, mental communion with this other world that these pilgrims seek. One can do this praying at Lourdes as well as on walking the Camino.

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