

# The Signs of a Pathologos Problem

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We have explored the idea that a pathologos blocks one from attaining one's most significant and meaningful goals but we have yet to define the signs of a pathologos problem. Equally, we have reached the point where we can understand that the pursuit of goals which are less meaningful produce less blocks and that the pursuit of lesser goals are attended with less negative experiences, and we have also shown how these lesser forms are variants of the more fundamental expression of the pathologos; but we have not fully discussed the significance of the relationship between the pathologos and the manifestations of its numerous forms and varieties.

Before discussing the signs of a problem we need to review a few things. First, in the acceptance of the pathologos there is a self-imposed limiting view of the self. This acceptance of a narrow and limiting idea of the self permeates the world view of the subject and whenever the moment is perceived and interpreted as analogous to the pathologos the drama unfolds. It is because this interpretation limits the range of our possible choices and our conduct to the form of the pathologos that we say our lives are fated by the pathologos; for to whatever degree the pathologos is in force to that degree it determines our fate.

Second, in freeing ourselves from the pathologos we can once again ask, "Quo ?" - "Now, where are you going?" Releasing ourselves from the binding power of fate we are able to seriously ask, "What now?" Indeed, we can then ask if there is some higher purpose to life consistent with what has brought us our freedom from our fate. The classic way of approaching this question is to ask, "Being free of our fate, is there a destiny for each of us? Does man have a destiny beyond struggling to be free of his fate?" But, we may ask, "what are the signs of being fated, or of being caught in the power of the pathologos?" And, "what possible way can be say we have a destiny and what signs can we point to that suggest our destiny? Where shall we turn?" It was this interest that brought many to the Delphic oracle, but its prophetic voice was silenced many years ago and to revive it would be a reversal of the most major kind.

We can say this much: there is no mystery about discovering the nature of a pathologos problem because if you are not pursuing the noblest of goals you have a pathologos problem. Whatever convinced you that you can't or shouldn't strive for such an ideal is the pathologos belief. It is that belief that undermines one's choices and distorts one's style of life as it depreciates one's goals.

The signs and characteristics of encountering the pathologos with these secondary goals are:

- setting secondary goals as if they were primary;
- making practical issues the significant goal of one's life;
- the failure to achieve one's goals with excellence;

not preparing adequately for goals;  
loss of concentration and energy;  
inability to resist distractions;  
blaming others, excuses, for not achieving;  
being unable to maintain the goal;  
functioning ideally in crises but experiencing stress, anxiety before and after such events;  
and, letting opportunities go by, sabotaging opportunities for success.

Thus, there are essential differences between goals and dreams. When we speak of some one having goals in philosophical midwifery we mean that the goals are of such a kind that to attain them it is necessary to go through some process, some steps, or some stages. If there are no processes or procedures to gain the goal it is not likely it can ever be attained; it then remains unattainable existing only as a dream.

Equally, there is a difference between experiencing difficulties and the pathologos because it is natural to encounter difficulties in the pursuit of some goal but not so for the pathologos. Sacrifices, hardships and various struggles are to be expected and they vary with each goal, but the pathologos blocks the attainment of goals, creates struggles that are not part of the reality, repeats mistakes of the past, while its roots are unknown.

In the quest for those most meaningful goals one can expect that there will be many manifestations of the pathologos. It is important to chart each of them and relate them to the stages or levels that have been identified to reach such goals. Each of these manifestations would then become the object of an exploration in philosophical midwifery and the set of these manifestations would then be traced back to the experiences that helped shape these formative pathologos beliefs. The unity of these beliefs is the pathologos and that unity will always be expressible in terms of a basic and fundamental idea of the self.

With the rejection of much of those false beliefs a new and more mature quest can begin into the most fundamental question: what after all is the nature of this being we call Man? Is Man a mere collection of beliefs and opinions or is there something more? Does the process of philosophical midwifery bring one to recognize that we can be rational and that this rational method and way of seeing is the start of a better way of being? Does that way of being lead to the mystery of our existence?

Indeed, we can say that philosophical midwifery uses our pathologos problems to introduce us to the need for a rational way of seeing. If there were a pill that could magically remove the pathologos we would still use our method because through it we learn a way of understanding. We can see that even in the worst of man's conditions there is still rationality, but it is of a restricted kind. The difference between the wisest and the worst among us is that worst don't know their premises are false when they act out the implications of their ignorance. These are the one's who fail to comprehend just how much of their life is determined within fixed boundaries.

## **Warning: The Inherent Risks of our Program**

Challenging one's fate opens one to a new vista, a new kind of life, and that life can be an unfolding of one's destiny. To whatever degree one leaves the confined and predictable patterns of pathologos behavior to that very degree there is an openness to the unknown. The unexpected is the rule not the exception. The inner development of man moves in unexpected ways, it creates opportunities, and can restructure everything in one's life. While it is likely that inner growth will bring about changes in the outward circumstances of one's life it is a certainty that it will transform one's most basic values and worldviews and with that kind of change relationships are also perceived in a new and vital way. Anyone who embarks on a path of self growth should know this to be true and if they don't they soon will discover it.

Before anyone decides to enter this program they should realize this fact and fully accept the responsibility for their own development. It is impossible to play safe and embark on the journey of self discovery. Our program is not a safe plaything. Without accepting totally and unconditionally the responsibility for one's own growth this program will contribute little if anything to your life.