

Jordan Peterson Deserves Love, Not Spite, in Time of Darkness

I'm not quite sure what to make of Jordan Peterson – but then I'm not quite sure Dr. Peterson does either. Maybe that's what makes his writings and his speeches so compelling. His best-selling book, *12 Rules for Life*, probably falls in the self-help genre, but he's no guru. He doesn't claim to have all the answers to life's problems – just a few helpful tips. And he presents those answers with hard evidence and emotional detachment, as any good scientist would.

Dr. Peterson saw a problem. The men (and women, but mostly men) of the West are declining – physically, intellectually, and morally. He studied the habits of those who eke out some meaning from their lives in this wasteland, and he wrote them down in a book. It's as simple as that. He doesn't claim any kind of divine revelation; he doesn't say he's smarter or more insightful than anyone else. He's just a clinical psychologist looking to help people. And as he himself admits, *12 Rules* “isn't only written for other people. It's a warning to me.”

This is why his critics despise him. Those on the Left detest that one of their own – an accomplished academic in a field dominated by progressives – is using their tools against them: they thought they had a monopoly on the scientific method. Some on the Right, meanwhile, are wary of his lukewarm commitment to conservative orthodoxy. We're troubled by his skepticism towards traditional religions and his Nietzschean disdain for moralism: he's a scientist, not an ideologue.

As a philosopher, Dr. Peterson is really more of a Socrates than a Nietzsche. His avatar isn't the superman, but the

satirist. And much as he enjoys exposing the ignorance of our elites, it's clear that he also believes it's the right thing to do. Eyes are for seeing – or, failing that, for poking.

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Last week, it was revealed that Dr. Peterson is receiving treatment for his addiction to benzodiazepine, a tranquilizer used to treat anxiety. As the *National Post* reported (and as Rod Dreher mentioned on his blog), Dr. Peterson nearly died from complications related to his addiction. He chose to be treated by holistic methods in Russia after being repeatedly misdiagnosed by North American doctors. According to the *Post*, Dr. Peterson “has only just come out of an intensive care unit” and suffered “neurological damage,” which apparently resulted in a seizure disorder.

Of course, his progressive detractors are rejoicing. And of course, this is yet another symptom of our moral disease – the gangrenous soul of modern man. Those on the Left claim to be *truly* compassionate, unlike traditional Christians and their fellow-travelers (like Dr. Peterson). They claim to love women more than we do because they would allow mothers to kill their babies; they claim to love “trans people” more than we do because they encourage them to surgically mutilate their bodies. And yet when a man nearly dies from his addiction to prescription drugs, they throw a party. And why? Because he holds opinions contrary to theirs.

This goes well beyond “telescopic philanthropy”: making special care to love far-away things – African orphans, Syrian refugees, and the like – because you can't bring yourselves to love the warty folks with whom you live and work. Telescopic philanthropy is hypocritical: it contradicts its own internal logic. What makes the Left's idea of “compassion” is its cold consistency. They make no claim that all men are worthy of their compassion. To them, compassion is something earned through conformity to their ideology, and possibly not even

then (*cf.* Bernie Sanders). The Party will tolerate – even celebrate! – any perversity of mind and body. Just be sure you toe the line.

As one of the commenters on Mr. Dreher's blog wrote:

My sympathy is for his victims, those whose hard lives his words have made harder, the trans kids, the depressed, the anxious, the lonely, the young women who have the audacity to want a career, the folks who know the world is unjust, but don't quite have their lives in perfect order to suit our Professor. He has judged those who disgust him harshly, may he learn mercy, and humility in his time of trials.

Note carefully: the commenter's sympathy lies solely – not *also* – with Dr. Peterson's "victims." Only if he "learns mercy" will mercy be shown to him. This is the fine print beneath all those LGBT rally signs: "Love Wins...at All Costs."

Dr. Peterson won't be surprised to find progressives celebrating his brush with death. And frankly I doubt he'll care. As he's quick to remind his reader, "you're not as nice as you think." But mark my words: if and when Dr. Peterson returns to the public eye, he'll speak with a new wisdom drawn from his experience.

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Up until this point, Dr. Peterson's advice has been mostly of the fatherly sort: make your bed, etc. That's why he's struck a chord with his legions of fans. So many young men lack real father figures, and while we shouldn't need a college professor to teach our sons Manhood 101, we do. Dr. Peterson has done an admirable job.

Still, I suspect he'll soon come to realize that his experience is all too common. Dr. Peterson's message has a

special appeal to working-class men. These folks have been robbed of good influences that are necessary for moral growth – not only fathers, but also extended families, neighborhoods, and churches. It really *does* take a village to raise a child, yet all across America, those villages are being ransacked by economic forces beyond their control, like outsourcing and automation. Whole states are being sacrificed on the altar of economic “progress.”

Even for those well-to-do among us, the whole of modernity seems geared up specifically to wreak havoc on one’s mental health. From blue-light smartphones to alarmist news media, Western man is on the verge of a collective nervous breakdown.

Yet the single greatest cause of anxiety, no doubt, is the decline of traditional Christianity. Regardless of what one makes of its claims to truth (and I happen to believe they’re very true indeed), Christian civilization was built upon two simple laws: love for God and love for one’s fellow man. Nobody, left- or right-wing, has much use for either principle today.

We can only hope that Dr. Peterson, emerging victorious from his own ordeal, will better understand the depths of our modern degradation. Those unmade beds are only a symptom of a far more dangerous malaise: selfishness, rootlessness, and (inevitably) despair. Seeing the breadth of this calamity, we can hope that he draws nearer to the only real solution to this social atavism.

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Dr. Peterson has long expressed admiration for Christianity. He once said the Bible is, “for better or worse, the foundational document of Western civilization.” And his pessimistic view of human nature is entirely in keeping with the Faith. “Only man will inflict suffering for the sake of

suffering,” he noted. “And with this realization we have full legitimization of the idea of Original Sin.”

He’s right, of course. But that’s the easy part. Only the most foolhardy optimist would deny that human nature is, in some very meaningful way, Fallen. The question is whether he sees the need for something uplifting.

There will be those who forsake Dr. Peterson for this perceived weakness. They’ll realize that he’s not the *Übermensch* they supposed him to be. His dark silhouettes and cocked eyebrows will melt into a puddle like some golden calf. He’ll be abandoned by those he tried so hard to help.

Maybe then he’ll see the need for love – not the Left’s phony “compassion,” but a true love for one’s fellow man, borne from a recognition of our common fallibility. We have a deficit of manliness, to be sure, but we have an even greater deficit of mercy. Even more than fathers, we need the Son.

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