

# The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men

by Theodore Dalrymple

Pride is perhaps the worst of sins, for it is often at the root of many others such as anger and avarice. One finds it in unexpected places, for example in an article in the *Guardian* newspaper about the horrors of pro-Brexit Britain.

The author (whom I shall not name to spare him his blushes) obviously subscribes to the *bien pensant* view that one either believes in the rule of Messrs Juncker and Van Rompuy, *et al.*, or one goes around beating up foreigners on the street. Our intellectual class, so dismissive of the uneducated masses who voted for Brexit, seem not to have noticed the logical fallacy in the argument that if xenophobes voted for Brexit, then those who voted for Brexit were xenophobes. Our educational system is evidently even worse than I had supposed.

The article, written by a Briton who now lives in Paris, ends as follows:

*On the slipstream of empire, I've always thought – to the point of treason – of my British passport as a "burden of shame" as UB40 so eloquently put it, "a British subject, not proud of it". Now, trying to cling on in "the continent", it is just a downright embarrassment – not only a badge of shame, but also, worse in a way, of pointless, bellicose imbecility.*

This is, of course, typical of the hyperbole that followed the result of the referendum – to the holding of which,

incidentally, few people objected before the results were known. In other words, you can have elections and referenda all right, so long as the results are 'correct.'

But the interesting thing about the passage above is the evident and overweening pride that runs through it. The man who wrote it is middle-aged: he has kept his 'badge of shame' for decades after he could, if he had felt genuine shame about it, have got rid of it. No, his pride is to have a badge of shame, extravagantly exhibited, in order to demonstrate his moral superiority over other people who wear the same badge who are not as intelligent, educated or morally sensitive as he. This is the prideful shame of the poseur, of the moral exhibitionist. Moral exhibitionism is now the *déformation professionnelle* (I use the French expression to establish that I am no xenophobe) of the intellectuals. On me, at any rate, it has the same effect as the sound of a teacher's nail accidentally running down the blackboard had when I was a child. It puts me on edge.

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