

Original Message

From: Payton, Robert

Sent: Wednesday, September 19, 2001 11:55 AM

Subject: Misanthropy

There is an increasing flow of comment and opinion about the events of September 11. I had planned to add another short essay of my own on "terrorism and barbarism," to reflect both on the acts and on the perpetrators, but I've decided not to. We can only absorb so much. I think I'll wait until some of the intellectual and emotional dust settles and we can all see more clearly, using the time to read and reflect, instead. I'll turn to McKeon's "thought, action, and passion," seeing thought as a necessary bridle on the passion we feel and our need for action to release the tension. There are times when teachers should be silent, too. As the Mishnah puts it, "The tradition is a fence around the Law; Tithes are a fence around riches; vows are a fence around abstinence; *a fence around wisdom is silence.*" (Aboth, 3. 14) It's uncharacteristic but I'll follow that advice for now. I'll be away for a few days meeting my new grandson, and that will restore my spirits.

RLP