25th September 2025

Training

"It was an initiation into the life of spirit, a training of the human soul in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue."

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *The Evolution of India (1958)*

On our Tartan Army jaunt to Copenhagen earlier this month, we had a flight-change in Frankfurt. The timings were tight, and our delayed take-off from Edinburgh meant making the connection was going to be tricky. Much discussion ensued: get a later flight direct to Copenhagen; take an earlier flight but have an additional change in another German city; stay overnight in Frankfurt and arrive in Copenhagen a day late.

In the end, we needn't have worried. A *Lufthansa* official met us as we disembarked and rushed us to Passport Control and Immigration. Relief all round! But there was a problem. The checking of our passports – the eight in our party and another half dozen also making the connection – was *unbelievably* slow. Even the *Lufthansa* official was agitated. He tried to push things along but came back to us with a wry smile and a Germanic shrug, informing us, in passable English, "He's a trainee. Slow. Just learning. We have to be patient." It looked like the departing flight to Copenhagen knew he was a trainee too, for, with commendable patience, they waited for this contingent of the Tartan Army, and all was well!

Let's be patient with trainees, the pedantic, doing-it-by-the-book, unsure, being-supervised-at-every-stage, trying-to-remember, checking-every-protocol trainees. If we've been trainees in *anything,* we'll remember what that was like, and how we hoped other people would be patient with us. Never denigrate trainees. They will always need our patience.

All of this, however, is about training in systems, regulations, skills, procedures, legalities, abilities. But what about morals, self-awareness, ethics, faith, perceptions, attitudes, behaviour, all those "inward" parts of our lives? In an "initiation into the life of spirit, a training of the human soul in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue" we're *all* still in training, a lifetime of learning. So, as we tried to be patient with a trainee passport-control-official at Frankfurt Airport, let's be patient with each other and with ourselves. Let's recognise the importance of our training in "the life of the spirit", before we rush on to the next stage of our journey.

A prayer for today

Always learning; always growing; always better – I hope! Thank you, God.

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