

GOD AND HUMAN JUDGEMENT: THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN AUTHENTICITY

ONE OF GOD'S STATEMENTS ON HUMAN JUDGEMENT:

“Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous men his thoughts... For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are My ways your ways.’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts’ (Isaiah 55:6-8).

One of the great errors in the human experience is to believe that humans are capable of making informed judgements without referencing ‘higher powers’. Adam and Eve thought they were making a rational judgment based on what they saw - good fruit to eat. They underestimated the implication of bypassing ‘what God said’, and this resulted in them giving recognition and power to God's enemy.

The importance of individual human judgement has been strongly promoted in our time. It was Herder that promoted the idea that each of us has an original way of being human; that there is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in my unique way, and not in imitation of anyone else. In fact, if I am not true to myself, I will miss the point of life, what it means to be human for me. This demands that I must not fit my life to the demands of external conformity; there is no model for my life outside of myself. My job in life is to realize a potentiality that is peculiarly my own.

This is the back ground to the moral force behind the post-modernist culture of authentic human experience. It is what gives sense to the idea of ‘doing you own thing’, of ‘finding your own fulfilment’. Frank Sinatra sang it and, in Australia, people like Don Dunstan and Robert Helpman applauded him and ‘did it their way’.

Paraclete’s view is that the above is an apostate doctrine which deflects humans from God's high purpose. The truth is that humans have no power of definitive judgement unless they are connected to the Logos. And the good news is that God has arranged for the Logos to dwell within the human spirit and to be available to the human psyche.

AN AUTHENTIC HUMAN AGENCY

With regard to the human senses, St Augustine found them limited but he saw no reason to believe that they were deceiving him. With regard to perception, Augustine noted that at a first level of thought the soul sought for characteristics like unity, proportion and number in the things that were perceived - but that this perception remained uninformed unless it drew on a higher intelligence and judged what was perceived against standards like equality, symmetry, beauty, etc. These standards he judged to be part of that Truth by which the intellect could be enlightened by an illumination found within.

Augustine did not believe that an individual can know all of Truth. On the contrary he was careful to maintain a distinction between God as Creator and humans as created beings. In his view, each individual could experience something of the Truth but the Absolute Truth remained to some extent indistinct. Knowledge for the believer he found to be dependent on constantly listening and being open to reproof. Thus, Augustine agrees with Herder that judgement may be found within but differs in prescribing that while humans may know and formulate ideas from experience, judgement is only possible by drawing on a power beyond the self.

Augustine identified four powers by which a human may know.

- The senses which provide experiences of external objects

- The intelligence that affirms non-sensible realities like moral principles and mathematics
- Other humans from whom the agent may obtain details of times and places not experienced
- God - Whose authority initiates faith to believe what is beyond perception

These powers he synthesized into a hierarchy of knowledge:

- At the lowest level - instinctive sensation common to men and animals
- At the second level - that 'half way house' in which humans focus perceived objects
- At the third level - the intellect's approximations of eternal standards
- The highest level - conceptual knowledge that aims at wisdom.

Augustine found all four levels to be important but, seeing it to be the natural order that 'authority precedes wisdom' when we wish to learn anything, he prescribed that the more capable in attribute by necessity judges the less capable. That is: that which reasons judges that which does not reason, that which is enlightened by the Logos judges that which simply reasons and the Logos judges all things.

The problem with the post modernists is that they deliberately discard the possibility of knowing the Logos within. Having made that choice they are of necessity cut off from enlightenment. They live in a delusion that they are informed by themselves individually, but the reality is that they are informed by the belief system of the group in which they congregate. The blind leading the blind!

The social problem deriving from Herder is an extreme autonomy leading to anarchy. Augustine's view, on the other hand, gives hope of:

- Unity and a moral agency in which human desires are aligned with God's purposes
- A human belief system derived from an enlightened intellect
- The human will 'made perfect in love'

Paraclete chooses the Augustine route to agency. Firstly, because by choosing the line of best utility based on a 'higher intelligence', moral correctness is ensured and inner peace gained. Secondly, because it provides the possibility that illuminated minds may find consensus (unity of thought and practice) instead of conflict, God setting the standard.

Unfortunately, not even the Christian church has always found this kind of unity. Rather the age following the Reformation has been an Age of Schism as a result of individuals rising up who claim knowledge superior to others, not recognizing their own imperfections. This problem is easily overcome; all we need to do is seek the Lord together and walk in His wisdom in every situation.



This Fact Sheet was written by Dr John Potter, August 2003

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