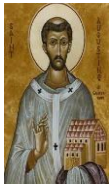


Paper 3: June 17th 2019 Afternoon: St. Augustine and Human Nature



Context: Though his mother was Christian, young Augustine found the Bible contradictory and was sexually liberal. He was influenced by **Manicheism** – stated *the world was a battle between good and evil, suffering was caused by an evil power, we have two souls which contemplate God and the material world. Human reason could lead to God.* He was later influenced by the **Neoplatonists**, (admirers of Plato) who said our minds contemplated God by denying the body and Jesus was enlightened. In **386, with his body and mind in turmoil, he became a Christian** when a voice told him to read **Romans 13 (by St. Paul)** about Christ as cure for drunkenness, jealousy, quarrelling and lust. He became a priest and bishop. **In 411, Augustine disputed with Christian monk Pelagius (condemned in 418). Pelagius' Views: Pelagius did not believe Original Sin caused universal guilt only God removes. Humans have sufficient free will to overcome Original Sin. Adam's sin harmed only him. Children born in the same state as Adam before he had sinned. God commands people to be holy so they are not flawed. Sin is a choice and we can choose perfection using free will. God would not condemn people for what they could not control. We do not die owing to Adam's sin nor are raised through Christ. There were wise men before Christ who died without sinning. Sin is choice. Death is biology not punishment.**

General Question: What does it mean to be a human? Human nature is the essential sense of what humans are like. For **Thomas Hobbes** human life was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” and **only society saves us.** **Jean Jacques Rousseau** thought the opposite when he said “**man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.**” **Evolution** suggests human nature is moving away from the primitive. **John Paul Sartre** said we make our essence through choice – *there is no basic human nature.* **Karl Marx** thought we were creative beings who adapt to situations. **Augustine believed humans were created in God's image but, at the Fall human nature was irretrievably damaged and we spend our lives battling this through sin (turning away from God) and concupiscence (our wounded natural perfected state so we always incline to sin).**

Before The Fall: Genesis 1-3 : State of Perfection Without Sin

According to Genesis, God creates everything good. Human beings, the pinnacle of creation, are made in God's image and likeness. Humans share something of God's nature in being self-aware, free rational and having the ability to love. Adam and Eve lived in the perfect paradise in perfect harmony with God (who used to walk with them), nature, body, will and reason. They had everything. They could eat from any vegetation apart from one (Tree of Knowledge) and named the animals. **There was no lust (Adam and Eve were married, had sex as friends (Concordia) and were told to go forth and multiply.** There was no repression, power, greed, political authority or threat. **Human will was given by God and was used to make choices. The will determines the person we are.** It was driven by **self love (cupiditas** eg lust, selfishness and attachment) and **generous /agape love** (eg caritas, prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice) which work together to help people choose to love God.

After The Fall (post Lapsarian): Genesis 3 – to Today: The Diagnosis: No avoiding sin

The Fall (in Genesis 3) is where the serpent (Satan) tempted Eve who then tempted Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan (a fallen angel), fell from grace through pride, wanting to rule the world. Satan was jealous of unfallen humans. *Disguised as a serpent, with “seductive craftiness”, was the stimulus for disobedience.* Proud humans rejected the perfect relationship with God and wanted to be God. They realised they were naked and hid from God who found out.

Augustine believe The Fall caused a “double death.” First Adam and Eve’s act killed the friendship and harmony between God and humans. *The second death is the mortal state of every human now born with a rebellious nature as punishment for the first disobedience transmitted through a chain of disasters. They chose cupiditas.*

After the Fall, things were complicated, fraught, anxious and corrupted with harmony destroyed and lust (libido) now controlling sexual organs and desire. Hard work, lust, death and child birth all were consequences as guilt is transmitted from birth and death is a consequence. Leadership could no longer be gentle and proper authority was now needed. Self-love was separated from generous love. No God friendship.

It was the will not the body corrupted, weakened and divided. St Paul in Romans 7 described doing what he hated and not what he wanted and sin as a chain. *It was and is like trying to leave a comfortable bed.* Our free will is now tainted by concupiscence (uncontrolled desires of all kinds such as craving for food, power or money which dominate life). Concupiscence was even experienced in friendships with jealousy undermining true friendship. Augustine describes a vision of seeing a pure and chaste Lady Contenance calling him to be celibate but he cannot do this based on past experience. He believed married couples should abstain from sex after marriage and would not see women alone. **People divided; made in God’s image but will corrupted.**

Original Sin is the state that humans were brought into by The Fall that characterises, changes and defines human nature with the rebellious will. No human being is ever now truly good no matter how much good they do as the will has a tendency away from goodness. Born into **Original Sin passed to generations through sex as we are all descendants of Adam and Eve, conceived as a result of lust** through “a chain of disasters” (Augustine). The Catholic Church still holds this view saying the human race is “one body of one man”, that how we are mysteriously implicated in Adam and Eve’s personal sin which is **contracted not committed and is a state not an act.** *Yes, our will is still rational enough to know what is morally good but is weakened by desires to do the opposite after The Fall.* The consequences of the Fall are everywhere . It is part of the ontological condition of human existence. The root of the tree is rotten.



God's Grace: The Cure: Salvation Through Christ: "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" asks St. Paul (Romans 7). We are set free from this calamitous sequence through the undeserved gift of God's grace, expressed in Jesus' life and sacrifice, showing God's love and goodness. Only God can save us from Original Sin. Humans do not have sufficient reason to live a good life and cannot do it on their own, needing God's grace (freely given act of love) expressed through Jesus. Through God's generous love and Jesus, **the damaged wound of the will can be healed** and human relationships with God restored, Original Sin removed. Redemption. Calms the soul. Love. Gives ethics. **Only God knows who is deserving of grace – the elect – who will be rewarded with heaven. All humans can do is persevere in hope and faith. Faith is recognising our failings and trusting God. Society needs and can have earthly peace-temporary goodness aiming for virtues such as self-control. A greater peace available for all, a greater good, the eternal happiness of Heavenly Peace and the . permanent presence of God given by grace. The Summum Bonum is the highest good of God's presence.**

Strengths: **1. Sexual ideas do seem to play disproportionate part in life. 2. Helps us understand emotions. Torn in different directions. 3. Catholic Church says we need God's help, 4. Freud - libido is central to motivation. 5. Some see Augustine as optimistic as God's grace given to undeserving humanity. Jesus died on the cross for all and paid the price for sinful nature. The Church/Baptism helps people keeps wound of Original Sin closed. Roman Catholic Church speaks of happy fault of Adam which meant greater blessings on Jesus. God works his mysterious goodness in the world after the Fall. 6. R. Niebuhr up-dates Augustine by saying sin in today's world is caused by egoism and self-interest, particularly in groups. Only God can help. 7. Interpret Genesis symbolically – God the creator, free will, responsibility. 8. Humble**

Weaknesses: **1. Genesis not literal. Jewish interpretation. Humans develop morally and spiritually. 2. Evolution says we move to perfection. 3. Richard Dawkins: Augustine led to much suffering. Steven Pinker (psychologist): Religion responsible for violence, suffering and debasement of humanity. Advocates the humanitarian principle thinking of others. 4. Dawkins - science challenges ideas contrary to evolutionary biology- we emerged from animals with no consciousness to make active decisions. 5. Dawkins - absurd 2 individuals cause corruption of all. Not fair. 6. Dawkins: Christianity has unhealthy obsession with guilt, violence and repressed sexuality and God restoring human nature through killing Jesus is irrational. Why was God incarnated to be tortured? 7. Is it possible to be good? Why be good? 8. Is the newborn baby tainted with original sin? Fair? 9. Sex part of being human. Not bad. 10. Augustine consumed with sexual guilt. 11. No identical human nature. 12. Psychologists have shown in different situations humans react differently. Socialisation. 13. Too pessimistic. 14. He believed in predestination – some are sent to hell from birth. 15. His ideas reflect his own mind not God's. 16. "We are born free" (Rousseau). 17. God has unrealistic standards. 18. The Quakers (Christian Group) say we are born with Divine Light. 19. Freud accepted libido but not Augustine's explanation of it. Psychoanalysis recalling traumatic events, was key not Christ. God illusion. 20. Use Pelagius.**

