The Philosopher's Stone

Philosophical Discussion Group, Armstrong State University

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"Christ does not call his benefactors loving or charitable. He calls them just. The Gospel makes no distinction between the love of our neighbor and justice ... We have invented the distinction between justice and charity" (85).

Simone Weil outlines a theory of justice in this excerpt from her essay collection *Waiting For God* (Harper, 2009). For Weil, the act of being just is synonymous with the act of loving one’s neighbor and being charitable. While this theory could arguably hold in a secular context, it is offered to the reader via Weil’s long discussion of Christian doctrine, as well as a historical analysis of Christianity.

Although Simone Weil is a philosopher in her own right, many scholars also consider her a Christian mystic. This classification, however, does not negate her long, complicated history with Christianity, which plays out in the correspondence between Weil and Father Perrin at the beginning of *Waiting For God*. In her letters to Father Perrin, Weil obstinately insists despite his pleas to the contrary that she refrain from being baptized. Her primary reason for this is the feeling that her spiritual destiny lay outside the nave’s walls.

*Waiting For God* reveals certain biographical aspects of Weil’s life, among which is that her philosophy sprung from a tedious, painstaking disavowal of certain exegetical practices of the Catholic Church over the course of her intellectual journey. The origin of Weil’s ideas notwithstanding, hers remain a pillar of Modern Platonism and continue to be subjected to debates in political and moral philosophy.

But do the religious origins of Weil’s philosophy undermine her ideas? Is anything lost if Weil’s theory of justice is taken in a secular light? And would the philosophy collapse without a clear sense of a Judeo-Christian God? More generally, where do we draw the line between theology and philosophy? Are the two compatible, indistinguishable, or mutually exclusive?
WHAT OTHER’S HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT
JUSTICE, RELIGION, THEOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

Is the pious loved by gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by gods?
– Plato

What are kingdoms without justice? They’re just gangs of bandits. – Augustine

The theologian considers sin mainly as an offence against God; the moral philosopher as contrary to reasonableness.
– Thomas Aquinas

And thus, however strong men’s propensity to believe invisible, intelligent power in nature, their propensity is equally strong to rest their attention on sensible, visible objects; and in order to reconcile these opposite inclinations, they are led to unite the invisible power with some visible object.
– David Hume

Kneeling down or grovelling on the ground, even to express your reverence for heavenly things, is contrary to human dignity. – Kant

Worship requires the abandonment of one’s role as an autonomous moral agent.
– James Rachels

Wherever morality is based on theology, wherever right is made dependent on divine authority, the most immoral, unjust, infamous things can be justified and established. – Ludwig Feuerbach

Religion is based primarily upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly as the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. Fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand in hand. – Bertrand Russell

Christ was crucified because he would have nothing to do with the crowd (even though he addressed himself to all). He did not want to form a party, an interest group, a mass movement, but wanted to be what he was, the truth, which is related to the single individual. Therefore everyone who will genuinely serve the truth is by that very fact a martyr. To win a crowd is no art; for that only untruth is needed, nonsense, and a little knowledge of human passions. But no witness to the truth dares to get involved with the crowd. – Kierkegaard

If you say to someone who has ears to hear: ‘What you are doing to me is not just,’ you may touch and awaken at its source the spirit of attention and love. But it is not the same with words like, ‘I have the right...’ or ‘you have no right to...’ They evoke a latent war and awaken the spirit of contention.
– Simone Weil

Religion in so far as it is a source of consolation is a hindrance to true faith; and in this sense atheism is a purification.
– Simone Weil

Pain and suffering are a kind of currency passed from hand to hand until they reach someone who receives them but does not pass them on. – Simone Weil

The Philosophical Discussion Group (PDG) invites you to consider the lines between love and justice, religion and philosophy.

--Dr. Erik Nordenhaug
Faculty advisor to the PDG

“It is an eternal obligation toward the human being not to let him suffer from hunger when one has a chance of coming to his assistance.” -- Simone Weil

To assist with the eternal obligation, food for thought, pizza & soda are justly provided

WED., Feb. 28 @ 4:30 PM IN GAMBLE 106