

POLI 341: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

Session 10 - ST. AUGUSTINE

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Session Overview

- Welcome to session 10: St. Augustine.
- We are going to introduce you to the life, education and the political ideals of Augustine.
- We will also introduce you to the Fallen Nature, the Two Cities, the church and the state.
- We further edŹawîŹe AugustiŹŹs |ie||s oŹ four politiĐal concepts: political obligation, justice, peace, and slavery.
- It is iŹterestiŹg to Źote that AugustiŹŹs |ie||s oŹ these concepts were largely influenced by his conception of the state and the relations between the church and the state.
- Please let us explore how Augustine dealt with these concepts.

Session outline

This session covers the following topics:

- **The Background and Political Ideals of St. Augustine**
- **The Fallen Nature of Man**
- **The Two Cities**
- **State and the Church**

TOPIC ONE

**THE BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL
IDEALS OF ST. THOMAS
AQUINAS**

Political Ideals and Works of Augustine

- St. Thomas Aquinas was born at Aquino, a tiny place near Naples (Italy) from which he obtained the title Aquinas, in 1227 AD.
- But he was better known as Thomas and his thought as *Thomism*. He belonged to an aristocratic (noble) Italian family with connections to European kings and emperors.
- In order to become a church father and to devote his life to the cause of Christianity, he surrendered his noble title over the protests of his family.
- He joined the Dominican order at the age of 19 and studied in Naples, Cologne and Paris.
- He died at the age of 47 in 1274 AD.

ST. Augustine (AD 354-430)

- Augustine was born in AD 354 at Thagaste in Algeria then a Roman province to a pagan father and a Christian mother, who eventually became St. Monica.
- He trained in classical Latin rhetoric, a modest training his family could offer him to enable him enter into imperial service.
- He wrote a celebrated apology of part of his life, the *Confessions*.
- He believed that the confession of past sins is a proof of present virtue.
- He was one of the most influential thinkers who ever lived.

ST. Augustine (AD 354-430)

- He taught rhetoric and moved to Milan in 384 to further his career. It was in Milan that he encountered for the first time the celebrated bishop of Milan Ambrose.
- He also began to read St. Paul.
- He learnt from Ambrose that Scripture could be read symbolically (some will say twisted) to mean things beyond the literal meaning of the text,
- From Paul, he took those views about the sexuality and sin
||hiÐh e|er siŶÐe ha|e d'eeŶ daŵagiŶg peopl'ès li|es iŶ the Catholic world.
- He experienced an emotional conversion to Christianity.

ST. Augustine (AD 354-430)

- His ardent desire to search for the truth led him finally to adopt Christianity.
- Having been baptized by Ambrose in 387, Augustine went into monastic retirement at Thagaste in North Africa, and it was only reluctantly, by his own account, that he gave in to local demand that he became first a priest, and then the Bishop of Hippo in 395.
- In Hippo, he deepened his knowledge of the Bible and obtained the Latin translation of Greek commentaries on it.
- ~~He was in Hippo that he~~ defended the Catholic Church against heresy (an opinion contrary to the orthodox

The relation between the rise of Christianity and the fall of the Roman Empire

- The Christian qualities of other-worldliness, pacific attitude to every affair and contempt for revered national deities were simply not favourable for a powerful Roman Empire.
 - Christianity did not recognize the loyalty to Rome as the first and foremost loyalty.
 - The declaration of Christianity created resentment in the minds of many particularly pagans.
- and many faiths.

Political Ideals and Works of

- To understand the political thought of Augustine it is necessary to know the background within which he worked.
- Christianity achieved the status of state religion in 313AD (about 40 years before Augustine was born) and paganism was proscribed.
- The declaration of Christianity as state religion created resentment in the minds of the strong adherents of paganism.
- The pagans hated Christianity's purpose of establishing one faith and one religion.

Political Ideals and Works of

- Eighty years after Christianity became a state religion, the Roman Empire collapsed and it was blamed on Christianity.
- The pagans saw Christianity as a betrayal of the old Roman deities under which Rome had risen to the position of world power.
- They had argued that Christian qualities of other-worldliness, pacific attitude to every affair (*turning the other cheek*) and contempt for revered national deities were not favourable to a powerful Roman Empire.
- Christianity did not recognize the loyalty to Rome as the first and foremost loyalty.
- For the pagans, Christianity had led to the neglect of the gods of Rome and traditional Roman virtue upon which the greatness and safety of Rome rested.

Political Ideals and Works of

- The Christians were also confused by the disintegration of the Roman Empire and disappointed because the state power on which they laid their hope for temporal security and worldwide domination was unable to save even itself from destruction.
- Augustine, whose father was a pagan and mother a Christian, was disturbed by the attacks of the pagans on Christianity and the acquiescence of the Christians to the attacks.
- He therefore sought to defend Christianity by a careful investigation into the destruction of the Roman Empire.
- His celebrated work, *City of God*, therefore, was a reply to the pagan accusation that Christianity was solely responsible for the downfall of the Empire.

Political Ideals and Works of

- Augustine denied the greatness of the Roman gods which, he claimed, had no power or ability to grant anything anyway.
- He defended the Christian God as the giver of all good things and the one who had granted Rome greatness as a reward for Roman virtue.
- He treated Christianity as the controlling force of the state.
- His elaborate investigation of the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire and all other related matters, touched on the state, society, human nature, etc., which are all parts of political thought.
- He expressed views which became part of the Christian thought on the relations of the church and the state.

Political Ideals and Works of

- Augustine became the most important Christian thinker of the early Middle Ages.
- His most characteristic idea was the **Christian commonwealth**, which he saw as the highest point of man's spiritual development.
- He identifies the two-fold nature of man, the **body** and the **soul**.
- Man's worldly interests belong to *the body*; and the other-worldly or spiritual interests belong to the **soul**.
- This makes man a citizen of this world (*the Earthly City*) and (*Heavenly City*) at the same time

Political Ideals and Works of

- On the one side stands the society that is founded on the earthly, appetitive and possessive impulses of the lower human nature; and on the other side stands the *City of God*, the society that is founded in the hope of heavenly peace and spiritual salvation.
- Since, the human race is condemned by the original sin and salvation is due to God's grace alone, man has the vital duty to worship God.



TOPIC TWO

THE FALLEN NATURE OF MAN

The Fallen Nature of Man

- According to Augustine, God created man and endowed him with liberty and free will.
- In the original state of godliness and justice, men exercised this liberty very cautiously and only for the attainment of holiness and worship of God.
- When wickedness dawned in the minds of men, they fell into the hands of Satan and began to commit sin after sin which led to their sufferings and misery.
- How did men become prey to sin?
- According to Augustine “*what is man’s misery other than his own disobedience to himself? . . . His mind is troubled, his flesh pained, age and death approach and a thousand other emotions seize on us against our wills which they could not do if our nature were wholly obedient to our will*”.
- Thus, Augustine emphasizes that man’s disobedience to himself causes disobedience to God.

The Fallen Nature of Man

cont'd

- When a man becomes the slave of his own desires to get more pleasure and satisfaction, he forgets the wills and wishes of God and also to worship Him.
- Man then comes to be involved in sinful activities.
- The corruption of human body, its inclination to worldly pleasure, is a **consequence** and not the cause of sin.
- Self-control is therefore the royal path to get the blessings of God.
- The state was created by God as partly a punitive and partly a remedial institution.
- Before the creation of the state the original men were innocent.

The Fallen Nature of Man

cont'd

- Sin instigated men to be disobedient and ultimately brought them under servitude.
- If God did not come out to save men then the entire mankind would have been destroyed.
- That is why out of mercy, God created two kingdoms – one for men seeking self-interest and the other for angels sacrificing self-interest and worshipping God only.
- The purpose of the heavenly city therefore is to save mankind from sin and sufferings.

TOPIC THREE

THE TWO CITIES

The Two Cities

- He stated that man is a citizen of two cities, i.e. the city of his birth or earthly city (***Civitas Terrana***) and the City of God (***Civitas Dei***).
- The two cities are formed by two ***loves***. The earthly city is the creation of self-love and to the contempt of God and the Heavenly city is the creation of God to the contempt of self.
- The earthly city glorifies the self and the heavenly city glorifies God.

The Two Cities ; Doctus?

- Only in the Heavenly City is peace possible; only the spiritual kingdom is permanent.
- All earthly kingdoms must pass away.
- Earthly power is naturally mutable and unstable.
- It is built upon those aspects of human nature which result in war and the greed of domination
- Because of the existence of the two cities, man's nature is also

two-fold, he is first, a spirit and second, a flesh or body.

- Man is therefore a citizen of two cities, the earthly city and the city of God.
- At death, the flesh remains on earth and the spirit goes up.

The Earthly City

- The earthly city has as its interests such as feeling for food, sex, drinks and other possessive impulses such as feeling good among men and recognition.
- The people of the earthly city run their personal interests and they are making all sorts of efforts immoral and unethical for the perpetuation of benefits which they have cropped.
- Feuds and animosity are very common among the princes, administrators and the common people.
- Goodliness, honesty and virtue are not available among the inhabitants of this city.
- Love, respect for others and wisdom are very scarce virtues in the earthly city.
- People are victims of vices and all sorts of misdeeds.
- Pride and glory dominate the entire society.

The Earthly City ;ĐoŸtd?

- The foundation of the earthly city is the appetitive and possessive impulses which are found in the lower categories of animals.
- The Satan with wicked thought and activities and seeking self-interest, has made the earthly city its den.
- There is no possibility of survival of the city of Satan because profligacy and debauchery cannot be the foundation of a stable and enduring city.
- All that is expected of the earthly city was a minimum of soĐial peaĐe, a ĐoŸ|eŸieŸt ĐoŸditioŸ for the souls pilgrimage through this world to God.

The City of God

- The heavenly city is diametrically opposed to the earthly city.
- It is inhabited by angels and holy persons.
- They do not look after their personal benefits or interests.
- Godliness and sacrifice dominate the behavior and attitude of the inhabitants of heavenly city.
- This city is not raged by feuds and conflicts.
- Peace, good relations and holiness are the permanent features.
- People do not lust for power, and so personal animosity and quarrels are absent.
- Heavenly peace and salvation of mankind are the foundation of the

Civitas Dei.

- There is no possibility of the disintegration of the kingdom of God because pagans have no existence there.
- The city of God remains a desire, an imperceptible desire and hope

The Significance of the City of God

- It gave the church a definite direction and a clear meaning to Christianity.
- The state is not an end in itself but a means to an end and the end is good life. The state is a reformatory organization.
- The **City of God** is Plato's concept of justice and the City of God is the law of nature. He argues that law without justice is valueless. He asserts that for the kingdom of earth both law and justice are essential. The intention of Augustine was to reform the state through law and justice.
- According to John Morrow, the **City of God** is timeless, does not correspond with any earthly realm and provides a positive framework for the realization of the supreme end for humanity.



TOPIC FOUR

STATE AND THE CHURCH

The State and the Church

- St. Augustine also asserted that all the powers that be are ordained by God and the use of force or coercion by a ruler if sanctioned by the church is in accordance with the wishes of God, because it brings happiness and order to this earth and atonement and reparation to the soul for the heavenly kingdom.
- This is usually the doctrine used in justifying hanging.
- Governments are instituted by God and therefore must be obeyed.
- Augustine was preaching submission to the authority of the state.

The State and the Church

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- Love for victory sometimes becomes life-destroying.
- The cost of achievement of victory far exceeds the benefits.
- People are fools and devoid of good sense.
- They make arms to make wars and they make war to get peace.
- Their foolishness know no bounds.
- Peace is never achieved in the earthly city.
- The people of the earthly city are divided among themselves by quarrels, wars and litigation.
- In the earthly city, peace is far-cry. The use of arms against each other is very common.

The State and the Church

Introduction

- In sum, St. Augustine stressed the autonomy of the church in the spiritual matters and conceived of government as being shared between groups namely the legal or secular and the clerical order.
- This implies that the secular government is the secular arm of the church.
- This means the state must be subordinated to the church.
- All persons must be Christians.
- It is important to note that St. Augustine upheld St. Paul's admonition to Christians towards civic obedience and subjections to the powers that be.
- The church is a social institution for the realization of human salvation which is the sole end of man.
- The unity of the state also means the unity of Christian life under the leadership of the church.

The State and the Church

Introduction

- Justice to him is **subordinate to the will of God** as propounded by the church.
- All the laws of the state must conform to the teachings of the church.
- A **just state** must be one in which a belief in the true religion is taught and is maintained with the authority of the state.
- The laws taught by the church are superior to all other laws.
- No state can be just unless it is **Christian** and the government which is not ordained by the church is devoid of justice

The State and the Church

Introduction

- Both the state and the society were created by God.
- The state is established by God to make life bearable in the human condition (the condition of sinfulness).
- States exist to do the messy job of making social order at least possible in the world of sinful men.
- The state is provisional, and its proper function can never be to prescribe the ends of human life.
- No institution on earth, neither the state nor the church, can decide what the ends of human life should be after the gospel has spoken.
- All the church can do is to speak with authority about the means of salvation.
- ~~Christ himself~~ intended his church to be more than a place to

The State and the Church

• De Vitoria

- ***Membership of the church could not guarantee salvation, but outside the church there is no salvation.***
- The church was both uniquely temporal and uniquely eternal institution.
- He did not doubt that the visible church, the church of bishops, priests and congregation of council and decrees, of authoritative pronouncement about liturgy and dogmas, was a pale copy of true church, just as he did not doubt that in some ultimate mystical end, the church was identifiable with the *City of God*.
- The earthly state however virtuous its rulers were, could never hope to be much more than a devilish parody of the kingdom of God.
- No matter how hard it tried, the state had the taint of lust upon it.
- The state could never be good enough to wipe out its stain and the church could never be bad enough to annul its promise of eternal life.

The State and the Church

• De Vitoria

- Every state including the Roman Empire is only a sin- policeman, hopelessly under resourced for the job in hand.
- He defined justice as a virtue distributing unto everyone his due.
- Justice means conformity with the order of God.
- A true justice must conform to law.
- So justice is always absolute.

The State and the Church

• De Vito

- To Augustine, justice is the most important thing in a state and if it is removed from the state, then it is an association of robbers.
- In other words, a state devoid of justice is not a state at all.
- Without justice, laws are arbitrary decrees.
- Augustiŕe Đoŕđiŕes Platŕs ĐoŕĐept of justiĐe ||ith CiĐerŕs la|| of ŕature.
- Law **without** justice is valueless.

The State and the Church

- He was keen in making men know what is meant to live a life in society.
- He believed that all human problems centered round the questions about what membership of human groups entailed.
- Like Aristotle, Augustine believed that failure to do ones duty was really a failure to fully understand the implications of membership of society.
- In the modern idiom, human failure was always more or less a failure to play a role properly.