

Physics and “Judge not that you may not be Judged”

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Without a proper understanding of simple physics,² which are the first principles upon which all of our knowledge builds, one can, and indeed many have, completely misunderstand important pieces of literature and writing, including the Bible. The Bible is universally agreed to be a special book. Educated non-Christians acknowledge its importance to western culture from which modern civilization arises. Even if one believes, as Christians do, that it is the word of God, it does not dispense it from first being a book and requiring a proper understanding of basic physics and proper reasoning to properly understand it. To see this, let’s look at a verse, which is a quote from Jesus, that is commonly misunderstood and which is very important: “*Judge not that you may not be judged.*” (Luke 6:37-38, Matthew 7:1-5)

In looking at the verse on the page, the first thing you see is that it is curvy shaped lines of ink on a page. That is, it has a natural meaning as natural substances: ink and paper. We also see that we have assigned meaning to these shapes. We call them words, sentences, paragraphs..... That is, these shapes stand for, remind us of, meanings, of things other than ink and paper. For example, “dog” brings to mind “a barky, friendly, omnivorous, mammalian animal.” If we had not already figured out what a dog was through our senses, we would not know what that word meant. Any word has this character. Thus, to read any book, even with the Bible (because it is first a book, not some magic direct form of transferring mental knowledge), one must know things first.

So, our **first** point is that we must know things before we can read anything. By this, we mean we must know, not just, for example, the English language (that is part of it, but the least part of it), but we must know things through our senses that can be communicated through that language.

Second, we must think through the meaning of the words based on the things we already know to understand the words and statements of a book in light of the context of the writing. If, instead of this two step process, we take a statement from a book without such care, we will come up with nonsense. Here’s why and how, using our example verse.

Starting with what comes first in principle, the first meaning of “judgment” is to determine whether something is true or false. The first act of the human mind is to apprehend something in the external world. We might see “brown.” Later we might come to understand “dog.” We thus have apprehended “brown” and “dog.” Now, we might next, see our neighbor’s dog and judge “the dog is brown.” This is the second act of the human mind, judgment. It is humanly impossible to “not judge” in this sense. If one were to attempt to deliberately stop making judgments of truth and falsity, one would be attempting to cease to be human.

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² Physics is the study of the physical world and begins with the simple things we get directly through the senses (see Rizzi, Anthony. *A Kid’s Introduction to Physics (and Beyond)* Baton Rouge: IAP Press (2012) for introduction to these simple physical principles upon which all we know stands).

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The second meaning of “judgment” is to make a decision based on what one judges to be true. Obviously, we can no more deny the need for this kind of judgment than the first. The next meaning of judgment is to judge the *thinking and acting of others* based on the same principles. Here again this is a human necessity. Take judgments about the *thinking* of others first. If we judge something to be true and it is indeed true, it must be true for everyone. Otherwise, it would not in fact be true, for the truth is the conformity of mind with reality. A brown dog is a reality on its own, not dependent on me. If we know the dog is brown and my neighbor thinks the dog is invisible, not brown, we must judge him to be wrong, lest we violate the principle of non-contradiction learned in the Kids’ book physics (see *A Kid’s Introduction to Physics (and Beyond)*). Something cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same way. Similarly, based on our true judgments about the nature of man³ and of the universe, we reason⁴ to find what *actions* are good and bad for man. Based on these conclusions, we judge the *actions* of ourselves and others. Clearly, this kind of judging also falls under the just given logic. Namely, if our starting principles are true and our reasoning valid, then for proper human activity and growth, we must follow it and help others do the same. Indeed, a command to not judge *in any of these senses* is tantamount to a command to not think, and thinking is the highest activity of man; thus, it would amount to a command to cease to be human.

So, the quote cannot, without being nonsense, refer to judgment in any of these primal senses. That is, Jesus, in these words, cannot be forbidding us from judging in any of these senses. What then does it mean? We must look more thoughtfully. For proper understanding, start by looking more at the context. The full quote is:

Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom.⁵ For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:37-38 Douay-Rheims)

In the first line, Jesus summarizes then, in the rest, He explains. Note the next line says not to condemn, but to forgive. Take the idea “do not condemn” first. This is a key idea. It is pointing to the core kind of judgment that Jesus is referring to in “judge not that you will not be judged.” The statement has to do, in particular, with our proper role in judging. It is God’s role to finally decide what happens to people at the end of their lives,

³ We come to understand the nature of man in the same way as we come to understand the nature of everything else. We do so through our knowledge of what we get through the senses. See Rizzi, Anthony. *The Science Before Science: A Guide to Thinking in the 21st Century* Baton Rouge: IAP Press (2004), which takes one from the first physics (see *A Kid’s Introduction to Physics (and Beyond)* for this as well) to the nature of man in the context of our modern scientific understanding. Also, the generic nature and role of God is something established through what we know through the senses and can be found in *The Science Before Science*. See also Anthony Rizzi “The Problem of Our Failing Culture and its Solution,” *Physics and Culture* (2006) online at <http://www.iapweb.org/iapmagazine.htm> The Bible says this when Paul says in Romans 1:20: *For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity.* Douay-Rheims.

⁴ Reasoning is the *third* operation of the human mind. As I have said, the *first* is apprehension of a reality, the *second* is a judgment that this is that.

⁵ The RSV translation has for this line: *A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.*

not ours.⁶ It is the state's role to decide on capital punishment, not the individual's. In short, there are different roles in judging penalty, and we should act within our proper role. Most importantly, God's role is, of course, unique. We must *judge* that it would be wrong to usurp God's role by *judging* as God alone could and should judge (notice the distinct uses of the word "judge"). We do not know what God knows. We can judge someone to be in a bad state, physically and/or morally if we have proper knowledge and capacities to do so, but we cannot judge where he will definitively end. We cannot say this still living person must of necessity go to Hell, for we do not have all the interior knowledge of that person to make such a judgment of necessity. This point that we should stay within our role and the limits of our powers is implied in the larger context. In particular, Matthew's account of Jesus' saying has:

Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam in thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5, Douay-Rheims)

The second sentence implies that all false judgments will be judged as evil. "What judgment you judge" includes not just the judgment of someone's final state but also all false judgments. However, in light of the first sentence, it, in particular, forbids the kind of false judgments which involve going beyond our role and powers which we do when we take on God's role of definitively deciding a man's final fate. It goes on to say that all wrong judgment should, and will be, judged by God as bad in proportion to the frequency and degree which one wrongly judges.

The rest of the saying from Matthew *demands that we judge* (and act on that judgment), but it demands that we do so rightly *by* first getting our own thinking and acting in order. And, of course, making sure that we are aware of the limits of our powers and our role is *part* of getting ourselves in order. This "getting in order" is an intellectual as well as moral activity in which we consciously move⁷ through the four steps to acquire healthy habits of judging rightly.⁸

But, Jesus' admonition implies more than this. Go back to Luke where it says: "Forgive." This is clearly talking about the need to leave behind inordinate anger and all unjust lust for revenge. This does not mean one does not seek justice (in fact, Jesus, in the beatitudes, praises and promises to reward those who seek justice). It means one should avoid revenge, which goes beyond redressing the grievances demanded by justice, and,

⁶ Of course, in this article, we have not established the existence of Heaven or Hell, but we are talking in the context of the meaning of the Bible in which these are taken for granted.

⁷ In the full context of Christian revelation, it says this can only be done in fallen man with the help of God's grace.

⁸ Anthony Rizzi, "How to Learn in Four Step" *Physics & Culture* April 2012 online at <http://www.iapweb.org/iapmagazine.htm>

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instead, seek to reconcile and heal in whatever way is in his power. This is part of proper judgment!⁹

For example, it can be shown (through reasoning from first principles) that justice should be done for *both* the good of those injured by a wrong action and the good of the wrong doer. The last can be surprising to those who have not had occasion to think this issue through. Indeed, it is bad for us to do evil; it takes us away from what will make us happy. People who facilitate us in doing and establishing habits of doing things that are damaging to ourselves are not being kind. Perhaps the most obvious case in which this fact is recognized is in the case of alcoholics. Few would think it is a good thing to enable an alcoholic to fall and stay in his slavery to alcohol. A caring person does what he can sympathetically and compassionately, but firmly, to help the alcoholic mitigate and finally stop this behavior by establishing habits that will facilitate such permanent change.

Doing justice in private life or in public court, when done rightly (however, rare that may be), actually helps all involved. Punishment for wrong doing has a deep medicinal value of reestablishing truth in the heart of the perpetrators very being. In so doing, it re-sets him on the path to real happiness, if he will so chose to take the benefits of it.¹⁰ In this way punishment itself, when done rightly, is rehabilitational.

The deepest point of this article is that we can only really understand the Bible (or any book) if we take seriously the need to understand the natural law which in turn builds from what we know directly through the senses. Thus, it necessarily requires a robust understanding of the kids book physics (*A Kid’s Introduction to Physics (and Beyond)*). If we do not take this task seriously, we can get nonsense out of the Bible instead of the rich treasure that is actually there.

So, “judge not that you not be judged” means no man should take on himself the position of God of deciding what the final disposition of any man will be. It does not mean we cannot judge actions and people. It does imply that we must judge rightly, because reason gives this as a context, and Jesus directly implies it immediately afterward and says it in so many words in another place.¹¹ And, to judge rightly means to judge

⁹ Forgive does not mean forget. It means one does not keep a tally waiting to explode when the breaking point is reached. It usually also means that you let go all or part of what the wrong doer owes you *personally* as a result of his wrong doing; you cannot free him from what he owes others or the community or God. And, obviously, you cannot free him from what he will not be freed of. Forgiveness does not mean that the evil action is forgotten as if the damage that was done was not done. Damage is damage; it has to be restored or it will cause more damage. A thief that broke your roof will, by so doing, have caused water to leak into your house. A hired hand that steals and has not admitted the wrong doing, expressed regret *and* firmly established new habits cannot (and should not) be trusted with money.

¹⁰ Furthermore, for Christians, for whom the New Testament (from which the quote comes) is written, the passage is also extolling the value (in the case of those who are truly sorrowful recognizing the harm they have done to themselves and others) of our taking on part of the person’s burden. Taking on what rightfully belongs to the wrong doer onto yourself. This is what the other parts of the Bible tell us Jesus did. He took on our sins so as to help those who would take his help. We must, St. Paul says, share in the sufferings of Christ, pick up our own burden and help with that of others because we are all one in nature, we are all men and even more those that are baptized, in terms of grace, are one Body in Christ. (Paul goes further and says: “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church” Colossians 1:24, Douay-Rheims.) This is the teaching of the Bible, but it takes a wider perspective to get hold of all this, a wider perspective that is beyond the scope of this article.

¹¹ “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” John 7-24, RSV

from evidence and reason founded in the first principles, and to do this right we must first have attended to our own proper formation. We could slightly amplify Jesus' summary statement by saying: "judge rightly and in your proper role so that you may not be judged to have done evil."

The passage further implies that the central purpose of judging of others, i.e. intrinsic to the habit of right judgment, is the commitment to help them move towards goodness and truth. We judge them to be right or wrong to help them, not to dehumanize them in our thoughts and/or separate them from ourselves and our sphere of action. Such enforced separation of our fellowman from ourselves, is, for us in its own pragmatic way, an effective assignment of them to the outer regions, to hell. Thus, the first meaning of this saying forbids us from giving up on someone after we, in a true judgment, see that he has done something seriously wrong. But, it goes further. Indeed, clearly the saying of Jesus *also* forbids us from permanently exiling people from ourselves based on *wrong* judgment.

A case in point, highly relevant to the habits of us moderns, is the kind of automatic social exile we impose on those (including family and friends) who tell us inconvenient truths, truths that hurt by cutting close enough to calling us to fundamental change. These truths can feel like they attack our very self, especially because of the erroneous "my will (and my emotional reaction) is me" way in which we moderns define ourselves. Such behavior is clearly a case in which we have judged wrongly and then condemned, resulting in two wrongs. To rightly judge the truth and our responsibilities to the truth is at the heart of what the words of the quote are asking of us. We, of course, have a responsibility to listen to the truth and act on the truth no matter where it comes from and we should not, as is said, shoot the messenger.¹²

None of this should be taken to imply that we are responsible for everyone to the same degree. We are not. Our chief responsibility lies with those God has put in our path in life; first and foremost our family then our friends, those with whom we are called to a common mission, our workmates, neighbors and all others that reason shows God has given us special responsibility to.

Lastly, all this subtext to the verse, implies that we should forgive wrong doers and (when they are willing, and to the degree they are willing) generally help them, though the burden is not properly our own,¹³ to satisfy the demands of justice in making amends for the wrongs done.

And, to do all this well, we must establish a habit of being thoughtful in all we do. In particular, we need to learn to approach reading any book, especially important deep books, with thought, not looking for rote mindless commands or repetition of empty sayings. (Once one says this, it is obvious, but we do not often get to the point of full consciousness of it to say it!) Most fundamentally, we must acknowledge the primacy of truth in our lives and the need to build all we know from the ground up starting firmly in the first principles that we get through our senses.

¹² We have a responsibility to seek those who can help us in finding and following the truth. Such authorities are important, for we cannot hope to learn all that needs to be learned without learning from others who have mastered what those that have come before us have done and taught.

¹³ Christians ask for the grace from God to do so.