Judgment and the Fear of Failure

Abstract

In modern Western society, people act in accordance with external success criteria and out of concern for the resulting social judgment. Where success is a sublime value, life often becomes a chronicle of failure. This article suggests that social-cultural judgment is rooted in religious judgment as well. This article analyzes the roots of Judeo-Christian judgment whose origin is in Scripture.

Western Judeo-Christian culture recognizes a God who is a legislator, a judge and punisher. God exists as an extra-human authority independent of human concerns who determines right and wrong, a supreme judge who metes out reward or punishment to people in accordance with their deeds. We are of the opinion that the existence of an extra-human supreme judge constitutes a cultural catalyst for the race for success and the fear of failure. Motivation to succeed is indeed religious in nature, but it later underwent processes of secularization.

Scripture is the source for analyzing the traditional law of retribution whereby suffering represents punishment for sins committed by a person or nation, while Scriptural sin is perceived as failure. Judgment is a central component of the Scriptural story. Later, the article will delve into Christian-Catholic judgment. In Christianity, not only the act is significant, but the intent as well, that is to say, thoughts and emotions. It will additionally relate to Protestant judgment and perception of failure and how Calvin took it to the extreme, demonstrating a dichotomy between the chosen ones who succeed in this world and those who fail.