

Friday Lent Week 3



The great 18th century English literary critic Dr Samuel Johnson, one of my heroes, once gave a very bad review to a blockbuster long epic poem. His opponent asked how he dared attack something if he was not able to produce something of equal magnitude. Dr Johnson replied that he might not be able to make a table but he could still tell whether a table was well made or not.

If, like me, you are musically illiterate you might still be able to appreciate, love and need music as part of your life. You'd be better equipped if you could analyse it technically – perhaps – but you can still value and benefit from even what you cannot describe.

All humanity is in this situation with regard to the ultimate mystery of reality. If you can understand it, it isn't God, said St Augustine. What an interesting remark from one of the great intellects of western culture.

The Buddhist symbol is that of the strings on a lute – if they are too tight or too loose you cannot make music. The Christian Desert teachers used the image of a bow – if it is too tight it will snap and if it's too loose it won't have the tension necessary to shoot the arrow.

Apply this to your practice of meditation or your Lenten discipline (if you remember what it is) and to your personality (as far as you can judge it) and lifestyle .

Doesn't it suggest that what we are seeking is not far away or at a level we cannot reach but simply on a wavelength that we have to be attuned to? Those whose ears let them hear, Jesus said.

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