



## Relationship of Human and Divine Notes and Questions

### Loss of Transcendence

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#### Lesson 2

Dr. Houston sees harmony between human beings occurring before communication of information between people. He sees desire for harmony with someone other than one's own self occurring in the drawings of cave dwellers. The ballad was the earliest form of language in the ancient Greek world. Harmony as a language was more in tune with the soul, more reflective of the inner peace with someone other than one's own self. The sense of connection with someone other than one's own self advanced the heroic world of ancient Greek culture. It developed a radical sense of permeability between the human and the divine. The Greek response to this permeability was to see themselves as half God and half human, as demigods. In Judeo-Christian tradition the desire for permeability with the divine, the desire to be in tune with the divine, was interpreted very differently from the Greeks. Instead of a harmony that meant we are gods, the communion was seen to be the effects of being created in the image and likeness of God and having a divine destiny determined from a pre-existing relationship with God. In ancient Greek culture you never knew the difference between being tuned-in to yourself or tuned-in to the divine.

**Session 2, Question 1:** How do you distinguish between the human and the divine in yourself?

Our popular culture practices adulation of heroes for their extraordinary accomplishments. We emotionally uplift them to divine status like the Greeks. There is little difference between our emotional need to praise in the football stadium from the praise in the Olympian games of Greece. The praise in the stadium is a repeat phenomenon derivative of a fundamental need to praise. Without realizing it we long to praise the wonders and actions of God, the "I AM" who spoke to Moses. We also hunger to praise His image and likeness in His creatures. So when the object of history for the philosopher is only to report abstract ideas, it ignores the reality of these felt emotional experiences from our past. Abstract ideas are not what is significant. What is significant are the events that reflect the deep desire to commune and praise with a

divine presence communing back with us as persons. Without an inward understanding of the human desire to enter into communion with the other, our response to such manifestations will result in an abstraction that denies the experience of human longings.

**Session 2, Question 2:** What do you think gives birth to your desire to praise and admire?

It is the Greeks who first introduce the concept of the person. The person initially was not understood as an individual. The person was understood as a self for the other. Socrates was a self for the sake of the polis and his death was on behalf of the culture he wanted to educate. On the other hand, with Alexander the Great an exaggerated aggrandizement of the individual developed in Greek culture. The tendency for the self to be a self for the self was emphasized. It was a self for being a monument like Alexander for his extraordinary ten-year accomplishments. But Alexander's isolation within himself was his own worst enemy. It resulted in total defeat of his self and the breakup of his empire. His addictions to drink and sex destroyed him at the age of 29. So in the chronology of Greek history you have two extremes. You have the history of the hero who is for the wellbeing of others and the history of the hero who is a self for the self.

**Session 2, Question 3:** How do you see yourself with this inner conflict between these two choices?

As pragmatists the Romans begin their history by acknowledging this inner conflict between human beings, moving in the direction of what the Apostle Paul called the conflict between the lust of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). Like the Old Testament story between Cain and Able, Rome begins with fratricide. Romulus kills his brother Remus and Rome is founded on that fratricide. The Romans were able to do what the Greeks never did. They were not idealist philosophers. They were pragmatist in facing the conflict within human nature. They were engineers who built roads, so when they talk about history they mean how they defeated conflict with

their enemies through the leadership of their emperors. Roman history is about the superiority of their institutions, the character of their statesmen, their perseverance, their steadiness of purpose, and the defence of their values with Roman law. You defeat your enemies and win them over to become citizens who adopt your values. You do not wipe them out. You incorporate them. This is skilled diplomacy.

**Session 2, Question 4:** Describe what you see that remains of Roman influence on our cultural values today?

Luke, the Gospel writer, adopts Roman pragmatism in how he blends biographies and events. He acts as a Roman historian yet sees history through the eyes of a Christian. Trained in Classical history, the events are about the character of individuals and the consequences of their historic deeds. What Luke does however is unique in the New Testament. Aware of Roman longing for harmony with godlike figures such as Caesar, he reveals that the real answer to this longing is in Christ, the Caesar above all Caesars, the lord of all. He is not lord of the Roman Empire alone. He is the lord of the entire Universe and the answer to the whole world's longing for harmony. Luke reports how intimate and personal people's responses were when they encountered Jesus. He reported their profound emotional reactions. He exemplifies how the personal reality of God in Christian history is reported.

**Session 2, Question 5:** In your view how should what is significant in people's past experience be reported?