THE POLITICS OF THE FALL IN ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the thought of St. Augustine of Hippo, arguing for the importance of "the fall" of mankind for contemporary political life. Augustine believes that human nature was shaped by a cataclysmic fall from grace. His influential interpretation of the Biblical story is well-known, and yet the political features of this account have not been subjected to a systematic study. This work aims to remedy this shortcoming by wrestling with Augustine's presentation of the fall across a wide variety of political concerns. The dissertation proceeds in four substantive chapters, each of which deals with a different sphere of human endeavor or hope. Chapter one considers Augustine's account of work before and after the fall, and compares his view with the more contemporary and secular ideas of Karl Marx. The second chapter analyzes the effect of the fall on human sociality. It makes the case that Augustine sees a duality in mankind's originally social nature. In the third chapter, I contend that Augustine sees the basic political problems of desire and mortality as dominating the life of mankind as a fallen creature. It is the fall that transforms these things into problems for us. Finally, the fourth chapter gives an original account of Augustine's treatment of glory-seeking. From all these chapters a surprising conclusion can be drawn: the idea of human corruption, far from simply denouncing humanity as depraved, articulates a much more nuanced, balanced, and ultimately realistic account of political life.

For my parents,
the one who lives the life of the blessed,[1]
and the other – still a *peregrinatus* in this earthly city.[2]

[1] *The City of God* XXII.30.
[2] *The City of God*, Preface.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, Steven Pinker published a book entitled *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*. Pinker begins that book by quoting, apparently approvingly, David Deutsch's startling claim that all problems, all evils, are susceptible of solutions (Pinker 2018, 12).[3] I wish to provoke some doubt about the wisdom of this posture, and in so doing provide some reasons for you to read this dissertation.

As one famous thinker says, mankind has become a problem or question to himself.[4] What is it about our problems that makes us think we can solve them? Or what it is about human beings that makes them able to do this? Pinker claims in quoting Deutsch that everything that prevents human flourishing can be solved by reason. The basic feature of the human condition is ignorance, which Pinker understands to be good news for prospects of making things better. Human nature, though "illiterate and innumerate" (ibid., 30) also contains within itself

> the seeds of its own improvement, as long as it comes up with norms and institutions that channel parochial interests into universal benefits. Among those norms are free speech, nonviolence, cooperation, cosmopolitanism, human rights, and an acknowledgment of human fallibility, and among the institutions are science, education, media, democratic government, international organizations, and markets. Not coincidentally, these were the major brainchildren of the Enlightenment (ibid., 33).

Thus, Pinker asserts *a priori* that human beings contain within themselves this capacity, and that it is the unique contribution of the enlightenment to help the seeds germinate. Pinker is careful to say that enlightenment (on his understanding) does not seek to change human nature, but only to plumb its depths, to know it. And the more we know about ourselves, the more encouraged we

[3] For all citations to work other than Augustine, I refer to a page number. For citations of Augustine, I refer to the book and chapter number.
[4] *Confessions* X.23.

should be about our future prospects. Progress does not mean that we go from bad to good, but rather we properly realize and make effectual the inherent potential of human creativity.

Key to Pinker's narrative of human progress, perhaps more important than even he realizes, is the claim that no individual persons should be blamed for the misfortunes that afflict humankind (ibid., 28). Blaming people for human misery, especially the behavior of one single person, constitutes an obstacle to progress because it provides an explanation that satisfies people, that gives them no reason to inquire further into the causes of things that are bad for us. The tendency to scapegoat is just that: a tendency that can be overcome not so much by seeing, but by deciding that blame cannot be laid at anyone's feet. Once we decide not to blame anyone for misfortunes, and we look into the real causes of that misfortune, we discover that many problems are not caused by human beings at all. In short, we learn how unreasonable it was to blame *a human* for that problem. So, we gradually adopt this statistical maxim: if we find a problem that afflicts the human race, people probably did not cause it. So, we can search for a cure wholeheartedly, knowing that we will not be implicated in the discovery of the problem's source. This is the substance of Pinker's humanism. He does not see a human problem, only Problems That Afflict Humans. Solving, not merely confronting, human ills such as poverty and sickness – progress in a nutshell – requires this disavowal of blame to even get off the ground. It depends on this exculpation of the human race. Indeed, as its progress continues, we see our positive goodness. We become duly convicted that the seed for human progress is present in human nature.

Throughout, Pinker describes religious faith as a principal opponent of progress, optimism, and the desire to make things better than they are. Sometimes he assumes that the religious account attributes misfortune to something inexplicable, like the muttered curse of a

witch (ibid., 29). His comments about progress and humanism deserve a full quotation because they reveal his view of the relationship between religious faith and people's understanding of their own condition:

> Let me introduce some of the popular alternatives to reason, science, humanism, and progress… The most obvious is religious faith. To take something on faith means to believe it without good reason, so by definition a faith in the existence of supernatural entities clashes with reason. Religions also commonly clash with humanism whenever they elevate some moral good above the well-being of humans, such as accepting a divine savior, ratifying a sacred narrative, enforcing rituals and taboos, proselytizing other people to do the same, and punishing or demonizing those who don't. Religions can also clash with humanism by valuing souls above lives, which is not as uplifting as it sounds (ibid., 35).

Pinker's quarrel with religion is really a thinly disguised quarrel with Christianity, of which he holds a needlessly naïve and unexamined view. Humanism according to Pinker means the denial of the need to be saved, or – if we need salvation after all – an assertion that we can save ourselves. Humanism is not a denial of God's existence, but a proclamation about mankind: that he does not need God. Whether God exists or not is, in a way, irrelevant. Pinker also insists that faith is by definition opposed to reason – that is, going beyond reason or trusting in something other than reason means going *against* reason. Reason itself demands that we use it and it alone. Pinker also equates progress with humanism; valuing the one implies a valuing of the other. To be humane and progressive means, on Pinker's account, the valuing of lives and bodies above souls. He never elucidates what he means by this, but one suspects that he has in mind the spectacle of the *auto-da-fé* or the Christian tendency to get martyred for refusing to disown Christ. Perhaps, Pinker believes that the moral demands of Christian faith are inhuman because, by emphasizing the soul's salvation, they cannot exclude the possibility of such things happening. He praises the enlightenment for getting the world beyond these destructive pathologies.

It cannot be doubted that science and technological progress have contributed to an exponential increase in material well-being. This is Pinker's *cri de coeur.* His book contains many valuable graphs tracking the explosive growth of prosperity in the last two centuries. Across a whole range of measures of human flourishing, people are wealthier, healthier, and more inoculated than ever from a hard world. Not only this, progress can be seen in the reduction of violent crime and the pacification of the world. Pinker argues that "improving the moral world requires knowledge of cause and effect" (ibid., 52). Pinker seems to have in mind the *scientific* knowledge of cause and effect. What moral improvements this knowledge brings about are less than clear. Likewise, he provides few details on what the moral world is, as opposed to the scientific world, and what it might demand of moral beings. Indeed, he seems to conflate the two. One gets the impression that morality requires no more than the continuous pursuit, and achievement, of well-being – the end goal of modern science.

The key question, for Pinker, is whether the morally serious can learn to stop worrying and love all this improvement. He writes, "At least since the time of the Hebrew prophets, who blended their social criticism with forewarnings of disaster, pessimism has been equated with moral seriousness" (ibid., 54). Pinker delights in explaining why intellectuals have "progressophobia" but never entertains the possibility that skepticism about moral progress (or "pessimism") could have a rational basis, or why the Christian view presents an alternative at all. An alternative implies choice. Living in this world means being presented with a large range of perspectives: choosing among them is the distinctly human task. The perspective of faith is not unaware of the improvements, and possible improvements, to which Pinker points. It hardly denies the human capacity for creativity, wealth creation, and innovative technological development. Nor is it ungrateful for the many blessings that ensue from these things. It simply

refuses to love these blessings by putting them on top. So, it may not be an enemy to progress as such, but perhaps to the delusions to which progress can give rise. What then shapes this refusal? My project, to which we will turn in a moment, provides a consideration of one possible basis for it.

Pinker, however, basically assumes that there is no visible alternative and that opposition to progress, and consideration of the past, amounts to a kind of behavioral or mental mistake. He sees pessimism as a symptom of "negativity bias" (ibid.) and displays of "one-upmanship" among intellectuals who think the world is getting worse. Pinker goes so far as to argue that the media's focus on "incurable pathologies" prepared the soil for Trump (ibid., 55). Intellectuals, above all, ignore progress because lowering the numbers of fatalities is an "unsexy" cause:

> In previous chapters we have seen how cognitive and moralistic biases work to damn the present and absolve the past. In this one we will see another way in which they conceal our progress. Though lethal injuries are a major scourge of human life, bringing the numbers down is not a sexy cause (ibid., 172-173).

Pinker means, of course, that the ordinary work of reducing death, destruction, and mayhem receives less attention than it should. Samuel Garner, the inventor of guardrails, received no Nobel prize for his efforts – but he saved a lot of lives. So, the world has gotten better almost without our noticing it. One cannot doubt the spectacular increase in the external and bodily goods of humankind over the past few centuries, which Pinker deserves some measure of applause for pointing out.

Yet with him we progress toward a liberal happiness, generated by the liberal ideals of reason, science, and humanism, measured (and therefore defended) by modern data collection, but ultimately constrained by the liberal imagination. Happiness means prosperity, safety, and emotional balance. Unhappiness means poverty, danger, ill health. Pinker can hardly imagine anything more for the human condition, or for that matter anything less. To put it another way,

he identifies the increase in health and wealth with moral goodness or improvement, when it is by no means clear that these two things are identical. It is entirely possible that humanity – once a race of dumb devils – has simply become a race of more ingenious devils. On that score, enlightenment means nothing more than an increase in ever more sophisticated tools for ends that remain as base as ever. Pinker's defense of reason, enlightenment, and progress cannot disprove this possibility.

Pinker meanwhile chides religious faith, in particular Christianity, as an enemy of progress and humanism. It is not the enemy that he thinks it is, though that does not mean then that faith and enlightenment can ride off into the sunset together. In short, such an opposition as Pinker puts between Christianity and the enlightenment in must be sustained by actual knowledge of what Christianity has to say about the moral situation of the human race. That is the key conviction underlying this dissertation. Pinker looks forward to progress and knows that Christianity is somehow the obstacle. Yet he refuses to think about the obstacle or whether it can be overcome. This position strikes me as quite unreasonable. As a result of his indifference to the possibility of wisdom found apart from the scientific method, "one feels that Pinker has created enemies where there were none before" as a recent book review argued (O'Connell and Ruse 2018). Let Pinker and the believers not be enemies, but friends – or at least uneasy partners in the effort to promote human flourishing.

So, what of the alternative presented by Christianity? In this dissertation, I argue that a particular understanding of mankind's origin underlies this alternative and shapes Augustine's view of human nature. Augustine is a powerful exponent of the idea that humanity, though originally created good, has fallen. Knowledge of this origin depends not on the scientific method, but on what Augustine calls testimony. From testimonies like those found in the Psalms,

Augustine says in *The City of God*, "we have learnt that there is a city of God: and we have longed to become citizens of that city, with a love inspired by its founder" (Augustine 1984, hereafter DCD, XI.1).[5] This testimony vitally concerns the fall of mankind, which is to say the rise (for humankind) of the earthly city. By the earthly city (*civitas terrena*), Augustine means the rise in history of life apart from God and in which all people live or are implicated. It is not a neutral phrase. While we live as citizens of the earthly city, we require the testimony of the scriptures to make us aware of a heavenly city.

The next step involves not mere knowledge of a better condition, but true longing for it. We cannot be indifferent to the heavenly city once we learn about it, but why is that the case? We must be dissatisfied, in some way, with this earthly city. We must be at least a little unhappy with our present condition. That is not to say that discontent with the present necessarily leads one to piety. But piety certainly requires such a dissatisfaction. Now, what shall we learn about our present condition so as to be dissatisfied with it? There are many sources of dissatisfaction; here I name only one: the possibility that the nature of things in this world, including the human person, could be other than what they are. The heavenly city, therefore, implicitly testifies against the earthly city, in particular its rise, progress, and ultimate destiny. In this lies Augustine's account of the fall purpose of the sacred history of human corruption from the originally good beginning.

Augustine might point out that testimony is often necessary for real knowledge, certainly for knowledge of historical events. History as the route to real knowledge depends on testimony, in fact it is a form of testimony. If you say you went grocery shopping yesterday, I have no choice but to believe you, or disbelieve you, because I cannot go back in time and observe you

[5] Unless otherwise noted, I use the Bettenson translation here and throughout the work.

shopping firsthand. Nothing about hearsay itself invalidates, that is – makes untrue, whatever knowledge may be conveyed through it. Nothing about hearsay necessarily excludes the possibility of truth, even if one supposes that believing it is not actually reasonable. The biblical testimony on which Augustine relies and sees as authoritative *may be true.* This project is devoted to the consideration of this possibility, and so presents itself as a barefaced analysis of hearsay, or testimony, concerning the fall. But mankind has not fallen away from a different world; it has fallen away from a better situation in this world.

Literature Review and Plan for the Dissertation

Strange though it may seem, Augustine's account of this original goodness and subsequent corruption has not been studied with sufficient depth. That is because we think that we already know this doctrine well enough to sufficiently appreciate its political implications. Nearly a century ago, noted Augustine scholar John Figgis wrote, "We need not follow S. Augustine into the account of the fall. It is familiar enough" (Figgis 1921, 41). To the contrary, Augustine's account of the fall is unfamiliar and strange to us. We think we know it, but in fact we have forgotten it – or we never bothered to understand its full importance in the first place. Perhaps we may find much in the fall that surprises us and changes our perspective on this theory and the political thought of its exponent, Augustine. He, of all the Christian thinkers of late antiquity, is a thinker who really makes this doctrine come to life and grasps its political importance.

Before getting underway, I will give a very brief introduction to the literature on Augustine's political influence as it relates to this dissertation. Since I begin each chapter with a literature review, I will only make some brief suggestions here. The three main perspectives on

Augustine to which I contribute are known as Realism, Civic Augustinianism, and Radical Orthodoxy, each of which stresses a different aspect of Augustine's thought. Overall, this dissertation seeks to build on the insights of the realistic approach, and sees Augustine's articulation of the fall as the underrated key to describing him as a realistic political thinker.

For Christian thinkers who are concerned to promote peace among human beings, whether in our cities, our nation at large, or the world, Augustine holds a great appeal. Reinhold Niebuhr serves as a classic example of a thinker of this sort, one who looked to Augustine to provide a theoretical basis for a Christian "realism" during the cold war (e.g. Niebuhr 1953). Niebuhr's Augustinian realism emphasized human sinfulness – the cumulative effect of wrong choices – as the ground of that realism. To be sinful is to be a lover of self, to be dominated and controlled by self-love. Sin in Niebuhr is quite individuated, however. As individuals we fall short of God's glory; as individuals we are members of the earthly city. Largely absent from Niebuhr's account is a sense of humanity's collective and hereditary shortcoming. Herbert Deane's important research connected this deficiency in Niebuhr's account of self-love, by learning from Augustine's account of our collective descent from grace (Deane 1963, chapters 1-2). He hopes for far less than does Niebuhr from political life. According to Deane's Augustine, the fall should chasten our dangerous hopes. He appreciates also the hereditary nature of human sin, which the idea of the fall captures: the curse of our first parents has been transmitted to us.

Now, what do fallen people look like in Deane's "realistic" account? They are characterized principally by the lust (*libido*) and greed (*cupiditas*) for money and power rather than love for God (Deane 1963, 48-9). Deane shows that the fall leaves a distinct impression on the loves and passions of the human soul. But what is that impression, exactly? We need clarity on how Augustine's consideration of the fall shapes or contributes to his view of desire. Can the

fall explain why we desire such diverse things, such as money, power, and immortality? All of these objects differ in their attainability and in the happiness they promise. The latter half of the dissertation deals with this question. My third chapter, in particular, shows that Augustine's articulation of the fall helps us understand the variegated nature of desire, particularly centering on the desire to escape death.

Perhaps what most distinguishes realism is its insistence on the egocentric nature of human beings. Such egoism implies that, due to the pervasive effects of the fall, we cannot expect genuine altruism in this world. People are selfish and probably asocial or anti-social. My second chapter explores whether this view of sociability jives with Augustine's interpretation of the fall; our view of what can be achieved in and through politics depends on how we answer this question. Jean Bethke Elshtain, in her now-classic study *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (1995), argues for a "chastened" understanding of what can be achieved in political life. Augustine teaches us a politics of limits. However, Elshtain also taught that Augustine believed people to be, at their core, sociable. This perception undermines any limitation on politics, however: if human sociability is relatively intact, why limit politics? Why limit the scope of human cooperation? On the other hand, if mankind lacked any sociable disposition whatsoever, then the tasks of limiting politics would be no task at all: politics would be, in a sense, self-limiting. People would only engage in it when forced to, not because they hold out great hopes. In this chapter, I argue that Augustine's acceptance of the fall leads him to accept the split or dual nature of sociability in this world. This idea, namely that man is both the social and the anti-social creature due to his fall, provides more solid support for a politics of limits.

I should make mention of the other perspectives on Augustine – perspectives that I do not identify with but to which I am nevertheless indebted. I wrestle with the work of the Civic

Augustinians, a perspective that emerged as a reaction to the realism just discussed. That realism ostensibly presented to the world a cold and joyless Augustine, one detached from this world and frankly uninterested in the political possibilities of this mortal life. The Civic Augustinians put forward a positive project, however, one that emphasizes not the depths of human depravity but our capacity for love, even if we love things inordinately. We are not wraiths but creatures of flesh and bone and beating hearts. Our strong impassioned loves evince our need of renewal and redirection, something that Augustine thinks revelation accomplishes for us. Gregory's book (2008) provides an excellent summary of this view. My discussion of the fall grounds this perspective while throwing a bit of cold water on its hopes. Finally, I hope to interest scholars who identify with radical orthodoxy, a movement which combines the insights of postmodernity with Augustinian theology to make a withering attack on liberal, modern theology and what they see to be its secularizing role in political life.[6] Scholars sympathetic to this point of view will find much to interest them in this dissertation, despite the fact that I think better of liberalism than they do.

In this dissertation I consider how Augustine's articulation of the fall sheds light on some of the most characteristic features of life in political community. Augustine sees the question of mankind's condition at the beginning, and his subsequent corruption, as one of decisive importance for our understanding of human nature. To put it squarely, the human problem according to Augustine is sin. Humanity is far from God. But how did the human race "fall"? To what does Augustine point as an indication that the human problem is sin? Each chapter tackles some political issue with those questions in mind. My research takes a snapshot of Augustine's view on the important topics of work, sociality, desire, mortality, and ambition. Augustine's

[6] Cf. (Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward 2000).

belief in the fall heavily colors his interpretation of those particular exigencies of the human condition. I am not sure, however, that the topics I chose for each chapter necessarily give a complete and full picture of Augustine, or the human condition in which he is so interested.[7] My aim is more modest: I study Augustine in an effort to put forward and restate the fundamental elements of the fall in its political dimensions.

The first chapter tackles the nature and importance of work in Augustine's thought. I show how the fall reveals the goodness as well as the curse of work, and compare Augustine's view with that of Marx who, after a fashion, argues for a kind of secular fall – or a tale of corruption. Putting him in conversation with Augustine adds something valuable by putting the spotlight on the idea of corruption, the losing of something good or the gaining of something bad, as an importance concept in political theory. My second chapter considers the question of sociality in light of the fall. Whether or not people are social is an issue of fundamental importance, and Augustine's view of it arises from the fall's distortion of an originally social nature. My third chapter focuses on Augustine's depiction of the most obvious results of the fall: mankind's condition of slavery to desire and subjection to death. Augustine's treatment of those concerns I deem to be political important: politics is nothing if not an arena in which our desires and fears run amuck. My fourth chapter considers the perennial question of political ambition. Where does ambition come from, and is it ultimately good or bad, useful or destructive? Augustine's articulation of the fall shines through in his treatment of the glory-seeking individual. My hope is that the variety of these concerns will show just how comprehensively the

[7] I wish to make a comment about why I examine *the fall* in St. Augustine's thought and not simply a theological doctrine such as original sin. Though the fall is of course related to original sin, I follow Jesse Couenhoven (2013) in arguing that these are actually separable concepts. Obviously, Augustine believes both that a fall occurred and that original sin blights the human race. But, as Couenhoven convincingly argues, one need not believe in original sin in order to consider the possibility of a fall.

fall – by Augustine's lights – has shaped the city of man. I conclude with some observations about what the fall might mean for humanism and progress, touch on the wisdom and pitfalls of Augustine's defense of it, and end with some thoughts on future research questions.

CHAPTER ONE

The heart of man is not compound of lies, but still draws some wisdom from the only Wise, and still recalls him. Though now long estranged, man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed. Dis-graced he may be, yet is not dethroned, and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned, his world-dominion by creative act…

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Mythopoeia*

Work is a strangely dualistic activity. That is, human beings can see both good and evil in it. If work was simply good, we would pursue it without worrying too much. If it was only ever an evil, or maybe a necessary evil, we should shun it. We should strive only for the leisure that money brings, endeavoring to escape work the moment it becomes possible to do so. Yet work defies these simple explanations. It is a complicated blend of both good and evil. In it we can find great satisfaction and joy, as anyone who has ever gotten absorbed in a project or feels pride at their creation can attest. We also sense, however, that we cannot attain such fulfillment without braving the dangers inherent in work as well. Work is frequently bad for our health and self-esteem, a means of oppression, and generally one of mankind's most hated activities. It can be frustrating even if every other feature of work (co-workers, bosses, pay, working conditions) goes well. So, we wish to retire. But if work consists of something good, whether instrumentally or in itself, then the danger lies in neglecting or forgetting about that good in our efforts to escape its difficulties.

In this chapter, I compare the views of Karl Marx and St. Augustine on the nature of the goodness, and of the challenge and trouble in work. Noting that labor is not something uniformly pleasing to human beings, Marx chastises the earlier contract tradition (especially as influenced by Locke) for its failure to fully explain the problematic status of work, and sets out to explain the origin more thoroughly. Let me begin by asserting that, though Augustine and Marx differ

drastically in their estimation of the problem of labor, they both affirm its fundamentally dualistic character. It has both an upside and a downside. How real and ennobling the upside, how vast the downside, will be considered in further detail. Yet work is not *simply* dualistic: rather its mixed nature can be understood as the product of a certain corruption of man, or society. Both thinkers regard work as corrupted in a way that poses a genuine challenge to the flourishing of persons bound by its necessity. But most importantly, both Marx and Augustine regard work as connected to the nature of human worth: their tale of work's corruption demonstrates it. Arguably, work plays a more central role in Marx's conception of human nature. But Augustine gives us a greater picture of what untroubled work would look like. To see this, we turn to Marx's account of labor's corruption before considering the same theme in Augustine's account of the fall.

Augustine's explanation of the origin of work draws on a deep understanding of the Genesis account, which Augustine discussed many times during the course of his life. Shortly after his conversion to Christianity, he wrote *On Genesis Against the Manichees* (Augustine 2002, hereafter AM), which served to refute Manichean heresies about the beginning of the world. Not long thereafter he attempted to provide a purely literal interpretation of Genesis, but failed in his attempt, leaving the work incomplete.[8] He takes up the subject again in the last three chapters of the *Confessions* (Augustine 2009a, hereafter C), once more in a completed work *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (Augustine 1982, hereafter GL) and finally in his masterpiece *The City of God Against the Pagans* (DCD). Although figurative and allegorical interpretations of Scripture were frequently used by patristic thinkers, Augustine recognized the importance of the

[8] The work was included in Augustine's *Retractions*, entitled *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book (De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber).*

Genesis account for explaining concrete human realities. A literally, factually true fall from grace explains social and political disorder, in this case the disorder of work.

Some of the earliest work done on Augustine attempted to frame the issue of work as one of two lives, the active or political life and the contemplative or theoretical life, a division well known to Plato and Aristotle. However, Colleen Mitchell and Mary Keys (2018) have shown that Augustine does not think of labor only or even primarily in terms of this distinction between active and contemplative.[9] Instead, they look to the way in which Augustine recasts the issue in terms of human motivation, specifically love for others. Love and charity become the new criterion for both lives: work done for the sake of others may be more honorable than leisure dedicated only to oneself. Augustine adds a layer of complexity onto this older distinction between the two lives. This paper aims to understand an additional complexity: how the fall shapes work. Because work is created originally good but falls along with humankind, it is not simply something extrinsic to human beings, or a curse imposed from outside, but something that itself reveals human greatness as well as the human plight. In addition, I bring Marx into the conversation for the purpose of highlighting work, and its corruption, as a central feature of political thought.

The Fulfillment and Agony of Work According to Marx

Marx's account of work under the conditions created by capitalism is well-known. I propose to highlight a few features of that account and relate those problems to Augustine's account of work. In Marx's early philosophic writings, especially the *Economic and Philosophic*

[9] Cf. (Butler 1924).

Manuscripts (Marx 2012, hereafter EPM), Marx gives a full account of the goodness of labor. Paradoxically, we learn about this goodness through the negative (so to speak), the alienation that workers experience in it. If being alienated from one's work and consequently from oneself were not bad, then Marx could hardly claim that work is in itself a good and expressive activity for human beings.

Marx makes it plain that both worker and capitalist suffer under the conditions of capitalism. But the worker struggles in a deeper way than the capitalist, namely "in his very existence" whereas the capitalist only suffers "in the profit on his dead mammon" (EPM, 22). Intriguingly, Marx is not concerned only or even primarily with the worker's struggle for his "physical means of subsistence," his effort to avoid starvation, but rather the misery of work itself. He writes, that the worker "he has to struggle to get work, i.e., the possibility, the means, to perform his activity" (EPM, 23).

Of course, if the wealth of a society decreases, then the working class suffers more cruelly from that decline. But even in a society where wealth increases, even when the proportionate share of the working man's wealth actually increases, Marx indicates that this problem of the alienation of labor still persists. He criticizes a range of thinkers known as the political economists, most notably Adam Smith. He believes that their analyses of the market economy ignores the devastating impact of the link between labor and the goal of increasing wealth: "But that labor itself, not merely in present conditions but insofar as its purpose in general is the mere increase of wealth — that labor itself, I say, is harmful and pernicious — follows from the political economist's line of argument, without his being aware of it" (EPM, 28). This gives us some insight into the way Marx thinks about alienation, namely that labor itself when directed to this goal of profit harms human beings. When trying to grasp the

connection between private property, the separation of labor, greed, and the operation of money, Marx writes that we should not "go back to a fictitious primordial condition as the political economist does" (EPM, 68). The state of nature was a mistaken idea, or rather an idea that did not do as much heavy lifting for political economy as everyone thought. Marx boldly proclaims that such a theory lacks explanatory power. It "assumes in the form of a fact, of an event, what [the political economist] is supposed to deduce – namely, the necessary relationship between two things – between, for example, division of labor and exchange." (EPM, 68-69).

To unpack this a bit further, Marx believes that something which the political economist assumes to be a fact, such as the necessary relationship between the division of labor and exchange, must in fact be subjected to further investigation. How in the world did human beings end up in a condition where they would seek to divide their labor in order to gain more from the exchange? When Smith says that human beings have the propensity to truck and barter, Marx suggests the unsatisfactory nature of this claim. It is the propensity to exchange itself, which must be explained. Interestingly, Marx sees great similarity between the state of nature arguments and the biblical ideas presented by Augustine, at least in the way these arguments were presented. The fall was used by the theologians in a similar way, namely explaining "the origin of evil by the fall of man" (EPM, 69). Theologians and political economists both believe in myths that purportedly explain the present-day condition of mankind. Marx, on the other hand, starts from present-day economic facts and attempts to show how the worker's subjective experience of those facts reveals an underlying alienation. "The more the worker spends himself," Marx argues,

> the more powerful the alien objective world becomes which he creates over-against himself, the poorer he himself—his inner world—becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this

> activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects. Whatever the product of his labor is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less he is himself. (EPM, 70).

Marx states that the worker becomes poorer, the more wealth he produces, and that this is necessarily the case. The poverty Marx points to is the loss of reality in his work. It appears to the worker as an "objectification" of what was formerly his own self. The labor of the worker, and thus the worker himself, has been commodified by productivity itself. It has become something tradeable, with a given monetary value. It should also be noted that Marx believes there is a human world beyond the world of things, which shrinks in proportion as the world of things grows. His is not a crude materialism. His objections here are essentially moral.

One can see this in Marx's description of the severity of the problem posed by the alienation of work. He says that the object of labor becomes lost to the worker and that labor itself becomes a means to that loss, writing, "So much does labor's realization appear as loss of realization that the worker loses realization to the point of starving to death" (EPM, 69). This suggests that Marx sees work as the key to the essence of life itself. When the object of our labor is lost in this way, we lose interest in preserving even our very lives. Marx emphasizes the badness of this situation by comparing it to the alienation brought about by religious faith. The situation of work blinds us to our true condition. More to the point, work grinds away at one's identity and sense of self. We become less and less ourselves the more we put into it. Marx brings into view an opposition between effort and selfhood. The more one invests in work, the more one loses of oneself. Thus, the most productive workers lose themselves the most. Yet it is far from clear how this conclusion flows from that premise: does productivity, as Marx believes, consist in great activity and emotional investment of the self? The difference seems to be that of trying hard and succeeding.

Our avoidance of work proves its alienation. Marx writes that its alien character "emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague" (EPM, 72). An alien activity dominates us and comes to hold us in subjection and slavery. "External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification" (EPM, 72). Self-sacrifice is the vice of working man – but not really a vice he can do anything about, if one wants to remain a working man. Marx provides one further, and simpler, reason why alienation occurs in selling our labor to the highest bidder. The object of labor becomes "alien" to us because the title or ownership of property changes hands, something that cannot be avoided by the worker:

> Lastly, the external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates on the individual independently of him – that is, operates as an alien, divine or diabolical activity – so is the worker's activity not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self (EPM, 72-73).

Marx argues that labor has taken on an external character, and so the self has become external to us as well. The self is not merely expressed in work, it is *found* in it. Our very consciousness becomes a means of repression. Scholars influenced by Marx, such as Rahel Jaeggi, write that this is a "loss of control" and the loss of "identifying" with one's work (Jaeggi 2014, 12). Marx also compares this to the loss of self experienced in religion. God, the invention of human imagination, becomes the source of life over and against human power. In believing in God, worshipping God, giving up everything for God, we lose ourselves – according to Marx. God defines us, we do not define ourselves. The same thing occurs in work. Marx here seems to compare the two, or even make them equivalent, but the Marx scholarship regards him as believing that alienation in work, the loss of the self in work, is the more fundamental loss. Religious alienation arises as a response to the material alienation experienced in work (cf. Wolff

2017). The sundering of self in work is the most primal alienation, from which every other false consciousness arises.

Alienated "man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal" (EPM, 73). For many theorists influenced by Marx, real freedom to transcend animal function *is* the human essence (cf. Lavalette and Ferguson 2018). Marx's comments about the animality of the worker are revealing in another way. Somehow the uniquely human functions, as opposed to the animal functions, have been lost – and this loss has much to do with estranged labor. Marx argues that as an animal, we are not distinct from our activity, we *are* that activity. In eating and drinking, we are eaters and drinkers. Is work any different from this? Yes, Marx says. Animals have mere life activity. But human beings possess "conscious" life activity; that is their distinguishing mark. We are a species-being, distinctly human, because our own lives are objects to us. People can stand outside themselves in this way. Marx continues: "Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labor reverses the relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life activity, his essential being, a mere means to his existence" (EPM, 75). Human emancipation might be described as the release from being a mere means for one's own existence (Wolff 2017).

All this indicates that work should be more than a mere "animal function." Work should be more than the mere effort to escape the clutches of necessity. While Marx does not deny that animals produce things, building nests and dwellings and things of that sort, he still emphasizes that they produce only when compelled by physical need (EPM, 75). What distinguishes mankind is the ability to produce "even when he is free from physical need" (EPM, 75). More to

the point, humanity "reproduces the whole of nature. An animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product" (EPM, 76). The glory of humankind consists in freely creating something and confronting it. What is meant by confrontation? Man "knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object" (EPM, 76). Marx notably mentions that people confront their work according to the "laws of beauty" (EPM, 76). Alienation can come about for mankind *because* we are able to create our work in freedom from need and to stand apart from it as well. Our freedom in work is ultimately the freedom of self-expression, and by Marx's account the problem with work is that it becomes a tool of self-repression. Marx puts this very nicely a little later on: "the object of labor is, therefore, the objectification of man's species-life: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he contemplates himself in a world that he has created" (EPM, 77). Marx believes that we confront our work according to standards of beauty invented by ourselves. Mankind freely generates standards of beauty, which may or may not be a good thing for beauty in the end.

Work devoted to profit and not to the realization of this idea, therefore, exacts an enormous human cost: "In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labor tears from him his species-life, his real objectivity as a member of the species (EPM, 76). If such a situation is unjust, then it rather easily follows that private property *as such* is *originally* unjust because it is, as Marx says, the "the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labor, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself" (EPM, 80). That is why, although private property appears to be the "cause of alienated labor, it

is in fact its consequence, just as the gods were originally not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion" (EPM, 80). Private property is built on an underlying alienation.

Marx writes that alienation corrupts human community not simply because of the market's competitive forces but because working for profit involves us in a relationship of mutual dependence on other people. This dependence is not natural. Marx characterizes it as the frantic effort to introduce new needs in other people, even as they work to introduce and satisfy new needs in us. Capitalizing on those novel needs means that every relationship now becomes part of a larger pattern of mutual fraud. The producer

> puts himself at the service of the other's most depraved fancies, plays the pimp between him and his need, excites in him morbid appetites, lies in wait for each of his weaknesses – all so that he can then demand the cash for this service of love. (Every product is a bait with which to seduce away the other's very being, his money; every real and possible need is a weakness which will lead the fly to the glue-pot. General exploitation of communal human nature, just as every imperfection in man, is a bond with heaven – an avenue giving the priest access to his heart; every need is an opportunity to approach one's neighbor under the guise of the utmost amiability and to say to him: Dear friend, I give you what you need, but you know the *conditio sine qua non*; you know the ink in which you have to sign yourself over to me; in providing for your pleasure, I fleece you.) (EPM, 116).

Marx believes that alienation experienced in work ultimately as a loss of the self. That's the link between Marx's critique of religion and his critique of the alienation to be found in a system where labor is exchanged for something else. Herbert Marcuse attributed the burdensome character of labor to this loss of self, instead of solely to the conditions of labor (cf. Marcuse 1973, 25). Marcuse turns toward play, saying triumph over the alienation of the productive process can only be achieved through that rather than through the redemption of labor. Such a turn toward play seems to give up on work. The choices at least seem clear: give up on work and engage in play as the ideal creative activity, or choose to work and hold on to some hope that it may be redeemed. We turn toward Augustine with this option in mind, because he shares with

Marx the sense that work is integral to the question of human fulfillment, even if he characterizes that fulfillment very differently.

Work in Eden

In the originally good condition of humankind, life is hardly one of uninterrupted languor. In his tract *Against Manichees,* Augustine states that one purpose of man in the garden was to work, to tend its fruit: "Although man was placed in paradise so as to work and guard it, that praiseworthy work was not toilsome. For the work in paradise is quite different from the work on earth to which he was condemned after the sin" (AM 2.11). Augustine uses the words *operaretur* and *custodir* to reflect the reality of working and guarding. God finishes his creative work by putting his image in mankind, the little governor whose rule over creation imitates the lordship of God. Augustine sees a link between the *imago Dei* and the superiority of mankind over the rest of creation, and thus of work's origin. He writes in *The City of God,*

> then God made man in his own image, by creating for him a soul of such a kind that because of it he surpassed all living creatures… in virtue of reason and intelligence; for no other creature had a mind like that. God fashioned man out of the dust of the earth and gave him a soul of the kind I have described…He then took a bone from his side and made a wife to help him beget children. (DCD XII.24)

Along the same lines, Augustine writes later in Book XII of *The City of God* that "…among those creatures of earth man is pre-eminent, being made in the likeness of God" (DCD XII.28). God's likeness is most visible in the soul of mankind, the reasoning part of the human being. What task or way of life, then, is fitting for a being endowed with this likeness? The famous "dominion mandate" lays it out quite clearly. God commands humanity to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and exercise dominion over every living thing.[10] Augustine

[10] Genesis 1:28.

thinks the dominion mandate, if obeyed, will allow human beings to flourish. God commands Adam and Eve to "have dominion" over the rest of creation – ruling it with the rationality that sets them apart from it. In *The City of God*, Augustine's description of the unfallen state sheds light on the situation of work under obedience to this mandate:

> Just as in paradise there was no extreme of heat or of cold, so in its inhabitant no desire or fear intervened to hamper his good will. There was no sadness at all, nor any frivolous jollity… Between man and wife there was a faithful partnership based on love and mutual respect; there was a harmony and a liveliness of mind and body, and an effortless observance of the commandment. Man was at leisure, and his tiredness never wearied him, and sleep never weighed him down against his will (DCD XIV.26).

Here Augustine allows himself a moment to reflect on life before the fall – and what a beautiful picture it is. Noticeably, the word *labor* is not mentioned, except where Augustine says that the commandment was kept without labor, or effort. Man was *otiosus*, at leisure, connoting activity done freely and for its pleasure alone. Normally only the wealthy are *otiosus*, for leisure can only be bought with money. But Augustine argues that the human race began in a similar position. Augustine nevertheless insists on the absence of languor in Eden, as well as the absence of labor or difficulty in work. Liveliness or vitality characterized an unwearied mind and body.

The dominion mandate, especially its command to work, is seen by Augustine as part of God's providential plan for humankind. This providential ordering of God gives us another indication that the original condition was not a slack and idle one. God's providence can be divided into two different kinds of divine activity: the "natural" and "voluntary" (GL VIII). Natural providence is God's hidden governance of the world. Because of this providence, the sun keeps shining; the world keeps spinning. Though hidden, it sustains all the created world through God's wisdom and power. The voluntary providence of God, however, can be observed in "the deeds of angels and men." Both kinds of providence aim at human good, yet there is a crucial difference between them. Natural providence aims directly at the human good – without the sun,

or oxygen, all other goods would disappear. But voluntary providence of God incorporates the willing and working of mankind into the promotion of human welfare. By this providence, "creatures are instructed and learn, fields are cultivated, societies are governed, the arts are practiced, and other activities go on in both the heavenly society and in this mortal society on earth; and the good are provided for even with the help of the wicked, though all unwittingly" (GL VIII.9). Every good kind of human activity arises because of voluntary providence. All these activities aim at the benefit of human beings – and involve the beneficiaries in procuring their good. Everyone participates in this providence and therefore contributes to human flourishing, even the wicked – those who have a bad will. People are often, although not always, "unwitting" in the sense that they practice these arts for ends of their own devising, and yet God directs the whole effort by his providence, to ends unknown to them. Augustine describes this kind of providence as voluntary because mankind participates in its own good.

On to the crucial question: does such providence operate before the fall? One can plausibly interpret Augustine to mean that voluntary providence operates only because the fall has made it necessary. On this view sin becomes the source of work, rather than a rebellion against (among other things) the providential plan in which work serves a good purpose. Similarly, government would not preexist the fall but merely arises as its painful and limited remedy. But, to the contrary, Augustine says that God established – as a first mover of all things – the importance of work for man.

> Over all things, therefore, is God, who established all things and rules all things, who in his goodness created all substances and in his justice guides all wills. Why, then, do we depart from the truth if we assume that man was placed in Paradise with the understanding that he would till the land not in servile labor but with a spiritual pleasure befitting his dignity? (GL VIII.9)

God's authority of the universe consists in the *goodness* that motivates his creation of the world, and the *justice* that guides all wills. In the original state, we did not shrink from the prospect of work but rather rejoiced with "a spiritual pleasure" in the fulfillment provided by it (GL, ibid). Work is, remarkably, *honesta animi voluptate*, the honest pleasure of *the soul.* So, work is spiritually uplifting. *Honesta* plainly suggests that the activity is not corrupting or vicious. However, Edmund Hill translates the passage above ("… with a spiritual pleasure befitting his dignity") a bit freely, for the word *dignitas* is not actually present in the manuscript. *Dignitas* refers to reputation and influence, a rather political term. Augustine stills shows that tilling the land is not mean, low, servile, sinful labor but an activity consonant with what is best in us. Even as Augustine does not say that work reflects our dignity, he gives us to understand that work can give pleasure and delight to the soul. So, in its original form, work could be done for its own sake.

The status of work is all the more interesting in the condition of innocence, since that state is characterized by leisure. Augustine gives us some insight into the relationship of good work to leisure, remarking, "What is more innocent than this work (of tilling the soil) for those who are at leisure, and what more provocative of profound reflection for those who are wise?" (GL VIII.9). He does not think of humankind as the working being, as if labor were the single or most fulfilling human activity. But neither does he think that, in our original condition, leisure meant the total absence of work. Augustine shows the companionship of work and leisure, and suggests that the idea of work itself is "provocative of profound reflection." Augustine suggests that the work of tilling the soil is "innocent" for those at leisure, meaning that it would not compromise our contemplation.

Even if people could work prior to the fall, why should people work in such a state? Augustine's answer leads us to a fundamental distinction between work and toil. The dominion mandate, which Augustine takes so seriously, raises precisely this question: would mankind need to subdue anything, or have dominion over it, if no necessity yet existed in the world? Augustine writes, "Did the Lord wish that the first man should work (*operare*) at tilling the soil? Surely he was not condemned to labor (*laborare*) before he sinned" (GL VIII.8). The distinction between *operare* and *laborare* is even more stark or separate than these lines of Hill suggest. *Operare* can mean perform or operate. *Laborare* means to work, and to work really hard. It implies laboriousness, difficulty, and wearisomeness. The objection that Augustine wishes to refute conflates work and labor, and argues that man cannot have worked or really done anything active while still in a state of blessedness.

Augustine writes that if the genesis of work was *in* the fall, then it could never produce joy in human beings. We should think of it only as misery and punishment. It would be entirely bad, as I wrote in the introduction to this chapter. He continues,

> This is what we should think, did we not see certain men cultivating the land with such pleasure that it is a severe punishment for them to be called away from it to something else. Whatever delight there is, therefore, in the cultivation of the land was present then much more intensely when neither soil nor weather presented any obstacle. For there was no painful effort but only pleasure and enthusiasm when the gifts of God's creation came forth in a joyful and abundant harvest with the help of man's effort (GL VIII.8).

Augustine does not downplay the toil and trouble we find in work *now*. Many people hate work and see it as productive of misery, as nothing more than "painful effort," and suppose it impossible to suffer like this in an innocent world. But in the farmer, Augustine is struck by evidence of the possibility of joy in work. This joy is not chimerical but rather a pale shadow of what was once the full possession of humanity. Augustine uses the word *opus* to describe "man's effort," another word for work that lacks the connotations of labor and wearisomeness.

Augustine here makes the point that joy in work needs to be explained just as much as its opposite, misery. The deeper it is, the more we should wonder. Where exactly does that joy come from? We rejoice in work for a few reasons. First, joy in work comes the obedience of nature to the will of man. Augustine's use of farming illustrates that the fruit of work depends on the pliability and fruitfulness of the soil, on the environment in which and on which work is done, on the "joyful and abundant" harvest. Neither soil nor weather must present an obstacle to man, if his joy in work is to be unmixed. In the beginning, there was in work no "painful effort" but only "pleasure," "delight," and "enthusiasm." In Eden, nature obeys humankind, who obeys God by tilling it. Augustine points to a chain of obedience in all creation, which mankind duly contributes to and benefits from. He writes that "just as the soil which he tilled obeyed him, so that he would dutifully render to his Lord, who had given him the command, the fruit of obedience, not the thorns of disobedience" (GL VIII.10). What Augustine tries to show is that man rejoices when he can live out the dominion mandate to subdue and bring order to the natural world. To be a steward over creation brings us joy. This assumes that nature is essentially able to be subdued and is pliable in the hand of man. Conversely, if people rail against the difficulty of subduing nature in a fallen world, they have only themselves to blame for upsetting the chain of obedience.

Second, we learn from Augustine that man's joy comes from somehow putting the marks of his reasonable nature on the world, through work. How do we learn this? Augustine makes much of the joy experienced by the farmer at the present time, even if partial and constantly thwarted by soil, weather, and human weakness. So, something in work brings joy in work, above and beyond the obedience of nature. Using one's body and mind to bring about a fruitful harvest, putting a hand to the plow or measuring a field, brings man pleasure because he can

apply *himself* to this task of stewarding creation, although in a rather unimaginably effortless way:

> Where is human reason better able to speak, as it were, to nature than when man sows the seed, plants a tree, transplants a bush, grafts a mallet-shoot, and thus asks, as it were, each root and seed what it can or cannot do, why it can or cannot do it, what is the extent of the intrinsic and invisible power of numbers within it, and what can be attributed to the extrinsic factors applied by human effort? …For even that part of the work of production which comes from outside comes from a man whom God has also created and whom He invisibly rules and governs. (GL VIII.8).

It is true that in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* and elsewhere, Augustine speaks particularly well of agriculture.[11] As he says, the *work of tilling the soil* provokes reflection. He makes no statement that all work in general produces these effects. Thus, we must consider whether or not Augustine looks favorably on craft or art. Does he regard agriculture as the unfallen work, but consider mechanical activities to be the later inventions of fallen humanity? If true, this presents serious difficulties for the idea that *all* honest work is part of the originally good condition of, and mandate for, humanity. It would turn Augustine into an agrarian of Wendell Berry's description, into a thinker who regards art and craft, and the natural knowledge which supports it, with extreme suspicion. This opposition to craft would only be intensified and heightened with the advent of modern science. Yet we have reasons to doubt that Augustine thought in these terms.

Augustine writes that in work's unfallen condition, the highest praise was given to God for work that could be done without the compulsion of bodily need (GL VIII.8). This, too, was something that brought joy to mankind. Such indicates that bodily need existed before the fall, even as God provided some grace or freedom from it: "…greater praise was given to the Creator himself, who had imparted to the soul of man placed in a living body the art and ability to carry

[11] Augustine seems to have affirmed, unqualifiedly, the goodness of manual labor. See listing of vocations in *On Christian Doctrine* 2.30.47 and *The City of God* XXII.22.

out his work in accordance with what he freely wished and not in accordance with what bodily needs might force upon him against his will. What more impressive and wonderful spectacle than this?" (GL VIII.8). God is praised for giving humankind the ability to work freely rather than in slavery to bodily need. What about the case of those insulated from physical necessity by their riches? The wealthy, "for whom the necessities of life come easily and who do not labor upon the earth," hardly escape the curse on work (AM 2.20). No one can dodge it. Augustine quotes the words of the curse and then says: "it is certainly clear that no one escapes this sentence" (AM 2.20). The thorns and thistles represent the "labors and sorrows which man has from the earth," the "prickings of torturous questions or thoughts concerned with providing for this life" (AM 2.20). Augustine states that the psychological effects of the fall do not depend on how needy one actually is. Despite varying degrees of material wealth, all share the mental anxiety and misery of having to provide for themselves.

In a sermon on Christ's invitation to "all you who labor and are heavy burdened,"[12] Augustine presses the same point but in a way that criticizes the pagan attitude toward wealth. He argues that the poor man labors to get what he does not have, and the rich man labors to keep what he has and to gain even more. Augustine writes, "And who doesn't labor in this world? I would like to be told, who doesn't labor, either by working or by thinking? The poor man labors in work, the rich man labors in thought" (Augustine 2007, hereafter S, 70A). Augustine describes work as what poor men do, and thinking as what rich men do. But everyone labors. Augustine also criticizes the view that anyone with enough money to be free from work would render them free of concern for money. Such is hardly the case. Instead, one will be *even more* concerned with gain.

[12] Matt. 11:28-30.

Augustine thinks that art is a feature of the human soul, a gift from God. God gave humankind "art and ability" (GL VIII.8). By art Augustine means artfulness, craftiness. The seemingly endless inventiveness of humanity makes us different from the animals. Only *with art* can humanity be separated from bodily necessity, the very kind of work that receives such high praise. Agriculture separates human beings from bodily need, and agriculture hardly implies the absence of craft. Rather than spurning craft, Augustine shows a great deal of amazement in the accomplishments of human genius. In *The City of God*, he provides a colorful description of art:

> And besides this (the work of the Almighty) there are all the important arts discovered and developed by human genius, some for necessary uses, others for pleasure. Man shows remarkable powers of mind and reason in the satisfaction of his aims, even though they may be unnecessary or even dangerous and harmful; and those powers are evidence of the blessings he enjoys in his natural powers which enable him to discover, to learn, and to practice those arts. Think of the wonderful inventions of clothing and building, the astounding achievements of human industry! Think of man's progress in agriculture and navigation… (*DCD* XXII, 24)

This encomium of art suggests that Augustine regards artifice as part of the original glory of humanity, even as he considers the destructive possibilities of human inventiveness (as in the engines of war, *DCD* XXII, 24). In sum, human inventiveness or craftiness originally arises from the creativeness of human beings made in God's image and persists after the fall, though sadly and frequently to our detriment

Fallen Work

After the fall, Adam tills the soil as before, but in quite a changed set of circumstances, both internal and external. The new version of work is demoralized by the consequences of mankind's disobedience – it now reveals what it means to die. Instead of bringing life and abundance, tilling the field delivers to humanity a foretaste of death, a reminder of their destiny amid all their labor. Augustine thinks it important that God did not create mankind *ex nihilo* but

out of the earth itself. Humankind is glorified topsoil. Created for immortality, fallen Adam tills the soil which he will eventually become as a result of his disobedience. Augustine writes in *Against Manichees*, "For all the days of our life we are going to suffer…These words [of the curse] are spoken to one who cultivates his field, because he suffers these things until he returns to the earth from which he was taken…" (AM 2.20). Thus, mankind's relation to nature is not one that turns his attention to the providence of God, but instead toward eventual death.

Augustine sees the curse on work as a curse upon the ground itself that humankind works to till, and therefore an assault on the beneficent relationship. The fruit of our work must now be wrested, rather than plucked, from the soil – so the relationship to nature becomes adversarial. People hope to eat of nature; nature gives them thorns and thistles. Augustine regards thorns and thistles as part of the original order of nature, yet definitely adding to man's misery after the fall: "But since they were growing in the fields in which man was now laboring in punishment for his sin, it is reasonable to suppose that they became one of the means of punishing him. For they might have grown elsewhere, for the nourishment of birds and beasts, or even for the use of man" (*GL* III.18). But did the thorns and thistles come forth in the virgin soil of earth? "Earth began to produce these to add to man's laborious lot only when he began to labor on the earth after his sin. I do not mean that these plants once grew in other places and only afterwards in the fields where man planted and harvested his crops. They were in the same place before and after: formerly not for man, afterwards for man" (*GL* III.18). Augustine teaches that the source of the problem is in mankind itself: "God does not say "thorns and thistles shall it bring forth," but *bring forth to you*; that is, they will now begin to come forth in such a way as to add to your labor, whereas formerly they came forth only as a food for other living creatures" (*GL* III.18). Nature brings forth thorns and thistles to man. Augustine does not argue that nature was once

part of God's providence but now indifferent to human welfare. Nature never was indifferent to the estate of mankind. Before the fall it was positively disposed toward the nurturing of human beings through work, afterwards it actively impedes human welfare by frustrating or complicating the attempt to reap the fruit of work.

The fall ruptures the chain of obedience that humankind earlier submitted to and benefited from. Humankind obeyed God, indeed its desire was to fulfill God's purposes, and in turn nature supported and obeyed human desire. Augustine characterizes the fall principally as the result of disobedience, itself a product of *superbia* or the pride by which man made himself his own ground. Thus, one can characterize the new situation of work as a certain disobedience of the soil to the command and intention of mankind.[13] Augustine writes later on in *On Genesis,* "So then, because he did not wish to remain obedient, he was condemned and *received a field like himself,* for God said, *thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you*" (GL VIII.6). Note that the problem is principally with man himself; nature acts as a mirror of man's own disobedience. As Augustine writes in his early work against the Manichees: "…the fact that the earth bears thorns and thistles is not due to nature, but to punishment" (AM 2.27). Weeds in my perfectly manicured lawn are little instances of punishment for human disobedience.

Augustine's conspicuous use of the word "labor" reveals that the underlying reality of work changed after the fall. In that passage Augustine writes that humanity "began to labor on the earth after his sin," and that thorns and thistles are added to the "laborious lot" of humankind (*GL* III.18). The problem really is the laborious lot, not the thorns and thistles. The souring of nature is *not* the primary problem with work. Toil, something unknown to humankind in a state

[13] "I can truthfully say that this is the only virtue of every rational creature who lives his life under God's rule, and that the fundamental and greatest vice is the overweening pride by which one wishes to have independence to his own ruin, and the name of this vice is disobedience.... because of this transgression man would learn by undergoing punishment the difference between the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience" (GL VIII.6).

of felicity, comes to dominate the meaning of work. Because of the fall, what was formerly pleasant and uplifting now brings pain and suffering to human beings.

Humankind, seeking the knowledge of good and evil, unfortunately obtained it. God says, "Man has become like us, with knowledge of evil." Thus, Augustine notes, Adam would "learn by experience when he feels the evil that God knew in his wisdom" (AM 2.22). In *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis,* Augustine considers mankind's endeavor to bring fruit from the soil: "Who does not know that these are the labors of man on earth? And there surely can be no doubt that they would not be if man had not lost the happiness that was his in Paradise" (GL XI.38). Such is the "proper sense" of the meaning of the curse on tilling of the soil.

After the fall, the working of learning becomes arduous as well. In fact, because learning has become so toilsome, few can begin to learn without the application of external coercion.[14] Yet Augustine does not see toil as altogether bad, as his analysis of the indolent learner reveals.

> What is the point of the pedagogue, the schoolmaster, the stick, the strap, the birch, and all the means of discipline? By such means, as holy Scripture teaches, the flanks of a beloved child must be beaten, for fear he may grow up untamed…What is the point of these punishments, but to overcome ignorance and to bridle corrupt desire – the evils we bring with us into this world? (DCD XXII.22).

The profit in toil, the good in the suffering of labor, is therefore a paradox. It bridles the corruption of the fall present in all human beings, especially the twin evils of ignorance and desire. It also proves useful in subduing pride. In an important passage in *De doctrina Christiana,* Augustine writes about the intellectual difficulties of understanding the text of scripture. For,

> hasty and careless readers are led astray by many and manifold obscurities and ambiguities, substituting one meaning for another; and in some places they cannot hit upon even a fair interpretation. Some of the expressions are so obscure as to shroud the meaning in the thickest darkness. And I do not doubt that all this was divinely arranged

[14] Cf. *Confessions,* Book 1.

> for the purpose of subduing pride by toil, and of preventing a feeling of satiety in the intellect, which generally holds in small esteem what is discovered without difficulty (Augustine 2009b, 6.7).

Augustine acknowledges the difficulty of interpreting text, yet he finds a purpose in intellectual toil. God's providence governs the fall also. Augustine proposes a tension between toil and pride. Pride, we learned earlier, is the vice "by which one wishes to have independence to his own ruin, and the name of this vice is disobedience" (DL VIII.6).[15] Disobedience stems from the wish for complete independence – or pride. But pride may also be said to "hold in small esteem," to take for granted, knowledge discovered without difficulty. Toil conquers pride, Augustine says, because it effectively conveys to human beings that knowledge is hard-earned.

Perhaps most importantly, Augustine believes that working despite its travail in the fallen condition forces us to a kind of honesty about our condition. We should not try to explain away the difficulty with work as something external to us, but acknowledge it as intrinsic to the condition and one piece of the overall puzzle. If the problem is with us, rather than in our

[15] Augustine believes that Adam's nature suffered the penalty for his disobedience. As he argues in *The City of God* XIII.3, Adam was sentenced to die for his disobedience in the garden. His nature was corrupted, leading to his death and the death of all those that issued from his same nature. Sharing a nature with Adam, we suffer from Adam's disobedience. The full quote reads,

> We must therefore admit that the first human beings were created under this condition, that they would not have experienced any kind of death, if they had not sinned; and yet those first s inners were sentenced to death, with the provision that *what*ever sprang from their stock should incur the same punishment. For whatever was born from them could not have been different from what they themselves had been. In fact, because of the magnitude of the offense, the condemnation changed human nature for the worse; so that what happened as a matter of punishment in the case of the first human beings became natural and congenital. This is because the descent of man from man is not like the derivation of man from the dust. Dust was the raw material for the making of man; but in the begetting of a human being man is a parent… the human parent is the is the same kind of thing as the human offspring. Therefore, the whole human race was in the first man.

Therefore, we can see how strongly Augustine believes in the idea of a "human nature." The human essence, quiddity, or "whatness" gives the initial corruption of man its explanatory power. If God made each man or woman anew, from the dust, and there was no essential nature shared, then we might be free from Adam's fault. What Augustine says about the sentence of death applies also to man's most important activities, including work, although I think that Augustine sees the penalty in the case of work as less severe. Still, work became difficult for Adam's nature, and so it is congenitally difficult for us. Concerning the justice of this situation, see the comments in the conclusion of this dissertation.

environment, then this is a point in favor of humility. In deciding to work and be productive we own up to the just deserts of our pride. Augustine explains that "we should then look for a cure of those sins, as being our own, instead of condemning them as if they did not belong to us" (DCD XV.7). He is even more explicit in his essay *Against the Manichees*. Despite being punished in our work, "we should act so that we feel its punishment" – i.e. we should work as we experience the curse, rather than remaining idle in order to escape it (AM 2.27). Paradoxically, then, idleness pays homage to the idea that in our fallen nature, working hard goes against the grain. Augustine writes,

> How is it that what we learn by toil we forget with ease? That it is hard to learn, but easy to be in ignorance? That activity goes against the grain, while indolence is second nature? Is it not clear from this into what state our spoilt nature sinks readily and promptly, as it were by its own weight? Is it not plain how much help it needs for its reclamation? Sloth, indolence, idleness, indifference – these are the vices which make us shun all toil. For toil, even when profitable for us, is in itself a punishment (DCD XXII.22).

We could only be naturally and reflexively a laboring creature in a world where idleness is utterly unattractive. But idleness *is* attractive, because it presents a way of avoiding (if at all possible) the very thing that the fall made hazardous and difficult. The punishment of human beings after the fall, something that we sense in the predicament of working, itself explains the charms of idleness.

The lure of idleness also explains the difficulty of intellectual progress: "For anyone born in this life has difficulty in discovering the truth because of the corruptible body" (*AM* 2.20). He makes a similar point in *The City of God*: "it is not the body as such, but the corruptible body, that is a burden to the soul… the soul was weighed down not by any kind of body but by the body as it became as a result of sin and the punishment that followed" (XIII.16). The corruptible body poses a burden to the intellectual life because we cannot learn without it. We perceive the truth through dying senses, as it were: "…it is necessary that we be admonished about the truth

through these eyes and these ears, and it is difficult to resist the phantasms which enter the soul through these senses, although truth's admonition also enters through them. In this perplexity whose brows would not sweat in order that he might eat his bread?" (*AM* 2.20). The deceit of the senses is a kind of first-fruit of death. Though "necessary," and ultimately worthwhile, Augustine nevertheless thinks the frailty of the intellectual life can be attributed to the divine punishment on work. So we are left with a predicament where the most worthwhile things (such as improvement of the mind) most display the fall to us: "for one who cultivates this field interiorly and gains his bread, albeit with toil, can suffer this toil up to the end of his life, but *after this life he need not suffer*" (*AM* 2.20). Augustine points out that education of the soul really matters if the soul is eternal. For one who believes that the soul will outlive the body, the consequences of not being disciplined by truth are dire. For the lazy person, one unwilling to be schooled in the truth, is the one who fails to cultivate his own interior field. The "one who did not cultivate has in this life the curse of the earth in all his works, and after this life he will have either the fire of purgation or eternal punishment" (AM 2.20).

How then do we make sense of the command to work, which in this fallen world means laboring for physical and spiritual fruit? Augustine argues that work forms a crucial part of the economy of salvation. Work continues to serve as a bodily and intellectual activity of separating oneself from physical necessity. But because of our history, work becomes part of God's redemptive plan for human beings. In his censure of the Manichees, a work-hating sect in whose rituals he once took part, Augustine writes that Adam "…is dismissed from the paradise of pleasure in order to work the earth from which he was taken, that is, in order that he work in this

body and establish in it, if he can, the merit to return" (AM 2.22).[16] We are in a way commanded to suffer in this life, and working hard makes one suffer more. Shirking the suffering is not good for the soul, and puts one at risk for eternal suffering that cannot be put off.

We can get closer to deciphering Augustine's ultimate position on work by considering what he thinks will happen to it in the heavenly city among the saints. Will work be fundamentally transformed or disappear? If so, what are the ramifications for the goodness of work in this world? At the conclusion of *The City of God* he calls the kingdom of God to come a "perpetual Sabbath," suggesting the possible abolition of work. Let us dig deeper in:

> How great will be that felicity, where there will be no evil, where no good will be withheld, where there will be leisure for the praises of God, who will be all in all! What other occupation could there be, in a state where there will be no inactivity of idleness, and yet no toil constrained by want? I can think of none…. All the limbs and organs of the body, no longer subject to decay, the parts which we now see assigned to various essential functions, will then be freed from all such constraint, since full, secure, certain, and eternal felicity will have replaced necessity… (DCD XXII.30)

In my reading of this passage, Augustine looks forward and sees that in the happy life to come, those in the heavenly city will surely enjoy leisure, and will use their leisure well: for the praise and worship of God. This will be, so to speak, the new occupation of everyone. Work seems to be nowhere in the picture. But if we read on, we learn that in this new state of things, there will be no idleness on the one hand, nor any toil on the other. We will have rest and activity in due measure.

[16] I do not take up the question of production and distribution. What does Augustine think of them? From what I have seen, production occurs before and after the fall. Distribution occurs before the fall, as well. Possibly connected with production side of this question is what Augustine thinks of the division of labor. Augustine comments on the division of labor, saying that craftsmen specialize in some part of a task rather than learning the whole art, so as to "obviate the long and painful process required to make them all masters of the whole art" (DCD VII.4). Thus, he thinks that dividing labor mercifully spares people of extra toil. For that reason, it might be considered good. On the other hand, he would disapprove of the attempt to do away with toil altogether or to use the division of labor simply to produce more stuff.

Augustine suggests that for a fallen nature and world, the most practical and reasonable way to motivate labor is by necessity. We do not operate from a position of "felicity" or "happiness" but from the need to provide for ourselves. The brute fact of necessity is apparent to unaided, instrumental human reason. Why should I work? Because if I do not, my bare needs will not be provided for. So human reason can see a close link between work and reward, if by reward we mean freedom from necessity. Even while making this admission, however, Augustine brings to the surface a great dissatisfaction with the reality of necessity.

In addition, insofar as he represents a premodern attitude toward work, Augustine gives us greater clarity about what exactly distinguishes his account from Marx. It would be incorrect to characterize the premodern world as entirely hostile to work, for Augustine at least has an unexpectedly high view of it. One mark of the highness of his view is that he does not spend much time considering the link between work and private property: that is to say, the materialistic motive for working. Human beings should work because God commands it – but this command, the dominion mandate, was originally given in a world unspoiled by human sin and in which human beings are free from necessity. After the fall, the situation is nearly reversed: people must accept the goodness of the mandate by faith. Revelation teaches that human beings are commanded to work for their own good, as lords of creation. Indeed, work was once productive of profound spiritual pleasure that, even now, shines through once in a while. God does not merely command human beings to work, he sets an example for them in his work. So, to work is to be godlike, to live as God lives.

Living for Work

Is work something that we ultimately live for? Augustine does not describe man as the working animal. Yet there is something to this description of the human being. Work is relatively easy to see and measure. It produces objects that can be sold for a profit. Its presence (and absence) has identifiable effects on individuals, families, and communities. Because work can be described in materialistic terms, and if a human being is only ever a working being, then the study of work becomes the study of the human things. In short, Marx's approach to work suited his materialism very well. The line taken by Augustine, however, fascinates because it approaches this mundane, rather materialistic matter through the very opposite means – the account given by revelation. One defect is that it puts Augustine at risk of over-spiritualizing everyday concerns. But the great virtue is that by defending the creation narrative he gives us profound reasons to work, to reject laziness as a real flaw. We encourage people to work but, when pressed, we simply say that we should work because of necessity. We point to the moral law of self-preservation, which is not a very high moral law. Another important difference between Augustine and Marx is not simply the essence of work, but the question of whether we can take responsibility for its ills. With regard to work especially, the denial of human responsibility characterizes Marx's thought. Who or what can be held responsible for the difficulty of labor? For Marx and those influenced by him, the problem stems from the socioeconomic conditions that surround human beings, not from the behavior or condition of the human soul itself. The social realities of chasing profit, not the human condition, are blamed for the toil, drudgery, and alienation of work. Augustine, meanwhile, makes the case for blaming the human race. But what reason could be given for blaming us? We wished to have independence to our own ruin, Augustine observes. Yet the original goodness of work perdures. Most strangely,

knowledge of the fall grants knowledge of what is possible through human effort because we learn the results of human pride.

Augustine believes that the human race is both assailant and victim; the situation of work is a classic self-inflicted wound. We did not obey God, and suffered the consequences of it in our labors. The spoiling of the original goodness of work, its mixing with sorrow in the way that Augustine describes, is our just punishment. So, the disagreeableness of work is not only something we brought on ourselves but indicative of our great interior dislocation. The drudgery of work, our combat with nature, is fully explained by the revelatory knowledge of the way our souls are. Doing away with drudgery and need altogether would blind us from seeing the deeper truth about our souls, namely our rebelliousness. Doing away with drudgery and need altogether would blind us from seeing the deeper truth about our souls, namely our wounded nature. The sometimes intense, sometimes more bearable, but ever-present suffering found in work suggests also its importance to the well-lived life.

In this essay, I have engaged in the somewhat curious enterprise of comparing Marx to Augustine. I believe there is much room for mutual dialogue. And, when it comes to scorekeeping, Marx's analysis of work has some real advantages over that of Augustine. First of all, Marx pays close attention to the actual conditions in which human beings labor to produce whatever is bought and sold in the market economy. Augustine's analysis does not quite capture this possibility of variation in these conditions. Even small changes in law or in productive practices can result in huge change for the human beings. Would he think the conditions of market capitalism dehumanizing? I am not sure. He certainly was well aware of human ingenuity and of the benefits and pitfalls thereof. I suspect he would be amazed at the efficiency of capital allocation in free markets but also maybe appalled at the excesses to which they can lead, to say

nothing of the hectic life of the ordinary businessperson. But Marx is interested in these conditions of production precisely because of their effect on human beings. We see this in his description of the commodification of labor, and therefore of the people themselves. Thus, Marx taps into our sense that human beings should not be considered a commodity, mere cogs in a productive machine, to be used up and then thrown away when they are no longer useful. If productivity is the goal for individuals, corporations, and society at large, then Marx invites us to consider the demands this makes on us. If we want productivity, we must devote ourselves utterly to it. We cannot live in a halfway house, getting the benefits of productivity without a devotion to it as an end in itself. But this means, according to Marx, the forsaking of the dignity in work. He comes to see a radical opposition, instead of a harmony, between these ends.

This strength of Marx's moral criticism is also a weakness, however. First the thesis itself can be questioned: must a lover of productivity throw away all the importance of work as a clue to human dignity and purpose? But the greater weakness is that Marx never shows us what unalienated work looks like. This is a greater problem than commentators have typically realized, or let on. When Jonathan Wolff drily comments that Marx never shows us a picture of unalienated labor except in a note "On James Mill," he says that unalienated labor "must be inferred from the negative" (Wolff 2017). Indeed, it must – Marx leaves us few resources other than his vague articulation of species essence. What vision of work causes Marx to see the current situation of work as such a loss? Can we only know the importance of work through a negative image, so to speak, the alienation which causes us to revolt? It is not an idle speculation – it gnaws away at the coherence of Marxian ideology. How do we know work is as bad for us in the capitalist system (bad in the moral sense) if we do not know the opposite of the bad, namely the good? Marcuse's criticisms of Marx's theory of the productive process points to this

possibility. But this question also points toward Augustine. Marx's refusal to speculate about the nature of unalienated work may mean that he recognizes that an answer would be religious in character. Here we see the difference, but also the similarity, between Marx and Augustine. The difference is that Augustine fully deploys a theological account of human life, including work. Marx has no theological grounding; indeed, it might be said that he runs up against the limits of what philosophy can tell us about the nature and origins of work. This makes whatever joy we find in work rather an unstable and insecure joy. Furthermore, alienation for Marx concerns a separation from the product of one's labor. This suggests to us that, as laboring creatures, what we need above all is unity with the fruit of our hands. This premise can, and should, be questioned. Does the very real satisfaction to be gained in working consist in being able to confront the final product in accordance with the standards of beauty? No one denies that the modern market economy, because it continually creates wealth through productivity improvements and the division of labor, in some way prevents anyone from claiming sole responsibility for producing something. So, the GM worker who looks at a Camaro and says, "I made this!" tells himself a lie. Admitting this, however, hardly precludes people from all satisfaction to be found in work. Perhaps the GM employee could say, "I had a small part in making this car. So small, in fact, that if I were fired, no one would notice!" Now, the possibility of finding satisfaction in spite of this reality suggests that what fulfills us in work is something other than what Marx says.

With respect to the satisfaction to be found in work, we can say a few more things about Augustine's approach. He writes that God was glorified in work that separated man from his bodily needs. Man is created dependent; work is not deliverance from dependence but a continual reminder of it. Nevertheless, man is to gain some satisfaction from this removal of

physical necessity. Second, we can take a spiritual pleasure in work. This spiritual pleasure suggests that working is good for the soul, which is after all the best part of the human being. And finally, according to the revelatory account, it is God who reveals the good of work for man. Man does not convince himself of the goodness in work, otherwise he would not need to be commanded to steward creation even prior to the fall. Finally, this chapter concludes with two questions concerning work's importance. First, is the moral concern for work rooted in objective ideas of human flourishing? Or is the concern to humanize work subjective after all? For all Marx's insistence that the commodification of work represents a loss to the worker, it is still a loss *to the worker*, an utterly unique loss. Even if one admits this loss in the terms sketched by Marx, how can this loss become an object of common concern?

The praise of labor we find in Augustine differs markedly from ancient recriminations against work, such as we find in Lucretius and Vergil (Catto 1986). All of mankind was subject to the dominion mandate and *labor* has become the lot of all mankind, whether they work in the fields or not. Therefore, the situation of work is something common to everyone. Augustine especially seems to appreciate the lot of ordinary men, especially honest manual labor, which is what most people do. We find in Augustine no praise of the idle rich, no patience for those who spend time idly speculating. So, the elevation of work, which we see in Augustine and in other Christian thinkers, constitutes an immense move toward democracy. Democracy is the rule of every man; work, the activity of every man, comes into prominence.

In addition, in Augustine's concern for work in the overall scheme of God's providence we begin to see first stirrings of the individual – a most startling development. What providence means, among other things, is the arranging of human affairs and human effort so as to benefit human beings. But if things require arranging, what does that say about human beings? Do *they*

have importance as unique participators in God's plan, or not? If yes, then God has something for them to do, not just a generic job. People are individuals because they cooperate in some unique way with God's providential plan. That uniqueness consists partly in the efforts they make that contribute to some larger plan for human welfare. Everyone has a job to do, some contribution to make. This powerful insight can, I think, be seen in Augustine's thought. Compare this to Marx, who treats work as an extraordinarily generic thing. Freed from the alienation of the modern marketplace, we might do any job we like. This says something deep about work itself: in switching jobs from morning to afternoon, we have the freedom to be nobody in particular. If jobs can be switched so easily, they are replaceable. And so all human beings are *in essence* replaceable. There is no unique contribution to be made by anyone to the common good.

Augustine's defense of the fall both raises and lowers our expectations of work. He raises its dignity by showing that the one who works obeys God, and that work's genesis begins with man's own creation. In this obedience to the divine mandate, the good of work perdures even in a fallen world. Augustine writes that God hides the usefulness of things in nature and that man should glory to discover those hidden uses (cf. DCD XIII)[17] Yet in work we do not expect perfection, nor should we. Augustine introduces *labor* into our vocabulary, teaching us that our reluctance to work is due to sin and its effects on human nature and the world itself. In the final analysis, work is bound to this earthly city, this present time, as Keys and Mitchell observe. Augustine comments the sabbath was instituted by God to "urge us to a longing for rest," (GL IV.14). The stoppage of work, the good of which we can see, is meant to urge us to want total

[17] And think: God's command to the Israelites on Sinai – to rest from labor on the Lord's day – is a command that goes the opposite way. Instead of being told to work, we need to be told to rest. So perhaps that's further evidence that the situation of work changed with the fall.

completion and happiness in God, which we cannot see. Work points beyond itself, mutely testifying in its own satisfactions to greater satisfactions in the world to come. Until that world should come, work remains a present investment for a future reward.

CHAPTER TWO

"For our original nature was by no means the same as it is now. In the first place, there were three kinds of human beings, [189e] not merely the two sexes, male and female, as at present: there was a third kind as well, which had equal shares of the other two, and whose name survives though, the thing itself has vanished. For 'man-woman'[2] was then a unity in form no less than name, composed of both sexes and sharing equally in male and female; whereas now it has come to be merely a name of reproach…Now, they were of surprising strength and vigor, and so lofty in their notions that they even conspired against the gods; and the same story is told of them as Homer relates of [190c] Ephialtes and Otus,[2] that scheming to assault the gods in fight they essayed to mount high heaven.

…Zeus and the other gods debated what they should do, and were perplexed: for they felt they could not slay them like the Giants, whom they had abolished root and branch with strokes of thunder—it would be only abolishing the honors and observances they had from men; nor yet could they endure such sinful rioting. Then Zeus, putting all his wits together, spoke at length and said: 'Methinks I can contrive that men, without ceasing to exist, shall give over their iniquity through a lessening of their strength. [190d] I propose now to slice every one of them in two, so that while making them weaker we shall find them more useful by reason of their multiplication

"For the rest, he smoothed away most of the puckers and figured out the breast with some such instrument as shoemakers use in smoothing the wrinkles of leather on the last; though he left there a few which we have just about the belly and navel, to remind us of our early fall. Now when our first form had been cut in two, each half in longing for its fellow would come to it again; and then would they fling their arms about each other and in mutual embraces [191b] yearn to be grafted together, till they began to perish of hunger and general indolence, through refusing to do anything apart."

Plato, *Symposium* 189d -191b

Human beings are not, according to the research of Nobel laureate Vernon L. Smith, mere utility-maximizers. In his 2018 book with fellow economist Bart J. Wilson, entitled *Humanomics: Moral Sentiments and the Wealth of Nations for the Twenty-First Century*, Smith makes the argument that neoclassical economics cannot fully account for the propensity of people to cooperate in ways that cut against their efforts to maximize personal utility (Smith and Wilson 2018). They draw on Adam Smith's explorations of human sociability in his *Theory of*

Moral Sentiments to show that the social side of human beings, such as a concern for the good opinion of others, really does lead people to modify their behavior.

Smith and Wilson observe real instances of human trust even in game-theory situations, particularly instances of economic exchange where we might expect naked self-interest to predict every outcome. One takeaway of this study, according to Samuel Gregg, is the idea that human sociability interacts with economic exchange – and influences it – in complicated ways that, quite frankly, we barely understand (Gregg 2019). The blithe assertion that market economics exists in some tension with human sociability often assumes that we can easily understand human beings as social. *Are* we social? Frequently we find the sociable part of us at war with the equally strong desire to look out for ourselves. Augustine's most clear and succinct statement of this problem occurs in *The City of God*:

> …man was created as one individual; but he was not left alone. For the human race is, more than any other species, at once social by nature and quarrelsome by perversion. And the most salutary warning against this perversion or disharmony is given by the facts of human nature. We are warned to guard against the emergence of this fault, or to remedy it once it has occurred, by remembering that first parent of ours, who was created by God as one individual with this intention: that from that one individual a multitude might be propagated, and that this fact should teach mankind to preserve a harmonious unity in plurality (XII.28).

Augustine says that humanity is possessed of a social nature (*sociale natura*) which is quarrelsome (*discordiosum*) through perversion (*vitio*). Importantly, Augustine uses the adjective *socialis* rather than *societas,* the latter word one that Cavadini translates to mean "association" (Cavadini 1999). In addition, throughout his entire corpus, Augustine never uses the term *sociābilis*. He uses the word "social" as an adjective for human nature itself, rather than a capacity or power in the human being.[18]

[18] As such, it seems inappropriate to use the word "sociability" to describe Augustine's position. Through the remainder of this essay, I will use the word "sociality" or "social nature."

Augustine relates that in the world in which we live, somehow both realities of *socialis* and *discordiosum* obtain. He does not say that people *used* to be social but are now anti-social. Rather, he gives us to understand that people live in a way subject to both comity and discord, that they are deeply inclined to both states. This chapter explores the ways in which both these realities obtain, in which they are present to our condition now. It sets forth what Augustine means by the originally sociable condition of mankind and the calamitous sequence in which our social nature suffers change, or vitiation, in the fall.

Let us begin with the political angle. Perhaps Augustine thinks that politics arises out of our inability to be sociable. As Nederman puts it,

> Christianity taught that some of the original nature of man had been sacrificed in the aftermath of the fall. Post-lapsian "nature" was regarded to be a perversion of its source, since mankind was created good and immortal but chose to be evil and mortal. In particular the range of sins deplored by the Western tradition of Christianity-pride, covetousness, lust, and the like-tended to be profoundly anti-social. Since in their sinful condition human beings were essentially egoistic, it was hard to see how they could continue to manifest any "natural" disposition to associate (Nederman 1988).

This position on Augustine's view of sociality especially characterizes those who see Augustine as an early defender of political realism (e.g. Niebuhr 1953; Weithman 2006; Weithman 1992). Weithman, for instance, sees this social nature as desiring "peace but compromised by sin, which is characterized by the inability to live in peace with ourselves and others" (2006). Politics arises because the desire for peace is radically compromised by our anti-social nature.

Others (e.g. Cary 2004; Elshtain 1995; Gregory 2008) take the opposite view, namely that Augustine's political outlook, such as it is, takes seriously the human propensity to love. Defined this way, sociality provides a crucial ground for political life – but a life that expresses our social nature rather than repressing an anti-social one. Where, then, does the political problem arise? We love things in a disordered way. There is a ladder of love, with God at the top

and human beings further down, and riches, honor, and power still further down. This theory gives rise to a parsimonious diagnosis of the problem: we turn the ladder upside down – loving things more than persons, or loving persons more than God. Yet despite the importance of rightly ordered love, it does not provide a satisfying answer to the question of whether man is social or not. To put it differently, to love is in some way to participate in goodness even if one loves wrongly or badly. But Augustine says that man quarrels, he twangs out of tune with others, due to vitiation – a deprivation of being itself, not to love but to a curious inability to love. This implies that Augustine measures the human condition not only by human potential but by human lack. So, then, not every unsocial behavior can be reduced to disordered love.

This essay argues, in contrast to the ideas above, that Augustine understands man's (unfallen) social nature to be longing or hoping for the experience of unity with other rational and good creatures. And this, far from discounting love, gives it a basis or a precondition. Yet, to clearly and rigorously think about sociality, in my reading of Augustine, we must investigate our social *corruption*. Why? Thinking in terms of corruption drives us to consider two central questions. First, is mankind essentially social? But more importantly: if we are essentially social, then what explains the discord that we do experience? We must in some way be disconnected with our essence, or gravely diminished, if indeed we are basically social.

Phillip Cary provides a beautiful and intimate portrayal of this reality, one which pervades Augustine's understanding of social life. The kind of unity people have is the unity of rational creatures: and that is a unity of the soul, rather than body (Cary 2004). In support of this thesis, Cary cites an elegant passage in Augustine's treatise *On Order*: "What is all love? Does it not will to be one with what it loves?" (Cary 2004, *On Order* 2.48). Indeed, this view – that Augustine describes sociality in light of this concern for unity – is widely shared among scholars

of all perspectives, not only among so-called "Civic Augustinians" but also realists (cf. Weithman 2006) and adherents of radical orthodoxy such as Cavanaugh and Milbank. One sees this assessment of Augustine's social thought in Cary and Figgis as well (Cary 2004; Figgis 1921). As Cary notes, we both wish to be with others and we wish to be apart from them. We wish for our thoughts to remain private, even as we hope for the primordial transparency that characterizes mankind's unfallen state. Cary observes that "the underlying notion is that the inability to see into each other's hearts is not natural but a terrible loss, a punishment due to our primal fall from transparency" (Cary 2004, 12). Because of this, according to Cary, speech itself and politics are unnatural for Augustine. Since one cannot peer into a fellow soul and know them intuitively, in this murky world, one must believe what they tell of themselves. On this account, the disunity arising from the soul's hiddenness is due to corruption of nature. Before the fall, people are separate but fully transparent, able to see and be seen. In this essay, I build on this understanding by using sociality as a mirror through which to see the spectacle of human corruption.

Mankind: The Social Creature?

Augustine writes that God's intention for humankind is that we enjoy a "unity in plurality" (*DCD* XII.28). Such a longing for unity, as Augustine, is unity of a very particular kind. It requires "plurality" – difference – as the precondition for the longing. Human beings would not long for unity in the absence of difference. Because of our natural diversity, unity is

not a given but rather a sought-after state of human relationship. But secondly, Augustine does not think human nature merely longs for unity alone, but a unity found in something higher than humanity itself. As Ernest Fortin puts it,

> …the model from which Augustine works is supplied by Acts 4:32, which extols the harmony that characterized the life of the earliest Christian community, all of whose members are said to have been "of one heart and soul." Until fairly recently, no one had noticed or paid much attention to the fact that Augustine frequently adds to that statement the words *in Deum*, "bent" or "intent on God." The addition, which is clearly deliberate (it occurs in thirty-one of the forty-two instances in which the verse is quoted) tells us a great deal about Augustine's understanding of the relationship that binds people together as friends and fellow citizens. It makes it clear that human beings become one, not by looking at one another, but by looking together in the direction of something outside of and higher than themselves. Any deep and lasting relationship presupposes a common good of some sort in which the parties involved can communicate and which serves as the ground of their unity" (Fortin 1996, 9)

Fortin correctly identifies Augustine's view of what human unity looks like. Human beings experience unity not by seeking to possess the other, but by looking up to God together in creaturely dependence, admiration, and love. However, one can pose a question here as well. Are human beings disposed to look for unity in this way, at least in their unspoiled nature? Fortin does not say whether this is the case. Nor does he speak of *socialis* as a description of human nature. I argue that Augustine does speak of such a disposition and that his defense of the fall makes this quite clear. Augustine's concept of human nature as *socialis* deserves a fuller account and a more fulsome explanation, one that does justice to the complexity of his thinking on the basic good of human relationship.

Our social nature expresses itself in a number of different ways. Out of it comes the capacity for real affection in the marriage bond and the joys of friendship, among other forms of relationship. One wants unity with one's friends, oneness of mind. Our sociable nature makes possible cooperation, compromise, and sharing of good. Augustine thinks the discovery and

pursuit of the good life is ultimately a social venture. In Book XIX of *The City of God,* we see one of Augustine's most extended discussions of social life. There, uncoincidentally, he enters into a refutation of the philosophic definition of the ultimate human good. He must first explain "the arguments advanced by mortal men in their endeavor to create happiness for themselves amidst the unhappiness of this life" (DCD XIX.1). In laying out the "appointed ends of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly," Augustine's purpose is "to make clear the great difference between their hollow realities and our hope, the hope given us by God" (DCD XIX.1). Furthermore, Augustine's method, if not his ultimate basis, is philosophic: he wishes to accomplish this task not "merely by appealing to divine authority but also by employing such powers of reason as we can apply for the benefit of unbelievers" (DCD XIX.1).

Augustine traces the arguments of Varro, who delineates all the possible philosophical positions with regard to the attainment of human happiness (the supreme good). There are, unsurprisingly, many opinions about what the good is and what way of life would best achieve it. In denominating all the possible opinions about the good life, Augustine adds one more "differentia", namely "that of social life, since any adherent of any of these sects adopts its principles either for his own sake or for the sake of his fellow-man as well, for whom he is bound to wish the same as he wishes for himself" (DCD XIX.1). Augustine first raises the question of whether one's opinion about the good life is a *social* opinion – whether the good life is to be pursued and shared in common or in private. He suggests that the ultimate good is inherently social, when one enjoys it, one would want other human beings to enjoy it along with him. In other words, it is in the nature of the highest good to be a social, public thing rather than a merely private matter.

Yet this tells us nothing about the content of the ultimate good. Throughout Book XIX, Augustine continues a lengthy discussion of the many philosophical sects and their cumulative positions on the highest good. This supreme good is not the good "of a tree, or a beast, or of God, but of man," and with Varro, Augustine concludes that we must ask, "what is man?" There are two elements in mankind's nature, body and soul, but three possible orderings: Body controlling soul, soul controlling body, or an equal combination of the two. Hence, the ultimate good could be three things: the beauty and strength of the body, the beauty and strength of the soul (the highest of which is virtue), or the combination thereof. These are the goods of human life, to which the philosopher points. Even if these goods are *the right goods,* Augustine treats the possibility of their attainment in this life with a great deal of skepticism, saying that none of the three ways of life – the learned life of leisure, the life of public business or a combination of the two – can satisfactorily bring enjoyment of those goods (DCD XIX.2).

Nevertheless, Augustine reiterates that the search for happiness, beatitude, the ultimate good, is a social, communal journey. Indeed, though disputing the content of their claims about the happy life, Augustine credits the philosophers with defending the view that "the happy life is social, and for its own sake values the good of friends as its own, just as it wishes for them, for their own sake, what it wishes for itself" (DCD XIX.3). Important here is Augustine's definition of "friends," – which may mean

> those in the same house, such as a man's wife or children, or any other members of the household; or it can mean all those in the place where man has his home, a city, for example, and a man's friends are thus his fellow citizens; or it can extent to the whole world, and include the nations with whom a man is joined by membership of the human society; or even to the whole universe (DCD XIX.3).

The pull of *sociale* begins with the family but ultimately directs one to face outward, as Elshtain (2003, 291) notes. It demands the acquisition of new relationship, broader ties outside of one's

family. As Augustine puts it later in *de civ,* the social bond should extend "more widely to a large number of with the multiplying links of kinship" (DCD XV.16). Augustine writes that the importance of marriage itself can be seen from what is *not* marriage although still

> appreciated and hoped for in human life. "For affection [in marriage] was given its right importance so that men, for whom social harmony would be advantageous and honorable, should be bound together by ties of various relationships. The aim was that one man should not combine many relationships in his one self, but that those connections should be separated and spread among individuals, and that in this way they should help to bind social life more effectively by involving in their plurality a plurality of persons. 'Father' and 'Father-in-law", for instance, are names denoting two different relationships (DCD XV.16).

In other words, the idea that the two different relationships should not be found in one person – father and father in law – serves as a ground or common-sense basis for the prohibition on incest. Our desire for unity amid plurality somehow demands the differentiation and clarification of social roles. This differentiation in turn helps to form basic moral categories. The relationship between spouses is a *particular kind of relationship,* with duties specific to it. Brothers and sisters enjoy a different kind of relationship than the marriage bond. But the roles are relational: one is not a brother to everyone, but to his siblings. Nor can one be married to everyone, but to their spouse. Our social nature spurs us to make these kinds of moral distinctions – the longing for unity spurs us to ask: what kind of thing both distinguishes and unites us?

Another way to get the sense of the importance of *socialis* for Augustine is to consider the example he makes of marriage. Marriage is an important human relationship, intertwined with legal and moral life in fascinating ways. Augustine begins his treatise *On the Good of Marriage* with the following statement: "Since every man is a part of the human race, and human nature is something social and possesses the capacity for friendship as a great and natural good, for this reason God wished to create all men from one" (Augustine 1996, *DBC* I). Marriage is not just any institution; it is the unifying institution *par excellence*. Augustine views marriage as,

among other things, an illuminator of our inherent sociality. The creation of the woman presents an image for the original intention for humankind: God did not create two separate persons with the intention of joining them together, rather Eve was built up from the rib of Adam. They are joined by the rib, as if to make an image not only of the marriage bond but of the whole human race. There is an essential unity in the relationship, despite the existence of really different persons. Unity does not mean sameness, because their souls really are different, as Augustine writes in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*: "Adam could have said in addition to "this now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," how much more tender and loving would it have been if he had said, "and soul of my soul" (Augustine 1982, GL X.1). Yet, Augustine goes on to say, Adam did not call his spouse "soul of my soul," highlighting the essential difference between the two partners in the conjugal bond. Marriage exemplifies the "unity in plurality" of which Augustine speaks in *The City of God* (DCD XII.28). Still, this unity and plurality of being is deeply mysterious.

In describing our social nature as something first seen in the family, Augustine suggests that all human beings are bound together in a blood relationship, first and most clearly within the family but then extending to the entire human race. One could not multiply the links of kinship if those beyond the immediate family could never be kindred. This multiplication is made possible by the original unity found in Adam. Human beings share a common likeness – because they are all children of Adam. Our contemporary tendency is to describe the human race as a family, while leaving unclear the meaning and source of that kinship. Refreshingly, Augustine provides an intriguing theoretical basis for the idea of the human family. That is because we come from a single common ancestor, and are led by our sociable nature to multiply kinship.

One feature of the longing for unity is that we wish for others to share what we ourselves enjoy. The good life is meant to be pursued and shared in human community. It could not be otherwise. Augustine thus thinks that the life of the wise man is properly social, and in this "we support them much more heartily" than in their proposals for the ultimate good (DCD XIX.5). Even though the philosophers do not correctly identify the ultimate good, and are powerless to show mankind how to obtain that good, they do rightly ascertain its social nature. To obtain this supreme good one must "live rightly" (DCD XIX.4), holding onto it by faith. For "we do not yet see our good, and hence we have to seek it by believing, and it is not in our power to live rightly, unless while we believe and pray, we receive help from him" (DCD XIX.4). Thus, Augustine's skepticism concerns the visibility of the ultimate good. But dim or blurred to the human eye as the ultimate good is, its attainment is not possible except if human beings are social. Augustine writes, "…how could that [Heavenly] City have made its first start, how could it have advanced along its course, how could it attain its appointed goal, if the life of the saints were not social?" (DCD XIX.5). *Socialis* is not only a quality or characteristic of the happy life; it is its essential precondition. Even history of the heavenly city, whose superiority Augustine impresses on the reader, could never have begun without the longing for unity.

Quarrelsome by Corruption

Yet so far, the analysis leaves out an important consideration. We have heard only half the tale of what we are. We are both the social and the anti-social creature. To repeat: *sociale natura*, by nature social, and *discordiosum vitio*, through perversion discordant (DCD XII.28).

According to Augustine, we cannot come to grips with the fall until we understand the effect it has on this most important feature of the human makeup. Augustine argues that "the most salutary warning against this perversion or disharmony is given by the facts of human nature" (ibid.). This interesting comment reveals that the social nature of human beings provides the standard by which we measure all conversation, and indeed all common enterprise. One might say that quarreling and disagreement offends our original nature. Augustine looks to the originally unified beginning, from whence all mankind came. We are warned by scripture to avoid quarrelling, Augustine says, "…or to remedy it when once it has appeared, by remembering the first parent of ours, who was created by God as one individual with this intention: that from the one individual a multitude might be propagated, and that this fact should teach mankind to preserve a harmonious unity in plurality (DCD XII.28).

We learn from Augustine that the use of speech itself opens the possibility of *discordiosum* – the same sounds that help others understand us can also "twang" – imperiling the very unity we so long for. The corruption of social nature is not a vague hatred of others, or indifference to them, but rather disagreement and discord. This tells us something about what Augustine means by sociality. Disagreement occurs precisely when people are engaged in some common effort. If there were no such effort, quarreling would not really occur because people simply would go their own way. There would be nothing to fight over. Disagreement is the corruption of creatures who have things in common, who desire unity with their fellow creatures *in something*. Augustine's use of the word *discordiosum* to convey the corruption of humankind shows the wisdom of Fortin's comment that human unity is found in God, in something higher than human beings.

The corruption of *socialis* shines through in Augustine's frequently quoted and frequently misunderstood passage on infants. Babies are something of a test case for the social nature, because lacking the distorting effects of education and rearing, they show us what people really are by nature. In *Confessions* I, Augustine gives a portrait of the psychology of babies, using himself as an example:

> Little by little I began to be aware where I was and wanted to manifest my wishes to those who could fulfil them as I could not. For my desires were internal; adults were external to me and had no means of entering into my soul. So I threw my limbs about and uttered sounds, signs resembling my wishes, the small number of which I was capable but such signs lay in my power to use: for there was no real resemblance. When I did not get my way, either because I was not understood or lest it be harmful to me, I used to be indignant with my seniors for their disobedience, and with free people who were not slaves to my interests; and I would revenge myself upon them by weeping. That this is the way of infants I have learnt from those I have been able to watch. That is what I was like myself and, although they have not been aware of it, they have taught me more than my nurses with all their knowledge of how I behaved (*Confessions* I.8).

The frustration of the infant in expressing desire reveals the fundamentally social nature of humans: *from birth* we are defined by the need to make known our wants. Elshtain argues that what Augustine wants us to see in the baby is the inherent sociality of human beings: "we are driven to communicate by our sociality, which lies at the basis of what Augustine proposes to be the nature of human societies" (Elshtain 2003, 290). Elshtain does not go far enough. The more compelling thesis is that we see, in the baby, the unique blend of sociality and anti-sociality that marks human beings after the fall. Augustine's description of the infant seems entirely calculated to show not only the wish to manifest one's wishes but how language (or signs) are utilized to bend the will of others toward our own. That is, we seek not unity but the subservience of other wills to our own. All human beings live like this.

Division naturally results when language serves the hidden motives of individuals. Augustine's tirade in Book XIV of *The City of God* shows that the fall of sociality becomes most

apparent within the family itself. Hence the family is both the location where the ties of relationship first emerge but also the place where we see human quarrelsomeness on clear display:

> …who would be capable of listing the number and the gravity of the ills which abound in human society amid the distresses of our mortal condition? Who would be competent to assess them? Our philosophers should listen to a character in one of their own comedies, voicing a sentiment with which all mankind agrees: "I married a wife, and misery I found! Children were born, and they increased my cares" (DCD XIX.5). [19]

Augustine says that we are consoled and pained by family in almost equal measure:

> …who are, in general, more friendly, or at any rate ought to be, than those within the walls of the same home? And yet, is anyone perfectly serene in that situation, when such grievous ills have so often arisen from the secret treachery of people within those walls? And the bitterness of those ills matches the sweetness of the peace that was reckoned genuine, when it was in fact only a clever pretense (DCD XIX.5).

Though peace is a real good sought by the family, Augustine indicates its elusiveness, and at times, even illusoriness. Politics is, at least along the plane of sociality, the family writ large. Augustine sees the act of political founding itself as infected by quarrelsomeness now indicative of individuals and plainly seen in the family. For, Augustine writes, "the quarrel that arose between Remus and Romulus demonstrated the division of the earthly city against itself" (DCD XV.5). A city divided against itself cannot stand; Augustine sees every city as so divided. Every city is *in principle* divided against itself because of the fall and the subsequent quarrelsomeness of the human race. Quarrels within the city and family quarrels are species of the same genera. In fact, the former arises from the latter and gains its intractable nature from it.

The "clever pretense" of peace within even the family is due to the quarrelsome nature of humanity. In the fall, we transformed from sociable to quarrelsome beings. In the original

[19] Quotation from Terence, *Adelph.* 5,4,13f

situation of Eden, the overwhelming human propensity was to cherish relationship, and in particular to look for unity and the assurance of fellowship and mutuality. But corruption of this inclination turns people into creatures who naturally seek difference, discord, disagreement, contention, rivalry. The precise nature of the change is not that we become asocial, but that we become anti-social. We are not indifferent to unity with others, our new disposition is one of hostility to it.

If Augustine says we are quarrelsome, the question arises: what do we quarrel *over*? What things bring people into contention with one another? For Augustine, the longing for unity is frequently expressed as the desire to share something with one's fellows. The sociable person *wants* others to enjoy the good that they themselves enjoy. The anti-social person is private, at least if we define privacy to mean the keeping of good things to oneself. As Elshtain notes, the most just political order is one that affords "the widest scope to fellowship and mutuality" (Elshtain 2003, 295). That is to say, the most just regime would be the most mutual and unified one, in which every good thing is shared. Not for nothing does Plato think that the perfect, most just regime requires communism of even spouses and private property. Augustine makes no hint of such communism before the fall, suggesting that mankind was not truly perfected in Eden. In heaven, people will "neither marry nor be given in marriage" (Matt 22:30, cf. Mark 12:25, Luke 17.27, 20:35), an indication that justice will be truly achieved – not the sharing of spouses but the dissolution of marriage itself.

With the fall, however, comes contention and division over the good things. Indeed, Augustine sees that the combination of good things and our newfound hostility to unity introduces extraordinary volatility into human affairs. Formerly, the good things were a means of unity but now are means of division. Though part of the knowledge of good and evil, and the

experience of evil, is the perception that the good things themselves are in limited supply and must be coveted and jealously guarded, that by itself does not fully explain the propensity to quarrel. What has changed is the relational disposition to those good things, which include material possessions but also political power (cf. DCD XV.4). Like the fallen angels, we live a "poverty-stricken" existence (DCD XI.1); the good things are less plentiful than they were.

Augustine sees a more political downside to this situation, as well. Compromise becomes both a necessity and something itself difficult to obtain. As Elshtain puts it, Augustine recognizes that for politics to function well "there must be a compromise between human wills" (Elshtain 2003, 295). This corruption means that a unified will, a general will, fragments into many wills all vying for supremacy – to make the particular will general when this is, in fact, really impossible. Compromise first comes into being because of this divergence in wills. But even as it mediates a disagreement about the basic goods to be achieved – a considerable accomplishment – nevertheless it requires two things for its successful operation. First, one must be willing to give concessions to the other party, and these concessions must be real. One must be prepared to give up a real good to ensure that one will get something. So, the "poverty" of the human condition means that it is possible, even likely, that we will get nothing, which forces us to the negotiating table. Second, unlike a simple deal, however, compromise implies the presence of goodwill. It implies that the folks on the other side *can* be worked with, compromised with.

Augustine sees that the fall of sociality intertwines, in fascinating ways, with our perception and experience of moral character. Our social nature furnishes the wish to be liked and included, but most of all it makes us wish to be admired. Augustine says we desire to receive praise from good judges of character (DCD V.19). He takes for granted that one cannot be a good judge of character without being morally virtuous oneself. Wanting to be admired by good

people is one facet of our yearning for fellowship. Not only do we enjoy the approbation of good judges; we also enjoy fellowship and mutual sharing with those who are good—but only if we are good ourselves. Being good is the ineluctable condition for enjoying fellowship with the good. Augustine shows that sociality cannot be separated from moral character. The good want to enjoy fellowship with the good, and the bad with the bad. Augustine's analysis of Adam's dismissal from the garden of Eden reveals this connection. Adam was not unceremoniously kicked out of the garden, Augustine says, rather he left of his own accord. He writes, in his interpretation of Genesis in *Against the Manichees*,

> "… God dismissed him from paradise." It is well put, "he dismissed," and not, "he excluded," so that he might seem to be drawn by the weight of his own sins to a place that suits him. A bad man generally experiences this when he begins to live among good men, if he is unwilling to change for the better. He is driven from the company of good men by the weight of his bad habit, and they do not exclude him against his will, but dismiss him in accord with his will" (*On Genesis* 2.22).

The good desire fellowship and society with the good, and the bad with the bad. Now, as a fallen race we can hardly bear the society of God and the righteous angels, which is why we were dismissed and not excluded from paradise. Augustine describes the fall here as a kind of leaving of society of righteous people, and joining a society of sinners. We can hardly bear to be united with those who are good, especially God himself. Thus, the social nature of human beings ensures that character will matter to them. The good wish to be united with the good, not with the bad – and vice versa.

In the fall, this desire to be admired and esteemed takes a darker turn, as Augustine shows in the famous episode of the pears in the *Confessions* (II.10). When Augustine was a teenager in a gang, he and his friends stole a good number of pears from a neighboring orchard. Augustine, reflecting on the event, saw it as a microcosm of the fall itself. The theft was pure wickedness, badness for the sake of badness. He did not steal the pears because of their quality or beauty, but

simply because he delighted in the doing of evil. Augustine makes it clear that he did not thieve simply *because* of the desire to be esteemed. But the episode reveals that our wish to be esteemed provides another reason why the fallen world is as bad as it is. Our wish for approval eggs us on to evil deeds, just as much or more than to good ones. And there is a further difficulty, which is simply that it is difficult to discern between the good and bad, so that good people will inevitably wish to be esteemed by those who are worse than them – something initially implausible but now a basic reality of the earthly city. Thus, far from offering resistance to evil, our social nature entangles us all the more. It is what makes life in the city of man such a *conmixtio* of good and evil.

Sociality and Self-Love

A final implication of the fall must be considered, for it too bears upon the question of sociality. Augustine clearly teaches that society after the fall is ordered on the principle of self-love. Love of self is *the* foundation of the earthly city. Given the centrality of self-love to Augustine's analysis of political life, we must endeavor to understand how his teaching squares with all that has been said regarding the corruption of man's social nature in the fall. In his argument in *The City of God* XIV.28, Augustine limns the essential character of the two cities: "…the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self. In fact, the earthly city glories in itself, the Heavenly City glories in the Lord. The former looks for glory from men, the latter finds its highest glory in God." In the following book, Augustine continues the thought:

> … human nature corrupted by sin, and therefore rightly condemned, did not deserve any true happiness for the future. Isaac therefore, who was born as a result of a promise, is rightly interpreted as symbolizing the children of grace, the

> citizens of the free city, the sharers in eternal peace, who form a community where there is no love of a will that is personal and, as we may say, private, but a love that rejoices in a good that is at once shared by all and unchanging – a love that makes 'one heart' out of many, a love that is the whole-hearted and harmonious obedience of mutual affection (DCD XV.3).

These two passages each form an apt description of each city, the first founded on self-love and the other love of unity in a good that is "shared by all and unchanging." The original conflict arises between the two cities out of these very different loves. The city founded on self-love cannot attain or even seek the unity so characteristic of the latter city, God's city. It is necessarily divided against itself because of its basis in self-love. Though Augustine certainly agrees that citizens can be united in some provisional or shallow agreement as to the object of their love – usually the good things of this world – these good things are desired for the sake of the self. Augustine provides us with a fairly apt description of political life: it is self-rule, rule by various selves. So, Augustine finds the political claim to nobility not entirely untrue (it is possible to be noble in politics, but only over and against politics) but insincere. There is a further problem as well, which is the mutability of the good things pursued in service of the self.

All this forms a part of Augustine's larger critique of Rome's ostensibly republican nature. There never was a *res publica* partly for the simple reason that the good that brings the political community together is, paradoxically, a private good – the self. This is the heart of the distinction – at least on a social level – drawn by Augustine between the city of God and the city of man. Weithman puts it this way: "The City of God consists of those who glory in God and love God rightly. Its members are unified by their common love of God… (Weithman 2006, 236). A truly social nature can only be found in the united love of God, love which binds and unites because only God can be truly enjoyed.

Thus, Augustine's basis for the two cities is based on the psychological distinction between the two things that we can love, God and the self. As Elshtain puts it, "… for Augustine, the question is not whether humans should be social or whether they should trust enough to love. Instead, the question is: "What shall I love and how shall I love it?" (Elshtain 2003, 291). One might point out that we have, really, only two objects of love. In articulating the motif of the two cities, Augustine does not mention options other than these two loves. He makes no reference, for example, to a disinterested interest in and regard for others apart from love of self or of God. Augustine does not think of sociality as valuing of others as ends in themselves. The true opposite of love of self is love of God, not love of others. Augustine devotes much of *The City of God* to showing that nothing can be an end in itself except for God; politics is a mess because people mistake a variety of instrumental ends – including other people – for the true end, God. For liberals who tend to associate tyranny with treating people as means rather than ends, this is a startling conclusion. Sociality, then, is not a high-minded assertion that persons are ends in themselves; yet Augustine does not maintain that people are simply useful means either. The love of God, the true opposite of love of self, leads to the enjoyment of one's own being and that of others, in God.

Living according to self-love means we live in contradiction with one of our deepest longings; that is, self-love ultimately undermines our social nature. The rule of self-love is profoundly *unnatural*, a deviation away from the original situation of sociality – both cause and sign of the fall. In putting continued emphasis on self-love, Augustine shows that social life serves as a microcosm of the fall. Though the fall obscured and distorted this natural human longing for unity with others (self-love blinds us to this good), it nevertheless did not erase the need for it. Thus, on the surface we are anti-social, but below the surface – at our core – we

retain the original longing, desiring to make another's good our own and to share what we have. As powerful as the fall's effect was, it did not eradicate this basic desire for unity. What the fall *did* do was make impossible the earthly fulfillment of that desire, and thus we live a kind of deep contradiction.

The Fall and Rule of a Social Nature

Augustine's view of sociality gives us greater insight into what he sees as the role of faith in political life. The aspiration toward a common good requires sociable people, people inclined toward unity and sharing of goods. Otherwise there *is* no common good, or at least none is possible in practice. But does Augustine think this is possible? As Nederman (1988) puts the question, "To what extent was it possible for men to recapture in the present life that associative nature with which they had been created but which they had lost through the commission of evil?" Augustine says it is only *by remembering the original unity of Adam* that we can be encouraged to guard against the fault of quarrelsomeness (DCD XII.28). He speaks to believers, saying they must be on their guard against this effect of the fall. But one guards against a fault when one has already made substantial progress in the moral life. Thus, in this passage, Augustine implies that substantial progress can be made with respect to making people sociable, but that this is a mercy of God rather than something to be accomplished by human striving. Only the work of God can undo the powerful effects of the fall, and this applies as much to our sociable nature as to anything. Faith can restore the ancient capacity for true unity – civic or otherwise – and this constitutes a great political good.[20] One of the central goals of Augustine's

[20] One question is still up in the air. Is making people sociable an essential political good, for Augustine? Can politics make do with our anti-social nature, or does it require truly sociable citizens? If Augustine takes the view

polemic is to show that becoming a citizen of the City of God makes one a better citizen here in this world. But embedded in Augustine's encouragement is a warning, as well, against the attempt to regain our sociable nature through human striving. Indeed, it would be dangerous to attempt this. There is something else to stop and ponder, as well. The progressive creed or ambition to achieve justice for all, is (among other things) a tacit admission to the *failure* to achieve justice so far in our history. The flaws of our political and economic institutions could account for this failure, and of course Augustine's analysis does not preclude analysis along these lines.

Yet the problem may be graver, and the investigation of the problem more difficult, than we institutionalists are inclined to admit. For what kind of person are our institutions calculated to benefit? If institutions merely mediate the conflicts of anti-social beings, then political justice does not mean the creation of social human beings but merely the benefitting of essentially anti-social people. Those unsatisfied by this arrangement – what they really want is for human beings to become social animals. Augustine speaks to this hope. He believes that human beings are properly social but also that they also lack this 'one thing needful'. Everywhere, we see evidence for the quarrelsomeness of the human race and the failure of justice. Further, Augustine suggests that people cannot by their own power regain their natural birthright. Only the city of God, as opposed to the earthly city, can restore to mankind what was lost in the fall.

The sociable nature of human beings aims at or culminates in human friendship; Augustine affirms the goodness of friendship but maintains the importance of seeking placing it correctly within the hierarchy of human goods. In this respect it looks similar to political power.

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that politics emphasizes love of self, and that compromise is not sociable at all but merely a process by which individual selves benefit from taking their slice of the pie, then making people sociable begins to look like a moral or spiritual, rather than political, good.

Both have a kind of dignity, but neither are worthy of pursuit as the highest good. In the *Confessions,* Augustine affirms they present certain attractions to the human eye:

> Temporal honor and the power of giving orders and of being in command have their own kind of dignity, though this is also the origin of the urge to self-assertion. Yet in the acquisition of all these sources of social status one must not depart from you, Lord, nor deviate from your law. The life which we live in this world has its attractiveness because of a certain measure in its beauty and its harmony with all those inferior objects that are beautiful. Human friendship is also a nest of love and gentleness because of the unity it brings about between many souls. Yet sin is committed for the sake of all these things and others of this kind when… we abandon the higher and supreme goods" (V.10).

This passage stands out for several reasons. Augustine's description largely mirrors the way we have been discussing the fall. The beauty we see in these goods produces much sin and suffering not because they are lower goods but because we forget they are so. We would not sin so badly if there were not such real pleasures to make us "abandon the higher and supreme goods" (V.10). Yet, in a parallel discussion that takes place in *The City of God*, Augustine writes that "it is incorrect to say that the goods which this city desires are not goods, since even that city is better, in its own human way, by their possession" (DCD XV.4). For a right understanding and ordering of our social nature, one must see human comity as marvelous and choice-worthy but ultimately inferior to the ultimate good. A healthy person longs for unity with others but yet knows that gaining this will not guarantee happiness, since happiness only comes from obtaining the highest good. Given this connection between sociality and friendship, we should consider how Augustine can regard a fully social nature as an impossibility (humanly speaking) while also affirming the very real possibility of friendship, the goal at which our social nature aims. Friendship, while perhaps rarer than we would like, is an attainable human good. But for this very reason it exists as an end-state: friendship is a kind of perfection of the relationship between persons. Augustine certainly speaks of it this way, in the *Confessions*, as a "nest of love and

gentleness" that brings about unity (V.10). Once attained, friendship (in itself) seeks no further end. Thus, our social nature underlies this desire to bestow affection in some concrete way.

It is worth asking, then: does the need for government arise from the social nature of human beings, or the fall of that nature? Only with extreme difficulty could one argue that Augustine's description of original sociality supplies a basis or foundation for government. Weithman summarizes such a case: "Because of their natural sociability, they would have lived in groups and those groups would presumably have needed direction. At issue is whether that direction would most aptly be described as an exercise of political authority" (Weithman 2006, 238). But there is a separate complexity, missed by Weithman. Against the speculation that political authority could arise from our original sociability, far more compelling is Augustine's insistence that the result of the fall on a nature *such as ours* is quarrelsomeness (cf. DCD XII.28).[21] Our quarrelsomeness, not our longing for unity, is the most obvious political fact that we must confront.

In other words, politics has a very important function in keeping our quarrelsomeness from making life absolutely miserable. Politics imposes on people the necessity of agreement and unity, no matter how "thin" the basis of the agreement is. For Augustine agrees with the pagan poets that strife and disunity make the human condition almost intolerable (DCD XIX.5). Yet that same passage, remarkably, is where Augustine agrees with the "The philosophers" who "hold the view that the life of the wise man should be social." He substantiates this claim by

[21] By Augustine's argument, we are social by nature but quarrelsome through the fall and the subsequent corruption of nature. This means that the condition of sin – being cut off from God – is a problem common to all humanity. It is a common problem because everyone shares a common descent from Adam, who was originally sociable but became quarrelsome: "the whole of mankind is a 'condemned lump'; for he who committed the first sin was punished, and along with him all the stock which had its roots in him" (DCD XXI.12). Yet it is interesting that Augustine also uses the original unity found Adam to show the origin of sociality.

pointing to the dilemma of the judge, a dilemma that Augustine himself knew well. Social life imposes a duty on the wise of judging those who may be guilty of a crime. Because of their ignorance, yet in order to fulfill their obligation, they cannot avoid the possibility of condemning the innocent and letting the guilty go free. Torture, even, may be required. The wise person knows all this and nevertheless fulfills this rather fearsome social duty. Politics, then, is not just a remedy for our social ills but an arena for social action. We do *express* our social nature in political life, as Elshtain remarks (2003). Yet she possibly underrates how fearsome it might be to satisfy what our social nature demands in a world where that same social nature suffers a deadly corruption.

Therefore, what emerges is a complicated picture of the relationship between social humans and political authority. Augustine produces little evidence for the rightness and necessity of political authority from the simple fact of human *socialis*, that is, from mankind's original nature. Much more compelling is the idea that Augustine takes seriously the corruption of sociality as a partial and quite modest explanation for the existence of politics, for the regime claims to do much more than simply mediate the quarrels of its citizens. To put it another way: can quarrels be mediated without the need to claim the mantle of justice? What we do learn from Augustine, as from other great political thinkers, is that regimes *do* claim to have and administer justice. That is what opens the Roman republic (and empire) up to Augustine's criticism in the first place. But it will require further research to see whether, for Augustine, the resolution of quarrels requires justice as a virtue for the individual or the city. He does see, at least, that a good political regime would moderate this tendency in human beings while remaining fully cognizant of its inability to eradicate it.

We should conclude with a final reminder that Augustine's concern for unity pervades all aspects of his social teaching. Forgiveness, in a fallen world, is the recipe for inner healing and peace with others. Augustine writes,

> this is why so many precepts are given about mutual forgiveness and the great care needed for the maintenance of peace, without which no one will be able to see God.[22] Hence the terrifying sentence on the slave when he was ordered to repay a debt of ten thousand talents, which had been forgiven, because he did not forgive his fellow slave a debt of a hundred denarii. And when the Lord Jesus had told this parable, he added, 'This is what your Heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not, every one of you, forgive your brother from your heart.'[23] This is how the citizens of the City of God are restored to health while on pilgrimage on this earth, as they sigh for their heavenly country (DCD XV.7).

Augustine defends the divine intention for unity, while making it clear that we can hardly receive this wisdom except by revelation. Only because of Genesis do we know about the original unity of the human race and the divine command to strive for it, instead of (for example) the speech of Aristophanes in the *Symposium* quoted in the very beginning. The longing for unity has a basis that cannot be discovered through mere mythmaking or even philosophy. That is, the obscurity of this longing's origin gives rise to the need for revelation to explain it.

[22] Hebrews 12:14
[23] Matt 18:24-25.

CHAPTER THREE

Look down, look down, You'll always be a slave. Look down, look down, You're standing in your grave.

Work Song, *Les Miserables*

In Books XII-XIX of *The City of God,* Augustine discusses the consequences of the fall for the human race. These consequences are twofold. First, we have a desire problem. Second, we have a death problem. Augustine does not arbitrarily select death and distorted desire as items from a general list or catalogue of man's ills. Rather, he singles them out as the touchstones of a dislocated human nature, which Augustine says was "vitiated" and "altered" by the fall. This chapter is dedicated to understanding Augustine's articulation of both these problems. Here I ask: if we take the occurrence of the fall for granted, what then becomes a "problem" for human beings? What are the deepest concerns of a *fallen* human being, as opposed (for example) to the concerns of a rational but uncorrupted being? These questions arise in Augustine's inquiry in the middle and latter parts of *The City of God*.

First, Augustine argues that as a result of the fall, the condition of humanity is one of slavery and compulsion to desire. This aspect of the human soul colors every decision and every enterprise. But, even as desire seems to rule us and therefore the political world, it is difficult to understand how it works and why it exerts such a grip on us. In other words, the deeper we believe the depths of desire to be, the more we begin to doubt that we can understand the motivation of human beings. This makes politics a complicated business indeed. As realist commentators such as Deane have noted, Augustine is not a "producer of system" for exactly that reason (1963). A systematic or deductive political scheme implies that human motivations *can* be easily understood and injected into a model. People are predictable; their motivations can

be rationalized. Now, human beings were not exactly simple in the beginning, either, but what I analyze here is the challenge or question of desire in its relation to human corruption. Augustine's treatment of the fall helps us to understand of why desire poses such a problem for political life. Augustine also argues for a second great consequence of the fall: the subjection of mankind to mortality. For Augustine the very fact of human mortality is closely intertwined with his defense of the fall.

These two features of life on earth are, Augustine argues, the most obvious consequences of mankind's fall. In *The City of God,* Augustine's discussion of mankind's slavery to desire always intersects (or takes place with) a corresponding declaration that mankind is doomed to die as a punishment. Fallen man is a desiring creature; he is also a dying creature. The idea of the fall, as related by Augustine, teaches that these problems are linked, they somehow correspond to one another, or only make sense in light of the other. Perhaps they exist as two sides of the same coin, so that the deepest desire of man *as fallen man* is to overcome human mortality.

The word Augustine most often uses for desire is *libido*. Peter Brown writes "a *libido*, for Augustine, was a desire that had somehow got out of control: the real problem, therefore, was why it had got out of control, what deeper dislocation this lack of moderation reflected" (Brown 2007, 36-37). The out-of-control nature of desire is a clue to the interior dislocation of all human beings. Sin, it might be said, is not simply a wrong choice but also a state of the soul that disposes human beings to make wrong choices. Humankind is disposed toward wrong choices as result of a seminal weakness in our nature. But how does Augustine see the fall contributing to this weakness?

Augustine claims in the very beginning of his *Confessions* that all people ultimately desire to enjoy God. But most people and nations pant after pretty ordinary, 'low' goods. Dodaro

argues that "Human beings become ever more obsessed with these 'lower' objects, as interest in them is transformed into the desire to possess them. Desire undergoes this corruption both as a result of the attraction of material objects and activities and as a consequence of the approval of others who encourage their possession" (2004). Dodaro rightly believes that sin reorients us to desire the material goods of life. Yet for a few different reasons, this account of corruption seems inadequate. The goods themselves suffered no change in the fall. What did change was our perception and desire for them. And the approval of others, as a cause of this change in our desires for those material goods, would not matter so much if there were not something in the soul which answered to such approval and agreed with its verdict. Augustine says as much in his famous discussion of the theft of pears in the *Confessions*: that it was not the attraction in the pears themselves, or even the social compulsion of his gang of pear-stealers, but rather the theft which attracted him: "I loved the self-destruction, I loved my fall, not the object for which I had fallen but my fall itself… I was seeking not to gain anything by shameful means, but shame for its own sake" (II.9). Augustine shows that something in us answers to the wicked promptings of our lousy friends. At issue, then, is the human heart, with all its follysome desires ruling over it. At issue in the wake of the fall is the very human capacity, on which we pride ourselves: our ability to will something, to freely choose. And yet we choose shame, we choose to fall, we choose corruption for its own sake. Augustine's description of the pear theft should shock and puzzle us. Were we really so stupid, in the beginning, to fall for a bunch of uncomely pears because we perversely wanted to be ashamed?

To see this puzzle, we must backtrack a moment. Augustinian civic liberals have sought to address an important challenge in contemporary ethical theory, namely how to generate regard for others in the face of self-interest. Augustine teaches that human beings, at our core, are a

bundle of loves (cf. Elshtain 2004; Gregory 2008). On a political level the challenge, as it were, consists in rightly ordering people's loves, putting them in position to love their fellow citizens and to want their good – because we can be self-lovers, turned in on ourselves. Scholars such as Gregory are most acutely aware of the opportunities and dangers present in the human being, if indeed we are what Augustine implies: "bundles of love" (Gregory 2010, 320). He writes, "the deeper problem is that we love too much in the wrong ways. Our motivations and desires are out of whack, not simply lacking" (Gregory 2008, 39). The challenge consists not in irrigating the desert of the human heart, but rather to direct the firehose of love in the right direction and understanding why it is so difficult to love things well, in their right order. The analysis and prescription would largely end there, if we could understand this self-serving to be successful in its aims. But Augustine's depiction of the human slavery to desire – the direct result of the fall – shows this not to be the case. Augustine's moral realism (cf. Schall. 1996) begins with this insight about human longing. Or rather, the realist insight is that Augustine treats *libido dominandi* as equally basic to fallen man as the instinct for self-preservation (cf. Deane 1963). I argue, however, that the rule of desire over mankind is the more basic problem.

In the second portion of this chapter, I discuss the question of mortality in light of the fall. As Cavadini shows, Augustine argues for the badness of death (Cavadini 1999). Against people like his teacher Ambrose and the neo-platonic tradition more broadly, Augustine maintains in *The City of God* XIII that death is not good for anyone, not even the saints for whom death seems to be a release from the moral and spiritual warfare of this life and the corruption of the body.[24] Ambrose had argued in *De Bono Mortis* that death was good because it useful (*utilitas*) in securing this release. But Augustine – according to Cavadini – argues that

[24] Cf. (Dodaro 1989; Martin 2009).

death is not useful at all; it is merely a privation of life, which is good. More specifically, death "is and represents not a *vis* or a *virtus* but a weakening, an injury, a diminution, a helplessness, in the face of a movement to ultimate incoherence…" (Cavadini 1999, 243).[25] Given this view of death, it is logical to ask whether this deprivation marks all of life, not simply the moment when we die. Cavadini says yes: death cannot be nicely contained in one moment, but in fact characterizes our whole life. We live a dying life. Moreover, and more importantly for this chapter, death is but the culmination of what Cavadini calls an incoherent *societas* of soul and body, an incoherence that marks our entire existence.[26] This chapter aims to expand on this very shrewd insight about the relationship of soul and body, by focusing specifically on the fall.

The Unfree Will

As I argued in the first chapter, Augustine emphasizes the good of obedience for a rational yet dependent creature such as man. He writes that God created man's nature as "a kind of mean between angels and beasts," with the corresponding choice in how humanity would live. If he "submitted to his creator, as to his true sovereign Lord, and observed his instructions with dutiful obedience," he would attain "an immortality of endless felicity." However, if man "used his free will in arrogance and disobedience, and thus offended God, his Lord, he should live like the beasts, under sentence of death, should be the slave of his desires…" (DCD XII.22).[27] Here

[25] Cavadini cites a passage from Augustine's *On Nature and Grace* 53.62, "Vulnerata, sauciata, vexata, perdita est."
[26] Cavadini does not quite explain what he means by this incoherence, but certainly it should not be taken to mean that the body as such is evil or bad. It is precisely because the body is good that its death can be considered an evil. Moreover, Cavadini makes a connection between the body's goodness (and the evil of its sufferings) and political compassion. If death is good, then human bodies (at least) cannot be "objects of compassion" (Cavadini 1999, 246).
[27] As we have seen from the first chapter already, Augustine constantly stresses the importance of obedience to man's original state of felicity: "obedience is in a way the mother and guardian of all the other virtues in a rational creature, seeing that the rational creation has been so made that it is to man's advantage to be in subjection to God, and it is calamitous for him to act according to his own will, and not to obey the will of his Creator" (DCD XIV.12). Obedience is a mother and guardian of the virtues and therefore of happiness, which is to be obtained only by "living rightly" (DCD XIX.3-4).

we have Augustine's summary statement of the immediate and devastating consequences of the fall for humankind. In the following book, Augustine repeats in slightly altered form the formula of the fall's result, unfolding the idea a bit more: "Human nature in [Adam] was vitiated and altered, so that he experienced the rebellion and disobedience of desire in his body and was bound by the necessity of dying" (DCD XIII.3). We learn, in these portions of *The City of God*, that Augustine goes through successive stages or attempts to define a problem. Each time, the language differs slightly enough to warrant closer reading. Here, Augustine puts an unexpected twist on the desire problem to which he drew our attention. We are not merely slaves to desire; we experience desire as a "disobedient citizen" within our person, hampering our efforts to obtain the things we wish for.[28] Our every desire is divided against itself. Augustine thereby indicates that the nature of the slavery is not extrinsic to us; desire is not an external constraint on our liberty or a cruel taskmaster outside of us. We have a cruel taskmaster, and it is nothing other than we ourselves. Adam is the slave of "*his* desires" (DCD XII.22, emphasis mine). Later on, Augustine writes that Adam was "handed over to himself" by God's justice (DCD XIV.15). We live in abject slavery to ourselves. It is a puzzling and indeed disturbing formulation.

That is why Augustine speaks of desire as a constraint rather than a liberation of the will.[29] In a chapter entitled "The emotions of the first human beings before their sin," Augustine writes that there was no fear or sadness in the garden because there was no sin (DCD XIV.10). In a world where desire presents no problems for humanity, the will's choices were genuinely free.

[28] I say this cautiously, but in the texts cited throughout this dissertation I see Augustine consistently using "wish" to denote a hope for moral goodness.

[29] Cavadini's interpretation is that desire is one of the passions, such as fear or sadness. This definition is somewhat unsatisfying because if this is the case, desire either did not exist in the uncorrupted world, or in a form we would hardly recognize (cf. Cavadini 2005). Augustine clearly argues that humanity was not disturbed by such passions before the Fall and thus "desire was not yet in opposition to the will" (DCD XIV.12). Cavadini puts it somewhat differently, "Any given emotion, such as joy or fear, is in itself neutral, but can be felt differently based on the fundamental configuration of the will" (Cavadini 2008).

It is a freedom unfamiliar to us: "the choice of the will, then, is genuinely free only when it is not subservient to faults and sins. God gave it that true freedom, and now that it has been lost, through its own fault, it can be restored only by him who had the power to give it at the beginning" (DCD XIV.11). This point is worth meditating over. For Augustine, freedom consists principally in the ability to choose good. In the human soul's original state, God predisposed it to love and desire the good. [30] We were poised to exercise true freedom. Before the fall, the soul loved God and was moved by him (cf. Weithman 2006; Loriaux 1992; Deane 1963). The will was never completely independent or self-moving: love for God stirred and directed its choices. Our disposition was not neutral but actively ordered to the love of good, especially of the highest good, God himself. And that, in Augustine's view, did not make people less free.

The first human beings went astray as they chose to live "by the standard of man" rather than God's standard, delighting in "their own power, as though they themselves were their own Good" (DCD XIV.4, see also XII.1). Augustine says, furthermore, that "when the will leaves the higher and turns to the lower, it becomes bad not because the thing to which it turns is bad, but because the turning itself is perverse" (DCD XII.7). But Augustine's comparison of men and angels is especially illuminating. As rational creatures, angels face the same choice as human beings do. Some, says Augustine, persisted "resolutely in that Good which is common to all…and in his eternity, truth, and love, while the others were delighted rather with their own power" (DCD XII.1). Augustine speaks of the angels not out of idle curiosity or theological speculation but because as rational creatures they show how the will can be turned by adherence

[30] See Couenhoven (2016): "According to Augustine's moral psychology, Adam and Eve's prelapsarian agency had its source in a love for the good that was bestowed on them at the moment of their creation. He envisioned Adam and Eve acting out of a volitional structure in which love for God and love for themselves and others were properly ordered from the start. In other words, the first couple was endowed with an original righteousness. Not only did they not have to struggle with the disordered desires that Augustine called 'carnal concupiscence,' they were born with a desire to obey God" (11).

to a merely created standard, choosing "pride in their own elevation in exchange for the true exaltation of eternity" (DCD XII.1). The bad angels foreshadowed and preceded the human race in its own choice of standards.

Adam and Eve were still able to choose evil, as they in fact did. But once they chose wrongly, in using their "freedom in arrogance and disobedience" (DCD XII.22) they severely compromised the freedom of will they formerly enjoyed. When possessed of a good will, they could do either good or evil. But their resolute turning toward evil compromised their ability to so easily do good. Thus, the interesting thing about desire, in Augustine's political theory of the fall, is its opposition to the most cherished of human faculties – the ability to choose. Desire comes to dominate us, to hold our will in utter subjection. But this occurs at the same time that we are "given over to ourselves." Being handed over to ourselves is not a liberation, but rather a punishment.

Shame About Nakedness

We should return for a moment to Augustine's comment that desire behaves like a disobedient citizen in the soul. This constitutes a fitting punishment for mankind's disobedience to God. Augustine writes about it this way because he hopes to show that in the original sin, obedience was the issue. Since we did not obey an exceedingly easy command, we now live in a condition where our will cannot command what is rightfully lower than it. The punishment fits the crime: "the retribution for disobedience is simply disobedience itself. For man's wretchedness is nothing but his own disobedience to himself, so that because would not do what he could, he now wills to do what he cannot" (DCD XIV.15). The flesh of humanity began to disobey the spirit of humanity from the moment they turned away from God. "[Adam and Eve]

felt a novel disturbance in their disobedient flesh, as a punishment which answered to their own disobedience" (DCD XIII.15). In the same chapter, he writes of an "unruly disturbance" that "arose in the flesh of the unruly soul" (DCD XIII.15). What does Augustine mean by this "novel" and "unruly" disturbance?" The object lesson of the body's disobedience is, as Augustine says, the embarrassing fact of impotence of the will in relation to the sexual act (DCD XIV.17). Augustine observes that we cannot *will* the sexual act, because the completion of that act requires the obedience of organs now under the dominance of desire. Before the fall, we would simply have procreated not through sexual arousal but through a free and conscious decision. Augustine writes, "it would not have been difficult for God to fashion him in such a way that even what is now set in motion in his flesh only by lust should have been moved only by his will," and a few paragraphs later: "…is there any reason why we should not believe that before the sin of disobedience and its punishment of corruptibility, the members of a man's body could have been the servants of man's will without any lust, for the procreation of children?" (DCD XIV.24). That is, the body would "begin its activity" at the will's behest, "instead of being stirred up by the ferment of lust." (DCD XIV.16). In his discussion of the *pudenda,* the sexual organs, Augustine says: "These organs (the 'organs of shame'), were the same as they were before, but previously there was no shame attaching to them. Thus, they felt a novel disturbance in their disobedient flesh, as a punishment which answered to their own disobedience" (DCD XIV.13,17).

Shame at nakedness reveals not just the body's disobedience to the will but the human embarrassment or awareness of this disobedience. The Biblical narrative, according to Augustine, took special care to separate nakedness from shame in the condition of mankind's

innocence: "as Scripture tells us, 'they were naked, and yet they felt no embarrassment.[31] This was not because they had not noticed their nakedness, but because nakedness was not yet disgraceful, because lust did not yet arouse those members independently of their decision" (DCD XIV.17). Augustine wants to explore the connection of lust, or concupiscence, to nakedness once the fall occurs.

Augustine sees disobedience as the key to understanding why one covers the genitals, the organs of reproduction. Simply, it is our effort to keep the out-of-control organs under control. This "decency" is prompted by the sense of shame: "It is right…to be ashamed of this lust, and it is right that the members which it moves or fails to move by its own right, so to speak, and not in complete conformity to our decision, should be called *pudenda*, which they were not called before man's sin; for, as Scripture tells us, 'they were naked, and yet felt no embarrassment'" (DCD XIV.17).[32] The rebellion of desire within the human being leads to a most profound sense of shame, that of nakedness. Augustine does not think that mankind's innocence before the fall blinded them to their true condition of nakedness. Rather, their innocence consisted partly in the fact that they knew they were naked, but that nudity was not yet disgraceful. Why? Augustine answers: "the flesh did not yet, in a fashion, give proof of man's disobedience by a disobedience of its own" (DCD XIV.17).

The eyes of Adam and Eve were wide open before the fall, writes Augustine, "and yet not wide enough open" (DCD XIV.17), suggesting that in blushing at their nakedness they became aware of their newly rebellious bodies. They did not recognize the blessing of being given a "garment of grace," that is, the blessing of living in a body whose members "did not know how to rebel against their will" (DCD XIV.17). This grace was taken away in the fall, where the

[31] Gen 2:25.
[32] Gen. 2:25.

body's parts would rebel against the will – resulting in the newfound experience of shame. In the body's disobedience, the punishment of the fall with which we are now familiar, "there appeared in the movements of their body a certain indecent novelty, which make nakedness shameful. It made them self-conscious and embarrassed" (DCD XIV.17). Why were Adam and Eve embarrassed by their nakedness? Augustine elaborates a bit further, noting that they "…were embarrassed by the insubordination of their flesh, the punishment which was a kind of evidence of their disobedience…" (DCD XIV.17). Augustine takes embarrassment about nakedness as a "kind of evidence" of the insubordination of the flesh which, he reminds us, is a punishment. The insubordination of the sexual organs reveals our guiltiness – and the first human beings wished to hide the evidence of it.

When Adam and Even realized they were naked, they hid themselves,[33] which Augustine takes as a metaphor for the fact that shame about nakedness arises from embarrassment about the fact that lust rules our parts, not our will. A few chapters later, Augustine says that after the fall "man's nature felt, blushed at, and concealed this lust," (DCD XIV.21). This raises the question: why is covering our sexual organs "decent," as Augustine says? Covering ourselves seems like an act of hiding our disobedience. But the opposite is true, Augustine argues. Modesty is an admission of shame, the decent shame at exposure of our sexual parts.[34] That we cover the sexual organs, Augustine thinks, is a kind of right confession of disobedience.[35]

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[33] Gen. 3:8.

[34] Augustine's interpretation of "their eyes were opened" shows that they could distinguish the good which they had lost (the "garment of grace"), and the evil into which they had fallen. Eyes being opened to the knowledge of evil: "they gained a knowledge where ignorance would have been a greater bliss if they had trusted in God and obeyed him…." Now they "learn by experience the harm that disloyalty and disobedience would do" (DCD XIV.21).

[35] Augustine's makes an insightful quip about God's call to Adam and Eve after they sinned and their eyes were opened. They hid in utter shame, at their newfound nakedness. In asking 'where are you?' God was "obviously not asking for information; he was rebuking Adam; and by the form of the rebuke he was warning him to take notice where he was, in that God was not with him (DCD XIII.15). To be with God is to be clothed in grace, to be without him is to be naked and ashamed in the world, ashamed especially of being part of the human race. In asking this

When discussing this connection between nakedness, shame, and human disobedience, Augustine says that the shamefulness of the naked body presents a "kind of evidence" and proof "in a fashion" (XIV.17) of the fall, indicating that he does not rely on it as conclusive but rather uses it as corroborating evidence for the reality of the fall. "Thus modesty, from a sense of shame, covered what was excited to disobedience by lust, in defiance of a will which had been condemned for the guilt of disobedience; and from then onwards the practice of concealing the pudenda has become a deep-rooted habit in all peoples, since they all derive from the same stock" (DCD XIV.17). Augustine appeals to a certain anthropological fact, namely that all people of the world tend to cover the sexual organs. This covering is not a mere cultural artifact. Rather it is explained as an effect of the original fall.

Augustine helpfully compares two different passions dominant in mankind, passion and anger. The Platonists, "who approached the truth more nearly than the other philosophers," knew that lust and anger were perverse elements of human character (DCD XIV.19). They taught that these "disturbed and undisciplined emotions" need "the control of intelligence and reason" (DCD XIV.19). One way to think about these features of human character is Augustine's suggestion that they were "set in motion" by the fall, needing guidance and indeed coercion from the rational part of the soul in order to live rightly. In paradise, lust and anger

> were not set in motion, in defiance of a right will, to pursue any course which made it necessary to hold them back with the guiding reins, so to speak, of reason. The situation now is that these passions are set in motion in this fashion, and are brought under control by those who live disciplined, just, devout lives…but this control entails coercion and struggle, and the situation does not represent a state of health in accordance with nature, but an enfeebled condition arising from guilt (DCD XIV.19).

question, God was giving humanity a chance to acknowledge its problem – to come out into the open, so to speak, and repent.

Augustine says that these unruly passions can be brought under control – but control is not the same thing as the cessation of struggle. Even the devout bear the marks of this enfeebled condition in which people struggle against those passions. Most interestingly, this coercion and struggle ensues because the genital organs themselves have "become as it were the private property of lust, which has brought them so completely under its sway that they have no power of movement if this passion fails, if it has not arisen spontaneously or in response to a stimulus. It is this that arouses shame…" (DCD XIV.19). To put it all together, Augustine connects the experience of shame to the unloosing of the passions and their control over human genitalia. Thus, we are not equally ashamed about all distortions of the soul involving loss of control. Lust makes us more ashamed than does, say, anger. "A man," Augustine writes, "would be less put out by a crowd of spectators watching him visiting his anger unjustly upon another man than by one person observing him when he is having lawful intercourse with his wife" (DCD XIV.19). Why are we put out when people violate our privacy? Augustine argues that it is a feature of human nature's response to mankind's fall.[36] Shame is the testimony of human nature to human disobedience and a "proof" of the "retribution" exacted on humankind. He puts it thus:

> …human nature then is, without any doubt, ashamed about lust, and rightly ashamed. For in its disobedience, which subjected the sexual organs solely to its own impulses and snatched them from the will's authority, we see a proof of the retribution imposed on man for that first disobedience. And it was entirely fitting that this retribution should show itself in that part which effects the procreation of the very nature that was changed for the worse through that first great sin. This offense was committed when all mankind existed in one man, and it brought universal ruin on mankind… (DCD XIV.20)

Further, we can link this to Augustine's deprecation of efforts to eradicate shame. Why is this? We are "ashamed" about lust, but "rightly ashamed." This means that, as lamentable as the

[36] The idea of privacy itself, to continue a thread from the previous chapter, in some way reflects the fallen condition, because it means the hiding of oneself from another, or a turning from some other person. Certainly, Augustine speaks of the fall as a turning from God. Cf. (Cary 2004).

condition of shame is, we notice something right about showing shame, too. The acts of public sex, as practiced by the cynic philosophers, and of public nudity represents an intentional overcoming of shame (cf. DCD XIV.20). Augustine might say that such efforts represent an intentional forgetting of something natural. Put otherwise, it is a calculated indifference to one of the fall's most powerful effects. Feeling shame at the public exhibition of our sexual parts is good, because we remember how far off the original nakedness was, where Adam and Eve walked in the garden and yet felt no shame.

Shame is not good in itself but good because it attests to the disobedience of human nature, which "snatched the sexual organs" from the authority of the will. Human nature in a way testifies, or witnesses, to the disobedience of human beings. The very effort to overcome shame in a way attests to the power of this "proof" seen in the mirroring disobedience of human sexuality. Augustine says that it is "fitting" that the retribution show reveal itself in the very parts that effect the procreation of children, the perpetuation of our nature (DCD XIV.20). Yet he concludes this argument, however, by emphasizing the original goodness of marriage and of procreation, reminding us that the dominion mandate to multiply and fill the earth means carnal multiplication (XIV.22-24). The blessing of fertility not "forfeited" by sin, but definitely associated with lust, and therefore, with shame.

To summarize this aspect of the fallen condition, then, we might say that people have become more fleshly or carnal and less spiritual. The body does not simply disobey in a mechanical way; rather we become bodily-minded. This passage is worth reciting in full:

> Therefore it was a just punishment that followed, and the condemnation was of such a kind that man who would have become spiritual even in his flesh, by observing the command, became carnal even in his mind; and he who in his pride had pleased himself was by God's justice handed over to himself. But the result of this was not that he was in every way under his own control, but that he was at odds with himself, and lived a life of

> harsh and pitiable slavery, instead of the freedom he so ardently desired, a slavery under him whom he entered into agreement in his sinning (DCD XIV.15).

If man had obeyed, he would have become "spiritual" even in his flesh. That indicates that the opposition is not between spirit and body as such, but the body as it has become as a result of the fall. Or, because of the fall and its punishment, humans became "carnal" in their mind. We do not ponder the stars but instead meditate on low things. Man wished to seize control, and God allowed him to take control.[37] Yet the outcome is that man does not live under his own control, but rather "at odds with himself," living a life of "harsh and pitiable slavery" (DCD XIV.15). Augustine also says that in the original offense that we "entered into an agreement" with ourselves. But the agreement led to bondage, not liberty. It's a difficult idea to understand, but there's no way around it: we live as slaves to ourselves. The fallen state of mankind is servitude to himself, but this is something intolerable. We can see this in the language of bondage and captivity that permeates Augustine's analysis of desire and will in the *Confessions*:

> I was bound, not with another man's chains, but with my own iron will. The enemy held my will, and, indeed, made a chain of it for me, and constrained me. Because of a perverse will, desire was made; and when I was enslaved to desire it became habit; and habit not restrained became necessity. By which links ... a very hard bondage had me enthralled (VIII.5).[38]

Here we see what might be called a deadly sequence at work. First, the perverse will, which leads to disordered desire, then the formation of a habit of slavery to desire. Once habit becomes

[37] An entire paper could be written on why Adam and Even chose to fall in the first place. Though I largely side with Couenhoven's suggestion that Augustine found the original sin mysterious, Augustine does say in several places that human beings wished to rule themselves; they wanted to live by their own standard (DCD XII.1), disdaining to serve God (DCD XII.13). Couenhoven says:

> Augustine suggested that God graciously supported Adam and Eve, not only by commanding that they act obediently and implying that they would be rewarded for doing so but by giving them the mental and volitional power to hold fast to the good. So although Adam and Eve were ontically and psychologically capable of sinning, God had stacked the deck against the Fall, and it made no sense that they should have done so…They had no reason not to trust God, and their own natures inclined them to do so. This is why Augustine found the primal sin mysterious" (2016, 11-12).

[38] See also *Confessions* II.6-7, also VII.3.

fully entrenched, we become subject to "necessity." Augustine is not making the literal claim that free will ceases to exist, but he rather emphasizes that we act as if it did not. Augustine mentions that Satan, the 'enemy,' the tempter of mankind, works not by laying chains on mankind but by letting human beings rule themselves and convince themselves that in this lies freedom. One question is whether we actually like what we choose if we choose something that goes against our nature.[39] But that is not quite Augustine's concern here. Rather, his insight that this slavery to desire becomes habitual and hard to break underlies his suspicion of all claims to freedom attained by human power or wisdom. Freedom is a divine gift. To be free involves living rightly, but Augustine finds this possibility to be radically compromised by the power of habitually and unquestioningly chasing after desire's command. Further, we may do all this from a very sincere hope to be happy. Happiness would be, as Augustine puts it a few chapters later in Book XIV, living according to our wish. But in the fall came "the more obvious misery where man does not live as he wishes to live. If he lived as he wished, he would consider himself happy" (DCD XIV.25). What does Augustine mean by living as we wished? A closer inspection reveals multiple levels. First, fallen mankind lives in a way that makes happiness impossible of attainment, objectively speaking. So, Augustine means, man cannot live as he truly would wish to live, if he were choosing in a state of complete freedom from the strictures of sin. We lack happiness because happiness requires living rightly. Augustine also means that everyone – even the most inveterately wicked – wish to live rightly. This wish is a powerful one. It's so powerful, in fact, that it leads to extremes of self-deception and incredible distortions. It is the most

[39] As James Schall writes, "Things work out according to our nature. We are free in our wills. The punishment for our sins, for the wrong use of our wills, is not so much external pain inflicted by someone else, God, say, or some alien power. Rather, it is the internal awareness that ultimately we get what we choose. And when what we choose is not according to what we are, not according to the order of things, we eventually find that we do not like what we choose. We do not really want it" (Schall 2008).

common thing in the world, really: blindness to evidence that we do not live rightly, or rearrangements of our faults so as to make them into virtues. What causes this situation to arise is that we cannot easily change course, getting so stuck in habits of slavery leads us to these self-justificatory behaviors.

Desire and Mortality

Death presents a special problem for the human being; confronting the human condition means coming face to face with death. Augustine writes, "…death is a reality; and so troublesome a reality that it cannot be explained by any verbal formula, nor got rid of by any rational argument" (DCD XIII.11). I have already mentioned that Augustine views the human problems of desire and death as somehow connected. The first piece of evidence for this contention is the fact Augustine mentions them together, quite frequently. Augustine states that if mankind used free will "in arrogance and disobedience, and thus offended God, he should live like the beasts, under sentence of death, should be the slave of his desires…" (DCD XII.21). Later on, he writes that Adam "experienced the rebellion and disobedience of desire in his body, and was bound by the necessity of dying" (DCD XII.3); and again: in this life of harsh and pitiable slavery to desire, mankind is "dead in spirit, of his own will; but doomed, against his will, to die in body" (DCD XIV.15). Why does Augustine pair these two consequences of the fall? More importantly, is the pairing intended to make us think that these two results of the fall are actually one result, one problem? I believe this to be the case. As fallen man, our most ardent desire is to become free from death; yet before the fall we did not sufficiently appreciate the gift of deathlessness.

The tyranny of desire is the first instance of death that we experience. To better know the character of this disobedience, we must learn the nature of the body that has become not only rebellious to the soul but subject to death. Augustine's image of unfallen humankind is not a bodiless one, but rather one in which the body takes on the obedience proper to it and immortal glory due it. In our fall, by contrast, the soul

> rejoiced in its own freedom to act perversely and disdained to be God's servant; and so, it was deprived of the obedient service which its body had at first rendered. At its own pleasure, the soul deserted its superior and master; and so, it no longer retained its inferior and servant obedient to its will. It did not keep its own flesh subject to it in all respects… this then was the time when the flesh began to 'lust in opposition to the spirit,[40] which is the conflict that attends us from our birth. We bring with us, at our birth, the beginning of our death, and with the vitiation of our nature our body is the scene of death's assault, or rather of his victory, as the result of that first disobedience. (DCD XIII.13).

Augustine's theory of pleasure and pain, it might be mentioned, is that these things do not principally have to do with the body as such, alone. The "so-called pains of the flesh are really pains of the soul, experienced in the flesh and from the flesh. The flesh can surely feel no desire or pain by itself, apart from the soul." Because this is so, the flesh "gives us trouble by its non-compliance." (DCD XIV.15). It has become a weight, a burden on the soul. Augustine writes that "…it is not the body as such, but the corruptible body, that is a burden to the soul. Hence the scriptural statement… 'The corruptible body weighs down the soul.' The addition of 'corruptible' shows that the writer meant that the soul was weighed down not by any kind of body but by the body as it became as a result of sin and the punishment that followed" (DCD XIII.16). Sinful and punished bodies are, in the end, dying bodies. Further, Augustine argues that we experience this death sentence as the body's rebellion against the disobedient soul. Augustine argues that "against his volition" man experiences a troubled mind, pain, old age, and death

[40] Galatians 5:17.

(DCD XIV.15). Augustine employs this idea of the body's rebellion against the soul as way to describe both of these two basic problems of desire and mortality.

Does Augustine regard death, this "troublesome reality", as a natural event? Augustine's articulation of the fall shows us that he considers death to unnatural in one sense, yet quite natural in another. He writes that death was "not inflicted on us by the law of our nature… it was imposed as a just punishment for sin" (DCD XIII.15).Yet earlier in the same book, Augustine had argued that what was a punishment for the first parents turns into something "natural and congenital" for their posterity (DCD XIII.3). Our bodies – unlike that of our first parents – are bound by the necessity of dying.[41] So that is what the fall means, above all, that which is decided by choice for the initial human beings gets decided without choice by all their descendants. It's a microcosm of the human situation.

In *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine also suggests that death is natural in the sense that even in the garden, God's grace merely prevented death from occurring by providing the tree of life to the first human beings. Adam, in the garden, was able both to die and to live forever in a state of natural immortality:

> Adam's body before he sinned could be said to be mortal in one respect and immortal in another: mortal because he was able to die, immortal because he was able not to die… this immortality was given to him from the tree of life, not from his nature. When he sinned, he was separated from this tree, with the result that he was able to die. He was mortal, therefore, by the constitution of his natural body, and he was immortal by the gift of his Creator. (GL VI.25).

Augustine argues that death was that could yet be avoided by the gift of God, otherwise the divine threat is not to be understood.[42] If mankind persisted in right choices and obeyed God, it

[41] "This body of ours is also natural as was Adam's; but although it is in the same class as his, it is much inferior. For our body must of necessity die, and that was not true of Adam's" (GL VI.26).

[42] According to the Genesis account: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the

would enjoy complete and everlasting immortality as a reward. The body was still subject to death even before the fall – the difference was not the constitution of the body itself but God's preventative measures, so to speak. Thus, the punishment is not quite as one expects! God responds to human sin by letting natural events take their course.

We can better understand this position if we take some time, briefly, to compare it to the Socratic teaching about the reason, and therefore the fear we have, concerning human mortality. In a famous passage in the *Apology*, Socrates says,

> That would have been a dreadful thing, and then I might truly have justly been brought here for not believing that there are gods, disobeying the oracle, fearing death, and thinking I was wise when I was not. To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death may not be the greatest of all blessings for a man, yet men fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of evils. And surely it is the most blameworthy ignorance to believe that one knows what one does not know.[43]

We do not know, according to Socrates, that death is a bad thing for the human being. People assert the evil of death and seek to avoid it out of "blameworthy ignorance." The difference between Augustine and the platonic teaching can be seen in both the analysis of the evil of death and also in the response to it. Socrates' description of death shows that he does not regard the necessity of dying as in any way a punishment for human behavior, whether just or not. Since death is an inevitable feature of being human, and philosophy seeks for wisdom about the best way to live, philosophy means learning how to die.[44] Doing this requires human beings to face up to the reality of their finitude and to submit to their end. This shines through in Socrates' ambivalence to death at the hands of the Athenians. Why do the Athenians think they are

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tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" cf. Gen. 2:15-17, RSV.

[43] *Apology* 28e-29a, trans. G.M.A. Grube. Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: from Thales to Aristotle, 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000.

[44] *Phaedo* 67e.

punishing Socrates by sentencing him to death? If they just waited a few years, they would have gotten their wish without having condemned him at all! Augustine, on the other hand, teaches the evil of death, with the revelation of the fall as the key to this teaching. We are revulsed by death. In the fallen world, creatures are by their "very nature subject to corruption" and their dissolution is "loathsome" to us "in our fallen state by reason of our own mortality" (GL, III.14). Augustine argues that the punishment, such as it is, is a punishment on human nature. In that way death has become in a sense natural, congenital, and necessary for all. Since the necessity of dying arises entirely as a result of human disobedience and separation from God, and because revelation reveals this fact, then accepting death through the guidance of revelation means taking on the burden of human complicity for its inevitability. Augustine toughens the task of facing up to death. The ugliness and the pangs of death, such as we see in animals in ourselves, reminds us that we bear responsibility for this doom. In its fullest sense, accepting death means the acceptance of this hard truth.[45]

The situation of desire and mortality therefore display a kind of vacuity, something evident in Augustine's theory of wickedness itself. When we live as slaves to desire, when we die, we tend toward nothingness. In an early work called *Of the Truth of Religion* (*de vera*

[45] The reality of death serves as a necessary precondition for faith itself. Faith in the immortality of the human person is the virtue of a fallen world, living in fallen bodies destined to die. In an unfallen world, by contrast, such faith is unnecessary because human beings are able to avoid death through obedience. Augustine thinks it significant that belief in God does not transform one instantly to an immortal state He writes in The City of God,

> faith is only faith when what is not yet seen in reality is awaited in hope…it was by the strength of faith and in the conflict of faith that even the fear of death admitted of being conquered, at any rate in the earlier ages; and this was seen pre-eminently in the martyrs. The conflict would have had no victory, no glory, since there could have been no conflict at all, if … the saints were straightaway exempt from bodily death. (DCD XIII.4)

Both Socrates and Augustine suggest that death veils the true human condition. We all must die, but we know not to what end our death will lead. Hence, we have a fear of death which can be conquered by faith. Even as Augustine admits that death is an evil, and so men in a way rightly fear it, he regards faith as key to conquering this fear. Death makes faith what it is "faith would not be tested by the fact that its reward was unseen; indeed, it would not be faith any longer…" (DCD XIII.4). Faith has not turned death into a good thing, but rather turned a bad thing toward some greater good (cf. Cavadini 1999).

religione, hereafter DVR), Augustine provides a very erudite statement of this connection. Augustine's insistence that human beings are punished with death must be seen in light of his more famous description of evil itself. Wickedness is described as a tendency toward death, a falling away from the center of all being. It is a deprivation, a movement, a falling away from being into nothingness. Augustine, always fond of seeing truths embedded in language itself, writes that "No life is evil as life, but only as it tends to death. Life knows no death save wickedness (*nequitia*) which derives its name from nothingness (*ne quidquam*). For this reason, wicked men are called men of no worth" (DVR XI.21). Augustine sees this descent into wickedness as a clinging to what is less than man, rather than what is greater. Death results from choosing to enjoy the carnal to the exclusion of the spiritual. "A life, therefore, which by voluntary defect falls away from him who made it, whose essence it enjoyed, and, contrary to the law of God seeks to enjoy bodily objects which God made to be inferior to it tends to nothingness. This is wickedness, but not because the body as such is nothing" (DVR XI.21). One can see this even more clearly in a subsequent passage:

> things die only in so far as they have a decreasing part in existence…as they become less. Matter is less than any kind of life, since it is life that keeps even the tiniest quantity of matter together in anything, whether it be the life that governs any particular living thing, or that which governs the entire universe of natural things. Matter is therefore subject to death, and is thereby nearer to nothingness. Life which delights in material joys and neglects God tends to nothingness and is thereby iniquity (DVR XI.22).

fallen man is *vita carnalis*. Insofar as he loves earthly and carnal things to the exclusion of God, he tends toward nothingness. This above all accounts for the unsatisfactory nature of earthly loves; one may call such loves as the earthly city promotes as deathly loves. In a passage that echoes the different themes we have seen in *The City of God*, Augustine takes the love of inferior things to be a signal cause of the fall. In loving something beneath us, we suffer a corruption in ourselves and in the thing we loved.

> In this way life becomes earthly and carnal. So long as it is so, it will not possess the kingdom of God, and what it loves will be snatched from it. It loves what, being matter, is less than life, and, on account of the sinfulness of so doing, the beloved object becomes corruptible, is dissolved and lost to its lover, even as it, in loving a material thing, has abandoned God. Therefore, it is punished; for by loving inferior things it is given a place among the inferior creatures, being deprived of its pleasures and afflicted with grief. What is bodily grief but the sudden loss of integrity in something which the soul has made a bad use of, so rendering it liable to corruption? And what is spiritual grief but to lose mutable things which the soul enjoyed or hoped to be able to enjoy? This covers the whole range of evil, i.e., sin and its penalty (DVR XII.23).

It is the delighting in material things, to the exclusion of God, which Augustine finds characteristic of dying creatures. Augustine's description of spiritual grief is striking: in the pursuit of material, lower things, we lose the ability to enjoy those things as we had wished.

The nature of the punishment of death tells us about a lot about how highly Augustine values the acceptance of human contingency. Human beings, in the absence of divine help, will die. This was true from the beginning, even before their corruption. Thus, the choice was: live forever by persisting in God's will or die in embracing the human will as preeminent. In both cases, humanity faced a choice between immortality and the demands of pride itself, since pride fundamentally demands that man's will be done. We probably think this an impossibly hard choice. Augustine says that the original command was easy, at least if humanity was humble. Pride made it difficult to obey the command.

The fall illustrates the fundamental moral choice between humility and pride. But Augustine argues that once humanity chooses pride, it loses the ability to truly enjoy the things it desired. More importantly, humanity could not *be* prideful without giving up the possibility of immortality. Put otherwise, Augustine thinks that the price of immortality is humility while the price of pride is death, and this not because of God's vengefulness but because pride asserts – on a fundamental level – the self-sufficiency of mankind. We would die rather than be dependent and live. Augustine's presentation of the human problems of desire and mortality turns on this

choice. In the end, we did not desire immortality enough to resist the allure of choosing to be our own ground.

Desiring Happiness

So far, we have seen Augustine argue that the condition of mankind in its fallen nature is one of slavery to desire. But is there any rhyme or reason to the objects of desire chosen by fallen man? What is it that drives our desperation? In that same essay *On the Truth of Religion,* Augustine shows us also that the language of slavery permeates the discussion of our pursuit of happiness. Augustine writes, "Whether he will or no, a man is necessarily a slave to the things by means of which he seeks to be happy. He follows them wherever they lead, and fears anyone who seems to have the power to rob him of them. Now a spark of fire or a tiny animal can do that… time itself much snatch away all transient things" (DVR XXXVII, 69). The hope for happiness makes us slaves to whatever we believe will obtain it for us. Notice that Augustine does not say that we simply are slaves to various things, but rather to whatever we *believe* will bring us happiness. If we are slavish in this way, as Augustine believes we are, then the question of what will bring happiness becomes paramount. Those who believe money brings happiness become slaves to money, not because there is anything especially slavish about money but because the search for happiness runs so strong in the human being. If we believe virtue brings happiness, then we are slaves to virtue. No human being really wishes to be unhappy. It might be considered a kind of impossibility. In addition, we would not be so fearful as we are, if our desire for happiness were not both so strong and so worldly. Augustine points to the fragility of the things in this world, combined with the awesomeness of the hopes we attach to them, as reasons to think that human beings are constitutionally unable to avoid wishing for happiness.

Once we understand this inevitability of the pursuit of happiness for any human being, and this condition of slavery to desire, Augustine's continual emphasis on idolatry makes a good deal of sense. He writes, "Now since the world includes all transient things, those who think to escape servitude by not worshipping anything are in fact the slaves of all kinds of worldly things" (DVR XXXVII, 69). What explains the generally idolatrous condition of mankind is the deep desire, in the end, to be happy. We worship, or give service (*latreia*) to, what we think will make us happy. Augustine argues that whoever wishes to be happy will end up worshipping something, whether he admits that to himself or not. Given that we must indeed worship something, what will we choose? As already suggested, Augustine poses a choice between service of something higher or something beneath the human being. Self-service, the apparent middle ground here, Augustine does not treat as a sustainable possibility. It is a vacuum. For whoever aims to serve themselves will end up serving something lower, and so be a slave.

Augustine believes that a purified search for happiness requires abandonment of the worship of changeable things, so that we can ascend to the worship of what is superior. He writes, "If the soul, while it continues in the course of human life, overcomes the desires which it has fed to its own undoing by enjoying mortal things, and believes that it has the aid of God's grace enabling it to overcome them, if it serves God with the mind and a good will, it will undoubtedly be restored, and will return from the mutable many to the immutable One" (DVR xii.24). Repentance for worshipping the "mutable many" opens the possibility that human beings can regain mastery, or even just fight back, against the tyranny of sinful desire. As Augustine puts it in his discussion of Cain in *The City of God,* "For this is a health-giving medicine of repentance and a petition for pardon which is suitable….for a man will have the mastery over his sin if he does not put it in command of himself by defending it, but subjects it to himself by

repenting of it. Otherwise, he will also be its slave, and it will have the mastery, if he affords it encouragement when it occurs (DCD XV.7). Finally, Augustine believes the love of the happy life is characterized by the love of immortality. If we love the happy life but do not think that this would include immortality, we do not love it enough. "If it (the happy life) is loved as much as it deserves to be loved (and a man cannot be happy unless he loves that life as it deserves) the man who so loves it must inevitably wish for it to be eternal. Therefore, life will only be truly happy when it is eternal (DCD XIV.25). Human mortality guarantees that we cannot be fully happy in this life, if only because that life is temporary. We should expect more of the happy life, Augustine says.

The soul longs to be clothed with an immortal body. One of the most memorable passages in *The City of God* is Augustine's statement on the effect the corrupted human body has on the soul: "It is not the body as such, but the body as it has become as a result of disobedience. That is what weighs down the soul" (DCD XIII.16).[46] He argues in that same passage that it is not punishment for a soul to be bound to any kind of body. He criticizes the Platonists who "assert with great force of argument that the soul, if it is to be capable of bliss, must get away not only from an earthly body but from any kind of body" (DCD XIII.17). In fallen humanity, bliss would require the renewal and healing of the body, not escape from it – for we truly love the body. Augustine's earlier assertions that death is "separation from the body" makes more sense in light of these passages. If the body is good as such, then separation from it is a privation of being. Augustine makes the further claim in both books XII and XIII that the philosophers themselves, in their speculations about the gods, cannot bring themselves to admit that deities would be separated from their bodies nor to be unhappy. This Augustine takes as an indication

[46] Cf. Wisdom 9:15, "The corruptible body weighs down the soul."

that happiness requires the body, and that separation from it is not liberation but punishment. The Platonists confuse the condition of the body as such with the condition of the corrupted body, for "it is not necessary for the achievement of bliss to avoid every kind of body, but only bodies which are corruptible, burdensome, oppressive, and in a dying state, not such bodies as the goodness of God created for the first human beings, but bodies in the condition which the punishment for sin forced upon them" (DCD XIII.17). The longings expressed by the Platonists for liberation from the body is verily the longing of fallen men, who bodies are not the companion wished for by the soul.

What we want out of our bodies is both the body we know, and yet a better one as well – an immortal one.[47] All we know is a body subject to corruption and decay. The body we hope for would fully obey the will, unlike the body we actually do have under the influence of the fall. Augustine puts it this way: "The flesh…will submit to the spirit with a ready obedience, an obedience so wonderfully complete that the body will fulfil the will of the spirit in such a way as to bring perfect assurance of indissoluble immortality, free from any feeling of distress, and relieved of any possibility of corruption…" (DCD XIII.20). Most illuminating is Augustine's analysis of the saints who successfully struggle against their fallen body, but for the purpose of enjoying an immortal one: "it is not, as Plato imagined, through forgetfulness that they long to have their bodies again. In fact, it is just because they remember the promise of him who never lets anyone down, who gave them the assurance that even the hairs would remain intact, remembering this, they look for the resurrection of their bodies with patient longing…" (DCD

[47] See Cavadini for a fuller explanation of Augustine's beliefs concerning an immortal body. He writes, "But at the end of the long and arduous pilgrimage that is the *City of God*, as he brings us readers to the brink of the vision of the promised land of eternity, the original question is now more specific. It is not only about what the eternal life of the saints will be like, but "what the saints will be doing when they are clothed in immortal and spiritual bodies"(DCD 22.29).What it means for the vision we will then have to surpass understanding is also intensified and specified by the focus on the embodied eternal life of the saints" (Cavadini 2012, 93).

XIII.20). These saints "hate their own flesh" insofar as it "resisted their mental resolve, when they had to discipline it by the law of the spirit, how much more do they love it now…" (DCD XIII.20).

Christ, for Augustine, presents the final key to regaining control of our desires. He is also the one who shows us – the proud – the surpassing greatness of humility (DCD I.1). For it is those proud of the earthly city who, Augustine says, are themselves dominated by lust even as they seek to dominate and oppress others in the political world. Christ is the beating heart of the heavenly city, and so we ought to imitate him. He in his humility did without the things we desire and so made them "of no account." Augustine writes in the full passage,

> All the things which men unrighteously desired to possess, he did without and so made them of no account. All the things which men sought to avoid and so deviated from the search for truth he endured and so robbed them of their power over us. There is no sin that men can commit which is not either a seeking of what he avoided, or an avoiding of what he bore (DVR XVI.31).

Repentance for sin; i.e. the seeking of what he avoided and the avoiding of what he bore, is the humble act for dependent creatures, one that sets them on the right path again in their war against the rule of desire. The necessity of constant repentance in daily life, with all the humility this implies, testifies to the soul's lack of control in this fallen world.

A Realism of Extremes

Both our subjection to death and our slavery to desire are instances of human weakness. This weakness lives in us as a punishment for the original disobedience, as Augustine says: "Now this kind of weakness, the disobedience, that is, which we discussed in the fourteenth book, is, of course, the punishment for the primal disobedience. Consequently, it is not part of nature, but a defect in nature" (DCD XIV.15). Augustine observes that the issue is not badness as

such, but rather corruption. As Augustine puts it, "… it is not by nature but by a perversion that the rebellious creation differs from the good, which adheres to God; yet even this perversion shows how great and honorable is the nature itself" (DCD XII.2). He says also that the result of mankind's "lawless presumption" was not a "relapse" into the original condition but a vitiating and corrupting of our nature (DCD XIII.3).

The "realist" approach to politics, defended most notably in the last century by Reinhold Niebuhr, owes a lot to Augustine's life and thought (cf. Niebuhr 1953). Niebuhr's effort in *The Nature and Destiny of Man* was designed to show that the "Christian faith assesses the spiritual stature of man more highly and has a lower estimate of man's virtue than alternative doctrines, both ancient and modern" (Niebuhr 1944). Niebuhr rose to prominence during the Cold War on the back of this low estimate of virtue. Less commonly known is that Niebuhr paired this skepticism with an emphasis on man's high destiny. The high, spiritual component of mankind's nature derives from the fact that he in some way imitates God. This chapter has given further color to these great extremes seen in the human soul – both its heights and depths. Humankind has sunk pretty low, but from a high place to which he can imagine returning.

By comparison, liberal theories of self-interest move in the opposite direction. For all their disagreements, liberals generally agree that we should not expect too much out of people. John Dewey offers a pragmatic example:

> An enlightened self-interest will induce a ruler not to push too far the patience of subjects. The enlightened self-interest of citizens will lead them to obtain by peaceful means, as far as possible, the changes that will effect a distribution of political power and the publicity that will lead political authorities to work for rather than against the interests of the people—a situation which Bentham thought was realized by government that is representative and based upon popular suffrage. But in any case, not natural rights but consequences in the lives of individuals are the criterion and measure of policy and judgment (Dewey 2012, 624)

We should not expect either much moral greatness or virtue; nor should we expect much depravity and distortion in the soul. This, it must be emphasized, is not a wish but actually an expectation for human behavior. People are egoists, self-interested, not tortured souls. They prefer thinking about creature comforts to thinking about death. The trick may be to enlighten their self-interest, as Dewey says. Yet one question is whether or not this can be called a realistic appraisal of what people actually are, and do. And second, does this kind of realism cohere with the fall as Augustine teaches it?

Augustine's realism appreciates the heights and the depths of the human being, which should make us reconsider the supposed realism of self-interest. The Augustinian being is hardly a calculating utility-maximizer. Put otherwise, self-interest appears (in light of the fall) to be too pessimistic and too optimistic an appraisal of what people are. If people really are simply self-interested then they will have extraordinarily shrunken hopes and desires. They cannot long for anything more than what this world offers. On the flipside, self-interest also papers over the deep depths of distorted desire that we find ourselves in. It assumes that desire is a relatively simple matter, and that the only question worth considering is how to obtain what we desire while allowing others to do the same. It navigates the war between the desires of different people, but not the war of desires within oneself.

Thus, Augustine teaches us something about self-interest as the basis for democracy, though in a very roundabout way. Democracy arises as the rule of the average person; the idea of self-interest is no less than an "averaging-out" of the human condition. It leaves out of the calculation what is highest and lowest in man; while it lowers man's goals, it raises his condition from slavery to desire to a self largely in control of its desires. Augustine hopes to paint the opposite picture: people are more corrupted than we think – mostly out of control and doomed to

die – and also endowed with incredible longings as well, longings whose pains grow the sharper the further we sink. Now, there are some potential problems and benefits of a realism that takes into account these highs and lows. One problem is reckoning with the implications of this account for political freedom. Under what conditions can we see political freedom as good for human beings? Augustine's account of desire leaves us with a picture of human beings as governing and running their own lives only with difficulty. At the same time, Augustine sees grace working as a healing agent in the world. At the very least we do wish for freedom from the domination of sin, even if we do not put it in those terms, and even if ultimately deliverance is out of our power. Finally, on a more political level, are people too out-of-control to have any "nudging" in the right direction be salutary? Augustine may agree with Cicero that exhortations and punishments can have good effects in public life. That this can be the case indicates that Augustine does not believe the reign of desire to be total, or to have the last word.

I will end with one further note. A realism informed by the fall does offer some insight into the basis of extreme tyranny and the possible defenses against it, a topic which will be more fully explored in the final chapter. The possibility of extreme, utopian tyranny is ever-present, not because man forgets or denies his nature but because tyranny addresses itself to the depths and the heights of the human condition. The tyrant and the priest, in fact, might be said to compete for the attention of the same audience. That is, the possibility of such extreme tyranny requires first an awareness of our anxious search to satisfy desire, in order to become a real political possibility. But tyranny also requires the understanding that desire can be satisfied in this world: the best city is not located in speech or in heaven, but on the earth. Augustine's account of desire assumes that the best city exists somewhere other than this world. The intractability of the desire problem (though this is by no means the only consideration) indicates

to Augustine that the best city lies further off than the tyrant thinks. Optimism about the nearness of the best city, once it is unleashed, remains harder to restrain because it fundamentally agrees with human slavery to desire, especially the desiring of less than immortal things. This recognition about the heights and the depths of the human soul leads to political caution, even as it encourages a hopefulness that reaches beyond mortal life itself.

CHAPTER FOUR

Pride imitates what is lofty; but you alone are God most high above all things. What does ambition seek but honor and glory? Yet you alone are worthy of honor and are glorious for eternity. The cruelty of powerful people aims to arouse fear. Who is to be feared but God alone? What can be seized or stolen from his power? When or where or how or by whom?

Augustine, *Confessions* II.13.

A perennial issue in political philosophy is the question of the ambitious individual, who seems to appear in every generation. What drives them to seek honors and dominion, and what accounts for the recurring nature of this phenomenon? This essay tackles the question of ambition from the perspective of the fall. Augustine's view of political ambition, which he unfolds in the middle sections of his classic work *The City of God,* is intimately connected to and part of his larger political theology of the fall. I provide a conceptual framework for thinking about ambition principally as the political effect of the love of glory, apart from the more famous claims that Augustine makes about the love of domination.

Though they draw different conclusions about the nature of political life, the various perspectives on Augustine view him as tending to calumniate or (at best) to downplay, the political role of glory. Scholars such as Robert Dodaro believe that the pursuit of glory is one form of "egocentrism" that ultimately causes political structures to "collapse in on themselves" (Dodaro 2012, 387). According to this view, love of glory is one particularly potent form of self-love that in Augustine's view undermines the very possibility of civic life. Love of glory is characteristic and central to the earthly city's understanding of itself, as Augustine's commentary on Rome's heroic past shows. Dodaro views Augustine as holding a negative outlook on glory because of its close connection to pride and selfishness. Yet Dodaro also hopes to provide a framework for thinking about Christian statesmanship. Glorying in one's achievements,

something so characteristic of the earthly city, should be forsaken in favor of deciding to rule by *caritas* (Dodaro 2004). This interpretation of Augustine's view also tends to doubt that he looks favorably on the desire for glory as a motivation for rule. John Von Heyking argues that any emperor's aim for glory can never be more than a "pretension" in Augustine's view (Heyking 2001, 41). Glory is not "the proper end of politics" collectively or in the motives of the individual statesman (Heyking 2001, 41). Augustine can be seen to criticize not only the individual lust for glory, but such a thirst for glory as the entire Roman people displayed for most of their history.

The glory of Rome, after all, consisted in the great duration and extent of its empire. If one believes in God's providence, as Augustine does, one must explain why God gave empire and the glory associated with it to the Romans. Mary Keys explores this connection between glory and empire in her work on the reception of Augustine's work by the scholastic Salamanca School (Keys 2017). The expansion of the Spanish empire into the Americas made this question particularly urgent for these later Scholastics. Augustine's thought was a point of contention because he questions whether God looks kindly on the pursuit of glory through imperial expansion. That the love of glory is a necessary motivation for such expansion is beyond doubt. Keys observes that some humanistic defenders of Rome, notably Sepulveda, asserted the love of glory to be a "necessary and noble motive" for political life. Following Lupher (2006), Keys notes that God allows people to pursue the earthly reward that is glory (Keys 2017, 71), which the Romans achieved. That does not, however, make the love of glory a virtue or even foundational for political life. It is a vice, even a splendid vice, that characterizes all of Roman history – from the self-sacrifice of the older Romans to the "tyrants of later eras" (Keys 2017, 71). They all strive as citizens of the earthly city do: thus, glory is at the heart of Augustine's

analysis of the earthly city. This criticism of the earthly city's pursuit of glory provides Augustine with a way to deprecate civic virtue, even of republican Rome, which was dedicated to that end. That virtue can only be 'a kind' of virtue, a simulacrum or effigy, not the real thing (cf. Irwin 1999).[48]

In this chapter, I take a different though possibly complementary position, by arguing that Augustine sees the earthly pursuit of glory as an artifact of the fall. Augustine does in fact criticize the earthly pursuit of glory, which in this essay I will call ambition. This censure, however, does not amount to a critique of glory itself, rather it serves as a prelude to helping us understand what glory really is. I show that Augustine's appreciation for the deep roots of ambition in the human psyche is informed by the doctrine of the fall, through a close analysis of Books IV and V of *The City of God*. Once this feature of Augustine's thought is absorbed, we can see further how he subverts the earthly love of glory, such as Roman ambition, only to rearticulate the longing for glory in terms of a loss, or a fall, from the glorious city of God.

The word *glorious* shows up as the very first word of *The City of God.* And, the word is a superlative: "Most glorious is the City of God (*gloriosissimam ciuitatem Dei*): whether in this passing age (*in hoc temporum cursu*), where she dwells by faith as a pilgrim among the ungodly (*cum inter impios peregrinatur ex fide uiuens*)" (Augustine 1998, preface, Dyson trans).[49] Of all the things that Augustine could have mentioned about the City of God, of all the qualities that make it different to and superior to its earthly opposite, he chooses glory! From the outset he shows that glory is proper to a city, and somehow bound up not only with its destiny but

[48] As Veronica Roberts Ogle writes in her new book, "Provocatively, then, Augustine presents his readers with a worldview that radically relativizes their own. Roma Aeterna, it turns out, is a city destined for destruction: a counterfeit imitation of the one city that is truly eternal and truly glorious" (Ogle 2020, 74).

[49] The Bettenson translation does not capture the placement and importance of glory in Augustine's iconic opening line. For all his other virtues, Bettenson hides *gloriosissimam*: "Here, my dear Marcellinus, is the fulfilment of my promise, a book in which I have taken upon myself the task of defending the glorious city of God…" (DCD I, preface).

indicative of its true worth. The earthly city has its glory, and so does the heavenly. Glory is the bone of contention for a polemic that seeks to defend the city of God and put the city of man in its place. But to do this, Augustine must explain why the love of glory has such a grip on the human being. What is it about our nature or history that has made us a glory-seeking race, or at least a race with some glory-seeking individuals in it? Augustine's articulation of the fall, when read carefully, aims to answer this question. That shows him to be highly interested in ambition or the search for glory as a feature of the human heart. He is far from dismissing the allure of glory. Indeed, he does the opposite – he explains why the chase for glory so defines the mortal human condition.

Earthly Glory and Civic Virtue

The first task is to explain the glory sought by the members of the earthly city. While Augustine praises the heavenly city as "most glorious" he "cannot refrain from speaking about the city of this world, a city which aims at dominion, which holds nations in enslavement, but is itself dominated by that very lust of domination" (DCD I, preface). Augustine quotes Sallust and observes that in general the Romans were "greedy for praise, generous with their money, and aimed at vast renown and honorable riches" (DCD V.12). Augustine seems to imply that their desire for glory overrides even the desire for riches. It is the overweening passion of Roman souls. What Augustine suggests throughout this passage is that glory, the love of glory, may be described as the love of praise, whether from one's fellow citizens or from the subject nations. It was "for this they desired to live, for this they did not hesitate to die" (DCD V.12). Now ambition is not only or merely the love of praise, but Augustine makes clear that ambition includes this desire at least. Sallust himself praised the "great men of renown" in his time, such

as Marcus Cato and Gaius Caesar. Caesar in particular looked for opportunities to display his greatness – to make it evident to all. Such desire for glory explains why Rome could not be content with a small kingdom and defensive wars, as Augustine suggests would be more just. The drive toward empire, toward expansion, makes sense when one considers the glory-loving character of the Roman people. Augustine suggests that even if they did not lust after domination, their love of praise would have provided a powerful impetus for empire. Fighting only defensive wars, by contrast, is a posture of almost unbelievable restraint.

Now if we return to Book V and examine it in a more orderly fashion, we see that Augustine first deals with the issue of how Roman greatness was achieved in the first place, amid an extended discussion of free will (DCD V.9-11, cf. IV.28) in light of God's providence. Augustine shows that the pagan gods cannot confer the worldly good of glory. God allowed the greatness of Rome to arise as a result of its thirst for praise. At the same time, while Augustine mentions the certain virtues and mores of government possessed by the Romans, he emphasizes that this is not primarily the reason they attained such rule. Rome ruled at God's pleasure, and obtained glory at his pleasure. On my interpretation, Augustine admits the "certain" virtues, or mores, of the Romans but denies the fundamental role or primacy of moral character in Roman greatness (DCD V.12).

Up until V.12, Augustine has only stated the definition and importance of glory for Rome; as he continues his history of Roman glory, however, it becomes clear that a new political reality emerges out of this Roman trait of glory-seeking. He writes, "such was the ambition aroused by their 'greed for praise' and 'passion for glory'" (DCD V.12). That is, the greed for praise, the passion for glory, are but the first stirrings of the earthly love that eventually leads people to seek domination. At first, the Roman love of liberty led to the first great achievements,

that is – they gained renown because of the importance they placed upon liberty. In seeking liberty, they found glory and acquired a taste for that, too. Augustine supplies the example of Marius, who obtained glory through his self-sacrifice. Yet Augustine shrewdly notes that when liberty had been won, the Romans also found (perhaps to their surprise) that it did not satisfy. The great achievement of political liberty failed to satiate their hearts. So, they perversely "had to acquire domination" (DCD V.12).

Great leaders do matter. God in his inscrutable providence "entrusted this dominion to those men, in preference to all others, who served their country for the sake of honor, praise and glory, who looked to find that glory in their country's safety above their own and who suppressed greed for money and many other faults in favor of that one fault of theirs, the love of praise" (DCD V.13). This fault checked greater vices (DCD V.13) in the early, self-sacrificial Romans, a fact observed by the "morally clear-sighted" (DCD V.13). At least, Augustine thinks, "it is good that the desire for human praise and glory (*fama*)[50] makes them, not indeed saints, but less depraved men" (DCD V.13). Here Augustine is very careful to specify: *human* praise. He sees something good in a certain tolerance of this fault, given the restraints that it imposes on more vile appetites. Yet we should not place Augustine among those who believe that the love of praise – properly speaking – can sustainably support the public interest. He goes as far as calling this Ciceronian idea a "pernicious doctrine" (DCD V.13). And yet this doctrine made people less bad than they otherwise might have been.

In the following chapter, Augustine gives us some indication of why he considers the Ciceronian doctrine so pernicious. "In this life," Augustine observes, "[the love of praise] cannot wholly be rooted out from the heart, because even those souls which are making good progress

[50] *Fama* denotes not simply praise and glory, but an aura of godlike immortality. Service on behalf of the "eternal" city can win one eternal or lasting praise.

are not exempt from the temptation" (DCD V.14). Augustine thinks that the love of praise cannot be rooted out of the heart as long as the heart should continue its beating. The proof for this dramatic claim can be seen paradoxically in those potential members of the heavenly city who, though progressing in *amor Dei* and crucifying *amor sui*, are always beset by this congenital weakness. Augustine sees the love of *human* praise as somehow fundamental to our fallen condition, and the love of praise *simply* as key to the human constitution as it should be. This latter contention needs further explanation but can be supported by the example Augustine makes of the apostles of Christ:

> the divine quality of their actions, their words and their lives, their triumphs, as one may say, over hard hearts, and their introduction of the peace of righteousness; all these brought them immense glory in the Church of Christ. And yet they did not rest on that glory, as if they had attained the goal of their own virtue. They ascribed it all to the glory of God, whose grace had made them what they were (DCD V.14).

Augustine compares two alternative attitudes toward glory and virtue. The apostles, whom Augustine commends for our imitation, let their light shine before men. Their virtue was apparent to all and they gained "immense glory" in the *societas* of the Church.[51] But it was not really their virtue at all, Augustine intones. That is the essence of their humble stance: they gave all glory to God, not attributing any virtue to themselves but to him whose "grace had made them" so glorious as they were. Pride attributes virtue to oneself while humility attributes it to the grace of God. The apostles also did not desire glory for its own sake, another crucial distinction. They did not "rest on that glory," proving that their goal of all their striving was not human glory but rather to obtain a greater, hidden reward.

[51] See also Cavadini's comments: "Ultimately glory accrues to the "most glorious city of God" whose "heroes" the martyrs are…But the City of God is not an empirical entity, but rather the fruit of God's grace, not known in its entirety until the eschaton. The glorious deaths of the martyrs break up the empire's monopoly on glory, only to drain it away into an alternative locus that resists empiricization" (Cavadini 1999, 246).

However, and most importantly, Augustine does not say that the apostles eschewed glory. They did not reject the praise of men. Rather, they participate in God's own glory, to whom they owe everything. So, in giving up glory, they get more than if they had simply claimed glory for themselves. Augustine alludes to this by writing that their actions had a "divine quality" (DCD V.14). In his translation, Bettenson understates how much Augustine stresses the glorious behavior of the saints. Augustine says that the saints performed divine things, spoke divine things, lived in a divine way (DCD V.14).[52] All their virtues they "ascribe to the glory of God." They cannot hate glory, because the God whom they serve in this way *is* glorious. It is not enough to acknowledge one's dependence on God for the good qualities for which one is praised; the saint wants others to see that dependence – that one's virtues are not really one's own. It is not only by their virtues they help men to praise God: what matters is the self-effacing presentation of those virtues. Augustine exposes the apostles and martyrs, not the heroes of republican Rome, as the paradigm case of human beings who gain great glory despite not seeking it. The meaning of true self-sacrifice is humility, and humility – paradoxically – leads to great glory in the heavenly society, for these saints.[53]

Those Romans who died for their city in a most glorious fashion, strove for earthly glory *because* of their mortality, since in their fallen condition no higher glory could be sought. In Augustine's view, the longing for glory cannot be understood apart from human awareness of

[52] Et quod eos divina facientes atque dicentes divineque viventes debellatis quodam modo cordibus duris atque introducta pace iustitiae ingens in Ecclesia Christi gloria consecuta est.

[53] We see this theme echo later on in *The City of God*, especially in XIV.27-28. Augustine writes, "God was perfectly certain that this man (Adam) would be defeated, but he foresaw with equal certainty that this same Devil was to be overcome by the man's seed (cf. Gen. 3:15), helped by God's own grace, *to the greater glory of the saints*" (XIV.27, emphasis mine). Augustine puts the matter squarely in terms of a comparison between the heavenly and earthly cities, in the following chapter: "We see then that the two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self. In fact, *the earthly city glories in itself, the Heavenly City glories in the Lord*" (XIV.28, emphasis mine).

their own mortality and that the search for glory then takes on this form of a search for immortality. Augustine says of the Romans, and of us: "what else was there for them to love save glory? For, through glory, they desired to have a kind of life after death on the lips of those who praised them" (DCD V.14). If the fall has made people mortal, and they should really like to be immortal, then we can expect a certain pursuit of glory. The pursuit of earthly glory is the pursuit of mortal creatures unhappily deprived of the possibility of eternal life. While Augustine exposes the emptiness of seeking glory as an end, there's something deeply sympathetic in his account of why we *do* seek it. We should see the glory-seekers as the serious ones, as people who take death itself into account for determining what to live for. Praise that lingers on mortal tongues is a "kind of life after death" (DCD V.14) and the heroic Romans "received their reward in full" (DCD V.15). Thus, the pursuit of praise is an understandable fault. But different, Augustine says, is the reward of the saints. In the eternal city, no one is born there because no one dies. Put differently, if eternal life is on the table, why strive for just a "kind of life after death"? This means, to follow through on Augustine's logic, that the denial of an eternal destiny leads men to more desperately seek glory and earthly destiny. Meanwhile affirming the possibility of living beyond death in actuality, not merely on the lips of men, should in some way dilute the appeal of seeking earthly glory. If one can have the real thing, why settle? But the human race seeks glory because of its fall into a mortal condition; and the more people see mortality as final, the more they may be inclined to search for the best that they can get.

With this understanding in mind, we can circle back to a question that Augustine raised in the previous book: Is it fitting that good men should wish to rule more widely (DCD IV.15)? This touches a number of different political dimensions connected to glory. If men were peaceful and just, kingdoms would be small. Absent that, the best possibility is for benevolent rule to be

spread far and wide, so empire brings with it the occasion to do much good. By contrast, wide rule by wicked rulers is worst for the rulers themselves, by giving them a "wide scope" for misdeeds (DCD IV.3). Good men should seize the opportunity to rule if the opportunity presents itself, but that is not a justification for imperial ambitions. Yet if good men are commanded to refrain from doing so, this pretty much guarantees that bad men will rule.

Now, the glory-seeking person desires to make all those under their reign happy (after a fashion). One can receive glory by benefitting all, not merely oneself. Although Augustine does not say it, this may be one reason to draw a distinction between the love of glory and the lust for domination (DCD V.19). Augustine takes this hope seriously even as he criticizes the tendency to boast in achievements of this sort: "Is it reasonable, it is sensible, to boast of the extent and grandeur of empire, when you cannot show that men lived in happiness, as they passed their lives amid the horrors of war, amid the shedding of men's blood – that of enemies as well as fellow citizens – under the shadow of fear and amid the terror of ruthless ambition? (DCD IV.3). Joy in this situation has all the "fragile brilliance of glass" (DCD IV.3). So, Augustine wants to give the naturally ambitious an alternative to think about. He does not simply tell them to look heavenward without accounting for earthly 'profit and loss' in the pursuit of praise (DCD V.17-18). A profit that accrued to the Romans was not only their wealth and power but their status, almost an ontological category: victors. This distinction between victors and vanquished, winners and losers, serves as the foci of earthly glory. The difference does not make any difference for security, moral standards, or even for dignity. It is merely "a matter of the arrogance of human glory" (DCD V.17).

The need to achieve victory in war can eviscerate the common good even as it seeks (through glory attained in the peace of universal empire) to do good for one's fellow citizens.

Augustine puts the difficulty this way: "…all men desire to be at peace with their own people, while wishing to impose their will upon those people's lives. For even when they wage war on others, their wish is to make those opponents their own people, if they can – to subject them, and to impose on them their own conditions of peace" (DCD XIX.12). What everyone desires, universally, is peace. But "even when men choose war, their only wish is for victory; which shows that their desire in fighting is for peace *with glory*" (DCD XIX.12, emphasis added). Men fight for victory because peace alone is not good enough. Peace with glory – the glory of a victor – is what the antagonists wish for. Hence, victory detracts from the common good in seeking to impose one will over all wills, but does in this way contribute to the peace desired by everyone.

Once again, Augustine considers the question of whether or not the prospect of glory should move one to take action on the stage of politics. Is the pursuit of glory a worthy endeavor? If, he argues, "the perverse standards of the world would allow men to receive honors proportional to their deserts, even so the honor of men should not be accounted an important matter; smoke has no weight" (DCD V.17). The perverse standards of the world do not allow men to receive just honors. And yet, even if just, it has no weight. It is not something we should be moved by. Even admitting a certain justice in the glory heaped on the Romans ("They deserved to receive that glory as a reward for such virtues"), it is ultimately weightless.[54] On the cost side of the ledger, so to speak, the heavenly city imposes easier duties than those imposed by the earthly. Augustine considers Brutus' filicide in pursuit of glory (DCD V.18) to show that the easier, though humbler, glory is of a heavenly kind. The heavenly city does not command such sacrifices. This lack of costliness accords with the degree to which Augustine stresses the value of humility: can the saint boast in all the great and glorious sacrifices he has made? No!

[54] Cf. Augustine's use of the word *weight* in articulating the movement of the soul toward what is higher (Cary 2004).

And yet Augustine's point is that he nonetheless obtains great glory. This discussion highlights an important theme for Augustine, namely the difference between temporal and heavenly reward and the difference also in the sacrifice required to obtain such reward. Imitating Brutus would be difficult, to say the least.

If we retrace our steps somewhat, we find a good summary of the relation between true glory and virtue's operation. Mentioning Sallust's encomium of Cato, Augustine observes that "glory, the object of the Roman's burning ambition, is the judgment of men when they think well of others. That is why virtue is superior to glory, since it is not content with the testimony of men, without the witness of a man's own conscience" (DCD V.12). There is something intrinsic to virtue whereby it ceases to be true virtue if aimed at the wrong end of human praise. We get it backward when we do so. Praise by others is a side-effect of virtue, but not the thing at which virtue aims; virtue "is not content" with it. Augustine comments later (DCD V.20) on the impropriety of virtue serving glory. It is just as "intolerable" for the virtues to serve glory as to serve voluptuous pleasure. Then the virtues would operate only "insofar as to win man's approval" (DCD V.20). But in the passage from V.12 quoted above, Augustine suggests that virtue *does* need another particular kind of praise, that of the conscience itself. That does not mean, however, that Augustine thinks the praise of a well-formed conscience is the "end" of virtue any more than is glory from man. True glory follows from the virtuous participation in divine matters in deed, speech, and life, such as Augustine says the apostles and martyrs achieved.

The Libido Dominandi and the Love of Praise

Step back for a moment, then, and consider what a range of human motivations Augustine has considered and balanced against one another. On the high end, we have heavenly glory, which consists not in being served but living *to* serve and to be the slave of all.[55] On the low end, we can see grasping, impatient, ruthless nature of the *libido dominandi* which, while seeking mastery is itself mastered in the very way that we described in the previous chapter (DCD I.1). The love of praise occupies something of a middle between these two extremes. It has something in common with both. In the first section, we analyzed the tension between the heavenly and earthly glory. Now we turn to the distinction between the love of glory and the lust for domination. Augustine understands the relationship between these two motivations as follows:

> There is a clear difference between the desire for glory before men (*humanae gloriae*) and the desire for domination (*cupiditatem dominationis*). There is, to be sure, a slippery slope from the excessive delight in the praise of men to the burning passion for domination; and yet those who long for true glory, though it be the glory of merely human praise, are anxious for the good opinion of enlightened judges. For there are many good moral qualities which are approved by many, though many do not possess them (DCD V.19).

The existence of a "slippery slope" confirms our initial diagnosis of the love for human praise: this cupidity, or desire, is the seedbed of domination. As Dyson translates it, whoever delights "excessively in human glory will also be much inclined ardently to desire mastery" (DCD V.19).

Moreover, it may well be the case that the love of glory cannot be rooted out of the human heart, as Augustine has already said. This idea, which Augustine tentatively puts forward, leads us not (perhaps) to count on glory as an iron law of the human heart, nor to expect it to arise in all times and places. But we should not be surprised when we do see it arise – precisely

[55] Mark 10:44.

because of the heart's condition. The *libido dominandi*, on the other hand, seems highly dependent on specific circumstances. In an earlier passage from *The City of God,* Augustine says that that ambition arises in very particular circumstances, even in Rome:

> For when can that lust for power in arrogant hearts come to rest until, after passing from one office to another, it arrives at sovereignty? Now there would be no occasion for this continuous progress if ambition were not all-powerful; and the essential context for ambition is a people corrupted by greed and sensuality. And greed and sensuality in a people is the result of that prosperity which the great Nasica in his wisdom maintained should be guarded against, when he opposed the removal of a great and strong and wealthy enemy state. His intention was that lust should be restrained by fear (DCD I.31).

The *libido dominandi* occurs among a people "corrupted by greed and sensuality." And what makes people in a particular time and place corrupted in this way? This kind of corruption is not the corruption of the fall but rather a further decline even from the love of glory. Augustine writes that prosperity led to the corruption of the Romans. Scipio Nasica rightly understood that prosperity would have these deleterious effects, and so he advocated for a particular foreign policy that would counter domestic corruption. Augustine understands the moral usefulness of having powerful enemies. They provide a check, however limited, on the people's sense of their own prosperity. The *libido dominandi* rears its head not where people are moderate and self-controlled, but where people are corrupt. Augustine teaches us to expect it when people are immoderate, greedy, and sensuous, out of control due to prosperous times.

Augustine makes the point that however well-intentioned and foresighted Nasica was in preventing the Romans from building a corrupting theater, the very corruption and vices of the Romans that set the scene for ambitious men could not be so easily put off. The depths of Roman vice could not, Augustine writes, even be checked by the barbarian invasion of Augustine's own time. Rome behaved in an even more "crazy" and "insane" manner after the collapse of Rome than before: "It was just this corruption, this moral disease, this overthrow of all integrity and

decency, that the great Scipio (Nasica) dreaded for you" (DCD I.33). Augustine continues, "prosperity depraved you; and adversity could not reform you" (DCD I.33). It is the classic problem of this earthly city – one which even the most foresighted and moral men could not overcome. This, Augustine says, is the reply that the "pilgrim church of Christ" makes to its earthly enemies.

Secondly, Augustine speaks of those "who long for true glory, though it be the glory of merely human praise, are anxious for the good opinion of enlightened judges" (DCD V.19). The good opinion of enlightened judges – all people long for that. Augustine quietly argues: the more we admire people (that is, the better they are), the more we seek *their* praise. This natural order extends to the heavenly city, where everyone longs to hear praise from Creator himself. That does not mean that piety, without which virtue is impossible (DCD V.19), consists in the smug reception of God's praise. Still, Augustine ultimately finds wanting the praise of even good judgments, such as those made by the poets, because they will pass away. This is indicated in his earliest lines about human praise – the transient nature of that reward is heavily implied in those passages, and here we see it more fully brought into the open. Yet the temporality of worthy praise does not make it bad, nor can one be faulted for living in a way that provokes it.

Nevertheless, Augustine's censure of the lust to dominate does not make him a promoter of the small-souled. The *City of God*, from its opening preface, aims to do to the pretensions of the earthly city what Rome claimed to do to all its enemies: cast down the arrogance of the proud. Augustine's polemic aims to discredit any reason we have to be fundamentally proud of ourselves, thus making politically salient the opposition or choice between humility and pride as a posture toward life. From this, however, one could infer that the *libido dominandi* arises from pride, while being small-souled is characteristic of humility. I argue that this is the wrong

inference to draw, and misses the fundamental nature of the distinction Augustine draws between the love of glory and the *libido dominandi.* The great-souled love glory, but seeking to dominate others is characteristic of the small-souled. Wishing to dominate indicates a shrinking of the love of glory. It is concerned with this world, whereas the orientation of the glory seeker is for immortality. The Augustinian paradox is that humility leads to true glory, whereas pride – if grounded in the domination of others – strangely leads to a shrinkage of our ambitions and a loss of glory. That all explains why, according to Augustine, glory involves benefitting others, rather than dominating them.

Glory is an end of human action, but what about the means? Augustine writes about the one who strives for glory in the right way, who "loves even his enemies; and such is his love even for those who hate and disparage him, that he wishes them to be reformed so that he may have them as fellow-citizens, not of the earthly city but of the heavenly" (DCD V.19). In this powerful passage, Augustine brings to light the view of the righteous toward glory, which is best known by God – who knows whether someone truly despises glory or only seems to do so. That kind of person sets little store by human praise but "does not undervalue" the love of those who praise him. He does not wish to deceive or play tricks on those people. He wishes for their praise to be true. So, Augustine speaks of a right attitude toward praise: "… for that reason his ardent concern is that praise should rather be given to him from whom man receives whatever in him is rightly deserving of praise" (DCD V.19). Here is a finer-grained statement on the "apostolic" approach to praise: The "divine qualities" in man do deserve some element of praise, but at the same time he who "receives" those qualities should be anxious that their Giver be known.

Yet then to our great surprise, Augustine compares this righteous individual with one who despises glory and is eager only for domination. That should strike us as a curious

comparison. We would expect Augustine to use praise-loving, glory-seeking person as a foil. Instead, he compares the honorable person with the one who "despises glory" and is "worse than the beasts, in his cruelty or in his self-indulgence" (DCD V.19). That is a picture of the ambitious person! Nero first "scaled, as it were, the heights of this vice, and gained the summit" (DCD V.19). The *libido dominandi* in the end subverts the desire to be praised, as it turns to cruelty and self-indulgence and away from a concern for what other people think. This is why the love of praise acts as a restraining force. To restate Augustine's conclusion, people should not think to free themselves from ambition by despising glory and disregarding the opinions of others (DCD V.20).

This discussion of human glory over and against the *libido dominandi* greatly moderates Augustine's conclusions about virtue and the earthly success that the Romans enjoyed in building such a nation. Augustine writes that they were "good according to the standards of the earthly city," attained so much glory in earthly empire because of their certain virtues (DCD V.19). But the "truly religious" believe that true virtue impossible without true piety (DCD V.19). *Pietas*, Augustine gives us to understand in Book X, may be understood as worship (DCD X.1). That is a fine statement of the dispute: does true virtue require pietas or not? Augustine suggests that it does, and this means that his critique of the pagans is not only that they saw virtue but were unable to live virtuously, as Fortin suggests was the case (cf. Fortin 1996; Fortin 1996), but that without revelation we cannot see virtue itself. The problem is in the intellect as well as in the will. The weakness of human intellect in a way demanded the revelation of God for our good (cf. DCD XI.2). "… he who with genuine piety believes in God and hopes in him, is more concerned about what he finds displeasing in himself than what is pleasing, not so much to himself as to the Truth" (DCD V.20). And whatever is pleasing in himself he attributes to the

mercy of God. Not to the "ends of glory and her inflated conceit" but to the end of being pleasing to God, the exemplar of Truth.

America: Guinea Pig of Providence?

What should distress the student of history is that we cannot know whether a ruler seeks God's approval, merely human glory, or simply domination and mastery for its own sake. Augustine's belief in providence, therefore, does not mean that God wills for the just or righteous to rule. Rather "we must ascribe to the true God alone the power to grant kingdoms and empires" to the just and unjust (DCD V.21). He denies the ability of human beings to weigh and "examine the secrets of men's hearts and to decide with clear judgement on the varying merits of human kingdoms" (DCD V.21). That is, knowing hearts is the key to evaluating merit: but only God can know hearts. Do leaders desire to rule for the good of their countrymen, or do they hope to rule for glory's sake? Because we cannot know this, however much we pretend to, we cannot judge kingdoms to be good or bad on this score. But Augustine's view of providence goes further: God "never leaves the human race unattended by his judgement or his help" (V.21). Back in chapter 19, he wrote that God may in his providence, decide that "man's condition deserves such masters" as Nero (DCD V.19). This thought should startle us.

Let us turn to America for a moment, in order to make the idea clearer. It is easy to lampoon the idea that God has destined America to serve as a "City upon a Hill": a guinea pig for the nations of good government. First articulated by John Winthrop, this vision continues to carry weight in American political discourse. It can be described (very loosely) as follows. God, by this account, has his eyes upon America: if she deals well and rightly, he will bless. If she does badly, he will curse. In either case, he will make an example of her. Now, the rejection of

this view depends, among other things, on the notion that God is either absent from human affairs or at least indifferent to America's influence and greatness so far as his providence is concerned. The greatness and influence of America in the world can hardly be denied, so the logical question concerns God's relation to America's greatness. And if God is indifferent, then it could be that Americans rule because they are exceptional. They have reaped an imperial reward for their virtues of self-government and money-making. This skeptical position is in many ways the more attractive one, and seems to be the humbler one too. Augustine, however, avoids both conclusions. God is no puppet of the reigning nation, neither is he indifferent to it. God was not indifferent to the Romans; he is not indifferent to America. That is quite an idea. As Augustine puts it above, God's governance of world affairs – his lack of indifference – comes in a double-edged package. He is always judging or helping, according to his own purposes. And, Augustine gives us to understand, the more one rules the more one experiences being helped and being judged.

Augustine might say that it is through the ultimately beneficent providence of God that America has ruled – this same providence by which God saw fit to give rule to, and take it away from, the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. This holds true of individual men as well as for nations. It holds for the glory-seeking as well as for those who simply hope to oppress. Augustine writes that "… the same God gave the throne to Constantine the Christian, and also to Julian the Apostate. Julian had exceptional endowments, perverted by sacrilegious and abominable superstition working through a love of domination." He "gave his entire trust to worthless oracles of superstition" which led to his early demise (DCD V.21). Rule is given to the good and bad alike, those who seek to serve and those who seek to dominate. Augustine writes, "It is clear that God, the one true God, rules and guides these events, according to his pleasure. If

God's reasons are inscrutable, does that mean that they are unjust?" (DCD V.21). All this does not prevent Augustine from arguing that God's providential governance, or at least what we know of it, elicits God's own concern for glory. He points to the failure of Radagaisus to conquer Rome as an instance of God's mercy:

> And those wretches do not give thanks to the great mercy of God, who after deciding to use a barbarian invasion as a chastisement for men's immorality – which deserved an even harsher punishment – tempered his wrath with such great compassion. And so, in the first place, he allowed the barbarian to be miraculously defeated, lest the glory should be given to those demons, whose help he was known to have entreated, to the overthrow of feeble minds (DCD V.23).

God, it may surprise moderns to know, is a jealous God. This explains Augustine's great seriousness in the matter of idolatry: God alone deserves the glory *due to God*, the praise we give the highest being – indeed, the source of all being. Augustine's appreciation of God's jealousy – He brooks no rival and suffers no demon to steal his glory – can only be because he sees glory as something rightly due to God. Giving glory to God is key to the *latreia*, or right service, that human beings need to offer.

In the process of the fall, man loses his nearness to God *and* the full glory proper to human beings, all while slavishly giving glory to false gods who do not deserve it. Only those who accept the truth of the Christian revelation can strive to escape this trap, and yet we all retain some semblance of glory. Augustine believes can be seen even in the lives of the pagan emperors who had no connection to the city of God. He continues,

> When we describe Christian emperors as 'happy', it is not because they enjoyed long reigns, or because they died a peaceful death, leaving the throne to their sons…all these, and other similar rewards or consolations in this life of trouble were granted to some of the worshippers of demons, *as their due*; and yet those pagan rulers have no connection with the Kingdom of God, to which those Christian rulers belong. Their good fortune was due to the mercy of God; for it was God's intention that those who believe in him should not demand such blessings from him as if they represented the highest good (DCD V.24, emphasis mine).

Augustine does not here mention human praise as one of these consolations, but he does explain the ground for a love of praise: the desire for consolation or reward in this life of trouble, amid this "shifting scene" (DCD, Preface). Augustine freely admits that the pagan emperors were granted good things as their due, but this only due to the "mercy of God" (DCD V.24). A few lines on, in a list that rather sounds like a job description for the just ruler, Augustine says that

> We Christians call rulers happy, if they rule with justice; if amid the voices of exalted praise and the reverent salutations of excessive humility, they are not inflated with pride, but remember that they are but men…if, more than the earthly kingdom, they love that realm where they do not fear to share the kingship…if they restrain their self-indulgent appetites all the more because they are more free to gratify them, and prefer to have command over their lower desires than over any number of subject peoples; and if they do all this not for *a burning desire for empty glory, but for the love of eternal blessedness* (DCD V.24, emphasis mine).

There is a lot to notice in this passage. First of all, Augustine sets out a standard by which Christians can judge the happiness of their rulers. That seems like an innovation unto itself. Such a standard could also be used by a Christian ruler could judge his own happiness. Second, notice the internal orientation of the list. Most, if not all of the qualities listed, have to do with the inner health or sickness of the ruler, which then presumably works its way out into politics. Finally, Augustine concludes that such felicitous emperors are happy in hope; in the life to come they will be happy in reality (DCD V.24). The substance of this hope is vindication in the life to come, not glory attained in this mortal life. One might also consider what Augustine leaves unsaid. Those who cling so much to earthly glory might be happy in reality, and not in hope. However, such that is what Augustine means by the phrase "empty glory." By my reading, Augustine adds the term "empty" to depict the relative inferiority of terrestrial glory compared to its eternal counterpart. Earthly glory, compared to eternal glory, is empty, like smoke, of no weight. Augustine also suggests that what we want is for glory to be full, not empty. We hope for

weighty, permanent glory. Yet even taking joy in the "fragile and brilliant" earthly glory might be better than entirely disregarding it in our search to dominate and oppress.

To summarize these first two sections, Augustine does not simply dismiss the concern for glory, despite some appearances to the contrary. We can see that he appreciates it sufficiently enough to distinguish it from the lust for domination, a very common passion in political life. We also see that Augustine sees God using the love of glory within his providential plan for humankind. Finally, the nature of the *humanae gloriae* is a complicated but incredibly useful one for Augustine to parse out, precisely because it prepares an invective against the earthly city on grounds that the earthly city itself appreciates. Who doesn't like glory? Who doesn't like their fifteen minutes of *fama*? This gives us an inkling of the subversive nature of Augustine's treatment of the earthly city's regard for itself, in this case exampled by Rome. He subverts earthly glory not by denigrating it but through a more subtle effort to claim its status as an effigy of true glory. But therein lies the twist: to know more about the nature of this "true" glory, people must trust the revelatory account or basis of it – about which I will say more in a moment.

Demonic and Angelic Glory-Seeking

Although he lists the love for glory among the vices of the earthly city, Augustine acknowledges the way that it points – in its very incompleteness and insufficiency – to a glory that would not fade, being more than the praise of faulty and fail judges. It points to the glory of the City of God, to a partaking in God's own glory. It points, in short, to a situation where man is closer to God. That sounds strikingly like the situation of mankind before its fall. In the next section, we will see more clearly how Augustine uses the fall to explain the psychological genesis of glory-loving.

Augustine's articulation of the fall at the beginning of Book XI takes the shape of an analysis of the psychological roots of ambition. In other words, he recaps the longing for glory in terms of the fall. All men, whether members of the earthly city or the heavenly, are burdened with a sense of loss, something that glory-seeking must be understood as an attempt to heal. To know what was originally lost, we must turn to what Augustine regards as the "original" citizens of the earthly city. He writes,

> the citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods to the founder of this Holy City, not knowing that he is the God of gods; not, that is, the God of the false gods, the impious and arrogant gods who are deprived of his changeless light which is shed upon all alike, and are therefore reduced to a poverty-stricken kind of power, and engage in a kind of scramble for their lost dominions and claim divine honors from their deluded subjects (DCD XI.1).

In this passage, Augustine speaks of the purely spiritual citizens of the earthly city. These he calls in Book XI, as in other places, the demons or false gods. The original fall happens not to men but to the bad angels. The demons are the purely rational, spiritual creatures made by God in his goodness; yet they failed to persist in his goodness, and so turned from the source of their being. This event could not have been anything but a loss for the angels. The false gods were "deprived of his changeless light". They no longer participate in God's goodness, a not unimportant change for a dependent rational being. This change means a departure from the source of what truly *is*. Augustine draws our attention to the result of this fall, saying that these angels were reduced and humbled, striving for a "poverty-stricken kind of power."

Note the interference of the demons in human affairs. Augustine charges these false gods with attempting to "claim divine honors from their deluded subjects" (DCD XI.1). The false gods continually chase their originally impious desire to be worshipped as gods, engaging in a mad scramble for a lesser reward. They would be better off, Augustine suggests, if they had made the humbler choice to embrace the real dependence of being. Augustine, in keeping with his

criticism of the pagan worldview, namely that these "gods" cannot deliver what the Romans claim them to be capable of delivering, nevertheless does not deny that the demons possessed real dominions and honors. Yet we are left with the pervading sense of the fallen angels' loss.

We can see the situation of the demons all the better for knowing, Augustine suggests, the disposition of the good angels who cling to God. God is God "of the good and holy gods, who would rather have themselves in subjection to the one God than have many subjects for themselves. Their delight is to worship God rather than to be worshipped instead of God" (XI.1). Augustine uses the choice of the good angels as a way of clarifying the choice for human beings, since both are possessed of a rational nature. If you could only choose one, would you rather be subject to God or rule over human beings? The example of the (good and bad) angels is more than simply salutary for human beings. Their history is inextricably linked with human history; the human fall mirrors the fall of the wicked angels, though with some obvious differences too.

Augustine's purpose as described in the introductory chapter of Book XI, is to describe the "rise, the development and the destined ends of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, the cities which we find, as I have said, interwoven, as it were, in this present transitory world." Augustine shows that all of the created order is divided into two *societas*, and that the original beginning, that is to say the division, of the earthly and heavenly cities in fact begins with the angels. So, the righteous angels and the righteous men are one society, while wicked men and wicked angels form the other (earthly) society. The former will enjoy God's own glory together, while the latter are doomed to be forgotten, ultimately. Near the end of *The City of God*, Augustine suggests that God has chosen human beings to fill the ranks of the "lost" angels who have fallen (XXII.1). Thus, in their common rational nature, and in the linking of their destinies, angels and men have much to do with one another. The ambition of angels, their fallen seeking

of a poverty-stricken power, should be of great concern to the human race. To return to the main point: angels had honors and dominions, which the good angels retain while bad angels have irretrievably lost. Augustine does not say what these honors and dominions consisted in, but clearly conveys the desperate search of the demons to recover it. Human beings, in thirsting for glory, unknowingly imitate these fallen, false gods, who scramble for whatever they can get from human beings.

Founding

This account of ambition shines through in Augustine's insights into the act of founding. Founders are principally concerned with honor gained, says Augustine. He focuses on two instances of founding, that of Cain and his brother Abel, along with Romulus and Remus. In both cases, Augustine observes, were accompanied by the dreadful crime of fratricide. In the former case, the

> first founder of the earthly city [Cain] was, as we have seen, a fratricide; for, overcome by envy, he slew his own brother, a citizen of the Eternal City, on pilgrimage in this world. Hence it is no wonder that long afterwards this first precedent – what the Greeks call an archetype – was answered by a kind of reflection, by an event of the same kind… (DCD XV.5)

Augustine sees the event echoed in the case of Romulus and Remus, with one important difference: the actions of Romulus and Remus resemble that of Cain. They are instances of earthly grasping for honor *par excellence*. The poets themselves understood the heinous nature of this crime that left the walls of Rome dripping with a brother's blood, says Lucan's *Pharsalia* (DCD XV.5, cf. *Phars* 1,95). The Roman edifice was built upon this murder, because nothing would have been founded without the ambition that was itself the motivation for fratricide.

> For this is how Rome was founded, when Remus, as Roman history witnesses, was slain by his brother Romulus. The difference from the primal crime was that both brothers were citizens of the earthly city. Both sought the glory of establishing the Roman state, but a joint foundation would not bring to each the glory that a single founder would enjoy. Anyone whose aim was to glory in the exercise of power would obviously enjoy less power if his sovereignty was diminished by a living partner (DCD XV.5).

Once again Augustine gives us the sense of how profoundly the love of glory dominates the human heart. Augustine does not say that the brothers were wrong, however – he makes no argument that earthly glory could really be shared. It seems that it cannot be shared if one wishes for the greatest amount of glory, and in the end to be regarded as divine and immortal by all Romans, forever.[56] Augustine appreciates the fact that, for one who aspires to founding, glory shared would be no glory at all. The ambition to found – to be the *sole* founder – motivated these fratricides. Augustine also points to fratricide as an unusually abhorrent crime but one that illustrates the depths to which the glory-seeker can sink. For far from being simple murder, it takes the life of one's own – those with whom one shares the first and deepest human connection. If sociality is most seen in the family, then founding perhaps requires a brutal ripping of the family bond. Romulus or Cain were not inexplicably fratricidal; rather the act of founding was accompanied, in two remarkable instances, by this crime.

[56] I am struck by this: Augustine understands the importance of *eternal* Rome to the identity of its founder. If the city lives forever, then its founder will too (in a fashion).

Man, the Substitutor

Augustine argues that mankind itself was in a place of honor, but did not realize how honored he was until he lost it. Augustine alludes to Psalm 49 in his discussion of human mortality after the fall, "Man was in a place of honor, but did not realize it: he has been brought to the level of the animals without understanding and been made like them" (DCD XIII.3). Fallen mankind's situation *as fallen* supplies a reason why Augustine does not entirely dismiss glory-seeking. The ambitious person who feels so keenly the loss of honor and a loss of station – and in the end, loss of life – might have a theological basis for that intuition. In its present condition, human nature suffers a great diminution, of which death gives a final indication. The longing to surpass this mortal condition is the same thing as the wish to regain the possibility of immortality *once* enjoyed. If this longing really is part of man's present nature, then nature bears the marks of a better nature or better life. Augustine's respect for glory-seeking behavior, then, provides a crucial indication of the role that the longing for immortality plays in his account of the fall.

The place in which human nature enjoyed life untroubled by the rebellion of desire and the consequence of mortality was a good one. Especially in losing the possibility of deathlessness, the human longing for that state takes the form of a desire to live on in the memories and praise of future generations. The ambitious person wishes to have a kind of life after death. Thus, human mortality supplies the first and most important condition for the love of glory and the extremes to which it can lead. It is striking how Augustine defines the love of glory as the desire to receive praise from others, especially worthy judges of human character, rather than in the actual exercise of political power. But the love of praise is still a very different thing than the love, and possession, of virtue.

What this chapter shows probably most abundantly is that Augustine sees human beings as substitutionary creatures. We pant for immortality, but since we cannot get that, we load up something else with all our desire for life unending. Instead of admitting to ourselves that we cannot have the real thing, the only thing worth striving for, then we will settle for a passé imitation. More than settling for it: we will die for it, as the Romans did. Thus, we have a substantial and, so to speak, immortal desire for life unstinted. The presentation of ambition then forms a key feature of Augustine's anthropology. The fall implies a certain permanence to our sense of loss, suggested by Augustine's comment that the love of glory may be ineradicable.

I have suggested that Augustine wants to do two things at once: he wants to show what glory really is *and* why fallen humanity loves it so inordinately. This also suggests that glory itself really is something on Augustine's account. It cannot simply be reduced to the longing for immortality; the fallen angels pant for their lost dominions, and they do not die. Glory is not a chimera, or something unreal. We love it so much because we have fallen from immortality, but it does not follow that once attaining immortality we should cease to regard praise as something notable.

This can be seen in Augustine's account of glory in heaven. The earthly glory of the saints, if we recall, can be absorbed into God's glory, in which case the saints no longer "own" their glory but receive it from God. The saints do not hold themselves to the ultimate cause of their noble deeds and speech, but rather God who works in them. But, Augustine remarks, in giving God all the glory, they themselves shine with glory. Giving up all notions of causing their own divinity somehow presents the key to becoming divine in the end. And those who give God more glory, and live the most virtuous lives, are definitely rewarded with more glory in eternal life. Augustine's remarks in the final books of *The City of God* make this abundantly clear. He

writes, “But what will be the grades of honor and glory here, appropriate to degrees of merit? Who is capable of imagining them, not to speak of describing them? But there will be such distinctions; of that there can be no doubt” (DCD XXII.30). Augustine does not say much more in describing heavenly glory because such glory is quite literally beyond description. But that there will be real merit, and glory attached to such merit, Augustine is sure. He writes, “There will be true glory, where no one will be praised in error or in flattery; there will be true honor, where it is denied to none who is worthy, and bestowed on none that is unworthy. And honor will not be courted by any unworthy claimant, for none but the worthy can gain admission there” (DCD XXII.30). Although Augustine sees that the glory of the saints as a participatory, dependent kind of glory – the hierarchy or “grades of merit” in heaven is due to the varying degrees of godlikeness – Augustine still maintains that glory is something offered by the heavenly city, in contradistinction to the earthly. Heavenly glory might be described as earthly glory assured, delivered in a way that the earthly city could never delivered. It is “true,” a real or just signifier of virtue and godlikeness.

Here on earth, the love of glory can terminate in the *libido dominandi*, in the hunger to lord it over others for its own sake. Augustine does judge domination differently than the love of praise. The one who lusts for mastery ceases to care what people think, so intent is he upon power, domination, and oppression. If we speak of tyrants as shameless, we mean that the opinion of the people no longer restrains their behavior (unless that opinion conduces to preservation of their position). Yet, he does say that there exists a slippery slope, so in some way the love of glory is not entirely free of the wish to dominate – which may be one reason why Augustine sees that the saints refuse all glory for themselves in giving it to God. Glory is not

domination, but the love of it may lead one down that path. Hence, we live in fear and suspicion of ambitious people, no matter how noble they seem to be.

Ultimately, Augustine's account of glory looks not only backward but most especially forward, to the full revelation of the heavenly city to come. He looks not to the glory ascribed to individuals only, but that glory ascribed to the heavenly city as a whole. Glory is proper to a city as a city, and so Augustine grudgingly acknowledges Roman greatness. Yet how much greater in glory will the heavenly city be: far surpassing, Augustine believes, that of Rome. Thus, we should fittingly should end this chapter with the end of human history, of which Augustine writes, "But through the judgement of God, which will be the last judgement, administered by his Son Jesus Christ, the splendor of that City will be made apparent, by God's gift. So great will be that splendor, and so new, that no traces of age will remain, since even our bodies will pass from their old corruption and mortality into incorruption and immortality" (DCD XX.17).

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion of the dissertation, I recapitulate the entire work first by showing how the findings of the individual chapters square with the issues raised by Pinker. Then I will give the architecture of the work as a whole as I present some fundamental conclusions from my research. Finally, in three short sections I will elaborate on the topics of dignity, justice, and pity, in a venture to suggest some new avenues of research into the implications of Augustine's thought for political life.

The first chapter, in discussing work as a microcosm of the fall, highlights the motivations of human beings who choose this activity. For, work is not the only possible way to live – laziness and indolence are attractive in their own way, because we experience toil in work. It goes against our grain. Work has become toilsome, and burdensome, to people who have fallen. Work has also become an avenue to escaping necessity; the fall creates physical necessity where none existed before. Now, assuming progress does occur and gets people beyond bare necessity, would it still be good to work? If yes, for what reason shall we work? I assume Pinker would want people to work and be productive. I assume he believes that the satisfactions of productivity are rationally defensible, apart from the materialistic benefits that a focus on productivity achieves – allowing the human race to escape the mire of poverty. He prefers to remain agnostic, I think, about why work is so hard in this world anyway. Augustine provides deep reasons to work once we have passed the level of mere subsistence. First and most importantly, Augustine sees work to be fully worthy of human dignity, to be productive of joy and a source of blessing. Indeed, we cooperate with God in contributing to human flourishing through work. Now that work has fallen along with us and become toilsome, Augustine explains what facing up to its difficulty does for the soul. With Augustine, the difficulty in work is

analogous to the difficulty in education itself, showing that the problem of work is not merely something that bedevils the day-laborer. It presents as genuine challenge to anyone who labors in body or mind. The difficulty in work, as in learning, is a punishment for disobedience, or rather discipline with a real point to it. We must be beaten by the birch strap of necessity in order to work, not because work is bad but in order to relearn its goodness.

In my second chapter, I discussed how the complicated situation of human sociability likewise reveals, or provides a mirror image of, the fall. Though social by nature, humanity has become unsociable to the extent that it suffers from the corruption or vitiation of sin. Augustine suggests that cooperation is good for its own sake, not merely because of the good things that result from that cooperation. My account of the fall shows that this discord does not arise merely from conflicting interests. If that were the case, any situation can be resolved by harmonizing interests, a far easier task than trying to make people sociable. Augustine suggests that because discord stems from the vitiation of the human being, making people sociable would require a pretty thorough makeover. Our attachment to self-interest, our hopes of harmonizing the many competing interests in society, in a way testify to the difficulty or even impossibility of that other task. At the same time, the strength of the longing for unity calls out for the eventual complete repair and healing of human nature.

The third chapter takes all this a step further. Human progress, after all, has meant an increase in well-being, which is pleasing to our self-interest. *Are* people self-interested? My analysis in the third chapter shows that Augustine teaches us – albeit in a backhand way – about the nature of self-interest. In view of the extreme range of the soul's delights and terrors, self-interest appears by contrast as a doctrine of the average. The self-interested human has no intense longings, nor any real depths. They are simply rational calculators of what benefits them. This

idea assumes that we're pretty much in charge, whereas Augustine argues that the fall places mankind in a condition of slavery to their desires. Our fallen existence is characterized by a fundamental lack of self-possession, making self-interest ultimately an optimistic doctrine, as well as the low and calculating one it was already assumed to be.

That third chapter also spent considerable time considering why death bothers us so much. It bothers us precisely because we long for immortality, for a life without the possibility of cessation. This deep and fondly held wish explains why we try to extend life for as long as we can and rejoice in the hard-won rise in mankind's average lifespan over the last few centuries. But perhaps it ends in futility just the same: for people who want to live forever, what is thirty more years? It is better than nothing, but rings hollow at the end, unless we tire of life itself. So, the primitive fear of a violent death is tied with an unbreakable bond to our most impassioned longing. Thus, Augustine's insistence that humans were originally meant to be immortal has lost nothing of its relevance: death remains a troublesome reality, a puzzle, that we cannot seem to get rid of. Nor can we strip away the sense that death is unnatural and bad.

Human progress can be either accelerated or imperiled by political ambition, perhaps even almost simultaneously, as my fourth chapter shows. Certainly, the glory-loving character of humanity can provide great fuel for progress. President Xi can boast of the millions of people that have escaped poverty since he assumed control of the Communist Party in China. His desire for glory must be pleased by this. Now, according to Augustine this desire for glory could go in two directions. First, it could easily slip into the desire to dominate. Or, it keeps on searching for what is truly glorious. One by one, the glory-seeker obtains earthly glories but finds them lacking and insecure. Frayed by mortality and the knowledge that human praise will wither, the glory-seeking person looks ultimately looks to the love of God, the chief characteristic of the heavenly

city. But at this point the love of glory almost ceases to enter into the equation: one loses oneself in worship of God. By Augustine's description, the love of glory occupies an uneasy middle ground between these two possibilities.

My research shows Augustine to be someone who has accepted the truth of the fall, and goes about interpreting the world (including political life) on that basis. That is, Augustine believes that human beings suffered a fatal corruption that nevertheless left many signs of good everywhere in the world. He is unsurprised, then, by the kind of dualistic experiences that mark a human life. What best explains the dualism that Augustine points to? How is it that work can be both good and bad for us, and human beings both social and quarrelsome, even in the closest of friendships? The fall, according to this line of argument, is the theory that best explains the unavoidable nature of these dualities.

In the second half of the dissertation, we see Augustine proceeding in a slightly different manner. Supposing again that we take for granted a fall in which humanity went from a state of blessing to a state of moral turpitude and regret, what then would be our condition and our chief concerns? What effects might follow from this most decisive moral event? The third chapter argues that Augustine plainly sees the human condemnation to mortality and slavery to desire as the basic results of the fall. These problems, I argued, are really two sides of the same coin. We want immortality. This longing is an artifact of the original condition; but of course, it brings with it no possibility of resolution. All people, believers and unbelievers alike, and all commonwealths, must reckon with this problem as best they can. Only believers, however, can think that mortality is an innovation in human history. By unpacking the fall, Augustine means to give that assurance. The fourth chapter expands on this analysis by looking more narrowly at the phenomenon of political ambition. Augustine, I show, takes the longing for glory and praise

quite seriously. If the human race has fallen from glory, then glory-seeking really makes perfect sense in light of that reality. Ambitious people are, so to speak, more in touch with the history of their race. These lines of reasoning offer an indirect confirmation of the truth of the fall but are not intended to directly support it. Augustine knows that the fall cannot be proven, but nevertheless hopes to provoke faith by explaining the human condition that we do see.

A Fine Mixture

Augustine emphasizes the mixed nature of the fully human life. The situation of work presents a good example of this. Work is a proper feature of man's activity in the garden. This means that the originally good state of mankind was not, according to Augustine, one of indolence but rather one characterized by activity and effort, even though this work was not toilsome. The fall introduced toil into the picture, but this sad innovation did not destroy all pleasure in work – far from it. Therefore, we see that work necessarily contains both good and bad. In the second chapter's exploration of sociability in the fall, we see a similar pattern. Mankind, sociable by nature and desiring unity with other human beings, suffers a real corruption in his relationships with others. Division and discord, the sundering of one person from another, results from the corruption of the human race. Whence then come friendship, love, and committed relationship? Why should people gather at all? We see that they do because the fall weakened and compromised, but did not obliterate, the desire for unity with others.

In my third chapter, I made the argument that Augustine, in the city of God, uses the fall to account for mankind's rebellion against death and against himself, in his desires. Mortality is the most obvious consequence of the fall, as seen in the biblical account. Mankind is now doomed to die, and yet this need not have happened. But Augustine is very careful about this. In

the garden mankind was able not to die. So, the possibility of death is not entirely a novel one. Those who were threatened with the punishment of death as the due wage of disobedience knew something about its possibility, otherwise the threatened punishment – which became the real punishment, could not effectively deter human beings from disobeying God.

Let me reflect for a moment on the very human desire for a deathless existence. Augustine shows the human race to be mortal and yet in rebellion against its mortality, which explains so many of our political pathologies. So, then, maybe those pathologies are permanent because the longing for immortality is (more or less) a permanent feature of the human heart. If we feel in any way that death is absurd or a "troublesome reality," then perhaps we ought to consider how much this thought motivates what we say, do, and believe. Augustine believes that this longing does explain much of our behavior. This belief is partly why he emphasizes that human mortality is a punishment for mankind's disobedience. Horror at death, and longing for immortality, share basically the same conviction: death should not be the end. That is one key question that emerges from this dissertation: putting aside for the moment the question of whether immortal life exists and is attainable, what we need to know is if human beings have a reliable longing for it. Augustine would, I think, answer this question in the affirmative. But the question is a fundamental one that needs to be raised.

The human "mixture" arises not from the fundamental or original nature of human beings but rather from the "calamitous sequence" that followed from the wrong choice of Adam. Eschatologically speaking, this mixed nature will disappear in the final judgement of each person. Those who persevere in good will become all good; those who fall away from God will have badness unmixed. Either our corruption will be healed, or it will become complete. Second, I observed that Augustine sees in the fallen heart great extremes in these highs and lows. We are

more angelic and more devilish than we had believed - the simple division between altruism and self-interest. We rise higher, and sink lower, then we would have dared to believe.

The high moral demands of Christianity arise not only from the teachings of Christ but, as can be seen from Augustine's thought, from the way in which the fall supports those teachings. We were high and godlike, but did not know it until we fell from such a height. Formerly, the demands of obedience were not burdensome. And even though good and evil do not change with the fall, our postlapsarian condition has made the good burdensome to us. And yet we do not abandon the good, even if we are hypocrites. The incoherence of this situation is what gets people thinking they need a savior. At the heart of the theological-political problem, seen from this vantage point, is this perduring of good in a fallen world.[57]

Christian morality also stems from a related intuition about the extreme range of the human highs and lows, something that we see in Augustine's presentation of the fall. If the capacity of people is so high, there is much to be encouraged. If we can sink so low, there is a lot to lose too. The sobriety of a realistic view of the world, which I view Augustine as contributing to, arises not from thinking of people as self-interested, but from the realization that godlikeness and devilishness exists in each person. It was our once-nearness to God himself that presents us with such dangers as we face.

For Augustine this rings true even in the way we experience life itself. It is our capacity for such enjoyment and delight which leads to such possibility of misery. Augustine makes a comment along these lines, on the joys and sorrows of friendship, near the close of *The City of God*:

> For if their life brought us the consoling delights of friendship, how could it be that their death should bring us no sadness? Anyone who forbids such sadness must forbid, if he can, all friendly conversation, must lay a ban on all friendly feeling or put a stop to it,

[57] For Augustine's account of this problem, cf. (DCD XXII.24).

> must with a ruthless insensibility break the ties of all human relationships, or else decree that they must only be engaged upon so long as they inspire no delight in a man's soul. But if this is beyond all possibility, how can it be that a man's death should not be bitter if his life is sweet to us? (DCD XIX.8)

Augustine shows the absurdity of banning friendship in order to insulate ourselves from the nearly certain pain involved in making and keeping friends. The broader political lesson is this: civic life should encourage people to lean into the good thing, even when this is dangerous for them. Choosing friendship in this unstable world is dangerous, Augustine writes. But that is not a good reason to choose loneliness! Marriages often end in divorce, broken families, unloved children. These things happen because the fall has made us quarrelsome, or "disagreeable" as Jane Austen would say. But to give up marriage, to avoid children, in order to avoid these evils means giving up on the goodness still inherent to those activities. Languor, then, is our temptation – we tragically give up all pursuit of good, usually in an (understandable) effort to prevent the bad from happening. To drive the point home with an example from my first chapter: refusing to work eliminates certain evils, say the oppressing of workers, or the dullness of some task that *somebody* must do. But this would simultaneously cut off the spiritual pleasure of creativity, innovation, and devotion to something that demands excellence of us. The effects of the fall on work show us that every human activity, no matter how mundane, is a mixture, because human beings themselves are corrupted, a mixture. So, we cannot seize the good, we cannot love the good, without thereby opening up the possibility that we may lose that good and more besides. Belief in the fall, for Augustine, grounds this expectation.

A further point might also be made. Augustine wants people to embrace some good, not simply for goodness' sake, but because doing so involves an unavoidable confrontation with some pain or trouble for the sake of that good. The fall forces us to prove our love for the good and the noble in a way that a cost-free, toil-free, death-free world could not. Another way to say

this is that since the fall pretty much guarantees that every good will have some corresponding evil or danger attached to it, pursuit of the good really requires bravery. Nobility, if it means recognizing and accepting the painful cost that the good incurs and pursuing it anyway, is something possible for fallen beings. In fact, nobility plays a central role in the good life of fallen man. Meanwhile it is not clear that activities such as work could be considered noble, prior to the fall.

We have sufficient space for one further question: is Augustine persuasive, or at least internally coherent? If I am right that the fall serves as a central reference point for Augustine's thought about human affairs, then this means that he presents the human problem as one of corruption. Properly speaking, humanity was created good and suffers a subsequent fall. So, Augustine belongs in the category of thinkers who believe the origin to be good rather than and bad. Now, in order to be convincing, Augustine must reason that the essential elements of our nature were already present before the fall; in other words, that there was a real continuity between our created nature and our fallen nature. For all the fascinating developments that occur with the fall, many of which I have explored in this project, there is only one new element of the fallen nature: sin. That raises the question of whether sin is really "us." Can we disown our corruption, or does corruption mean that something originally alien to us is now a part of our intrinsic makeup? I think the latter description best fits the evidence. Augustine writes that we should not dismiss our sins as if they were far from us, as if they were imposed on us from outside (DCD XV.7). Sin is something we have made our own, through pride.

How Augustine settles the issue matters greatly for the believability of his account. If there was too much of a gap between our present nature and our blessed state in paradise, Augustine would appear to be conjuring up some kind of projection or chimera instead of a real

human. And that is unquestionably the sense we get in the portions of this dissertation where life before the fall is described. Only with difficulty can we imagine work without toil, relationships without any hint of quarreling, a world where death was a possibility but not a necessity. On the other hand, however, Augustine faces the danger that in making the original man too like us, he undermines the idea of the fall altogether, along with its importance for the well-lived life. If the difference in Adam before and after his disobedience is not all that great, one need not even bother to argue that man is a wretch who needs saving from himself. We would be a little off-kilter, but not people whose entire nature has become dislocated. So, the theory in a way needs to present man before the fall as an almost unbelievably good creature. This, I think, is the direction to which Augustine ultimately tends. Prelapsarian life is not an earthy one. Yet Augustine still manages to make the unfallen world seem near to us by his description of how madly we threw it all away. The best life was tragically within our grasp. He wants us to sense the pathos of the fall, to feel its effects keenly, to carry with us some sense of loss. Augustine deems this effort – of keeping this sense of loss alive – to be an important purpose of revelation.

Future Research: Human Dignity, Justice and Luck, Pity

I wish to end this dissertation with a few tentative suggestions and thoughts about future research. First, what are the implications of the fall for human dignity? This I believe to be an important and fecund question. Augustine thinks human dignity is, according to the scriptural account, grounded in the image of God. Already a problem arises: who can see God? Even in a world without sin, the grounding and the content of human dignity seems mysterious. As Augustine puts it in his commentary on the literal meaning of Genesis, "…what is the basis of man's greater dignity except that he was created in the image of God?" (GL VI.12). Human

beings worked in the full awareness of this image, this godlikeness, in the unfallen state. That image was "impressed on the spirit of our minds" (GL VI.27).

But the fall, Augustine writes, made this image less discernible. In that same passage, Augustine writes that through his sin Adam lost that impression or perception of human dignity (cf. GL VI.27). That does not mean that dignity ceases to exist, as an ontological matter. In his Retractions, Augustine tried to correct erroneous interpretations of that sort, writing, "In Book VI my statement that Adam by his sin lost the image of God in which he was made must not be taken to mean that no trace of the image remained in him. Rather it was so disfigured that it needed renewal" (Retractions 2.50.3). In both the original statement, and in its further elucidation, we see that the fall poses quite a serious difficulty for human beings: they possess dignity, and yet that dignity has suffered a disfiguring. So, dignity is at once the most obvious thing in the world, something that practically cries out for recognition and a new UN declaration every year, but also something that seems to have been compromised. In short, it seems to defy easy definition.

The revelation concerning the fall culminates in an effort to show mankind's inherent dignity, while also explaining the difficulty or even the impossibility of proving it beyond all doubt. So human dignity, for all its fanfare among the religious and secular alike, is doubly mysterious. First, man's dignity consists in an image of the invisible God. One of the marks of the unfallen world was that humanity sensed that dignity intellectually, even if that ground (God) remained his mysterious self. But human beings walked with God, so it is reasonable to expect the unfallen nature to have a greater sense of its own dignity and worth. Second and more importantly, if we take the doctrine of the fall seriously – as Augustine does – then we should have reason to think that people will not actually be able to see or sense dignity very well, since

human nature has been injured. This imperiling of dignity, and the hope of recovering or restoring it, is a central conclusion to draw from Augustine's account of the fall. Redemption then means a resuscitating of our nature, making us dignified again, not simply a case of God standing in for individual sins.

It seems to me that this may pose an interesting problem for the various proponents of natural law who are also believers in the revelatory account of Christianity. In a nutshell, Augustine argues that the blurred image of God, the imperiling of dignity due to the fall, points people to the possibility of redemption. For Christians, our difficulty in figuring out what human dignity consists in, or even our doubt that it really exists, is a divine clue that as a race we need saving. The tension arises when natural law philosophers attempt to make human dignity a matter beyond all doubt, much like the Declaration of Independence nicely pronounces equality to be a self-evident truth. Similarly, a lot of ink has been spilled in the attempt to fortify human dignity, to make it practically unassailable philosophically and politically.

In short, I do see a possible tension, maybe a productive tension, between human dignity and the idea of the fall, which may be worth further exploration. If human dignity is so obvious, what are we to make of the fall and the subsequent need for redemption, of which Augustine speaks? Augustine's account of the fall essentially makes the case that we have become less dignified. Believers, *as believers*, are supposed to communicate this need for redemption and the depths to which the human race has sunk. That account implies that the fall has been, and continues to be, nothing short of a catastrophe for our understanding of ourselves as made in God's image. Conversely, it seems to me that the more stridently believers emphasize human dignity, the more they assert that it can be plainly seen or even proved, the more the revelatory account that makes them believers in the first place could be undermined. In short, if the fall

affected both our intellect and the object of its vision in the way Augustine says it did, we might expect dignity to be more than a little mysterious. This need to put human dignity beyond all doubt, however, is very real. At the very least, we need humility in our efforts to pin down exactly why human beings are so special and worthy of honor.

At the beginning of my work on this topic in Augustine's thought, Steve Kautz[58] suggested that I consider the question of luck. Now, our good or bad luck can be seen in the circumstances of our birth. Therefore, Hannah Arendt learned much from Augustine concerning the human problem of *natality*. However, the problem, as I see it, goes far deeper than being born to parents we did not choose. More than this, we are grafted into the human race without any choice on our part whatsoever. Conceivably we could have been born to another, perfect race. Or we could not have been "born" at all, but rather set down as an individuated species unto ourselves. In that case, we could choose good and evil for ourselves and ourselves only. As it is, we suffer the bad luck of being born into humanity, whose condition we have zero control over. The fall underlines the seriousness of this problem of natality. I must stress, however, that I do not refer here to original sin. We are not discussing the issue of guilt that comes along with it. What is up for discussion is the collective condemnation of the human race that results from an original sin.

Augustine, of course, is not unaware of this problem – he recognizes that the good and bad alike live a condemned existence in this world (DCD XIX.6). We are all unlucky, so to speak, by virtue of being human due to the fall. Augustine, as Camus writes in The Rebel, appreciates the absurdity of this situation for anyone who thinks they are truly "sons of Adam" and "daughters of Eve," as (to borrow from C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*). Underlying these

[58] *Requiescat in pace*, my dear mentor.

reflections on Augustine is a sense of the injustice of suffering. I am far from convinced, however, that Augustine considers our unwilling participation in the condemned human race to be necessarily unjust, or that punishment of death was unjust for anyone. That does not mean it is good, of course. While one may describe our being born into a mortal condition as unjust, Augustine did not, I think, believe this.

There are many reasons for Augustine's stance, but one especially concerns us here. It has much to do with the originally social nature of human beings. Our suffering, not to put too fine a point on it, is social. The unluckiness of the human race is an essential feature of – and perhaps the greatest piece of evidence for – the original unity of the human race, for which our injured but sociable nature longs. This made clear by Augustine's comments in *The City of God* XIV, where he makes much of St. Paul's phrase "In Adam all die." God's intention in starting with one man shows that God wants unity for the human race. And this unity was directed toward God, all the human beings (all two of them) were united in their love for God. With the fall, a separation from God occurs, and what logically follows form this is the separation also of man from man. Yet the original unity in some way prevails, maybe even perversely so, because we are born from the seed of condemned people and share in their nature.

At the same time, the condemnation of mankind is something of a democratic condition. We are a "condemned mass," a term Augustine uses to describe the common lot of mortality. Augustine writes, "…the whole mass of mankind has been condemned as it were in its infected root; he selects them by grace and shows the extent of his generosity to those who have been set free…but also in his treatment of those who have not been freed" (DCD XIV.26). Humanity as a unit is condemned as a single lump destined for destruction. We are not owed life, by right, but rather death. For, "each person can recognize that his deliverance from evils is due to an act of

kindness freely granted, not owed to him by right, when he is exempted from sharing the final destiny of those whose just punishment he had shared" (DCD XIV.26). If we wish to be saved from final condemnation, then an exemption from this necessity must be made.

This idea – that suffering due to the fall, in this world, is not necessarily unjust – is precisely what makes Augustine's teaching so difficult to accept. Consider the following example. A poor person, let us call him James, grows up in a rural area, with no opportunities, a horrible education, a dysfunctional family, early and frequent drug abuse, and criminal gangs that harass him daily. After a short life he dies alone, unremembered, and unhappy. His life, from start to its premature finish, resembles a Dickens novel. Augustine would call his condition a fallen one. Though James tragically falls far short of his potential, Augustine would not be surprised at such a life. It is certainly far from what God intends for human beings; but such a life is typical, maybe even expected, of any member of a condemned race. If the case of James was *not* typical, we might begin to suspect that our race is free from condemnation after all! So, there is something undeniably unsympathetic and hard about Augustine's account as I have portrayed it.

We should appropriately end, then, with a discussion of pity. In the face of mankind's condemnation in its fall, it would seem that pity for the human race is a lost cause. And yet we find this not to the case. As a result of its fall, the human race lives in a *pitiable* condition. In their fallen state, in their common ailments, human beings are pitiable. Augustine also argues that in the face of the miserable condition in which we live, the most pitiable condition of all is that of one faces the "horror and cruelty" of this life without grief, lives in the most pitiable condition of all (DCD XIX.7). For a thinker who insists that the condemnation of humanity was

just, that is an interesting and unexpected remark. For the fall would seem to erode this natural sentiment – but does it?

Aristotle's reflections on pity in the *Rhetoric* can help us consider this question. According to Aristotle, pity is the emotion one has when something unfortunate, accidental, and undeserved befalls another person.[59] Augustine's account of the fall, to the contrary, reveals that many of our ills are no accident. Perhaps being a human being is itself "unfortunate" or "accidental," and that possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand. Augustine himself calls the first human beings, created before the fall, as "fortunate" (DCD XIV.10)! Augustine's insistence on the justice of the punishment for human disobedience, and the pitiableness of the human race, suggests a subtle transformation of the idea of pity. We can pity someone who deserves what has befallen them. So, the requirements for pity become more a matter of degree than of kind. Certainly, we feel more pity for the friend who suffers undeservedly, but that does not mean that we should stifle feelings of pity for the murderer who deservedly suffers death for his crime.

Other aspects of the fall correspond more neatly with Aristotle's sensible account of pity. One needs something in common with the sufferer; one needs to feel like that same suffering can befall oneself, and befall one sometime "soon". This corresponds with the universalizing features of the fall, namely that it afflicts all of humanity. The sufferings outlined by Augustine are near to us in both time and space. Pity in a way presupposes a common humanity, and our common humanity somehow consists in suffering of a most unavoidable and severe kind. If such suffering was distant from us, or if it could easily be avoided, then we would not feel pity for our fellow man as we see him in his sufferings. Augustine, in his depiction of the fall's result, gives form

[59] *Rhetoric* II.8

and shape to this idea. We can feel a pathos for man as fallen man, *because* he has fallen. He was once high but has now become reduced to moral, spiritual, and physical poverty.

Pity also has much to do with the moral potential and deficiencies of human beings. As I have already noted, the fall results in a profound inner tension between the noble and the base, rather than in a complete degradation of human nature. For the human being to be truly a mixture, for corruption to be the essential explanation for the way we are, the persistence of good in each person must be recognized or taken seriously. Particularly important for pity is this perduring of good. If, as Aristotle says, one believes that people are nothing but evil, then pity for people is something impossible to feel.[60] Why pity needs this perception of good is another question entirely. But the misanthrope denies the possibility of goodness in the human race as such. Conversely, feeling pity for the human race is not a misanthropic position, but one that requires us to see some good in every individual.

There is one more interesting wrinkle to this consideration of pity. Another requirement of pity, according to Aristotle, is a distance from those who suffer.[61] The suffering cannot be our own, otherwise the emotions we feel cannot be classified as pity. So, to feel pity for the human race as such, we would need to stand at a sufficient remove from our race to be sufficiently able to pity it. Put otherwise, humankind is pitiable from God's perspective and therefore in the account given by revelation. Further, we are far more pitiable according to the account of revelation that we would have thought by our natural lights. God takes pity on man; perhaps man cannot take pity on himself as man, without God's instruction.

Why do I harp on this issue of pity or compassion? Pity, as a natural sentiment, seems to me to be as weak as it is important for political life. Pity ameliorates the hard edge of politics;

[60] *Rhetoric* II.8
[61] *Rhetoric* II.8

since everyone has political enemies, the only question is whether anyone will spare his enemies and whether those enemies will spare him, if they get the advantage in any way. Pity makes partisan rancor more bearable and makes possible comity, because we see ourselves in the other that we so despise. That is, we do not despise them, however much we may oppose their goals, as long as we do not despise ourselves. But pity is like a weak muscle in the body politic. It can easily be overridden by the passions that bestir the soul. Augustine's account of the deadliness of Rome's civil wars, the revenge and bloodshed that abounded, is precisely an account of a politics bereft of pity and clemency (cf. DCD III.29). He asks: do you want to live in a world where no quarter is given? Pity, precisely because it is a sentiment, can be thrust down, ignored, or even expelled from our minds. It is a worthless emotion characteristic of weak people; and weak people cannot get power or hold onto it.

Augustine says that Christianity gives people a reason to give quarter to their enemies, something we see in his account of Rome's sack (DCD I.5-7). Pity or compassion is a distinctly Christian virtue, not in the sense that only believers see value in it, but that Christianity especially stresses it as a way to bring about social concord and more importantly because it truly reflects the fallen human condition as God sees it. We can pity, we should pity, and we should exclude no one from our pity, because everyone is pitiable and fallen. In fact, if the whole human race has fallen, then *ipso facto* no one can be excluded from pity's gaze. In interpreting the revelatory account as he does, Augustine seeks to provide a universal basis for the particular emotion that we experience in everyday life. All human beings share the human calamity, and that may be grounds for a kind of solidarity, which in these days – as in every age – we could sorely use more of.

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