

This major work constitutes a significant attempt to provide a detailed and accurate account of the character and effects of Augustine's thought as a whole. It describes the transformation of Greco-Roman philosophy into the version that was to become the most influential in the history of Western thought. Augustine weighed some of the major themes of classical philosophy and ancient culture against the truth he found in the Bible and Catholic tradition, and reformulated these in Christian dress. The author identifies the fundamental themes in Augustine's theology and philosophy (such as belief and knowledge; soul, body and the person; love and the will; marriage and sexuality in a fallen world; the virtues; the nature of moral acts; and God's providence, predestination and omnipotence), and puts a fresh perspective on Augustine's chief concerns, so that those concerns may speak to us more intelligibly.

AUGUSTINE

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Ancient thought baptized

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For our children Peter, Alice, Thomas, Rebecca

Sine ira et studio quorum causas procul habeo

(Tacitus)

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Abbreviations

<i>AGP</i>	<i>Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AM</i>	<i>Augustinus Magister</i> (Paris 1954–1955)
<i>APQ</i>	<i>American Philosophical Quarterly</i>
<i>AS</i>	<i>Augustinian Studies</i> (Villanova)
<i>AT</i>	<i>Augustiniana Traiectina</i> (Paris 1987)
<i>BA</i>	<i>Bibliothèque Augustinienne</i> (Paris)
<i>CAG</i>	<i>Commentatores Aristotelici Græci</i> (Berlin)
<i>CAug</i>	<i>Collectanea Augustiniana: Mélanges T. J. van Bavel</i> (Louvain)
<i>CCL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina</i>
<i>CIA</i>	<i>Congresso Internazionale su S. Agostino</i> (Rome 1987)
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna)
<i>DTC</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Les Etudes Classiques</i>
<i>FZPT</i>	<i>Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie</i>
<i>GM</i>	<i>Giornale di Metafisica</i>
<i>GPD</i>	<i>Grace, Politics and Desire: Essays on Augustine</i> , edited by H. Meynell (Calgary 1990)
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Homo Spiritualis: Festgabe für L. Verheijen</i> (Würzburg 1987)
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IPQ</i>	<i>International Philosophical Quarterly</i>
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JRE</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> (Oxford)

<i>MA</i>	<i>Miscellanea Agostiniana</i> (Rome 1930–1931)
<i>MH</i>	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
<i>MSR</i>	<i>Mélanges de Science Religieuse</i>
<i>NRT</i>	<i>Nouvelle Revue Théologique</i>
<i>OSAP</i>	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
<i>PACPA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association</i>
<i>PASS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplement</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Recherches Augustiniennes</i>
<i>RAM</i>	<i>Revue de l'Ascétique et de la Mystique</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des Études Augustiniennes</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i>
<i>RIP</i>	<i>Revue Internationale de Philosophie</i>
<i>RM</i>	<i>Review of Metaphysics</i>
<i>RS</i>	<i>Religious Studies</i>
<i>RSPT</i>	<i>Recherches de Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuse</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Signum Pietatis: Festgabe für Cornelius Mayer</i> (Würzburg 1989)
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> , edited by J. von Arnim (1986)
<i>TQ</i>	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i> (Leipzig and Berlin)

Works of Augustine

I have referred to Augustine's writings by English titles in the text, and by abbreviated Latin in the notes. The following list is by alphabetical order of the Latin titles.

<i>Confessiones</i>	<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
<i>Contra Academicos</i>	<i>CA</i>	<i>Against the Sceptics</i>
<i>Contra Adimantum</i>	<i>CAdim.</i>	<i>Against Adimantus</i>
<i>Contra duas Epistulas Pelagianorum</i>	<i>C2EpPel.</i>	<i>Against Two Letters of the Pelagians</i>
<i>Contra Epistulam Fundamenti</i>	<i>CEpFund.</i>	<i>Against the Letter of the Foundation</i>
<i>Contra Epistulam Parmeniani</i>	<i>CEpParm.</i>	<i>Against Parmenian's Letter</i>
<i>Contra Faustum</i>	<i>CFaust.</i>	<i>Against Faustus</i>
<i>Contra Felicem</i>	<i>CFel.</i>	<i>Against Felix</i>
<i>Contra Fortunatum</i>	<i>CFort.</i>	<i>Against Fortunatus</i>
<i>Contra Gaudentium</i>	<i>CGaud.</i>	<i>Against Gaudentius</i>
<i>Contra Julianum</i>	<i>CJul.</i>	<i>Against Julian</i>
<i>Contra Julianum Opus Imperfectum</i>	<i>OpImp.</i>	<i>Incomplete Work</i>
<i>Contra Litteras Petiliani</i>	<i>CLittPet.</i>	<i>Against Petilian</i>
<i>De Agone Christiano</i>	<i>AgChr.</i>	<i>Christian Struggle</i>
<i>De Anima et eius Origine</i>	<i>AnOr.</i>	<i>The Soul and its Origin</i>
<i>De Baptismo</i>	<i>De Bapt.</i>	<i>On Baptism</i>
<i>De Beata Vita</i>	<i>DBV</i>	<i>The Happy Life</i>
<i>De Bono Coniugali</i>	<i>DBC</i>	<i>The Good of Marriage</i>
<i>De Catechizandis Rudibus</i>	<i>CatRud.</i>	<i>Catechizing the Simple</i>
<i>De Civitate Dei</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>City of God</i>
<i>De Coniugiis Adulterinis</i>	<i>DCA</i>	<i>Adulterous Marriages</i>
<i>De Consensu Evangelistarum</i>	<i>ConsEv.</i>	<i>The Harmony of the Gospels</i>
<i>De Correptione et Gratia</i>	<i>DCG</i>	<i>Rebuke and Grace</i>

<i>De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda</i>	DCM	<i>Care for the Dead</i>
<i>De Dono Perseverantiae</i>	DDP	<i>The Gift of Perseverance</i>
<i>De diversis quaestionibus</i> 83	83Q	<i>83 Questions</i>
<i>De Dialectica</i>	DeDial.	<i>On Dialectic</i>
<i>De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum</i>	AdSimp.	<i>To Simplicianus</i>
<i>De Doctrina Christiana</i>	DDC	<i>Christian Doctrine</i>
<i>De Duabus Animabus</i>	D2An.	<i>On Two Souls</i>
<i>De Fide et Operibus</i>	FidOp.	<i>Faith and Works</i>
<i>De Fide et Symbolo</i>	DFS	<i>Faith and the Creed</i>
<i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i>	GenLitt.	<i>Literal Commentary</i>
<i>De Genesi contra Manichaeos</i>	GenMan.	<i>Genesis: Against Manichaeans</i>
<i>De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio</i>	GLA	<i>Grace and Free Will</i>
<i>De Gratia et Peccato Originali</i>	GPO	<i>Grace and Original Sin</i>
<i>De Haeresibus</i>	DeHaer.	<i>On Heresies</i>
<i>De Immortalitate Animae</i>	ImmAn.	<i>Immortality of the Soul</i>
<i>De Libero Arbitrio Voluntatis</i>	DLA	<i>On Human Responsibility</i>
<i>De Magistro</i>	DeMag.	<i>The Master</i>
<i>De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et de Moribus Manichaeorum</i>	DeMor.	<i>The Life-Style of the Catholic Church</i>
<i>De Musica</i>	DeMus.	<i>On Music</i>
<i>De Natura Boni</i>	DNB	<i>The Nature of the Good</i>
<i>De Natura et Gratia</i>	DNG	<i>Nature and Grace</i>
<i>De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia</i>	DNC	<i>Marriage and Concupiscence</i>
<i>De Opere Monachorum</i>	OpMon.	<i>Works of Monks</i>
<i>De Ordine</i>	DeOrd.	<i>On Order</i>
<i>De Patientia</i>	DePat.	<i>Patience</i>
<i>De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione</i>	PeccMer.	<i>Merits and Remission</i>
<i>De Perfectione Hominis Iustitiae</i>	PerfIust.	<i>Perfection of Justice</i>
<i>De Praedestinatione Sanctorum</i>	DPS	<i>Predestination of the Saints</i>
<i>De Quantitate Animae</i>	QuAn.	<i>Greatness of the Soul</i>
<i>De Sancta Virginitate</i>	DSV	<i>On Holy Virginity</i>
<i>De Sermone Domini in Monte</i>	DSD	<i>The Sermon on the Mount</i>
<i>De Spiritu et Littera</i>	SL	<i>The Spirit and the Letter</i>

<i>De Trinitate</i>	<i>De Trin.</i>	<i>The Trinity</i>
<i>De Unico Baptismo</i>	<i>DUB</i>	<i>One Baptism</i>
<i>De Utilitate Credendi</i>	<i>DUC</i>	<i>The Usefulness of Belief</i>
<i>De Vera Religione</i>	<i>DVR</i>	<i>True Religion</i>
<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>	<i>EnPs.</i>	<i>On Psalms</i> (the bracketed numbers (e.g. 141 (140)) refer to the Latin text)
<i>Enchiridion de fide, spe, et caritate</i>	<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion</i>
<i>Epistulae</i>	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Letter(s)</i>
<i>Expositio epistulae ad Galatas</i>	<i>ExpGal.</i>	<i>On Galatians</i>
<i>Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos</i>	<i>ExpPropRom.</i>	<i>On Romans</i>
<i>In Ioannis epistolam ad Parthos Tractatus</i>	<i>IoEp.</i>	<i>On John's Epistle</i>
<i>In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus</i>	<i>IoEv.</i>	<i>On John's Gospel</i>
<i>Quaestiones in Heptateuchum</i>	<i>QHept.</i>	<i>On the Heptateuch</i>
<i>Retractationes</i>	<i>Retr.</i>	<i>Reconsiderations</i>
<i>Sermones</i>	<i>Sermo.</i>	<i>Sermon(s)</i>
<i>Soliloquia</i>	<i>Solil.</i>	<i>Soliloquies</i>

Notes on chronology

Some of the more important works of Augustine discussed below may be dated with a reasonable degree of confidence as follows:

386	<i>The Happy Life; Against the Sceptics; On Order</i>
387	<i>Soliloquies</i>
388–395	<i>On Human Responsibility</i>
388/9	<i>Commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans</i>
389	<i>The Master</i>
c. 390	<i>On Music</i> (completed)
390	<i>On True Religion</i>
391	<i>The Usefulness of Belief</i>
393	<i>On the Sermon on the Mount</i>
394	<i>Exposition of some Propositions on Romans</i>
396	<i>Replies to Simplicianus</i>
396	<i>Christian Teaching</i> (first part): completed in 426
397–400	<i>Confessions</i>
402	<i>Against Faustus</i>
402–404	<i>Against the Letters of Petilian</i>
c. 404	<i>The Good of Marriage</i>
404–420 +	<i>The Trinity</i>
405–415	<i>Literal Commentary on Genesis</i>
405	<i>The Harmony of the Gospels</i>
405/6	<i>On Baptism</i>
407	<i>On John's Epistle</i>
411/2	<i>Merits and Remission</i>
412	<i>The Spirit and the Letter</i>
413–425/6	<i>The City of God</i>
414	<i>Perfection of Justice</i>
415	<i>Nature and Grace</i>

418	<i>On Continence</i>
c. 420	<i>Against Lying</i>
421	<i>Marriage and Concupiscence</i> (completed)
423	<i>Against Julian</i>
426	<i>Correction and Grace</i>
426/7	<i>Reconsiderations</i>
429	<i>Predestination of the Saints; The Gift of Perseverance</i>
429/30	<i>Incomplete Work against Julian</i>

For further information on chronological matters consult especially:
 Berrouard, M. F., 'La date des Tractatus I-LIV in Johannis
 Evangelium', *RA* 7 (1971), 105-168

Goldbacher, A., (for the letters) *CSEL* 58.2, Index 3, pp. 12-63

La Bonnardière, A. M., *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris 1965)

Verbraken, P. P., *Etudes critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint
 Augustin* (The Hague 1976)

Zarb, S. M., *Chronologia Enarrationum sancti Augustini in Psalmos* (Valletta,
 Malta 1948)

Bibliographical note

Every year the *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* publishes a survey of writings on Augustine. Help in finding one's way through the tangle of secondary 'literature' is given by A. Trapè in *Patrology*, volume 4, (edited by A. di Berardino, English translation by P. Solari, Westminster, Maryland 1988), pp. 342–462. In addition there are standard bibliographies: e.g. T.J. van Bavel, *Repertoire bibliographique de saint Augustin* (Louvain 1954) and *Repertoire bibliographique de saint Augustin 1950–1960* (The Hague 1963); C. Andresen, *Bibliographia Augustiniana*, 2nd edn (Darmstadt 1973); T.L. Miethe, *Augustinian Bibliography 1970–1980* (Westport and London 1982).

In the present book full bibliographical details of each modern study of Augustine are given in the first footnote in which the work is mentioned. Lacking space for a bibliography, I have added an index of modern scholars.

CHAPTER ONE

Approaching Augustine

More than most authors Augustine has been the object of unjustified denunciation by those who have not read him.

(Gerald Bonner)

Bishop Augustine . . . a man predestinate.

(Possidius)

En! Que nous important les rêveries d'un Africain, tantôt manichéen, tantôt chrétien, tantôt débauché, tantôt dévot, tantôt tolérant, tantôt persécuteur.

(Voltaire, cited by Madec)

The world of Greco-Roman antiquity came to an end both gradually and dramatically. Many attempted to transform its thought, but among them Augustine was the most radical and the most influential, though the transformation he attempted was not always the transformation he produced. To transform is not necessarily to improve, and Augustine was handicapped by his lack of knowledge of much of the best classical philosophy. In the late twentieth century we know more about the thought of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and the Stoics than he did, though we do not always convert our knowledge into understanding. Augustine's more limited knowledge may even be thought to have left the originality of his own mind less constrained.

Unlike us, Augustine lived on the frontier between the ancient world and mediaeval Western Europe. For ill or for good, or it may be for both, the transformation he effected left an indelible mark on subsequent Western thought. Despite his lack of resources, he managed to sit in judgement on ancient philosophy and ancient culture. The present book is an account of the judgements he made: what he understood and what he failed to understand, the errors he detected, the developments he proposed, the new directions he set. Our subject, under its broadest description, is the Christianization of

ancient philosophy in the version which was to be the most powerful and the most comprehensive. A book of reasonable length can do little more than scratch the surface of such a topic, though it can scratch to more or less good purpose.

It is impossible to understand a thinker without knowing something of his biography, and Augustine's mental history must be set against that of the religious and political events of his own times, particularly as they were experienced in North Africa and in Italy. Augustine has provided a selective account of large parts of his own life in the *Confessions*, and good modern biographies exist, especially that of P. R. L. Brown;¹ hence in a work like the present a brief summary must suffice. Augustine was born in the small town of Tagaste (now Souk Ahras in Algeria) in 354 to Patricius, a non-Christian and fairly comfortable member of the ruling élite of his small town and to his Christian wife Monnica who, though devout, was not so ardent on 'divine things' as she later became (*On Order* 2.1.1). The atmosphere at their home was Christian, yet Augustine was not baptized. His schooling began at Tagaste, and after a year at Madaura his parents, recognizing his talent, sent him to the metropolis of Carthage to become a student of rhetoric. There he flourished in his profession, found a concubine by whom he had a son, Adeodatus, and from 373 to 382 was a Manichaean 'auditor', a member of a self-styled 'Christian' group owing allegiance to the Mesopotamian prophet Mani.² He left Carthage for Rome in 383, but kept up links with Manichaeans there until late in the following year he succeeded to the Chair of Rhetoric in Milan. Perhaps his Manichaean contacts helped him to secure this.

Augustine was first drawn to philosophy by reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, an exhortation to its study modelled on the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle. On his own account he found it overwhelming, and it temporarily dimmed his ambition for a political career as he felt 'an incredible burning desire' in his heart to fly away from earthly things to God and Wisdom (*Confessions* 3.4.7). When his confidence in the supposed rationality of the Manichaeans began to fade, it was to the Scepticism of the New Academy, as found largely in Cicero's writings, that he returned.³

¹ *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London 1967).

² On Augustine's detailed and accurate knowledge of Manichaeism see recently S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester 1985), 117-153.

³ *CA* 1.3.7; *DBV* 4.26; *Conf.* 5.10.19; 5.14.25, etc.

In Milan Augustine met a different kind of thinking. Bishop Ambrose was not only able to defend the Old Testament against the Manichaeans, but urged his congregation to think of God and the soul as distinct from any material reality, and raised the possibility that belief is a prerequisite for understanding (*Confessions* 6.5.7–8). Ambrose himself was well read in contemporary Greek theology and had some knowledge of Greek Neoplatonism as well as its Latin derivatives, so that Augustine met for the first time a ‘platonizing’ interpretation of Christianity, but as yet he had read no such material himself. Yet it was not Ambrose who introduced Augustine to the Platonists of Milan – among them some prominent Christians, including the priest Simplicianus who had baptized Ambrose himself and was to succeed him as bishop. Somehow, through a man ‘swollen with monstrous vanity’, probably not a Christian himself,⁴ Augustine was introduced to a number of ‘Platonic books’ (in which Simplicianus later told him that ‘God and his Word are implied’ [*Confessions* 8.2.3]); some (though perhaps not all) of them were by Plotinus himself, that is, as Augustine saw it, by ‘Plato born again’ (*Against the Sceptics* 3.18.41). They may have amounted to only a smallish portion of the *Enneads*; most of what Augustine knew of Plotinus could have been derived, or intelligently inferred, from a very few of Plotinus’ earliest (and often easiest) essays: 1.6 (‘On Beauty’), 5.1 (‘On the Three Divine Hypostases’), 4.8 (‘On the Descent of the Soul into the Body’).

It is likely that Augustine’s readings in Neoplatonism were not limited to the period immediately before his conversion to Christianity. What he found in this period, however, was enough to convince him that Platonism and Christianity had much common ground. The Platonic books provided evidence about God and his eternal Word, though not about the Incarnation (*Confessions* 7.9.14).

The discovery of the importance of Christ as the only Way (John 14:6; *Confessions* 7.18.24) drove Augustine beyond the Platonic books; for while the Neoplatonists might speak the truth about God’s nature, they lacked means of access to it. Neoplatonism is incomplete; its underlying weakness is that it is theoretical, without the power to instigate right action. But notice that even when Augustine’s ‘natural’ understanding of God was bolstered by the recognition that Christ is the Way, he did not immediately convert to Christianity. He had

⁴ Cf. A. Solignac, in *BA* (1962a) xiii, 101–103. For an identification with Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, the doyen of philosophical pagans of fourth century Italy and a hero of Macrobius’ *Saturnalia*, see J. M. Rist, ‘A Man of Monstrous Vanity’, *JTS* 42 (1991), 138–143.

achieved only what Newman termed 'notional' assent, an assent to propositions, not that 'real' assent which is a willed commitment to a way of life. In Augustine's view it is real assent which is conversion. There is only one point of conversion in the *Confessions*: the progress of notional assent which is described in book 7 is followed by the account of the conversion, that is Augustine's desire to ask for baptism, in book 8. The truth of Christianity he had recognized before he became a Christian (*Confessions* 8.1.1).

Augustine was baptized in 387, in the presence of his mother Monnica, together with his son Adeodatus (his mother had been sent back to Africa when, only a little time before, Augustine – and Monnica – were thinking of a political marriage and a career in the civil service) and Alypius his old friend from Tagaste – later its bishop. A rather 'Plotinian' mystical experience in Milan had helped in the last stages of his conversion; a more specifically Christian experience at Ostia, with his mother Monnica, shortly preceded her death and Augustine's return to Africa, where he had determined to live a lay monastic life.

But this was not to be, and after his enforced ordination to the priesthood in 391 and elevation to the bishopric of Hippo in 396 he was to spend the rest of his days combining a monastic personal lifestyle with the burdens of a bishop, influential first among his fellows in North Africa, where he took a leading role in opposing the schismatic 'party of Donatus', and later, both through his writings and his battle with the Pelagians, on the wider stage of world-history. He died, with his political world in ruins around him, in 430, when his see of Hippo, crowded with refugees, was being besieged by the Vandals of Gaiseric. But by then had appeared the writings which are the material of the present study.

Augustine wrote an inordinate amount, and much of it survives, though a recent estimate suggests that of his sermons 'to the people' we possess only 546 out of a possible 8000. Nevertheless, despite a few diminishing coteries of condoners and devotees – indeed sometimes because of them – Augustine has a dubious, even evil reputation, and not only among those who have read little or nothing of his work. One reason for that, however, is clear and singularly unimpressive. There are many genuinely Augustinian themes (about the body, or predestination, or baptism, and above all about human inadequacy and sinfulness) which 'post-Christian' orthodoxy merely *assumes* to be misguided: such can currently be acceptably rejected without benefit of scrutiny or honest attempt to understand their *raison d'être*. Then

there are notions attributed to Augustine, or 'found' in him by 'Augustinians' of various stripes, which are also unpopular, but which Augustine would have disowned himself. A contemporary student acquainted with his thought has a responsibility to help the modern reader identify such items.

Augustine has often been described as a 'Christian philosopher'. Critics have sometimes wanted to object that the adjective contradicts the noun. Certainly to say that Augustine was a Christian philosopher is not the same as to say that Aristotle was a Greek philosopher, if only because Greek philosophers did not have to believe in God, whereas, at least until recently, Christian philosophers did. To say that Augustine was a Christian philosopher is rather like saying that Sartre was an atheist philosopher: Augustine accepted arguments for God's existence, Sartre for his non-existence. If Sartre's arguments on the matter are bad, that does not entail that he was not a philosopher, only that in that respect he was a bad one. The same could apply to Augustine.

Books sometimes appear with titles like *The Philosophy of Augustine* or *Augustine's Philosophy of Whatever*.⁵ So titled they may unintentionally mislead, suggesting as they do that Augustine's range of intellectual concerns was limited to those of a typical member of an Anglo-American philosophy department – though in his view philosophy is not a game or a job but a way of life (*Against the Sceptics* 2.2.5). They may also suggest that a book about Augustine's philosophy would have little to say about what we would style theology. A book entitled *The Theology of Augustine*, on the other hand, would risk being treated as pabulum for the cleric or para-cleric, hence of no interest to anyone else; some would assume that it had nothing to do with argument, or even with reason. In any case, to call Augustine a philosopher rather than a theologian is not merely to admit a distinction which he would not have accepted; it is to propose a distinction which he did not know. For while in antiquity a 'philosopher' is usually someone who tries to live a life governed by reason, a regular sense of the word 'theologian' (*theologos*) is someone who talks about 'the divine', and 'the divine' is whatever is eternal and unchanging, or, at a cruder level, more long-lasting or just plain stronger than we are: so 'theologian' might refer to a metaphysician, a physicist, a mythographer or an

⁵ So G. P. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London 1987). R. A. Markus' collection of essays on Augustine, *Augustine*, appears in a series entitled *Modern Studies in Philosophy* (New York 1972).

astrologer.⁶ In the hope of avoiding some of the pitfalls surrounding the distinction between philosophy and theology in Augustine, I have usually left the philosophy embedded in its often very obviously theological context. The price of this avoidance of anachronism may seem to be the introduction of too much merely 'theological' matter, and not only of what is now styled 'philosophical theology'. That is a price which has to be accepted if Augustine is to be taken seriously. However, it has been possible to omit much revealed or 'church-order' matters such as 'sacraments' and 'ecclesiology' without gross distortion, since my primary concern is with Augustine's evaluation and transmission of Greco-Roman 'philosophical' ideas.

To include a good deal of theology in a book on Augustine's thought, and at the same time to say that he would not recognize himself as a philosopher in a modern, or at least modern Anglo-American sense, is not to assume that he should be approached with any anachronistic preconceptions about his being a philosopher, or would-be philosopher, in some other, older or better sense; for example as to his being in anticipation a Thomist or Thomist manqué. Here too he has been misrepresented and distorted, for obviously Augustine's work enormously influenced Aquinas – so much so that where they differed, for example about politics and the state, Aquinas' efforts to explain such differences away remain a common cause of the misreading of Augustine – but to read Augustine with thirteenth-century problems to the fore must be to read him through a distorting lens.

Clearly Augustine would have agreed with much in Aquinas, but commonsense and a sense of history make us aware that he cannot be a Thomist in the way that Aquinas can be an Augustinian. A sane theory of a *philosophia perennis* is that later thinkers develop the work of their predecessors, not that later work reveals what is fully implicit in what went before. To say that Aquinas builds on Augustine is not to say that Augustine would have regarded Thomism as the only possible, let alone the best possible, development of his ideas. The philosophical world from which Augustine comes, and in which to some considerable extent he remains, is hardly even Aristotelian: it is

⁶ For interesting recent comment on 'theologians' in antiquity see J. M. Dillon, 'Philosophy and Theology in Proclus', in *From Augustine to Eriugena: Essays on Neoplatonism and Christianity in Honor of J. J. O'Meara*, eds. F. X. Martin and J. A. Richmond (Washington 1991), 66–76. Dillon notes (p. 67) that the word first appears in Plato, *Rep.* 2.379D5. See also G. Madec ('Theologia: note augustino-érigénienne', *ibid.*, 117–125) who comments on Augustine's remark that theology is speech or reasoning 'about the divine' (*CD* 8.1).

primarily Stoic and Platonic, though often in unusual mutations of these systems.

Ideological reasons for assimilating Augustine to Aquinas are obvious enough – Aristotle has often been assimilated for the same reasons – but beneath them lurks a substantive point of considerable interest. Aquinas inherited and appropriated two traditions, one Augustinian and the other Aristotelian, but the historical Augustine also appropriated an amalgam of ancient philosophy, of which Platonism was the principal ingredient, into his Christian synthesis. That should tell us that, quite apart from ‘theological’ matter, much purely philosophical material assimilated by Aquinas in the thirteenth century had already been assimilated by Augustine in the fifth. This makes the areas where they diverge of particular interest philosophically; and it is essential to avoid confusing Augustine and Aquinas in precisely these cases.

A final and more theoretical point about the distinction between philosophy and theology in Augustine must be addressed. Very roughly, philosophical discussions have two constant features: arguments from premisses and the premisses from which the arguments derive. Modern philosophers may suggest that their premisses form possible models as a basis from which to proceed. These possible models may first arise from ‘thought-experiments’ which generate a number of premisses the consequences of which can then be inspected. As a result of such inspection, judgements can be made about the usefulness of the original model and consequent assumptions in explaining the puzzling phenomena which originally called them forth. The generation of such helpful models is a work of philosophical imagination. Augustine’s ‘philosophical models’ were, increasingly, theological hypotheses, teased out of the Scriptures and the belief and practice of the Church. They were like any modern model in that their purpose was to make sense of what lies around us. It is their continuing success in doing that, which makes them not only interesting possibilities, but worthy of close and detailed inspection. To attempt to make sense of Augustine’s thought without taking such theological models at least as seriously as one takes a modern philosopher’s models is to emasculate the thought itself, and to deprive Augustine of his philosophical integrity.

Like any other thinker, whether of Greco-Roman antiquity or of the present day, Augustine wanted to understand the world in which he lived, or at least what mattered in that world, and so he wanted to

avail himself of any evidence which might be useful to that end. Such evidence might be provided by the senses, by reason and argument, and by authorities, if such there were. For Augustine, after his conversion to Christianity, such authorities were the Scriptures, read within the Church tradition, and 'Catholic' writers. These were accepted because they appeared to contribute to the solution of problems which otherwise seemed insoluble. Before reaching this conviction Augustine had tried other authorities such as the writings of Mani.⁷ He had found them unsatisfying both to reason – on which they especially vaunted themselves – and to his experience of the world; above all they failed to explain human nature, and thus the nature of moral evil.⁸

All the texts of Augustine which we possess are Christian. Before his conversion he had written a book *On the Beautiful and the Suitable* – perhaps in 381 – and a number of panegyrics on or before famous people,⁹ but of these none survives. The extant writings are the compositions of a Christian reasonably familiar with a selection of standard philosophical ideas. Long before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine, who at this time knew rather little Greek, had learned much of what he knew of the classical and Hellenistic periods of Greek philosophy – as we have suggested – from the writings of Cicero,¹⁰ his master in rhetoric, and from Cicero's contemporary Varro. From such sources, and from more potted handbook collections, he also learned most of what he knew of the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Sceptics, and of Plato (as distinct from later Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic authors).¹¹ His 'Platonism', as we shall call it, runs deep,

⁷ For the problem of reason and authority in Augustine's anti-Manichaean writings see J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London 1938), 74. Augustine recalls (*Sermo* 51.5.6) that concern about the incompatibility between the genealogies of Matthew and Luke was a factor in his turn to Manichaeism.

⁸ Augustine claimed that he was always expecting more of the Manichaeans than looked to be immediately available; cf. R. P. Russell, 'Cicero's Hortensius and the Problem of Riches in Saint Augustine', in *Scientia Augustiniana: Festschrift A. Zumkeller*, ed. P. Mayer and W. Eckermann (Würzburg 1975), 12–21, at 14–15; *DBV* 1.4; *DUC* 1.2; 8.20.

⁹ There seem to have been Manichaean elements in the *De Pulchro et Apto*, but despite C. Starnes (*Augustine's Confessions* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1990), 102–104) I am disinclined to emphasize them.

¹⁰ For Cicero's own philosophical shifts and his (incomplete) return to Scepticism in his later years, see most recently J. Glucker, 'Cicero's Philosophical Affiliations', in *The Question of Eclecticism*, eds. J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley, London and Los Angeles, 1988), 34–69.

¹¹ See M. Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron* (Paris 1958) and H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Göteborg 1967), and for Varro, I. Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris 1984), 156–190. For the manuals, see A. Solignac, 'Doxographies et manuels dans la formation philosophique de saint Augustin', *RA* 1 (1958), 113–148. Augustine's knowledge of the Neoplatonists is more controversial. He had read some books 'of the

but his acquaintance with Plato's own writings was largely second-hand: for example, key passages of the *Meno* about knowledge as recollection seem to have reached him via Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (1.57-58).¹²

Thus, though Augustine's extant writings are entirely Christian, and his theology from the first is based on the absolute supremacy of an immaterial God and on the unhellenic notion of the creation of all things by God from nothing,¹³ it is essential to know something of his philosophical and theological history, and of his concerns and presuppositions at the time – soon after his conversion – when he began to write as a Christian. It might then seem a reasonable procedure to progress through his works in chronological order, trying to establish and explain changes as they occur. For he himself said that he was a man who writes as he progresses and progresses as he writes (*Letter* 143); and that if we read his writings in sequence we shall be able to discern the progress of his mind (*Reconsiderations*, prologue 3).¹⁴ With some thinkers, to follow such a chronological progression would be a very suitable course; in the case of Plato it is essential. With Augustine it would undoubtedly have considerable advantages: one of the greatest would be that we should be able to study the *Confessions* as a unit – an advantage which a work of the present sort has to sacrifice. Indeed, to approach every book of Augustine as a single whole would deliver similar, though less extensive, rewards. Yet a study of that sort would often degenerate into a tedious catalogue and would require thousands of pages. Our present project must remain more modest. Readers with sufficient

Platonists' (i.e. Neoplatonists) – the plural suggests more than one author – before his conversion, and these included at least a few essays from Plotinus' *Enneads* (1.6; 5.1; etc.). It is possible that he extended his reading of Plotinus in the course of the 390s.

Many commentators believe that at the time of his conversion he had already also read some Porphyry: perhaps the *Sententiae* is the best candidate, published as an introduction to (some of) the *Enneads*. He had certainly read a good deal of Porphyry by the early 400s, but massive scholarly attempts to pinpoint earlier direct acquaintance with Porphyry are not compelling. By the time of the *City of God* (begun c. 413) Augustine also knew the Latin Asclepius (which he wrongly believed to be by Apuleius), and Apuleius himself.

¹² For the *Meno* see Hagendahl (1967: 143, 598) and M. Burnyeat, 'Wittgenstein and Augustine's *De Magistro*', *PASS* 61 (1987), 1-24, esp. 19-22.

¹³ Before his conversion Augustine had long thought of God as a material object. Such materialism was typical of Western Christianity: see F. Masai, 'Les conversions de saint Augustin et les débuts du spiritualisme en Occident', *Le Moyen Âge* 67 (1961), 1-40 and R. Teske, 'Vocans Temporales, Faciens Aeternos: St. Augustine on Liberation from Time', *Traditio* 41 (1985), 24-47, esp. 45, note 37. Teske corrects G. Verbeke, *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma, du stoïcisme à saint Augustin* (Paris and Louvain 1945). Ambrose and Plotinus had combined to liberate Augustine from materialist notions of God.

¹⁴ Cf. his remarks about his 'erroneous' views of the origins of faith before 396 (*DDP* 20.53-21.54).

time can pursue their interests further elsewhere, in editions and commentaries on individual Augustinian texts.

The principal obstacle to a detailed chronological approach to Augustine's *thought* (as distinct from his biography) was set up by the very nature of his life as a priest and a bishop. Unlike most 'philosophers', he was a man who had great and constant public responsibilities, and he wielded considerable power. Much of his time was taken up by his liturgical and pastoral duties, his episcopal role and that which *de facto* followed from it as a magistrate, and by ecclesiastical politics. Completion of large books, such as *The Trinity* and *The City of God*, was constantly delayed, partly in the former case because of radical changes of plan and the sheer difficulty of the subject-matter, but also to allow for time to satisfy pressing local concerns and the constant demands of correspondents. Of these there was an enormous variety: small-town know-alls looking for recognition, prominent politicians and soldiers, Christian thinkers and writers (like Jerome), a variety of influential bishops known to Augustine only through their letters, old friends like Simplicianus and Evodius, the former now successor of Ambrose in the see of Milan, the latter a one-time secret policeman (*agens in rebus*)¹⁵ turned bishop of Uzalis, and a close associate of Augustine's from his early Christian days who was always urging serious problems about evil and the nature of the soul. As a result of all this Augustine's life was hectic, as his writings bear witness. Important evidence for his key beliefs is often widely scattered; arguments are left incomplete and revived years later; problems are raised and pushed aside.

Certainly there are systematic treatises of Augustine, most obviously *The Trinity*; but other long books (*The Literal Commentary on Genesis*, *The Confessions*, *The City of God*), though more or less organized around broad themes, are often discursive, prompting complaints, in impatient times, about Augustine composing badly.¹⁶ But Augustine's procedures, for which he can hardly be blamed, have not satisfied the writers of 'Augustinian' manuals – the first of which, a handbook on more than eighty heresies, he churned out himself in 428. It was a bad precedent, and frequently followed. Systematic (and often systematically

¹⁵ On the work of the *agentes* see A. Giardina, *Aspetti della burocrazia nel Basso Impero* (Rome 1977). Other members of the corps included Ponticianus, who much impressed Augustine at a crucial moment before his conversion by recounting how two of his colleagues at Trier had been inspired by tales of St Antony to take up the monastic life (*Conf.* 8.6.13–15).

¹⁶ So H. I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 4th edn (Paris 1958) 61 (recanted, 665–672).

misleading) accounts of his view (too often in the singular) of grace, reason, the sacraments, God, original sin and so on, can regularly be found in hagiographical or semi-hagiographical tracts.

Augustine's writings are almost all the work of a controversialist: they grow from arguments with his earlier self and with views current among his contemporaries, both within North Africa and throughout the wider world of the late Roman Empire. They have a setting; they depend on assumptions known but not always spelled out by the parties involved, and these assumptions may be either religious (for example about the effects of baptism) or secular (as about the role of a father in his family, as also about the meaning of the word 'family' itself). They may be philosophical, about the nature of knowledge, or historical, about the world-historical role of Rome or of the patriarchs and people of Israel. Because of this character, formal accounts of Augustine's views on grace or free will, or more broadly on human nature and human expectations, prove sapless dogma at best and dry detail or ecclesiastical pedantry at worst, once they are removed from the soil in which they took form.

This character, however, generates further difficulties: a study of Augustine's ideas can turn into social history as easily as into manualist theology – thus equally missing the mark. The present work is not intended as a study of the social history of Augustine's day, but since much excellent work has been done in recent years in that area, and since it is a necessary but not a sufficient part of the data required by the student of Augustine's mind, I attempt to use it wherever appropriate. For Augustine's work is framed, though, I would maintain, not constituted, by social conditions.

Historians are inclined to neglect, or treat at second-hand, the philosophical (as distinct from the social) climate, both Christian and non-Christian, in which Augustine grew up. Hence we need to understand where Augustine stood intellectually at the time of his conversion, for in his later years we shall hear many implicit, if not always explicit, echoes of significant philosophical themes and attitudes: some ideas are retained, others are modified, others abandoned, while others persist below the surface even if explicitly rejected. Therefore, we must attempt to understand such modifications and changes when they occur. For if we do not appreciate which parts of his intellectual inheritance still satisfied Augustine at the time of his conversion to Catholic Christianity, we shall fail to understand his later dissatisfactions and reformulations.

In many important respects Augustine viewed his conversion not so much as a replacement but as an expansion and an enrichment of his earlier views. In 386 Christianity had completed his intellectual past, or so he believed, optimistically, at the time. It had also – and most significantly – made the good life something to be realized, not just something to be thought about and known about. In this respect Augustine resembles other intellectual converts to Christianity, or to a more serious and committed form of Christianity.¹⁷

Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–254), the second most powerful mind among early Christian writers, affords an instructive comparison with Augustine. Like Augustine, but in a more learned fashion, he was deeply influenced by Platonism and by the moral and psychological theories of the Stoics. He exhibited a similar attitude to what he judged to be non-Christian philosophy at its best. Consider, for example, his confrontation with Celsus on the subject of the origin of evil. Celsus, he knows, is a Platonist, but he shows (*Against Celsus* 4.62–70) that Celsus is not even familiar with all that Plato says about evil. His first move is to enlighten Celsus about Plato. He then passes to stage two: the best and standard study of the problem, he tells Celsus, is that of the Stoic Chrysippus in *On Good and Evil*, of which Celsus, though claiming to be a learned and sophisticated thinker, is ignorant. Yet when Origen explains Chrysippus' views, they too prove unsatisfactory, and we are encouraged to conclude that the best non-Christian minds have failed to make sense of evil in the universe, especially if the universe is governed providentially. Origen, however, does not then dismiss the philosophers as fools, as many of his co-religionists would have preferred. Their problem rather, he concludes, is that they rely on reason and the senses alone; that is, they are philosophers in a more twentieth-century sense. They neglect the kind of evidence which can only be revealed by God himself through the Church and the Scriptures. It is hopeless, Origen believes, to expect a solution to the problem of evil without taking account of the fall of the angels: a fact which can only be known by revelation. It is not, he thinks, that such a fall, once revealed, cannot be shown to be intelligible; it is that, unless revealed, it could not be suspected of having occurred.

In this approach by Origen we see much of the appeal of

¹⁷ For an apparently parallel intellectual development in Ps-Dionysius, see J. M. Rist, 'Ps-Dionysius, Neoplatonism and the Problem of Spiritual Weakness', in *From Athens to Chartres: Festschrift E. Jeauneau*, ed. H. Westra (Leiden 1992), 135–161. Parallels could also be identified in the spiritual careers of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and even Ambrose.

Augustine's use (almost from the time of his earliest surviving writings) of the Latin Septuagint text of Isaiah 7.9: 'Unless you believe, you will not understand.'¹⁸ The implication is that those, like the Greek philosophers, who did not have the opportunity to believe in the authority of Christ, his Church and his Scriptures, are bound to be imperfect guides, and to fail in some of the most urgent problems relating to the human condition, not least those concerning the nature of moral evil.

For it is in the area of the human condition and of its relation to God that Augustine's mind primarily works. He knows a certain amount of ancient, especially Stoic, physics,¹⁹ and of logic – he informs us in the *Confessions* (4.16.28) that he read Aristotle's *Categories* in Latin 'without a master' – but he is far from being a professional philosopher in such matters. His knowledge and understanding of Stoic logic – though certainly not negligible – falls well short of the expertise of Origen. What he wants to understand, as he observes in *On Order* (2.18.47) and in the *Soliloquies* (1.2.7), are two topics: God and the soul. The *Soliloquies* being an early work, and still greatly and obviously influenced by Neoplatonic theories of the soul, we may assume that by 'soul' Augustine means something like 'our real self', 'our true humanity'. Even later on, however, when he would qualify the notion that we *are* our souls much more directly and specifically, the primacy of his concern with human nature and the nature of God remains. These themes are therefore at the heart of any useful account of his thought.

We have already noted that, although it might appear sensible to pursue Augustine's ideas chronologically, from before his conversion in 386 to his death in 430, the random and scattered nature of much of his surviving thought renders this an unrewarding exercise and risks the extreme tedium of repetition. In any case, even Augustine's early philosophical dialogues are not, like Plato's, works of philosophical theatre, where the dialectical context is crucial and can only be

¹⁸ 'Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis.' On Augustine's use of this text, first in *DLA* (1.2.4; 2.2.6) and *De Mag.* 11.37, see A. M. La Bonnardière, *Saint Augustin et la Bible* (Paris 1986), 44, and more recently L. C. Ferrari, 'Isaiah and the Early Augustine', *CAug* 2 (1991), 739–756, esp. 750. Before 'discovering' Isaiah 7.9 Augustine talked about searching through 'reason' and 'authority' (e.g. *CA* 3.20.43), but he wants to *understand* what he believes.

It was Ambrose who first recommended Isaiah to Augustine, but Augustine remarked later (*Conf.* 9.5.13) that at first he had found him too difficult. Isaiah was rejected by the Manichaeans.

¹⁹ For an introductory summary, with further references, see M. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Leiden 1985) II, 198–207. Augustine's use of the theory of 'seminal reasons' is of considerable importance.

eliminated in the process of system-building at the price of gross misinterpretation of the text. Nevertheless, the changes between certain major phases of Augustine's intellectual life must be observed.

Augustine himself indicates two principal turning points in his intellectual progress directly and a third by clear implication, and these points allow us to divide his development into four broad phases. Obviously his conversion and baptism was a turning point. A second, as he tells us, was the re-examination of Paul's Epistle to the Romans provoked by the request for enlightenment on the mysteries of divine election which he received from his old spiritual master Simplicianus.²⁰ As he observed thirty years later, when he was working out his reply he struggled much in defence of the unrestrained decision-making power of our 'will' – I shall discuss that rather misleading translation of the Latin *voluntas* in chapter 5 – but the grace of God defeated him (*Reconsiderations* 2.1). The solution to the difficult exegetical problems of Romans, he believed, as well as the truth about the spiritual and moral weakness of our fallen human nature, were 'revealed' to him. The date of this revelation – that is, understanding illuminated by God – was 396, soon after the beginning of his episcopacy.²¹

Between his conversion, however, and the reply to Simplicianus there was a further major point of transition. We have seen how he was pressed into the priesthood by popular acclaim, and ordained (as his intended successor) by Bishop Valerius of Hippo in 391. Augustine gives his own account of the affair in a sermon (355.2) preached nearly forty years later. Soon after his ordination he was asked to preach – contrary to African custom which reserved such duties to bishops.²² Indeed on 3 December 393, at a Council of the Church of Africa meeting for the only time in Hippo, he instructed the apparently rather ill-informed episcopate on the Creed – in a discourse (*Faith and the Creed*) replete with biblical quotations and

²⁰ For the context of such anxieties, and their coming association with arguments about Origen's *De Principiis*; see C. P. Hammond, 'The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life', *JTS* 28 (1977), 372–429, at 423–424.

²¹ Ambrose died on 4 April 397, and was succeeded by Simplicianus as bishop of Milan. It is not certain whether Simplicianus was bishop when Augustine replied to his requests about Romans. That means that Augustine's essays might be dated either to 397 (and either before or after Simplicianus became bishop), or to 396. The opening of Augustine's reply ('pater Simpliciane', for Simplicianus was Augustine's 'father in grace') might suggest (but need not imply) that Simplicianus was not yet a bishop (or that Augustine had not yet heard of his election). The most likely date for Simplicianus' original request is 396. For further discussion, see G. Bardy in *BA* (1952), x, 386–387.

²² Possidius, *Vita* 5.3.

which is still extant. We should attend to those quotations, for from the point of view of Augustine's intellectual and spiritual development, his detailed knowledge of the Scriptures and his concern further to enrich that knowledge in order to preach effectively are of great importance.

Obviously Augustine had acquired a certain knowledge of the Bible long before his conversion. He had listened to Ambrose in Milan explaining, or explaining away by allegorical interpretation (*Confessions* 6.4.6), the difficulties raised, especially about the Old Testament, by Manichaean and other critics. At a crucial stage of his process of conversion (*Confessions* 8.12.29) he had noticed the relevance of a famous chapter of the Epistle to the Romans (13:13-14), which he was also to quote again in an informative letter to his friend Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, with reference to drunken orgies at the festivals of the martyrs (*Letter* 22.2): 'not in revelling and drunkenness, not in fornicating and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its lusts'. As early as 389 he wrote two books of a commentary on Genesis as part of his own literary campaign against the Manichaeans.

Yet at the time of his ordination Augustine's biblical knowledge was still quite limited, for his *intellectual* formation had to this point been largely unscriptural. Before his baptism, as we have seen, he had already found Isaiah, recommended by Ambrose, too difficult (*Confessions* 9.5.13). For reasons connected with his own personal history as a Manichaean and with his own temperament, he was more immediately attracted to Genesis, the Psalms and the Pauline letters. After ordination he judged that he needed time to study the Scriptures in more detail and depth, and he asked his bishop, Valerius (*Letter* 21), for time off in which to widen his biblical knowledge. It was the exigencies of preaching, not his already seriously Christian life, which impelled Augustine to make this request.

What I have called our three signposts (conversion in 386, ordination to the priesthood in 391 and the reply to Simplicianus in 396) are indisputable, and the evidence for them is easily discovered in Augustine's own text. But important changes in both the broad substance and the more minor details of Augustine's thought continued well after 396. Some of these changes occurred in areas of his intellectual world which are specially unpalatable to contemporary readers, and therefore need specially careful attention. Hence it is unprofitable to follow commentators who choose to ignore or disdain Augustine's latest writings as the products of a sclerotic old age. Such

condemnations may often be the fruit of unthinking assumptions or prejudice, and it is worth observing that much of what is now often relegated to an insensitive old age was particularly treasured in earlier centuries. More surprisingly, some of the more 'modern' features of Augustine's thought are to be found in just those later writings – such as the *Unfinished Work* against Julian of Eclanum – which are often dismissed as products of the perverser kind of theological logic.

There is no need at this stage for a detailed exposition of the shifts in Augustine's thought after the reply to Simplicianus; very often, as the years passed, he seemed, like Newman, to find himself in a different place. However, two significant points, one of them rather controversial, must be mentioned. It is still uncertain whether Augustine read much, if any, of the work of Porphyry before about 400. If he did, he paid it no great attention, treating Porphyry simply as a major disciple of Plotinus, from whom perhaps a few supplementary philosophical details could be acquired, as well as a new theory of language which had been developed by Porphyry as part of his campaign to appropriate Aristotelian logic to the service of Platonism and which will be considered in Appendix 1. Sometime after 400, however, Augustine confronted a very different Porphyry, the author of a notorious and banned pamphlet *Against the Christians*: Porphyry the epitome, as Augustine came to identify him, of the arrogant and blasphemous side of philosophy which he had recognized and feared since before his conversion. For Porphyry was not only an advocate of theurgy, the ascent to God by what Augustine held to be magic and idolatry, but the intellectual opponent of Christianity who produced attacks on the Gospels and Apostles, and perhaps the allegation that Jesus himself was a magician (*Harmony of the Gospels* 1.9.14; Sermon 43.5). In the years after 400 we can identify in Augustine both a renewed emphasis on the weaknesses of the Platonists and a more sober estimate of their strengths.²³

²³ Porphyry, however, will not figure prominently in the present study. Texts in which he appears as an adversary after 400 include (apart from *DeConsEv.*) *Ep.* 102 (cf. *DPS* 9.17) of 409 on why Christ did not come earlier (perhaps he came at a time when there would be a fair number of converts); *CD* 10.9, 11, 23, 28, 29; 12.21; 13.16–18; 19.23; 22.11ff.; 22.26 (on the Resurrection); a group of sermons apparently preached at Easter between 405 and 410 (numbers 240–242). See also 277.3.3, of 413; *DeTrin.* 13.9.12; *Retr.* 1.4.3; 2.31. *DeConsEv.* may be as late as 405; the date is reconsidered by G. Madec, "Tempora Christiana". Expression du triomphalisme chrétien ou récrimination païenne?, in *Scientia Augustiniana*, 112–136, at 118, note 34. J. J. O'Donnell, 'Augustine's Classical Readings', *RA* 15 (1980), 144–175, at 173–175 would consider going even as late as 415.

I have largely avoided discussing works of Porphyry other than those named by Augustine

The influence of Porphyry among non-Christians, and the consequent hostility of Augustine, could only have increased as a result of the events of the year 410. In any case, Porphyry aside, no student of Augustine can ignore the effects on him of the sack of Rome by the Goths of Alaric. Portentous in itself, leading men to enquire, 'Why did it happen in "Christian times"?'; it also led to the appearance in Carthage not only of the ascetic Pelagius, whose views Augustine was to combat for the last twenty years of his life, but of his more reckless aristocratic supporter Caelestius, whose denial of the necessity of infant baptism was the proximate cause of the 'Pelagian' controversy itself – a challenge, as Augustine soon came to recognize, to his own most fundamental beliefs about the fallen state of human nature.

Yet that challenge was also a cause of the further development of Augustine's thought. His first mature account of man's need for grace, worked out in the reply to Simplicianus, had inevitably focused on the sinfulness of adults, as was only to be expected since Christianity was originally a missionary religion, making adult converts. The challenge of Caelestius compelled Augustine to face what he had already noted in the *Confessions* (1.7.11), the paradox of the sinfulness of infants, since baptism – already a heated issue in the struggle with the schismatic 'party of Donatus' – was 'for the remission of sins'. But what sins had an infant committed, and when, and how? It is in work begun in 411/412 that Augustine first raises the matter (*Merits and Remission* 2.20.34).²⁴

Pelagius, Caelestius and above all their subsequent advocate Julian, bishop of Eclanum in Campania, were to provoke not only some of Augustine's fiercest and most intransigent writing, but a series of highly significant modifications of his thought. Augustine himself claimed that a rebuttal of the Pelagians could already be found in his pre-Pelagian essays, especially in the reply to Simplicianus, and even in the three books *On Human Responsibility* (*De libero arbitrio voluntatis*). The latter claim, at least, is hard to credit; in any case the ever-present 'threat' of Pelagianism compelled him to develop and deepen his ideas on a whole range of subjects, from infant baptism and the nature of Adam's sin and its effects to the pitiable condition of contemporary,

himself, and I have assumed that Augustine acquired his knowledge of Porphyry over an extended period of time. For an introduction to the contemporary debate about Porphyry one could consult P. Hadot, 'Citations de Porphyre chez Augustin (à propos d'un livre récent)', *REA* 6 (1960a), 204–244 or the generally sensible overview of E. TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London 1970), 237–258.

²⁴ Cf. J. P. Burns, 'A Change in Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace in 418', *TU* 129 = *Studia Patristica* (1985), xvi, 491–496, at 492.

including post-baptismal, life and the possibility of persevering in virtue, and from Adam's security from the 'threat' of autonomous erections in the Garden of Eden to the mysterious workings of the love of God.

Pelagianism viewed as a system may be the discovery of Augustine himself; indeed Pelagius may not be the first *historical* figure in the Pelagian controversy. That honour seems to belong to a certain Syrian Rufinus, perhaps from Jerome's monastery in Bethlehem, who attacked the doctrine of original sin transmitted from Adam, and the consequent 'guilt' of infants,²⁵ and may have thought that these were the tell-tale signs and products of Origen's now discredited theses about the pre-existence of the soul. Yet 'Pelagianism' is a syndrome rather than a theory, at least in Augustine's view.²⁶ Its underlying philosophical claim is an axiom of Greek philosophy and thought generally: the possibility of heroic perfection in this life. For a Christian, two theological propositions are required to support this: that Adam's sin, as well as his consequent guilt and weakness, is not transmitted, and that Christians have been granted from birth the psychological capacity to live the good life, needing baptism and membership of the Church only to enable them to practise their own austerities effectively. Since the good life is possible for those who make the effort, it is also necessary. Augustine had originally held not entirely dissimilar views, but after 396 he found them not only contrary to his own experience of life and to the experiences of others, but flying in the face of the plain teaching of Scripture. Grace alone (not human efforts at austerity) gives faith and salvation, and is an ongoing gift from God: 'What have you which you have not received?' (1 Cor. 4:7).²⁷

When composing his *Reconsiderations* (the Latin word *retractationes* implies a work of *apologia* rather than of self-criticism, though there is an element of that),²⁸ Augustine is first and foremost concerned to ensure that the Pelagians have no opportunity to claim support from his own writings. For the remarkable fact is that Augustine realized that those writings would provide future generations of Western

²⁵ See F. Refoulé, 'La datation du premier Concile de Carthage contre les Pélagiens et du *Libellus fidei* de Rufin', *REA* 9 (1963), 41-49.

²⁶ Cf. Brown (1967: 345).

²⁷ Cf. 'Without me you can do nothing' (Jn 15:5); *De Trin* 14.16.22.

²⁸ See esp. J. Burnaby, 'The "Retractationes" of Saint Augustine: Self-Criticism or Apologia?', *AM* (1954), 1, 85-92 and Bardy's introduction to *BA* (1950), xii.

Christians with much of their intellectual raw material.²⁹ Labouring through the twenty-two books of the *City of God* and reflecting on the decline of the Roman world, he seems to have recognized himself as a transitional figure. As the Empire in the West collapsed into its warring and even barbarous successor-states, so the educational traditions in which he himself had been nurtured sank into oblivion. Whereas, as a youth, Augustine had soaked himself in Cicero and Virgil and Terence and Sallust, and then, as a professional rhetorician, had begun to appropriate the Platonic philosophy of Plotinus, so his successors, instead of all this, would normally take their starting point from the works of Augustine himself. As one who realized, while the Vandals besieged Hippo in 430, that for coming generations he had largely replaced the past, or at least had become its conduit, Augustine wanted above all to make sure that what they inherited through him was doctrinally sound, indeed that it was the clearest and most unambiguous presentation of Christian thinking and the 'Catholic faith' that could be achieved.

For us that worthy project of the old Augustine can be a snare. For, as we have seen, it is Augustine himself who points out – when less concerned about Pelagian 'misrepresentations' – that his thought developed, so that the comparatively finished product which he laboured to round off for the edification of future generations (and which future generations would round off a good deal further) fails to involve us in the hard and ever incomplete labour of thinking and rethinking to which he himself, in at least a limited way, drew attention. In the course of this study, therefore, while concentrating as far as possible and in a fairly elementary way on themes which Augustine would have maintained throughout most of his Christian life, I have also indicated how the signposts to which I have drawn attention can be used to map out the intellectual stages through which he passed.

Above all, the matter of Augustine's ever-growing familiarity with and use of Scripture – not to speak of the prayers, practice and liturgies of the Church – cannot be over-estimated. As indicators and guides to the *authority* of Christ (*Against the Sceptics* 3.20.43) these

²⁹ Despite his influence on the Council of Chalcedon and on Maximus Confessor, Augustine remained comparatively little known in the East, where texts in Latin were often assumed to come from a theological (not to say linguistic) backwater; but see L. R. Wickham, 'Pelagianism in the East', in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge 1989), 200–213. There was a revived interest in the fourteenth century.

became, as we have seen, an irreplaceable source of understanding. As he put it in *The Usefulness of Belief* (7.14): 'Wisdom' (which he identifies with Christ) 'is perhaps true religion'. For a major result of his increasing use of scriptural authority was that certain problems which previously, and to earlier philosophers, might have seemed insoluble now appeared to find a solution. Some of these were difficulties which had oppressed him before his conversion, and Scripture (and the African Church) became the catalysts which forced him to challenge, and often to dismiss, assumptions from his pre-Christian past. Thus where the 'clear' meaning of Scripture conflicted with inherited wisdom, the inherited wisdom had to give way, while new positions must be shown not only to solve old problems, but to contribute to an advance in understanding of the primary subjects of human enquiry: the soul, human nature and the Christian God. Scriptural reflection will lead to substantial modifications of classical wisdom, but arguments must then be found to show that such modifications are not only exegetically sound and psychologically plausible, but also that they are demonstrable to the enquirer deemed to be in good faith.

Scripture for Augustine is as much a source of understanding as of data. Hence one striking and regular feature of his procedures is easily misconstrued: his reliance on proof-texts. Especially in works composed between his conversion and his succession to Valerius in the see of Hippo, Augustine will often work out a theory or doctrine without undue reliance on any particular scriptural text. Later in life, sometimes much later, he will come upon a text which seems a peculiarly appropriate support for the position already reached. When that happens, Augustine will often resort to quoting the newly discovered text mentioning neither other texts which had previously led him to form the doctrine in question nor arguments on which the doctrine could be, and was, independently based. Occasionally, and notoriously in the case of his use of Romans 5.12 (which he selects as a newly found proof-text for the claim that we all sinned 'in Adam'), Augustine's biblical source is an ambiguous Latin rendering of the original Greek or Hebrew. The particular example of Romans 5.12 will be considered in a later chapter; for the present we notice only that if Augustine were deprived of the use of it, his theology would not be affected.³⁰

³⁰ For a good introduction to Augustine's use of the Bible, see G. Bonner, 'Augustine as Biblical Scholar', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge 1970), 1, 541-563; also La Bonnardière (1986), and G. J. Hamilton, 'Augustine's Methods of Biblical Interpretation', in *GPD*, 103-119.

As we have seen, Scripture provides only part, though a constantly growing part, of Augustine's intellectual armoury. If we are to follow him from conversion to death in the manner outlined above, we must be ever aware of the 'secular' philosophical scenes he discovered at Carthage, Rome and Milan, but it is more important, in most cases, to know what Augustine acquired from philosophy than the precise sources from which he had acquired it. Such awareness of Augustine's pagan past, however, will both shed light on some of the intellectual reasons for his conversion and indicate the kind of philosophical and theological problems he wanted to solve. It will also show how his philosophical background provided, in the long run, a framework within which he was compelled to work and which, in some cases, boxed him in. For at times he wished to assert sets of propositions which the philosophical parameters of his own education prevented him from harmonizing, even when the success of his own scriptural exegesis and his own psychological observations called for harmonization. Sometimes, on the contrary, we shall find him delighted to conclude, or happy to assume, that his philosophical background provides him with theories which are neither to be rejected, nor even to be substantially modified, by his Christian faith. Some of these theories (about important aspects of love, for example, or about knowledge, or about human happiness, though not the earthly achievement of such happiness) will always remain, in his view, of the most fundamental philosophical importance.

Before eventually moving on with Augustine down a series of philosophical paths, we cannot avoid a last disclaimer. All books on the history of thought or of philosophy, as on philosophy itself, are gravely reductionist, and need to be recognized as such. In the present study, not only will there be missed much relevant social history, as well as most of Augustine's sacramental theology and certainly too much of his theory of the Church, but there will be no attempt to reproduce something even more important, which only a long and attentive reading of Augustine's own text can begin to provide. It is impossible to reproduce the rambling, rhetorical feel of an Augustinian book, with its forced dichotomies, Ciceronian tricks of style and the endless pounding of its scriptural quotations, often deployed with great skill to pin the victim back into his corner. So much the better, it may be thought. Yet that reaction is mistaken, the first step towards yet another misuse of Augustine. Just as, if we leave out the 'theology', Augustine becomes at times merely an observer, rather than a fascinating (and fascinated) explicator of phenomena,

so without the 'style' we shall lose not only much of the very essence of the man and of the harsh world within which he fought out his corner as bishop of the North African seaport of Hippo Regius, but also much of his mentality and his spirituality, which can only be appreciated as this individual's reaction to these conditions and the calls on him they constituted.

CHAPTER TWO

Words, signs and things

How we must learn or discover realities is perhaps beyond the wit of you and me . . . but it is valuable to have agreed even on this, that they must be learned and sought out not from names, but rather through themselves.

(Plato: *Cratylus*)

I want you now to understand that things signified are of greater importance than their signs.

(Augustine: *The Master* 9.25)

Augustine was a Platonist before he was a baptized Christian, and he was an admirer of Cicero before he was a Platonist. From Cicero and from his rhetorical training and teaching he acquired a concern that was theoretical as well as practical with words as tools of persuasion, and hence an incentive to think about some long-standing Stoic and Epicurean disputes about the nature of signs,¹ verbal and otherwise: his knowledge of the matter may be said to be professional.

Augustine's treatment of signs is chiefly to be found in three works, two of which – plus a substantial part of the third – were completed within about ten years of his conversion: *On Dialectic* (387),² *The Master* (389), *Christian Teaching* (begun in 396). *On Dialectic* was part of an early and abandoned project – a victim, according to Augustine, of the burden of ecclesiastical office³ – to show how the

¹ Cf. *De Inventione* 1.30 for a definition of a sign. For Augustine's knowledge of the semantic theories of Aristotle and Chrysippus, see B.D. Jackson, 'The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*', in Augustine ed. Markus, 92–137, at 119–128. For claims about parallels between Augustine and Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* see *ibid.*, 130. Cicero (*Orator* 32.113–33.117) advises speakers to study the logical writings of Aristotle and Chrysippus.

² For its authenticity, once disputed, see Jackson (1972).

³ *Ep.* 101 (AD c. 409), to Bishop Memorius; cf. *Sermo* 46.1.2. The phrase itself is common; see M. Jourjon, 'Sarcina. Un mot cher à l'évêque d'Hippone', *RSR* 43 (1955), 258–262 and for discussion A. Mandouze, *Saint Augustin. L'aventure de la raison et de la grâce* (Paris 1968), 142–155.

liberal arts can be harnessed to the service of Christianity: the theory presumably was that they all lead to and are measured by Truth, which is God (*True Religion* 31.57).⁴ As Augustine put it in the *Reconsiderations* (1.6), they can lead the student from the corporeal to the incorporeal 'by certain definite steps'. In *The Master* the discussion of signs is embedded in an ambitious attempt to develop a 'Platonic' theory of learning by illumination within a Christian framework. In *Christian Teaching*, where education is discussed in the context of Augustine's comparatively recent emphasis on the overriding importance of scriptural exegesis, he applies his theory of signs to interpreting the 'word' of God.

Augustine's original concern with signs was largely with such as are verbal, those that he used professionally as a rhetorician, but by the time of the *Confessions* (1.7.27; 2.2.4; 3.3.6) his enthusiasm for his former profession was more guarded: he voiced his dislike for the cultivation of style without content,⁵ and denounced his previous academic post in Milan as 'a chair of lying' (*Confessions* 9.2.4). As a preacher, however, he remained intensely interested in persuasion, being prepared in 394 to compose a song in strikingly unclassical form against the Donatists, though thus subordinating rhetorical 'orthodoxy' to effectiveness of presentation. As he developed, in *Christian Teaching*, an elaborate account of how 'signs' found in scriptural texts can be interpreted – building on, and altering, what he had learned from Ambrose – he also, partly under pressure to correct what he found to be the false sacramentalism of the Donatists, began to develop a directly theological view of the 'sacramental' acts of both the Old and the New Covenant as signs.⁶ Hence, as his life progressed, Augustine's concern with signs grew much wider than the largely semantic (or at least largely linguistic) preoccupations of the Stoic and Epicurean theories he had inherited.

There is no doubt that Augustine's first reflections on signs derive from the older philosophical schools and their more restricted concerns. The Stoics and Epicureans were in sharp disagreement

⁴ For the liberal arts see also *ImmAn.* 4.6ff. and *Solil.* 2.11.19ff. As a Platonist, Augustine accorded an especially important role to mathematics as guiding the soul towards the immaterial, that is, God: *QuAn.* 6.10ff.; *DLA* 2.8.20ff.

⁵ For some recent comment on Augustine's attitude to rhetoric see C. M. Sutherland, 'Love as Rhetorical Principle: The Relationship between Content and Style in the Rhetoric of St. Augustine', in *CPD* 139–154.

⁶ For an account of how Augustine moved from signs in Scripture to sacramental signs in theology, see H.-M. Féret, "'Sacramentum" – "Res" dans la langue théologique de saint Augustin', *RSPT* 29 (1940), 218–243. The problem as to which text of Scripture Augustine used does not necessarily make the discussion superannuated.

about signs, and Augustine, who took over certain ideas from both parties, offered a very different account of his own, one much influenced by a theory of the nature of a proposition which derived, ultimately, from Porphyry.⁷ Furthermore, his synthesis was marked by the introduction of characteristic philosophical and theological concerns into the traditional debate.

Both Stoics and Epicureans were concerned both with the nature of verbal signs and with their objects of reference. Neither school regarded verbal signs as verbal pictures (like a picture of a hill on a road-sign, warning the motorist of the approach of a hill).⁸ Rather they both thought more generally of signs as pointers. But to the further questions, To what do they point? Or do they just refer? – they gave different answers. The verbal signs in which the Stoics are primarily interested are propositions which refer to and indicate a conclusion: a sign is ‘a proposition in a sound conditional which is antecedent . . . and revelatory of the conclusion’.⁹ An example would be: ‘Where there is smoke, there is fire.’ With propositions we are concerned with a set of inferences, which by their nature are about things or events. The Stoics discuss that which signifies (*to sēmainon*), i.e. speech, and that which is signified (i.e. propositions which may be true or false) about some person or event (*to tungchanon*).¹⁰ That which is signified is the meaning of the words, or their sense (the Stoics called this the *lekton*). It is the ‘sense’ of a proposition which a foreigner who is ignorant of a language cannot understand when he hears a proposition uttered.

The Stoic view of verbal signs leaves a gap between the sense of a proposition and the reality of that to which the proposition refers. They themselves, as also their Sceptical opponents, were aware of this but failed to grasp its full import. We ‘assent’ to the content of propositions, but assent may be ‘weakly given’ (i.e. without a full assessment). Then we assent to what is not the case about the world. According to the Sceptical opponents of Stoicism, it is impossible to know whether or not we should assent to the various propositions which are formed after we have grasped ‘presentations’ about and from the world; hence knowledge is unattainable.¹¹ Of course, the

⁷ For Augustine's use of Porphyry's theory of the sentence see Appendix 1, pp. 314–316.

⁸ The example is taken from C. Kirwan, *Augustine* (London 1989), 37.

⁹ Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 8.245.

¹⁰ Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 8.11–12.

¹¹ For the debate see *SVF* 1.624; 2.110–121. See recently B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford 1985), 57–59, and M. Frede, ‘The Affections of the Soul’, in *The Norms of Nature*, eds. M. Schofield and G. Striker (Cambridge 1986), pp. 93–110, at 104.

Sceptics were right to observe that what is signified, what we 'mean', is not necessarily an accurate representation of the world, but only what we believe, with more or less justification, to be such. It is significant that when in *Against the Sceptics* Augustine defends the possibility of knowledge, the knowledge he claims to defend is not merely identical with that provided by the 'sense' or 'meaning' of a standard Stoic proposition.

Despite the fact that he prides himself on his knowledge of Stoic dialectic (i.e. logic),¹² Augustine's most interesting methods of countering those forms of scepticism which he aims to counter are not mere rehashes of the old Stoic arguments for certainty, but new moves which do not (he thinks) fall victim to the traditional onslaught. Yet while aware of the arguments of scepticism and confident of being able to rebut them where necessary, he also shifts his primary philosophical concern away from Hellenistic questions about what we should call certainty – for which 'knowledge' is simply propositional – back to a more Platonic search for understanding. In that Platonic framework propositions are ultimately transcended as reductionist renderings of reality.

The Stoics held that it is not only propositions, but also their elements – that is, all individual words – which signify. In contrast to the Peripatetics, they thought of all words as signs, or more strictly, as signifiers.¹³ Augustine followed this view in *The Master* (2.3), though he did not follow the Stoics in treating the proposition as a whole as a separate 'sign' (as distinct from a signifier).¹⁴ Augustine's view, derived from Porphyry, appears to have been that the proposition as a whole functions in such a way as to clarify and reinforce the meaning of the subject-term.

The Master, written in 389, is supposedly the record of a conversation between Augustine and his natural son Adeodatus; perhaps it was

¹² See *Contra Cresconium* (AD 405/406) 1:24 on Chrysippus and the Stoics who teach dialectic. Although this was written at a comparatively late period of Augustine's life, most of his knowledge of Stoic logic must have been acquired before his conversion. Some of it may have come from handbooks (cf. Solignac (1958)), and Varro's *De Dialectica* is another possibility (see U. Duchrow, *Sprachverständnis und biblisches Hören bei Augustin* (Tübingen 1965), 42, note 47). But the major source is Cicero (cf. *Topics* 12.51–13.57); cf. *De Mag.* 5.16, apparently from *TuscDisp.* 1.7.14, on the 'nobilissimi disputationum magistri' (i.e. the Stoics). Marrou claims (1958: 113) that Augustine became interested in logic after reading the *Hortensius*.

¹³ See Burnyeat (1987: 10) citing C. Atherton, 'The Stoics on Ambiguity', unpublished PhD thesis (Cambridge 1986) and Plutarch, *Quaest. Plat.* 1011c; also Kirwan (1989: 37).

¹⁴ For the Stoics, as we have seen, antecedent propositions are *signs* (*sēmeia*) which 'reveal', while words (names, verbs, etc.) 'signify' (*sēmainousi*, D. L. 7.58). Augustine speaks (less refinedly) of propositions as sets of signs; see Jackson (1972: 136).

composed to mark Adeodatus' death. Its subject-matter is limited. It is not an attempt to offer a comprehensive theory of language, though in part it assumes one; its main aim is to investigate the processes of teaching and learning and the role of words in these processes, and to develop the thesis that without 'illumination', 'knowledge' of names (or of any other kind of sign) will not bring understanding.

At one point Augustine quotes a line from Virgil's *Aeneid* (2.659): 'Si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui' and asks Adeodatus how many signs the line contains. Adeodatus replies eight: eight, not nine; the proposition itself is not counted by Adeodatus as a ninth and extra sign;¹⁵ rather, as we have observed, it clarifies the subject. Individual word-signs, however, are things which both show themselves to a sense, i.e. hearing (*sensui*), and show something beyond themselves to the mind (*On Dialectic* 5.7; cf. *Christian Teaching* 2.1.1). Words are sounds with an intelligible sense.¹⁶ Written words are signs of words,¹⁷ while the words themselves are names of themselves as objects and also of objects beyond themselves. Thus, in the Virgilian line 'if' (*si*) is regarded by Augustine as a name indicating a doubt. In fact, Augustine tends to collapse 'indicating something' into 'referring to an object', on the grounds that both involve using a word. If this is not blown up into an attempt at a general theory of language, but is treated simply as an indication that words somehow point beyond themselves, it may be less damaging than it looks. In any case, the notion that names may refer to a state of mind (*affectus animi*) belongs in a tradition which goes back to Aristotle's *On Interpretation* (1.16A3-4).

The Stoic discussion of signs is part of a theory of inference, and that theory is concerned with claims to validity rather than to truth. In this regard Augustine's interests are different: when he thinks about signs, he wants to think of them as evidence not for propositions, but for what is happening or what is in the world; even the *si* in the line of Virgil is evidence of this. He is only concerned with whether smoke signifies fire if there are in fact any fires. In other words, Augustine's interest is not simply with revealing the consequent ('If there is smoke, there is fire'), but with understanding the world and its events. In this respect, oddly, his attitude is closer to that of the

¹⁵ Note that some examples of Augustine's distinction between knowing about something and understanding it (cf. Burnyeat (1987: 19-21)) may depend on the fact that we can fail to understand a 'propositional sign', i.e. what is said to us, even if we know what all the individual words 'signify'. ¹⁶ *De Mag.* 10.34; *QuAn.* 32.66.

¹⁷ *De Dial.* 5.7; *De Mag.* 4.8; *DDC* 2.4.5.

Epicureans. Like the Stoics, the Epicureans want to use signs to infer what is non-evident (*adēlon*) from what is given by the senses (*prodēlon*), though of course as materialists they are interested only in non-evident material objects whereas Augustine is interested also in immaterial objects. Like Augustine, they treat signs as indicators of whether something exists or not, or is happening or not, not to determine what would be the case if a certain propositionally describable situation were to obtain. For the Epicureans, 'sure' indications of the existence of objects or the occurrence of events are only verifiable or shown to be non-falsifiable by further evidence of the senses.¹⁸

There is no evidence that Augustine was particularly well informed about the details of the Epicurean theory of signs, but he may have recognized it as more 'common-sensical'. It is, in fact, rather like a plain man's account of one observed event indicating another, observed events and objects having individual names. An advantage it might have had for Augustine over the Stoic theory is that if the Epicureans are right, they annul the gap between our knowledge of propositions and their meanings on the one hand – our knowledge, that is, of what the Stoics called 'what is signified' – and on the other hand the world itself which the propositions may represent well, badly, or not at all. But, as we shall see, Augustine accepts that there is a gap between signs and the world (however the latter should be described). In this respect he is nearer to the Stoics, though nearer still to the views of Socrates in the *Cratylus* (which he had not read), and yet nearer to those of Porphyry, who, though willing to consider the logical relationships between words (for example those highlighted by Aristotle's *Categories*), always retained the Platonic view that the meaning of the word (and the 'being' of the particular named by the word) is only understandable metaphysically with reference to Forms in the intelligible world.

In about 387, in Milan, Augustine wrote the textbook he entitled *On Dialectic*. In the *Reconsiderations* (1.6), composed near the end of his life, he says that he had already lost it (as well as other textbooks on rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic and philosophy), but he thinks that copies are still extant. In *On Dialectic* we find a version, significantly adapted, of the Stoic theory of meaning (of the *lekton*). The word

¹⁸ Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 7.212.6. See R. A. Markus, 'St Augustine on Signs', *Phronesis* 2 (1957), 60–83, at 61–62 = *Augustine*, ed. Markus (1972), 61–85, at 62–63. For discussion of Epicurean signs, see E. Asmis, *Epicurus' Scientific Method* (Ithaca, NY, 1984: 175–224).

dicibile, which Augustine uses to render this Greek term (*On Dialectic* 5), is absent from earlier Latin texts which survive, but is presumably not a new coinage. Augustine associates it with the *dictio* – apparently representing the Greek *lexis semantikē* (D.L. 7.57) – or ‘uttered meaning’ of an intelligible sentence when he wishes to link his theory of verbal signs with another significant feature of the system of the Stoics, their account of the relationship between thoughts and their verbal expression. For the Stoics distinguished an uttered thought (*logos prophorikos*) from a thought in the mind (*logos endiathetos*). But whereas the Stoics, driven by their strict materialism, seem to have seen no difficulty about the isomorphic relationship between the two, that is, in effect, they assumed that we convey in speech whatever we have in mind and intend to convey, Augustine, for reasons which deserve consideration, thinks that the sign we give – the *dictio* if that sign is verbal (*On Dialectic* 5.8) – will not necessarily convey the idea that we intend. Thus another sort of gap is opened up: not, this time, between the proposition and the situation it purports to represent, where the underlying problem is that of the relationship between validity and truth,¹⁹ but the relationship between what we should like to convey and what we manage to convey. Man cannot express what he is incapable of experiencing or imagining, but he can experience what he is incapable of putting into words.²⁰ And he can often fail to understand, Augustine holds, because of his ‘evil will’ (*The Master* 11.38); that is, because he has motives for not doing so, and does not want to. All that is part of the problem of what in other contexts Augustine will refer to as the incapacity (the *difficultas*) of human agents. At this point, our discussion of signs seems to have approached one of the more centrally ‘Augustinian’ features of Augustine. That is because we are considering Augustinian signs in an Augustinian context. That context itself also explains why Augustine never offers a pure or remotely complete theory of verbal signs but gives certain indications, drawn from a variety of sources, as to what such a theory might be like, and a certain amount of information about how he thinks signs are actually used.

For we should notice that Augustine is much concerned with the drama of the speaker. If there is a gap between what is in us and what we arrive at expressing, and if speech is an intended means of expressing what we know and feel, it is this intentional aspect of

¹⁹ Augustine is certainly aware of this, cf. *DDC* 2.31.49–2.34.52.

²⁰ *Sermo* 117.5.7ff., cf. *EnPs.* 100 (99).5.

speaking, of giving sets of verbal signs, in which Augustine is especially and unusually interested (e.g. in *The Master* 1.2). As we have seen, however, for Augustine, *dictiones*, the significant utterances, are not necessarily, or even primarily, in the form of propositions: propositions are not a privileged class of verbal signs as they are among the Stoics. Augustine's account of verbal signs is an account of the nature and information-value of words and sets of words used by a verbalizing agent. Propositions are treated as the sum of their parts, or as an expansion of their subject-terms, and are no different in principle from other intelligible verbal groups.

We have, however, identified two important features of Augustine's account of verbal signs, features, that is, which he himself emphasized as important: his concern with our ability or inability to express through signs what we want to express, and his view that names are indicative of objects and events. By stringing them together we are able to think about (*cogitare* in Augustine's Latin) these objects and events. But in this stringing together, we shall often fail to record what we think and understand. For, as we have seen, Augustine's view that we shall fail to express, through our signs, what we 'might' be able to express, is part of a more general portrait of human behaviour. Moreover, our failing is not merely an inability to convey; it involves a further, and perhaps even more fundamental, weakness. For speaking in sets of signs about the world, expressing our thoughts about the world, is a way of 'informing' someone else about the world, a passing on of our own thoughts and experiences *at second hand*.

Yet Augustine devotes a large part of his attention in *The Master* to arguing that, if we were to *understand* the world (*intelligere*), or anything in it, rather than *believe* things about it, we should have to experience it at first hand. Moreover, telling ourselves about the world is in a sense not different from being told by others about the world: it is a record of what may be a first hand experience, not a first hand experience itself. In considering this estimate of first hand experience, we again confront Augustine the convinced, if partial, Platonist at the time of his conversion.

At least in his earlier writings Augustine is somewhat uncritically prepared to tolerate the Platonic theory that learning is simply a recalling of pre-natal experience.²¹ A main attraction of this theory, both to Plato who formulated it in somewhat different versions in the

²¹ For Augustine's more general account of 'memory' and some of its specifically Plotinian rather than Platonic roots, see (in particular) *Conf.* 10.8.15 – 10.17.26 and pp. 74–77 below.

Meno and *Phaedo*, and to Augustine and later Platonists, is that it appears to account for the fact that we have dim – even residual – notions, but notions still held with conviction, about the nature of beauty, truth, equality and so on. There is no doubt, of course, that at the time of his conversion and increasingly throughout his later life, Augustine held that even the ‘good’ man’s grasp of such ‘universals’, especially those of a moral sort, is normally dim and uncertain; even so, this is secondary to the fact that they are ‘there’, in the mind, at all. For when Augustine began to modify (and then consciously to reject) Plato’s theory of recollection – probably by 389, the time of *The Master* – he cannot but have realized that he is left to face the same phenomena, and the same epistemological difficulties, which provoked Plato to formulate the theory in the first place. Hence although Augustine abandoned the notion that learning is a recalling of what we experienced or knew directly in some previous life, he accepted, both in *The Master* and in the later *Confessions*, that we hold in our ‘memory’ a set of immaterial principles (*rationes*) or impressed ideas (*impressae notiones*) which seem to be similar to at least a select number of Platonic forms: for example of happiness and truth and (in a strange way) even of God.²² These ‘items’ are no longer retained memories of a previous life, but they are, in some sense, constitutive of the human soul.

Further discussion of Augustine’s epistemology and his theory of first-hand experience must await another chapter. Our present concern with such matters relates only to their relationship to his treatment of verbal signs. For such signs indicate objects (*res*) and events – though not necessarily with clarity – from the point of view of the speaker (or thinker), and his point of view must be understood in a broad sense to include his aims, intentions, habits, beliefs and prejudices. Thus when we get to know objects and events through signs, we know them at second hand, so that if second hand knowledge is really only belief, as Augustine holds, then what is communicated through signs alone will only be belief. Only a sign which is identical with that of which it is a sign will give more than this, and then only to those capable of understanding it. Even when he develops a sacramental theology, where he will obviously treat of

²² ‘Impressed ideas’ will be discussed further below (pp.50–51), with reference to 83Q, 46 and other relevant texts. In anticipation of the connection between ‘love’ and impressed ideas observe that love may be seen as a flaming up of the memory of an ‘old acquaintance’ (*De Trin.* 9.16.11; 11.7.12; 13.1.2; cf. *CFaust.* 19.16).

non-verbal as well as verbal signs, Augustine thinks along similar lines. Even the Lord, he says, did not hesitate to say 'This is my body', though he only gave us a sign for his body (*Against Adimantus* 12.3). The Christian doctrine that the Eucharist is his body is, therefore, in this life, only to be *believed* (by faith), not known. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Augustine wants to put an unplatonic emphasis on the Platonic category of right belief. For there is an important sense in which what we know and understand,²³ we owe to reason, what we believe, to authority (*The Usefulness of Belief* 11.25). I shall leave further consideration of distinctions between the *objects* of knowledge and those of belief until the next chapter.

Although words are signs and as such intrude themselves between the thinker and the world of which he thinks, as well as between the speaker and the ideas which he might wish to express, it is impossible to do without them (or perhaps other symbolic indicators),²⁴ if we wish to enable people to learn. For although in *The Master* Augustine begins by stating that all teaching is through words (or other signs) (1.1–10.31), but continues with the claim that no teaching is effected through words and signs (10.32–35), we must not misunderstand him.²⁵ What he intends to make plain is that words (and more generally signs) are a necessary but not sufficient condition of learning. They also require to be 'illuminated' by God for, as we have

²³ That the 'proper' sense of *scire* is *intelligere* (i.e. to understand) is well shown by Burnyeat ((1987: 7); cf. *Retr.* 1.14.3). In ordinary conversation, however, it is customary (and permissible) to use *scire* more loosely.

²⁴ Augustine was suspicious and ambivalent about 'emotional symbols' such as music (cf. *Conf.* 10.33.49–50 on Athanasius; *EnPs.* 19 (18).2.1 (with comment on vulgar songs); *CJul.* 4.66), though he was 'converted' to psalms (he introduced psalm-singing in Hippo: see P. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, English translation by B. Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (London and New York 1961), 326), to the Ambrosian chant, and generally to thinking that singing was the best occupation for an assembled congregation so long as it did not interfere with reading or preaching (*Ep.* 55.18.34). He regarded secular musicians as no better than sleazy cabaret artists.

Pictures too Augustine found suspect (Van der Meer (1961: 317–324)): religious pictures merely distract or mislead (*Dfs* 7.14) and pagan pictures are obscene (*Ep.* 91.5). Augustine makes no distinction between obscene and erotic. Part of his objection to visual representation springs from a Platonic dislike for copies of copies. (Sculptors express something of what divine wisdom expresses in a beautiful body, but one should not value it too highly, *83Q* 75.) Notice the characteristic Platonic blindness to the claim that an artist may highlight specific features in nature or from beyond it.

Augustine's suspicion of myths increased with age; note his attack in *Retr.* 1.1.3 on his own remarks about *Philosophia* and *Philocalia* in *CA.* 2.3.7.

²⁵ G. C. Stead ('Augustine's "De Magistro": A Philosopher's View', *SP*, 63–73, at 64) commits himself to the view that Augustine holds (or seems to hold) that 'nothing is learnt by means of signs', but that is to oversimplify Augustine's attitude. Nor need Augustine be saddled with the view that all sentences are statements, even though he is mostly concerned with statements in the *De Magistro*.

seen, they are merely the purveyors of claims to be believed, whereas to understand requires more than the presence either of the words (or other signs) or of an instructor. To learn is to make information one's own. Augustine makes a similar claim in *Christian Teaching* (2.24.37), for although 'things are learned by means of (*per*) signs' (1.2.2), we are not to infer that when we hear (or see) 'signs', or even speak of them, we necessarily understand them.

The 'philosophical' context of Augustine's approach to signs should now be clear. In his early Christian years his chief concerns are with God and the soul (*Soliloquies* 1.2.7; *On Order* 2.18.47), and he is comparatively uninterested in other issues. At best these are sideshows: when they are introduced (and their introduction is never casual) it is normally because they are thought to shed light on God and the soul. The starting-point is usually a reflective observation, which commentators sometimes call 'phenomenological'. Augustine observes strange but apparently irreducible behaviour and 'facts' either in human life or in the Scriptures and attempts to get behind them. Frequently he requires a theological hypothesis (such as the fall of Adam) to account for the *prima facie* extraordinary events, circumstances and activities.

When Augustine considers language specifically, he finds himself confronted with evidence from a number of sources of the comparative failure of human beings in their attempts to communicate with one another. When they communicate, they normally use verbal signs, but these signs are often ineffective, for, as Augustine puts it (*On Catechizing the Simple* 2.3) language does not measure up to the heart. (Here is one of the 'gaps' we discussed.) Love, he continues, can communicate where language does not, because it makes its presence felt: note again the suggestion of the need for something 'firsthand'. Words, as we have seen, do not convey the 'heart';²⁶ one's 'thoughts' are immediate, whereas talk is slow and drawn out (10.14). That is because of the gap between what we want to express and what we manage to express through signs. The Stoics, as we have seen, held that the idea is isomorphic with the idea expressed in language, but in a transmutation of their doctrine to which we adverted earlier, Augustine notes (in *The Trinity* (15.11.20)) that 'the word which sounds without is a sign of the word which shines within, which (in the heart) is much more worthy of the name "word"'. In the last analysis

²⁶ For Augustine's notion of the 'heart' see E. de la Peza, 'El significado de "cor" en San Agustín', *REA* 7 (1961), 339–368, and *El significado de 'cor' en San Agustín* (Paris 1962). Note *De Trin.* 15.10.19 ('verbum est quod in corde dicimus'). For a heart being closed to other hearts, *EnPs.* 42 (41).13; 56 (55).9.

the cause which Augustine identifies for the perceived failure to communicate in language (which is the 'body' of the word in the heart) is the fall of man. For Augustine cannot believe that men could have been intended by God (and therefore created by God) with their present patently ineffective and inadequate ability to reveal their thoughts and 'hearts'. Thus, from perceived phenomenological effects he infers (and 'simultaneously' finds in scripture) an intelligible theological explanation.

Yet if words are signs, and in a sense failed signs, Augustine has to consider our consequent linguistic dilemma in relation to the interaction and effectiveness of human agents. At the beginning of *The Master* (1.2), as we have seen, he says that someone who speaks gives out (*foras*) a sign of his will, such communication being a star indicator of the nature of human community. Banners reveal through the eyes the will (*voluntatem*) of various military commanders, but words are the dominant means among men of signifying something which we want to present (*Christian Teaching* 2.3.4). That is why the discussion of signs in general and of the verbal signs of scripture in particular begins with a distinction between 'natural signs' and 'given signs' (2.1.2ff.). Whether Augustine's distinction is precise or not,²⁷ or whether it is to be regarded as a rule of thumb, his intention is plain enough: knowledge is of things (*res*) or of signs, but it is by means of signs that we know things, for a sign is itself a thing which 'brings something else to mind' (*in cogitationem*) or communicates what is in the mind of whoever makes the sign to somebody else's mind (or, presumably, to the awareness of an animal). Thus verbal signs are of circumscribed usefulness and will clearly be effective only in a community, whether of humans or animals, which recognizes the relevant 'conventions' of communication. Within the set of communally recognized signs Augustine pays little attention to those not given by an agent, thus neglecting much of the material given a central place by Stoics and Epicureans: such as smoke being a sign of fire (or the proposition 'there is smoke' entailing the further proposition 'there is fire'). For these are 'given' without a will or desire to signify ('sine voluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi').²⁸ In such cases the existence, but not the 'reference' or the 'force' (*vis*, *On Music* 3.2.3; *The*

²⁷ The verdict of Kirwan (1989: 41–42f.) is negative. Markus (1972: 87), following Peirce, calls natural signs 'symptoms' and notes that they are reciprocal.

²⁸ *DDC* 2.1.2. Specific attention is paid to the distinction between willed and unwilled signs by J. Engels, 'La doctrine du signe chez saint Augustin', *Studia Patristica* 6 (Berlin 1962), 366–373, and Jackson (1972: 97). For what a writer means, i.e. intends, by a sign see *De Trin.* 10.1.2; cf. *DDC* 2.12.18; 2.25.38.

Master 10.34) of the sign depends on its source.²⁹ With the word *appetitus* Augustine probably hopes to capture not only the 'intention' and the 'aim' of agents (which would include animals, for example when they aim at something by uttering a mating-call), but also 'non-deliberative' indicators given by human beings (and animals also) such as unplanned bodily signs. An example of such signs cited by Aristotle in the *Prior Analytics* (2.70A14–16) had by Augustine's time become traditional: if a female has milk, she has conceived (where having milk indicates conception whether she wishes to indicate it – as she might wish – or not).

Thus 'given signs' are given within an intelligible context or society, and are recognized as intelligible within that community as indicating the wished for, though rarely achieved, expression of one's mind and (presumably) feelings. In this sense verbal signs are like other kinds of 'given signs': circumcision, for example, is a sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people,³⁰ and, according to Augustine, the success of divination is due to the 'pernicious society' or pact made between the diviner and demons (*Christian Teaching* 2.24.37).³¹ Within individual societies, words and many other signs are conventional: the meanings of words depend on an original or acquired authority. Perhaps Augustine has in mind something like the activity of the name-giver of Plato's *Cratylus*, as well as the story in Genesis about Adam giving names to the animals. The name-givers establish traditions (*Christian Teaching* 3.2.3).³² Words, as we have seen, were instituted so that people can bring their thoughts (*cogitationes*, *Enchiridion* 22.7) or 'whatever they feel' (*Christian Teaching* 3.3.4) to the notice of others. In brief, within each society signs are the conventional, or at least established, means of conveying the wills, intentions, wishes and hence values (or in Augustinian terms the loves and hates) of the society. Thus the letter X has different significance in Greek and Latin not by nature but by agreement and consent as to what it signifies ('non natura sed placito et consensione significandi', *Christian Teaching* 2.24.37).³³

²⁹ There is probably a similar distinction in *De Mag.* between the force of a word (*vis*, *significatio*, 10.34) and its reference (*significatio*, 4.5).

³⁰ *Signum* is the word used in the Latin Bible (Gen. 17.11), a fact noted by Jackson (1972: 115).

³¹ Noted by Markus (1972: 78) and A. Louth, 'St. Augustine on Language', *Literature and Theology* 3 (1989), 151–158, at 152. ³² Cf. *De Musica* 6.13.41.

³³ Cf. *pactum et placitum* (*Conf.* 1.13.22), with R. J. O'Connell, *Saint Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, MA 1969), 48. Conventions apply in the case of non-verbal signs too, and they may be more or less 'realistic': note Augustine's comments on the dancers' presentation of 'signs' of the love of Venus and Adonis. He claims that it is the 'reading' or

Note, however, that for Augustine at least one set of signs is not merely conventional (and therefore that signs are not *necessarily* conventional); that is the signs of God given in Scripture (or in the liturgy and 'sacraments', i.e. in religious acts). Part of the explanation of why these are not conventional is because they are not mere *attempts*, but accomplishments of what God wishes to achieve. For Augustine believed it is impossible for God to try and fail: a belief which, surprisingly at first sight, led him into many difficulties.

At the level of ordinary language, both as originally founded and as conventionally used to indicate intentions and aims, we are concerned with attempts within a society to organize its members. Speaking is an activity which we undertake both as individuals and as members of a community. Hence our failures to communicate are failures of ourselves both as individuals and as members of our community. When we fail to communicate, we also exhibit the failure of our community to provide us with adequate means of communication. Language thus being a means of organization among communities, Augustine is even able to claim that one of the (presumably incidental) advantages of the present plurality of language-communities among men is that no one person is able to dominate the rest so effectively as he would if we all spoke the same language (*On Music* 6.13.41). The claim is interesting for many reasons: societies with a common language (such as Greek or Latin in ancient times, or English in modern) are easier to manipulate, as by advertisers or propagandists. Since the fall, according to Augustine, language-users (or at least their 'law-givers') have tried to use their linguistic skills – like their other skills – to dominate their fellows more or less promiscuously. That is because the desire to dominate (*libido dominandi*) and the attempt to satisfy that desire are characteristic features of fallen society. Thus the Tower of Babel – the plurality of languages – is a sign of the sin of pride, but paradoxically it is also a difficulty in the path of would-be tyrants.³⁴

Words have the capacity of signifying,³⁵ but that capacity has to be exercised. If words are to be used successfully, the sign-giver must understand how to express his will (and there will be limitations on that), and the sign-receiver has to know how to interpret the sign when he receives it. The latter process will require (in normal

interpretation of the actions which renders them, or shows them to be, obscene (*De Ord.* 2.11.34; cf. *DDC* 2.25.38). ³⁴ *DDC* 2.4.5–2.6.8; cf. *CD* 19.7.

³⁵ Cicero, *Orat.* 32.115 (*vis verborum*); cf. *De Mag.* 10.34 (*vim verbi*).

circumstances) not only previous beliefs imbedded in the memory, but also both some first-hand experience of 'impressed ideas', as we have observed, and also assistance from Christ, the inner teacher who 'illuminates' the 'inner man' (*The Master* 12.40).³⁶

From the side of the sign-giver, or speaker, however, we must emphasize the incomplete success of his attempts. We do not know our own hearts, which are an 'abyss' (*On Psalms* 42 (41).13); we are a 'great deep' (*Confessions* 4.14.22); 'The power of my understanding is actually unknown to me' (*The Nature and Origin of the Soul* 4.7.10); 'Practically no-one understands his own capacities' (*The Usefulness of Belief* 10.24). Thus, since we do not know our own hearts, we could find no accurate way of representing them. Since our linguistic signs convey ambiguous beliefs, for that reason alone they must be less than fully effective.

The multiplicity of languages is one result of the fall, but Augustine is also less than fully confident about the ability of language as such to communicate what we most need to communicate, as also about our ability to know this. Indeed, according to the early commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans (2.5),³⁷ language itself is a consequence of the fall. It seems, however, from book 2 of *Christian Teaching*, that Augustine later concluded only that the *diversity* of languages presupposes the expulsion from the Garden.³⁸ On this account, obviously Adam and Eve would need only one (perfect) language. Augustine's reasons for making the changes, however, were scriptural: God spoke to Adam and Eve before the fall. But even so, he still hesitates between an earlier preference for an actual language with 'verbal signs' (*Literal Commentary* 8.18.37; 8.27.49–50) and the *possibility* that God spoke 'through his own (immaterial) substance', and therefore necessarily only to Adam's 'heart'.³⁹

For certainly before the fall words would have been unnecessary, and similarly in the last book of the *City of God* (22.29.6) Augustine

³⁶ For the inner man of Eph. 3:16–17 cf. *De Mag.* 1.2; 11.38; *DVR* 39.72 and *Retr.* 1.12.

³⁷ AD 388/389. Cf. U. Duchrow, "'Signum" und "superbia" beim jungen Augustin (386–390)', *REA* 7 (1961), 369–372. Augustine holds that the thoughts which precede speech are in fact non-linguistic: 'Neither in Greek nor Latin nor any other language' (*De Trin.* 15.10.19). They may resemble the abstract formulations of logic or mathematics (*Conf.* 10.12.19). Anyone who reflects on the ultimate *impossibility* of translation will understand the aspiration behind Augustine's longing for non-linguistic communication.

³⁸ Jackson (1972: 113); Louth (1989: 157).

³⁹ *GenLitt.* 8.19.38–8.27.50 may be a later addition to the original text of the book, expanding the discussions of 'wills' and 'natures' in the cosmos. See P. Agaesse and A. Solignac in *BA* (1972b), XLIX, 514.

argues that in heaven our thoughts will be transparent to one another. Language, it would seem, would be possible, but not necessary. There would be silence in heaven because language (the *verbum vocis*), at least human language, would often necessarily fall short of the requirements of the speakers, even though the speakers' will was always to speak the uncorrupted truth.

In *The Trinity* (15.10.19ff.) we read of a word which precedes any particular language, but such a word (or divine Word) is not itself a sign.⁴⁰ In *On Catechizing the Simple* we read that language does not measure up to the heart (2.3). At the philosophical level Augustine is probably adopting the Platonic idea that words (or propositions) can only inadequately represent their subject-matter, and that propositional knowledge about the Good only gives us a poor image of the Good itself. On the theological level he believes that among the good the inadequacies of speech are made up for by love (*On Catechizing the Simple* 12.17). In heaven signs, even sacramental signs, are unnecessary. There no one needs to refer to anything, that is, in a verbal or propositional attempt to pass on beliefs, orders or truths. For since through mutual love each person will have first hand and immediate experience of what others are thinking, he will have no occasion to attempt to infer the nature of those thoughts or identify their objects. Thus since, as we have seen, Augustine makes no claim that verbal signs are ostensive, that is, that they give verbal pictures of their objects, and since referring and inferring are unnecessary in heaven, it is hard to see that 'outer' words have any remaining role to play in a world where souls are transparent,⁴¹ or even that they had any great value – though seemingly mentioned in Scripture – in the lost Paradise of men's origins.

Further evidence might be adduced from what seems a substantial and surprising omission in Augustine's comments on language. Perhaps still too much influenced by the Stoics, with their overwhelming concern for the role of the proposition, Augustine normally assumes that the primary, even the only, function of words is to convey

⁴⁰ Inner words are 'nude' to the thinker and are (later) 'clothed' in words (*Serm.* 187.3.3); cf. Matthews (1972: 181). The inability of the proposition to express the idea in the mind is Augustine's 'Platonic' appropriation, and Platonic critique, of the Stoic distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*. But the Stoics, who thought the truth is expressed propositionally, are 'Platonically' corrected; cf. G. Watson, 'St. Augustine and the Inner Word: The Philosophical Background', *ITQ* 54 (1988), 81–92.

⁴¹ For more on words as non-ostensive see Burnyeat (1987: 12) and Kirwan (1989: 37–39, 53). Augustine and his son Adeodatus point out the inadequacy and misleading nature of ostensive definitions at *DeMag.* 3.6 and 10.29. [But what exactly is being shown?]

information. Had he discussed language in the context of sacramental theology, and thus, for example, attended to the function of the *words* in the baptismal performative 'I baptize you', he might have developed his ideas differently. For he considers sacraments to be invisible words (*Against Faustus* 19.16). But his direct discussions of language are normally either in an epistemological context, or in one of biblical exegesis. He is concerned with discovering the 'meaning' of words or with their use in referring to things; that is, as we saw, with their role as vehicles of information. It is true that in theological contexts he has the opportunity to go much further: thus Word and Spirit give commands (*On John's Gospel* 80.3). But when he is theorizing, Augustine gives the impression that he thinks of such commands as expressions of fact about what God wants, and his emphasis on the role of the will in language-use may even hinder the development of a broader theory, since, for example, commands are read as ways of passing on truths ('It is wrong to kill' appears in the form of imperatives like 'Do not kill') rather than as performatives (such as 'Let there be light').

Performatives aside, what becomes of ordinary informative propositions, in the light of Augustine's account of words as signs? What Augustine seems to want to say in suggesting that sentences are somehow the sum of their constituent signs, not something over and above them, is that there are conventions within societies by which we string our verbal signs together in such a way (that is, by the grammar and syntax of the individual language) as more or less to make sense, more or less to convey what we want to convey, either to ourselves or to others. Some subjects will be more accessible to such rendering; our greatest failures will be in areas where the signs most need expert interpretation and where in our inner selves we have the least understanding; that is, in the case of God and the soul. Here our possible ability to express understanding will be limited – which is what Augustine *finds* in his reflections on himself and others and in his readings of what 'wise' men have to say about such topics. The authority of the Scriptures and of the Church enables him, in this life, to make as much sense as God allows; but a good deal less than this would be – and was – possible without this or other divine assistance. For without it – despite our signs – we should be perpetually baffled.

For all the intrinsic interest of Augustine's restricted discussions of language, he himself came to attach little importance to their details at least. He says nothing about signs in his remarks about *The Master*

in his *Reconsiderations*;⁴² his interest there is in the importance of divine illumination and Christ as the Master. In fact, there is little doubt that his concern with the nature of language was always primarily directed towards its practical consequences. The practising persuader, whether as orator or as bishop, dominated the theoretician, who only came into his own briefly and from time to time.

The most Augustinian lesson we can learn from a study of Augustine's account of verbal signs is our inadequacy at understanding what is most worthy of being understood; though we may allow that in treating the proposition as somehow the sum of its parts and an expansion of its grammatical subject, as also in other ways, Augustine may have managed to give the impression that our inadequacy is even greater than we feel it to be. Nevertheless, as we turn to his epistemology, we need to remember his insistence that what comes out of the mouth of the speaker is not the reality signified, but only the sign by which signification is willed and attempted (*The Master* 8.23). Even if we hear the Latin word *sarabara* uttered, we cannot know what it refers to unless we know what a *sarabara* is (10.33-35).⁴³ And in his view we have no option but to recognize the truth of propositions of all sorts without being able to express or understand – perhaps necessarily not being able to understand – why things are as they are.

⁴² Markus (1972: 71).

⁴³ Cf. *De Trin.* 10.1.1–10.3.5: we have no *notitia* of a sign unless we know of what it is a sign.

CHAPTER THREE

Certainty, belief and understanding

Assent is to be given to the truth, but who will show us the truth?
(*Against the Sceptics* 3.5.12)

God did not decide to save his people through (Stoic) logic.
(Ambrose)

AUGUSTINE'S INTEREST IN SCEPTICAL ARGUMENTS

It is necessary to consider Augustine's treatment of scepticism for two reasons: historically it enables us to evaluate an important and ongoing aspect of his intellectual growth; philosophically it helps us to understand the claims he wants to make about the importance of belief as distinct from knowledge, and the priority of understanding to both. It is principally on Cicero's *Academics* that Augustine's writings on scepticism, and more generally on epistemology, depend. Such material was not available in the Neoplatonic texts with which he became familiar. His knowledge of Plato's *Meno* and *Theaetetus* was derivative, and he knew nothing of Aristotle's *Analytics* or of any Stoic or Sceptic epistemological texts in Greek.

We get to know, at least in part, by communicating with other people. Augustine's account of given signs shows that he held such communication to be flawed, but not impossible, in our fallen condition. Speakers are able to express at least part of what they wish to express, though hearers will not necessarily be able to understand them. If we want to pursue the matter further, therefore, we must consider the learning capacities of the hearer, or rather not only his learning capacities *qua* hearer (or reader), but more widely how Augustine supposed that he acquires beliefs, information and understanding of a variety of types of subject-matter. In fact, throughout virtually the whole of his Catholic life, Augustine claimed that strictly speaking no one except God is able to teach us anything

at all. He argued for the dependence of our learning on God if we are to learn – partly on Platonic as well as on theological grounds – even before he formulated his most characteristic ideas about human dependence on God for the possibility of moral behaviour. This fact is philosophically important in itself. It also gives a usually unrecognized signal of the direction in which Augustine's thoughts about man's relationship to God will develop in areas far removed from epistemology.

In the previous chapter we identified Augustine's persistent emphasis on the inadequacies of language, and on the failure of language-users to pass on their thoughts, or even to formulate them. Finally we met the claim – resembling the claim of Plato in the *Cratylus* – that, although words are signs of 'things', they are only intelligible if we know the things themselves. Turning directly to epistemology, we meet an even more radical and disturbing claim: that there is a sense in which no one can teach anyone else anything at all. Certainly the mere expressing and accepting of words or sentences is no sign of the conveying of knowledge or of having been taught 'as human beings', for, says Augustine, parrots can do as much, and we are not parrots or any other mere animal. He has no doubts or delusions about the reality and importance of the differences between men and animals: 'This is not the power by which I find my God, for if it were, the horse and the mule, senseless creatures (Ps. 31:9), could find him too . . .' (*Confessions* 10.7.11).

So even if we know, we may not be able to expound; even if we have an inner word, that inner word is not necessarily expressible intelligibly. But do we have even that? Unlike almost every other thinker of late antiquity, Augustine took radical scepticism seriously and was driven by his own experiences to attempt to find answers to it. When he arrived in Italy disillusioned with the Manichaeans (*The Usefulness of Belief* 8.20), he fell back on the wisdom to be found in his old mentor Cicero and began to ask himself whether the so-called Academics, Sceptics of the school of Arcesilaus (c. 315–241 BC) and Carneades (214–129 BC) were not the most sensible, or the least deluded, of the philosophers: for they held that we should doubt everything and that no truth can be perceived (*Confessions* 5.10.19). In the *Reconsiderations* (1.1.1) Augustine says that such claims disturbed many, including himself; our evidence for the period as a whole suggests that at any rate they disturbed Augustine and his friends. Howsoever that be, shortly before his baptism he wanted to put his arguments against scepticism before the public, and the first result was *Against the Sceptics*,

a work of comparatively restricted scope with which – within its limits – Augustine remained more or less satisfied throughout his life. He still cited it with approval in *The Trinity* (15.12.21), a text he completed nearly thirty years later.

That may seem surprising, but let us not forget an important feature of ancient scepticism; it was normally ‘global’, doubtful of *any* claim to knowledge. A modern sceptic arguing that objective truths in ethics are ‘queer’ because they are expressed in propositions of a different logical structure from those of physics – where there really are objective truths – would have seemed aberrant, and methodologically unsound – to ancient Sceptics.¹ The more extreme ancient position is not only more difficult to justify than the more restricted version (and most moderns of a sceptical turn have disowned it), but it tempts its opponents into a risky kind of philosophical confidence. For it is easy to assume, and Augustine himself is inclined to assume, that if he can establish *any* certain knowledge, say in the realm of logic, he has also established at least the possibility of certain knowledge in other areas: philosophical theology, or ethics, or theories of the mind and the person. Yet we should also remember that the mature Augustine would be the last thinker to assume that we can achieve, in our fallen state, what it is theoretically possible for us to achieve, and we shall pursue further what we have already noted, that Augustine’s concern with ‘certainty’ (concerning the truth of propositions) came to be subsumed under a (Platonic) re-emphasis on the greater importance of ‘understanding’. Furthermore, as this shift of perspective occurred, he simultaneously restricted the practical importance of the distinction between knowledge and belief.

Most general studies of Augustine include a chapter on his refutation of ‘official’ scepticism, and come to varying conclusions about the strengths of the different arguments he musters. Some are careful to set the arguments in the particular context in which Cicero originally placed them: the debate between Stoics and Sceptics as to whether objects or events could be known through propositional signs in such a way that the sign gives unambiguous evidence of that to which it refers. Such studies naturally are almost entirely dedicated to the early writings of Augustine where specifically ‘Academic’ Scepticism

¹ For ancient and modern scepticism, see M. Burnyeat, ‘The Sceptic in his Place and Time’, in *Philosophy in History* eds. R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (Cambridge 1984), 225–254; and J. Annas, ‘Doing without Objective Values: Ancient and Modern Strategies’, in *The Norms of Nature*, eds. M. Schofield and G. Striker (Cambridge and Paris 1986), 3–29.

is under inspection, and they are usually supplemented by a more or less lengthy appendage on the continuing interest of Augustine in one possible route to a limited certitude: the famous argument perhaps best expressed by the proposition 'If I am mistaken, I exist' ('Si fallor, sum'). Hence they will normally also make passing reference to the implications of such remarks even of the 'late' Augustine about his 'having no fear of the arguments of the Academics' (*City of God* 11.26); or that 'As for that characteristic which Varro produced as the distinctive mark of the New Academy, the view that everything is uncertain, the City of God condemns such doubt outright as a kind of madness', for small and incomplete though human knowledge may be, it indubitably exists (*City of God* 19.18).²

Such observations, it is rightly supposed, indicate Augustine's continuing confidence in the argument for the certainty of his own existence as the most impressive formal testimony against Scepticism.³ They also re-emphasize that, although rebutting the Sceptics was a primary concern for Augustine only in the period immediately before or soon after his conversion, his later thoughts about the possibility of knowledge, as they surface from time to time, are less a repudiation of what went before than a redrawing of the epistemological map. The frontiers of knowledge are fixed differently and new problems appear in the forefront of Augustine's mind, but the earlier arguments against Scepticism, so far as they go, are not abandoned.

The Academic Sceptics claimed to be the genuine disciples of Socrates, that is, of that tradition (represented especially in certain early Platonic dialogues) that the wise man is the man who only knows that he knows nothing. There is an important sense in which even Plato (and therefore any genuine Platonist) is a Sceptic; he has accepted – Aristotle thinks from the Heraclitean Cratylus – that sensible things are always in flux and that there is a sense in which there is no 'understanding' of them. This is not the place to discuss the details of Plato's views, but their general tenor is significant, since in one way or other it is reflected in Augustine: not only because (although, as we have noted, he had not read the *Meno* and *Theaetetus*) Augustine knew of Plato's discussions of knowledge through Cicero

² Augustine, as a good rhetorician, will never miss the chance for an *ad hominem* argument in this connection: in *CD* 4.30 he objects that Cicero the Academic philosopher (i.e. the Sceptic) expects us to treat him seriously as an authority in the matter of augury (which in fact he treats as a joke).

³ *Solil.* 2.1.1; *DLA* 2.3.7; cf. *DVR* 39.73 on understanding one's doubt; *DeTrin.* 10.10.14.

and Varro, but because, in part at least, he 'reconstructed' some of the ideas of those dialogues from other parts of the Platonic tradition which had come down to him. Similar philosophical concerns to Plato's seem to have led him at least some of the way to similar philosophical conclusions.

For the most basic principle of Platonic epistemology is not the distinction between 'intelligibles' and 'sensibles' (important though that is), but the distinction between first-hand experience which gives 'knowledge' (*epistēmē*) and second- (or other-) hand experience which gives various sorts of more or less justified 'belief' (*doxa*). In the *Meno* (97A–C) Socrates argues that if we travel from Athens to Larissa, we 'know' the road, whereas if we learn how to get there from someone else we have true (or false) belief; similarly in the *Theaetetus* (201 BC) the spectator of a crime has knowledge of that crime, while the jury to whom he reports his knowledge have only belief. Thus must we understand 'knowledge' of sensibles. It is not knowledge in the strictest sense, for that requires both first-hand knowledge *and* experience of intelligible objects, but it is still often worthy of being entitled 'knowledge'.

As for intelligibles, it is the most notorious part of the Platonic theory of the Good (and of the forms in general) that he who has seen it 'knows what I mean' (cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.6.7, etc.). He who has not seen can only talk of it. In a piece of *ben trovato* legend the Cynic Diogenes tells Plato that he can see horses, but not horsesness itself; to which Plato replies that that is because Diogenes has eyes but no mind. For Diogenes (whether or not possessed of a mind) had never encountered the forms; he had only heard Plato talking about them. He does not 'understand' what they are. But let us leave 'understanding' aside for the moment.

Consider an important difference between a peculiarly Platonic knowledge of forms and a knowledge of particulars. Knowledge of forms can be shared by innumerable people – Augustine in *On Human Responsibility* (2.9.27) says that such goods are 'common' and that we need not fear they will be snatched away (2.18.48), and Plato says the same of beauty in his *Symposium* – but knowledge of particular events or even of particular objects at any particular time and place is more or less unique, unrepeatable and unshareable. As we shall see, it is Augustine's view (though not, I think, Plato's) that the past does not exist (and the future does not exist), and if it does not exist, then we could have first hand experience of it only when it existed. Hence any

recalling of the past (and any talk about the past) deals with only some kind of *version* of the past that we retain in our minds.

Thus when we consider the epistemological implications of Augustine's account of time and his consequent attitude to what is past, and even to what is present, in the 'stream' of events, we find a new kind of 'self-generated' problem of scepticism in Augustine's middle and later works: not the more general Platonic scepticism about how to grasp particulars with the mind (as distinct from experiencing them first-hand), but a special scepticism deriving from that same Platonic insistence on the existence and priority of non-material substances as had freed Augustine from materialism in Milan. For the price of this, as later appeared, was to sharpen underlying problems about the nature and 'reality' of the world of generation and passing-away. The problems concern the *continuing* knowledge of sensible particulars of which original 'knowledge' was acquired and can only be acquired first-hand (*On Human Responsibility* 3.21.60). For the intelligible world is exempted by its immateriality from ceasing to exist and thus from becoming inaccessible to *continuing* first-hand experience; but no such exemption can apply to the world of material objects. Even if we once had knowledge of what is now past, how can we manage to retain it?

Augustine might seem to need to defend a continuing knowledge of particulars, despite his full-scale rehabilitation of 'belief' against the tendency in the Platonic tradition to denigrate it. For he might seem to want to 'know' that the cup he broke yesterday was a cup and that the Bible he lost was a Bible. At times, however, he will maintain that to say we 'know' sensibles is an improper use of 'know' (*intelligere* or *scire*); strictly (and platonically) the word means 'understand' (*Reconsiderations* 1.14.3) and is therefore unsuited to 'knowledge' of sensibles. For understanding requires a wider context and 'background' which only reasoning, generating a full explanation of all related and relevant 'facts', can wholly provide and remembered perception cannot.⁴ Yet at least *prima facie* there seem to be very practical reasons why, despite his developed 'platonic' theory of time, Augustine might wish to defend some sort of 'knowledge' of the external world. Between *The Master*, book 11 of the *Confessions* and *The Trinity*, he attempts a resolution of this newer and more personal set of sceptical problems, though his claims about full understanding of ourselves or

⁴ Cf. *Solil.* 1.3.8; *Retr.* 1.14.3, with Burnyeat (1987: 6, 19).

of the world around us still compel him to agree with Plato that full 'knowledge' could never be merely justified belief.

Once convinced of their existence and explanatory power, Augustine, like Plato, never doubted that a number of 'intelligibles' are the proper objects of understanding and indeed of certain knowledge, in some technical sense of 'knowledge',⁵ and it is on the basis of the establishment of such knowables that the bulk of his case is developed in *Against the Sceptics*. For the Academic attacks, though supposedly elaborating a scepticism against *all* knowledge, were in fact directed primarily (at least in the view of Augustine and of Cicero, his primary source) against the Stoics. But the Stoics were materialists (or more strictly vitalists) who had no time for any sort of Platonic 'intelligible realities'. In their view, Platonic forms are merely reified concepts, and Platonic 'qualities', such as goodness, beauty and justice, are physical objects, namely air-currents (*pneumata*). Hence, although Augustine's first arguments against the Sceptics concern the existence of 'truth', 'happiness', etc., he could reasonably claim – at least *ad hominem* – that if he is right about these, the traditional Sceptical attack on the possibility of any kind of knowledge is defeated. For if and only if scepticism is 'global', then if any kind of knowledge is certain, all kinds of knowledge might seem to be possible.

Augustine's view of the Academic Sceptics is superficially complicated by a historical curiosity. At the end of *Against the Sceptics* (3.17.37–39) he shows himself aware of an old Platonic tradition that the sceptics of the Academy were not 'really' sceptical at all; for since their attacks were aimed against the epistemology of the Stoic materialists,⁶ they were (obviously!) offered in support of a non-materialist (and hence also non-sceptical) epistemology. Yet it must also be said that in arguing with the New Academy itself Augustine pays little attention to this kind of special pleading. He makes no attempt to suggest at this stage of the debate that the Sceptics knew that their own arguments missed the real target; indeed, as we have seen, he takes their arguments extremely seriously and maintains that he is replying because they have caused grave doubt about the possibility of truth in many of their readers, including himself.⁷

⁵ Note that in *De Mag.* (12.39–40) perceiving through the senses is learning (*discere*) where 'mental perceiving' is 'knowing' (*noscere*).

⁶ For the Stoics as the real target of Scepticism, see *CA* 2.6.16; cf. also R. Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse. Saint Augustin et la problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris 1962), 121.

⁷ *Retr.* 1.1.1; cf. *Ep.* 1.3; *Trin.* 15.12.21.

As we have already seen, Augustine says at the beginning of his Christian career that he just wants to understand God and the soul: a desire which he retained to the end despite a later insistence that knowledge of the soul's origin is not necessary for salvation (*Against Julian* 5.4.17).⁸ In still wanting to know about it, as it was to turn out, Augustine had set himself no mean target; an understanding of God and the soul, even to the limited degree which he came to think he had achieved, involved him in offering some sort of explanation of a good deal more. To understand the soul entailed unwrapping the nature of its operations: how it thinks; what it thinks about (our knowledge of the external world, and therefore the apparent nature of that world as we know it, will inevitably appear); what is memory; what is time; what is the soul's relationship to God (both proper and actual); what is its relationship to the body – this last a pressing question both for contemporary Platonists and for the fast-growing but considerably divergent movements of specifically Christian asceticism.

In so far as these questions are substantive ones about God's nature, God's purposes in the universe, the soul-body problem and matters of our personal identity, they will be deferred to later chapters. Discussion must focus first on whether now, in our present life, we are able to have certain knowledge of anything at all, and if so of what. We shall find that the limitations of 'certain knowledge' compelled Augustine to a radical re-evaluation of the philosophical status of belief, and of its relationship to understanding.

HAPPINESS

In his creative interpretation of Plotinus and the Platonists, Augustine undercuts the optimism of ancient philosophy in at least three ways: he denies an unaided capacity for good in man; he refuses to accept the compromise that even if only a few men have such a capacity, that is all that matters; he holds that his view of the nature of moral evil entails that it is impossible to construct an institutional utopia in this life. But he did not reach these positions as soon as he was converted to Catholic Christianity.

What we need to know, Augustine once told Dioscorus (*Letter* 118.13) is how to be happy: that is what pagan moral philosophy is about. The question is also vital for Augustine and, he thinks, it is a

⁸ Cf. *Retr.* 1.1.3; *OpImp.* 2.178.

fundamentally *Christian* question. In that sense Augustine, like the Greco-Roman philosophers, is a eudaimonist. But his final answer to the question, that happiness is the gift of God, indicates that he is a very different kind of eudaimonist.⁹ The argument about happiness in book 1 of *Against the Academics* begins (1.4.10) with a conflict between two apparently Platonic themes. Licentius, son of Augustine's relative and former patron Romanianus, representing the Sceptical viewpoint, claims that happiness for mankind is obtained, as far as possible, in the course of searching for the truth. (The Platonic Socrates, at least as interpreted by the Sceptics, could have held such a view.) Against this another of Augustine's pupils, Trygetius, argues that, if we can only search for the truth, but not obtain it, then no one is happy. Happiness depends on attaining what one desires: a Platonic theme – if the assumption is that one desires the right thing – spelled out in detail in the *Symposium* and tirelessly repeated in Neoplatonic texts.

As is indicated by the very title of the short treatise *The Happy Life* (completed before *Against the Sceptics* and dedicated to the Christian 'Plotinian' Manlius Theodorus), Licentius and Trygetius are debating a problem of central philosophical concern to Augustine at the time of his conversion: not merely the problem of the nature of happiness, but the claim of many philosophers, including both Platonists and Stoics, that happiness is within our grasp. Augustine himself expected, and briefly thereafter believed, that with his conversion he would enter the 'port of happiness'.¹⁰ So his concern about the possibility of knowledge and of truth is intimately bound up with the possibility of happiness. If truth is attainable, happiness is attainable.

But when? And is it knowledge of truth that we want or belief in it? For the time being, following the standard classical tradition, Augustine assumed that the answer to the first question is that there is a group (though a small group) who can obtain perfect happiness in

⁹ *Sermo* 150.8.9; cf. Burnaby (1938: 45).

¹⁰ For further discussion, see esp. Holte (1962) and I. Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu* (Paris 1982). Later, Augustine will say that one gets home by boat (the Church) on the wood of the Cross (e.g. *Sermo* 75.2.2), but note that even in the *Confessions*, where Augustine observes that the Platonists had nothing to say about the Incarnation, he places no emphasis on the Cross of Christ as the way to salvation; presumably this is historically accurate about his views at the time of his conversion. In *JoEv.* 2.2–4, on the other hand, he emphasizes that we cross the sea to salvation on the wood of the Cross. For the growth of Augustine's theology of the Cross in the 390s, see J. M. Dewart, 'Augustine's Developing Use of the Cross: 387–400', *AS* 15 (1984), 15–33.

this life (*On Order* 2.9.26):¹¹ But the question of when is not specifically raised in *Against the Sceptics*, and the debate does not depend on its being raised, let alone answered. For the more general question discussed is the *nature* of human happiness. The underlying issue – to which the problem of *when* we can be happy is subordinate – is that if happiness depends on the satisfaction of our desire for truth, which desire is not satisfiable, then happiness itself is impossible.

Note that none of the speakers in the dialogue doubts that all men wish to be happy. Here Augustine follows the ancient wisdom, summed up by Aristotle at the opening of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. All men want to be happy, says Aristotle, but the problem comes in knowing what it is that constitutes happiness and what therefore ‘counts’ as able to make a man happy. By Augustine this ‘native’ desire for happiness is said to derive, along with a number of other native desires and beliefs, from those ‘ideas impressed on our minds’ which we have already met. Since there is a residual uncertainty as to how many such impressed ideas Augustine was prepared to accept, we should notice that happiness is specifically mentioned as one of them (*On Human Responsibility* 2.9.26), alongside wisdom (2.9.26), goodness and human nature (*The Trinity* 8.3.4; 13.1.2), eternal law (*On Human Responsibility* 1.6.14–15) and the just law which is impressed on the human heart (*The Trinity* 14.15.21).¹²

As we have already noticed, for at least a short period after his conversion Augustine was willing to tolerate Plato’s doctrine (to be found in Cicero and Plotinus) that knowledge is a recollection of experiences of a previous life,¹³ but his acceptance of the impressed

¹¹ *DBV* 2.14 (AD 386) corrected by *Retr.* 1.2; *Solil.* 1.7.14 corrected by *Retr.* 1.4.3; *DUC* 11.25 (AD 391) corrected by *Retr.* 1.14.2; also *Retr.* 1.7.4 and 1.19.1. For discussion, see Brown (1967), esp. chapter 15, ‘The Lost Future’. The view that knowledge and happiness are only perfected after this life is already visible in *DVR* 53.103 (of 390).

¹² See also *DDC* 2.40.60, *Conf.* 7.9.15; 7.10.16 (both passages also discuss despoiling the Egyptians, i.e. the Platonists), with E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (trans. of *Introduction à l’étude de saint Augustin*, 2nd edn (Paris 1943)) translated by L. E. M. Lynch, (New York 1960, and London 1961), 89; Holte (1962: 139); R.A. Markus, ‘Marius Victorinus and Augustine’, in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Mediaeval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (1967), 367.

¹³ Relevant early texts of Augustine include *CA* 1.9.22 (with *Retr.* 1.1.3), *Solil.* 2.20.35, *QuAn.* 20.34, and *Ep.* 7.1.2 (on which, see G. P. O’Daly, ‘Did St. Augustine ever Believe in the Soul’s Pre-existence?’, *AS* 5 (1974), 227–235 and R. J. O’Connell, ‘Pre-Existence in the Early Augustine’, *REA* 16 (1980), 176–188). In the later *De Trin.* (12.15.24) pre-existence in the Platonic sense is clearly unacceptable (cf. *Retr.* 1.4.4; 1.8.2), but by then Augustine is experimenting with the unplatonic alternative of our existence outside our *propria vita* in Adam. This is discussed in chapter 4, below.

For more on pre-existence and recollection see the introduction to the *BA* text of the

idea of happiness did not arise from, and does not need to be defended by, such a theory. The language of impressed ideas could be found in handbooks of Platonism and in Augustine's Latin sources, and it was commonplace among those platonically (as also stoically) inclined.¹⁴ It must be admitted that the early Stoics had no such ideas about innateness; their view of the mind is that it is a blank sheet marked by sense-experiences. But contamination of the original Stoic deposit by presumably Platonic sources is already apparent in the writings of Epictetus in the first century AD,¹⁵ and by the time of Augustine confusion was widespread. Augustine himself seems to have no qualms about using the Stoic language of 'common ideas' or 'impressed ideas' for Platonic-seeming incorporeals 'present' with us in our inner man or inner self,¹⁶ a self for which he found evidence, again, both in the Platonic books and in the Bible, especially the Pauline Epistles.¹⁷

Hence we all long for happiness and happiness has some relationship to the search for truth. While we long for truth or wisdom we remain 'philosophers' (*Against the Sceptics* 2.2.5); if we secure it, we are wise (3.3.5), as Augustine accepts, echoing the *Symposium* (203E–204A). But for Augustine, if happiness is sought, even if in the right way, we cannot be satisfied – satisfaction being a condition of happiness – until it is found. Augustine does not mean that unless we get whatever we want, we shall not be happy, for underlying the discussion in *Against the Sceptics* is the belief or the desideratum (later to be expressed in an imperative from the *Song of Songs* (2.4): Order my love in me¹⁸) that

Reconsiderations (xii, 141–148) and O'Daly (1987: 199–201). O'Daly argues here, and elsewhere, that all Augustine's early texts in which recollection seems to appear should be read 'figuratively', as presupposing a theory of knowledge by illumination: Augustine is nowhere committed to pre-existence by his account of knowledge, and in fact never subscribed to it. Others (e.g. O'Connell (1980), Teske (1985)) disagree sharply, as did many earlier scholars (e.g. Gilson (1960–1961)).

¹⁴ Note, for example, *Didaskalikos* 4 (p. 156, 13 Louis): *phusikē ennoia* of what is noble and good. Cf. J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London and Ithaca, NY 1977), 271.

¹⁵ See J.M. Rist, 'Epictetus: Ex-Slave', *Dialectic* 24 (1985), 3–22, at 7.

¹⁶ For the notion of the inner man or inner self see *Conf.* 10.6.9 (where the inner man = *animus*); *CFaust.* 24.2; *DeCont.* 2.4; *IoEv* 99.4; *Ep.* 238.2.12 ('exterior cum nuncupato corpore dicitur homo, interior in sola rationali anima intellegitur'). In *Sermo* 52.7.18 the inner man is identified with the Trinitarian group of memory, intellect and will.

¹⁷ 'ho esō anthrōpos': *Rom.* 7:22–23; *II Cor.* 4:16; *Eph.* 3:16.

¹⁸ For Augustine's use of the *Song of Songs* (first in *GenMan.* 2.14.20), see O. O'Donovan; 'Usus and Fruitio in Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 1', *JTS* 33 (1982), 361–397, at 396, and A.M. La Bonnardière, 'Le Cantique des Cantiques dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin', *REA* 1 (1955), 225–237. The first quotation of 'Ordinate in me caritatem' seems to be in *Sermo* 100.2 (perhaps in 395) or in *Sermo* 37.2 (perhaps in 397).

objects of human desire, even worthy objects of human desire, are not 'on all fours', but are hierarchically ordered. For whatever we happen to think of them, or feel about them at particular times, some will satisfy 'fully' and some will not – perhaps not at all – and specifically no one is happy if his love of *God* is unsatisfied. If this Augustinian *assumption* is disregarded, the point of the debate is lost, for the 'sceptical' Licentius is trying to show that, even if truth is the object of the wise man's desires, he will be happy just in searching for it. Augustine, however, thinks of the love of truth and wisdom as analogous to a man's love of a woman: he wants to hold her naked 'without a covering in between' (*Soliloquies* 1.13.22) – again a belief traceable (philosophically) to the Platonic tradition. Unfulfilled desires are unsatisfying.¹⁹

Note that at this point Augustine makes no attempt to apply what may be dubbed the 'ascetic ploy' to the pursuit of truth itself. By 'ascetic ploy' is to be understood the classical notion of 'self-sufficiency', presented in differing versions by Platonists, Stoics and Epicureans alike. If you are made unhappy by not having power, or wealth, or sex, give up your desire for them. Thinking of them is unnecessary. Clearly this would not do for happiness itself: we could not give up the pursuit of happiness in order to be happy. Moreover, if the achievement of truth is necessary for happiness, we are not at liberty to renounce that either. But is it necessary? Only if truth (which for Augustine is ultimately God himself) is the necessary precondition for *any* happiness.

In *The Happy Life* an alternative Christian solution is offered and rejected. Suppose the seeker for truth has God 'on his side'; perhaps that is enough for happiness. That is, to have God propitious is a sufficient condition for happiness. Augustine rejects that view (3.21); success in 'finding' the longed-for happiness is still necessary for its attainment. Accordingly in *Against the Sceptics*, while not determining whether happiness is possible, Augustine dismisses the claim of the sceptic that the attainment of truth need not be a necessary condition. In fact, this is an argument *against* the Academics,²⁰ that is, against the

¹⁹ Cf. *DLA* 2.13.35; Kirwan (1989: 19): 'There is no joy in a hopeless passion.'

²⁰ For the view that Augustine's attacks on the Academics are aimed not so much at establishing a rival thesis as at demolishing objections and counter-proposals see G. B. Matthews, 'Si fallor, Sum', in *Augustine* ed. Markus (1972), 151–164, at 157–160: 'Perhaps his purpose is rather to put down the arguments of sceptics, to reason, not constructively, but destructively – *contra academicos*' (p. 157). For the oddity of sceptical claims that suspending judgement is satisfying see J. Annas and J. Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism* (Cambridge 1985), 167–170.

academic *arguments*: whether truth is attainable or not, it is a delusion to claim that we can be happy merely by suspending judgement about what we want to know – even if we could.

CERTAINTY IN 'AGAINST THE SCEPTICS'

We have observed that there is an important assumption behind the attitude of ancient sceptics, namely that all fields of human enquiry are equally open to the sceptical challenge. This 'global' claim leaves the sceptic open to attacks which a more modest, more restricted, version of scepticism would be better able to repel. Consequently it seems to be an important part of Augustine's strategy in *Against the Sceptics* to find at least one piece of knowledge which the sceptic cannot undermine. This is what seems to underlie the apparently rather verbal disputes over the proposal of Augustine's friend Alypius that the wise man need possess only credible (*probabilis*) notions (3.3.5).

Augustine disposes of Alypius' view by claiming that, *if* there is a wise man, he will at least know one thing: namely what wisdom is (*scire sapientiam*). (His wisdom could be of the Socratic sort that the wise man knows only that he knows nothing – for it is worth noting that, despite the contempt and irritation of their opponents, some ancient sceptics were prepared to make this claim, without falling back on the refinement that the wise man merely *believes* that he knows nothing.) Moreover, Augustine is ready to insist that any such justifiable claim to knowledge (even to knowledge of one's own ignorance, a second-order kind of knowledge) supplies sound reasons to assert the possibility of knowledge in general. A similar move appears elsewhere in book 3 (3.10.23), where Augustine argues for the certain knowledge of disjunctive propositions (either p or not-p is the case) and of mathematics (if there is one world and six worlds, there are seven worlds, 3.11.25). In so proceeding, he attempts to establish that there are certain areas of mental activity where certainty, not merely credibility (or plausibility), can be found; and he insists that that is enough to refute the Academic position as a whole.

It should now be repeated, in Augustine's favour, that the Sceptical attack on the Stoic Zeno's criterion of truth – the attack which is reflected in the sceptical positions of *Against the Sceptics* itself – seems to target only those kinds of truths which the Stoic criterion was intended to test; i.e. propositions purporting to arise from experience of the sensible world. Thus, if there are any other kinds of truths (or if Stoic truths are in any case always defectively expressed, as a

Platonist would believe), then the Sceptical attack is open to the charge of being incomplete, and therefore itself defective.

Nevertheless, Augustine's discussion is confusing, and one element in the confusion is the lack of any formal distinction between kinds of truths or different 'epistemic categories'.²¹ In *Against the Sceptics* he wants to argue that we have knowledge of logical and mathematical truths, because these are accessible to reason alone, and also of 'subjective truths'.²² 'When a man tastes something, he can swear in good faith that he knows that this is sweet to his palate . . . and no Greek sophism can deprive him of that knowledge' (3.11.26). Augustine is thus prepared to assert the certainty of (at least some) sense-knowledge: that is because of the principle we have already noted, that our first-hand experience is a sure guide.

It might be objected that both this example and the example of disjunctions require some general theory that logical indubitability or the irresistibility of personal experience are signs of truth. Augustine does not offer any such theory, but in accord with longstanding practice merely (and not unreasonably) assumes one. Later in life, however, as we have already noticed, he found himself trying to understand the 'mechanics' of how first-hand experience is transformed by our minds into a continuing awareness of what we know. For since he held that there is an important sense in which the past and the future do not exist and that the present is for ever flowing away, he was left with a problem about what it could mean to say that we know that we have had first-hand experience of something.

These questions are beyond the range of Cicero's original treatment of Academic Scepticism, and probably of Augustine's own dependent reflections at the time of *Against the Sceptics*. At any rate, they do not occur there. In *Against the Sceptics* Augustine offers some interesting counter-examples to blanket scepticism, but sheds little light on his own views of how we know (or 'know') many of the material objects about which Zeno and his sceptical critics disputed. The goals of *Against the Sceptics* are limited by the kind of traditional concerns Augustine found in his Ciceronian texts and the difficulties these had produced in a man disillusioned with the easy and 'rational' certainties of Manichaeism. Cicero is still allowed to dictate the philosophical agenda.

²¹ The phrase is used by J. Barnes, 'Socrates and the Jury: Paradoxes in Plato's Distinction between Knowledge and True Belief', *PASS* 54 (1980), 193–206, and taken up by Burnyeat (1987: 18). ²² See Kirwan (1987: 24).

By the latter part of the third book (e.g. in 3.11.26) it is clear that Augustine is surprisingly little concerned about whether the Academics could mount an argument for the unreliability of the senses, and hence of 'knowledge' derived from the senses. Indeed up to a point (for Platonic reasons) he will even assist them to do so, although, as we have noted, his 'ideological' preference for the inadequacy of sense-knowledge does not withstand his philosophical claim that at least some first-hand experiences have a strong claim to be regarded as epistemically superior. What Augustine thinks he really needs, however, (beyond a mere *assertion* that it is the case) is a proof that certain 'truths' recognized by the mind are unassailable, and he would like to extend these 'truths' from those of logic and mathematics both to 'Platonic' forms or their 'impressed ideas' and to the truths of Christianity: the last two sets of data being linked by his thesis of the identity of Christ as Logos with a vaguely Neoplatonic Divine Mind which 'contains' the Forms.²³ In *On Order* (1.11.32) Augustine even claims – in line with his early Platonic intellectualism – that Christ's words 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36) indicate that his kingdom (or fatherland in the language of *Against the Sceptics* (3.19.42))²⁴ is to be identified with the Platonic intelligible world, and hence that the 'sensible world' is to be transcended – a simplification he repudiated in the *Reconsiderations* (1.3.2). In any case, in the face of truths about immaterial objects recognizable by the mind alone, Zeno's definition of the criterion of truth (not to speak of criticisms of it) becomes largely irrelevant, and Augustine is probably as much concerned to suggest this wider kind of epistemological point as to emphasize logical necessity when he insists on our *knowledge* of disjunctions (i.e. that either *p* or *not-p* is the case).

According to Augustine (*Against the Sceptics* 2.5.11), Zeno has provided a criterion of truth by which 'that truth can be perceived which is so impressed (*impressum*) on the mind as from that from which it comes that it could not come from anything else'. Augustine thinks that part of Zeno's purpose in so expressing himself was to explain errors in judgement (as well as situations in which even the wise man will suspend judgement) about sensible objects which were traditionally thought of as difficult to distinguish individually, such as grains of sand or pairs of snakes emerging from holes. But in the case of a disjunction (and presumably of the impressed idea of a form which is

²³ See Holte (1962: 73–109, 321–327), esp. his remarks about the *auctoritas* of Christ.

²⁴ For fatherland, cf. also *CD* 9.17, where Augustine cites Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.6.8; *De Trin.* 3.4.9; etc.

not 'impressed' through the senses), it is precisely not *possible* to be wrong. There are no philosophically interesting reasons to deny that *p* either is the case or is not the case; hence judgement cannot be suspended wisely.

In the case of so-called 'subjective knowledge' ('This seems sweet to me'), Augustine's view is that I could not be wrong in claiming that I just *know* what seems sweet to me. For I know what it is to know what is sweet to me and what is not. Yet this sort of appeal to awareness is of real interest. It is not an appeal to knowing something *about* what is sweet or to knowing or believing (propositionally) that this is sweet; it is a claim that being aware, having a *conscientia*, of seeming sweetness is a 'primitive'.²⁵ For it might be claimed, if we did not know that Augustine identifies first-hand 'beliefs' (or rather the non-propositional experiences on which they depend) as knowledge, that I merely *believe* that it seems sweet to me. But the question of belief deserves a more extended discussion.

BELIEF AND UNDERSTANDING

Although in *On Order* Augustine's mother Monnica represents the simple truths to which unsophisticated Christians can attain, there is often a suggestion in Augustine's earliest work (as in that of Origen) that such simple piety is a second-class Christianity. Indeed, the nature of belief is not approached directly in *Against the Sceptics* at all, though a significantly related subject lies beneath its surface and comes up directly at its close (3.20.43), that of authority. The relationship between reason and authority, the two sources of human understanding,²⁶ had been raised in an acute form for Augustine by the Manichaeans, who claimed that they could satisfy human reason without any trace of appeal to belief, which they rejected as a kind of anti-intellectualism. Augustine's disillusionment with the Manichaeans might have seemed to offer him the bleak choice between arbitrary belief and resting content with scepticism. His subsequent rejection of scepticism left him with decisions about which authorities are to be believed about what.

In the early part of book 1 of *Against the Sceptics* there is an appeal to the authority of Cicero (1.3.7; cf. 1.9.24), and the demolition of

²⁵ For the distinction in Augustine, see A. C. Lloyd, '*Nosce Teipsum* and *Conscientia*', *AGP* 46 (1964), 188–200. I remain sceptical about Lloyd's reconstructions of the historical origins of some of the Augustinian material.

²⁶ Cf. *DeOrd.* 2.5.16; 2.9.26; *DeMor.* 1.2.3; *DVR* 24.45; *DUC* 12.26.

scepticism is certainly intended to weaken any appeal to such an authority again – despite the fact that Cicero is said to be one of the ‘ancients’ who is at least ‘ours’; by ‘ours’ is meant Latin-speaking, in contrast to the Greek Carneades of whom Trygetius with rather typically Roman offensiveness remarks, ‘I am not a Greek, I do not know who he was.’ Thus, the point is made that not all the ‘ancients’, only the wise, have authority. Nevertheless, to have authority is to be taken seriously, even to be believed, and at the end of *Against the Sceptics* Augustine reverts to the topic. When we learn something, he observes (3.20.43; cf. *On Order* 2.5.16), our sources are intelligence (*ratio*) and ‘authority’; he himself has determined never to depart from the authority of Christ.

The question of which authority to follow is logically subsidiary to the question of why it is necessary to follow authorities at all, and there is in Augustine’s view no doubt that we must follow ‘authorities’ where it is not possible to have first-hand experience. Such, as we shall see, will be the case, at least in part, whenever we acquire information about the past or the future. Yet two areas have already been identified where certain knowledge can be acquired: where we use the mind alone, that is to learn logic or mathematics; and where we have first-hand experience or perception. Of course, we can remember first-hand experiences of the past – I shall leave this aside for the moment – but most of our understanding of the past is not at first-hand but by the testimony of others.

If the past were, in some Platonic way, outside the world of sense and time, and in the world of Forms and mathematics, then ‘authorities’ would be of minor significance; but Augustine has come to believe that at least some historical events, those of the life of Jesus and those of the Old Testament, are so important that ‘knowledge’ of them might seem essential for the happy life; and the possibility of that life would involve its continuation into the future. Hence, knowledge being circumscribed in the ways we have identified, there seems to be a need to re-evaluate the role of belief in the pursuit of the happy life. In an early sermon on the Psalms (8.5), Augustine observes that belief in temporal events, that is, in the accounts of them in the Scriptures, is a necessary ‘milk’ for people still unable to grasp spiritual realities directly.²⁷ But since there are beliefs and justified

²⁷ For the image of milk more generally, see T. J. van Bavel, ‘L’Humanité du Christ comme “lac parvulorum” et comme “via” dans la spiritualité du saint Augustin’, *Augustiniana* 7 (1957) 245–281; M. O’Rourke-Boyle, ‘Augustine in the Garden of Zeus: Lust, Love and Language’, *HTR* 83 (1990), 117–139, at 133–139.

beliefs, and the question of belief cannot be separated from the question of authority, the credibility of the authorities themselves acquires a new urgency. Whether happiness is possible in the here and now, or whether, as Augustine thought for most of his Christian career, it is only to be enjoyed in a future life, authoritative accounts of the events of the past and of prospects for the future are required. In accordance with the world-view of Platonic metaphysics Augustine at first did his best to restrict the impact of some of the historical claims of Christianity. We shall pay special attention to his 'spiritualizing' treatment of Adam and Eve and of the prospects for the human race proposed in his first commentary on Genesis.²⁸ Nevertheless, from the time of his conversion he held that, at least in the case of creation *ex nihilo* and of the Incarnation, the historical must become part of any account of 'reality', however 'Platonic' it might otherwise be (*Against the Sceptics* 3.19.42); that Christianity demands a serious attempt to include history in the metaphysics of the unchanging and divine. As an authority for that no stronger (*validiorem*) could be imagined than the authority of Christ himself.

So Augustine now has an authority, the Scriptures; and 'knowledge' of the most important events of the Christian past derives from that authority, which is itself guaranteed by the Catholic Church (the 'body' of Christ) which has ratified and handed on its canon: 'I would not have believed the Gospels except on the authority of the Catholic Church' (*Against The Epistle of the Foundation* 5.6).²⁹ But the kind of information which authorities provide may not always be knowledge; perhaps that is why the subject of authority only arises at the end of *Against the Sceptics* where, against the Sceptics, Augustine simply wants to show that truth can be obtained, and not to linger long over the ways of obtaining it. Yet he also wants to establish that *if* there is a wise man, he will know wisdom. Christ is the wise man he has discovered.

Not very long after *Against the Sceptics* and soon after being ordained priest in Hippo Regius in 391, Augustine composed a book on *The Usefulness of Belief* which attempts to place an account of religious belief – already, at the end of *Against the Sceptics* (3.20.43), a prerequisite for religious understanding ('non credendo solum, sed etiam intelligendo') – within a broader account of the nature of belief as a whole. For a 'Platonist' such an attempt must be unorthodox. For a Christian it is essential, but by advancing epistemological arguments

²⁸ See below, pp. 113–114.

²⁹ Cf. *CFaust.* 22.79; *DDC* 2.8.12.

about belief Augustine is also distancing himself from the sort of Christian anti-intellectualism famously mocked in a text of Galen: If I had been a follower of Moses or of Christ, I should not have given you a definition; I should have said, 'Just believe.'³⁰

Sometimes Plato speaks of 'beliefs' as though they are only about material objects, or even only about the images of material objects (*Republic* 6. 511E1–2). Beliefs are thus formed about objects which are unstable, and they are unstable themselves. Augustine does not dispute that genuine understanding or complete knowledge of what is eternal and unchanging (e.g. God) is superior to any belief. What he does insist is not only that there are useful *beliefs* about such higher realities, and that such beliefs are not merely important but indeed essential, but also that (if dependent on serious authority) they are intellectually justifiable. A passage from *The Usefulness of Belief* (8.20) which depicts Augustine's disillusionment about the philosophical abilities of the Manichaean Bishop Faustus, summarizes his dilemma: 'Often it seemed to me that truth could not be found . . . but often again, as I reflected to the best of my ability how lively was the human mind, how wise, how penetrating, I could not believe that the truth must lie undetected. Possibly the manner of seeking truth might be hidden and would have to be accepted from some divine authority.' Doubtless as a result of such reflections Augustine had already appealed in *The Master* (11.37) to the Latin version of Isaiah 7:9: 'Unless you have believed, you will not understand' ('Nisi credideritis, non intellegitis').³¹ Note that the aim is now understanding, and that Augustine is now sure that some certainties are possible. The question of *certainty* no longer worries him; it is almost irrelevant to what he now finds important, for he has passed from anxiety about Stoic epistemology to emphasis on Platonic understanding. But merely to have defused scepticism is not to have achieved that understanding. For that *belief* is a necessary first step. But only a first step: in *The Trinity* (15.28.51) Augustine says that he 'wanted to see in the mind what he believed' – not merely to believe it, or even to know it, but to understand it.

Although after 396 Augustine is going to emphasize that religious belief in God as God can only be a gift of God who enables us to

³⁰ See R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (Oxford 1949), 48.

³¹ Cf. *DLA* 1.2.4; 2.2.6; *DFS* 1.1; *Sermo* 91.7.9; and more generally *DUC* 11.25. The *LXX*'s *intellegitis* was to be replaced by the Vulgate's *permanebitis*; see *DDC* 2.12.17 (AD 396/7). For Augustine's use of Isaiah, see Ferrari (1991).

believe (*Sermo* 43.2, etc.), in *The Usefulness of Belief* he argues first that religious beliefs form part of a much wider set of beliefs which necessarily govern our entire lives; secondly that other, non-religious beliefs also depend on authority. Naturally the question of whom to believe is important (14.31) – Augustine holds that the performance of miracles and its unmoved tradition argue powerfully for the authority of the Catholic Church – but the problem of which authority is secondary to that of the general need for belief itself. Apart from belief, says Augustine, how are we even able to identify our parents, to whom we owe a debt? It would be absurd to decline to respect our parents on the pretext we do not know who they are (12.26). We know who our father is on our mother's testimony, and we believe others (midwives, nurses or slaves) as to who is our mother. In fact any 'knowledge' of the past – and we know that such knowledge is essential – derives from belief. I believe, says Augustine, that the Catilinarian conspirators (of 63 BC) were executed by the 'virtuous Cicero'. But I do not *know* that (in the strict sense), since neither was I there nor did I work out such a fact dialectically: 'Not only do I not know it, but I am quite certain that I cannot possibly know it.'

The same theme is outlined again in a better known passage of the *Confessions* (6.5.7). After telling us in the previous chapter that he wanted to be as certain about the 'spiritual sense' of biblical texts as he was that $7 + 3 = 10$, 'for I was not so far out of my senses as to suppose that not even this could be grasped firmly', Augustine refers again to belief as a necessary supplement to first-hand experience, saying that he began to reflect 'that I believed countless things which I had not seen, or which had taken place when I had not been there to see them – so many events in the history of the world, so many facts about places and cities which I had not seen, and so much that I believed on the word of friends or doctors or various other people'. 'Unless we take these things on trust', he continues, 'we should accomplish absolutely nothing in this life. Most of all (as in *The Usefulness of Belief*) it came home to me how firm and unshakeable was the faith (or belief) which told me who my parents were, because I could never know this unless I had believed what I heard.'

Here is an account of justified belief in areas where 'knowledge', if understood as first-hand experience or grasping self-evident analytic truths, is unattainable, but where *de facto* certainty is necessary for the conduct of human life. Such 'certainties' are necessary if one is to

understand anything at all. Yet already in *Against the Sceptics* (3.15.34), as we have seen, Augustine had warned us to be careful, even in ordinary life, of our 'authorities'. In the *Meno* Plato had argued that 'true belief' may enable a traveller to journey from Athens to Larissa as satisfactorily as first-hand experience of the road. For his part, Augustine, who only knew of the *Meno* second-hand, considers two men, one of whom is sceptical and the other credulous, standing at a cross-roads and wondering how to proceed. They enquire of a peasant, and the over-credulous man takes his advice, giving his assent too weakly, as the Stoics would have put it; none the less, he arrives safely at his destination. The sceptical traveller, despising such ready assent, waits for confirmation, and by eventually accepting as reasonable the advice of a smart practical joker finishes up in a trackless waste. The authentication of belief is not as easy as it may seem; but, especially in religion, the 'old firm' is of particular merit. The sceptic in Augustine's story, though not assenting to the wrong advice as certain truth, accepts it as plausible (from a plausible but untried source), and is lost.

Near the end of his life, in *The Predestination of the Saints* (2.5), Augustine offered a definition of believing which makes it sound rather like Stoic knowing: it is, he says, thinking about something with assent (*cogitare cum assensione*),³² and of course if we believe something, there is someone (though it may be only ourselves) in whom we believe. No such definition appears in the early Augustinian texts which we have been considering so far, but in them the idea is the same: we have to think about things before we assent to them, and assent is given to belief where only belief is appropriate; in other cases it is attached to knowledge. One thing we have to think about before assenting is the credibility of the evidence and its sources. As we have seen, religious belief is not *special* or *queer* in this regard. In all of life, as in religious contexts, there are times where it is rational not to believe. There are also countless instances where not to believe is foolish and irrational. Then it is ridiculous either to disbelieve or, with the sceptics, to suspend judgement.

There is a logical distinction between belief *that* such and such is the case and belief *in* an authority. Augustine's definition of belief seems to be a definition of belief in facts or propositions. Though he

³² See Markus (1967: 348–349). The similarity with Stoicism is noted by Holte (1962: 81), who offers a comparison with Clement of Alexandria (p. 188). Cf. *SpirLitt.* 31.54: 'quid est enim credere nisi consentire verum esse quod dicitur'.

does not explicitly make the distinction, this does not disturb his position, since his assumption is that to believe a proposition, or to believe something about something, is only acceptable when there is someone to believe in, whether that someone is a human being providing us with the ordinary beliefs of our daily lives, or whether it is God through Christ in matters of religion. Belief *in* is thus prior to belief *that*, and conversely beliefs *that* depend for their reasonableness on beliefs *in*.

Augustine held that there are certain religious 'truths' which can be recognized by reasoning; as *The Happy Life*, *Against the Sceptics* and many other works both early and late can testify (and none more vigorously than *Letter* 118, perhaps as late as AD 410), he held that the Platonists had recognized many of them. But none of the philosophical schools, he concluded, could be thought of as a 'school of the most complete philosophy' ('una verissimae philosophiae doctrina'). Although the Platonists, the philosophers of non-materialism, are able in Augustine's view to demonstrate even the existence of God and his Logos, their understanding is incomplete and provisional precisely because it remains unsupported by necessary beliefs obtainable only through revelation: about God's *nature*, in particular about Christ's 'humility', and about the present human condition, *understanding* of which can only be obtained by accepting Scripture and Christian exegesis. Even knowledge of the intelligible world, as taught by the Platonists, is only temporarily satisfying: 'In the meanwhile I trust that I shall find only among the Platonists what is not opposed to our mysteries' (*sacris nostris*, *Against the Sceptics* 3.20.43).

No account of Augustine's acceptance of an authoritative guide to truth could be complete without some consideration of his typical (but not unique) attitude towards 'what is true'. When he read Cicero's *Hortensius* at the age of nineteen, he began his intellectual career by looking for 'wisdom and truth'; that is, as he supposed, he wanted to know what is really the case about certain existents: God, for instance, and the soul. He also wanted to know what is true about the Truth, which he assumed to be some kind of ultimate being or substance: something itself of which true or false things can be said. At times, troubled by the arguments of the Sceptics, he wondered whether any proposition about God's existence or qualities could be affirmed. Finally he concluded that a number of truths about the Truth had been discovered by the Platonists. 'The Truth' must refer to beings (or a being) which is unchanging and eternal: what ancient philosophers would regularly call 'God' or 'the divine'.

Yet, though within the human range, complete understanding still seemed to be beyond our unaided capacity, requiring belief as well as knowledge. The explanation had to be that *with assistance* the truth can be found about what is true, and that that assistance must come from the Truth itself (i.e. from God or God's Logos as the only possible source of true belief about himself).³³ Above all, only divine assistance can remove certain primeval fears which impede us from 'following God' (*sequi Deum*: an old Pythagorean tag which Augustine could have known through Seneca): 'By being born miraculously and by doing miracles he procured our love, and by dying and rising again he drove away our fear. In everything else he did . . . he enables us to understand . . . to what heights human weakness could be raised' (*The Usefulness of Belief* 15.33).³⁴

'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life' (Jn 14:6) is a text to which Augustine already appeals in *The Happy Life* (4.34): Christ is wisdom and truth and therefore the source of true belief. Though still a 'Platonist', Augustine is already abandoning the Platonists when their views conflict (and apparently cannot be reconciled) with the claims of either Christian belief or personal reflection. Belief, as we have seen, so far from being peripheral and distracting if we want a full understanding even of sensibles, is soon to become central and fundamental to our understanding not only of sensibles but of the unchanging nature of God – on which all other knowledge ultimately depends. Yet, as we can see, Augustine's attitude is just that, not quite a theory, but an attitude which Origen had already adopted when confronting the philosophers – not least on the problem of evil. Yet though Augustine offers no explicit theory of belief, in discussing the justification of religious belief in the context of an evaluation of beliefs as a whole, he has advanced a substantial distance towards the formulation of a reconstructed theory: a Platonic theory, in that the search for belief is ultimately a search for understanding.

KNOWING THAT I EXIST

Augustine's most famous argument that the sceptical denial of the possibility of knowledge is false, and false in a particularly important instance, is not to be found in *Against the Sceptics*. Perhaps he had not yet thought of it, or at least not developed it. In any case its absence from *Against the Sceptics* makes good sense in that there is no trace of it

³³ For a more or less satisfactory account of the reference of this to Christianity, see Holte (1962: 94–109). ³⁴ Cf. 83Q 25; Dewart (1984: 81).

in the Ciceronian texts on which *Against the Sceptics* particularly depends. It appears that the argument is embedded in a Neoplatonic account of the relationship between existence, living and thinking,³⁵ and Augustine may have hit upon it – though without realizing its full power – when, having rejected the specific arguments of the Academic Sceptics, he first came under the direct influence of Plotinus.

In any case two points are clear: first that the argument provides a *dialectical* refutation of the Sceptics in a way which, in part at least, satisfies what Cicero (*Academics* 2.6.18) had already called ‘Zeno’s definition’. At bottom what Zeno had wanted was a belief that some proposition is true which could not arise if that proposition were false. The basic proposition which Augustine holds can only be believed to be true if it really is true is the proposition ‘I exist’. Thus his claim is that I cannot believe falsely (that is, be mistaken in my belief) that I exist.³⁶

A second obvious but significant point about Augustine’s use of the argument is that he offers more or less developed versions of it on several occasions over a long period of time. It would have been not untypical of him, however – if the nature of his *Reconsiderations* is illuminating on this sort of matter – to have forgotten the development of the argument and assumed that he had always been aware of its full ramifications even when he had only been aware of its outline. The most frequently cited version of the argument is the ‘If I am mistaken, I exist’ (‘Si fallor, sum’) of the eleventh book of the *City of God* (11.26,

³⁵ The best contemporary account of the origin of these ideas is to be found in P. Hadot, ‘Etre, vie, pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin’, in *Les Sources de Plotin*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Geneva 1960b), 107–157 – as noted by Madec, *BA* vi, 563. Another pre-Augustinian (i.e. Stoic) origin for the argument is conjectured, in an otherwise very helpful article, by Lloyd (1964: esp. 200). The conjecture is ‘supported’ by the suggestion that Augustine himself lacked philosophical [*sic*] originality. But there probably was some Stoic influence on Augustine’s position; see below.

³⁶ My account of Augustine’s developed ‘version’ of the ‘*Cogito*’ (*De Trin.* 15.12.21; *CD* 11.26) is much indebted to Matthews (1972). Matthews sees Augustine’s emphasis as, ‘I cannot be mistaken (in my belief that I exist) unless I exist.’ For existing, for any reasoning agent, entails knowing that one exists. Augustine does not *infer* that I exist from the fact that I am mistaken. Rather he claims that to consider myself mistaken is impossible unless I exist to consider such a thing. I thus also follow Matthews, as suggested above, in thinking that Augustine’s primary use of this argument is negative: not to establish a firm ground from which doubt is excluded and which can be used as a foundation for some philosophical edifice, but to knock down ‘Academic’ objections to the non-philosophical and ‘obvious’ truth that I exist (Matthews, pp. 157–158). But, as we shall see, in *De Trin.* (and by implication elsewhere) Augustine wants to establish an important positive claim about God’s existence if it can be determined that I know and think: the point is noted by L. Hölscher, *The Reality of the Mind: Augustine’s Philosophical Arguments for the Human Soul as a Spiritual Substance* (London and New York 1986), 142.

written in about 417); here Augustine specifically urges the power of the argument against the Sceptical rejoinder to my claim that I exist, 'What if you should be mistaken?' A little later (after 420) the same point is developed in more detail in *The Trinity* (15.12.21). Here, the kinds of mistakes the Academic has in mind are spelled out: perhaps you are dreaming? Or insane? But even so, you know that you are *alive*: not merely existing, but a kind of existing which is entailed by the ability to know and to err: living existence.

At a somewhat earlier point in *The Trinity* (10.10.14, perhaps of 416) there is something similar: 'Who would doubt that he lives and remembers and understands, and wills and thinks and knows and judges? Since even if he doubts, he lives . . .' Here the argument is simply that the act of doubting, in and of itself, is only possible for a living, thinking and necessarily existing being. Anyone who offers a 'philosophical' objection that he may doubt whether he is a living being is necessarily self-refuting.

In the earlier forms of this kind of reasoning, written long before the completion of the later books of *The Trinity* and the *City of God*, Augustine does not develop the notion of being mistaken, whether through dreaming, madness or any other cause, in the same way. In *Against the Sceptics*, where we might have expected that the argument would be found, all we have is the brief remark that it is absurd to suppose that the wise man does not know whether he is living (3.9.19). That seems to be part of an analysis of what it is to be wise. A related point is made in *The Happy Life* (2.7) where Augustine's brother Navigius simply assumes as self-evident at least that he is alive: from which it is inferred that he 'has life' (i.e. a soul). He similarly agrees that he has a body: hence that he 'consists of life and a body'. Again in the *Soliloquies* (2.1.1) Augustine's Reason asks him whether he knows that he exists. Augustine asserts that he does, but cannot explain whence he acquired such knowledge.

In these early works Augustine seems simply to assume that to know that one exists is a brute fact, a primitive, for which it would be absurd to demand an explanation. If so, it has not yet occurred to him that the self-refutation *argument*, as found in *The Trinity* and the *City of God*, might justify such an assumption.

In addition to the apparently Neoplatonic associations of the primitive idea that for a human being to exist it is necessary also for him to think that he exists (and further that he lives), a further source of Augustine's claim may be the insistence by the Stoics – though not,

so far as we know, in connection with epistemological debates with the Sceptics – that in considering any object or event, the first thing we need to know (before we consider any possible ‘category’ for it) is whether it exists or not.³⁷ Perhaps, like the earlier Augustine, the Stoics believed such identifications to be indisputable, or at least assumed that they needed no defence. But to make good use of Stoic propositional logic, where the basic argument-schema is ‘if p, then q’, it is essential to know whether ‘p’ refers to an existing state of affairs or not. For Stoic logic deals in hypothetical as well as actual conditions, while Stoic physics is necessarily limited to the actual.

As we have seen, Augustine had a certain familiarity with Stoic logic, and he was almost certainly aware of the basic Stoic dichotomy of existents and non-existents. (A possible, but only possible, source for this awareness is Seneca’s fifty-eighth letter.) Yet if this part of Stoic dialectic was known to Augustine, and if the Stoics themselves had not developed the argument from my being deceived to my necessary existence, it is all the more likely that Augustine elaborated his self-referential argument over the course of time to justify, in a more philosophical way, his earlier assumption that we simply know that we exist.

The turning-point in Augustine’s treatment of ‘*Cogito*-style’ arguments seems to be represented by the work *On Human Responsibility*. Here the question of being deceived about one’s own existence is specifically raised (2.3.7), and the immediate context is an argument not merely for one’s own existence, but for the existence of God.³⁸ For the existence of God, as a *reasonable* and necessary claim, not just a belief, was uppermost in Augustine’s mind at this time. Book 2 of *On Human Responsibility* (perhaps of 389 AD) can be paralleled from *True Religion* (31.57) of 390 and book 6 of *On Music* (6.12.34), finished perhaps a little later.

On Human Responsibility (2.3.7), as we have seen, gives us the crucial text about doubting whether one is a living existent:

³⁷ *SVF* II.329–332. There are numerous modern discussions: e.g. J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1969a), 153–158; A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1987), I, 163–166.

³⁸ This point is emphasized by Gilson (1960–1961: 42). A text of *DVR* (39.73), where Augustine argues that everyone who doubts knows that he doubts, and therefore that at least some knowledge is certain, may suggest that Augustine has still not decided that the claim that the possibility of doubt entails knowledge of *existing* is a more powerful and general claim than that it merely entails knowledge of doubting. The argument that one is certain that one doubts looks more like the arguments (of *Contra Academicos*) for at least some kind of *knowledge*.

AUGUSTINE: Do you exist? Are you perhaps afraid to be deceived by the question? But if you did not exist, it would be impossible for you to be deceived.

EVODIUS: Go on to your other questions.

AUGUSTINE: Since it is clear that you exist and that you could not exist unless you were alive, it is clear that you are living.

Here the irrationality of doubting one's own existence is raised, as in the later versions of the theme in *The Trinity* and the *City of God*, but only very sketchy comment is made on the rationale. Evodius is quite certain of his existence. The question of doubting is explicitly raised – marking some advance on the discussions in the *Happy Life* and the *Soliloquies* – but Augustine has apparently not developed anything like a formal explanation of it. There is no direct reference to the Academics in *On Human Responsibility*, and Augustine's main point is not that a *cogito*-style argument might in some broad sense fulfil Zeno's conditions for the knowledge and understanding of certain truths. Rather he seeks to build on a truth self-evident to the plain man – who is satisfied, as is Augustine himself by this time, that there are at least some certain and knowable truths – to show how the existence of God both is and is not a truth of that kind. For we have already seen, for example in the *Soliloquies*, that at this time Augustine's overriding philosophical interests are God and the soul. What he wants to consider in *On Human Responsibility* is whether if (or rather since) there are souls, God also exists: a truth which can be shown both as knowable by reason and as the object of that belief which reason needs as its necessary condition in matters of religion, if not in philosophical theology.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

In the *Confessions* Augustine says that he had never really doubted the existence of God (6.5.7; 7.7.11); indeed few in antiquity harboured doubts of a God or gods. On a number of other occasions he suggests that the most plausible explanation for the denial of God's existence is the moral corruption of atheists:³⁹ people have fallen into a condition where they are incapable of recognizing the obvious. Hence it is not surprising that *pace* much later discussion of Augustine's proofs of the

³⁹ *IoEv.* 106.17.4; *EnPs.* 53 (52).2; *Sermo* 69.2.3; *De Trin.* 8.3.4; see Gilson (1960–1961: 12–13); R. J. Teske, 'The Aim of Augustine's Proof that God Truly Is', *IPQ* 26 (1986), 253–268, at 261.

existence of God, there are rather few attempts at such proofs in Augustine himself. Why try to prove the obvious? Augustine is much more concerned to understand the nature and attributes of God, whether by the aid of Scriptural authority or of reason. In an early letter to his friend Nebridius (4.2), however, he refers to a 'little argument with which you are very familiar' from the superiority of the mind over the senses to the superiority of mental objects over objects of sense, which is to say to the superiority of the intelligible world and of God who must therefore exist. But the most famous Augustinian argument for God's existence (we have already alluded to it and we may note that it is a precursor of the ontological argument of Anselm) is to be found in book 2 of *On Human Responsibility*. Here, after agreeing with Evodius that we obviously exist, Augustine proceeds to argue from the existence of our minds to the existence of what can be called God. Even now, however, Augustine is as much concerned to show – against the Manichaeans, his own earlier Manichaean self, and probably the vast majority of 'Western' Christians of his day – that God must be a non-material, that is, a 'spiritual' substance,⁴⁰ as merely to show that he exists.

Even if such ramifications are left aside, however, the 'argument' is strange in a number of ways. In the first place the discussion with Evodius is within the context established in book 1 (and repeated at 2.2.6) that belief is a prerequisite for understanding: which might suggest that the argument, even if sound, would not convince non-believers. Indeed, a hostile reading of Augustine's attitude to belief and understanding would be that, since he knows the answer to the question of God's existence, he has to find an argument – any argument – to back it up. That, however, is unnecessarily harsh, for wanting an argument to be right does not entail making it faulty – or faultless.

On the other hand, those who discuss Augustine's 'proof' sometimes suggest that there is no *argument* at all: that Augustine merely describes God as the being we reach at the end of a 'dialectical ascent', a reaching upwards of the soul from the external world to the inner world.⁴¹ That again seems a travesty of Augustine's procedure. There is certainly an argument intended in *On Human Responsibility*; we can

⁴⁰ See esp. Teske (1986), and earlier Masai (1961).

⁴¹ See, for example, the remarks of Solignac in *BA* (1962a), xiii, 105–106, with the criticisms of L. P. Gerson, 'Saint Augustine's Neoplatonic Argument for the Existence of God', *The Thomist* (1981), 571–584, at 572. O. Du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin* (Paris 1966), 242, also influentially claims that the 'demonstration' is not a logical argument. Note what may perhaps be a slightly earlier sketch of the argument at 83Q.54.

hardly mistake Augustine's direct statement when he says that he was not thinking merely of beliefs and experiences. Thus at 2.5.11 he asks: 'How can it be made evident (*manifestum*) that God exists, granted that this must be believed most firmly and fixedly?'; and when the argument is concluded he says that, though the results are secure, the reasoning is very fragile (*tenuissima forma cognitionis*, 2.15.39). That seems to suggest that the argument, though sound, would not always be found compelling.

The problem is not whether there is an argument, but the strength of its Neoplatonic premisses. The first stages of the argument are as follows: we have five senses and an 'interior sense' to which the five senses refer their data (2.3.8). This interior sense, 'since shared with beasts', is not reason, though, of course, it is by reason that we know that we have it; it is a kind of consciousness of perceiving which is a prerequisite for movement (2.4.10). Augustine argues that, unless a beast is 'aware' that it would see only when it opens its eyes, it would not be able to open them when it wanted to see.⁴² But the 'interior sense' is not reason, and its objects are different, and a being which possesses reason in addition to the interior sense is a higher form of life. Nothing, Evodius concludes, is higher in human nature than reason (*ratio*).

Then comes Augustine's crucial question (2.6.14): If we could find something existing and superior to reason, would you call it God? In this question notice a use of the word 'God' characteristic of antiquity: 'God' is a kind of predicative adjective, a short-hand way of referring to a set of elevated, indeed the most elevated, beings we can recognize. But Evodius hesitates in answering the question. It does not follow, he observes, that we should call God that which is higher than the reason (for there may be several other higher beings); the word should be used for that 'above which there is none higher' ('quo est nullus superior').⁴³ Augustine agrees, explaining himself by asking Evodius

⁴² Augustine gives the 'interior sense' little prominence outside *DLA*, though it does appear elsewhere (e.g. *Conf.* 7.17.23, where animals are also said to possess it). O'Daly (1987: 102) points out that the context of this passage is Augustine's reading of the Platonic books – which might support his view that the immediate source of Augustine's version of the 'interior sense' is Neoplatonic. The ultimate source, to which Augustine certainly had no direct access, is Aristotle's *De Anima* (418A7–25, 424B22–427A16). Plotinus speaks of the 'power of internal perception' at *Ennead* 4.8.8.10 (in a treatise we can be sure Augustine had read). Note the soul's 'inner power' in the text of the *Confessions*. See further O'Daly (pp. 102–105).

⁴³ As Du Roy points out (1966: 245, note 5), this (and many similar Augustinian passages) may be an echo of Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.26.65 ('id quod ne in deo quidem quicquam maius intellegi potest'), perhaps (though this seems more doubtful) filtered through a Plotinian text about transcendence like *Ennead* 5.3.15.8–9. On 'God' as a predicative adjective see originally U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon* (1909), 1, 348: 'Denn Gott selbst ist ja zuerst ein Prädikatsbegriff.'

whether, if he found nothing superior to our reason except 'what is eternal and unchangeable', he would hesitate to call that God? When Evodius accepts this, Augustine urges him to look for something which is not the peculiar and separate property of each individual human agent, but which is not only originally common to us all, but which cannot even be transformed into anything with a localized individual use, like portions of food and drink.

Such higher 'common' items will necessarily only be recognized by the soul, and will themselves remain complete and unchanged after contact (2.8.20). Such, for example, are numbers, for knowledge of numbers 'remains the same for everybody who can learn it, and it is not converted into something like food by the person who learns it'; nor is it affected in any other way, either by a good learner or a poor one. So numbers appear to be eternal and unchanging items, and Augustine proceeds to identify a number of similar items, which in fact turn out to be Platonic forms (2.16.44): 'That eternal and unchangeable form is neither contained in nor somehow diffused in space, nor does it extend through or vary in time.' But even before spelling out his remarks about forms in general, Augustine identifies one in particular, Truth, 'in which the highest good is beheld and possessed' (2.9.26). This Truth is 'one truth which we both see with our different minds', though it is 'common to both of us' (2.10.28), while understanding (*sapientia*) of it is 'very much more worthy of respect than arithmetic' (2.11.30): a significantly Platonic conclusion.

This Truth is 'higher and more excellent than our minds' (2.12.34) – 'the very thing we have been searching for – for, if it were inferior, we should pass judgement on it, urging not that it is so, but that it ought to be so. But eternal truths cannot be judged in such a way; we do not say that the eternal ought to be superior to the temporal, but that it is superior: it is the standard (*regula*) by which our judgements are measured.'⁴⁴ Hence Augustine claims to have established that that something higher than the mind exists which he and Evodius had already agreed deserves the title of God.

Why they should be satisfied with this as Christians is more debatable, though we can immediately point to two features of that 'higher something' which would be attractive. One (2.13.37) is the biblical identification of the Truth as Christ (which is persuasive to

⁴⁴ Note the Ciceronian sense of *regula*: *Acad.* 2.18.58; cf. 2.46.140 and *De Off.* 1.31.110, etc. Cf. Dillon (1977: 276) on the long tradition (e.g. *Didask.* 4, p. 156, line 13: *phusikē ennoia*, of noble and good). 'Natural concepts' are 'yardsticks' (*kanones*).

Christians but obviously not to others, thus affecting the argument in ways we have already suggested): 'The Truth itself, speaking as Man to man, says to those who believe in him: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"' (John 8:31-32).

The second feature of the 'higher something', obviously connectable to this, and thus naturally attractive to *Platonizing* Christians, seems to be encapsulated in the Neoplatonic claim that, if truth exists independently of the human mind, it must exist in a divine mind (as argued in *Ennead* 5.5).⁴⁵ A further related feature of Augustine's argument which similarly points to an admixture of Neoplatonic ideas is the suggestion (2.15.39) that God is *either* Truth or something higher than Truth: an approach – in which we should not see suggestions of an 'Arian' subordination of the Second Person – which Augustine is ready to use elsewhere, and in different versions, e.g. 'Equality is *either* in a soul or above a soul' (*On Music* 6.12.34). Finally, in *True Religion* (31.57), in another passage often said to be an Augustinian proof of the existence of God, we read: 'We must have no doubt that the unchangeable substance which is above the rational mind is God. This truth is . . . the art of the omnipotent artificer': again a combination of Neoplatonic and biblical motifs, though this time there is no direct appeal to St John on God as Truth. In the previous chapter, however, as in *On Human Responsibility*, we find the claim that 'the standard (*regula*) which is called truth is higher than our minds'.

Such, then, is the character of Augustine's 'proof' of the existence of God. What he presents, and intends to present, is a claim as to the intelligible harmony of Neoplatonic wisdom (that is, the superior sort of Greek wisdom) with the authority of Scripture. Such harmony, intelligible and 'astounding', is what is required to convince Evodius and Augustine himself that the best approaches to the question of God's existence coincide, and that there is therefore no evidence to the contrary from any reputable source, either of reason or of authority.

In *On Human Responsibility*, despite the concern with Truth, we hear nothing further of the old Sceptical claim that we do not need Truth – for the Augustinian Christian equated with Christ – as a guide or absolute, but that credibility, or that which looks like the truth (*veri*

⁴⁵ Cf. A. H. Armstrong, 'The Background of the Doctrine that the Intelligibles are not outside the Intellect', in *Entretiens Hardt 5. Les Sources de Plotin* ed. E. R. Dodds (Geneva 1960), and for its relevance to *DLA*, Gerson (1981: 577-581).

simile), will do as well. In *Against the Sceptics*, in a rather imprecisely formulated argument,⁴⁶ Augustine had already satisfied himself that, if I can recognize what is similar to the Truth, I must have some notion of the Truth to act as a guide in determining that (logically dependent) similarity. Such reasoning could have been 'Platonic', and connected with the Platonic claim that particulars are images, dependent on independent but 'similar' forms. Now if A, B and C are derived from x, and are all 'like' x and also 'like' one another, I may get a better idea of x by reflecting on any one of A, B and C than by comparing A, B and C. (Augustine is aware of this when he distinguishes between an 'image' – a special kind of likeness which depends directly on its original – and a 'likeness' which need not so depend. Thus two eggs may be likenesses of one another, but one is not the image of the other.)⁴⁷

But in *Against the Sceptics* Augustine's immediate technique is cruder: if, he observes, on seeing your brother, a man were to say, without having seen your father, that your brother was like your father, he would appear a fool or a madman (2.7.16). To this dubious analogy the Academic is only allowed a reply which, in effect, changes the subject: 'We expect a fine day after a clear night.' In itself that is a reasonable 'truth-like' claim, but the Academic suggests that the two cases are parallel; hence that the man who saw your brother and had not seen your father could plausibly infer what your father is like. To which Augustine need only reply that the cases are quite different, for one involves direct causal dependence while the other merely points to a sequence of events. The Academic's defence is inadequate and his original claim thus appears to fail.

But whatever the logic of Augustine's refutation of claims in *Against the Sceptics* about what is 'like the truth', the matter is never directly raised again. Much later, in *The Trinity*, Augustine will attempt to move from an analysis of the character of the human mind to analogous claims about the nature of the unseen triune God. We might wonder, in the light of his own procedures in *Against the Sceptics*,

⁴⁶ Cf. Kirwan (1989: 20–22).

⁴⁷ 83Q.74. Augustine's thought developed: see R. A. Markus, "'Imago' and 'Similitudo' in Augustine", *REA* 10 (1964), 125–143, at 125 and 13 (1967), 361; *De Trin.* 9.2.2; 10.12.29. Thus man, as image and likeness of God, becomes at the Fall an *impar imago*, but remains an *imago*, and hence a kind of damaged likeness. See *QHept.* 5.4 for an attack on earlier patristic views suggesting that an image need not be a likeness (at all), and Markus (1964: 142) on Augustine's occasional carelessness which might sometimes give the impression that the image has been lost.

how even by analogy we could acquire knowledge of God whom we have not seen. Part of Augustine's answer has already been suggested – though it does not appear in *Against the Sceptics*: images are, in fact, specially informative kinds of dependent likenesses. For the rest, we shall have to consider the strange nature of the 'memory' of God that the *Confessions* (10.17.26) tells us we possess. That will also introduce us to some of the sceptical implications – at which we have already hinted – of Augustine's account of time, memory and the past. Although Augustine does not think of his treatment of these questions in relation to the scepticism of the Academics, it is nonetheless part of a discussion of scepticism in a wider sense.

TIME, MEMORY AND ILLUMINATION

No modern account of Augustine will entirely omit his unusual treatment of time; indeed we can read remarkably diverse interpretations of it.⁴⁸ Yet the context of these discussions is rarely Augustine's refutation of scepticism, and in that the critics have followed the lead of Augustine himself. For Augustine's principal and most controverted treatment of time, in book 11 of the *Confessions*, is apparently located in quite another context: an exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis which introduces the creation of time along with that of the heavens and the earth. Furthermore, the discussion of time immediately follows a long and fascinating treatment of memory. Part, at least, of the connection is that it is through 'memory', somehow, that we both obtain and retain our 'knowledge' of the past. Similar connections occur, as we shall see, in the matter of our 'knowledge' of the future – not to speak of God's, for God, of course, knows future contingents (*Against Faustus* 26.4-5).⁴⁹

And yet there is a sense in which Augustine's problems about time cannot be separated from the question of scepticism; for if time did not exist, or could not be understood, it would be hard to see how things in time could exist or be understood. Beyond that, as an adherent of the Platonic notion that what 'really is' is eternal and unchanging, Augustine holds that there is something 'unreal' and therefore unknowable about physical objects in so far as they are changing. Furthermore, if changes have taken place in the past, and therefore

⁴⁸ The discussion is also protracted. See Hölscher (1986: 77-89), O'Daly (1987: 152-160), Kirwan (1989: 151-186), J. Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge 1992), 17-44.

⁴⁹ Cf. *DLA* 3.2.4; 3.5.12; *DeBapt.* 4.3.5; 5.28.39; *CD* 5.9, etc.

we have no *direct* contact with objects and events in past time (and similarly with those in future time), it will be hard for Augustine to explain how we can 'know' them. Or is it the case that strictly speaking we can only have *beliefs* about the past, precisely because we have no direct contact with it?

As early as *The Master* (12.39) Augustine raises a direct question about the nature of our knowledge of the past. When we talk about the past, he says, we do not deal in the things themselves (*res*), but of images impressed from them on the mind and committed to memory.⁵⁰ This strange comment is not a mere 'changing the subject';⁵¹ rather it represents Augustine's considered opinion that we do not know the past, except in and as the mind, because in itself the past does not exist. For if knowledge must be first-hand, then whatever does not exist is withdrawn from first-hand contact and thus cannot be 'known' directly. We might say that it *was* known, but by what is in effect an extension of the original thesis of Plato's *Meno* and *Theaetetus*, it ceases to be known (at least in the same sense) when it ceases to exist, or when other immediate contact with it is lost. (An overall effect of this is that compared even with Plato Augustine extends the domain of belief at the expense of that of knowledge.)

Augustine may seem to be left with a problem of how to distinguish between true and false images of the past; or perhaps between more or less true (or more or less false) images of the past. Perhaps our preceding discussion would suggest that he was less worried by the wider philosophical problems of this (though, as we shall see, he is certainly aware of them) than we might expect. In any case, if our 'knowledge' of the past is somehow a matter of more or less justified belief, then the plausibility of that belief will depend on the credibility of the 'authority' which provides it.

Consider, then, the discussion of our ability to speak of the past, set out not in the brief remarks of *The Master*, but in the extended treatment of the *Confessions*. Obviously such an ability depends on our memory, and, as Augustine repeats time and again, memory is an extraordinary and in many ways incomprehensible power: it is a spacious palace, a storehouse (*Confessions* 10.8.12) with vast capacity and hidden depth (10.9.16); its power is prodigious (10.8.15; 10.13.20).

⁵⁰ The significance (and oddity) of this section is well discussed by G. B. Matthews, 'Augustine on Speaking from Memory', *APQ* 2 (1965), 1-4 = *Augustine*, ed. Markus (1972), 168-175.

⁵¹ So Matthews (1965: 4), accepted by Hölscher (1986: 59). There is something similar, though more nuanced, in D. Ferrari, 'Retention-Memory: Perception and the Cognition of Enduring Objects', *Aletheia* 2 (1981), 60-61, who speaks of a 'presently existing image of a past object of consciousness'.

'I do not know how it acquires its contents', Augustine tells us (10.10.17), 'nor even all that its depths contain' (10.8.15). It looks, absurdly, like a stomach of the mind where joy and sadness remain but lose their 'taste' (10.14.21). Its contents are manifold: images of the experiences of the senses (10.8.13) and of personal actions and events; principles of number (10.12.19), and what has been learned of the liberal arts – in these cases not mere images, but the relevant knowledge, such as of grammar, of the things themselves (*res*, 10.10.17), which have been acquired not through the senses, but by direct experience of the mind. (God's entire knowledge, though not discussed in these sections of the *Confessions*, must be more similar to knowledge of this kind, since it is not acquired through the senses. Yet it is different because it is not *acquired* at all.)

We also remember feelings of pleasure and pain, but it is not necessarily pleasurable to remember pleasures or painful to remember pain,⁵² so in this case it is not immediately clear whether or not our memories are only of 'images' (10.14.22–10.15.23); they have, in some way, been intellectualized.⁵³ Furthermore, we have, somehow, an idea of happiness (10.20.29); that fascinating 'somehow' will be considered in the next chapter.⁵⁴ For if we have knowledge of happiness in the memory, 'that means that at some time in the past we were happy. It may be that we were all once happy individually' (*singillatim*) – the Platonic solution – 'or it may be that we were all happy in the one man who first sinned (namely, Adam)'. But, as Augustine himself continues, 'this is not the question which I am now asking'.

Finally, in a strange and unique way, we have a memory of God,⁵⁵

⁵² So too in the theatre we can even enjoy someone else's sorrows – but that is living 'vicariously' or 'unrealistically' (*Conf.* 3.2.2).

⁵³ Recall again that the theory of *notiones insitae* is greatly influenced by Cicero (e.g. *Disp. Tusc.* 1.57 – which is susceptible of both a Platonic and a non-Platonic, i.e. Stoic, interpretation); see also *De Leg.* 1.59 (*adumbratas intelligentias*). For 'feelings' (sorrow, fear, desire) cf. *De Fin.* 3.10.35; *Tusc.* 4.6.11.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Conf.* 1.6.7.

⁵⁵ Cf. *De Trin.* 14.12.15, with O'Daly (1987: 211–216); G. Madec, 'Pour et contre la "memoria Dei"', *REA* 11 (1965), 89–92. In *De Trin.* 1.4.7 knowledge of God as Trinity can only be grasped through faith. Elsewhere, as we have seen, Augustine's emphasis appears somewhat different, allowing more success to the faithless Platonists. But in explanation we should recall the distinction between a general knowledge of God as Trinity and knowledge – even a partial understanding – of (at least some of) his 'special' attributes (O'Daly pp. 184ff.). Knowledge of God (though not understanding) is also acquired by 'negative theology' (cf. V. Lossky, 'Les éléments de "Théologie négative" dans la pensée de saint Augustin', *AM* 1 (1954), 575–581 and O'Daly, p. 214); see *Sermo* 117.3.5: 'If you grasp him (*comprehendis*), it is not God.' We know *something* of God's attributes (e.g. goodness, *De Trin.* 8.3.4) through 'impressed notions', and, of course, through Scripture and tradition.

but 'you have only deigned to be present in my memory since I first learned of you (*Confessions* 10.25.36); you were not there before that (10.26.37). You were there within me, but I was outside myself.' Thus 'you were with me but I was not with you' (10.27.38). What Augustine seems to mean by this is that as a fallen man he can only be consciously present with God by God's grace. For although God is in him, as everywhere else, he is not 'within himself', since he is alienated from his true self. Plotinus would have preferred simply: You are always with me, but I am present with you when I look,⁵⁶ thereby exhibiting, in Augustine's eyes, the characteristic Platonic overconfidence and lack of humility which results from a failure to allow for the Fall.

We conclude that the contents of our memory are of two formally distinct sorts: images of particular objects, experiences and events in time and historical sequence – these are our immediate concern in considering questions of scepticism; and 'things themselves' recognized by the mind, namely the objects of mathematics, logic and above all metaphysics, that is the Platonic Forms which invariably by 'nature' or, in accordance with our learning, by acquisition, constitute the furniture of the mind. Such 'ideas', as Augustine had learned from Plotinus, are both 'in' the mind of God and somehow also present to what Plotinus calls our human 'upper soul'. We have noticed that it is uncertain how many such naturally impressed (as distinct from acquired) ideas Augustine envisaged, though we have already identified some examples. In *On Human Responsibility* there are impressed ideas of the eternal law (1.6.15)⁵⁷, of numbers (2.8.20–21) and of wisdom (*sapientia*) (2.9.26). In *The Trinity* we read of a just law impressed on the human heart (14.15.21) – this would include a version 'which even iniquity does not blot out' of the Golden Rule ('Do not do to others what you would be unwilling to suffer' (*Confessions* 1.18.29, 2.4.9))⁵⁸ – and of the good itself (8.3.4). Impressed notions of this sort, as we have seen, are 'rules' (*regulae*), themselves unjudgeable,⁵⁹ which enable us both to make judgements, for

⁵⁶ Cf. R. Arnou, *Le désir de Dieu dans la philosophie de Plotin* (Paris 1921), 162–174, 246, 248.

⁵⁷ For a definition of the eternal law see *CFaust.* 22.27: it is the 'ratio divina vel voluntas Dei ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans'. For God's law as God's will (though without discussion of the nature of that will), *EnPs.* 37 (36).3.5; cf. *Sermo* 126.3.4 and V.J. Bourke, 'Voluntarism in Augustine's Ethico-Legal Thought', *AS* 1 (1970), 7–9. But Bourke discusses Augustine's words without adequate treatment of their significance and context.

⁵⁸ For more on law written on the human heart or on one's *conscientia* (*Conf.* 1.18.29, cf. Romans 2:15) cf. *DSD* 2.9.32; *DLA* 2.10.28–29 and Solignac in *BA*, (1962a), xiii, 663–664. For the Golden Rule, *DLA* 1.3.6. ⁵⁹ Cf. Hölscher (1986: 109).

example to prefer one thing to another (8.3.4) or to say that a man is not as gentle as he ought to be (*On Human Responsibility* 2.12.34),⁶⁰ and to form concepts, including moral concepts.⁶¹ In both cases they are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for our mental activity; they are insufficient in themselves, because the generation of actual thoughts and judgements from our impressed ideas also requires not only our will to think, but the illumination of God. Nevertheless, 'no one judges them and no one judges well without them' (*On Human Responsibility* 2.14.38).

Illumination is required not only if we are to be able to use the impressed ideas that are our rules, and indeed if we are to use or form any notions of any sort, but also more generally if we are ever to learn anything. Platonists especially had long been aware that a teacher cannot just stuff information into a pupil's head; somehow, mysteriously, the pupil has to make the information his own. For Augustine, that making one's own is not only a matter of knowing the object to which the teacher's words refer – we have already noted his comment that we do not understand the word *sarabara*, if we do not know what a *sarabara* is; it is also a matter of understanding the new implications of sets of words whose use and reference are already familiar to us. For it is possible to hear or read words, know what they 'mean' and yet not be able to comprehend – because we do not want to comprehend – the significance of that meaning (*The Trinity* 11.8.15). If that were not so, people would understand the Scriptures, and be converted to Christianity, merely by a reading of the text.⁶² Augustine knew, not least from his own experience, that such is not the case.

Our will, he tells us in *The Trinity*, brings together what we immediately experience, for example by hearing a teacher, with what we already have in our memory. But, as he likes to put it (after 411) in discussing conversion or the reception of faith, that 'will' needs to be

⁶⁰ Cf. *DVR* 31.58.

⁶¹ It was the matter of a long-running argument (see Gilson 1960–1961: 89) which sort of mental activity impressed notions were intended to explain: either the formation of concepts or the making of judgements. The argument was anachronistic; see Markus (1967: 367). For moral judgements see *DLA* 2.12.34 (*ratio morum*). For recollecting common notions, see H. Tarrant, *Scepticism or Platonism?* (Cambridge 1985), 85, 94. The origins of the Augustinian theory of 'reasons' in God's mind are best approached by consideration of the sources of 83Q.46 (cf. *CD* 11.10).

⁶² Cf. H. G. Coward, 'Memory and Scripture in the Conversion of Augustine', *GPD* 19–30, at 26; also *Solil.* 1.1.2: 'pater evigilationis atque illuminationis'; *DVR* 39.73; *EnPs.* 43 (42).6; 119 (118).18.4; *DeTrin.* 4.2.4 ('illuminatio quippe nostra participatio Verbi est') with 1 John 1.14; 12.14.23; 12.15.24, etc.

prepared by God (Prov. 8:35). To the monks of Provence, worried that his account of predestination might render preaching pointless, the old Augustine was able to observe that it is not the mere hearing of the Gospel which makes a man a Christian. That is a necessary condition; but the inspiration which enables him to receive what is on offer is also essential, and that no preacher can assume he can purvey.⁶³ Yet preparation of the will for faith is only a crucial example of the illumination of the contents of the memory (and of their relationship to present impressions) which, as early as *The Master* (14.46) and *On Human Responsibility* (2.12.33), Augustine sees to be required if we are to learn anything at all. As he sums the theory up years later (c. 406–407), apparently without change, in a sermon on John's first Epistle (3.13), 'We can advise you by the sound of our voice, but our sound is empty if there is none to teach within you . . . It is the inner master who teaches; it is Christ who teaches, it is his inspiration which teaches.'⁶⁴ Where that is lacking, he concludes, the 'word from without' sounds in vain.

Both Christian and Platonic reasons impelled Augustine to what is often called his 'doctrine of illumination'. Since the *Republic* (6.508E1–3), Platonists had held that it is the function of the Form of the Good not only to 'cause' the Forms, but to make them knowable to us. Its light is the light of intelligibility. Augustine's reflections on the problems of learning in *The Master* must be seen against such a background; even if we have a certain awareness within us, it needs to be lit up by the Good, that is, for Augustine, by God, so that we can 'see' what is in front of our eyes, whether those eyes be physical or mental. As a Platonist, Augustine sees this illuminating light not as a power within ourselves, but as the light of God himself;⁶⁵ as a

⁶³ *DPS* 7.12; 8.15; cf. Burns (1985: 495). ⁶⁴ Cf. *De Mag.* 11.38; *DLA* 2.14.38.

⁶⁵ Bonaventure seems to have got most of this right. The Augustinian light which illuminates is not to be interpreted as the Thomistic version of Aristotle's active intellect, as supposed by C. Boyer (*L'idée de vérité dans la philosophie de saint Augustin* (Paris 1920), 116–120): it is not, that is, a faculty of the human mind. Rather it resembles the authentic Aristotelian active intellect, if (as I and many others believe) Aristotle holds that the active intellect is identical with God. But Aristotle's God is only indirectly an efficient cause; the metaphysical significance of his effects will therefore also differ from that of the Augustinian light. Augustine's view, in fact, is much closer to that of the 'Aristotelian' Alexander of Aphrodisias, who himself seems to have been under the influence of Plato's *Republic*. Augustine did not know Alexander; had he known him, he would have more or less agreed with him. What Alexander attributed to Aristotle, Augustine (and Plotinus) found in the Platonic tradition.

Augustine sometimes talks Platonically – and carelessly – (e.g. at *DLA* 2.13.36) about some people looking at the sunlight, others at the sun itself, but the language is merely traditional and does not commit him to the claim that to think directly about God, or even just to understand something, entails an immediate vision of Him. The so-called ontologist

Christian he claims that God's necessary role in our acts of knowing, learning and judging is one of the marks of His overall care for the workings of the universe.

Our more immediate concern, however, is only with the kind of impressed notions which enable us to know past events, for it is about these, as we have observed, that problems of scepticism arise. For all historical events, and generally all events in past time, are known to us indirectly. We hear of them from others, or record images of them derived from our own past experience. Memory attempts to retain first-hand experiences of the past, but even in the case of our personal experiences, it does not altogether succeed. In the light of the discussion of memory in the tenth book of the *Confessions*, there is nothing surprising about the suggestion in *The Master* that 'we do not speak of the things themselves, but of images impressed by them on the mind and committed to memory'. There is a sense in which, once events are out of our immediate and direct 'range', Augustine wants to assimilate our access through memory to our own past to our means of access to the recorded pasts of others. In *The Usefulness of Belief*, as we recall, he observed that he cannot know (but only accept from Cicero) that the Catilinarian conspirators were executed (11.25).⁶⁶ In a genuinely Platonic spirit Augustine believes that God knows the past perfectly, because he can hold it in the present perfectly, but we necessarily lesser beings will suffer from defective memories, or at least, since the fall, from a defective ability to recall.

In the *Confessions* Augustine is puzzled as to the nature of our experience of the past, and even as to what it means to say that such and such a thing is in the past; or in the present; or the future. Indeed, as book eleven begins, he observes that even God's knowledge of his, Augustine's, life is threatened by His being 'outside' time: 'Since you are outside time in eternity, are you unaware of the things I tell you?' For what Augustine tells God about his past are items which were recorded in his memory and fed to him through the senses. But God has no senses and might be supposed only to have knowledge of the eternal and unchanging. Perhaps, Augustine thinks, the matter would become clearer if we could discover what time is, and how it is

interpretation of Augustine is mistaken, being based in part on a disregard for his philosophical background.

⁶⁶ Cf. *83Q*, 48: historical truths, in contrast to those of e.g. mathematics, are to be believed, not known; and *Ep.* 147.1.6–2.8. The Scriptures themselves, as we have seen, are only to be believed on good authority, i.e. that of the living and continuous tradition of the Church; cf. *Ep.* 147.2.7: 'praesentia videntur, creduntur absentia'.

related to the mind. The discussion in book 11 concerns the human mind, but its implications must affect all minds, including God's. In the Scriptures, right from Day One, God is said to have intervened in time, and so Augustine asks, 'Let me understand the meaning of the words: In the beginning you made heaven and earth' (11.3.5). Likewise he asks to understand a whole variety of interventions of God in history, as described in the Old and New Testaments.

Augustine's *philosophical* problems about time are of at least two kinds: as a Christian Platonist, a believer in a timeless 'intelligible world', he needs to understand, as Plotinus did not, how eternity can insert itself directly into history, or to put it more fashionably, how salvation-history can be related to its underlying metaphysical reality.⁶⁷ His second problem is the converse of this: if he could dispense with timelessness (and other metaphysical concepts), and fall back on a cruder and more material notion of God, he would have a different set of worries, perhaps summed up by the mocking question (based on the assumption that God *did* intervene in history): What was he doing before he made heaven and earth? (*Confessions* 11.10.12).⁶⁸

Augustine holds that what we would see as philosophical conundrums about time are part of a confusion about God's nature and activity. It is in the context of a discussion of that activity that he allows himself to indulge his own philosophical puzzlement about time. To understand the concepts of God and of eternity, it is helpful, he thinks (*Confessions* 11.11), to contrast them with time. Eternity is changeless, and 'all is present', but lengths of time can be recognized by observing a sequence of movements from the past into the future. Augustine himself often speaks of time passing, but moving *from* the future *to* the past (e.g. *Confessions* 11.15.20). It is, as the *City of God* puts it (11.6), the change and movement of physical objects which provide the 'conditions' of time. Time (in this like space, 11.5) is associated with natural objects and the created world.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ In *CD* 11.4 Augustine defends God against an apparently 'Platonist' objection that beginning on Day One is a random act which suddenly 'occurred' to Him. For an introduction to time words which are 'token-reflexives' (the term is Reichenbach's), see R. R. K. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum* (London 1983), 33-37.

⁶⁸ Cf. *CD* 11.4. Augustine had heard objections along these lines from Manichaeans (*GenMan.* 1.3.4) and knew from Cicero (*De Nat. Deorum* 1.9.21) of analogous Epicurean attitudes. Cf. recently E. Peters, 'What was God doing before He Created the Heavens and the Earth', *Augustiniana* 34 (1984), 53-74.

⁶⁹ All bodies are in place, as well as in time; cf. *De Trin.* 10.7.10, *GenLitt.* 8.20.39: 'Omne autem quod movetur per locum non potest nisi et per tempus simul moveri', with Hölscher (1986: 13, and for copious references note 18).

But how? Granted that there is some connection between time and physical objects, what is the nature of that connection? Augustine thinks it not inappropriate to observe that it might be tempting, though a temptation to be resisted (*Confessions* 11.12.14), to riposte that before he created heaven and earth, God was creating hell for the over-curious. That retort has been made, he notes, probably referring to the sort of philistine or would-be philistine response the more or less simple-minded African fundamentalist might come up with. But the question is much better shown to be nonsensical: 'then' (a temporal word) has no meaning outside a physical universe of physical objects located in time (11.13.15; cf. 11.30.40). Where there were no things, there was no time.

But time is not a mere epiphenomenon of the physical world; Augustine remarks on a number of occasions that God is the *maker* of time.⁷⁰ However, there seems to be a difficulty about that – unless time is essentially like space – for although time is 'made' by God, it is a different and unique kind of 'thing'. Indeed, it hardly seems to be a thing, for it is continually changing: the past is continually changing into the present and into the future, and even when it is present, it has no duration (11.15.20), nor does it appear to exist 'anywhere'. If the future and the past exist, we need to know 'where' they are, for to be somewhere, for Augustine as for the ancients in general, is a regular feature of being at all. We know that time exists, for we experience it: 'I know what it is, provided that nobody asks me; but if I am asked what it is and would like to explain it, I do not know how to.'⁷¹

Augustine is aware of claims that time, which is somehow connected with physical objects, is actually *constituted* by the movement of heavenly bodies (11.23.30). In an argument based on an event of biblical record but also, he thinks, of more general interest, he rejects that. The battle at Ajalon (Jos. 10:13) took place 'when the sun stood still', but time still passed without being affected by what the sun was doing or not doing. Time, Augustine concludes (11.24.31), is not the movement of any physical body.

Part of the problem of understanding Augustine's discussion of time, however, is that it is difficult to be sure what exactly is being discussed. It is often assumed that he is looking for a *definition* of time, and certainly a remark such as 'I wonder whether time is an extension

⁷⁰ Cf. *GenMan.* 1.2.3; *Conf.* 11.13.16; 11.30.40; *CD* 11.6.

⁷¹ Cf. 11.14.17. That there is an objective side of Augustinian time is rightly emphasized, against many commentators, by H. Lacey, 'Empiricism and Augustine's Problems about Time', *RM* 22 (1968), 219–245, at 223, note 10 = *Augustine*, ed. Markus (1972).

(*distentio*) of the mind itself' would suggest such a reading. Nevertheless, unless he is quite confused, what Augustine is doing is not defining time, but asking how, in view of the present non-existence of the past, the not-yetness of the future, and the durationless state of what we misleadingly call the present, we can *measure* the passage of time. For what he gives us in the *Confessions*, in an analysis of Ambrose's line 'Deus creator omnium' broken down into its constituent long and short syllables, is an account of how we determine times in relation to one another: a solution he has already sketched in the sixth book of *On Music*, where he explained that we *remember* past syllables and hold them in the memory until we have a grip on the whole word over an interval of time ('quantulocumque temporis intervallo', 6.8.21).⁷²

In the *Confessions* there is no complete answer to the question 'What is time?', but there is an answer to the question of how we measure time; we do it through the 'distending' capacity of our mind, which can only 'grasp' physical objects and events when 'pulled apart' into a sequence.⁷³ Thus it is a property of the mind to be able to retain something of the past after that thing and the past time itself have ceased to exist. Now what we retain is not the thing itself. My memory of Socrates is not Socrates in the mind; it is an image of Socrates in the mind, and that image may be more or less accurate. This is exactly the point which we found Augustine making in *The Master*: the image from the past is retained, while the past does not now exist, and although we 'believe' we are talking about the past and attempt (usually) to talk accurately about the past, we do not succeed in doing so. Hence Augustine is left with the difficulty of distinguishing between, say, 'true' and 'false' accounts of places he has not seen and can only imagine, like Alexandria.⁷⁴ In the end a weighing of authorities has to settle such disputes.

⁷² For retention in the memory, see Ferrari (1981: 94–95) and Hölscher (1986: 80–89), with *GenLitt.* 12.16.33.

⁷³ Cf. Wetzel (1992: 35).

⁷⁴ On remembering Carthage see *Conf.* 10.10.25; 10.21.30. For *fictas imagines* see *GenLitt.* 12.6.15. For *phantasia* of Carthage which Augustine had seen and *phantasmata* of Alexandria which he could only image, *De Trin.* 8.6.9 (cf. 9.6.10; 11.5.8; *DeMus.* 6.11.32). For the Stoic distinction between *phantasia* and *phantasma* see *SVF* 2.54–55.

When we think about them, almost all images provide us with inner words (*verbum*) (*AdSimp.* 2.3.2; *DeTrin.* 8.6.9); they are thus, as O'Daly puts it, 'word-potentials' (1987: 113, 141); cf. *DeTrin.* 9.11.16 on *phantasia memoriae*. The problem of distinguishing between more or less true images of what one has seen must be separated from that of distinguishing between images of what one has seen and what one has not seen (*GenLitt.* 12.6.15). See further p. 86 below, Hölscher (1986: 45–57) and Watson (1988: 141); and for imagination generally O'Daly (1987: 104–130).

Thus Augustine is able to hold both that the past, and past events, do not exist, but did exist, and that their existence can be 'vicariously' prolonged by the mental act of retention or 'distention'. Not that that makes time subjective, that is, mind-dependent, a creation of the measuring agent which in book 11 of the *Confessions* is the human mind. Nor, for that matter, is time the creation of the soul of the world which, even at the end of his life, Augustine still allowed might exist.⁷⁵ Rather Augustine's position implies that, if there is a world-soul, that too, like the human soul, is capable of retention-memories.

What then is time in *Confessions* 11? In attempting an answer, we must bear in mind two persistent obstacles to our understanding of ancient philosophy in general: firstly that many of our contemporary philosophical tools were used but not identified in antiquity; secondly that the ancients assume conceptual distinctions without giving any specific indication that they are doing so. In general, they were much less concerned with explicit questions of methodology, and if this is true in general, it is particularly the case with an 'informal' philosopher like Augustine. One of the very best examples of the phenomenon, however, is provided by the far from 'informal' Aristotle: even for him 'prime matter' seems to be what we should call a formal concept. Certainly 'time', in Augustine, exhibits similar features. It is not a product of the human mind; it is not an epiphenomenon of matter, for physical objects come into being 'in' it (11.24.31), and the first physical objects came to be 'with' it. It is a kind of property of things, or better a formal concept or 'category' of the physical universe.

⁷⁵ R. J. Teske, 'The World-Soul and Time in St. Augustine', *AS* 14 (1983), 77–94, argues that Augustine would be saved from 'subjectivism' if time were the extension not of human souls, but of the world-soul, of which human souls are 'Plotinian' parts. But whatever Augustine eventually believed about the world-soul (which may well exist as the 'heaven of heavens' at *Conf.* 12.9.9–12.15.22) the traditional view that he is thinking primarily of the human soul must be the correct reading of the texts about time. If there is a world-soul, it too (and more paradigmatically) would be able to measure time in its retention-memory, and each individual soul would indeed be one of its 'Plotinian parts'. Hence time could not in fact be a subjective creation of the individual soul.

Augustine seems to accept a world-soul in *ImmAn.* 15.24, *QuAn.* 32.68, *DeOrd.* 2.11.30 and *DeMus.* 6.5.13; see R. J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man*, *AD* 386–391 (Cambridge, MA 1968), 122, Teske (1983: 75). He is agnostic (commenting on *De Mus.* 6.14.44, cf. 6.17.58) in *Retr.* 1.11.4: he cannot resolve the matter either by reason or scriptural authority. For the 'heaven of heavens' as an unfallen spiritual creature in *Conf.* 12, see Teske (1983: 82–83 and 1985: 41–44). For argument that the spiritual creature is formal see J. C. M. van Winden, 'Once Again *Caelum Caeli*', *CAug.* (1991), 904–911. Earlier discussion can be found in A. H. Armstrong, 'Spiritual or Intelligible Matter in Plotinus and St. Augustine', *AM*, 1, 277–283, at 280 and J. Pépin, 'Recherches sur le sens et les origines de l'expression "caelum caeli" dans le livre XII des Confessions de saint Augustin', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi. Bulletin du Cange* 23 (1953), 185–274.

Thus the past does not continue to exist, but a representation of it (more or less accurate) exists in our 'memory' (and perfectly, as a whole, in God's 'memory', which experiences past and future as present). We may refer to the past accurately, but what we name are the memory-images which depend on and revive once-present events. Since knowledge is first-hand, we may have first-hand knowledge of our images which retain the past (and these images are in a sense intentional), but we can only have true belief about the past itself. Thus, even God presumably has knowledge of the past in so far as he can retain it, and of the future which (like us, though successfully) he can 'predict'. Strictly speaking, God has no foreknowledge of the future; he knows the future as a 'present' synoptic knowing of any (future) sequence of events.⁷⁶ However, Augustine frequently retains ordinary usage and refers to God's foreknowledge.⁷⁷

Thus it is true, but ultimately not disturbing for Augustine, that we have no knowledge of the past except in so far as we retain it in the memory. But that 'except' has an especial merit: through our 'memory' we ourselves retain a continuity of mental existence over time, which is not essential to personality, for God does not need it, but is an essential part of human nature. That is a subject to which, with scepticism safely behind us, we shall return more confidently in the next chapter,⁷⁸ always remembering that for Augustine, and nowhere more emphatically than in the *Confessions*, our knowledge of ourselves, because of the limitations of our (fallen) memory, is very incomplete (4.10). Yet it is on our knowledge of ourselves, or at least of what is in ourselves, that our knowledge, or rather beliefs, about the past depend.

It is also, he thinks, curiously appropriate that we have no direct knowledge of the past and cannot foresee the future. Our immortal destiny is to live with God, and God has the strange knowledge of past, present and future which we have sketched. In Augustine's language, God does not live in time; hence it follows that in so far as we become like him, we too shall transcend or 'escape from' time. For now we have lost the synoptic view and fragmented ourselves 'into different times' (11.29.39). We have descended into what is in time

⁷⁶ *AdSimp.* 2.2.2; cf. Kirwan (1989: 172); and M. Mignucci, 'Logic and Omniscience', *OSAP* 3 (1985), 219–246, at 235.

⁷⁷ E.g. *DLA* 3.3.6; *DDP* 13.25; cf. *CD* 12.23.

⁷⁸ See O'Daly (1987: 148–150). The 'forms' in our memory, of course, also give us 'certainty' outside time.

(*temporalia*, *True Religion* 15.29), but when we are in God we shall transcend time: there will be 'in truth' no past and future but only a present (*On John's Gospel* 38.10). We shall have been 'freed' from time (*On John's Gospel* 31.5, *Sermon* 340A.5), for time is a part and an 'accompaniment' of the created world, a world often marked by the sadness of the ephemeral,⁷⁹ for we are called 'out of time' to share God's divinity.⁸⁰ Augustine and Monnica achieved at Ostia a vision of what is eternal, beyond the passage of time (*Confessions* 9.10.24). They briefly transcended the world of what might be, and entered ('somehow', again) into the world of what is – but in a Christian way, in community, not merely as isolated individuals 'alone with the alone', but after common reflection on the life of the saints (9.10.23).⁸¹

Yet all this is rather strange. If we 'fell' into times or into time, was there no time *before the fall*? If there was, and to the mature Augustine it seems that there must have been, then we did not fall into it, but rather transformed it, or rather deformed it by our fall. Still following in the footsteps of Plotinus, Augustine does not come to say that. He should have done so – especially when he came to envisage the prelapsarian life of Adam in a literal sense, making history supplement and transform Platonic metaphysics.

INTROSPECTION AND UNDERSTANDING

Having sketched Augustine's treatment of various forms of scepticism, we can turn with more confidence to those powers of the soul which especially lead to the more urgent truths. That in turn will bring us towards understanding the special nature of the soul as an immaterial substance. One such power of the soul, that of introspection, is particularly important, yet for all his interest in the self as an *introspective* substance, Augustine seems unaware of how far his views have gone beyond what is to be found in the classical philosophers.

A second unusual feature of Augustine's treatment of cognitive

⁷⁹ On the sadness of time and its creatureliness, see E. Gilson, 'Notes sur l'être et le temps chez saint Augustin', *RA* 2 (1962), 205–223, at 233. Teske (1985: 44) draws attention to a striking passage of *DVR* (35.65) where Augustine notes that 'times snatch away what we love'. For the 'flowing down' of the soul of man, see *Conf.* 13.8.9.

⁸⁰ As Teske points out (1985: 32), such passages mean more than freedom from duration; yet sometimes Augustine does understand man's eternity in that more modest sense.

⁸¹ Contrast the communal vision at Ostia with the more solitary (and thus more Plotinian) vision in Milan (*Conf.* 7.10.16). Note how Augustine tells us that the language in which he describes the experience at Ostia (which is more Plotinian) does not reflect the words he used at the time. 'Plotinian' language forms a convenient descriptive vehicle.

activities is his concern with creativity, that is, with our ability to create various kinds of images. We have touched on the question of how this affects his account of knowledge of the past. Indeed, there is a sense in which Augustine holds that all thinking is based on a form of recreation of images, of imagination (*Literal Commentary* 12.23.49). The images we construct may depend on direct sense-experiences, or on reading or thinking. They may arise unconsciously or in dreams, and when they are erotic in our dreams we may 'act' upon them by ejaculating – an event regrettable but morally neutral.⁸² Or the images may be attempts to reproduce our experiences and those of others, or to remember them: we may recall a song, for example, without singing it (*The Trinity* 15.11.20). Or they may be attempts to evaluate or to fantasize, or to use what we have experienced to imagine what does not exist or something of which we have had no direct experience: we may, for example, try to imagine the appearance of St Paul (*The Trinity* 8.4.7). All such images, as we have seen in discussing Augustine's view of knowledge of the past, are false because incomplete: they simply are not the equivalents of what they represent. Even if we have been to Rome we do not imagine it or remember it exactly as it is, and I can imagine my friend being where he is not (*True Religion* 34.64).⁸³ Nevertheless, although such images are inaccurate versions of the world, they certainly exist as images; indeed they are created by the soul, incorporeals created by an incorporeal substance (*Literal Commentary* 10.25.42).⁸⁴

What interests Augustine primarily is that by the power of introspection, he thinks, we can reach – to some degree – a vision of Truth, that is of God, within ourselves though beyond ourselves. Hence we are able to reach something fixed and unchanging, something within us which is not an image constructed from our defective readings of ourselves and of the external world, but a meeting (which can be misunderstood and misinterpreted) with the unchanging God. To this end recall that Augustine holds that, although we have in our memory only images of physical objects,

⁸² See G.B. Matthews, 'On Being Immoral in a Dream', *Philosophy* 56 (1981), 47–54. Augustine's account is complex. It is *we* who intend and sometimes consent in our dreams, but the responsibility is lacking, for 'sleeping and waking are so different' (*Conf.* 10.30.41). Elsewhere, however, he says that assent is absent in dreams (*GenLitt.* 12.15.31). It is surprising that he does not arrive at saying that it is *concupiscentia* as weakness (part of our 'second nature') which is the cause in feeble man of things regrettable, but often unavoidable, in our dream-life. Adam, of course, would not have been so troubled.

⁸³ Cf. *Quaest.* 5.8 on remembering Milan when in Rome; Evodius says he remembers it very clearly.

⁸⁴ Cf. Hölscher (1986: 53–55).

personal experiences and events, even memories of our personal past emotions and feelings are also present in a more general way, since we have 'impressed *ideas* of fears, desires and sorrows, as well as memories of the bodily experiences of them' (*Confessions* 10.14.22). We do not, of course, necessarily find joy when we remember joy, for such memories are indirect, though 'memories' of immaterial beings, especially of Forms, are present directly. These latter, as we have seen, are the common furniture of our minds, and can be used introspectively as stepping stones towards God.

Recall that Augustine recognizes unequivocally that it is possible to know or hold beliefs about things without understanding them, though such knowledge or belief is a necessary precondition for understanding. He uses the word *cogitare* to indicate such 'knowing about', reserving *scire* (or *intellegere*) for understanding: the distinction appears as early as *The Master* and is developed in *The Trinity*. More broadly, he is concerned to develop a Christian understanding of the Socratic dictum 'know thyself' (*nosce teipsum*), whereby he may not only know about himself and think about himself (*se cogitare*),⁸⁵ but also may ultimately understand himself: again, as we have seen, the theme is developed early – for example, in the *Soliloquies*. It is also important to notice the growth of unsocratic insights: the knowledge we can obtain of ourselves is unique and what we can know of ourselves cannot be known in the same way by others (*On John's Gospel* 32.5).⁸⁶ That is not to say that we are wholly inaccessible to others; our eyes, for example, may reveal our minds (*83 Questions*, 47).

Augustine uses Stoic language when he says that the beginning of understanding is self-awareness (*conscientia sui*), but he also uses a phrase of his own, 'memory of oneself' (*memoria sui*). Self-awareness is to be distinguished from being aware of one's body, for which Augustine reserves the phrase *sentire in corpore*. Nevertheless it can be painful, and we cannot escape from it: 'Where could I flee myself? Where did I not pursue myself?' (*Confessions* 4.7.12). This self-awareness must also be distinguished from understanding of the self,⁸⁷ for it is possible to be aware of oneself without understanding. Nor is self-awareness even to be identified with knowing *about* oneself, for which it is a necessary condition. For Augustine, the concept of self-awareness becomes an important tool in ethics. It is possible to be aware that one is doing wrong, for example, without understanding

⁸⁵ Cf. esp. *De Trin.* 14.6.8–14.7.9. ⁸⁶ Cf. *EnPs.* 147.2.16.

⁸⁷ Lloyd (1964: 189) suggests that Augustine is confused; but see Hölscher (1986: 128–133).

the full circumstances of the act, or even the ramifications of such wrongdoing itself. Such self-awareness can be heightened by introspection, by learning about ourselves, and of course by coming to understand ourselves. It may be numbed or diminished by 'carnal habits'.⁸⁸

Augustine is often said to be the first 'modern' man, and the claim to modernity is frequently tied to his emphasis on introspection. We have already noticed, however, that the uses to which Augustine puts the *cogito*-argument are different from those of Descartes. Now we can further see that Augustine would criticize Descartes for making illegitimate use of his argument. Augustine does not build any certain knowledge of God and of the external world on the certain knowledge of self. We must now, moreover, also notice some dissimilarities in Augustine's account of self-knowledge (which we have already seen is influenced by Stoicism) from those of Socrates or Plato. The 'Socratic' position is simply that, if one really knew oneself, one would realize one's ignorance of and failure to understand the world around, ultimately that behind the sensible 'appearances' lies an eternal and unchanging reality. In contrast to this, Descartes held that from a certain knowledge of oneself one can ultimately infer a certain knowledge of the world. In contrast to both these views lies the view of Augustine. Self-knowledge for him means knowing *that* one exists, but, unlike the view of Descartes, it does not mean having a clear idea of *what* we are. Augustine demonstrates that we are, and that we think, but behind that we are quite mysterious, even to ourselves. This view would lead to scepticism, were it not for the fact that through introspection we come to recognize the existence – though not the nature – of God. Thus the discovery of God within ourselves fills for Augustine the philosophical place of the discovery of reality behind appearances in Plato. Where for Plato the dimly perceived existence of Forms establishes objectivity, for Augustine the dimly perceived memory of God *within* supplies this objectivity. Hence for Augustine, unlike Descartes, there is no problem of 'constructing' the reality of the body or of other minds; rather we find them, with our selves, in God. For the Augustinian *cogito* does not tell us adequately *what* we are, but only *that* we are intelligent living beings.

⁸⁸ See below, pp. 173–179. It is tempting to follow E. Hill (in his translation of *De Trin.* (New York, 1992)) in rendering *carnalis* as 'materialist', but the translation is misleading. 'Secularist' or 'worldly' might be better, but in the end I have decided to retain 'carnal' as a technical term.

Augustine seeks an 'understanding' of himself not just for its own sake, but because he thinks it leads him to God who is more truly within him than he is within himself (*interior intimo meo*, *Confessions* 3.6.11; cf. *The Trinity* 14.12.15). The theme, as we have seen, is far more than a pious platitude. The Neoplatonists had advocated introspection as the way to understand both oneself and God; now in Augustine's claim that God is within him, we find an attempt to 'anchor' introspection. For a major objection to introspection, as Augustine knows, is that one cannot see within oneself without distorting what one sees, simply because the viewer is also the object of vision. But Augustine's idea that God is within us implies that one's inward eye is not merely looking at oneself as an object, and thus creating an image: it is also looking at something independent of the self, namely God, an ever present object which will always 'resist' human misrepresentation. As *True Religion* puts it (39.72), 'Truth', that is, God, lives in the inner man. Augustine says in the *Reconsiderations* that in the period immediately after his conversion he had described introspection (too Neoplatonically) as a return to the self, rather than as a return to God.⁸⁹ This observation constitutes a repudiation – after closer inspection – of Neoplatonic claims about the 'natural' divinity of the soul, though it is no repudiation of the Neoplatonic insight that if introspection is to be philosophically helpful, it must provide more than mere *notions* or *concepts* of the self.

Understanding of God and the soul is the fruit of a proper introspection, a proper understanding of 'know thyself' which, following his text of Isaiah 7.9 ('You will not understand without belief'), Augustine thinks is promoted, or rather provided, by Christian faith. Augustine sometimes identifies such 'metaphysical' understanding by the word 'wisdom' (*sapientia*), used in deliberate contradistinction to 'knowledge' (*scientia*),⁹⁰ which then refers not to a total lack of understanding, but to an understanding limited to changing objects of knowledge in the external world.

Augustine came to stress, especially in *The Trinity*, that an essential feature of *sapientia* (and even of *scientia*) is knowledge of Christ

⁸⁹ *Retr.* 1.8.3 (correcting *QuAn.* 28.55); cf. *Retr.* 1.1.3, (correcting *CA* 2.9.22); cf. Y. Miyatani, 'Theologia Conversionis in St. Augustine', *CIA*, 1, 49–60, at 52–53. For returning to the self see *DeOrd.* 2.11.30; *CA* 1.1.3; 2.2.4; 2.2.5; *DVR* 39.72; *Conf.* 7.10.16 (where Augustine finds himself far from God in a region of 'unlikeness'); cf. 13.2.2 and *EnPs.* 100 (99).5. For the Platonic background to the region of unlikeness, and its application to the fate of the Prodigal Son, see Solignac in *BA* (1962a), xii, 664–665, 689–693.

⁹⁰ See the discussion in Gilson (1960–1961: 115–126).

(13.19.24).⁹¹ Lack of such knowledge, as the *Confessions* (7.9.14) and the *City of God* (10.28–29) also emphasize, explains why the Platonists, for all their intellectual achievements, are ultimately unable to recover their ‘fatherland’ (7.20.26).⁹² Mere introspection will not provide the way, so in desperation the Platonists indulge in sacrilegious rites (i.e. theurgy) and impious ‘curiosity’ in their arrogant desire to ‘return’ by their own efforts. For opposed to both *sapientia* and *scientia* is ‘curiosity’ which appears as their ‘shadow’. It is a traditional vice, the seeking to know what should not be known, vicious sometimes on account of its connections with the occult or with ‘impious’ religions, sometimes simply in itself. An interest in knowing the taste of human flesh would be an example. It may show itself as an excessive interest in earthly and heavenly creatures, leading to a failure to honour God as God by giving thanks.

Distinctions between cognitive states are assumed rather than analysed in much of Augustine’s earlier work, and are often developed only in *The Trinity*. There they are pursued in more detail, not of course as a means of defeating the Sceptics, but as part of the search for analogues in the human mind to the nature of the Trinity, which can thus be sought introspectively.⁹³ Our own remembering, knowing and loving points us beyond ourselves to God (*The Trinity* 14.12.15). To understand the analogies, however, we must look within ourselves, for only within ourselves do we meet the reality of epistemic differences at first-hand and on the evidence of our own experience. Such evidence is inadequate; Augustine never abandoned his insistence that we are a mystery to ourselves. But if we cannot recognize the differences between such mental states in ourselves, we shall not recognize them; since we can only compare our mental experiences with those of others if we have something of our own to compare. Augustine is not so much concerned about whether the privileged access we have to ourselves is accurate; he knows that it often is not. What he is concerned about is simply that we can form certain ideas about the actuality of our mental states which we cannot form first-hand about those of others. And of course he believes that the more honest we are with ourselves (that is, the more godlike we become), the more habitually reliable our privileged access becomes.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Cf. 12.14.22; 14.1.2.

⁹² On returning to one’s fatherland Augustine cites Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.6.8, at *CD* 9.17; cf. Bochet (1982: 138). ⁹³ *Sermo* 52.17; 68.8; *Romans* 1:20.

⁹⁴ For the supreme importance Augustine attached to truth see below, pp. 191–193. God is Truth; hence all untruthfulness – above all in matters of religion – makes us less like him.

SCEPTICISM, PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

As this chapter has shown, almost all of Augustine's direct attacks on Scepticism are to be found in his earlier writings. The main lines of his treatment of other possible sceptical puzzles, even those which arise from his own treatment of time, have been settled by about 400, when the *Confessions* was complete. From this a more general conclusion may be drawn which will help us to understand the progress of Augustine's mind. With his confidence that scepticism is no longer a serious problem came a greater determination to find solutions to dilemmas which no sceptical slothfulness could now license him to leave in abeyance. Furthermore, that new determination was reached at a time when his confidence in himself as a scriptural exegete had grown substantially. The result was a set of theological solutions, with philosophical underpinnings and parallel philosophical arguments, of a new, indeed an unprecedented and unlooked-for, boldness. Modern writers on Augustine sometimes give the impression that, apart from the political 'theory' of the *City of God* and the psychological analysis in *The Trinity*, there is rather little philosophy in Augustine's later work. Such an interpretation depends partly on an anachronistic and restrictive view of what constitutes philosophy which we have already discussed in chapter 1, and so would have been repudiated by Augustine himself. He would have remarked that by the time of the *Confessions* the ground had been cleared, that much 'pagan' error had been intelligently ejected, and that the way was now open for a specifically Christian solution to many philosophical problems which had hung fire for centuries.

CHAPTER FOUR

Soul, body and personal identity

That in virtue of which I am called mortal is not mine.

(*On Order* 2.19.50)

What I want is for it to be healed as a whole, for I am one whole. I do not want my flesh to be removed from me for ever, as if it were something alien to me, but that it be healed, a whole with me.

(*Sermon* 30.4, after 412)

These three, then, memory, understanding and will, are not three lives, but one life.

(*The Trinity* 10.11.18)

INTRODUCTION

Augustine prays to understand God and the soul. But why not understand the human being? Or is the human being the soul? If the human being is not the soul but the soul and body, what is the relationship between the soul and the body? And why did Augustine not pray to understand the body as well as the soul? Full answers to these questions, involving as they do a lengthy investigation of the development of Augustine's thought from his conversion to his death, would require a series of detailed and technical discussions beyond the scope of the present study; yet some sort of answers are essential, for here if anywhere is the 'core' of Augustine's thought. Let us begin with two philosophical reasons why, in the *Soliloquies*, Augustine wants to understand the soul, rather than the human being, and then outline why he later concluded that there is an important sense in which it is not possible to understand the soul (or at least one's own soul) without knowing something of its body. Only then shall we find that his view of the relationship between the soul and its body has changed as well.

As we might expect, of Augustine's two initial reasons for wanting

to understand the soul, one is in origin Platonic (though already at home in learned forms of Christianity long before Augustine), while the other is specifically and theologically Christian. Augustine was deeply impressed by Platonic claims as to the superiority of the soul to the body, as well as about the immateriality and hence godlikeness of the soul itself. Hence he supposed that what may appear to be bodily experiences are best understood, as the Platonists understood them, as related experiences of the soul; thus sensation is defined as 'an experience of the body noticed by the soul' ('passio corporis non latens animam', *Magnitude of the Soul* 25.48).¹ In sensation, as in other mental acts, we notice the intentionality of the soul, or, as we would put it, 'our' intentionality. Yet to understand the workings of intentionality we shall need to know not merely that the body is required as an instrument, but how it must be a specially appropriate instrument. If Augustine's early language about the soul's use of the body might suggest that the body is rather like a machine, his account of intentionality, and indeed of other ways in which the soul functions through the body, would compel him in the end to reject that kind of description.

Augustine was familiar with the notion that death (as the *Phaedo* puts it) is the separation of the soul from its bodily garments, and with the somewhat unnuanced summary of this in a tradition deriving from the pseudo-Platonic *Alcibiades* that 'we' are really our souls.² Porphyry had popularized the emotional impact of such ideas with his slogan 'all body must be escaped' ('omne corpus est fugiendum') – a text which Augustine may echo but does not quote in the *Soliloquies* (1.14.24) with his 'You must flee sensible things completely', but to which, when he wrote his *Reconsiderations* (1.4.3) he thought he had come spiritually (and dangerously) close.³

Above all, Augustine claimed to have learned from the Platonic books that God is immaterial, and when he considered man's creation in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), he naturally held that

¹ Detailed consideration of Augustine's account of perception is omitted from the present study. Good treatments exist; see O'Daly (1987: 80–105).

² For the inauthenticity of the *Alcibiades Major*, see E. de Strycker, 'L'authenticité du Premier Alcibiade', *EC* 11 (1942) 135–151, C. J. de Vogel, *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* (Leiden 1986), 185. For our present purposes it does not matter if the *Alcibiades* is non-Platonic. In late antiquity it was assumed to be by Plato, and was regularly treated as an excellent simple introduction to Platonism.

³ It is by no means certain what Porphyry's original Greek was (the Latin comes from Augustine himself in *CD* 10.29.2 (cf. 22.12.2; 22.26; *Sermo* 241.7.7), citing Porphyry's *De Regressu Animae*). Porphyry may have used the verb *aphistamai* (as in *Sent.* 32, p.25.4 Lamberz, and *Ad Marc.* 8.32), but presumably *phugō* (for which we have no direct evidence) is more likely.

we are an image of what is immaterial. Hence he maintained, as late as the time of *The Trinity* (completed after 420), where the most detailed treatment of the topic can be found, that what is an image of God must itself be immaterial. Now, when he asks how we are to understand the creation of man in God's image, he assumes that the Scriptures too teach that his 'soul' or self is created in that image. Which leaves a problem as to what the body is – Is it itself an inferior trinity, in a way an image of an image? – and; at the very least, a problem as to what is the exact relationship between body and soul, a problem of which the authors of Genesis were entirely unaware.

Augustine is convinced that the soul cannot just be identical with the body, or with anything bodily, for if it were, either the body too would be incorporeal or, as his fellow African Tertullian had preferred, the soul would be material. As we shall see, Augustine's perhaps excessive hostility to Tertullian over the materiality of the soul left him open not only to difficulties about the relationship of the soul and the body, and in general to problems of personal identity, but to more purely theological dilemmas about original sin and the mechanism of human salvation. Nor does Augustine have time for theories of the soul as the harmony or attunement of the body; and he regards the Aristotelian view that the soul is the body's form as little more than a version of such a harmony-theory, one to which Platonists had already given short enough shrift.⁴

From the time of his conversion, Augustine wished to maintain *both* that it is man's soul which is created in the image of God, *and* that man himself is some kind of composite of two substances, a soul and a body. In the end, as we shall see, he fails to provide a full account of the 'mystery' of their coming together to form each of us, though he determines that the 'person' formed by the mixture of soul and body has some analogues to the 'person' formed by the presence of God as man.⁵ Twice, indeed, he notes an observation of Varro that the word 'man' is like the word 'horseman'.⁶ A horseman is not like a pair of horses. To count as a horseman, a man has to ride a horse: that is, to be in charge of it and use it in a certain way. We shall see that part of Augustine's final account of man is that he is a soul managing a body.

All of which leaves us with two immediate questions: (1) Does

⁴ Plotinus discusses (and rejects) Aristotelian hylomorphism in *Ennead* 4.7.8⁵, a far more detailed treatment than Augustine's rather cursory remarks in *ImmAn.* 10.17.

⁵ *Ep.* 137.11 (AD 412) to Volusianus; cf. Hölscher (1986: 218–220).

⁶ *DeMor.* 1.4.6; *CD* 19.3.1.

Augustine have (good) reasons for believing that some sort of dualist account of man is essential, even if the connection between soul and body cannot be wholly determined? and (2) If we are such composite beings, what attitude should we have towards the body (or the soul)? Or in terms more appropriate to Augustine's own day, if there is a sense (but only a sense) in which we are the soul, why did God create us, and intend to resurrect us, with bodies? For while generally assuming that the 'whole man' (*totus homo*) is a composite of soul and body, Augustine constantly wonders how the soul got 'into' or 'fell into' the body and whether and under what conditions it should (as the Platonists held) long to be out of it. We too may wonder to what, in our more normal vocabulary, this 'soul' corresponds. If 'we' are not just our souls, are we more or less than our souls? And if less, why did God give us bodies?

A warning must be posted immediately. In Augustine we shall find not one, but three accounts of the relationship between soul and body: we are to consider our composite beings first as God originally created them (that is, before the fall), now in our familiar human life, and finally in the life to come. In discussing the spiritual history of the human race and the vicissitudes of its members, we shall have to record changes in Augustine's views as he became increasingly convinced that 'Platonic' views are not compatible with serious exegesis of God's word in Scripture. But first come the reasons for the necessity of some sort of soul-body 'dualism' in the first place.

WHY SOUL CANNOT BE BODY

Augustine rejected materialism when he read the Platonic books. Although much of his treatment of the immaterial soul as an image of God appears in *The Trinity* (404/5-420+), most of his reasons for believing the soul to be an immaterial substance were developed long before. If the soul is immaterial, it is obviously neither a material substance nor any kind of epiphenomenon or state of a material substance (*Immortality of the Soul* 10.17). Thus we find throughout Augustine's writings the standard Platonizing suggestions that, since the soul is not limited spatially (and since its cognitive objects, such as the objects of mathematics,⁷ are not limited spatially), it cannot be a

⁷ *DLA* 2.8.23.

body.⁸ The 'magnitude' of the soul has nothing to do with space and extension. If the soul were material, we could not account for the 'unity of our perceptions', that is, that *we* feel when *part* of our body is hurt. For that, the omnipresence (necessarily non-material) of the soul to the body is required.⁹ The specific acts of the soul, the acts of willing and thinking, cannot be performed by the body.¹⁰ The whole Platonic tradition from the time of the *Phaedo* (99AB) knew that *Socrates* had *decided* to stay in prison; it was not his arms or legs or any other bodily part which had made that decision for him. In brief 'there is a great difference between soul and body' (*On John's Gospel* 20.10).

There are whole sets of predicates, particularly those denoting moral qualities, which cannot intelligibly be attached to the body; hence Augustine is convinced that 'our bodies are not (or not just) what we are' (*True Religion* 46.89). It is 'we', not our bodies, who are just, and that 'we', in Platonic language, would be (or would refer to) our souls. That it eventually will be held by Augustine to refer to 'more' than the soul will emerge; but it always and certainly refers to the soul. Justice cannot be three-dimensional.¹¹ Moreover, Augustine always thought that it is the soul which sins; sins committed 'with' the body are inflicted on the body by the soul. When discussing the fall in his earlier writings Augustine often alludes to the 'triple concupiscence' of the first Epistle of John: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and an arrogant way of life (*superbia vitae*) (1 John 2:16).¹² The three lusts together constitute 'fornicating away from God' (*Sermon* 142.2.2),¹³ that is, they are abuses of our human capacities. For the lust of the eyes depends on the way in which we use our eyes, not on the mere act of seeing. We can watch a salacious dance representing the amours of the gods, but sin lies in the interpretation by the artists or by the spectators (*On Order* 2.11.34). The fundamental sin is always pride,

⁸ For bodies as three-dimensional objects in space see *83Q*, 20; *Ep.* 18.2; 137.2.4; *QuAn.* 4.6. Cf. O'Daly (1987: 26); Hölscher (1986: 15–16).

⁹ This argument, found widely in Augustine (*ImmAn.* 16.25; *Ep.* 166.2.4; *De Trin.* 6.6.8; *CEpFund.* 16.20), was available (for example) in Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.7.6–7; cf. E. Emillion, *Plotinus on Sense Perception* (Cambridge 1988), 101–106. It derives originally from Plato himself, but was developed by Plotinus against Stoic materialism.

¹⁰ For examples see further Hölscher (1986: chapter 1). ¹¹ *QuAn.* 4.5; cf. *Ep.* 147.17.43.

¹² Cf. Du Roy (1966: 343–352); O'Connell (1968: 174–183). Note the 'capita iniquitatis' of *Conf.* 3.8.16 ('principandi et spectandi et sentiendi libido'): sins against the Father, Son and Holy Spirit respectively.

¹³ Such 'fornicating' (cf. *Conf.* 1.13.21; 2.6.14; 4.2.3; 5.12.22; *EnPs.* 73 (72) 33) is not only Old Testamental and Prophetic. Augustine would (perhaps despite himself) 'appreciate' the symbolic fact that jokes about ex-priests and ex-nuns usually concentrate on a choice of sexual activity over vows and a 'commitment' to the 'sacrament' of orders.

which leads to envy, disobedience, wilfulness and the preference of the worse to the better;¹⁴ that was the sin in the soul which led to the fall of Adam, and the virus is perpetuated in us. In this regard Augustine has an undivided mind: his Christian tradition is supported by Neoplatonic writings, above all *Ennead* 5.1.1, where what causes the souls to forget their father is, substantially, pride (*tolma*) and 'wishing to belong to themselves', that is, to be self-creators.

For Augustine, then, soul and body are separate substances. Unlike soul, body requires a place and makes contact with other bodily objects which also require a place. Soul, though present in our bodies, need not be so, and can 'live' among non-bodily objects. The Forms and the truths available to the soul are in no way tied to their spatial instantiations; but neither, of course, are the soul's judgements necessarily in line with the impressed ideas (some of which come through the body) which it possesses (*The Trinity* 8.3.4). It is the soul, not the body, which 'remembers', understands and loves. In more modern terminology, it is I, not my understanding, who understand (*The Trinity* 15.22.42.).¹⁵ Still less, in Augustine's view, is it my body which loves, understands, or acts justly.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOUL AND BODY

We have then a clear, consistent and constant view of Augustine that the immaterial soul and the material body (which originally were separate substances) are joined to make a single rational entity, 'man' (*The Trinity* 15.7.11).¹⁶ 'What do we consist of?', he asks in an early letter (3.4): 'body and soul'.¹⁷ There are then two substances, and the soul is created in the image of God,¹⁸ but Augustine's description of the relationship between them varies: sometimes he wants to emphasize

¹⁴ For details, see especially W. M. Green, 'Initium omnis peccati superbia: Augustine on Pride as the First Sin', *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 13 (1949), 407-431, O'Connell (1968: 173-183), D. J. MacQueen, 'Contemptus Dei; St. Augustine on the Disorder of Pride in Society and its Remedies', *RA* 9 (1973), 227-293. ¹⁵ Cf. 9.4.5; 15.7.11.

¹⁶ Cf. O'Daly (1987: 55). Hölscher (1986: 304, note 8) finds only two places where the body is specifically called a substance; perhaps that is because the point would not be generally in doubt. Augustine's language in each passage suggests a Platonizing view that there is something more 'real' or more substantial about the soul: 'corpus nostrum nonnulla substantia est' (*ImmAn.* 2.2); 'caro animae meae alia substantia est ad animam meam' (*De Trin.* 1.10.20). The problem about the 'substantiality' of the body is that to be a specific substance (rather than, say, decaying matter), the body requires a soul. See further below.

¹⁷ Cf. *De Mor.* 1.4.6; *GenMan.* 2.7.9; *QuAn.* 1.1, and much later *Sermo* 128.7.9. The language is traditional; cf. Cicero, *De Fin.* 5.12.34.

¹⁸ *GenLitt.* 3.20.30-3.21.33; 6.7.12; *De Trin.* 14.4.6 etc.

the moral 'problem' posed by the body, and sometimes to concentrate on the metaphysical relationship of soul and body 'within' what he comes to call the 'person' (*persona*).

Some of the broad principles of that relationship are established early: in *Against the Sceptics* we already hear that there is a part of the soul which is appropriate to rule (1.2.5).¹⁹ But the details vary considerably, to some extent in proportion to the degree of hostility to the body which Augustine exhibits. In some of the early Cassiciacum dialogues, where the dualism is most extreme, the hostility is often marked.²⁰ The body is a dark prison – the view of Licentius (in *Against the Sceptics* 1.3.9) – and a cave (*Soliloquies* 1.14.24).²¹ More dispassionately, in *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* (1.27.52), man is said to be a rational soul using a mortal and earthly body, a description which may be modified later (*Tractates on John* 19.15) where we again read 'What is man?', and are given the reply that he is a rational soul with a body. It is then respecified that a soul with a body does not make two persons, but one man.²²

Notice, however, an important complication: Augustine's early account of the human body is itself modified. In the *Commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans* he holds that Adam was originally created and inserted into the Garden of Eden with a spiritual body, that is, a body made of 'matter' (2.7.9) which was 'spiritual' at its inception, but which ceased to be spiritual at the fall; but this matter was not originally flesh. It was more like the Neoplatonic envelope or 'bearer' (*ochēma*) of the soul.²³ One reason why Augustine, in this work, prefers to hold that Adam and Eve were not intended to procreate physically is that they had no 'flesh'. In another early text (*Faith and the Creed*) a similar view of the 'body' is asserted of the resurrected body in heaven: there will be no flesh there (10.24). But this view did not survive very long.²⁴ We do not know precisely when

¹⁹ Cf. *QuAn.* 4.5.

²⁰ The influence of the *Hortensius*, and through that of Aristotle's early *Protrepticus*, is certain here, in addition to more obviously Platonic influences. In the late *CJul.* (4.15.78) Augustine alludes to a notorious passage of the *Hortensius*, in which, quoting Aristotle, Cicero compares the association of the soul with the body to the living bound to the dead – an atrocity perpetrated on their prisoners by Etruscan pirates.

²¹ Note a later modification: if the flesh is a prison, it was not designed to be so; your prison is not a body *qua* body, but the corruption of your body (*EnPs.* 142 (141).18). ²² Cf. 47.12.

²³ For the *ochēma* see E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, 2nd edn (Oxford 1963), 313–321 and more recently A. Smith, *Porphyrus's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague 1974), 152–158, and for Augustine's views, O'Daly (1987: 75–79).

²⁴ It is corrected, of course, at *Retr.* 1.17; cf. M. E. Miles, *Augustine on the Body* (Missoula, MT 1979) 109–111.

it was abandoned, but by the time of *Against Faustus* (11.3) – possibly as early as 398 but very probably about four years later – it has gone:²⁵ the resurrection body – necessarily the best possible ‘body’ – is undubitably fleshly. Instead of a Neoplatonic spiritualizing away of the flesh, the flesh itself will become spiritual.

Whatever the relationship between ‘body’ and ‘flesh’, there is a continuing question about the relationship between the two elements or ‘parts’ (*City of God* 14.4.2) of the body-soul ‘mixture’ that we are.²⁶ Or rather, there are two questions: what was the relationship once, before the fall of Adam, the relationship, that is, which God intended when he determined to create the human race; and what is the relationship which we now experience, a relationship which is certain to be a perversion, a corruption of the original relationship, but which is perhaps still able to shed light on it? We may also, in varying ways, be able to understand the developing views of Augustine as to what we can become, by the grace of God, at the resurrection of the body.²⁷

Despite its misleadingly materialist ring, ‘blending’ seems to be the best single word available in English to describe the constant in Augustine’s developing view of the relationship between soul and body, though there is a variety of terms in Latin: it is a *contemperatio* (*Magnitude of the Soul* 30.59), and a *mixtura* (*Letter* 137.3.11). The *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (3.16.25) offers an ‘indescribable’ (*ineffabili*) mixture, while in the *City of God* (13.24.2) we read that, ‘The soul (like the body) is not the whole man; it is the better part of him. It is the conjunction (‘cum est utrumque coniunctum’) of the two parts which is entitled to the name “man”.’ A man then is a blending, but at the

²⁵ If the *De Continentia* is to be dated to 395, we have an even earlier statement of the view of the resurrected body as flesh (8.19), but *DeCont.* is probably much later (see A.-M. La Bonnardière, ‘La date du *De Continentia* de saint Augustin’, *REA* 5 (1959) 121–127).

²⁶ For argument against the influence of a Porphyrian theory of *asunchutos henōsis* on ancient treatments of the body-soul problem see J. M. Rist, ‘Pseudo-Ammonius and the Soul/Body Problem in Some Platonic Texts of Late Antiquity’, *AJP* 109 (1988), 402–415. Varro (cf. *CD* 7.17–35; 19.3) is a likely source for Augustine’s ideas of mixture, but not the only one. Another is Cornelius Celsus (*Solil.* 1.12.21); presumably also Cicero, *De Fin.* 5.12.34. Porphyry certainly inherited the soul-body problem from Plotinus, but he did not invoke ‘unconfused unity’ to solve it. Christians in the late fourth century may have done so.

²⁷ For the resurrection-body, see H. I. Marrou and A.-M. La Bonnardière, ‘Le dogme de la résurrection et la théologie des valeurs humaines selon l’enseignement de saint Augustin’, *REA* 12 (1966), 111–136, Miles (1979), 99–125, G. Watson, ‘St. Augustine, the Platonists and the Resurrection Body: Augustine’s Use of a Fragment from Porphyry’, *ITQ* 50 (1983), 222–232.

same time a unity of soul and body.²⁸ But the body 'subsists' as a body by and through the soul:²⁹ that seems to be a version of Plotinus' view that the body is 'in', that is caused by, the soul. It is the soul that enables the body to be a body. In addition the soul and body form a unity; the philosophical problem is whether that unity is merely 'accidental'.

Letter 137 (AD 411) introduces, for the first time, a new terminology for the body-soul relationship. The 'mixture' is now, mysteriously, a *persona* (137.3.11). We should not simply assume that the new term merely rephrases Augustine's earlier understanding of the mixture that is a man. Augustine, in fact, both re-affirms that there is indeed some kind of mixture and at the same time attempts to advance his position. For in *Letter 137* he compares the certain but inexplicable *persona* which is a union of soul and body with the *persona* which is the union in Christ of God and man.³⁰ The word *persona* seems expressly chosen to indicate a union of substances.³¹ It seems that Augustine's growing theological confidence – itself the result of a long and shifting process of thought – about the appropriate language to be used for the Incarnation encouraged him to think that he need not worry about the queerness or uniqueness of the relationship between the substances soul and body. If so, it is another example of his view that *only theological* explanations will enable certain basic philosophical problems

²⁸ For further remarks on unity see *GenLitt.* 12.35.68; *De Trin.* 15.7.11.

²⁹ *ImmAn.* 14.24; *IoEv.* 26.13. The soul vivifies the body; a corpse is an empty house (*Sermo* 65.4). Cf. *QuAn.* 33.70; *GenMan.* 2.7.9.

³⁰ There are, of course, earlier uses of *persona* in Augustine, some of which help fill in the background (but there is no Christology) to the material in *Ep.* 137. One of the more interesting is *CFaust.* 23.8: 'propter virilem sexum potius honoranda persona'. This probably refers specifically to a man's 'higher' legal status, to the notion of a man as a 'legal person'.

³¹ Cf. *Ep.* 238.5.29; *De Trin.* 12.12.18. E. L. Fortin, *Christianisme et culture philosophique au cinquième siècle* (Paris 1959), 111–128, conjectured the influence of Porphyry on *Ep.* 137; cf. again O'Daly (1987: 43). A soul plus a body is not two persons but one man (*IoEv.* 11.15). For caution and a possible Eastern Christian source for Augustine (in addition to the Westerners Tertullian and Ambrose), see Rist (1988: 409–414). Cf. H. R. Drobner, *Person-Exegese und Christologie bei Augustinus* (Leiden 1986) for comparisons with Nemesius (p. 224) and Theodore – admittedly in the Latin translation of Julian of Eclanum – says that 'man' consists of a unity of an immortal soul and a body.

The term *persona* was used Christologically by Tertullian (*adv. Prax.* 27) and later by Ambrose (*EnPs.* 61.5); cf. A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2nd edn (Atlanta, GA 1975), 405. In 396 Augustine revived it in *AgCh.* But remember that Tertullian conceives the soul as material, as Augustine well knows (cf. *AgCh.* 20.22; *Ep.* 14.3; 169.8; T. J. van Bavel, *Recherches sur la Christologie de saint Augustin. L'humain et le divin dans le Christ d'après saint Augustin* (Fribourg 1954), 17–18; Miles (1979: 90)). In *De Trin.* 7.6.11 Augustine defines *persona* as 'aliquid singulare atque individuum'; at 15.22.42 'I', as one *persona*, possess memory, understanding and love, but am not identical with them. Cf. also *IoEv.* 19.15; *Ench.* 10.36.

to be solved, or at least admit of a rational solution (to be fully understood by God if not by us).³² The relation between the immaterial substance which is the soul and the material substance which is the body must be frankly admitted to be a 'miraculous combination' (*City of God* 22.24). Nevertheless, if anyone thinks that the nature of man can be understood without consideration of his body, he is a fool (*The Soul's Nature and Origin* 4.2.3). And, as we shall see, the new kind of mixture which is a *persona* cannot be an accidental unity. After 411, Augustine continues to identify his new understanding of the mixture as a *persona*,³³ and the term highlights the uniqueness of the relationship.

If the unique relationship between the soul and the body can be compared with the relationship of the two natures in Christ, the *persona* must not only be fully integrable (at the personal Resurrection), but the soul must be happy to care for and love the body. We shall be considering a little later how that care and love has already become a part of Augustine's theory before 411. For the moment we conclude that Augustine became almost as hostile to 'spiritual' reductionism as he had been since his conversion to 'material' reductionism.

So now we have two substances of man, mixed together, and in Augustine's hierarchically ordered universe we expect a hierarchical relationship between them: naturally the higher rules the lower, and indeed the soul is 'suited to' ruling the body (*Magnitude of the Soul* 4.5 with 13.22). That idea persists, for Augustine always wants to say that just as God rules, and should rule the soul, so the soul did (in unfallen Adam) and should (in all of us) rule the body. Here, in his earlier writings, Augustine talks the language of the pseudo-Platonic *Alcibiades* without nuance or apology. Man, as we saw him defined in *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* (1.27.52), is a rational soul using a mortal body; indeed it is often said that it is typically Augustinian for

³² We miss an Augustinian treatise on the Incarnation to match the *De Trinitate*; that reflects the historical fact that (generally speaking) Trinitarian theory developed earlier: Nicaea preceded Chalcedon. For detailed discussion see esp. Grillmeier (1975: 407–413); van Bavel (1954); and Drobner (1986). There is evidence of the undeveloped state of the Latin theology of the Incarnation in the late fourth century – despite Ambrose's *De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento* – in Augustine's self-criticism (*Retr.* 1.19.8). Thus, his expression *homo dominicus* (*EnPs.* 4.2), he says, is an inadequate formula for the incarnate Person. He apparently dropped it after 395; see Drobner (1986: 153–155).

Augustine claimed to find indications of the Trinity but not the Incarnation in the 'Platonic books' (*Conf.* 7.9.14). Note also his Photinian view that Christ was no more than a man of extraordinary wisdom (7.19.25). ³³ Cf. *De Trin.* 4.20.30.

the soul to be viewed as using the body.³⁴ We shall consider some of the problems which arise from Augustine's understanding of the word 'use' in the next chapter; for the time being it is enough to state that for Augustine to 'use' is not necessarily to 'exploit', though some uses (or better abuses) would constitute exploitation. In fact, when Augustine speaks, in his early works, of the use of the body, he does not mean exploitation. He means that the body provides the tools with which the soul is able to perform certain tasks; for example, it is through the bodily organs that we enjoy sensation and perception.³⁵ The notion that the body is a tool persists, but Augustine's later view is that it is no ordinary tool. The body, he says, is not just an ornament or an assistant *brought in from outside*, but is connected with the very nature of man (*On Caring for the Dead* 3.5). It should be considered a temple,³⁶ not just a tool, let alone a prison.

In his earlier writings Augustine especially highlights two features of the soul's attitude to the body: on the one hand its natural and innate capacity to rule the body, to which we have alluded (*On Human Responsibility* 3.11.32–3.12.35), on the other its wrongful attachment to the body which becomes a counter-attraction to God, and a means by which it can rejoice in its own power and its sensual capacity. All the passages in which Augustine treats of the 'triple concupiscence' of the soul (according to St John) point to this phenomenon;³⁷ and here 'concupiscence' means simply 'lust' of some kind or another, a meaning it does not always have in the anti-Pelagian treatises of Augustine's later life, where 'concupiscence', while sometimes meaning 'lust', can also mean 'weakness for' or 'proneness to', as the man who has a weakness for drink is not always lusting to drink.

Even in his earlier writings Augustine seems to identify pride as the core of the triple concupiscence, and to associate that theme with scriptural texts on the same subject: 'The beginning of man's pride is apostasy from God'; 'The beginning of all sin is pride.'³⁸ These passages from Ecclesiasticus (10.9–15) seem to 'harmonize' with a famous passage of *Ennead* 5.1.1 (and with 3.7.11.15) where the soul's

³⁴ So Gilson (1960–1961: 45). Gilson is, of course, aware of the influence of Platonism, and of *Alcibiades* 129E–130C in particular. For a later text see *De Trin.* 11.2.2. The notion of the body being a slave (*CD* 10.6; 22.24.2; *IoEv.* 23.5, etc.) could still be purely instrumental; slaves are living tools and accepted in ancient society rather as we accept 'the working classes' in ours.

³⁵ For recent studies, see Miles (1979: 9–39) and O'Daly (1987: 80–105).

³⁶ *Sermo* 82.10.13 (1 Cor. 3.16); cf. the interesting remarks of De Vogel (1986: 223–248).

³⁷ *DeMor.* 1.20.37–1.21.38; *GenMan.* 1.23.40; 2.17.26–2.18.27; *DeMus.* 6.14.45; *DVR* 3.4; 38.69ff; *DLA* 2.19.53; *Conf.* 3.8.16; 10.30.41; 10.35.54; 10.36.59. For a complete list, see Du Roy (1966: 351–352). ³⁸ See *GenMan.* 2.5.6; *DeMus.* 6.13.40.

evil and the soul's pride (*tolma*) are the wish to rule itself and belong to itself, the wish to rejoice in its own power: a providential harmonization which seems almost certainly Augustine's as far back as *On the Life-style of the Catholic Church* (1.12.20), where the Plotinian *tolma* appears as *audacia*. Augustine must have believed this provided striking evidence – the Plotinian texts have no direct connection with the Platonic rejection of materialism which had so impressed him in Milan³⁹ – in favour of appropriating a good deal more of Platonism to the service of Christian Scripture and tradition.⁴⁰ But in appropriating *Ennead* 5.1.1, Augustine quickly adds a genuinely Christian corollary: the 'proud soul' not only rejoices in her own power, but she 'enjoys' it, as if she were a god (*On Human Responsibility* 3.25.76), and thus engages in a 'perverse imitation of God'.⁴¹ That phrase is not in Plotinus.

Indeed, to understand Augustine's earlier position in regard to the body, it is necessary to refer regularly to his reading of Plotinus, though a detailed comparison is not possible here. Interpreters of Plotinus have often found his treatment of the origin of moral evil puzzling, since several passages in the *Enneads* suggest that there is some sort of connection between the existence of moral evil and the existence of matter or of material objects. On the other hand there are also the passages to which we have just adverted, in which moral evil takes its root from some sort of pride or self-glorification of the soul.

We cannot determine here whether Plotinus had thought the problem through, but we can do some thinking through on his behalf. Using an alien terminology, we might say that there would be no moral evil unless the soul were in the presence of matter or material objects; that is, that the existence of matter is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the existence of moral evil. Thus from the point of view of the Plotinian moral reformer, one could say that moral evils would cease either (a) if there were no matter, or (b) if matter were no longer able to distract the soul. But the problem with (a) is that though active moral evils would cease, the soul would still be *capable* of being seduced, even if it were not actually seduced. In other words (a) would allow for actual non-corruption, but not the incorruptibility of souls.

Nevertheless, it is tempting, if matter is a necessary condition for evil acts, to persuade ourselves that by detaching ourselves from matter we shall remove ourselves entirely from moral evil. Perhaps

³⁹ Cf. *Sermo* 142.3. ⁴⁰ See further O'Connell (1968: 169–183).

⁴¹ *DeMor.* 1.12.20; *DeMus.* 6.13.40.

Porphyry's famous slogan, which we have already quoted, that all body must be avoided, indicates the logical mistake of confusing the sufficient with the necessary condition of sin. And whatever Plotinus' clearheadedness, or lack of it, it is possible that Augustine's early readiness to speak of pride and the triple concupiscence as the ultimate sin and source of sin, while at the same time using the language of the flight from the material sensibles to the immaterial intelligibles as indicating the path to perfection, exhibits a variety of Neoplatonic confusion. Sinlessness might be viewed merely as a return to the immaterial world, or as a freeing of the pure immaterial core of the self. Augustine came close to both these views, and then rejected them both emphatically.

Yet if it makes sense to suppose that the early Augustine sometimes failed to separate necessary from sufficient conditions in explaining the origin of moral evil, we should also recall that from very close to his Christian beginnings he was concerned about a feature of Neoplatonism, obviously inaccessible to Plotinus, but apt to give Augustine himself second thoughts on the quality of Neoplatonic moral wisdom. For Augustine soon noticed what he took to be arrogance (*superbia* = *tolma*) among the Neoplatonists themselves.⁴² Oddly enough, he thought, recognition of intelligibles (and correspondingly disvaluing sensibles) had provided no antidote to the very vice which Plotinus himself sometimes claimed to be the root of sinfulness in the soul. Thus Augustine played a variation on a traditional Christian theme: the Platonists – in this like Docetists or Gnostics – were too proud to be able to recognize the inherent humility of the Incarnation; of itself, recognizing the intelligibles neither healed the philosophers nor substituted for Christ.

CAUSES OF THE FALL: MATTER OR CREATEDNESS?

The mere claim that matter (or a material body) is not the sufficient cause of moral evil leaves a variety of questions unanswered. Is the body (or matter itself) an evil *substance* which seduces the soul? What are the implications of suggesting that the soul is so morally inadequate that it is liable to false judgements and sins when brought

⁴² J. J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine* (London 1954), 143–151, provides a good deal of evidence, but assumes that all references to Neoplatonic pride are references to Porphyry, because some passages associate pride with the worship of 'demons'. None of O'Meara's references to texts earlier than the *City of God* mentions Porphyry by name, and Augustine's treatment of arrogance would be much less powerful and persuasive (even to himself) if only Porphyry (and his obvious followers) rather than the Platonists in general, were guilty of it.

into contact with a morally neutral material world? Augustine spent years and wrote much to persuade himself and others that Manichaean notions about the existence of an eternal, autonomous and evil material substance are both blasphemous and ridiculous. But if the soul is created as good by a benevolent deity, how does its contact with (good) matter lead to the likelihood of moral evil? The problems are metaphysical as well as moral, for why is the soul attracted to vicious behaviour by *anything*? And if it is, can it be said to be guilty in yielding to such attraction? If a mere 'escape' from bodies and matter is not the answer to our moral dilemmas – the moral dilemmas which occur when the soul is 'mixed' with the body – then what can be done? Above all is it metaphysically necessary that the soul be culpably weak? If that weakness is caused neither by its being a material substance, nor indeed by anything to do with matter as such at all, then what is the real nature of the illness of the soul which it is tempting to pretend is the fault of the body or of the matter of which the body is composed? Why indeed did Adam (or Satan) fall? The removal of matter as the cause would seem to have engendered harder problems than ever. It was easy to see why the Manichaean solution had looked very attractive.

If Adam and Eve are merely symbolic figures, not to be pressed historically – a view to which Augustine inclined in 388/9 when he composed his early *Commentary on Genesis* – the difficulty is less severe (though not wholly insignificant), but when Augustine began to think of the narrative of Genesis in strictly historical terms, it could not be evaded. For Adam, though capable of sinning, has everything in favour of his not doing so. Yet he sins, and Augustine's attempts to *explain* this get off to a bad start. In the early *Commentary* he argued that Adam's sin has to be caused through Eve (who here represents the 'female', emotional part of the soul), since reason, the 'male' element, if left to itself, is immune to temptation.⁴³ That, however, solves nothing, since it leaves reason itself able to be tempted, whether the temptress be Eve, the 'emotions' or matter?

Augustine soon dropped the idea that the relationship between male and female elements in the soul can serve as an explanation of the problem of moral evil.⁴⁴ In a number of his middle and late works, however, he proposes a genuinely metaphysical answer, which *inter*

⁴³ *GenMan.* 2.14.20–21; cf. K. E. Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Women in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (English translation, Washington, DC 1981), 52.

⁴⁴ The 'elements' themselves persist, but in a different form, at least allegorically. Male is opposed to female as contemplation to action; see below, pp. 118–119, 199ff.

alia relieves matter (at least as ordinarily understood) from bearing any responsibility, and thus indirectly contributes to an alleviation of the 'moral' difficulties apparently blocking a 'reconciliation' between the substances of soul and body which make up a man. He now suggests that in unfallen man there was no 'efficient cause' of moral evil, but a weakness, or 'deficient cause' or *declinatio*.⁴⁵ The soul *qua* 'free' created being rather than *qua* material is just not strong enough to stand out. Its weakness, which is a weakness of the 'will' ('*vita voluntario defectu deficiens*', *True Religion* 11.21), is due to the very fact of its being created from that nothing to which all created existents tend and which forms for them, as it were, the localization of weakness.⁴⁶ That might seem to leave only two strange possibilities for explaining the sequence of events in the Garden of Eden. Augustine might suppose either (a) that it was just chance or sheer bad luck – which seems highly unlikely – that Adam (or for that matter Satan) fell, or (b) that since only God could not fall – for 'lability' is a necessary feature of any other soul than his – then it was highly likely, indeed almost inevitable (though not logically so), that Adam (or for that matter Satan) would fall sometime, though the specific time would remain undetermined. Then the virtual inevitability of the fall might be, in justice, a 'reason' for the Redemption.

But Augustine would not tolerate this view either.⁴⁷ For if God made Adam (or could not logically avoid making Adam) of such a sort that he would almost inevitably fall, then it is unreasonable to

⁴⁵ Cf. *DNB* 2.4; *Conf.* 12.7.7; *GenLitt.* 11.16–26 (on angels); *DNC* 2. 28.48; *CD* 12.6–9 (on angels), 14.10–13 (on men); *OpImp.* 5.38–39. In *DLA* 2.20.54 Augustine says that turning away from God is evil and a 'defective movement', and he does not know its cause; for what is absolutely 'nothing cannot be known' (cf. *CD* 12.7, quoting Ps. 18.13, 'Delicta quis intellegit').

⁴⁶ *OpImp.* 5.60; cf. *CD* 12.1; 14.13; *DeMor.* 2.7.9: 'deficiunt . . . id est non esse tendunt'; cf. Du Roy (1966: 234). In his earliest writings Augustine is inclined – under Neoplatonic influence – to treat 'nothing' not just as formless but as a 'formless substance'. Such a substance could not be positively evil, and thus 'Manichaean', nor could it strictly be a substance at all. It is difficult to know whether Augustine's problems with 'nothing' are genuinely logical or merely the result of confusion about formlessness and nothingness (that is, between being nothing and being no one thing) inherited from his sources, Plotinus in particular. But once he becomes clear that 'nothing' merely signals absence, his difficulties over the way such 'absence' affects the moral behaviour of souls become greater. For further comments on Augustinian 'nothing', see O'Connell (1968: 278, note 8) and below p. 259, note 10. On the creation of matter *ex nihilo*, see *GenMan.* 1.6.10.

⁴⁷ Despite the *necessé* of *DLA* 3.5.12, R. Brown, 'The First Evil Will Must be Incomprehensible: A Critique of Augustine', *JAAR* 46 (1978), 315–329 argues that by appealing to creation *ex nihilo* Augustine is in fact committed to a necessary fall. Note also that *CFaust.* 22.18 suggests that it is a moot point whether any rational creature will not take pleasure in what is unlawful. But see below, pp. 127–128, 274–275.

hold him entirely blameworthy for falling.⁴⁸ But Augustine would not accept that either. Adam's fall may perhaps have been almost inevitable, but at each specific moment he could have avoided it. In any case, his fall is senseless; his reasons for choosing sin – even if it is somehow 'unavoidable' – are utterly incomprehensible. Yet Augustine is not disturbed by that; he holds folly to be a kind of darkness: as darkness cannot be seen, so folly cannot be understood (*On Order* 2.3.10). Nevertheless, if that is the 'explanation' of Adam's fall, the explanation is that the fall is inexplicable; or rather that it cannot be fully explained.

For though Augustine recognizes, as we shall see, that there is a threat to God's justice in the punishment of Adam's descendants, he never suggests that such a threat exists in the case of Adam personally. We may assume, therefore, that he would not accept that Adam had no option but to sin at some time or other. In any case, if it is true that no soul other than God (or, in the case of the blessed in heaven, those assumed by God into the divine nature⁴⁹) is steadfastly certain to avoid sin, then the ultimate explanation of sin is well described by Plotinus (in *Ennead* 5.1.1) as 'primary otherness': just being other than God. But in Plotinus' world – at least when properly sorted out – such primary otherness, which might unfortunately be identified as (or as a feature of) some sort of matter or of 'plurality', would be the necessary, but not the sufficient, condition of sin: unless we are to allow that sin is unavoidable.

Had Augustine been wholly clear (as Plotinus too perhaps was not) about the distinction between a necessary and a sufficient condition of moral evil, he might not have attempted to explain its origin simply as a 'deficient cause'. For although 'deficient', with its specious invocation of 'efficient', looks informative, it at least suggests that Adam's sin is tragically necessary, because something is inevitably faulty in Adam. Which, we can be sure, is not quite what Augustine intended.

Furthermore, if Adam's sin, that is the sin of a created soul 'on its own', is necessary, why did God not 'in the beginning' choose to

⁴⁸ W. S. Babcock, 'Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency', *JRE* 16 (1988), 28–55, at 45 argues that the notion of a 'deficient cause' eliminates moral responsibility from Adam. In the case of the fallen angels, Augustine in one place (*CD* 12.9) leaves open the possibility that those who fell were given less assistance by God. This poses the kind of problems about God's justice which are considered in detail with specific reference to predestination in chapter 7.

⁴⁹ On 'deification', see recently G. Bonner, 'Christ, God and Man in the Thought of St. Augustine', *Angelicum* 61 (1984b) 268–294; 'Augustine's Doctrine of Man: Image of God and Sinner', *Augustinianum* 24 (1984a), 495–514, at 510–513, and 'The Desire for God and the Need for Grace in Augustine's Theology', *CIA* (1987a), 1, 203–215.

create man as a partaker of his own nature rather than having recourse to the second option of 'adopting' him as such by the corrective action of the Incarnation? Augustine raises a form of this question in *On Human Responsibility* (2.18.49; 3.5.12). His claim is that free will is a good, and that it is better that God created men subject to the possibility of the abuse of free will than that he did not create them at all. But that reply is puzzling, for since God intends to make us (or some of us) even better, and unable to sin, at the Resurrection, why could he not have made us of such a sort in the first place? In other words, he made us 'good', but why did he not make us the best possible? The problem will come up again in the *Enchiridion* and we shall return to it. As we shall see,⁵⁰ there is an Augustinian answer available.

CORRECT ATTITUDES TO THE BODY

Even if the fall is necessary – or whatever else is to be said in explanation of it – it is at least clear that it is not matter which is responsible. Rather it is the wicked soul; 'wicked', somehow, because created. This insight establishes the groundwork at least for a more benevolent relationship between soul and body, or for that matter soul and any other material object. Let us therefore begin again from firm ground: from the time of his conversion Augustine held that the soul is suited to rule the body, and is intended by God to do so, though with a correctly 'distant' or 'arm's length' attitude to the object of its authority. The word Augustine eventually seems to have preferred for this relationship was *intentio*, which implies that the soul is 'directed towards' and concentrated on the body.⁵¹ That is why the soul 'feels in the body'.⁵² In *On Music* (6.5.9) the body is said to be animated by the soul 'through the attention of an agent' (*intentione facientis*).⁵³ This

⁵⁰ See pp. 278–280 below.

⁵¹ Augustine seems to be much influenced by Stoicism. See O'Daly (1987: 44, 84ff.), who rightly indicates that none of the Neoplatonic Greek equivalents for *intentio* exactly fills the bill. O'Daly is also right to observe (85, note 14) that 'Augustine scholars should stop talking of an active theory of sense-perception as an innovation of Plotinus, to whom Augustine is therefore inevitably indebted.' It is, however, possible that Augustine intended to *correct* Plotinus in the light of earlier Stoic theories, or that he merely, and inaccurately, assimilated Plotinus' views to his own version of such theories.

⁵² *CEpFund.* 16.20: *sentit in corpore*. The idea goes back to Plato; cf. *Republic* (5.462D1–5). It is unclear whether Augustine learned it from Cicero or Plotinus, or proposed it independently. See Miles (1979: 14–39).

⁵³ Cf. *Ep.* 166.2.4 (to Jerome): 'non locali diffusionem sed quadam vitali intentione'.

intentionality is not indicated and expressed in space, but rather by a 'nod' of the 'will', which is itself called some kind of *intentio* (*Literal Commentary on Genesis* 8.21.42). The most interesting passage, however, is from the previous book of the *Literal Commentary* (7.25.36, cf. *City of God* 13.20). Here Augustine raises the possibility that it is natural for a soul (even *before* coming to a body) to *want* to rule the body. Such a desire is morally neutral and is thus in accordance with Romans 9:11 ('When they had not yet been begotten and had done nothing good or evil'), a text of great importance to Augustine after 396. Reflecting on it against the Pelagians he had to 'recognize' that, even if our souls existed somehow before our birth, '*we*' could then do neither good nor evil.⁵⁴ But Augustine's attitude to the relationship between soul and body had now become distinct from that normally advocated by the Neoplatonists. A healthy soul could have no moral reason to escape from the body; it should rather wish for a proper relationship with the body. That helps to explain why the bodies of the dead should be honoured: the body, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit (*City of God* 1.13), is a valued part of man's nature, unlike his clothing or his ring which his children might value as a memento. If we 'possess' our bodies, as *On Human Responsibility* had suggested 'for a time' (1.15.32), it is in a unique sense of possessing – and in the Resurrection the time will be extended! Augustine frequently adverts to the body's great beauty, as well as its extraordinary complexity, even in its fallen state.⁵⁵ In heaven men and women will enjoy the beauty of one another's bodies without being troubled by lust (*City of God* 22.24).

One of the scriptural texts which helped Augustine to change his view of the correct attitude to one's body (and to one's neighbour's body)⁵⁶ was Ephesians 5:29: 'No one hates his own flesh', the importance of which is recognized in the first book of *Christian Teaching* (1.24.25). There is much more evidence of the change in the sermons on St John's first Epistle (AD 407).⁵⁷ It is clear that as soon as Augustine began to give serious consideration to the dogma of the Resurrection of the body,⁵⁸ he found good reasons to conclude that,

⁵⁴ See the comment of R. J. O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works* (New York 1987), 219.

⁵⁵ Cf J. Tscholl, 'Augustins Interesse für das körperliche Schöne', *Augustiniana* (L) 14 (1964), 72–104; Hölscher (1986: 30–32).

⁵⁶ See R. J. Teske, 'Love of Neighbour in St. Augustine', *CIA* III, 81–102 and note 60 below.

⁵⁷ For the date, see M. F. Berrouard, 'L'exégèse de saint Augustin prédicateur du quatrième Evangile. Le sens de l'unité des Ecritures', *FZPT* 34 (1987), 311–338; G. Madec, *La Patrie et la voie* (Paris 1989), 190–191.

⁵⁸ See Marrou–La Bonnardière (1966), Miles (1979: 99–125).

although the Platonists were right to insist on the subordination of the demands of the body to the demands of the soul, they were wrong, and even begin to look 'Manichaean', when they wish to be rid of the body so far as possible.

Belief in bodily resurrection was a constant note of the authentic Church in antiquity,⁵⁹ and nowhere was it urged more strongly than in North Africa. Augustine certainly accepted it at the time of his conversion. He tells us that we desire to escape '*this* body', as we look forward to the resurrection (*Magnitude of the Soul* 23.76), but does that mean that we desire to escape from 'the flesh', and what is the relation between the flesh and the resurrected body? What, indeed, is to be *understood* by 'resurrection'? Recalling that at first Augustine thought even that unfallen Adam had a purely 'spiritual' body, we may ask whether the resurrection played more than a peripheral part in his thought. Writing after 414 on John's Gospel (23:6) Augustine left no room for doubt of his position at that time: 'The whole preaching and dispensation given through Christ is this and nothing else: the Resurrection – Resurrection not only of soul but of body.' As we have seen, from soon after 400, if not before, Augustine increasingly explained the Resurrection of the body as the Resurrection of the flesh. 'For even after the Resurrection the body of Christ was called flesh' (*Enchiridion* 23.91).

When in the *Reconsiderations* (1.4.3) Augustine observes that he regrets the language of a passage of his *Soliloquies* (1.14.24), since 'it might offend pious ears by sounding something like the doctrines of Porphyry', we should ignore the 'pious ears' in recognizing that Augustine is drawing attention to an important shift in his own position. The soul, even before the fall, wished naturally to rule the body; the two, in their proper relationship, are drawn lovingly to one another; something of that proper relationship persists now. When the soul loves the body now, from force of habit, as *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* puts it (1.22.40), the habits may be bad, but the soul was intended to love the body from force of good habits, deliberately encouraged. 'Escaping from the body' would be not only a metaphysical mistake, but a desertion of the love for the body which God has intended.

That is the tone which Augustine adopts with considerable power in some of his late sermons. Addressing the citizens of Hippo

⁵⁹ So A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros: A Study of the Christian Idea of Love* (English translation by P. S. Watson (London 1953), 280–288) and the recent comment of G. G. Stroumsa, 'Caro salutis cardo: Shaping the Person in Early Christianity', *HR* 30 (1990), 25–59, at 42–46.

beleaguered by the Vandals, he tells them (344.4) that, 'I know you want to go on living. You do not want to die. You would like to pass over from this life to another in such a way that you would not rise again as a dead man, but alive and changed for the better. That is what you would like. This is the nature of human feeling. Somehow the soul itself wishes and desires it . . . No one hates his own flesh' (Eph. 5.29). For 'the mind has a natural appetite (*naturalis appetitus*) for ruling the body' (*Literal Commentary* 12.35.68), and its love of life is one and the same as its love for its body, which will only be satisfied at the Resurrection when that body will be no longer a burden (*sarcina*) but a glory. Commenting on a famous Pauline text (1 Cor. 15:26), 'Death, the last enemy (*inimica*) . . .' Augustine adds, 'my flesh shall be my friend throughout eternity' (*Sermon* 155.14.15).

We cannot exactly pinpoint when Augustine began to reflect specifically on the soul's love for the body, though the new emphasis seems more or less contemporaneous with the less ambiguous proclamation of the resurrection of the flesh. If the *Usefulness of Fasting* is as early as 399, that is the date of Augustine's remark (4.5) that there is a 'kind of conjugal union of flesh and spirit',⁶⁰ but the real date is perhaps more likely 408. That, however, would bring it closer to both the twelfth book of the *Literal Commentary* and the concentration on love as God (and on love in general) in the sermons on the Epistle of John. In *Letter* 140, of 412, Augustine speaks of the 'sweet marriage-bond (*dulce consortium*) of body and soul', again citing Ephesians 5.29, and rather later, in the *City of God* (13.6), he says that the pains of death arise because the soul is torn unnaturally (*contra naturam*) from its 'embrace' with the flesh. For 'anyone who wants to separate the body from human nature is a fool' (*The Soul and its Origin* 4.2.3).

Different considerations also point to the same period, the early years of the fifth century. In the *Confessions* Augustine still clearly holds that the soul falls into body (rather than with body) and into time. But the 'revised' version of the soul's affection for the body almost certainly precedes letter 98, apparently of 408, to Bishop Boniface, where each man's original 'membership' in Adam, and

⁶⁰ The context is comment on Ephesians 5.29; see Teske (1987: 101). (The conjugal union of flesh and spirit oddly echoes Lucretius 3.845-846: 'comptu coniugioque / corporis atque animae consistimus'.) Teske's date is 399, which would have the advantage of bringing *Deleium* nearer to the improved exegesis of Eph. 5.29 ('No one hates his own flesh.') to be found in *DDC* 1.24.25. On the question more generally see the important paper of C. Couturier, 'La structure métaphysique de l'homme d'après saint Augustin', *AM* 1 (Paris 1954), 543-550.

consequent harmony with Adam's body before the fall, is first made explicit. Yet already in the *Confessions*, as we shall see, Augustine is considering that possibility. We may have existed in a very strange way, living a life that is not our 'own' in Adam (10.20). This living 'in Adam' is not mere pre-existence; we shall return to that.

According to the *Literal Commentary*, Adam had an 'animal' body before the fall, that is, he was a mixture of soul and body and so did not fall into body. His fall was with his body, and so in a different way was ours. Originally Adam had a good relationship with his body; it is an even better version of that relationship which we long to recover at the Resurrection. The *Confessions* may be the latest major work of Augustine in which he thought that we are souls *fallen into* rather than with a body. For that 'Neoplatonic' thesis he was to substitute a theological and 'historical' version, a version which for all its oddity is much more attractive in its treatment of the body, and which has several other specific philosophical advantages. For the time being, we may conclude by observing that Augustine's emphases on the body as flesh and our souls' proper love for our flesh immediately precedes his first use of *persona* (in 411) to describe the new soul-body 'complex' which is what we are. Or is it what we are striving to be?

HUMANITY AND SEXUAL DIFFERENTIATION

Part of the context of Augustine's developing emphasis and developing understanding of the Resurrection of the body is a thesis about the linear (as opposed to circular) history of the human race from the creation of Adam to the Last Judgement, and a modification of the classical (and often Christian) theme that perfection was in the past.⁶¹ Such an emphasis on the linear unfolding of history as a 'metaphysical' process, indeed a manifestation of the providence of God, was also part-cause and part-effect of Augustine's gradual modification of

⁶¹ Augustine's abandonment of the notion that humanity returns (in a circle) to its primal excellence, in favour of a theory that the elect pass to a superior state, has huge ramifications. Parallel to it is his shift from believing that happiness is possible in this life to the belief that in this life we live by faith *in hope* of the fulfilment of eschatological happiness in the life to come. See pp. 170 and 204 below.

The new view also brings the claim (and an explanation of the claim) that, whereas Adam was able not to sin (*posse non peccare*), the angels and the saints *in pace* will not be able to sin (*non posse peccare*: cf. A. Solignac, 'La condition de l'homme pécheur d'après saint Augustin', *NRT* 78 (1956), 359–387, at 367–368) just as God himself who has graced them so as to live in Christ is unable to sin. Any explanation of this would be more complicated if Adam's sin were necessary; as it is, it is the star instance of bringing a greater good out of a greater evil.

'Platonic' claims about the relationship between the soul and the body in so far as bodies are sexually differentiated. Soon after finishing his commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans, Augustine became more concerned with a 'historical' interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, attempting and quickly abandoning a literal commentary in AD 393. A literal commentary could not but have raised problems about sexuality within the wider context of the soul-body problem. Was the relationship between the soul and body of Adam the same as that between the soul and body of Eve? What does that imply about the intended relationship between the body-soul of Adam and that of Eve before the fall? If the Resurrection is to restore (or even improve) the paradisaal state, what will then be the relationship between the soul and body? What will then become of sexual distinctions? One of the basic questions thus raised is whether reproduction is the only reason for sexual (or should we say 'gender?') differentiation. Another is whether gender differences are merely limited to reproductive '*machinery*', that is, strictly 'bodily'. That had been more or less Plato's view (and Augustine is still a Platonist), with which, however, Aristotle had disagreed.

Sexual differentiation of some kind may remain in heaven, but there are to be no sexual acts. Does that imply that there would have been none before the fall? Before Augustine's time many Christians believed so,⁶² and Augustine himself preferred that option in his commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans.⁶³ But what was then the relationship between the humanity of Adam and Eve and their sexuality? Was that relationship radically different from ours? If Adam's and Eve's humanity and sexuality are to be more intelligible, not to say more historical, the 'angelic' reading of life in the Garden may be mistaken.

Augustine's original preference was for a purely spiritual fruitfulness of Adam and Eve: the command 'Be fruitful and multiply' relates to the multiplication of 'good works of divine praise'.⁶⁴ In *The Good of Marriage* (2.2), probably written in about 404, Augustine still

⁶² See G. Sfameni Gasparro, 'Concupiscenza e Generazione: Aspetti Antropologici della Dottrina Agostiniana del Peccato Originale', *CIA* (Rome 1987), II, 225-255, at 232-233), P. R. L. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York 1988), 294-296; and for Augustine's developed theory of marriage E. Schmitt, *Le mariage chrétien dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin. Une théologie baptismale de la vie conjugale* (Paris 1983), with E. A. Clark, 'Adam's Only Companion: Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage', *RA* 21 (1986a), 139-162. ⁶³ Cf. Solignac: *BA* (1972b) XLIX, 519.

⁶⁴ Cf. the earlier *CatRud.* 18.29 and *Conf.* 13.24.36 (where Eve is an *adiutorium* but apparently not for sexual reproduction).

hesitates over sexual intercourse in the Garden, and in the slightly later third book of the *Literal Commentary* he is still wondering whether the affection of *caritas* alone would have been adequate for reproduction.⁶⁵ Augustine never achieved a wholly satisfactory account of the role of sexuality within marriage. He took years to decide that Adam had an 'animal', not a 'spiritual', body, and that in their unfallen state Adam and Eve would have had and enjoyed sexual relations, though strictly for the procreation of children: that is, neither simply for pleasure, nor, as we shall see, simply as an expression of affection.⁶⁶

The question of Adam's animal body is in part exegetical. Augustine raises it in a letter of 412 (143.6) to Count Marcellinus: Paul, he suspects, may be telling the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:42ff.) that Adam had an 'animal', not a 'spiritual', body. By book 6 of the *Literal Commentary*, or perhaps a little later,⁶⁷ he is convinced of that (6.19.30ff.). But in *Letter* 143.6 Augustine had already set out what he now saw as the essential point about Adam: we must remember that, even if Adam had an animal body capable of and suited for reproduction, while still able to be rewarded with immortality, yet before the fall the soul ruled (*regebat*) the body as it willed (*pro arbitrio*), and in that respect Adam's soul once differed greatly from ours.

In book 9 of the *Literal Commentary* (9.5.9) Eve is said unambiguously to have been created for procreation, and Augustine invokes one of his misleading though rhetorically effective dichotomies: either she was created for procreation, or for something else; she was created for procreation, therefore . . . He supports this by suggesting that another man would have been a better intellectual companion. Augustine found it easier to learn (partly from the Scriptures, perhaps especially from Isaiah) to value the female than to admit that the female might entail the feminine.⁶⁸ That would be intelligible if femininity has nothing to do with the soul – except negatively as an excitement to concupiscence. But could Augustine maintain that

⁶⁵ Mary conceived *oboedientia mentis* (*PeccMer.* 1.29.57); Augustine does not mention this causality in connection with the suggestion of conception *solo pietatis* (for *caritatis*) *affectu* for Eve (*GenLitt.* 3.21.33). For the reading *caritatis* rather than *pietatis*, see J. Doignon, 'Une définition oubliée de l'amour conjugal édénique chez Augustin: (pia) caritatis adfectus' (*GenLitt.* 3.21.33), *Vetera Christianorum* 19 (1982), 25–36.

⁶⁶ Cf. *CJul.* 4.14.65; *OpImp.* 4.69.

⁶⁷ O'Connell (1987: 212) seems unwontedly confusing about chronology here.

⁶⁸ G. Bonner, 'Augustine's Attitude to Women and Amicitia', *HS* (Würzburg 1987b), 258–275, at 263. For the influence of Isaiah on Augustine's application of 'mothering' language to God, see R. J. O'Connell, 'Isaiah's Mothering God in St. Augustine's *Confessions*', *CIA* (1983) II, 188–206.

position? As we shall see, for him 'marital affection' is of the essence of marriage, indeed a precondition for the proper achievement of its goals. But 'marital affection', though in some sense 'designed' by God in the interest of procreation, is like all affection a condition of the *soul*. That would suggest that the power of procreativity, though bodily, must affect the souls of its agents – and not necessarily in the same way in the case of the partners to it. There is no reason to think that book 9 of the *Literal Commentary* abrogates any of that.⁶⁹ Hence in following up Augustine's thinking we may reasonably wonder whether 'marital affection' could allow the elimination of femininity (or for that matter of masculinity) from an analysis of the nature of the soul of either partner.

Augustine's final account of sexual differences requires the reconciliation of three propositions: that it is the mind, in both men and women, which is in the image of God;⁷⁰ that sexuality is a mark of the body rather than of the soul;⁷¹ that God's original plan for Adam and the survival of sexual differentiation in the resurrected body indicate that such differentiation is a necessary and redeemed feature of the human *person* as composite (*City of God* 22.17), indeed as 'deified' composite. This reconciliation is probably impossible, but some critics have made it less attainable by misreading a passage from *The Trinity* (12.7.10–12), in order to claim that Augustine does not allow that woman is directly in the image of God at all. Before

⁶⁹ Cf. *caritas coniugal*is (*Sermo* 51.13.21; *CJul.* 5.11.48), *amicalis coniunctio* (*DBC* 1.1); *fida ex honesto amore societas* (*CD* 14.26); and other passages listed by Schmitt (1983: 280–281). See Clark (1986a: esp. 151–154) and chapter 6 below.

⁷⁰ *De Trin.* 12.7.10. At *De Trin.* 12.7.12 Augustine asks the rhetorical question whether women lose their sex when 'renewed' in the image of God, that is, at Baptism. His answer is that they are renewed in the image of God in their minds, where there is no sex. In the early *DBV* (2.10) Augustine makes the characteristically (but not universally) 'Roman' remark, when Monnica shows intellectual acumen, that 'we forgot her sex at this point'. Cf. the discussion at *DeOrd.* 2.11.31–32.

The (non-Augustinian) but popular patristic view that sexual differences disappear altogether in the perfected is well summed up in an anonymous medieval couplet in the Ovidian style:

Femineum sexum depones tempore certo
cum fueris Christo consociata viro.

⁷¹ *CD* 14.22 ('sexus in carne est'); cf. *CFaust* 24.2.2; *DeAgChr.* 11.12; *DeTrin.* 12.7.10; *GenLitt.* 3.22.34; 6.7.12; *OpMon.* 40; *Sermo* 280.1. The last text is especially interesting; it concerns the martyrs Felicity and Perpetua who 'according to the inner man' (*hominis*) are neither male nor female. Augustine here interprets the Pauline dictum that God has no favourites between men and women, Greeks and Jews, slaves and free, as suggesting that 'in our true selves', that is, apart from our bodies, we are neither male nor female. And he does not mean that we are not *simply* male or female. For Augustine's almost Neopythagorean view, which he cast off after his Manichaean days, of God as a material 'monadic' mind without sex, see *Conf.* 4.15.24.

considering his final position, therefore, that roadblock must be circumvented.

Commenting on I Corinthians 11:7, Augustine observes that 'when she is assigned as a helper, which pertains to her alone, she (woman) is not the image of God'. Which plainly means that *qua* helper woman is not an image, but in herself she is.⁷² She is a 'helper' because Genesis said she was.⁷³ Augustine's position is not that woman is not in the image of God, but that, according to Scripture (and society), women have some sort of subordinate role in their dealings with men: subordinate, in Augustine's language, in the *saeculum*, but only in the *saeculum*. 'He rules; she is ruled' (*On John's Gospel* 2.14). (Why, if women are not naturally inferior, their subordination must always be maintained is a point of social theory, as well as of social theology, which will be considered in chapter 6.) *The Trinity*, however, does not deny either that women are in the image of God – Augustine once observed that the Psalmist 'made God father and made God mother'⁷⁴ – nor that they possess the same mental capacities as men. Like men they possess a 'rational mind', though on occasion that mind is said to be inferior – a characteristic 'ancient' confusion of outlook.⁷⁵

Moreover, in the *saeculum*, although woman is in the image of God, her bodily sexuality, unlike the sexuality of the male, is unsuitable for *signifying* that she is in God's image. That is why she should be veiled in Church.⁷⁶ Augustine's reasons for maintaining that the bodily appearance of a female is thus 'unsuitable' are murky and variegated, at least as stated. There appear to be unanalysed assumptions: that Jesus was male 'since it was fitting that he should take the human

⁷² So T. J. van Bavel, 'Woman as the Image of God in St. Augustine's "De Trinitate XII"', *SP* (Würzburg 1989a), 267–288, at 269ff.; cf. K. E. Børresen, 'In Defence of Augustine: How *Femina* is *Homo*', *CAug* (1990), 411–428, at 415: 'Augustine is the first church father I have found who directly confronts I Cor. 11:7 by affirming that women *too* are created in God's image.'

⁷³ Børresen's comment is clear and reasonable: 'My present, more *positive* assessment of Augustine results from a more *negative* judgment of his doctrinal framework, namely the male-centred *conformity* of both scriptural texts and their subsequent interpretation.'

⁷⁴ *EnPs.* 27 (26). 2.18, noted by van Bavel (1989: 287). For further feminine imagery of God in the *Confessions* see O'Connell (1983).

⁷⁵ For women as similarly 'rational', see *Conf.* 13.32.47; *GenLitt.* 3.22.34 ('et femina homo erat, habebat utique mentem suam eandemque rationalem, secundum quam ipsa quoque facta est ad imaginem Dei'). For Augustine against a patristic background, see Agaesse-Solignac (*BA* (1972a), XLVIII, 622–628). Normally Augustine suggests that woman's subordination in society is connected with her role as a helpmeet by childbearing, or interestingly with her 'physiological' submission in intercourse, but *QHept.* (1.153) suggests that man should rule woman as it is just that the weaker *mind* should be subservient to the stronger.

⁷⁶ *OpMon.* 32.40; *DeTrin.* 12.7.12; cf. Børresen (1981: 28–29), and, of course, I Cor. 11:7.

nature of man, the more honourable of the two sexes' (83 *Questions* 11);⁷⁷ or, more reasonably, that since we fell in the male Adam we should be saved in the male Jesus (*Sermon* 51.3); or again that the regulations for women prescribed by Paul indicate eternal truths about the proper relationship between men and women. Those eternal truths may be understood, in Augustine's mind, as the fact of female 'submission' in the act of intercourse: by the 'sex of her body' she is submitted (*Confessions* 13.32.47). Augustine also assumed, on the basis of a literalist interpretation of Genesis, that woman's body is a variation on man's, not that their differences are reciprocal, since man's was the 'original' version.⁷⁸ The variation is such, however, that while a male body can symbolize a woman as well as a man, a woman cannot symbolize a man as well as a woman.

Augustine seems prepared to push this in a manner which the Fathers of Chalcedon (and he himself at other times) may (or should) have found worrying: the Incarnation 'has honoured both sexes, male and female, and shows that God cares not only for him whom He assumed, but also for her who was the instrument of this assumption, by taking man upon himself and being born of a woman' (*Faith and the Creed* 4.9).⁷⁹ Thus, if women are to be 'saved' – as of course Augustine always believed – to 'assume' a man is also to assume a woman, but the reverse would not be the case. But the 'explanation' – discovered in Genesis – is a mere assumption, and non-theological.

Nevertheless, it is important to notice that for Augustine the differences between male and female bodies do not imply – as was widely held in antiquity – that to be female is to be a *defective* male, let alone that such defect is somehow due to the fall. On the contrary, sexual differentiation is part of human nature as originally planned by God (*City of God* 22.17) – so that the problems facing women in recovering their personal identity and wholeness are morally and spiritually identical to those faced by men. But though women are not defective men, they may still be inferior to men; certainly, as we have seen, Augustine holds them to be somehow subordinate to men on

⁷⁷ Note Clark's discussion (1986a: 157) of the New Testament genealogies coming down to Joseph: *DNC* 1.11.12; cf. *CFaust.* 23.8.

⁷⁸ Cf. Børresen (1981: 30): 'Sexual difference . . . is based on the fact that woman differs from man and not on the reciprocal difference that exists between them both.'

⁷⁹ Cf. *AgChr.* 22.24, with Børresen (1981: 74–75); *Sermo* 51.3; 72A.4 (= Denis 25). Augustine himself is aware of what later became the Chalcedonian principle that 'what is not assumed is not healed' (cf. Greg. Naz., *Ep.* 101); see further *DVR* 16.30; *DFS* 4.8; *AgChr.* 19.21 with van Bavel (1954: 51, note 130).

earth both before and after the fall. That is connected with the fact that we are all in Adam, a theme we shall pursue further. Even Eve was once 'in Adam', who is the original version of the human race, and who, as a matter of 'fact', was created male by God. In a similar way, commenting on Galatians 3:28 ('In Christ there is neither male nor female'), Augustine says that men and women are 'in one man', that is, in Christ.⁸⁰

We must be precise about the subordination, and pursue the question of symbolism further. We saw how in his earliest treatment of the Genesis-story Augustine regarded maleness as a symbol of the intellect and femaleness as a symbol of the 'animal part' or 'appetite' of the soul (2.14.20–21).⁸¹ Female still (c. 403/4) symbolizes *concupiscentia* in *On the Works of Monks* (32.40), while in the later *Literal Commentary* and *The Trinity* (12.3.3) Augustine referred it to the active rather than the contemplative life. The inferiority which femaleness symbolizes might thus seem to be diminished as Augustine's life progressed, but still to remain.

Augustine also regularly availed himself of the Latin usage by which 'virile' (*virilis*) means 'masterful', or 'in control'; he will say that martyrs like Perpetua and Felicity have a 'virile mind' (*Sermon* 280.1.1) which may subdue 'feminine desire for pleasure' (*True Religion* 41.78). By this he means that in their 'inner selves' they were found neither male nor female, and that it is surprising that their female bodies were so obedient to the 'manliness' of their souls. It appears that Augustine assumed (probably wrongly) that women can bear less physical pain than men. At all events, an aura of (often symbolic) 'inferiority' envelops the female, which takes different forms at different times. Hence despite Augustine's frequent emphasis on the moral superiority of women in individual historical instances, his symbolism, and the linguistic practices on which it is partially based, might after all also suggest a greater degree of difficulty for women in achieving the integration of the psyche which sanctity – living as befits a creature made in the image of God – requires. The difficulty might normally be greater still if the women are married and sexually active. Nuns might be at least potentially freer, even though – as he will point out – more exposed to sins of pride.

⁸⁰ *EnPs.* 26.2.23; cf. *ExpGal.* 28.

⁸¹ Ambrose, partly under the influence of Philo, compared man to the mind, woman to the bodily senses (*De Parad.* 2.11–3.12). Without mentioning his name ('Some who before us were distinguished defenders of the Catholic faith'), Augustine rejected this comparison.

Yet we are still in the world of symbols, and symbols are elusive. Elsewhere Augustine speaks of a woman – Mary – as a symbol of the *contemplative* life, while her sister Martha is a symbol of the life of action.⁸² The truth is – and Augustine himself emphasizes it⁸³ – that he finds it convenient to borrow the symbol of male superiority, supported by Scripture and reinforced by the customs of his own society, to depict the subordination of the active functions of the human mind to the contemplation of God. Yet that subordination is to take place in all of us, men and women alike.

Symbolism apart, there is a further complication about the role of reason and even the primacy of reason as a human attribute. Both men and women have rational minds, but Augustine will urge that while men are stronger in reason, women, despite being of the ‘weaker sex’, are stronger in emotional strength (*maiores affectu*), that is, in love. That is why Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the Resurrection,⁸⁴ and more generally it is love, rather than intelligence, which determines the Christian virtues. For love is, above all, the ‘attribute’ of God the Spirit. But Augustine failed to develop this aspect of the question of sexual differentiation, and it is not clear what more general ‘anthropological’ and theological conclusions he would have wished to draw from female superiority in love. Certainly he had to find some ‘explanation’ as to why Mary Magdalene was so honoured, but he gave little thought to developing the rich possibilities for a theology of the Spirit with which an old ‘folk-wisdom’ could have supplied him.

Augustine interpreted Genesis, and Scripture as a whole, as confirming that it is the sexless mind which is in the image of God. Plato, he would have agreed, had been right in claiming that gender differences are ‘just bodily’, for Eve was created for procreation (*Literal Commentary* 9.5.9). Yet there was no necessity for God to have mankind reproduce sexually. Granted that Eve was ‘useful’ if sexual

⁸² See A. M. La Bonnardière, ‘Les deux vies. Marthe et Marie’, in *Saint Augustin et la Bible* (Paris 1986), 411–425. For Martha and Mary, see *Sermones* 104, 169.14.17 (of 416), 179, 255 (of 418).

⁸³ See van Bavel (1989a: 283).

⁸⁴ *Sermo Guelf.* 14.1 = 229L.1; 45.5; 51.3; 232.2; 244.2; 245.2; *De Trin.* 4.3.6; *IoEv.* 121.1 (*fortior affectus*); see Børresen (1981: 78). On the *noli me tangere* Augustine holds that Jesus’ behaviour has nothing to do with Mary’s being female, but that spiritual union in faith must precede physical contact (*IoEp.* 3.2), or that she represents the Gentiles whose turn has not yet come (*IoEv.* 121.3). On ‘womanly weakness’, see *83Q.* 61.5, *GenLitt.* 9.13.23, G. Bartelink, ‘*Fragilitas (Infirmetas) humana* chez saint Augustin’, *CAug.*, II, 815–828, at 820, S. Dixon, ‘*Infirmetas sexus*: Womanly Weakness in Roman Law’, *Tijdsch. v. Rechtsgeschiedenis* 53 (1984), 343–371.

reproduction was to be the norm, we may ask whether her sexuality has no further 'incidental' advantages. That brings us back to one of our original and still unresolved questions: Are sexual differences after the Resurrection purely decorative, just an embodiment and affirmation of our memories of the past? For it is persons, and not 'just bodies', which are resurrected as males and females (*City of God* 22.17). It is not only the soul, as the image of God, which is redeemed, that is, assumed into Christ's divinity and 'adopted'. Redemption includes the sexualized body 'in the soul' – and very beautiful such redeemed bodies are (22.24)!⁸⁵ Naturally their relationships with their respective souls are now harmonious, but the souls, as we have seen, are devoted to the well-being of their respective bodies.

Augustine apparently never considered whether a soul designed and habituated to look after a male body might be different from a soul looking after a female body. Yet unless perfect souls are qualitatively indistinguishable in as much as they are similar *qua* image of God – an idea with a strong 'Platonic' background – their differences cannot be entirely unconnected with their different experiences of sexuality and, more widely, with the fact that they have a personal *history*, which includes a sexual history. Augustine's modifications of the dualistic version of the two-substance theory of man do not go far enough to handle that personal history. The sexual features of the redeemed bodies are left looking rather anomalous, just something beautiful to see, with no apparent effect on their dedicated souls. That is unconvincing, and calls in question Augustine's unwillingness to give up the notion that gender differences are just bodily. Yet note that whereas his Pelagian critic Julian of Eclanum (whom some suppose to have been influenced by Aristotle) thinks of sexual behaviour as a set of clinical acts, it is Augustine who is aware of the importance of eroticism,⁸⁶ that is, of 'sex in the head', and who holds that sexual concupiscence derives not from the body but from the disordered soul. Such thoughts could have impelled him towards a more sophisticated account of the sexualized *person*, but they did not do so. He remained, to that extent, a prisoner of his age. Augustine has moved towards an integration of sexuality with his account of the human 'person', but pressures both social and scriptural have prevented him from achieving it.

⁸⁵ See Tscholl (1964: 76). Tscholl (p. 77) lists a formidable array of passages in which Augustine specifically extols the beauty of women.

⁸⁶ Cf. P. Fredriksen, 'Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul against the Manichees and the Pelagians', *RA* 23 (1988), 87–114, at 112.

Nevertheless, if it is clear that unfallen humanity was sexed and designed for a reproductive life, one of the most powerful emotional objections among early Christians, including the early Augustine himself, to postulating a more intimate relationship between the soul and the body – whatever the metaphysics of that relationship, and whatever the problems of marriage after the fall – has been removed. The new view of Eden and of God's original purposes for the institution of marriage is presented in detail in books twelve to fourteen of the *City of God*, written probably in 417.⁸⁷ It harmonizes with, and carries further, the developments of Augustine's thought about the relationship between body and soul which we have already dated to the first fifteen years or so of the fifth century. Augustine has now emphasized the goodness of Adam's sexualized, and not merely fleshly body before the fall and its perfection in the Resurrection, and at least shown the way towards looking at the wider implications of sexualized flesh, that is, towards a psychological theory of gender differentiation. We are sexually Adams and Eves, though, as Augustine also began to insist during this same period, our original life, whether we be men or women, was a life 'in Adam', body and soul. To that important and highly controversial question we must now turn.

OUR LIFE IN ADAM: A RESTORED DIMENSION⁸⁸

Man, the *Confessions* told us (10.8.15; 10.17.26, etc.), is a great mystery: we know much about our individual selves, but we do not know ourselves, and cannot trust our own reports about ourselves. We know about our continuity with the past, but we cannot find that continuity. We know ourselves better than others do, but we cannot even be sure of how we shall behave tomorrow (*Letter* 130.2.4). In an earlier part of this chapter we discussed an especially important example of our present lack of understanding: our inability to comprehend how we can be composed of two substances and how these two substances are compounded. In Augustine's writings from 408 onwards, and increasingly as the Pelagian controversy developed, a further mysterious theme begins to appear, for Augustine is forced into the tantalizingly shadowy, but oft-repeated and by no means

⁸⁷ O'Connell (1987: 283). *Epistle* 184A.5 (417–418 AD) says that books 11–13 are finished, and that book 14 is in progress; it also offers a similar account of sexual behaviour 'as it would have been' (184A. 1.3).

⁸⁸ Scholarly readers will recognize how much this section is indebted to the writings of O'Connell, especially to his *Origin of the Soul* (1987), though my account of Augustine's views after 408 aims to be less convoluted than his. See further, Appendix 2 and p. 127, note 99 below.

uncongenial claim that, in so far as we are souls as well as in so far as we are bodies, we live and have lived a double life, once at the individual level, and once, 'in Adam', at the universal level.

Recall that in his early Christian days Augustine was at least prepared to 'go along' with the notion that our souls somehow pre-existed, and that there might be a connection between pre-existence and the presence of 'impressed notions' in our minds. Epistemological reasons for postulating pre-existence may soon have faded for Augustine, as they did for Plotinus, whose view of the eternal and continuing presence of the mind with the Forms diminished the need to assume it. But even for Plotinus, not to say for Plato, the uses of pre-existence were not merely epistemological. Plotinus also held that the individual soul is both a 'part' of the hypostasis 'soul' and at the same time an individualized entity. More important still was his view that pre-existence might be invoked to allow a doctrine of the fall and of some sort of guiltiness in the individual soul.⁸⁹

Whatever may have been Augustine's 'deeper' and more personal motives for believing that there are forces at work in us beneath our subjective consciousness, and whatever influence the Platonic books may have exercised in deepening his awareness, there is little doubt that, as so often, his primary motivation for developing an amalgam of ideas and intuitions about pre-existence into what became the core of an interesting and highly original general *theory* was theological: the theory of our presence in Adam was developed in outline as a way out of the urgent need for God's justice to be preserved in his punishment of Adam's children (that is, the whole human race) for Adam's sin.

Moreover, the theory seemed at least to provide the groundwork for solving an urgent problem without pushing Augustine into what,

⁸⁹ Habit and school-tradition doubtless also contributed to Plotinus' position, not to speak of loyalty to Plato. For some of the Plotinian evidence see A. N. M. Rich, 'Reincarnation in Plotinus', *Mnemosyne* s.4.10 (1957), 232-238.

There are no clear and unambiguous *assertions* in Augustine's earlier writings that the soul lived an individual life before birth, though the possibility is mentioned, as one among others, in *On Human Responsibility* (1.12.24; 3.20.57-21.59). But there are a number of passages where it has been widely, and rightly, recognized that at least in these texts pre-existence is assumed as the precondition for a Platonic theory of knowledge as recollection. Such texts include (apart from those in *On Human Responsibility*) *CA* 1.9.22 (with *Retr.* 1.1.3), *Solil.* 2.20.35, *QuAn.* 20.34, and *Ep.* 7.1.2 (on which see O'Daly (1974: 232-235) and O'Connell (1969) and (1980), 176-188). In the later *De Trin.* (12.15.24) pre-existence in the Platonic sense is clearly unacceptable (cf. *Retr.* 1.4.4; 1.8.2), but by then Augustine is experimenting with the unplatonic alternative of our existence outside our *propria vita* in Adam. For Ciceronian texts on pre-existence and recollection with which Augustine may be presumed to have been familiar before his conversion, see Hagendahl (1967, esp. 139-143 on the *Tusculans*).

since his conversion, he regarded as the 'mad materialism' (*dementia*, *Letter* 190.4.14–15) of Tertullian. For Tertullian's materialist account of the soul enabled him,⁹⁰ and his later followers, to conclude that we inherited guilty souls by a 'propagation' from Adam, just as we inherited lustful, weak and mortal bodies. Again and again, though recognizing the strength of Tertullian's case in accounting for the transmission of original sin and guilt, Augustine balks at its seemingly unavoidable implications about the material nature of the soul; nor should we conclude, as has sometimes been suggested, that he came to the conclusion that an immaterial soul could be transmitted by propagation in the same way as a material one.⁹¹

So for newly discovered theological reasons Augustine eventually needed to hold that we have some kind of double nature. On the one hand we existed in and as Adam: all of us in common; on the other we have an individual life which begins at conception, or at least at ensoulment.⁹² And apparently when we live our individual life we do not lose our common life: we exist both in an individual and in a common mode. Leaving aside the dominant theological motive for this for the moment, let us pursue some of its more purely Platonic attractiveness to Augustine. As early as *On Human Responsibility* (2.9.25) he was concerned to point out that there are 'common' goods and 'individual' ones. An example of what this distinction can illuminate is that if I admire a beautiful work of art, I do not need to own it, or to want to own it, to be able to appreciate it. Any number of lovers of beauty can value a common good. (Diotima had made a similar point in Plato's *Symposium* (211A–212A).) But, Augustine holds, we cannot all enjoy an individual object, like a wife or a glass of wine, in the same way. So that in our characters there are what we may dub 'common' faculties and 'individual' faculties. By such a common faculty I enjoy immaterial goods, indeed ultimately, for Augustine, God himself.

Whatever degree of harmonization Augustine had achieved between

⁹⁰ Cf. Rufinus, *Apol. ad Anastasium* 6.

⁹¹ See Appendix 2 (on pp. 318–320) for further comment on what S. Lyonnet, 'Augustin et Rm 5.12 avant la controverse pélagienne', *NRT* 89 (1967), 842–849, calls 'spiritual traducianism'.

⁹² Augustine seems rather uncertain when the soul is 'linked' with the body; certainly, however, the linkage occurs in the womb (cf. *CJul.* 6.14.43). See O'Daly (1987: 19); O. Wermelinger, 'Abortus', *Augustinus-Lexikon* 1 (1986), fasc. 1/2, cols. 6–10; Van der Meer (1961: 189–190); *QHept.* 2.80; *83Q.* 56; *AnOr.* 1.15.25. Abortion, for Augustine, thus counts as murder (*DNC* 1.15). But if the 'contents of the womb' are not 'I' before ensoulment, it is left obscure what Augustine thinks they are. If ensoulment (or individual ensoulment?) occurs later than conception, then the soul is certainly not handed down in a simply 'traducianist' manner.

these notions and a theory of our common existence in Adam, his directly theological motive can be identified as far back as the *Confessions*. There, in the tenth book (10.20.29), completed before AD 400, we find him claiming that 'either we were all happy individually (that is before our conception and birth into our present lives), or it may be that we were all happy in Adam, in whom we all died'.⁹³ The first part of this seems to be a clear reference to the pre-existence of the individual soul, along the lines of Plato's *Meno*, a thesis which, as we have noticed, Augustine once at least tolerated and later rejected.

But if pre-existence in the manner of the *Meno* – and particularly a memory of an earlier life – is to be ruled out, that is not to say that pre-existence 'in Adam', without any consequent memory, is ruled out as well. That is clear from a parallel passage of *The Trinity* (14.15.21). Indeed, this second alternative, offered first in the tenth book of the *Confessions*, has a long life before it, for it seems that from this time on Augustine was prepared to take seriously the view that, at some time before our present life 'as individuals' (*singillatim*), we were all *happy* in Adam 'collectively'; that after Adam's fall we were all unhappy in him, because we had sinned in him; finally that we all died in him. But since Adam too had both a common and an individual life before the fall, his personal experience of the common life came to an 'end' in death with the end of his individual life – and so presumably will ours. Yet it is for that common life, which we all have lived, in which we all have died, and in which we all have sinned, that we are being justly punished now. For Augustine repeats in a late work his long-standing conviction that our present state is a penal condition (*The Gift of Perseverance* 12.29), and he claims that he

⁹³ Lyonnet (1967 and *Dict. de la Bible*, Supp. 7 (1963), cols. 528, 540) should have disposed of the idea that Augustine's Latin version of Romans 5:12 ('in quo omnes peccaverunt') was the major factor in the development of his theory of original sin. Other texts, and especially 1 Cor. 15 ('in whom we all died'), cited in the *Confessions*, were more important. Inherited mortality is the first consequence of sin: a 'genetic' inability to survive. But Lyonnet is still ignored, e.g. by E. Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* (New York 1988), 109, 143. Augustine seems to have worked out his idea of our common sin in Adam before discovering the 'relevance' of Romans 5:12. When he did notice it, however, the text became a kind of short-hand way of summing up an already established position. (For detailed criticism of Pagels, see now M. Lamberigts, 'Augustine, Julian of Aelclanum and E. Pagels', *Augustiniana* 39 (1989), 392–435.) The general question of Augustine's 'discovery' of such convenient proof-texts was discussed in chapter 1: for Eph. 5:29 see Teske (1987: 99–102); for Proverbs 8.35 (LXX: 'praeparatur voluntas a deo') after 411, see Sage (1964); for the Song of Songs 2.4 ('Ordinate in me caritatem'), see La Bonnardière (1955), O'Donovan (1982: 396). See below p. 160.

had recognized as much when he wrote book 3 of *On Human Responsibility*: that is, as early as AD 395.

What then is the evidence that after the *Confessions* Augustine advocated the 'two-level' theory of the life of the human soul which we have just outlined? The series of informative texts begins as early as 408 and continues to the end of Augustine's life, but their interpretation is far from settled and more detailed consideration is necessary.⁹⁴

Perhaps the most significant evidence is provided by *Letter* 98 to Bishop Boniface, for this may be as early as 408, in which case its discussion of the handing on of sin from one generation to the next precedes the period when Augustine's steadily deepening immersion in controversy with the Pelagians made such problems all-pervasive for him. The subject of the letter is baptism, a central preoccupation in the long-standing dispute between the Catholics and the 'party of Donatus', and perhaps it was Donatism which had forced the question to the mind of Boniface, and hence of Augustine. By 408 the dispute with the Donatists had dragged on for more than a century, though the theology of the baptism of infants 'for the remission of sins' had not always been central to it. Yet it was this question which was to be crucial for Augustine's developing theory of original sin and God's election, for certainly those baptised in adult life would have 'personal' sins to be remitted, while infants would have no such 'personal' sins.⁹⁵ If infants are baptized 'for the remission of their "own" (in some sense) sins', then they must somehow have shared in the sin of Adam. (We should remember that the sins of unbaptized infants are not prominent in Augustine's reply to Simplicianus in 396; they are prominent, however, in the Pelagian controversy, and in the preceding *Letter* 98.) But would it not follow that, if infants are to be baptized for the remission of sins, *we* must have lived before conception?

Bishop Boniface had written to ask whether sinful parents produce sinful children. Augustine, quoting Ezechiel (18.4), replied that if a child has absolutely no knowledge of his parents' sin, then he does not sin. But then arises the case of Adam, clearly marked out as *the* common ancestor, and so different from whatever latter-day ancestors we may each possess. For, Boniface has asked, how then do we 'contract' sin from Adam? Augustine's reply is that when Adam sinned, we were not yet souls 'living separately' (*separatim vivens*, 98.1).

⁹⁴ The importance of these passages was first emphasized by Solignac (1956) and most of them were studied by O'Connell (1987). Solignac speaks of Adam's 'personnage transindividuel' (p. 384). ⁹⁵ 'Sua propria parvuli peccata non habent' (*OpImp.* 2.185).

Rather we were one with and in him ('unus . . . cum illo et in illo'), a relationship which only exists between Adam and his descendants, not between us and any of our other ancestors. For when we are born, we shall live our *personal* life (*propria vita*).

This special relationship with Adam and its exact philosophical relevance is spelled out in a passage of a roughly contemporary sermon on the Gospel of John (10.11), where, speaking of Adam, Augustine says that he was 'one man' and also the whole human race (*totum genus humanum*). That is an allegory perhaps,⁹⁶ and of course Adam does represent each and every one of us allegorically. But in Augustine's time Adam cannot be a merely allegorical figure. And the transmission of his sin to us is not allegory, not just a symbol of our similarity to Adam, as the Pelagians held, but an historical fact. The historical Adam is 'the whole human race' of which we are all members.

The relationship between Adam and each of us looks in some respects like that of the Plotinian hypostasis of Soul – though in Plotinus Soul cannot fall – to the individuals which are 'parts' of it. Such a hypostasis is no abstraction; without it Plotinus' individual souls would not exist and 'we' therefore would not be men. Similarly, it seems, for Augustine Adam is in us and beyond us, and yet we share in him, and in his guilt; that latter part is unplotinian. Even Eve partakes in Adam, as is shown by the account of her being physically formed from him. There can be no 'man' (*homo* is of course both male and female) who does not share in Adam, and who is not Adam. It is no more surprising that Adam can also exist 'separately' from his 'parts' than that the Plotinian hypostasis can exist 'apart' from individual souls; as a 'one and many'. The difference is that while Plotinus makes the individual souls metaphysically distinct from the hypostasis, Augustine makes them 'historically' distinct. But that is what we should expect a Christianized Plotinus to do.

Ideas of our oneness in Adam are too common in Augustine's later works to be dismissed as freaks or ill-considered oddities. In a letter (190) of 418/9 to Optatus Augustine suggests that perhaps our souls were 'originally in our parents', but that as yet none of them enjoyed their personal lives ('qui suas et proprias vitas agerent'). In a sermon from about the same period⁹⁷ we get a glimpse of how Augustine fitted such ideas into one of his long-established patterns of thought. Contrary to the view of some – Platonists or Platonizers – infants who

⁹⁶ So apparently Solignac (1956: 384, note 67).

⁹⁷ *Sermo* 165.7.9, after 1 May 418; cf. *Retr.* 2.50.

are condemned are not condemned for what they did of their own 'private' volition in an earlier life, but because they belong to the 'mass of perdition', that is, to the state to which the fallen Adam and therefore all his descendants belong.⁹⁸

Further references to our guilt in a transpersonal life seem to be found in *Merits and Remission* (2.36.59),⁹⁹ in *Letter* 194, where we sinned communally before our individual sins (*ante propria peccata*), and perhaps most strikingly of all in *Letter* 217.5.16 (c. AD 423) to Vitalis at Carthage: we Catholic Christians know that those yet unborn have in their own lives (*in vita propria*) done nothing either good or evil nor did they come to the miseries of this life from an earlier life which individually (*singuli*) they had as their own (*proprium*).

We have already noticed that in the sixth book of the *Literal Commentary* on Genesis Augustine rejects the view (with which he was still sympathetic in book 3) that Adam had originally a 'spiritual' body, a body, that is, not designed for the physicalities of marriage. We have also connected this rejection with developments in Augustine's theory of the nature of marriage, and thus, in general, with the relationship between the soul as image of God and the body as a worthily desired object of the soul's concern both in Adam and in the saints perfected in heaven. It is thus appropriate that the sixth book of the *Literal Commentary* on Genesis – probably to be dated no later than the letter of 408 to Boniface – should also contain a further interesting reference to the 'double-life' theory. It is even possible that this is the earliest such reference after the *Confessions*; though book 6 may have been revised some time after its original composition.¹⁰⁰

Be that as it may, book 6 chapter 14 is particularly interesting because, like *Letter* 190 to Optatus but unlike the reply to Simplicianus of 396, Augustine discusses Romans 9:11 in connection both with predestination ('How did God "know" Jeremiah before he formed him in the womb?') and with the *propria vita* theory of a double life. He

⁹⁸ For *massa* (or *conspersio*) see Romans 9.21. The idea was used by Ambrosiaster (*CommRom.* 5:12; 9:21; 1 Cor. 15:39), and appears first in Augustine (as *massa peccati*) in *ExpPropRom.* 62. Cf. *ExpGal.* 42; 83Q 68.3–4, etc. See D. Marafioti, 'Alle Origini del Teorema della Predestinazione (*Simpl* 1.2.13–22)', *CIA* (1987), II, 257–277, at 269 and Fredriksen (1988: 99).

⁹⁹ If my boldness (*vis-à-vis* O'Connell (1987)) is justified in taking *Ep.* 98 as a startlingly clear appearance of the 'transpersonal' theory, then his arguments for redating a second edition of *PeccMer.* to 417/8 are weakened. For we do not need to wait till about 417 before expecting a developed use of the idea of a *propria vita*. In any case its appearance in the sixth book of the *Literal Commentary* (surely of approximately AD 412) seriously militates against O'Connell's view.

¹⁰⁰ TeSelle (1978: 70, 257) dates *GenLitt.* 6.14–16 to 406. This might be right, but his arguments are not compelling; see *contra* O'Connell (1987: 184, note 16).

expresses puzzlement – perhaps it is beyond the wit of man to understand – as to how God could have known Jeremiah in such circumstances, making it once again clear that in his view a human being (namely Jeremiah) only lives his ‘personal life’ from the day he is ‘brought out into the light of this world’. (In context this last phrase must refer to conception rather than birth.) Thus another kind of life, a life before this one, is left as a possibility; though it is certainly not an individual life.

Besides all these ‘personal life’ passages which suggest that we have a special ‘private’ or ‘individual’ life as distinct from a ‘common’ one which we may have lived and still live ‘elsewhere’, and as a result of which, apparently, the blame of Adam can still be attached to us, there is a further series of texts – from about 410 to Augustine’s final book, the *Incomplete Work against Julian* – which specifically say that we are all one in Adam. The origin of this phrase is mysterious; perhaps Augustine originally took it from Ambrose’s commentary on Luke.¹⁰¹ He does not mention its origin, and the frequency of its appearance would suggest that he thought of it as Scriptural. Yet although it represents what Augustine thought he had found in Scripture (e.g. 1 Cor. 15; Romans 5.12, etc.) about our common life, death and unity in Adam, there is no exact Scriptural source. Whatever its source, Augustine must have found it so apposite and succinct that he used it many times.¹⁰²

What then are to be our provisional conclusions as to this strange set of ideas about human nature? Certainly that to identify us just as a body-soul ‘mixture’ (as Augustine himself usually does) is incomplete and misleading. For our soul itself is both something of the common soul of the human race, and at the same time an individual part of that common soul by which individual bodies are regulated (in so far as they are regulated) in our earthly lives. For each of us is not only himself but the whole of humanity. Moreover, as we were all one in Adam, and ‘fell’ in Adam, so we (not just I or any one of us individually) are also all one in Christ,¹⁰³ and in a sense Christ is ‘all of us’. Christian this certainly is, though we cannot but be reminded also of the saying of Plotinus that we are each an intelligible world (*kosmos noētos*, *Ennead* 3.4.3.22). Certainly for a Christian Plotinus to be one in

¹⁰¹ So Solignac (1956: 379, note 61); Ambrose, *Expos. in Luc.* 7.234 (PL xv: 1852).

¹⁰² Solignac lists *Sermo* 165 (? AD 417), *EnPs.* 85 (84).7 (after 410), *CD* 13.14 (? 417), *PeccMer.* 3.7.14 (411/2), *DNC* 2.5.15 (421), *OpImp.* 2.177 (429).

¹⁰³ Cf. T. J. van Bavel, ‘The Double Face of Love in St. Augustine: The Daring Inversion: Love is God’, *CIA* (1987a), III, 69–80, at 73.

Christ would involve being one in something 'higher' than in Soul (i.e. in Adam). Yet Plotinus is also wrong, in Augustine's view, if he thinks that such an intelligible nature is all that we are. The human complex, including the body, is both in Adam and in Christ more mysterious and more uniquely individualized than its *common* humanity or even its *common* likeness to God. Augustine's 'double-life' theory, though developed, as we have seen, for predominantly theological reasons, might well have seemed attractive for reasons more philosophical. It seems to go some way towards doing justice both to the metaphysical claims of Plotinus about human identity with one another, and with the historical claims of Christianity about the importance of human individuality and uniqueness.

Greek thinkers, and notoriously Plato in the *Phaedo*, are rather cavalier with the distinction between the survival of souls and the survival of personal individuals. This may have some connection with the fact that, for Plato, individuality, being a mark of variation from the perfect, and thus a defect, must be qualitatively overcome – at least to a very large degree. By his theory of the double self, both common in Adam and individual in our 'personal' lives, Augustine manages to transcend these ambiguities – though at a price. There is a defective individuality in our fallen state, but there is also a common humanity, represented perfectly by Christ and imperfectly by the 'solidarity' of the human race with Adam. We too were once, as it were, the Soul of Man. Now our humanity is also differentiated into our separate lives, each governed by personal histories and experiences in the body and in time. Moreover, these separate lives are marked by selfishness and exploitation, but the Incarnation (where Man again becomes a man) shows that these are the true defects, and that they are no necessary marks of individuality, but that individual men must be located in their relation to God not only metaphysically but also historically.

THE WORLD WE HAVE LOST

Presumably it would once have been easy for Adam and Eve to understand themselves. The fall makes it more difficult, indeed impossible, to comprehend the abyss of our own heart (*On Psalms* 42 (41).13). We have lost the sense, and in practice the reality, of our unity as individuals. Our 'personal identity' is now only to be understood 'in logic'; it is something to regain painfully. (No wonder that philosophers, without the assistance of revelation and theology,

fail to understand it, for we are still, in this life, a bundle of competing selves.) We do not know how far Augustine had progressed in his earliest writings in elaborating the subtle distinctions between various kinds of human 'knowledge' – and their various limitations – which are developed in *The Trinity*. We do know, however, that when he completed *On Human Responsibility*, if not before, he held that in our fallen condition, and as a direct result of the fall, we are invincibly ignorant of much that is of great, even of supreme importance, and that we are morally weak: we are subject to what he calls 'ignorance' and 'difficulty'.

This suggestion is both a thesis and a purported explanation. Augustine claims to be able to observe that we do not know what we need to know (for example about the soul, God, or the means to the good life); even of happiness we know that we want it, but we do not know what will make us happy either individually or as a race. Moreover, we are not only ignorant; following the assertion of Paul that what we would not, that we do, Augustine increasingly believes that we both suffer massively from what, since Aristotle, had been referred to as *acrasia*, weakness of will, and that we exhibit a peculiar moral ambiguity. The human condition can be briefly summed up as: 'It is I who willed it, and I who did not – the same I' (*Confessions* 8.10.22).

Augustine claimed, at least in late writings like *Rebuke and Grace* and parts of the *City of God*, that even before the fall, since Adam might not always *want* (*velle*) to do the good he had the capacity to do, he required God's assisting grace, an *adiutorium sine quo non*, to *persist* (*permanere*) in good actions.¹⁰⁴ Our immediate concern, however, is with the degree of our present weakness and dividedness, and (in the next chapter) with Augustine's view that without God's *further* assistance (as an *adiutorium quo*) we cannot perform even a single perfectly good act: a view in which we shall find an elegant combination of Saint Paul with the Stoics.

The problem of exactly how much we are morally weakened by the fall can best be understood by considering what has happened to our 'free will'. In brief, Augustine's mature view (at least after 411) is expressed as follows: Adam before the Fall was able to decide between good and evil. He knew the difference between good and evil, and exercised the 'lesser virtue' of making the right choice: yet he remained in the position of both knowing what is evil and of somehow being able to choose it (*posse peccare*). (God,

¹⁰⁴ See DCG 11 (esp. 11.31) and 12, with *Ench.* 28.106. Cf. CD 14.27: 'bene vivere sine adiutorio Dei, etiam in Paradiso, non erat in potestate'. That is, Adam's good will would 'wane'.

on the other hand, knows what is evil and 'cannot' choose it.)¹⁰⁵

This account of unfallen Adam is odder than it looks. On the one hand Adam has God's help (the *adiutorium sine quo non*), and seems thus to be godly; on the other he has an absolute freedom of moral choice between good and evil – which God could not have in the same sense. Yet one reading of such absolute freedom is not only theologically problematic, it is also a philosophical chimaera, for a being who possessed it must be neither moral nor immoral, but seems to function from some kind of dispassionate 'Cartesian' standpoint. Being outside moral 'space' he would arguably not be human at all! At any rate, Adam would be debating whether to be moral or not. But if that were so, we would have another reason to suppose that his fall is 'necessary', or bad luck, or plain unintelligible, or that he had nowhere to fall from – being at first 'pre-moral' or even already evil.

Clearly Augustine would reject the first two of these supposed implications of his thesis about Adam, as well as the thesis itself.¹⁰⁶ He

¹⁰⁵ For Adam's original *bona voluntas*, and the *libertas* which went with it, see Gilson (1961: 323–324); M. T. Clark, *Augustine: Philosopher of Freedom* (New York 1958), 45, 49 and below p. 186. This *libertas*, and its corresponding *virtus*, is eventually called *minor* (*DCG* 12.33); see A. Trapè, 'Libertà e Grazia', *CIA* (1987), 1, 189–202, at 190–191. Its possessor is able not to sin, but is not unable to sin. Such 'free will' is inferior to the freedom of God, for God has the physical power to do ill and full knowledge of what evil is, but, being good, would never exercise his power to do evil. In that sense he *cannot* sin because he does not *want* to. God (and the saints in glory) thus have 'free will', but at the same time cannot choose to sin. They enjoy the 'to-be-longed-for necessity' (*desideranda necessitas*, *OpImp.* 5.61) which is 'freedom', and, in the case of the saints, the longed-for reward (*CD* 22.20.3). The saints are no longer 'condemned' to be 'free' (in e.g. Sartre's sense). (On God's inability to act wrongly, see further chapter 7.)

The *libertas minor* of Adam consisted in his possessing an inclination to good, and in being subject to no internal contradictions (no 'concupiscence' for the body and no struggle of the 'carnal' against the spirit: cf. again *Conf.* 8.9–10; *CD* 5.9.4, with Solignac (1956: 364)). But even Adam needed the *adiutorium sine quo non* if his power to act well was to be sustained. As for us, only further grace (*adiutorium quo*) from God can grant the *libertas maior* of heaven. To deny that would in fact be a *logical* mistake, for nothing but God can be God and perform God's works. (Cf. *Ench.* 28.106, where Augustine argues that just as a man could kill himself but not extend his life, so even Adam could sin, but could not, unless helped, avoid sin.)

For further discussion of 'posse non peccare, non posse non peccare, non posse peccare', see Solignac (1956: 359–368), and for the four stages of human history (before the Law, under the Law, under Grace, in Peace), see W. S. Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (AD 394–396)', *AS* 10 (1979), 55–74, at 59–60. The four stages are expounded at *83Q* 66.3 and *ExPropRom.* 13–18.

¹⁰⁶ Contrary to Augustine (*OpImp.* 3.117), Julian of Eclanum (following Pelagius, *Ep.* 186.10.34) thought that the freedom of the will (*libertas arbitrii*), or 'free will' – Julian seems to use both phrases without distinction – is 'the possibility of good and evil, but voluntarily so' (*OpImp.* 6.11) and involves being 'emancipated' from God (*OpImp.* 1.78). That, for Augustine, is certainly impossible, even for unfallen Adam, for to be emancipated from God is to be outside God's 'family' (see R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge 1990), 55). According to Augustine, Julian's approach would deny free will even to God himself (*OpImp.* 5.38).

always maintained that Adam had everything in his favour to encourage him to choose the good; his attitude, therefore, could not be 'dispassionate'. That reply, however, does not seem to be adequate, for if Adam really does have a choice (and he does, since he chose evil), all the advantages he has do not alter the fact that his choice is directly between good and evil, and therefore that (at least at his moment of decision-making for evil) he is neither good nor evil – or is he already evil? But if already evil, when did he become evil? Yet if he is not yet evil, he is, after all, somehow to be thought of as a man, but his behaviour looks at worst 'pre-moral'; Julian, indeed, thought of him as a 'moral primitive'. His wrong choice is certainly not due to evil habits. He almost seems to 'plump' for evil.¹⁰⁷

Leaving unfallen Adam aside, our concern is with the position of *fallen* man. That position seems to be that, unless given further divine assistance, man is unable to choose the good (*non posse non peccare*), either in the sense that his good actions are never 'wholly good', because not motivated by pure love (which will be considered in the next chapter) or in the sense that at some point he will certainly choose evil. When Augustine says, as he normally does say, that fallen man has 'free choice', he means that it is man alone who decides what he will do; he is pulled by no 'Manichaean' outside force. He also means that fallen man will choose what is wrong. A theological corollary of this is that, although man has free choice of his actions, he will exercise his choice in such a way that, unless God intervenes, he cannot be saved. In that sense – and it is vital to keep the different senses distinct – he is *not* free, and it is a matter for God alone to determine who will be freed for salvation. Augustine prefers to put it somewhat differently: man is free (*liberum*) to do what he likes, but he is not freed (*liberatum*) from sin (*Rebuke and Grace* 13.42) – and this latter unfreedom will be disastrous. As Augustine had said as early as *On Human Responsibility*, freedom (*libertas*) is being subject to truth;¹⁰⁸ we need to be *freed* from fallen 'free' choice.

But if in our fallen state we must sin – and are not free not to – does

¹⁰⁷ For Julian's Adam as a moral primitive, see M. Lamberigts, 'Julien d'Eclane et Augustin d'Hippone: Deux conceptions d'Adam', *CAug.*, 1, 373–410, at 376–379. Augustine disagrees. A characteristic Pelagian line is that Adam lived in such primitive times that he did not even have the advantage (to concentrate the mind) of seeing the execution of a human being (cf. P. R. L. Brown, 'Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment', *JTS* 19 (1968), 93–114, at 112).

¹⁰⁸ The definition of freedom is, of course, not new with Augustine; cf. *libertas* as *Deo parere* in Seneca, *De Vita Beata* 15.7.

Augustine also hold that for those (however many there are) to whom God grants the necessary additional aid (the *adiutorium quo*), there is no option but salvation? Is our weakness such that we have become virtual puppets of God?¹⁰⁹ It is certainly true that Augustine intends to distinguish those of us to whom God gives the grace necessary for good works, and hence salvation, both from unfallen Adam, who had a plain option to choose right or wrong, and in a sense seems to be 'pre-moral', and from the saints in heaven for whom wrongdoing is not an option. But is there any third intelligible position for us, other than that of puppets of God? Augustine thinks that there is, and in his later writings he often summed up his approach in the words of a text of Proverbs (8.35): the will is prepared by God (*voluntas praeparatur a Deo*). Detailed treatment of the nature of 'the will' must await the next chapter; it will be sufficient for now to see how Augustine would reply to the charge that the elect on earth are puppets. His argument, as we have seen, would be that far from grace taking away 'free will', it actually restores it (*Letter* 157.2.10), or releases us from its corrupt mutation, i.e. our delusion that to do 'as we like' is freedom. He does not say that grace is irresistible, but that it is 'effective' in that it provides the will with 'most effective strength' (*Grace and Free Will* 16.32), so that it unconquerably desires the good (*Rebuke and Grace*

¹⁰⁹ I used the term 'puppets' of the elect several times in an earlier discussion of predestination (J. M. Rist, 'Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', *JTS* 20 (1969b), 420–447, at 429, 435 = *Augustine*, ed. Markus, 218–252 = *Platonism and its Christian Heritage* (London 1985), essay xiii). Some of that material should be modified, but it is not as immediately helpful as it might seem to say that the elect are not puppets because they can choose humility (as does D. J. McQueen, 'Augustine on Free Will and Predestination: A Critique of J. M. Rist', *Museum: West African Journal of Theology* (1974) 17–28), for (at least after 396) the option of humility itself is a gift of God – or we are back at a morality of works. Certainly humility restores 'freedom', but man has no choice of humility. A similar philosophical mistake seems to be made by Trapè (1987: 200–202), who speaks of love rather than humility, though Trapè is well aware that love is a gift.

McQueen may be right, however, in an indirect sense, in that humility – but not as understood by Augustine – may afford an answer to the dilemma. Augustine's problem may be that his concept of humility itself is too broad and unanalysed. For Augustine, humility involves a recognition of our status as created beings, but another kind of humility might be the mere recognition of our moral inadequacy – which could arise entirely outside any theistic understanding of the world. That, as is the case with the modern notion of existential meaninglessness, could induce not hope but despair. Yet perhaps humility as a sense of moral inadequacy (though not perverted into despair) would help Augustine. But putting it like that, and making distinctions of that sort, is what Augustine might have seen, or even should have seen, not what he actually said. For further possible *developments* of Augustine along these lines see chapter 8.

Despite its date, A. Rottmann's study of these aspects of Augustine is still basic reading (*Der Augustinismus. Eine dogmengeschichtliche Studie* (Munich 1892), with a French translation by J. Liébaert in *MSR* 6 (1949), 29–48).

11.35) and is led along unswervingly and (externally) unstoppably, so that it *will* not be corrupted again. God helps the elect to heaven just as we might help a wounded man across a road which he certainly *wants* to cross. Clearly the sense of such assertions depends on what Augustine understands by the internal transformation of a 'free will'.

The function of grace, according to Augustine, is not to drag us, kicking and screaming, to salvation, but to allow us to want and to do the things that are right and in every sense desirable. For no one is just against his will (*Unfinished Work* 3.122).¹¹⁰ We shall want to do the right if we love the right, so that once we are 'prepared' to love well, we shall need no manipulation, but simply God's support to keep us going. Augustine likes to compare us to the lame who are kept going by an external aid, so that when God prepares our wills, he is not manipulating us, but restoring us. If we were 'healthy' and 'whole', we really would choose the right, and choose it willingly and freely. There are, of course, difficulties with the analogy: to be a *moral* cripple who is made into a morally good man is to experience an imposition on the whole personality (it might seem like a brainwashing, but in a good sense of the word) to which no assistance given to a physical cripple can be a close parallel. Indeed the lame are given largely external support, but God's grace works within us, restoring us internally.

It is true that it is by 'external' means, by the arrangement of the circumstances of a man's life, as the next chapter will show, that God brings about this internal change and thus draws us to himself: 'Nemo venit ad me nisi Pater traxerit eum' (John 6.44), cited against Julian in the *Incomplete Work* (1.110), is a favourite text with Augustine. Yet the external circumstances are merely the means which God uses; the alteration wrought is unambiguously internal. Furthermore, the effect of such internal support would seem to be a re-creation of ourselves into something better; which is precisely what Augustine says it is. Is a remade self the same self, or has God substituted something different, cancelling the preceding historical sequence? That would not necessarily be so, even in a sudden conversion, let alone in a gradual change over time, but the problem is made the more difficult in that the recreated self is not just the moral self as it would have been had Adam not fallen; it is a better self than Adam ever was.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *CFort.* 20 and *De2An.* 10.12 on the claim that one cannot be compelled to will.

On the other hand, it is the constant claim of Augustine that God is within us more than we are within ourselves (*intimior intimo meo*, *Confessions* 3.6.11) – a very strong explication of the theme that we are created in the image of God, for the cause remains in the effect. It gives a ‘metaphysical’ rather than an arbitrary explanation of the insistence in *Rebuke and Grace* (14.45) that God has our ‘wills’ in his power more than we do ourselves, confirming that the changing of our ‘wills’ by God is no mere ‘imposition’: we never were – even in Adam – what we thought we were. But if this is the case, then the language of ‘re-creation’ seems inappropriate, or at least too absolute. The conversion and transformation of Saul into Paul is Augustine’s star example of the concrete workings of grace. He cites it against the Pelagians (e.g. *Grace and Free will* 5.12); he insists that although Paul was re-created, he was still the same moral self that he might have been and ought to have been.

Augustine does not pursue these problems with sufficient precision, and they must be left aside. Even if his understanding of the shattered identity of fallen man constitutes some kind of a defence of the free will of the elect, it raises the question of why we are not all elect – as Augustine certainly held – in a very acute form. For if God’s grace is to be understood as a necessary support for our flickering desire for the good to make us ‘ourselves’, a desire which, if we were sound, we should always nourish (though by no logical necessity), how does that grace come to be limited? That in its turn raises questions of the nature of God’s omnipotence which will be discussed in a later chapter. Not the least of them is why God did not create some (or all) of us as ‘heavenly’ (in ‘peace’) in the first place. For then, in Adam, we would have been the integrated persons we might have been, and which we might still be.

DIFFICULTAS AND CONCUPISCENTIA

Augustine’s claims about ‘ignorance’ and ‘difficulty’, the twin forms of weakness endemic in fallen man, are first elaborated in *On Human Responsibility*. They persist in his later works, and though the terminology may vary, it is not discarded; indeed *On Human Responsibility* is quoted in *The Gift of Perseverance* (11.27). Perhaps as a result of his study of Scripture, especially of Romans, however, Augustine is more sparing about the word ‘difficulty’, often replacing it by ‘concupis-

cence'.¹¹¹ For the moment we may retain that literal rendering of *concupiscentia*.

The wages of sin are death, and death is the principal consequence of the fall. But with death comes the weakened state which begins and entails the coming destruction of the human being. For the concupiscence which arises from the fall, that 'struggle of the flesh against the spirit', specially symbolized for Augustine by the unchosen or autonomous erections of the penis, is importantly different from the 'triple concupiscence' (even from the lust of the eyes, let alone from the lust for power ('ambitio saeculi, libido dominandi')) which, roughly coagulating as pride, constitutes man's first sinfulness.¹¹² In Augustine's mature writings *concupiscentia* is not so much the active attitude, the lust of a man which constitutes his sin, but a defect in man which is the effect of sin, the permanent weakness which we have inherited from Adam. Thus thinking in a rather Stoic manner, Augustine holds that *concupiscentia* (the weakness we have for things, as we might speak of having a weakness for wine, or for men) is not in itself sinful, but becomes so in virtue of our consenting to it.¹¹³ Such weakness, according to Augustine, though certainly penal, can be 'used well', just as in the symbol of the penis, sexual desire, though out of rational control, can be fruitfully harnessed in marriage.¹¹⁴ In general, the overcoming of weakness, that is, of our lack of control over our bodies, desires and fantasies, can become the occasion for

¹¹¹ According to R. Dodaro, "'Christus Iustus" and Fear of Death in Augustine's Dispute with Pelagius', *SP*, 341-361, at 346-347, Augustine treats *ignorantia* and *infirmetas* as parts of *concupiscentia*; cf. *PeccMer.* 1.36.67; 2.2.2; 2.17.26; *SL* 35.63; *DNC* 3.3. The less 'intellectualist' *caecitas cordis* is to be found at *OpImp.* 5.17. The pair *ignorantia/concupiscentia* is to be found at *Ench.* 8.24, and *ignorantia/infirmetas* at 22.81 (cf. *Sermo* 182.6). For *infirmetas/fragilitas*, see Bartelink (1991).

¹¹² For an introduction to the different senses of *concupiscentia*, see G. Bonner, 'Libido and Concupiscentia in St. Augustine', *Studia Patristica* 6 (= *TU* 81) (1962), 303-314 and F.J. Thonnard, 'La notion de concupiscence en philosophie augustinienne', *RA* 3 (1965a), 259-287. Thonnard, however, tends to treat Augustine as a systematic phenomenologist, so that while identifying a number of different meanings of the word, he has little to say about the developments of those meanings in their historical sequence.

¹¹³ For assenting to 'concupiscence' as sin, cf. *DNC* 1.23.25; *CzEp.* 1.13.27; *CJul.* 5.3.8. Thus *concupiscentia* has some relationship to the Stoic *propatheia*, represented for the Romans by the involuntary shudder which even the hero might have experienced when Hannibal appeared at the gates of Rome. According to the Stoics, the hero would sin if he then consented to the proposition that death is to be feared. See Inwood (1985: 175-181) and C.H. Kahn, 'Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine', in *The Question of Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, eds. J.M. Dillon and A.A. Long (Berkeley 1988), 234-259, at 246-247. O'Daly comments (1987: 89) on *CD* 14.6 that the Stoic 'intellectualist' assent is given a voluntarist twist. The contrast is accurate though the terminology may mislead.

¹¹⁴ See especially *DNC*. Further comment can be found in Appendix 3 below.

virtuous actions, and thus the location of the graceful actions of God.

Thus, it seems that after *On Human Responsibility*, and especially after the outbreak of the Pelagian disputes, Augustine preferred to think of the relevant after-effects of the fall as 'weakness', as liability to temptation, rather than as impotence in the sense of an inability to achieve what we want to achieve. The new distinction does not replace the old, but the new language better suggests a more basic weakness, a weakness more universal among humankind; it also sounds less like a claim in ethics, and more like a claim in philosophical psychology.

Augustine's original interpretation of our human condition is that we struggle and fail to do what we want to do and know that we ought to do – the classical problem of weakness of will or *acrasia*. But typically *acrasia* is thought of as a special problem which we face from time to time. We recognize *acrasia* in ourselves – as does Leonteus in the fourth book of Plato's *Republic* (439E6–440A3) whose eyes 'liked' looking at corpses dangling from a gibbet – and in others;¹¹⁵ but it is an *acrasia* which is tied to specific weaknesses: the man who yearns for vodka, and who tries and fails to limit his vodka-intake, may have no serious difficulty in avoiding over-eating. But *concupiscentia*, as the later Augustine saw it, is all-pervasive. Augustine does not mean to deny that some people are more tempted by one thing, others by another, but he insists that no one should imagine himself wholly free of (or freed from) any temptation. If we claim that we are, we are liable to be tripped up. The unwanted sexual arousal (which symbolizes, and is an example of, the broader phenomenon of *concupiscentia*) is neither the only, nor the most important, nor the most dangerous of such 'weaknesses'. Yet like the others it is, and marks, the divided self (*Confessions* 10.28.39), the self that neither knows what it is nor what it wants.

With *difficultas*, then, the emphasis is on trying and failing. If Adam had tried in Paradise, he would not have failed. (You cannot try to pay the waiter, but fail.) But *concupiscentia* in Augustine's later acceptance has nothing particular to do with trying at all. It is not a word which signifies that we fail *from time to time* or in a particular moral area; it is a permanent condition or state in which the whole of humanity finds itself, or rather which it has 'in Adam' brought upon

¹¹⁵ Augustine knew of *acrasia* long before reading Paul on Romans. Stoic texts regularly discussed 'slavery' of this kind; cf. Cicero, *Paradox. St.* 5.33–35, and Ovid, *Met.* 7.20–21 – the classic text – 'video meliora proboque / deteriora sequor'; for Chrysippus see *SVF* 3.473.

itself. The saints are never free from temptation (*Sermon* 77A.1). Even St Paul, the old Augustine happily informs us, would not have been free from inappropriate sexual desires;¹¹⁶ nor was Bishop Augustine himself when he wrote his *Confessions* (10.30.41), though now their force is powerful only in his dreams.¹¹⁷ The critical weakness of the human race is revealed by freak pieces of behaviour, often sexual behaviour: an eighty-four year old ascetic (continent with his wife for twenty-five years) startled everyone by buying a 'lyre-girl' for sex (*Against Julian* 3.11.22). Hence, as we shall see in the next chapter, chastity, viewed as sexual integrity (*Confessions* 10.29.40), is an essential part of that wholeness which we need to recover.

As Augustine grew older he especially emphasized another ineradicable weakness – one which he had previously claimed most Christians could eradicate: the fear of death. After 415 he emphasizes that it is 'natural', that is, in accordance with our second nature:¹¹⁸ it afflicted Peter and Paul.¹¹⁹ This second nature, or second 'self' – which cannot be wholly corrupt or it would not be a 'nature' – is the fruit of our habits, good and bad. Its persistence, together with the persistence of 'genetic' *concupiscentia*, throughout our lives makes it necessary for all of us to pray for perseverance to the end.

For the present, let us note that 'difficulty' is a kind of species within the broader concept of *concupiscentia*. For of all the moral actions which are subject to our inherent weakness in the face of various temptations, those in which we try (and fail) to do better are only a small group. Furthermore, the fact that we do not know the limits of our weakness, of our inability to live a moral life, is another feature – not greatly emphasized by Augustine in this context – of our general failure to understand the 'mystery' that we are; to understand indeed that in our fallen state our nature is significantly irrational and hence unintelligible. For not only is our mind too weakened to be able to understand ourselves, but the inherent irrationality of our sinfulness would seem to render us necessarily unintelligible to ourselves and to our now rather perverted powers of introspection. (Should Augustine have said, indeed, that we are unintelligible even to God?)

¹¹⁶ *C2EpPel.* 1.8.13; 1.11.24; Brown (1967: 147).

¹¹⁷ But he is still responsible for his dreams in that they are *his* dreams (Matthews 1981). He regrets them without being guilty of them.

¹¹⁸ The notion of a 'second nature' (*DeMag.* 6.7.19, *DLA* 3.18.52) will be discussed in the next chapter; Augustine presumably derived the phrase from Cicero (*De Fin.* 5.25.74).

¹¹⁹ *IoEv.* 123.5; *Sermo* 76.3.4; 297.2.3; 299.8–9; cf. van Bavel (1954: 136). Dozens more texts along the same lines are supplied by Dodaro (1989: 355–361).

The 'fragility of goodness' has recently been identified as a fundamentally Greek recognition,¹²⁰ and earlier scholars have realized that the Greeks feared for the fragility of civilized society itself.¹²¹ Oddly enough, in Augustine such ideas have returned with a vengeance, and now it is not only that most human goodness is fragile and that most members of society are fallible; the weakness extends to all of us individually and in every moral respect. Here indeed is Augustine's 'Christian egalitarianism': a recognition of the equal plight of mankind, but in a very non-classical sense.

As we have already suggested, Augustine's observations about ignorance, difficulty and weakness throw the idea of personal identity itself into further confusion. There is a sense in which personal identity is something we have lost, or perhaps never owned. For our sense of identity is certainly connected with the *memoria* which prescribes the limits of our thinking (cf. *cogitandi modus*, *The Trinity* 11.8.14), linking our experience of the past with its continuity into the present.¹²² As for the future, our 'fragility' is absolute, dependent on our own weak powers and God's grace. Preaching in 411 Augustine emphasized the point once more: 'I, the bishop who speak to you in the name of the Lord, do not know what kind of man I am, and how much less do you know. I can have some notion of what I am at this moment, but how can I know what I shall be and when I shall become it' (*Sermon* 340A.8). Strictly speaking, only God exhibits the features of an intelligible kind of personal identity, for although outside time, he can forget nothing of his eternal nature or of the actions and events of the created universe which are laid out for him in the 'expansiveness' (*distentio*) of his mind. Human beings have lost such powers, even so far as we possessed them in the nature of the unfallen Adam.

Adam was indeed created in the image and likeness of God, but now we are only likenesses at second hand: we are likenesses of the fallen Adam, not directly of Adam's original prototype who is God himself. Hence we have lost the understanding of ourselves that we once had, and insofar as we have lost it, we have lost our sense of

¹²⁰ Notably by M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge 1980), behind whom lies the strong influence of Bernard Williams.

¹²¹ See especially G. Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 4th edn (Oxford 1934: 9-11).

¹²² But our ignorance even of the present is startling: we cannot remember what we know and do not know what we remember. O'Daly (1987: 148-149) notes a reference in *AnOr.* 4.7.9-10 to Simplicius, an old friend of Augustine's from his youth who did not realize what a phenomenal memory he had until he found himself able to recite Virgil and Cicero at will. On ignorance more generally, *AnOr.* 4.6.8-4.9.13. Full 'memory' would mean integrated identity; now we have an 'unmeasurable life' (*Conf.* 4.17.26).

personal identity too. We do not know who or what we are. We can only realize (somewhat as the Platonists can still realize the existence of eternal, unchanging realities) the fact of our loss, and occasionally get glimpses of what might have been. We are able neither to understand our own minds nor to control our own bodies, and we run the risk of becoming further fractured into more and more weakened, would-be-autonomous units. As all else that is truly good in the 'natural' Augustine (or in anyone else), his personal identity (and ours) – envisaged as the harmony of a man with a pure and undivided heart – exists in hope, in a future state where Adam will be not just repaired but remade and improved.

IDLE CURIOSITY

In Augustine's writings about the phenomenologically observable results of the fall, there is certainly more emphasis on our weakness, our liability to temptation and our impotence in achieving morally correct behaviour, than on the other effect of Adam's sin: that is, his 'ignorance'. This is because Augustine, deliberately rejecting a constant tendency in classical thinkers, and in Stoicism in particular, to locate the springs of human action in proper or perverse *reasoning or calculating*, considers that the chief determinant of human behaviour is the 'set' of our 'will', which is itself nothing more than the congealed sum of our loves and hates. Nonetheless, Augustine not unreasonably assumes that we are largely ignorant of ourselves as of the world around us and of the dictates of the moral law. We see through a glass darkly (*The Trinity* 14.5.23). Moreover, as a loss of our sense of a just hierarchy leads to the abuse he names lust for power, and a loss of a sense of the proper use of sexuality leads to the lust for bodies, so a loss of genuine understanding leads to (and is betrayed by) a specific intellectual abuse, a 'false knowledge' (*falsa scientia*, *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* 1.21.38) over and above all congenital ignorance. That intellectual abuse is the third part of the 'triple concupiscence': idle curiosity (*curiositas*), the desire to know what 'should not be known',¹²³ in a search for 'figments' (*per imaginationes quasdam*).

¹²³ On *curiositas* generally, see A. Labhardt, 'Curiositas. Notes sur l'histoire d'un mot et d'une notion', *MH* 17 (1960), 206–224; for its place within the 'triple concupiscence', see O'Connell (1968: 175–182), though according to O'Connell the Plotinian parallels seem to be rather formal (cf. also Du Roy (1966: 345)). The theme is particularly common in the 390s: *DVR* 29.52; 49.94; 53.103; *DUC* 9.22, but note also the very late *Sermo* 68.8 on Mt. 11:25. (In chapter 7 Peter trembled and Plato – typically, in Augustine's view – did not at the mention of humility.) For *libido sciendi* see *CFaust.* 10.35.54.

Such idle curiosity is not to be seen merely, or even primarily, as a fault in our intellectual functioning; it also has to do with what we want to know, and with how we choose to know; with our priorities, with a perverse notion of the order of things and ultimately with an idolatrous worship of ourselves as knowers. In some respects it is a remarkably sophisticated notion, of very considerable antiquity in its philosophical and theological origins, but Augustine's use of it possesses excessive flexibility, and that has done his reputation no good. Some critics even claim that Augustine's attitude to 'non-theological' learning was a major stumbling block in the development of European thought. There is a certain truth in that charge,¹²⁴ but it is not substantiated, nor are the genuine difficulties of the matter – of which Augustine is aware – made easier to resolve by the frequent and uncritical counter-claim that all enquiry is in and of itself a good to be pursued. Unheeding advocates of this sort of 'progress' rarely pause – at least when attempting an evaluation of the past – to consider whether it really is not idle curiosity, for example, to want to know exactly the degree of pain felt by a tortured animal (or human), or whether such knowledge, even if hitherto unrecorded, should always be a licensed subject for research. The force of such examples can show us that Augustine (and his predecessors both Christian and pagan) were right to suppose that there is such a thing as idle curiosity.

The real problem, to which Augustine failed to find a satisfactory solution, is that if we rightly allow that there is a vice of idle curiosity, there remains the question of determining which forms of intellectual enquiry are legitimate – even highly useful and desirable – and which not. As Augustine realized, it is a question of 'due order', of distinguishing between lesser and greater goods, and beyond that of keeping intellectual enquiry within the limits of moral behaviour, or of a religious life. Augustine's own views developed. First came a heady enthusiasm for revising the curriculum of the liberal arts in the service of Christianity. He was hoping to develop such a curriculum when he retired from Milan to Cassiciacum, and his *On Music* and *On Dialectic* are the fragmentary surviving pieces of the abandoned project. Later he embarked on a programme of retrenchment, and in the protracted *Christian Teaching* established two touchstones for worthwhile learning: it directly furthers our understanding of the Bible – which leaves something to be said for certain kinds of music (2.18.28), for history (2.28.42), and for mathematics (2.31.48),

¹²⁴ According to *Ench.* 3.9 Greek physics has nothing to contribute in matters of religion. Such remarks, however, require careful interpretation; see the discussion below.

though not for fine art (2.25.39); and it provides for the necessities of life such as clothes to differentiate the sexes and different social standings!

Subsequent debate about Augustine's attitude to culture hung on whether these guidelines were to be broadly or narrowly interpreted. Clearly Augustine wanted to discourage any learning which appeared to diminish the influence of Christianity and of Scripture, but, perhaps over-confident at the apparent expansion of Christianity, he failed to consider whether short-term gains which might be obtained from discouraging 'secular' or 'pagan' learning might not be outweighed by long-term losses. Thus he thinks that history (2.28.42) and natural science (2.29.45) have practical as well as theological uses, but that although Platonism can be pillaged for what is useful to Christians, there is apparently no *further* truth to be acquired from secular philosophy in the future (2.40.60). Even on the assumption that the Bible contains all truth, that is a false inference since even the mistakes of future philosophers might enable the truths of the Bible to be understood better than before. At the very least, such matters require wise judgement, and Augustine assumes too quickly that such judgement is readily available to the honest Christian.

Augustine seems to have made the mistake of supposing that, while the ability to pick and choose from ancient culture which his own considerable, though often rather unprofessional, knowledge and education had given him, had helped him to discover many of the 'right answers', the 'syllabus' for future intellectual Christians could be restricted without damage now that those right answers had been obtained. Yet had he had to endure such a restricted syllabus himself, he would not have achieved what he achieved. More generally, one of the 'historical' tragedies of Augustine's career is that, whereas he himself had read widely in pagan literature and philosophy, his enormous reputation – and sometimes his own words – encouraged a tendency to think that the Bible, plus his own writings, not least *Christian Teaching*, should alone be studied, *instead of*, rather than as well as, the very texts which had helped him to materialize as what he was. People began to assume that Augustine's answers could be learned, his route to those answers being disregarded.

Towards the end of his life (as we noted earlier), at the request of Quodvultdeus, a deacon and future bishop of the Church at Carthage, Augustine compiled a handbook of heresies. As history and theology it is quite inadequate for the serious student, but it easily satisfied people who assumed that the hard path to wisdom which Augustine

himself had trodden could now be avoided by use of the master's 'quick-fix' text: something analogous to the material issued by 'crammers' for those wishing to 'satisfy' examiners.

Augustine certainly did not recognize the seriousness of the problems in which discussion of 'idle curiosity' (*curiositas*) might, or should, have involved him. Part of the explanation of this is the overwhelming importance which 'knowledge of God and the soul' had come to play for him from the time of his conversion. Such knowledge, he believed, could have come only from books of metaphysics (such as Plotinus' *Enneads*) or from the Bible and its exegetes: mostly of course 'Catholic' exegetes, but notice the supreme exception: the unorthodox Donatist Tyconius was immensely influential on Augustine in many ways,¹²⁵ and his *Book of Rules* is given great prominence in *Christian Teaching* itself (3.30.42–3.37.56).

Gradually, though Augustine continued to use much Plotinian material himself (not to speak of Cicero, Varro and many others), he came to *advocate* a more and more complete reliance on Scripture aided solely by Catholic exegesis and tradition: far from a doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, but an increasing withdrawal from secular thinking which in after times would delight Protestant Reformers in their campaign against what they dismissed as the Aristotelian secularism of Scholastic philosophy.

So if the first objection to 'idle curiosity' is that sometimes the concept could prove damaging to useful thought, the second criticism is that it entailed an unfortunate application of the proper principle of concentrating on first things first. To the credit side, however, was the reasonable aim of discouraging the collection of trivial bits of knowledge, an attitude which Augustine shared with a long tradition of Greek philosophers who had applauded the Heraclitean dictum that much learning does not teach sense. Augustine's legitimate anxieties¹²⁶ about trivia are in the context of a critique of the antiquarianism which often passed for wisdom in late antiquity, and which his own professional life as a rhetorician had given him ample opportunity to observe. He could regret the constant dissociation of

¹²⁵ For Tyconius, see P. Fredriksen (Landes), 'Tyconius and the End of the World', *REA* (1982) 59–75, M. Dulacy, 'L'Apocalypse. Augustin et Tyconius', in *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, ed. A. M. La Bonnardière, 369–386, P. Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame 1988), W. S. Babcock, *Tyconius: The Book of Rules* (Atlanta 1989), G. Bonner, 'Augustine and Millenarianism', in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams, (Cambridge 1989), 235–254.

¹²⁶ Noted especially by Marrou (1938).

form from content in the training of speakers, and thus of public figures in general. And in his proper rejection of the banalities of much contemporary culture, it is perhaps understandable that he failed to notice the near-disappearance of some babies with the bathwater.

A final, and perhaps the most compelling, reason for Augustine's strictures on *curiositas* was the association – not only by Christians – of 'idle curiosity' both with seeking what it is wrong to seek, and with using fascinating but improper (or even blasphemous) means in the search, itself often undertaken for trivial or self-interested reasons. In particular, Augustine worried about Manichaean astrology (*On Order* 2.15.42), and the use of magic or of what he thought of as its Neoplatonic equivalent, theurgy. Such practices were regularly said to 'elevate' the soul by the performance of rituals. In the *City of God* in particular, Augustine associates them both with Porphyry and with his fellow-African Apuleius, in whose home-town of Madaura he had himself studied, and towards whom he seems to have developed a mixture of love and hate. Interestingly, in Apuleius' own novel *The Golden Ass*, *curiositas* is finally shown to be vicious; but Augustine might not unreasonably have considered that book's moral framework in general to be but a tendentious pretext for titillating stories about sex and magic.¹²⁷ Or more likely he would not have even considered the moral framework to be moral, since it is associated with the worship of Isis.

Finally, before leaving 'idle curiosity', we should notice – for later consideration – an apparently 'consequentialist' aspect of Augustine's rather short-sighted attitude to secular learning: the end – the spread and deepening of Christianity – seems to justify the means, or at least encourage a carelessness or thoughtlessness about them. We shall find something similar when we consider Augustine's attitude to religious coercion (though not to lying 'in matters of religion'). In the case of idle curiosity Augustine seems to have assumed (without offering any theoretical framework as to the appropriateness of means to ends) that it is 'obvious' that matters of secondary importance – i.e. secular learning – should give way to those which are primary. Certainly he believed that whatever could be classified as idle curiosity is itself an

¹²⁷ For Manichaean *curiositas*, cf. *GenMan.* 2.26.40: 'qui terrena sapiunt et spiritualia terreno oculo inquirunt'. 'Curiositas' (*inter alia*) encourages the hero of the novel in his enthusiastic sexual combat with the slave-girl Fotis; his 'final cause' is the hope of learning her mistress' magical secrets; cf. G. N. Sandy, 'Serviles Voluptates in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Phoenix* 28 (1974), 234–244.

effect of the fall, and as such should be discouraged, even repressed.¹²⁸ The very attractiveness of *curiositas* is another symbol and sign of the postlapsarian disintegration of the psyche, and of its instability. It is a symbol too of our disharmony and hence unintelligibility to ourselves in our fallen state. For what if not a lack of self-knowledge is indicated by the fact that, while often declining to believe and understand what is good for us, we are simultaneously allured into wanting to know what, if known, can only be harmful?

WHY A COMPLETE METAPHYSICAL EXPLANATION OF MAN CANNOT (YET) BE GIVEN

In the earlier parts of this chapter we discussed Augustine's view of what we were intended to be, and what we have become. We saw how our 'ignorance' and 'difficulty', and our 'triple concupiscence' prevent us from understanding either our moral or our metaphysical structure, though they do not leave us in total darkness. Moreover, since we have still not touched upon the third 'concupiscence', the lust for power – which is better treated in connection with Augustine's account of human society – the darkness is even deeper than it has so far been presented.

For all that, books nine to fourteen of *The Trinity* argue that Man is a psychological image of the whole Trinity.¹²⁹ Augustine's minimal meaning is that our minds are constituted by three activities, only

¹²⁸ The question of the repression of *curiositas* is related to the question of the repression of the objects of *curiositas*. Augustine certainly thought that magical practices, indeed paganism in general, should be banned by law, and he approved the actions of Theodosius (and other emperors) in such cases. Somehow a bishop is able to tell which forms of *curiositas* should be physically discouraged and which left to the mercy of God. The curious problem of the special spiritual insight and honesty of bishops will be discussed further at pp. 244–245 below.

¹²⁹ Augustine's account of man as a *psychological* image is often contrasted with the view of Victorinus who more Neoplatonically saw man as an ontological image of the structure of God or of being itself. It is said that compared with the theory of Victorinus, Augustine's account remains at the level of an analogy (see P. Hadot, 'L'image de la Trinité dans l'âme chez Victorinus et chez saint Augustin', *Studia Patristica* 6 (1962), 409–442 (= TU 81)), but is a psychological image not a different *kind* of ontological image or even a different way of expressing an ontological image?

The *Confessions* shows that Trinitarian problems were already in Augustine's mind at the time of his conversion, and early indications of the theme of *De Trin.* 9–14 (that man is an analogue of the whole Trinity) appear at *Conf.* 13.11.12, where a blend of being, knowing and willing is seen as constituting the whole man. Augustine began to move towards this position during his time at Tagaste (389–391), and even before. See Du Roy (1966) for a detailed though over-schematic treatment. In his earlier life Augustine spoke traditionally of man as only 'in the image' of God. Strictly speaking only Christ is an image, and we are an image in him (cf. Markus 1964: 142, and 1967: 360–361). Later he held that we ourselves are images of the whole Trinity; see Teske, 'The Image and Likeness of God in Saint Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram Liber imperfectus*', *Augustinianum* 30 (1990), 441–451.

formally distinct, which he eventually prefers to identify as 'self-memory, self-understanding and self-willing'. Roughly, 'self-willing' is understood as 'self-loving' (cf. 9.4.4). These activities in God are obviously perfect, for he knows who he is, and knows it all the 'time', but they are imperfect in us, though we can become more and more godlike. Even after the fall, the mind in the image of God remains 'capable of divinity' (*capax Dei* 14.8.11),¹³⁰ though at present we are warped in two ways; that is, roughly, by our ignorance and difficulty. Hence we now do not know and cannot now know who we are. Even at our best we are only potentially capable of such self-knowledge and self-understanding,¹³¹ but the root of our knowledge is neither knowledge of intelligibles, nor of sensible objects, but of ourselves (ultimately in God) – though of ourselves *qua* intentional agents. Augustine uses the words *nosse* and *notitia* in this part of *The Trinity* to denote such awareness when it is still only implicit, when we do not yet understand (*scire, intelligere*).

Our intentionality also can obstruct our self-knowledge. Our self-knowledge can be distorted by the way we think of ourselves, and that in turn is distorted by our relations with the world around us. Though somehow retaining our original self-awareness, we allow this to be overshadowed by notions of ourselves constructed from our own fond imaginings and our own ideas, though since the fall these ideas are both corrupt in themselves and further corrupted by 'temptations' from outside. By adhering in love to the external world (10.5.7ff), we form a false 'knowledge' of ourselves: our *verbum* of ourselves is distorted, as the *verbum* of God cannot be (9.7.12). We mistake our false image of ourselves for what we really are, or are 'underneath'. If we want to know what we really are, we must see ourselves in God.¹³²

Yet if we try to do that, we shall begin to see that our frustrated souls are part of our fractured persons. We shall understand why we are soul, and yet at the same time (confusingly) that we are intentional agents – and also necessarily intentional towards our own bodies. Since we were born (and indeed before that) we have retained that relationship to our bodies, despite being in our minds in the image of God. That is why we need the Resurrection and why the body cannot be treated as an earthly and temporary nuisance, as a

¹³⁰ The Latin is almost untranslatable; cf. Tacitus' famous *capax imperii (nisi imperasset)* (*Hist.* 1.49).

¹³¹ Cf. Teselle (1970: 302–303).

¹³² *De Trin.* 8.6.9; cf. *DVR* 39.72; *Conf.* 13.31.46; *GenLitt.* 4.32.50: the angels know themselves better in God.

more 'Platonic' Augustine seemed once to suggest. It was thus appropriate for the later Augustine to parallel the elaborated account of ourselves as created in the image of God in *The Trinity* with a revised understanding of the relation between our ('two-level') souls and our bodies in the *Literal Commentary* and the *City of God*.

Such a unitive and moral account – demanding but not receiving a full metaphysical explanation – of the relationship between souls and bodies had already begun to appear in the later books of the *Confessions*, though at that stage Augustine was hardly ready to use the warm language which he employed later on. But he does say, in answer to the question, 'Who are you?', that he is 'a man', and he explains this as: 'There is in myself a body and a soul, the one exterior, the other interior . . . But the interior part is better . . .', and it knows the external world by using the exterior as a 'minister' (10.6.9). Within that better part we have also seen in the *Confessions* a foreshadowing of the 'two-level' soul, and there is also an unambiguous 'trinitarian' pattern: 'I am and I know and I will . . . I know that I am . . . In these three let him who can do so perceive how inseparable a life there is, one life and one mind and one being, and finally how inseparable a distinction there is, and yet there is a distinction' (13.11.12).

While Augustine offers us a moral account of what human nature must be like, with a phenomenological 'psychology' to go with it, the 'metaphysics' is incomplete and inadequate. That is because, for Augustine, we do not yet *know* what a man, that is, a perfect man, is like. A complete metaphysics (of the Thomistic sort) cannot be written; we have simply recognized the perfect man by faith.

As for Augustine himself, it has been said that he could never have been another Plotinus;¹³³ perhaps he lacked his predecessor's massive tranquillity. Augustine himself would have taken that as a compliment; he would redescribe that 'massive tranquillity' as the stubborn arrogance typical of ancient notions of wisdom and based on a gross underestimate of the nature of a perfect man and, of course, on self-deception about the sort of wickedness the image of God is capable of committing in his 'multiplicity'.

¹³³ Brown (1967: 104).

CHAPTER FIVE

Will, love and right action

The whole life of a good Christian is a holy desire.

(On John's Epistle 4.6)

Of your letters some speak of Christ, some of Plato, some of Plotinus.

(Letter 6.1, to Nebridius)

LOVE AND INSPIRATION

Augustine learned from many sources, but his varied learning is often originally ill-digested and years later far from totally assimilated. When a degree of assimilation occurs, it may have been prompted by challenges which have arisen almost by chance. Especially in the decade or so after his conversion, Augustine was constantly driven to reassess what he had learned from the Greek philosophical tradition: from the Stoics and to a greater degree from the Platonists. For although he had learned from Plotinus how to surmount various forms of materialism, his experience of Christian life, first as a devout layman, and later as a priest and bishop, made him increasingly aware of new and hitherto unexpected ways in which the tenets and goals of Neoplatonism and Christianity are in conflict. Even at the time of his conversion, though believing Neoplatonism to be compatible with Christianity, he already held it to be incomplete.

We have already seen how Christian experience and biblical reflection affected Augustine's treatment of a series of traditional problems about the relationship of the soul to the body; but nowhere is Augustine's reassessment more evident, or more far-reaching, than in his account of moral behaviour and of virtue; and nowhere is it more acute than in his treatment of the Christian commandment to love one's neighbour.

It is not difficult to understand why love of neighbour presented problems for Augustine both at the philosophical and at the personal

level. He had come to Catholic Christianity convinced that the Platonists of the school of Plotinus had managed to see something of the true good for man: they had gone beyond the recognition common in ancient thought that all men seek happiness; they knew by reflection what Monnica knew from simple Christianity, that happiness is not merely achieving one's immediate desires (*The Happy Life* 2.10); they even knew that man's happiness depends on a return to the One God. But Augustine's first, and chief, complaint against the Platonists was that, although they knew where they must go, they were ignorant of the way to get there (Jn 14:6; *Confessions* 7.18.24); their pride prevented them from recognizing that an act of God himself, in the Incarnation, was and must be the only means of return. Thus for Augustine, and for many another ancient convert Platonist, Christianity in the beginning seemed to centre on how the individual man, or often rather the individual soul, could be healed. Having been once a Platonist, Augustine had no difficulty in understanding how love for God, the right attitude towards God, is essential for salvation.

But the Platonists, and Plotinus in particular, taught that the soul returns to God as 'the alone to the Alone' (*Ennead* 6.9.11.50), and it is widely recognized that, despite the often exemplary kindness of Neoplatonic philosophers towards their fellow-men, such behaviour does not fit entirely consistently into their ethical system as a whole. At best it will appear as part of the necessary, but only preliminary, purification of the soul, a setting of the stage for one's own elevation. The problem is to see how ordinary moral action (whether or not motivated by love, or kindness, or obligation, or duties), could itself be constitutive of, rather than merely necessary for, the 'religious' life summed up as a return to God.

Plotinus himself saw no problem here. When he castigated what he considered to be an antinomian immorality on the part of certain Gnostics, he urged that without a decent moral life, talk of a return to God is high-flown verbiage. Ordinary morality is both a necessary condition and a necessary preparation for the return of the soul: as such it is not quite a mere means to an end, but certainly not part of the end itself. Coming from such a tradition, Augustine too might be expected to see that love of neighbour is a means towards, or a condition for, the best 'philosophical' life, but to find difficulty in treating it as an integral and constitutive part of the 'highest' reaches of religion to which he aspired in his convert's all-or-nothing enthusiasm.

Light may be shed on Augustine's situation from an unexpected source, for some of the more striking, and even alarming, features of Stoic ethics are connected with similar difficulties. At first glance, Stoic theories of moral perfection may look wholly different from anything of interest to Augustine, for the Stoics propose an immanent God. Their Divine Reason is in the cosmos rather than outside it; in a sense it is even identical with the cosmos. That might make any question about whether we should rise to a spiritual life above 'mere morality' seem less pressing. But what Augustine could have learned from the Stoics is less whether moral acts are a means to an end or in some way themselves constitute that end; his point of contact is rather with their view that what matters morally is not what external act is performed, but whether the right act is performed for the right reason and with a purely moral intention. Otherwise it is not moral in the strict sense at all. Many acts may look moral (and thus resemble the acts of the wise man), but in so far as they are not the products of pure motives – that is, for the Stoics, motives entirely in accord with right reason – they are not virtuous. Indeed, though they may lead to habits of virtue or promote a virtuous rather than a vicious disposition in the agent, and thus be dubbed 'preferred', in and of themselves they are vicious.

There is no doubt that there is also a fundamentally Platonic strain in Augustine's theory of moral motivation. Like all Greeks of the classical period, Plato himself had placed great emphasis on the attitude of the philosopher to those great compellers of men, pleasure and pain. The *Symposium* tells us how Socrates handled the one, the *Phaedo* how he handled the other. Wisdom has to do with loving the true good and being repelled by the evil and ugly. Similarly Augustine believes, as early as his first Catholic text, *The Happy Life*, that the good man is driven by 'blazing love' (*flagrante caritate*, 4.35).¹ Obviously there is a purely Christian side to this, and obviously Augustine is thinking of the Pauline faith, hope and love as well as being taught by his own ardent disposition; but that in no way diminishes the Platonic and more than Platonic note. To understand the roots of this we must turn back to Plato himself.

In book 10 of the *Republic* Plato attempts an explanation of how,

¹ Augustine uses *amor*, *dilectio* or *caritas* for 'love'. *Caritas* always has a good sense; its opposite is *cupiditas*. There is little distinction between *amor* and *dilectio*, and all three may be used synonymously (O. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine* (New Haven, CT and London 1980), 11).

even when we have begun to live an evil life, we are still able to mend our ways. The possibility of improvement depends on the fact that our soul is never wholly corrupted. Within us, like the pearl in the oyster (or, as he puts it, like the sea-god Glaucus encrusted with refuse and débris) is our misguided but ultimately pure self. Plotinus develops the theme: we have within us an 'undescended' part of the soul (*Ennead* 4.8.8.1–4; cf. 5.1.10.17ff.). Since this uncorrupted part is always in contact with the eternal forms – with goodness, truth and beauty – we are able to turn ourselves back to them, to anchor ourselves in them, and thus to prevent ourselves from sinking further into the mire. The pure core of the self provides us with a foundation on which to rebuild our moral character. Yet the pure core is a postulate, not a demonstrated reality. Plato might argue for it roughly as follows: unless there is such a stable centre to hang on to, our slide into the mire would be unavoidable; we should have nowhere to stand. But there are at least a few who improve their lives and even come to lead admirable lives. Therefore there must be a stable centre to hang on to.

At least three points should be made about this: (a) there might be some other explanation for the possibility of moral goodness; (b) there *must* be some other explanation if there is no such uncorrupted core; (c) even if there is such an uncorrupted core, it would provide a necessary but not a sufficient condition for our 'return' to the good life. For, to use an analogy, a skilled mountaineer can save himself from falling by jamming his hand into a crack if there happens to be a crack; but even if there is a crack he still needs *to be able* to jam his hand into it; if he is paralysed or has lost a limb, he will be unable to avail himself of the crack. As for Augustine, he came to deny both that there is an uncorrupted part of the soul (holding not that the soul is totally corrupted, but that it is injured beyond self-repair), *and* that even if there were, it would be unable to guarantee our *unfailing* moral safety.

The original Platonic theory depended on two beliefs: (a) that there is something 'solid' within us which we can grasp: that is the 'meaning' (in more than one possible sense) of Forms; (b) that our love (*eros*) of the Forms is infallibly strong enough to drive us on to successful self-improvement. Between the time of Plotinus and that of Augustine, prominent Platonists – notably Iamblichus, but to a degree even Porphyry, Plotinus' most influential pupil – came to doubt, or to deny, that any part of the soul is 'undescended'.² As

² For further discussion, see Rist (1992).

Augustine would see it, that was not only a weakening of the Platonic claim that the soul may now be cognitively incapable of returning to the One or God (that is, its capacity to think or 'know' the Forms may be deficient); it also implied an incapacity in *wanting* to know, an incapacity of desire, of eros. There is no evidence that the pagan Platonists identified the latter of these consequences, but Augustine had clearly done so by the time he finished *On Human Responsibility* (c. 395). There he discusses not only the *ignorantia* of our souls but also their accompanying weakness (*difficultas*): our incapacity to want, our inability to want sufficiently to impel us to act. The question is *when* Augustine came to that conclusion. It is clear that at least some sort of implicit critique of the Platonists' understanding of the nature and possibility of *flagrans caritas* and of man's return to God predates Augustine's conversion, indeed that it contributed substantially to his decision to go beyond the Platonic books and embrace Christianity.³

In the *Symposium* Plato had written that all that is beautiful, and above all beauty itself, arouses desire for a kind of possession. But one of the differences between desire for passing goods, like beautiful bodies, and desire for immaterial goodness, is that desire for the immaterial has no need to be possessive; there is as much and to spare for everyone. The gods, Plato tells us in both the *Phaedrus* (247A) and the *Timaeus* (29E1–2), are neither envious nor grudging. So a proper understanding of the good and the beautiful will bring us (some of us) to an inspired and godlike condition which Plato calls a form of madness (*Phaedrus* 244A–245C). As Diotima puts it (*Symposium* 206E), when we have seen the vision of beauty, we shall beget in the beautiful, produce many noble and splendid ideas (210D), engender true virtue (212A): that is, in plainer terms, we shall do good deeds and know what we are doing and why we are doing it. Furthermore, this love brings its necessities, obligations and responsibilities. Beauty is both Destiny and the Goddess of the labours of childbirth. Eros is a compelling force, and Diotima's remarks about begetting in the beautiful suggest a double analogy for good works: the inevitability of orgasm when a certain stage has been passed in the confrontation with beauty, and the subsequent conception.

³ Augustine only describes one conversion in the *Confessions*: to Christianity. The Platonic books could only give him a notional assent, an assent to propositions, not a real commitment to a way of life. Augustine's account of the notional assent in book 7 is followed by his account of the conversion in book 8. He had recognized the 'truth' of Christianity before he became a Christian (*Conf.* 8.1.1). He went to Simplicianus not to learn about the relationship between Neoplatonic philosophy and the Logos of St John's Gospel, but because Simplicianus was a practised Christian (who had baptized Ambrose) (*Conf.* 8.2.3).

We have already noted similar themes in the *Republic*. In book 7 Socrates is concerned with the obligations which follow from a love of justice, itself supported by love for Lady Philosophy and the Form of the Good to which she leads. The Guardian will rule not because ruling is a fine thing (*kalon*, 540B) but because his love of justice will impose an obligation on him; he could do no other than obey a just command to hold office. Broadly speaking, then, if I am good, if, that is, I have seen and known the Form of the Good, as the bridegroom of Lady Philosophy (495BC) and of the Goodness and Beauty to which she leads, I shall act for the best. This is certainly a powerful analogy: if I say that I am in love with someone and then add that I feel no obligation to act rightly by her, it would be natural to infer that I am not in love at all. Plato's model for the action of the Guardian – as well as for Socrates in the *Symposium* and the demiurgic God in the *Timaeus* – is the inspired lover. In Platonic and Platonically inspired ethics the Greek word *kalon* (often rendered misleadingly and inadequately in Latin as *honestum*) means 'inspiring' and hence 'compelling'.

In developing such an ethic Plato was appealing to a traditional Greek notion: both Sophocles (*Antigone* 781ff.) and Theocritus (*Idyll* 11) know that eros is a destiny, a *daimon*. Gilbert Murray once wrote of 'the curious power and importance in Greek life of two words':⁴ the words were *kallos* and *sophia* (inspirational beauty and wisdom). In considering Augustine's ethics too – and herein lies the paradox of his insistence on going beyond the 'school-Platonism' of the Platonic books – we must remember that what may be dubbed an 'ethics of inspiration' was still a living option not only for Christians but for the 'secular' moral theorist, not only in the Platonic tradition, but especially there. In Augustine's time no moralist would have supposed that his choices were limited to something like utilitarianism (or more broadly consequentialism), Kantian obligations or a form of contract-theory. Even the original ancient versions of what is now called virtue-ethics were far from a mere ethic of good training inducing good habits. Aristotelians, as well as Platonists, dealt in the ethics of inspiration,⁵ and even the Stoics paid tribute to the tradition when

⁴ Murray (1934: 25).

⁵ Note the importance of actions done *heneka tou kalou* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. See J. Owens, 'The *kalon* in the Aristotelian Ethics', in *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. D. O'Meara, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 9 (Washington DC, 1981), 261–277, though Owens still confuses the issue by translating *kalon* as 'right'. For an unusually perceptive approach to the spirit of much of classical Greek ethics, see I. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Goodness* (London 1970).

defining eros as not just any desire, but specifically as an impulse aroused by beauty (*SVF* 3.397; cf. 3.719).

But to all this there are several apparent objections. Are we not driven by repulsion as much as by attraction (as the Stoics thought)?⁶ What kind of knowing is involved? How do we find such an object of knowledge? Even if we know what is good, why should we love it? For most people do not seem to be inspired, or much inspired, by what is good even if we grant that they know what it is. They neither know what it is best to love nor would they necessarily love it even if they did. And perhaps there are right and wrong ways of loving. Thus Plato's claims seem otherworldly and unrealistic. He seems to assume that 'underneath', or somehow, we do all have accessible knowledge of the good and a desire for it, even a love of it.

When we considered Augustine's ideas about 'impressed notions' of the good, of God and of happiness, we found him to be, or to become, much less certain about our capacity for moral and spiritual success. By the time he writes book 3 of *On Human Responsibility*, he wants to say that our ignorance is stupendous and our ability to act even in pursuing what we want, or love, is weak. We simply are not possessed of the power Plato supposed, though we once possessed it, before the fall.

Furthermore, when we love, our love is often misdirected. At the very beginning of his treatment of love Plato had observed in the *Symposium* that we usually love bodies rather than souls, and particular beauties rather than Beauty itself. Moreover, even if we love Beauty itself, or some other 'divine attribute', we may do so in the wrong way. As for Augustine, he observes that we may try to appropriate immaterial goods which are common to all as private property:⁷ behaviour essentially selfish, unnecessary, but typical of our present human condition. After the second book of *On Human Responsibility* he emphasizes that the vicious man (and the fallen angel) is possessive, and to possessiveness he adds a further accompanying vice, the vice of envy:⁸ the devil adds envy to pride in plotting man's downfall (3.25.76). Envy is the 'fruit' of pride, the love of self, just as active goodness is the fruit of the love of God and the good. In making such points Augustine is exploring a 'negative' side of Plato's original

⁶ Cf. *SVF* 1.566 (Cleanthes); 3.118, 119, 121, 141, 169, 228.

⁷ *DLA* 2.10.28–2.14.37; cf. 'secretum et publicum lumen' (2.12.33); *DVR* 55.112; *Conf.* 10.39.64; *De Trin.* 12.9.14; *GenLitt.* 11.15.19. See Madec in *BA*, vi, 544 and discussion in R. A. Markus, 'De Civitate Dei: Pride and the Common Good', *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 12 (1987–1988), 1–16, at 6–7; also Plotinus, *Ennead* 6.5.10.

⁸ *DLA* 3.5.13; 3.9.24; *83Q* 79.1; *DVR* 55.112; *De Trin.* 12.10.15.

account of human motivation, and supplementing the classical emphasis on man's capacity for good with a corresponding emphasis on his capacity for evil.

In later writings Augustine persisted with the distinction between what is properly one's own (*proprium*) and what is properly common (*commune*) when he comes to talk of the 'two loves', the depraved and the holy: they are 'private' and 'social' respectively. It is a part of the right attitude to God to have a right attitude to what is good, and that entails that goods are meant to be shared, not simply to be appropriated. Pride rejoices in private goods (*Literal Commentary* 11.15.19–20),⁹ and it is perverse self-love to identify what is common and for all with the private and therefore divisive: *ad privatam partem*.¹⁰

Augustine (and Plato) are right in believing that we can readily understand that such attitudes are not necessary. We recognize that to admire a work of art is not tantamount to saying to oneself, 'I just have to have it.'¹¹ As Plato pointed out, the best souls, that is, the gods, are not grudging; and just as there are beautiful objects which are inspiring, but do not 'inspire' possessiveness, so there is Beauty itself which, unlike earthly beauties, is available to all and a source of unlimited inspiration.¹²

We have that which we can all enjoy equally and in common. In her there is no straitness, no deficiency. All the lovers she receives are altogether free of jealousy of one another; she is shared by all in common and chaste to each. None says to another: 'Stand back that I too may approach' or 'Take your hands off that I may embrace her too.' All cleave to the same thing. Her food is not divided individually and you do not drink anything which I cannot drink too. From that common store you can convert nothing to your private possession (*On Human Responsibility* 2.14.37).

Even in a late sermon, probably of 418, Augustine agrees with Plato that lesser loves, even of a debased kind, may conceal within

⁹ Markus (1987–1988: 9) is misleading when he states that 'for the hierarchical paradigm of pride Augustine has substituted a social one'. Rather, when Augustine comes to discuss the social implications of a revolt from God he introduces the social dimension as an expression of the hierarchical one.

¹⁰ Markus (1987–1988: 12) rightly notes that the object of Augustine's hostility is something like what C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford 1962), has well dubbed 'possessive individualism'. Note the Latin use of *pars* for a faction – as in *pars Donati* for the Donatist Church.

¹¹ The same point is made, grotesquely, by a character in David Lodge's recent novel *Nice Work* (Harmondsworth, 1989): 'You don't get blokes going into an art gallery and staring at a picture of Venus or whatever and nudging each other in the ribs saying, "I wouldn't mind going through her on a Saturday night"' (p. 213).

¹² *EnPs.* 36 (35).6; cf. G. Madec, 'Le communisme spirituel', *HS* 225–239, at 227–228.

themselves something greater: the lascivious lover of the 'limbs' of a beautiful woman is aroused by the beauty of her body, but 'within' (*intus*) he wants more: a mutuality of love (*Sermon* 34.2.4). In a sense he is in love with love itself, that is, with God.¹³ That yearning can be concealed but not obliterated. Originally, as many of Plato's critics have emphasized, there may be something self-serving in our (fallen) desire for Beauty and Goodness, and, as we know, such genuine goods are far from being our only immediate desires. The further point that even Plato, let alone many Christian Platonists, wants to make is that, when the true Good is achieved, there is nothing further to be desired. In Augustine the word 'to love' (*amare*) denotes a desire both to obtain – the whole Christian life is a holy desire (*On John's Epistle* 4.6) – and to retain in peace what one enjoys.¹⁴ Yet it comes to denote more, for when the soul is satisfied and at rest, the need and desire to receive is fulfilled in a desire to share in the divine giving: something which Augustine's critics have often been unwilling to recognize.

Whatever the weaknesses of Plato's proposals, whether they rest in our fallible sense of what is worth loving or in our inability to love what deserves our love, his basic point remains unaffected. If there is something supremely beautiful, it is supremely lovable, and like the Form of Beauty, it is lovable and inspiring to all. Throughout his Christian life, Augustine accepted Platonic claims about the effects of inspiration and added the belief that God (rather than merely Plato's Beauty) alone is the intrinsically worthy object of human love.

¹³ Cf. T. J. van Bavel, 'Augustine's View on Women', *Augustiniana* 39 (1989b), 5–53, at 46, and especially R. Canning, 'The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour', *Augustiniana* 37 (1987), 38–121, at 77–83. Augustine recognized the 'need' to be in love with love (though with no understanding of it) as a young student in Carthage (*Conf.* 3.1.1). It seems to have been chiefly as a result of thinking about the first Epistle of John that he came to believe that love of love is to be achieved only in love of God the Holy Spirit. *De Trin.* develops the ideas of the commentary on the Epistle further.

The *Confessions* (which says little of the Spirit in its autobiographical books 1–9) seems to be historically accurate in implying that reflection on the Spirit played no significant role in Augustine's journey to conversion. His theology of the Spirit develops late, largely after 400. In *Confessions* 9, of course, 'love' and 'will' are prominent, but direct reference to the Holy Spirit is absent. In his writings after conversion the following sequence is worth notice: (a) in *De Ord.* 1.7.18, God loves order *because* he loves the good; (b) in *De Mor.* 1.13.23, the Holy Spirit gives the love which unites us with God (and thus is itself connected with love (cf. Du Roy 1966: 202, note 101; 219)); (c) in the slightly later *QuAn.* 34.77, the Spirit is *caritas* (Du Roy 1966: 261). Overall it is clear that whereas for Augustine the Spirit was always connected with 'ordering' (cf. *DLA* 3.12.35; 3.21.60; and *CFaust.* 21.6, where the Father provides unity, the Son form and the Spirit 'order'), the connection of order with love takes longer to develop. For the Spirit as link and love between Father and Son, an especially Augustinian development, see *BA*, xv, 587.

¹⁴ See the excellent remarks of Burnaby (1938: 96–97).

Happiness, says the *Confessions*, is 'Joy which comes from truth' (10.33). Yet the parallels with Plato's ideas – though couched in exclusively heterosexual language – about what such superior love would be like, and the persistence in Augustine of Platonic 'inspiration' cannot be too much emphasized.

At the end of the Augustinian *Rule* there is a reference to lovers of spiritual beauty. Of many similar passages the following may be taken as typical and representative:

We cannot love anything unless it is beautiful. (*On Music* 6.13.38)

Men cry out that they are blessed (*beati*) when they embrace with great yearning the beautiful and longed-for bodies of their wives, or even of prostitutes, and shall we doubt that we are blessed in the arms of truth (*On Human Responsibility* 2.13.35).¹⁵

Perhaps this is what Scripture means when it describes how Wisdom deals with her lovers when they come in search of her. For it was said: She shall show herself graciously to them in the ways. (Wisdom 6.17; *On Human Responsibility* 2.16.41)

And have the senses of the body their delights, while the soul is abandoned by its own pleasures? . . . Give me a man in love: he understands what I mean. Give me a man who yearns: give me a man who is hungry; give me a man travelling in the desert, who is thirsty and sighing for the spring of the eternal country. Give me that sort of man; he knows what I mean. But if I talk to a cold man, he does not know what I am talking about. (*On John's Gospel* 26.4)

Too late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new. (*Confessions* 10.27.38)

Love, who are always ablaze . . . enkindle me. Give what you command and command what you will. (*Confessions* 10.29.40)

The last passages from the *Confessions* show particularly clearly how Augustine combines the Platonic insight that it is not possible for man to love the unlovely ('We cannot love what is not beautiful', *On Music* 6.13.38) with the Christian teaching – which we shall shortly consider – that the ability to love is itself the gift of a God who is love and of his love. The perfect lover, that is God, is able to create both beauty and love in the beloved. Similarly, before the fall Adam is (romantically)

¹⁵ Cf. *Solil.* 1.13.22 ('étonnement érotique', L. M. J. Verheijen, 'Comme des amants de la Beauté spirituelle B. Dans les oeuvres du jeune Augustin', *Augustiniana* 33 (1983), 86–111, at 97); *DLA* 2.14.37. The bibliography on love in Augustine is peculiarly daunting and at times redolent of *odium theologicum*. An introduction to some of the more recent theological discussions is provided by D. Dideberg, 'Caritas. Prolégomènes à une étude de la théologie augustinienne de la charité', *SP*, 369–381.

said by his love to have made Eve beautiful (*On Psalms* 132.10), while 'there is no greater invitation to love than prevenient love' (*Catechizing the Simple* 4.7). Pelagius (in this not unlike Plotinus) failed to understand Augustine's point about the need for God's prior action to promote love in individual human beings: he took exception to Augustine's prayer 'Give what you command and command what you will' (*Confessions* 10.29.40).¹⁶

For as far as concerns the motivation of a good man and a good lover, if he can be found, Augustine remained a Platonist, but a reformed Platonist. He came to take the objections to the unreformed variety seriously: How are we to be motivated? How is love to be 'commanded'? How does a man know the order (i.e. the priorities) of love? Will not 'inspiration' wane? Above all, suppose the proper object of love does not present itself. And again, what about repugnance, love's opposite, or hate? Is inspiration the only proper motivation? Are there good and bad 'hates'? The Stoics had said more about that than Plato.

In the series of replies to Simplicianus which mark a turning point in his understanding of moral behaviour, Augustine asks two rhetorical questions which 'answer' Pelagius in advance: Who has it in his power either that an object be presented which can please him, or that when presented it shall please (1.2.21)? For it is delight – including the sweetness of forbidden sin – which moves the will (1.1.9), and Augustine wonders how the will can come to delight in the right things. In answering that, however, he rejects all forms of hedonism, including spiritual hedonism. In and of itself delight would not entice the will to God, nor is the aim of the good man to secure the right sort of delight. Delight is not the final cause of the action of the good man, and to claim it as the sole efficient cause would be to fail to understand that 'delights' in any particular case vary qualitatively with their intentional objects: another piece of Platonic analysis. Thus man's goal is not to secure delight, but to be able to know God – which is experientially delightful.

Yet even at this last stage Augustine introduces a specifically Christian twist. Humility is a peculiarly Christian virtue; it marks the proper human recognition that man is not to confuse himself with God. Thus, like love, indeed as a special mode of Christian love, humility too comes to suffuse the entire range of virtues (*Holy Virginity*

¹⁶ Cf. *DDP* 20.53; but for the traditionally Christian side of the Pelagian attitude, see Brown (1968: 107–114).

53.54). If Socratic *eros* is based on a final confidence in the natural immortality of the soul, and thus of a virtual equality with the gods, Augustinian *eros*, in its realistic (and hence humble, though far from grovelling) love for God, is able to do justice to the gulf between our fallen beauties and Beauty itself.

LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR

It was easy and natural for Augustine, at the time of his conversion, to recognize the similarities and points of contact between the Christian love for God and the Platonic/Plotinian love for the One. Certainly he had acknowledged that the Incarnation was necessary to empower the Christian to 'return', but as yet – apart from a growing awareness of the requisite of humility – he seems to have made few moves in what we would call philosophical psychology or theory of action to deepen his understanding of his Christian faith. As a serious Christian, and especially after ordination a devoted reader of Scripture, he quickly became aware of the importance to be attached to the commandment of love of neighbour. When he pondered how a man must love his neighbour as himself, he concluded that not only is it obvious that in some sense one must love oneself, that is, ultimately wish oneself well, but that if we do not love ourselves, we shall hate our neighbour as ourselves (*Sermon* 128.3–5).

'Philosophical' and religious love is not to be limited to the relationship of man with God; loving one's neighbour as oneself is a precept which insists on the presence of 'love' in any Christian account of the *moral* relationships between individuals as well as of more directly religious and ascetic activities. Augustine already emphasized that in 389 when he published *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* (cf. 1.25.47–1.30.62), a much less otherworldly work than its contemporaries, where love of neighbour includes love of his body, that is, corporal works of mercy, as well as concern for his soul; where also 'If you love God, you love yourself' (though the converse does not apply) and where 'We can find no surer step towards the love of God than the love of man for man' (1.26.48). *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* both emphasizes the role of love in Christianity and foreshadows many of the changes in Augustine's account of love which were to follow.

There were obstacles to be overcome before Augustine could grasp the full significance of the second commandment. He knew from his Platonic background that love of goods other than God could distract

from the love of God itself. Furthermore, as he came to emphasize explicitly after about 396, one must recognize the significance of a text from the Song of Songs (2.4): order love in me ('ordinate in me caritatem');¹⁷ for lesser loves can impede the greater, and might not the love of men, of one's neighbour, impede the love of God?

There was a further question which had arisen within the Platonic tradition itself, where the love of persons seemed often to be equated with, or subordinated to, the love of non-personal entities. In the *Symposium* Plato had ranked love of good laws and institutions *higher* than love of good souls. Although this might be interpreted to mean no more than that a good man should (for example) put his country above his friends (for his country is or should be a group of his friends), still the love of human persons seems to have no privileged status in the Platonic tradition. At the very least that tradition is ambivalent about the relationship between love of persons and love of the higher non-personal realities which should mould the lives of the persons themselves. The problem arises in part from the impersonal nature of Platonic Forms, and in part from a lack of distinction between the well-grounded belief that usually it is good societies which bring up good men (and therefore that the good man may have to sacrifice himself for the good of his society) and the far from identical claim that the society in itself – rather than as a group of human beings – is to be given a higher value than its members.

Nevertheless, as early as 390, in *True Religion*, a work in which his account of love of neighbour is still far from its maturity, Augustine distinguished clearly between love of persons and love of objects (46.87): 'If a man were to love another not as himself but as a beast of burden, or as the public baths, or as a gaudy and garrulous bird, that is, to get some temporal pleasure or advantage from him, he is necessarily a slave not to a man, but, what is worse, to that foul and detestable vice of not loving a man as a man ought to be loved.'¹⁸

Obviously Plato would have agreed with Augustine about that: souls are not material objects, they are 'higher' on the scale of realities. But though it is true that in *True Religion* Augustine

¹⁷ Cf. La Bonnardière (1955: 231). The text brings together two names in Augustine's account of the Holy Spirit: *ordo* and *caritas*.

¹⁸ Cf. *IoEp.* 8.5, where Augustine makes a similar distinction, with van Bavel's comments (1987a: 79): 'We ought not to love human beings in the sense in which one hears gourmets say "I love thrushes". Why not? Because the gourmet loves to kill and consume. When he says that he loves thrushes, he loves them so that they may not exist, so that he may destroy them . . . We should obviously not love human beings as things to be consumed. Friendship is a kind of benevolence, leading us to do things for the benefit of those we love.'

emphasizes love of men, it is love of men as souls only, for, as he puts it, 'Bodies are not what we are' (46.89).¹⁹ This may seem unnuanced, and in the same passage he interprets the notion of the 'body' widely. 'If we are ablaze with love for eternity we shall hate temporal bonds. Let a man love his neighbour as himself. For no one is to himself father or son or relative or anything of that sort, but only a man (i.e. a soul). Therefore he who loves someone as himself ought to love in him that which he is to himself.'²⁰ Later, indeed, and partly under the influence of Ephesians 5:29 ('No one hates his own flesh'), Augustine abandoned this kind of interpretation. The soul does, and should, love the body, and therefore the bodies of others too – but with respect. We have already in the last chapter seen the larger context of Augustine's developing understanding of the more general relationship between the soul and the body as he moved away from an overly 'Platonic' stance.

Indeed, though Augustine is willing to attenuate the notion of love of neighbour along Platonic lines in *True Religion*, in the slightly earlier work *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* – a work, as we have seen, often indicative of what is to come – he has already claimed that virtue is 'nothing other' than the supreme love of God (1.15.25), and, quite unclassically, defined each of the cardinal virtues in terms of love. Thus 'Justice is love serving only that which is loved', and Augustine continues by claiming that 'justice is love serving God alone, and for this reason ruling other things which are subject to man'. Notice, however, that he is speaking of *our* love for God. There is less emphasis on God's love for us,²¹ though he does note that love is God's gift.²²

The Life-Style of the Catholic Church starts a programme of building love – a Christianized Platonic love – into the classical structures of virtue. Specifically, Augustine's formula looks as if it blends 'Christian Platonic' notions of love into a definition of justice which, if right reason replaced love, would be Stoic. For while according to the Stoics all forms of virtue are modes of right reason, for Augustine they have become modes of love. As a result of their love for God, says Augustine, men are able to react morally to whatever situation may arise in the course of their lives.

In the actual course of our lives we have all kinds of alternative

¹⁹ That is the reason why in the nearly contemporary *DSD* (1.15.41) husbands are invited to hate the sexuality of their wives.

²⁰ For an interesting discussion of these aspects of *True Religion*, see Teske (1987: esp. 80–93).

²¹ Cf. Burnaby (1938: 89). ²² *DeMor.* 1.13.23; see note 14 above.

loves and these alternative loves, or 'loves', if Augustine is right, could not lead to justice or any other virtue. Indeed it would seem that, unless we love God, we should not be just, wise or temperate. As we shall see, that is increasingly Augustine's position. So how can we come to 'acquire' such love? Just as we cannot find simply 'to order' people whom we 'love' in ordinary life, so it is hard to see how we can love the good merely because we hear that that is what we 'should' love: indeed, as we have seen, Augustine thinks that most people do not love what they should love.

When Augustine wishes to express the goal of the good life, he often speaks of the need to be 'glued' to God or 'to cleave to God in love' (*ut inhaeramus Deo*, *On Music* 6.14.46),²³ or 'to enjoy God' (*frui, fruitio Dei*), or to enjoy the various forms of happiness. The language of enjoyment can be found from the earliest Augustinian texts.²⁴ Yet obviously 'enjoying' is not normally limited to spiritual contexts: we have already noted the blasphemous desire to enjoy one's own power, and Augustine can say of himself in the *Confessions* (3.1.1), that in Carthage he greatly desired to enjoy the body of a girl-friend. After his conversion, it seems, he sometimes preferred to speak of such earthy desires as 'wishing to enjoy' or 'hoping to enjoy' (*True Religion* 11.21; 12.23), but the *intent* of the language of enjoyment is the same:²⁵ things that are 'enjoyed' are supposed to be good in themselves, and with no further reference to any other source of goodness. Naturally, in Platonic terms, this is a moral 'mistake'; it is to mistake 'something beautiful' for Beauty itself. Creatures should be loved, but should not be thought the source of happiness. Just as a woman who is betrothed should love her ring for the sake of the man who gave it, so we should love all beauties other than God as gifts of God himself (*On John's Epistle* 2.11).

Anything else would be idolatry. Augustine's realization of that, plus his adherence to the Platonic counsel to separate oneself from material objects, made it necessary for him to find a new way of describing the love of neighbour. We have already noticed that in his account of the virtues in *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church*, he tended

²³ Cf. Ps. 73.28 with *DVR* 10.19 and 'ipsum gluten caritas est' (*EnPs.* 63 (62).17), with Bochet (1982: 94). 'Glueing' is often also to 'carnal habits' or vices: *Solil.* 1.14.24 (*visco*); *Conf.* 4.10.15; *De Trin.* 10.5.7; but 10.8.11 (*glutino amoris*).

²⁴ *DBV* 4.43; *CAcad.* 1.8.23; *DeOrd.* 2.7.20; 1.8.24; *DVR* 11.21; 12.24; *DeMus.* 4.4.5, etc. In 83Q 30 and 31 we find the Ciceronian dichotomy 'fruentum est in honestis, utendum in utilibus', but Augustine apparently declined to develop this version of the antithesis explicitly.

²⁵ See O'Donovan (1982: 378).

to think of virtuous acts towards one's fellow men as somehow subsumed under the love for God; it is a short step from that to the suggestion that they are ways in which the love for God can be achieved. Read in that way, the 'Platonic' notion of the love of the soul for God could be maintained. God could be loved 'through' the neighbour, or 'in the person of' the neighbour. A tempting rationale for that, however, would be to suggest that the neighbour is the means to be employed to love God, or even that we should in effect 'exploit' our neighbour to secure our own happiness in God.²⁶

But Augustine did not view love of neighbour and love of God in the light of a distinction between means and ends. Rather he seems to have thought originally that it is through love of neighbour that love of God can be expressed, but that in speaking of the love of neighbour we must avoid attributing to anything other than God a value in and of itself, independently of God. Since whatever exists, other than God, is similar in that it is other than God, while at the same time, as we have seen as early as *True Religion*, a distinction between souls and material objects is an essential part of any moral view of the world, we should expect Augustine to develop a terminology to describe a love for others which is not merely love for material (and hence perishable) goods, and which also steers clear of the idolatrous over-valuation of a creature.

In Augustine's earlier writings we can detect some inclination to assimilate love of neighbour to love of material objects. The argument, had he ever made it explicit, would run as follows: love of God must be distinct from love of anything else. God must be loved; sensibles must be 'despised',²⁷ but also 'used' for the necessities of the present life (*The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* 1.20.37). In fact, Augustine knows that other human beings are not just 'sensibles', but where do they fit into the schema?²⁸ By the time of *True Religion* – which we have already noticed as a rather stern work in terms of Augustine's attitude to the neighbour (who is reduced to his soul) – we find different ways in which various people (friends, enemies, etc.) are to be 'used' (47.91). That is merely a standard Latin locution – found also in earlier English, e.g. 'He used him well' – indicating how people are to be

²⁶ Such views have been read into Augustine, most seductively by Nygren (1953). Nygren has been answered, from different angles but effectively, by many: in particular Burnaby (1938); G. Hultgren, *Le commandement de l'amour chez Augustin* (Paris 1939); Holte (1962); and O'Donovan (1980). His work remains the most influential and confusing modern treatment.

²⁷ *Omnia corporea* are similarly to be despised at *Qu.An.* 3.4, in the interest of making us 'like God'.

²⁸ For more on this, see O'Donovan (1982: 376–383).

‘treated’; the notion of ‘exploitation’ is not to be read into it. In any case, Augustine soon begins to speak of loving our neighbour ‘because of God’ or ‘because of Christ’ (83 *Questions* 71.7). However, since he also points out that only what ‘pertains to the inner man’ must be loved, while the rest must be used (again for the necessities of life),²⁹ but not enjoyed as a joy (*ad gaudium perfruendum*), we still need to consider what kind of love of neighbour ‘pertains to the inner man’ before we can understand how love of neighbour fits into Augustine’s broader dichotomy between love of God and love of what is other than God.

In the first book of *Christian Teaching* (AD 396) Augustine tries to resolve the matter by asking directly whether we should ‘enjoy’ one another, or ‘use’ one another, or both (1.22.20). Note the general context. It is certain that we should love (*diligere*) our neighbour: is that love to be described as enjoyment or use? The answer is what we should now expect. Since only God should be enjoyed, the neighbour must be ‘used’, that is (at least) ‘treated’ as less than God, but as himself, which means lovingly and by no means as a material object. In fact, employing language with which we are now familiar, Augustine says that he should be loved ‘for the sake of God’. Yet this use-love for the sake of God is much wider than anything in *True Religion*. We are to love ourselves, our neighbours as ourselves, and our bodies which are lower than ‘ourselves’, and yet ‘no one hates his own flesh’.³⁰ ‘If you love the whole of yourself, that is, your soul and your body, and the whole of your neighbour, that is, his soul and body (for man is composed of soul and body – ‘homo ex animo constat et corpore’), no variety of objects of love is omitted in these two commandments’ (1.26.27).

What we find in this unnecessarily notorious section of *Christian Teaching* is the claim that man is to be loved ‘for the sake of God’ (*propter Deum*), and that this is the love that is ‘use-love’. The implication is the belief which Augustine has been wanting to preserve all along: that it is impossible to love even a fellow man in the right way unless the ‘order’ of the world is preserved and unless we recognize that it is ‘because of God’ that we are able to love human

²⁹ *EnPs.* 4.8. For the dating of *EnPs.* 1–32 (to before AD 392), see S. M. Zarb, *Chronologia Enarrationum s. Augustini in Psalmos* (Valletta, Malta, 1948).

³⁰ Ephesians 5:29; cf. *DDC* 1.24.24 and Teske (1987: 96–99). But Teske’s use of *De Continentia* 8.19 as further evidence for the regular use of Ephesians 5:29 as early as 396 to moderate ‘Neoplatonic’ denigration of the body cannot stand. *De Continentia* is probably to be dated to about 418; see La Bonnardière (1959).

beings at all. If that 'because of God' were not there, we should be treating people as material objects, and if God himself were not there, we should be justified in so doing, for then man would not be made in his image.³¹ 'He lives in a just and holy fashion who is an honest judge of things (*integer aestimator*)' (1.27.28). He recognizes, that is, a proper order of things, and knows that it is the love of God for his creation that has made it lovable – subordinately so therefore. We saw earlier how unfallen Adam made Eve beautiful by loving her; that was a characteristically godlike effect of the action of an unfallen man made in the image of God. Men are of value since and only since God has made them so in making them godlike. Indeed, our souls are only constituted and glued together (*agglutinator*) as such in virtue of their relations with God first, and secondarily with one another and with themselves (*The Trinity* 6.5.7). All value judgements are underpinned by God's action as the sole non-conventional source of value. Human evaluations which disregard this fact, even if correct, are unstable and idolatrous. It is the humility – a virtue proper to divine love – of the Canaanite woman which leads Jesus to tell her she is human, not an animal (*Sermon* 60A.3; 70A.11).

Apparently, however, Augustine found it inappropriate to describe love of neighbour as 'use', but not because the phrase entails exploitation. He drops it after *Christian Teaching*, while continuing, of course, to speak of enjoying God. The phrase 'because of God' seems also to be under pressure, while in *Christian Teaching* itself (1.32.35), quoting Philemon 20 ('I will enjoy (*fruar*) you in God'),³² Augustine even seems to hesitate over the correct use of 'enjoy': Does it mean 'to use lovingly' (*uti cum dilectione*)? But he apparently reconciled himself to speaking of enjoying one's neighbour in God.³³ To enjoy in God thus becomes part of the fulfilment of our end which even in *Christian Teaching* (1.5.5), is to enjoy God as Father, Son and Spirit. 'Because of God' is enriched by 'in God' – to emphasize that one really does enjoy one's neighbour, but that the only way to do so without reducing his status to that of a material object is to enjoy him 'in the Lord' or 'in

³¹ Thus the community of rights could not include animals without a rational soul (*DeMor.* 2.17.59); cf. *DLA* 3.23.69.

³² Cf. *Ep.* 26.4 to Licentius, with O'Donovan (1982: 395). For further discussion of *DCD*, see L. M. J. Verheijen, 'Le premier livre du *De Doctrina Christiana* d'Augustin', in *Augustiniana Traiectina* (Paris 1987), 169–187, at 178–184, who introduces the possibility of an eschatological dimension: a distinction between 'enjoying' here and now and enjoying in the afterlife.

³³ E.g. *Ep.* 26.4 (AD 395?); *CD* 19.13.1; *DeTrin.* 9.8.13.

Christ'. Hence Augustine exhorts his congregation to love their children and wives 'in a human way', but to love Christ more (*Sermon* 349.7.7).³⁴

'Using' a human being is thus left as a perquisite for God himself; it is only appropriate to the attitude of a metaphysical superior to an inferior, and even then Augustine thinks he must emphasize that God 'uses' us in a way other than our way of 'using' (*Christian Teaching* 1.32.35).³⁵ The distinction between human 'uses' and enjoyments, however, does not disappear altogether, though Augustine is more careful about how he employs it. 'Temporals' are to be used, 'eternals' enjoyed (*Sermon* 36.6, perhaps of AD 410). Good men use this world to enjoy God, while the evil try to use God to enjoy the world (*City of God* 15.7). It is ambiguous institutions, not people, which are to be treated as means to ends.

In brief, then, Augustine started from a 'Platonic' view that pure love is devoted to God alone, but reflection on the second commandment compelled him to develop a fuller account of the love we owe our fellows, both to comprise a proper love for the whole man (body and soul), and to argue that only if a man is loved 'in the Lord' can his value be recognized. That is the wider context of the fact that as early as 389 he began to see the moral virtues themselves not only as forms of the love of God, but specifically of the love of those creatures which God had made in his own image.³⁶ His view is summed up near the beginning of his *Rule* for monks: Honour God in one another.³⁷

'In God' and 'loved in God', each of us will have equal value in God's eyes as brothers. God's 'valuation' forms, in the later language

³⁴ Cf. *CD* 21–26. For further discussion and references, see van Bavel (1989b: 42–43).

³⁵ For a possibly contemporary parallel, see *Sermo* 65A 65f. (R. Etaix, 'Un Sermon inédit de saint Augustin sur l'amour des parents', *RB* 86 (1976), 38–48, at 43). O'Donovan (1982: 396) plausibly suggests that the sermon may be dated to about 400, or even 396. See earlier La Bonnardière (1955) and P. P. Verbraken, *Etudes critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin* (The Hague 1976), 77, 165.

³⁶ Van Bavel (1987a) points out that in his commentary on the Epistle of John (begun in AD 407), Augustine holds that love of neighbour, that is, love for a person in Christ, is to be identified with God, and in that sense that *love is God* (*IoEp.* 8.14; 9.2); so that in loving our neighbour (as in loving God) we are loving with a love which is not only 'from God' (*ex deo*), but which *is* God (*De Trin.* 8.8.12); cf. 15.3.5; 15.6.10; 15.17.31; *EnPs.* 99 (98).4 with R. Canning, 'The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour', *Augustiniana* 37 (1987), 38–121, at 103. Previously he had shrunk from the formula 'Love is God'; indeed he had denied it in 393 (*DFS* 7.19). Note *Sermo* 359.9 (discussed by van Bavel, p. 71) of 411 or 412: 'Whether someone is a pagan or a Jew, he is our neighbour because he is a human being.' Cf. *De Mor.* 1.26.49, though here it is not quite clear how universal is the notion of neighbour.

³⁷ Cf. T. J. van Bavel, 'And Honour God in One Another: *Rule* of Augustine 1.8', *HS* (Würzburg 1987b), 195–206.

of the *City of God*, a scale in the order of nature. It should be contrasted with a human sort of valuation which determines value by usefulness or the market. According to this scale 'a higher price is often paid for a horse than for a slave, more for a jewel than for a maidservant' (*City of God* 11.16). (Apparently in Africa a horse was worth 7 *solidi*.³⁸ Half-wits could be expensive because they could be exploited for their entertainment value (*Desserts of Sinners* 1.35.66).)

There remains a rather different problem which Augustine's revised treatment of love of neighbour must take into account. At this stage it will only receive preliminary consideration. The 'Platonic' ethics of inspiration leading to action, which we have discussed, was first developed in connection with a theory of love for the Good, or for God; Augustine wants to treat love of neighbour in the same way. For the Christian, inspiration for action is also to flow from love of neighbour. Or is it? Can one's neighbour be regularly inspiring enough? Although, in fact, Augustine identifies love of neighbour *as* love of God, there is a certain unclarity, for the neighbour is loved *in* the Lord, while the Lord is loved directly. And the 'treatment' of objects of love must differ too, not only as between love of neighbour and love of God, but as regards love of neighbour itself; what is appropriate for one neighbour and what is appropriate for another must differ. In earlier Christian times simplistic interpreting of this line of thought may have been a factor leading to sexual promiscuity, for all are to be 'loved' – though the confusion apparently did not extend to homosexual loves. Aberrations apart, it is obvious that we do not and cannot 'love' – all our neighbours in the same way, nor is there any evidence that the New Testament intends that we should. The problem is seen at its most taxing when we have to be severe, as Augustine thinks we frequently do, in the service of love, or as a means of showing our love.

It seems strange to hold that we are inspired to be severe, though less so in that we are not inspired to be severe to *God*. Perhaps we should not find it peculiar: certainly Socrates showed what seemed at least to his 'victims' to be severity in the way he treated them, though he thought and claimed that he was interested in the good of their souls; indeed that his actions were inspired by the love of the Good. The case is no real parallel if Socrates *loved* the Good, but *cared for* his friends. Nevertheless,

³⁸ In AD 401; cf. *Cod. Theod.* 11.17.3 (cited by G. Corcoran, *Saint Augustine on Slavery* (Rome 1985), 23). See Augustine's earlier remarks in *DSD* 1.19.59. But 'normally' a skilled (?) adult would be worth 20 *solidi*.

if love is to be a kind of inspiration by God, there does seem to be a problem about how that inspiration works itself out: directly in relation to God himself and indirectly in relation to human beings in God's image. Part (but only part) of the problem lies in the fact that by inspired we nowadays include the notion of constantly *feeling* inspired. What we ordinarily think of and feel as inspiration is for Augustine merely part of the broader and deeper mind-set which is not dependent on our feelings, but which is and can only be derived from, dependent on and directed towards God. In Platonic language our actual love of our neighbour 'participates' in God's love of our neighbour, and similarly has to 'adjust' to the spiritual condition of the neighbour. Of course, to say that love of neighbour is the equivalent of love of God would also be true if God himself were nothing more than one's neighbour, but that sort of 'humanist' solution (in as much as it is intelligible) is happily not considered by Augustine.

VIRTUE AND 'VIRTUE'

Augustine cannot accurately be represented as holding that the love of one's neighbour is a means to the love of God. Rather, love of God underpins and gives reality to love of neighbour, and thus to all moral conduct. For since love underlies the virtues, apparently virtuous acts performed without love – indeed without love of God – would not be virtuous at all. It remains to be discussed whether the love of God needs to be explicit or whether it may remain implicit, as well as how one can love God in the first place. Can one, in fact, decide or choose to love anything, at least with the wholehearted love which Augustine requires? It is, of course, possible to delude oneself or to be deluded, but such delusions cannot lead to the 'enjoyment' of God and the 'good deeds' they give rise to are illusory. As Augustine puts it in the *City of God* (5.11), 'Participation in God brings happiness to all who are happy in truth and not in illusion.'

If we consider the Stoicism still alive in Augustine's time, and very influential on Augustine himself through much of his reading, not least in Cicero, we cannot but be struck by a remarkable similarity between the role of love in Augustine's ethics and the role of right reason in Stoicism. Obviously there are great differences, but light can be shed on Augustine's views if we focus on a particular set of similarities. These can be summed up in the claim that externally similar actions – even perhaps actions performed for apparently similar reasons – may possess a fundamentally different moral status.

If a man helps a friend out of a blazing building, he does the right thing (his *officium* is performed); but if any shade of a desire for a good reputation enters his mind when he is deciding what to do, that is, if his motives are not pure, his action, though apparently virtuous, is actually vicious. It is, in itself, a good act, the right thing to do, but the flawed agent is, in the moral sense, totally flawed. You are either a man of 100% right reason, or you are not.

Augustine's attitude to love shows much that is similar to this. Admittedly he rejects, and vigorously, the Stoic claim that 'all sins are equal'.³⁹ He sharply distinguishes mortal from venial sins: sins which, if unrepented, set a man outside the boundaries of the City of God from those which do not. But although sins are not equally sinful, they are equal *as* sinful. They are equal in so far as the motivation behind them is mixed. As Augustine knew, the Manichaeans were willing to make this point, in mockery of Catholic ascetics: even a mule is a virgin, they observed (*The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* 2.13.28). A political thug like Catiline, says Augustine himself, citing one of his favourite examples,⁴⁰ could do many of the right things for the wrong reasons: a point to which he was to revert later in life when denigrating the 'martyrs' of the Donatists.

What all sins, great and small, have in common, Augustine now wants to say, is lack of love, whether towards God or towards one's neighbour, or both. At least from the 390s he explained such abiding failure to love as an effect of original sin; in this life it can be controlled by grace, but not obliterated. However, his thinking developed, and the reasons and stages of that development can be chronicled.

After his conversion, as the opening lines of *The Happy Life* make clear, Augustine thought of the event in terms of reaching port after a storm. Christ is the way to reach the port; the Christian who professes faith in Christ and becomes a member of the Christian community is more or less in the port already. He can now work on perfecting his soul, and happiness can be attained in this life. It was a view which during the 390s Augustine came to repudiate; no one can be happy, only on the road (*iter*) to happiness in this life (*On Human Responsibility* 2.16.41). Augustine now professed the strikingly unclassical notion that there are no sages among us. No more telling formulation of this

³⁹ *Ep.* 104.4.17; 167.2.4, with the comments of G. Verbeke, 'Augustin et le stoicisme', *RA* 1 (1958), 67–89, at 72. The pressure of the Pelagian controversy may have forced Augustine's recognition that if some are damned, it does not follow that all the damned are equally guilty. A simple distinction between the elect and the non-elect might invite the suspicion of Stoic over-simplification. ⁴⁰ Cf. *Conf.* 2.5.11; *EnPs.* 109 (108).3; *CJul.* 4.3.25.

can be found than the observations we have already noted (though from much later in Augustine's life) that St Paul may still have been much troubled by sexual desires and that he and Peter knew the fear of death?⁴¹ We shall consider the bearing such psychological claims have on ethics later in this chapter; for the present notice that despite the parallels with Stoic 'pure reason' that can be identified in Augustine's account of the relationship between love and the virtues, the Stoic sage – even for the Stoics as rare as the phoenix – has disappeared. Jesus (and perhaps Mary⁴²) alone have achieved perfection in this life, and only because he was the man 'predestined' to do so.⁴³ As for the rest of us, Augustine goes out of his way in the *Reconsiderations* to correct those passages of his early writings which state or imply the possible earthly perfection of the soul.⁴⁴

Although Augustine gave up the view that perfection is possible in this life, he maintained that love must underpin the virtues. Now, however, all virtues are incomplete, and, for reasons soon to be considered, they need to be supported, and even induced, by grace. Yet the distinction between the genuinely (though still imperfectly) virtuous and the seemingly virtuous remains intact; and although the unsystematic nature of Augustine's remarks makes exposition difficult, we can understand this distinction by considering the mature Augustine's view of what may be called 'pagan virtues'. By 'pagan virtues' Augustine understands the 'virtues' (or pseudo-virtues) displayed and promoted by pagans, and, presumably, by Christians if insufficiently assisted by grace. Augustine himself understands pagans as all – apart from Old Testament worthies⁴⁵ – who have not received the grace of baptism – unless they have been granted the grace of martyrdom for the faith instead.⁴⁶

⁴¹ See above pp. 137–138.

⁴² For Mary, see E. A. Clark, 'Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichaean Past', in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays in Late Ancient Christianity* (Queenston, Ont., 1986b), 291–349, at 312–313; *DNG* 36.42: Augustine does not want to query Pelagius' claim that she was sinless 'out of honour to the Lord'; cf. *OpImp.* 4.122.

⁴³ *DPS* 15.30; *DDP* 24.67; cf. R. Bernard, 'La prédestination du Christ total selon saint Augustin', *RA* 3 (1964), 1–58.

⁴⁴ *Retr.* 1.2 (on *DBV* 2.14); 1.3.2 (on *DeOrd.* 1.11.31); cf. 1.7.5 (on *DeMor.* 1.30.64).

⁴⁵ For the extension of Christ's saving grace into the past, see *GPO* 2.23.28.

⁴⁶ Strictly speaking Jews are to be distinguished from pagans, but for the purposes of the present discussion no distinction need be made. For martyrdom as the only possible alternative to baptism as the path to grace or further graces see *CD* 13.7. According to the earlier (c. 405/6) *DeBapt.* (4.22.29), faith and conversion may be enough, where baptism is not possible. This is 'corrected' in *Retr.* 2.18 where, again citing the good thief ('Today you will be with me in paradise.') Augustine grotesquely wonders whether he may have been baptized. *83Q.62* is 'corrected' at *Retr.* 1.26 in the same way. Cf. the discussion in *BA*, xx, 777–778. Without baptism, law is 'imputed' (e.g. *DNC* 1.32.37).

At least from the time of his reply to Simplicianus, Augustine insisted that as fallen human beings we cannot choose a truly just way of living without grace; we are mutilated, weakened, limping (*The Perfection of Justice* 2.4; 3.5–6, AD 414),⁴⁷ suffering from self-inflicted wounds not susceptible of a self-imposed cure.⁴⁸ Such evocations illuminate the general theory: while subject to ‘carnal concupiscence’, that is, to the weakness which has overtaken us since the fall, we cannot love with our whole heart. Though even ‘under sin’ we are able to do some good – no human being, however wicked, can fail to do some good in life – we cannot do it ‘completely’ (*perficere*, *The Perfection of Justice* 9.28). No one can boast of a clean heart (15.33).⁴⁹

The mature Augustine’s regular distinction between law and grace enables him to make the ‘theological’ claim that the ‘justice’ of works is ‘of no avail’ for salvation (e.g. *Grace and Free Will* 18.37; *The Spirit and the Letter* 27.48), but his distinction between the act to be done (the *officium*) and the end (*finis*) for which it is done raises philosophical as well as soteriological questions. His claim is that only acts dependent on grace are salvific, and also that in themselves they are a different kind of act.

Augustine wants to say that the true moral end *cannot* be attained, or even sought, without grace. Objectively right acts may be done; correct end-states may be achieved. But when we consider the ‘subjective’ side of a human act, the situation is, as it was for the Stoics, more complex. The man of faith knows that he is seeking God when performing his good acts (*officia*) – and in so far as he knows he is trying to act well, he knows that he has received grace; the faithless unbeliever has no such knowledge. Hence the attitude of the agents will necessarily differ in the two cases. In a manner analogous to the Stoics, Augustine holds that the ‘good’ pagan (or man without grace) performs the *officium*, the right act, but not in the right spirit. In the language of early Christianity – note the usage we found when we considered Augustine speaking of ‘enjoying’ our neighbour ‘in God’, or ‘in Christ’ – the good pagan does not act ‘in the Lord’.

Towards the end of the *City of God* (19.25), Augustine says that the ‘virtues’ of pagans may seem to be true and beautiful, but that they are vices *rather* than virtues, just as a Stoic might speak of the ‘good’

⁴⁷ Cf. *DNC* 1.7.8; 2.34.57; *CJul.* 5.8.34; *Sermo* 26.7–10; 155.10.10.

⁴⁸ *Sermo* 20.1. We behave like invalids who savage the doctor (*Sermo* 87.14).

⁴⁹ Note that as early as *DBV* 2.12 Adeodatus is made to identify ‘having God’ with having a clean heart; other candidates (perhaps secondary though not wholly irrelevant) are obedience and leading a moral life.

deeds of the non-sage. In fact, Augustine does not go quite as far as the Stoics who would insist that the 'virtues' are really vices. He seems to wish to assert that, if a choice must be made, such acts must be classed as vices rather than virtues, but to recoil from condemning them outright as vicious. The virtues of pagans are 'sterile' (i.e. ineffective, like Donatist sacraments), hence not good, but not explicitly bad either (*Against Julian* 4.3.33). Pagan virtues are significantly different from pagan vices and will therefore be punished less severely by God (4.3.25, etc.). The Romans, says Augustine, have a 'certain uprightness of their own' (*Letter* 138.3.17). Assuming – as is reasonable – that *Sermon* 349 is genuine, Augustine is even prepared to say in about 412 that pagan virtues exhibit a certain 'human love' (*caritas humana*).

Good acts are of three kinds, at least in Augustine's mature thought: those in faith and love,⁵⁰ which are both truly just and of pure motivation; those in faith but inadequate love; those neither in faith nor love. In book 1 of the *City of God* Augustine considers the apparently virtuous deeds of such pagan heroes as Cato and Lucretia. It turns out that their motives are mixed, and viciously so: the lust for power and honour has driven out the other vices but is itself a greater vice.⁵¹ Yet at least Regulus emerges from the text as a hero. There are indeed pagan virtues – perfect of their kind but rare – but 'as a rule' pagans are both unjust and unjustified.⁵² Perhaps a Regulus may be bracketed with saintly Old Testament pagans, but the most that is certain is that Augustine is not unequivocally committed to the view that only those who recognize God's love explicitly, and submit or

⁵⁰ In his later works (e.g. *De Trin.* 13.20.25), because of the demands of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine seems inclined to emphasize faith rather than love as the gift which engenders 'true' virtues, for all that is not of faith is sin (*Ep.* 186.7.24; 194.3.9 and note *DNC* 1.4.5 on chastity). This seems to be a development, not a change, of doctrine, and Augustine regularly emphasizes Galatians 5:6 ('fides quae per caritatem operatur', cf. *Ep.* 194.3.11), not to mention James 2:20: faith without works is unprofitable; even the devils believe (cf. *Ench.* 2.8; 32.121 on uncharitable 'good acts'). The difference in language reflects no abandonment of the 'Platonic' ethics of inspiration but a further immersing of it into Christian (especially Pauline) texts. Historically, the effects of the shift of the revised emphasis have been unfortunate, though unintended.

⁵¹ For more on power-seeking, see chapter 6 below.

⁵² According to J. Tch'ang Tche Wang, *Saint Augustin et les Vertus des Païens* (Paris 1938), Augustine's view of the fate of pagans is that if they are saved, it must be through the grace of Christ. (That is certainly true of the 'heroes' of the Old Testament: *Perflust.* 19.42; *Ench.* 31.118.) But in a modern critic a simple and 'generous' formulation of that sort 'economizes' with Augustine's true position for unhistorical reasons. (See A. de Veer in *BA*, xxiii, 764–770.) For to say that all those saved are saved through Christ (*Perflust.* 19.42; cf. *De Pat.* 21.18) is to say nothing of who is saved. Augustine limits himself to observing that the saved, in the Old Testament, were not limited to Jews. That has no necessary connection with those not mentioned in the Old Testament, let alone with those who now go without baptism.

intended to submit to his wish for us to be baptized, can be saved. Regulus himself is said elsewhere to be 'far from grace' (*Letter* 125.3).

Perhaps the most interesting case of doing (if thinking is doing) the right things, or some of the right things, but not in the right spirit, is that of Plotinus and other Platonists. Although in the *Reconsiderations* Augustine tried to withdraw some of his earlier praise of the Platonists,⁵³ he never abandoned the view that they had been given glimpses of the happy life and a substantial degree of metaphysical understanding. Only their way of pursuing the good life was vitiated – perhaps inevitably – by pride, which at worst had degenerated into the vain 'curiosity' of magic and the worship of demons. They could not have been motivated by pure love (*caritas*), for they did not have faith.

THE WORKINGS OF LOVE

Love is the common essential core of the virtues, and to possess an ordered love, a love which knows its priorities, is the mark of the good man, the saint. Perhaps surprisingly, Augustine's account of love's nature and mode of operation is consistent throughout the great majority of his writings; it seems impossible to identify any substantial development in his account of the psychology of loving (though, as we have seen, there is a widening of his view of the proper 'objects' of love), though such development is easy to trace in his account of God's grace enabling us to love and to persist in loving. In this section we are less concerned with God's enabling power than with the workings of love in the human psyche.

All animals, including man, have appetitions (*City of God* 5.11) which are 'movements of the soul'.⁵⁴ Augustine calls such *per se* movements in man 'affects' (*affectus*, *The Life-Style of the Church* 1.15.25), and as with animals in general they are caused by 'delight' and its opposite, abhorrence; by delight we are moved to whatever is pleasing to us, whether our pleasure is moral or immoral. Where our treasure is, there is our delight (Matt. 6:21). Following a philosophical tradition the ultimate source of which is Plato's *Republic*,⁵⁵ Augustine thinks of each such delight as a weight on the soul, trying to draw it in

⁵³ Cf. *Retr.* 1.1.4 on *CA* 2.10.24 and 3.17.37, plus the remarks on Manlius Theodorus; also 1.2 on *DBV* 1.5, 1.4.3 on the 'false philosopher Porphyry'. We have already noted the reasons for Augustine's growing criticism of the Platonists after about 400.

⁵⁴ Cf. *83Q*, 8: 'moveri per se animam sentit, qui sentit in se voluntatem'. Cf. *DeMor.* 1.12.21, and Holte (1962: 237). ⁵⁵ *Rep.* 6.485D6; Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.3.13.31.

one of two directions.⁵⁶ If delight pulls in one direction, we have *caritas*, if in the other *cupiditas* (*Letter* 157.5). 'If you want to know the nature of a man's love, see where it leads' (*On Psalms* 122 (121).1). Loves do not ultimately all pull, with different strengths, in the same direction, as Plotinus, but not always Plato, had claimed on metaphysical grounds which, as Augustine held, failed to do justice to the reality and power of evil. Delights may be holy or perverse; they are never neutral. There are no 'bare' delights or 'bare' volitions, but delights and volitions are always intentional.

Love and weight are strikingly compared in the *City of God* (11.28): a man is called good not because of what he knows but because of what he loves, and his loves are a kind of delightful weight.

For we are justified in calling a man good not because he knows what is good, but because he loves the good . . . There is indeed a love by which that which should not be loved is loved, and that love is hated in himself by one who knows the love which is given to what ought to be loved. For these can both exist in one and the same man . . . If we were cattle, we should love the life of sensuality and what pleases the senses; this would be our sufficient good, and when this was satisfied, we should seek nothing else. Similarly, if we were trees, we should not be able to love anything through sensual experience; yet we would seem to have a kind of desire for increased fertility and more abundant fruitfulness. If we were stones or waves or wind or flame, or anything of that kind, lacking sense and life, we would still have something like a desire for our own places and order. For the specific weight of bodies is, in a manner, their love, whether bodies tend downwards in virtue of their heaviness or strive upwards in virtue of their lightness. A material body is borne along by its weight in a particular direction, just as a soul is by its love.

For a human being to love something is more than to be drawn to it by a natural appetite, as is the case with animals. Human beings are able to value things, that is, to set or recognize a value in them – we have already noticed Augustine's comments on the 'real' and 'market' value of slaves – and things can be valued either in themselves, or as a means to something else, or as both. But to 'love' something, as Augustine puts it in one of the *83 Questions* (35.1), is 'nothing other than to seek it *for its own sake*': to treat it, that is, as an end in itself. We have already noticed how this creates difficulties about the 'idolatrous'

⁵⁶ *De Mus.* 6.11.29, with quotation of Matt. 6:21: 'quippe quasi pondus est animae, delectatio ergo ordinat animam' (cf. Bochet 1982: 104–107); *Conf.* 7.17.23; 13.9.10 ('pondus meum amor meus'); *De Trin.* 12.11.16; *Ep.* 55.10.18; 157.2.7; *GenLitt.* 2.1.2; 4.3.7–8; 4.18.34; cf. *Sermo* 30.2 (of AD 412–416): 'Distortus sum sub pondere iniquitatis.' For further discussion of weight see Solignac (*BA* (1972a), XLVIII, 635).

love of anything other than God; and beyond that, how the notion of loving something for its own sake puts Augustine in the Greek ethical tradition of seeing the highest motivation as that of inspiration.

Human beings are drawn by their loves (*City of God* 19.19), by the compelling pressure of what they delight in. And since life itself is a continuum, the satisfaction (and non-satisfaction) of these loves and desires affects us in the future. We may come to enjoy, as Augustine sometimes likes to put it, the prospect of the 'sweet taste of sinning'. In a series of texts of which *On True Religion* (390) is perhaps the first,⁵⁷ he begins to emphasize that we are habit-forming creatures, for good and for ill, but more readily for ill; we live under the dominion and constant threat of 'carnal custom',⁵⁸ which forms a 'second nature'. That realization marks a major shift in Augustine's thought: he comes to see this second nature as the true cause of the persistence in evil habits which the Manichaeans had attributed to the presence within us of a second, evil soul.

Augustine noted how his congregation in Hippo (not to speak of North Africans generally) were addicted to the 'carnal custom' of oath-taking (they just loved doing it), and that he himself had had difficulty in getting out of the habit.⁵⁹ Lying too (*Sermon* 16A 2-3) and drinking can become compulsive (*Sermon* 151.9.4); as a girl Monnica had almost succumbed to wine (*Confessions* 9.7.18). Such carnal customs, he tells Fortunatus (*Against Fortunatus* 22), as he struggles to reclaim Paul from the Manichaeans, develop into pleasurable compulsions. Before they set in, we have the uninhibited power (*liberum arbitrium*) to do what we want. But our enjoyment of what we do builds up an ever-growing compulsion to repeat it. Habit takes away our freedom of choice and binds us in 'necessity' (*On Human Responsibility*, 3.1.2). We no longer have the power to refuse, or at least our power to refuse is more and more restricted.⁶⁰ Our weakness is shown up by 'Freudian' slips (*On the Perfection of Justice* 21.44), and one bad habit leads to another: from swearing we come easily to perjury (*Sermon on the Mount* 1.17.51).

⁵⁷ *DVR*, *DezAn.*, *CFort.*, *DSD*.

⁵⁸ For *allera natura*, see Cicero, *De Fin.* 5.25.74. The idea can be traced back further; cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1370a7, 1369b6. For Augustine see *DVR* 46.88; *DSD* (394) 1.3.10; 1.12.34-35; *DLA* 3.7.23; 3.18.52; *Conf.* 8.11.26; 10.40.65; *DeMus.* 6.7.19; *AdSimp.* 1.1.11; *OpImp.* 1.69.

⁵⁹ *DSD* 1.17.51; *ExpGal.* 9; *CFaust.* 19.23; *Sermo* 180.12.14; 307.4.5, where Augustine mentions his own case; cf. *83Q.* 70, *Sermo* 68.12, 70.2 on the love of hunting.

⁶⁰ Cf. *DezAn.* 3.19 and *CAdim.* 21 for more on nature, custom and necessity. Our parents may be the source of avarice, robbery, lying, idol-worship, etc. (*EnPs.* 137 (136). 21).

Augustine was not the first philosopher to emphasize the power of habit and of the necessity for parents and educators to instill the right habits in their charges, and for good rulers to maintain such habits by the institutions of the societies they govern. But no previous thinker had chronicled the growth of compulsive habits with such perception, nor had anyone pointed out with such clarity how severely they restrain our freedom of action. One of Augustine's unwritten complaints about much previous and contemporary thought was that, although lip-service had been paid to the question of habit, the full strength of its threat to the moral life had been underestimated and even ignored; people had been too prone to discuss our moral options in terms which would only have been appropriate to the situation of Adam and Eve before the fall.

It is as a result of the fall that we have a permanent weakness for sin, and, as we have seen, Augustine's awareness of that weakness grew stronger as he passed from his early days in the priesthood through the Donatist and Pelagian controversies. We are now lame and limping, and in need of support:⁶¹ more liable to be corrupted by bad habits which inflict themselves on our memory⁶² than to be benefited (and indeed 'liberated') by good ones. Pride, itself the root cause of sinful behaviour, exacerbates the problem, discouraging us from looking beyond ourselves to God to find ways out of our difficulties. Yet if we try to build ourselves up, we build a ruin (*Sermon* 169.11).

Not that Augustine considers our 'penal' weakness itself to be sinful; rather it is a fault in human nature as we now experience it. Viciousness and sin arise when we assent to the temptations which this weakness presents and to the sweetness of the pleasures, and hence their 'weight', to which we are all exposed. For Augustine has again assumed a Stoic idea, the idea of assent – and, in the case of sin, assent too readily given – and applied it not, as did the Stoics, to our reasonings (so that we make 'moral mistakes') but to our loves. Our habits reinforce the pressure of our loves and desires (*83 Questions* 40), and we come 'habitually' to assent to these more readily. We thus make the sins possible for human nature, the sins within the human range, into our own personal property.

From desires and loves strengthened by the constant series of assents promoted by habit and easy familiarity arises what we may

⁶¹ *PerfJust.* 2.4. For a different idea of loss of control, namely being bound in the chains of slavery, see *Conf.* 8.5.10; 8.11.25. For a 'half-wounded' will see *Conf.* 8.8.19.

⁶² *DeMus.* 6.11.33; cf. *DSD* 1.12.34.

call a cast of mind, a mind-set, or, in the traditional but ambivalent term, our 'will'. The Latin is *voluntas*, and *voluntas* is a love which has been accepted or consented to.⁶³ Or, if you like, 'will' is the conscious acceptance of a set of loves and desires and a determination to 'stick with them'. The metaphor is Augustine's: as we recall, he regularly speaks of the 'glue' of love. Above all, note that in *The Trinity* Augustine regularly identifies the Holy Spirit as love, or as will. In their perfect form, where no modifications to a 'person' are possible, *amor* and *voluntas* are identical. For since *voluntas* is what we are, and each person is what they love,⁶⁴ in God *amor* and *voluntas* must be identical.⁶⁵ In the vicious, conversely, the habit of anger, involving a lust for vengeance, becomes inveterate, leading to hatred, love's opposite.⁶⁶

In the notion of assenting to love (or anger), or to desire, we recognize again a remarkable amalgam and transformation, but Augustine makes little attempt to work out the details systematically. His synthesis of Stoic ideas, largely derived from Cicero and Varro, with the inspirational ethic of the Platonists, seems to have arisen from his personal experience, particularly of the force of habit.

The *Confessions*, in particular, abounds with reflections on the power of habit and on the effects of bad company – the misuse of a man's social instincts – in reinforcing such habits. Even before Augustine first went to Carthage, the 'cauldron of unholy loves' (3.1.1), he had felt he was 'missing out' on sexual satisfactions (2.2.2–2.2.4). In his sixteenth year (2.3.7) he had longed to be sinning with 'the boys'. The picture he paints is tediously familiar: in the spirit of machismo, he despised Monnica's warnings against sexual irregularities – she urged him at least to avoid seducing married women – and felt ashamed at being less dissolute than his peers. He wanted and enjoyed not only the 'sinning' but the applause such

⁶³ For assent as an important constituent of *voluntas* cf. Kahn (1988), perhaps the most helpful, and recent, discussion of the topic. It is surprising, however, that Kahn says almost nothing about the connection of *voluntas* with love, despite his quotation of Aquinas, *ST* 1a 11ae 24.3 (p. 244) – an apparent instance of our neglect of the ethics of inspiration. See further *SL* 34.60: 'To yield our consent . . . or to withhold it is the function of our will – if we function properly'; *DNC* 1.23.25; *C2Ep.* 1.13.27; *CJul.* 5.3.8.

⁶⁴ *IoEp.* 96.4; cf. Burnaby (1938: 94, note 1); Gilson (1960–1961: 174, note 1); Holte (1962: 243).

⁶⁵ *De Trin.* 15.20.38 (*caritas* = *voluntas*); 15.21.41; cf. *EnPs.* 122 (121).1: the character of one's love can be recognized by its goal.

⁶⁶ *Sermo* 58.8; cf. 49.7; *Ep.* 38.2; *EnPs.* 26 (25).2.3; 55 (54).7; 104 (103).19, with Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 3.5.11 and D. Dideberg, *Saint Augustin et la première Épître de saint Jean. Une théologie de l'amour* (Paris 1975), 77.

activities brought him among his mates. The famous pear-tree incident reveals the same mentality: Augustine and his friends stole the pears and threw them to pigs. They did not need them or want them themselves. They took them just because it was the wrong thing to do (2.4.9; 2.6.12; 2.8.16); it produced a shadowy likeness of omnipotence (2.6.14): 'All the same, I am quite sure that I would not have done this thing on my own' (2.8.16; 2.9.7). Friendship, for Augustine, is a delightful knot (2.5.10), but, as ancient thinkers often worried, it is a knot (or bond) for vice as well as for virtue. Note the word 'knot'; knots hinder the smoothness of one's choices, derive from one's habits and help to confirm them.

Augustine's friend Alypius, later bishop of their home town of Tagaste, is depicted in the *Confessions* as another victim of social pressures. Sex – he had not become habituated (*Confessions* 6.12.21) – and pillage were not Alypius' weaknesses. Driven in part by 'curiosity', he preferred the brutalities of the gladiatorial shows. 'When he saw the blood, it was as though he had drunk a draught of savagery . . . he revelled in the wickedness of the combat and was drunk with the joys of bloodshed. He was no longer the man who had come to the show but one of the mob which he had joined, a real companion for those who had brought him' (6.8.13).⁶⁷

For the star example of the perils of 'friendship', however, we must turn to the sin of Adam and Eve, as explained in the *Literal Commentary* on Genesis (11.42.59).⁶⁸ Adam was given Eve as a companion, for the purpose of begetting children. Between them existed a friendship, a 'marital affection', which, when perverted and followed in forgetfulness of God, had disastrous consequences. For rather than deny his wife, his sole companion, Adam chose disobedience to God, a disobedience which, together with the pride which engendered it, has become habitual to the human race and a mark of human 'nature'. The perversion of *amicalis benevolentia* was in this case nearly fatal to mankind.

Callousness and bad company, combined with the congenital weakness of the human race for false loves, promote evil habits and

⁶⁷ Cf. the remarks about fans at the theatre at *DDC* 1.29.30.

⁶⁸ See Clark (1986a). For Augustine's view – after the *Confessions* (4.4.7) – of true friendship as a gift of God (perhaps only possible among Christians, certainly powered by the Holy Spirit), see J. Lienhart, 'Friendship in Paulinus of Nola and Augustine', *CAug.*, 1, 279–296, at 284–296. Lienhart emphasizes the unclassical nature of such a claim and its dependence (p. 293) on Augustine's new theory of grace. Ambrose had retained the more 'classical' outlook, but Augustine did not go as far as Paulinus of Nola who rejected the classical term *amicitia* altogether in favour of *caritas* or *dilectio*.

'carnal custom'. Our freedom to act is universally impaired; no one, not even Peter and Paul, is safe. Worst of all, and without grace insurmountable even by the saints, is the necessary fear of death, from which only Christ, born without original sin, is untainted. That is why only Christ can suffer death quite 'freely'. He is not enslaved by carnal custom; he alone is at one with himself. Thus he alone can inspire and strengthen the martyrs to imitate him, though the imitation is imperfect.⁶⁹ Augustine's early account of the life of Christ sees it above all as an inspiring example. If we are puzzled why even a perfect example can help, we have Plato to tell us that examples inspire, and later Augustine will tell us that a sacramental life helps to keep inspiration going.

After about 415 Augustine came to think of the lives even of those 'under grace' as a constant struggle with evil habits.⁷⁰ For our goodness, unlike the fictitious perfection of the Platonic and Stoic sage, remains fragile, and carnal customs can easily set in again. The Pelagians are wrong to imagine that even the 'elect' can attain sinlessness on earth,⁷¹ just as the Donatists are wrong to suppose that the Church could consist just of the holy; there is a sense in which both groups are making the old mistake of the classical philosophers, a mistake which Augustine himself had once made. Repenting of that, he finally urges men more and more to pray for 'perseverance to the end'. That is the only hope if our love for God is to continue, if the inspiration is not to wane. Augustine likes to remind us of the continued moral weakness of the old and the constant temptations, especially to pride, of those who are trying to live an ascetic or spiritual life.⁷²

Because of the fall we are lame and unable to walk properly without support. It is characteristic of Augustine to find evidence for that in everyday experience as well as in Scripture. For our ordinary experience of love is that – whereas we are commanded to love our neighbour – we cannot love 'to order'; we need to come across

⁶⁹ *Sermo* 335B (= Morin Guelf. 31).1–2; cf. *Perf. Iust.* 11.24. Christ alone is without sin, the saints *sine querella*.

⁷⁰ In his early Christian writings, and even in the reply to Simplicianus, Augustine read Romans 7:15–25 as referring to Paul's life before grace and conversion. Later, 'correcting' himself, he saw it as reflecting Paul's view of himself even under grace. Cf. *C2EpPel.* 1.8.13–1.11.24, where 'correcting' the Pelagians, Augustine refers to his own 'mistaken' interpretation; cf. P. Platz, *Der Römerbrief in der Gnadenlehre Augustins* (Würzburg 1938), 148. For Augustine's view of his personal struggle in 403 ('fighting against my evil promptings, a day-long tension'), see *EnPs.* 37 (36).19. ⁷¹ Pelagius, *Dem.* 9; *Exp. in Rom.* 10.3–5, etc.

⁷² Note the remarks about nuns in *CD* 1.28, *DSV* 31.31, 33.33, and *EnPs.* 100 (99).13.

someone 'lovable' or understand that someone is 'really' lovable. But 'who has it in his power to ensure that he will meet something which delights him' (*To Simplicianus* 1.2.21)? Yet if 'love' does appear, we may have the experience of being led, as Augustine says, by something over which we have little control.

In such a case we may talk of 'falling in love', especially if we are inclined to think of love as simply a feeling. Yet if we think only of 'falling in love', we have difficulty with the commands 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. Even if we accept that we can tell ourselves, or be told by God, that we must love, there remains the problem of why we should obey, or whether we have the power to obey. Indeed, if we are commanded to love, it is easy to see why Augustine (following Paul in Romans 5.5) said that *caritas* must be infused⁷³ – long before he came to rely on a text (Proverbs 8:35) which said that our 'will' needs to be prepared to obey that command by God. For our 'carnal habits' disincite us to love where we should and in proportion as we should. 'Naturally' we shall love the wrong things; Augustine often expresses amazement at the power of 'false' loves or 'impure' loves: the exulting of the fans at the races (*Sermon* 90.6), the love of the hunter for the chase (*Sermon* 68.12; 70.2), the loyalty of the brigand to his fellows even under torture (*Sermon* 169.14): 'He could not have done this without a great capacity for love.'

Two points have become clear: first that unless God were present, we could not love him; second that if we are in the grip of evil habits, we shall not want to love him. Our 'wills' are corrupted,⁷⁴ and they need 'treatment' by God to enable them to love what is good. Following the Stoics, Augustine thinks that we need a spiritual, indeed a divine, physician. That entails that our love for God must be preceded by God's gift of love, showing itself as faith. From the time of *Merits and Remission* (AD 412) Augustine uses Proverbs 8:35 to summarize the situation as 'Our will is prepared by God' (*voluntas praeparatur a Deo*). In view of the close relationship between love and will, that means that our love and affection for God, which is shown in faith, can only itself be God's gift.

Paul's texts about grace dovetail with the need for a source of Platonic inspiration. It is not enough to know that there is a God; it is requisite for moral life (not to say salvation) to love him. Plato's gods

⁷³ E.g. *ExpPropRom.* 44.3; 83Q 66.

⁷⁴ Cf. *De Trin.* 13.12.16: *natura depravata* (or often *vitiata*).

are certainly concerned that human beings act morally, but do not much concern themselves with commanding them to do so – though they will punish them if they do not. Since in the original Platonic tradition there is virtually no stress on divine commands, there is no corresponding emphasis on obedience to god and no particular connection of love with obedience. But for Augustine obedience to God is necessarily a mark of love for God. Both, in fact, are inspired by God himself. Hence, as he puts it in his treatise *Against Fortunatus* (22), Grace inspired (divine) love in us; and elsewhere: ‘Grace is the inspiration of love enabling us to do what is known by holy love’ (*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 4.5.11).⁷⁵ Augustinian grace has come to perform the role of Platonic *eros*; the difference is that grace is unambiguously divine, no mere *daimon*, but the Holy Spirit; and the fact that love is God entails that it is omnipresent. If grace is with us, then there is no possibility that we shall ‘fall out’ of love as easily as we ‘fell into’ it. Human love, as we normally experience it, is inclined to wane (and passion is not easily converted into deep friendship – which many ancient Platonists held to be necessary), but if our energies and love can be constantly rekindled, we shall, as we have found Augustine insisting, ‘endure’ or ‘persist’ to the end: a theme which became especially prominent and important to him in the last few darkening years of his life.

The matter is given detailed treatment in *Rebuke and Grace* (11.31–32). Before the fall Adam had received the ‘more joyful’ grace of having the capacity to win his salvation, but he lacked the power to persevere. Now, through Christ, we have received the ‘more powerful’ grace which is above all to be prayed for, and which will enable us to persevere to the end.

Perhaps Augustine’s favourite example of the working of grace comes to be the transformation of Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle, the ex-Pharisee commanded to preach the Messiah.⁷⁶ In the *City of God* (11.25) Augustine even attributes much of his theory of grace and love (though without the divine commands) to Plato himself: ‘In Plato’s view God alone is the . . . giver of all reason, the inspirer of the love which is the condition of a good and happy life.’ In *Against Fortunatus* he tells us that the effect of our being so inspired is that we are ‘subdued to His will’ – which we now know means subdued not to some arbitrary set of divine decrees but to the love of

⁷⁵ Cf. *AdSimp.* 1.2.13: ‘effectrix bonae voluntatis’; Nygren (1953: 522–527).

⁷⁶ Cf. *AdSimp.* 1.2.22, with the discussion of Fredriksen (1988: 103).

God, directed firstly to himself and secondarily to us, wishing us good. For the 'will' of God is also equivalent to 'divine reason' (*divina ratio*). We shall return to the question of being 'subdued'.

Of course, to sinners God's 'love' may not *seem* kindly; that is because of the distortions in ourselves. Which brings us back to the brute fact that we are repelled, as well as attracted, by what we come across. Repulsion, as well as attraction, as the Stoics had emphasized, is a motivating force. Augustine holds that if we were genuinely 'free', we should be repelled only by evil,⁷⁷ though in our fallen state that is not the case. Hence suffering – at the hands of men as well as those of God – is necessary to break the power of bad habits and to promote the conditions for a good will.⁷⁸ For as Augustine's concern about the dangers of habit grew, and his belief in the necessity of their correction strengthened, he began to think that God's 'discipline' would necessarily be unwelcome, as is the discipline of the schoolmaster. Corrupt loves may require to be corrected by fear, that fear of the Lord which is the beginning, though not the end, of wisdom: 'If any suggestion springing from a desire for the inferior should deflect our purpose, not merely the fear of death (though that is helpful)⁷⁹ but the eternal damnation and torments of the Devil will recall us to the true path' (*On Human Responsibility* 3.25.76).⁸⁰

The effects of the fall are primarily death and the characterization of the soul by a 'carnal quality', typically visible in a sexual 'dérèglement', from which we shall only be freed at the Resurrection,⁸¹ but which we can modify by chaste living, whether in celibacy or married life. As a result we can neither know ourselves – as we have seen, we are now a great mystery to ourselves – nor can the proud soul, which once sought to be God, control even the sexual movements of its own body. In this present life death is unavoidable, and our carnal quality, our weakness (*concupiscentia*) for the flesh, is ineradicable; it will not simply respond to an easy kindness, an appeal

⁷⁷ *DLA* 3.10.29.

⁷⁸ *DeMus.* 6.11.33; *Conf.* 1.14.23; *Ep.* 89.7; *Ep.* 191.2 (*timor severitatis*); cf. Rist (1969b: 444). Note the observation that the fear of God is more prominent in the Old Testament and the love of God in the New (*DeMor.* 1.28.56): a natural order.

⁷⁹ *GenMan.* 2.28.42; *DLA* 3.10.29; 3.25.76.

⁸⁰ Cf. excellently, and with many references, Fredriksen (1988: 98). Augustine claimed that he knew few, if any, conversions to Christianity in which fear was not an important motivation (*CatRud.* 4.7–9; cf. *EnPs.* 81 (80).20; *IoEp.* 3.12). There is nothing meritorious about such fear, but it may bring us to love (*Sermo* 161.8). Mature fear of the Lord is not of punishment but of the absence of the Bridegroom (cf. Burnaby 1938: 215–216).

⁸¹ *ExpPropRom.* 13–18, 2–10. For the 'carnal quality' of the soul *83Q.* 66.6.

to our good will. In *On Human Responsibility*, where in book 3 the Devil, his torments and his power to tempt are unusually prominent by Augustinian standards, it is significant that while at the beginning of the treatise the debate is focused on the nature of a 'good will' and of a 'bad', in book 3 (and the latter part of 2) attention shifts to the possibility of our having a good will at all. For although the will is under the domination of no evil substance (as the Manichaeans believed) or of any astrological fate or similarly compelling external pressure, it functions according to its 'second nature', and the second nature is not the nature formed by God, but the nature which has sinned.⁸²

The second nature is like that of a vicious child or a vicious slave, needing to be restrained by fear: fear of a loving God, certainly, but fear none the less. Such fear is associated in Augustine's mind with the traditional *disciplina* which fathers bring to bear on their sons and masters on their slaves. It is painful, but medicine often is, and with God as the administrator we can at least be sure that it is just.⁸³ In the next chapter we shall consider the special problems which arise when God's punishments and corrections are carried out by God's human agents, but here we have to do with what is regularly and rightly called Augustine's darkening vision of the fallen human condition, his increasing opposition to facile 'Platonic' or classical optimism over the possibilities for easy human improvement at the level of the individual, let alone at the level of society as a whole, whether Christian or other. Already in 403 he is able to say even of the Emperors that they had come to serve the Lord with fear and trembling, and had shown this by 'paving the way' for the Church and enraging its enemies.⁸⁴

When in 396 Augustine replied to his old master Simplicianus about various problems in Romans, he had reached the core of his final position. That position, however, had been revealed to him;⁸⁵ how else could one discover it? Augustine had been enabled to see the answer; he had been illuminated by God. For he had tried hard to support the freedom of the human will, but the grace of God, as he ambiguously put it, had prevailed (*Reconsiderations* 2.1.1). For the

⁸² Cf. 'nostra natura peccavit' (83Q, 66.3); *DeCont.* 8.21; *Retr.* 1.10.3.

⁸³ Fear binds people together (*DLA* 1.15.32). For the *disciplina* of the 'family' (including slaves), see now B. D. Shaw, 'The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine', *Past and Present*, 115 (1987), 3-51 and below pp. 210-213. The chapter '*Disciplina*' (pp. 233-243) in Brown (1967) should also be consulted on 'reforming' Donatist society.

⁸⁴ *EnPs.* 33 (32) (3).9-10; cf. 19. For the date see Zarb (1948).

⁸⁵ Cf. *DPS* 4.8.

will, he came to believe, is compelled by nothing beyond itself, but is itself corrupt, not some of the time, but all the time.

It is helpful, as we have seen, to think of Augustine's account of human weakness in terms of the standard classical descriptions of weakness of will or *acrasia*, above all that of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle thinks that some of us are *acratice* some of the time, and a few of us may be *acratice* all the time (at least about something), while Augustine's position is rather that all of us are *acratice* all the time, and that while we may think we have overcome a particular moral weakness, there is always the real possibility that it will return. To this, however, we should add that his identification of the main feature of the morally good act as loving rather than as some sort of knowing makes such an analysis much more convincing.

As we have seen, Augustine is appealing to the obvious, and biblically emphasized, experience of the divided heart⁸⁶ – 'heart' is the word which he himself uses⁸⁷ – as vicious, and singleness of heart as the basic virtue. For although 'we' are one, our hearts and wills are divided; we wish to follow both the law of the Spirit and the law of the 'flesh'. It is not that we have two separate wills, let alone that there are two originally distinct substances within us, as the Manichaeans held, but that we are divided selves, divided wills, divided lovers, as was Augustine himself over the step of conversion (*Confessions* 8.9.21–8.10.24). For the single of heart there are no other loves, no other distractions, no other 'gods' to think about, let alone to love and worship. The pure intentions and aspirations of the Augustinian saint are thus more intelligible than the pure reasonings of the Stoic sage, or perhaps we should say more basic and primitive.

Logically correct thinking can aim at all sorts of goals, but if we are to say that one of these goals is superior to another, it seems right to think of it as more valuable, more worthy of love and respect, rather than as more intelligible. Augustine certainly held that the more lovable is also the more intelligible, but if we are talking about human motivation, we need an object which is desirable as well as intelligible; Augustine knew that as well as Hume or Plato.

Historically, as Augustine's 'pessimism' or realism grew, and his sense of *acrasia* shifted from the more limited 'Aristotelian' analysis to

⁸⁶ For recent comment, see Brown (1988): 33–39.

⁸⁷ For the 'heart' as the self – an alternative to the *voluntas* or *prohairesis* – see De la Peza (1962); one may recall the famous 'fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te' (*Conf.* 1.1.1).

the picture of a universally flawed humanity, so his sense of what is required to drive the 'acratie' soul to correction also changed. Whereas soon after his conversion he was very inclined to think of the possibility of completing the ascent to higher and 'eternal' realities, leaving behind the 'temporal', his new 'acratie' is the man who always and continually needs to be inspired by God, to be enflamed ever more by love. The Augustinian saint will not separate his lower sensible interests from his higher, but will blend his heart into a new but ordered unity by God's help. For it is God's grace which 'inspires love in us', and God who 'orders the love in us' and sets our priorities. Moreover, the love the good man must acquire is not only of the eternal One or God but also of the changing human self when loved 'aright'. True freedom in the first book of *On Human Responsibility* (1.15.31) is still a turning back to the eternal law (*lex aeterna*), without dithering and backsliding, but, as *Against Faustus* (22.27) is soon to add, that eternal law must be identified as the will (that is, the love) of God.

Can we tell whether we are making moral progress, whether our 'will' and love are turning back to God? The theory of the divided will might suggest that we could only know the answer to that when we have become single of heart, when our progress is complete. Thus, like the Stoic sage, we might be good without realizing it. But in an interesting advance on Aristotle's theory of *akrasia*, Augustine holds out for us a way of realizing that we are making progress and even a way of realizing at the same time a little more of what we are. He tells us that just before his final conversion he himself was still a divided self; he had more or less given up his ambitions and his love of money, but, though he wanted to give up his sexual lust, he could not (*Confessions* 8.1.2). In that he seems a typical Aristotelian 'acratie'. He had said in *On Human Responsibility* that the will is in its own power, but he had already experienced that it is not (*Confessions* 8.9.21). Yet he had progressed, and identified something of his real self. He had first-order desires for sex and for chastity, but he found that he had also had, for many years, something of a second-order desire to want chastity: 'Give me chastity, but not yet' (8.7.17). In that second-order desire his true self ('embodied' in a love of God and finally in the figure of Continence offered him by God (8.11.27)) was both growing and becoming apparent.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Cf. D. D. Crawford, 'Intellect and Will in Augustine's *Confessions*', *RS* 24 (1988), 291–302, at 298.

MORE ON WILL: 'DE LIBERO ARBITRIO VOLUNTATIS'

We have identified will as an accepted set of loves; we have noticed the importance of the notion of assent in Augustine's position. Further consideration of the 'history' of *voluntas* will do more than enable us to see who influenced Augustine directly and in what way. It will help us to understand two further features of *voluntas*, over and above the love and assent on which we have concentrated thus far. These two features are the semantic field of the Latin word *voluntas* itself, and the fact that *voluntas* appears to encapsulate some of the content of the Greek *prohairesis*, which itself has a rather peculiar philosophical history.⁸⁹

Consider the experiment of seeking a Greek equivalent for Augustine's title 'De libero arbitrio voluntatis' – which may be rendered long-windedly as 'On the externally uninhibited power to choose which we have as moral agents', and which I have rendered as *On Human Responsibility*. The Greek would have to be 'peri tou autexousiou tēs prohairesēōs': that would have been intelligible to Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine's near-contemporary, and a possible title for one of his books. The notion of 'freedom' would be captured in the word *autexousiou* (self-determining):⁹⁰ a connotation required in texts where Augustine speaks not of a free will but of a free choice (or power to choose) of the will.⁹¹ Since Augustine obviously does not think that the power to choose, in and of itself, could be the supreme excellence of man, he is free to consider such freedom as a moral chameleon. Indeed, as we have seen, though it is possible to have freedom from righteousness (*Against Two Letters* 1.2.5), there is no such thing as 'bare freedom'.

Augustine is always concerned to argue that in the course of our ordinary human life nothing outside the will determines the will; that is, whatever kind of will we have (good or bad, as the early parts of *On Human Responsibility* put it), we shall 'will' accordingly. That is the reason why when Augustine remarked of his *Reply to Simplicianus* that

⁸⁹ On the history of *voluntas*, see Kahn (1988), A. Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1982), 133–135, 143; Rist (1969: 223–232) and 'Prohairesis: Proclus, Plotinus et Alii', in *De Jamblique à Proclus*, ed. H. Dörrie (Geneva 1975), 103–117 = *Platonism and its Christian Heritage* (London 1985), essay xiv.

⁹⁰ Cf. Jerome, *Adv. Pel.* 3.7: 'autexousion nos liberum appellamus arbitrium'.

⁹¹ The phrase 'free will' (*libera voluntas*) occurs rarely, if at all, before Augustine, who might seem to use it merely as an alternative for *liberum arbitrium voluntatis* (*DLA* 3.1.1). Kahn (1988: 248, note 16) notices Lucretius, *De rer. nat.* 2.257 (reading *voluntas* rather than *voluptas*).

there he had struggled for the free choice of the will, but that the grace of God prevailed, he was not denying that the will is free to choose. He was asserting that only the wrong choices are possible unless the will is properly repaired and maintained by God. Hence, if it chooses badly, it is nothing but the will that chooses; if it chooses well, the will is 'prepared' by God, or, as Augustine eventually puts it, it enjoys full freedom (*summa libertas*),⁹² freedom being a condition in which the soul is in harmony with, and subject to, the truth and the will and love of God.

But 'freedom' is less our immediate concern than 'will/*voluntas*/*prohairesis*', and here a *limited* knowledge of the history of ancient philosophy may even mislead. In Aristotle the word *prohairesis* indicates a 'deliberated desire' – the deliberation being about means to a desired end. The ability to engage in such deliberating is a mark of mankind, as distinct from animals. But the Aristotelian usage, though familiar, is not that with which we are now concerned, nor would *voluntas* be the Latin rendering of that sort of *prohairesis*. The sense we need of *prohairesis* is visible in the writings of the Stoic Epictetus in the first century AD, in whom *prohairesis* seems to be more or less equivalent to *voluntas* as used by the near-contemporary Seneca.⁹³

Perhaps neither Seneca nor Epictetus intended their use of *voluntas*/*prohairesis* to signal a new philosophical position, but within Stoicism their language, at least, is innovative. *Prohairesis*, as used by Epictetus, seems to be drawn from ordinary contemporary speech where it most naturally refers to character, but Epictetus uses it to refer to character specifically in the sense of moral character or moral personality. Seneca's *voluntas* seems to be the same, but in this case the 'natural' meaning of the word – a nominal form from *volo* ('I wish') – carries over more obviously into philosophical usage and highlights the connection of moral character with a man's set of wants. This is Augustine's usage, and it is possible that he is directly influenced by Seneca.⁹⁴ That, however, is not necessarily the case, for the natural meaning of *voluntas* was as obvious to Augustine as it would have been to Seneca and probably to many another in between. Moreover, by Augustine's day *prohairesis* too had acquired among several Christian

⁹² As early as *DeMus.* 6.5.14 one enjoys *summa libertas* in serving God; cf. *DLA* (2.13.37) on *libertas* as submission to truth, and later *Ench.* 9.32, *Oplmp.* 6.11.

⁹³ Cf. Rist (1975); Dihle (1982: 133ff., 215, note 24) and Kahn (1988: 252–254). Kahn has interesting comment on the similarities of usage between Epictetus and Augustine.

⁹⁴ But for Augustine's *limited* use of Seneca, see Hagendahl (1967: 245).

writers, as well as among the Neoplatonists with whom they were familiar, that sense of moral character which we have noticed.⁹⁵ Yet in neither Greek nor Latin can current usage account for the special near-identification of will with love, or a set of accepted loves, which is Augustine's powerful and transforming thesis.

In English, 'willing' conjures up the idea of determining on a course of action. Is that, then, not part of Augustine's understanding of it too? It is, but he wants to put the genesis of *voluntas* further back in what he thinks of as the mystery of the soul. We determine on doing things as a result of what we are, and what we are is what we love – within the restrictions imposed by the necessity of life in a particular body.

LOVE OF SELF, LOVE OF POWER AND HUMILITY

The sketch presented above gives some idea of the richness and many-sidedness of Augustine's account of love and the 'will', and above all of their importance for his theory of moral motivation. I have generally avoided much discussion of the specific sources of Augustine's ideas in order not to risk dissolving his rather *insouciant* originality into a far-flung collection of forerunners. Sometimes, however, the best way of highlighting a doctrine is to highlight its origins, and this is the case with one of the specifically Plotinian (rather than more broadly Platonic) features of Augustine's account of love. As we have seen, Augustine certainly read *Ennead* 5.1 before his conversion, and within a few years he began to blend it with parts of Scripture, such as, perhaps, the 'triple concupiscence' of John's Epistle (1 John 2:15). The key passage of the *Enneads* runs as follows: 'The beginning of evil for them [sc. souls] is pride (*tolma*), becoming, the primal otherness, and the wish to belong to themselves. Since they have clearly enjoyed their unrestrained power of choice (*autexousion*) . . . they used it to withdraw (*apostasin pleistēn*) as far [from their origin] as they could. They did not know that they came from There' [sc. the world above].⁹⁶

Roughly speaking, this tells us that the necessary condition for sin is (obviously) existence, but more pertinently existence other than in God (or perhaps than in God's mind). When this necessary condition prevails, pride and self-will can and do appear. In his earliest commentary on Genesis (2.15.22), Augustine says of Adam and Eve that their sin arose through pride (*superbia*), through wishing to be in

⁹⁵ 'If the *prohairesis* sins, how is the soul sinless?', asks Proclus, approving a thesis of Iamblichus (*In Tim.* iii, p. 336, 6–7 Diehl).

⁹⁶ Cf. *Enn.* 3.7.11.15 ('wishing to rule itself and be its own') and 6.9.5.15.

their own power without the Lord ('in sua potestate potius sine Domino'), and through excessive love of their own power ('ut suam potestatem nimis amarent'), because they foolishly supposed that God was jealous lest they rule themselves. The beginning of man's pride is attempting to live away (*apostatare*) from God; hence man, indeed, swells through pride (*per superbiam tumescens*).

Augustine's thought developed further. The original sin of pride may take on Saint John's three forms: pride in the strict sense of claiming even to be of the same substance as God (in the manner of the Manichaeans (*On Genesis Against the Manichaeans* 2.26.40)); lascivious behaviour; vain curiosity. Yet a further feature of pride has to be introduced. The proud soul (6.13.41) wants like God to 'have other souls under her control', thus again both challenging God as an equal and wishing to disrupt the order which God has established.⁹⁷

Plotinus associated pride with a perverse love, a love of one's own powers, a wish to be one's own master. Augustine expands on the notion of a perverse love, as well as the perverse imitation of God which we have already considered, for it is our desires and loves which form our will and which motivate us to act, and to act habitually. Thus, when arguing later (perhaps in 404) with the Manichaean Secundinus (18) about the fall, Augustine can say that a man sins when, under the impulse of love (*dilectionem*), he prefers a creature, however good, to its Creator. But Augustine expands on Plotinus: wishing to be one's own master is tied to wishing to master others. Love of one's own power becomes love of one's power over others. Characteristically, Augustine adds a social dimension to Plotinus' insight, in this reverting from Plotinus to Plato. That is what we should expect; just as in Augustine love of God must be tied (socially) to love of neighbour, so hatred of God must be tied to hatred of neighbour and the desire to dominate.

In the *City of God* and in many other places⁹⁸ Augustine argued that 'two loves founded two cities': the love of God and the love of the world. But well before the *City of God*, perhaps first in a sermon on the Psalms (44.9.7),⁹⁹ Augustine had come to characterize the perverse love, that love of self-mastery which 'forgets its origin' – identical with

⁹⁷ Cf. *DDC* 1.23.23; Holte (1962: 249); Markus (1987–1988: 4).

⁹⁸ Cf. A. Laurus and H. Rondet, 'Le thème des deux cités dans l'oeuvre de S. Augustin', in *Etudes Augustiniennes*, eds. Rondet et al. (Paris 1953), 97–160; J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden 1991); and as late as *Sermo* 344.1 (at the earliest of 428): 'amor saeculi, amor Dei'.

⁹⁹ C. 403 AD according to Zarb (1948). The concept of an evil self-love is, of course, earlier; cf. *DDC* 1.23.23.

both Plotinian *tolma* and biblical pride – not only with love of ‘the world’ but simply as ‘love of self’ (*amor sui*). There is, of course, also a good self-love in Augustine, though it is not designated *amor sui*; it is an understanding that one is of value (as God’s image) and that therefore one naturally wishes to preserve one’s life and well-being. It is on the basis of such ‘self-love’ that one learns to love one’s neighbour as oneself.¹⁰⁰ But now Augustine begins to use *amor sui* for something quite other: for love of oneself over against God, for selfishness rather than for self-esteem.¹⁰¹

Love of self, love of power over others, apostasy from God, pride: these are virtual synonyms in Augustine’s mature thought. What are their opposites? Love of God, service of others, clinging to God, and finally humility. Whatever later would-be Augustinians may have made of it, the last term indicates no grovelling subservience or servile self-abasement. It has primarily two sorts of reference: to a recognition that man is not God but that he depends on God for his existence, and to a recognition that in his fallen state he needs the help of God’s ‘humility’, God’s being willing to serve others, as shown above all in the Incarnation. At bottom, humility is honesty about the human condition, and it is on the basis of that honesty, that willingness to face the facts, that man’s moral and spiritual regeneration has to be founded. Humility is thus the companion of love for God just as pride is the companion of love of self. A lust for power is humility’s opposite. False loves necessarily encourage not only an arrogant misreading of oneself, but a forgetfulness of God: bad faith, conscious and deliberate.

Augustine tells us in the *Confessions* that at a crucial point before his commitment to the Catholic Church, when his two ‘wills’ (8.5.10) were in conflict,¹⁰² when he hoped for singleness of heart but could not find it, his old attachments ‘plucked at my garment of flesh’ and whispered their complaint (8.11.26): ‘Are you going to dismiss us?’ Habit, he continued, was still too strong. In a perhaps nearly contemporary sermon (65A) he spoke of the murmur of unjust ‘loves’ which surround us.¹⁰³ Such loves promote unjust acts, acts in

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *DDC* 1.23.22; 1.26.27; *De Trin.* 14.14.18 (self-love is *naturaliter inditum*); *CD* 10.3.2, etc. The influence of the Stoic theme that man’s first natural impulse is to self-preservation is obvious.

¹⁰¹ In the *Laus* (5.731D–732B) Plato had used *philautia* in a similarly bad sense, though of course without the theological overtones.

¹⁰² We have considered ‘two wills’ (not, as Manichaeans held, two substances); but recall *Conf.* 8.9.21, 8.10.23 (where more than two are envisaged). If ‘wills’ are loves, the phenomenon is easily recognized; if they were substances, it could seem unintelligible.

¹⁰³ The text is in Etaix (1976: 42, line 23). For the date see O’Donovan (1982: 396). ‘Murmuring’ is an activity of the ungodly.

contempt of God, as he puts it elsewhere. They cannot therefore be acts of humility but must be prompted by the lies of pride. For as the prologue to his commentary on John's first epistle has it, 'Where there is humility, there is love' (*caritas*). As we have seen from another angle, with love you have the basis for moral and religious acts. 'Dilige et quod vis fac':¹⁰⁴ love and do what you want (or love).

ABSOLUTE MORAL RULES

God's love both commands man's obedience and gives him the strength to obey. Without God's help we are 'under the Law', and will either fail to act rightly or pretend (by various rationalizations) that (in this case) the Law does not apply. Yet the Law does more than provide impossible guidelines. It stirs up the 'light of reason' which, though weakened, is not quenched but remains flickering within us (*Incomplete Work* 1.94). There is still a just law impressed on our hearts (*The Trinity* 14.15.21). Hence we can recognize that we should not do to others what we do not wish done to ourselves, though presumably Augustine meant what we *ought* not to want done to us (*On Psalms* 58 (57).1).¹⁰⁵

'Love and do what you will' in Augustine is no licence for libertinism or situation ethics. It licenses a man and makes him wish to want what God wishes, loves and commands, and God wishes, loves and commands only what is constitutive of his own nature. God's nature is by definition unchanging; hence God's love will be 'eternal', and hence we have an 'eternal law' (*On Human Responsibility* 2.15.31ff.). This would seem to imply that there will be absolute moral rules, and that these will encapsulate not just tautologous truths like 'murder is wrong' or 'adultery is wrong', but synthetic propositions which are invariably true, such as that it is always wrong to make deliberately false statements with intent to deceive.¹⁰⁶ We

¹⁰⁴ See J. Gallay, 'Dilige et quod vis fac. Notes d'exégèse augustinienne', *RSR* 43 (1955a), 545-555. For Pelagius' reaction see *DDP* 20.53. Some of the 'political' effects of this will be considered in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Conf.* 2.4.9; *Ep.* 157.3.15; 194.2.5 (where law gives an indication that sin should be punished).

¹⁰⁶ As we shall see, the only exceptions to certain 'absolute' prohibitions are those 'licensed' by divine command or inspiration. The thesis behind these exceptions seems to be that God always knows the right (and equitable) action, but after *DLA* 3 and *DVR* Augustine thinks that no 'human' law, or law intelligible to humans, can express this (cf. H. A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York and London 1963), 89-91). Thus apart from divine intervention, absolute rules are absolute as far as we are concerned. But, as the case of lying shows, some rules may express the divine nature and divine knowledge of the right better than others, and hence are more important.

have within us an 'impressed' idea of truth (*Literal Commentary* 8.27.49–50) which is part of the core of our moral personality. It is understandable that Augustine devotes two treatises specifically to truth-telling (*On Lying* of 395 and *Against Lying* which reached Consentius in the Balearic Islands in 420).¹⁰⁷

The first of these essays, admitted by Augustine himself to be obscure and difficult (*Reconsiderations* 1.27), considers various examples of lying in a good cause – so called 'compensatory lies' – some of which are taken from events of the Old Testament.¹⁰⁸ While allowing that such lies are more easily condoned than others (lying by persecuted Christians to avoid homosexual rape is cited as an example in *On Lying* (9.14)), Augustine still insists that any deliberate telling of falsehoods is more or less sinful. Thus a lie will always be a sin, though sometimes a venial one, and we have already noticed that venial sins are unavoidable (*Spirit and Letter* 27.48). Augustine thinks that we should always *attempt* to avoid unavoidable sins, and when we commit them 'compensate' for them by almsgiving or by good works (*Sermon* 77B 7) or by saying the Lord's Prayer. That does *not* entail that, if we give alms, we are licensed to commit venial sins (*Sermon* 8.18). Of course, lying is frequently condemned throughout Augustine's writings, but it is an extremely difficult matter (*Enchiridion* 6.18). Lying on oath, however, is not a venial sin; indeed, it is almost as serious as blasphemy,¹⁰⁹ while inducing someone to perjure himself is worse than homicide, since it kills the soul (*Sermon* 308.4). Even an oath taken under duress imposes a serious obligation.¹¹⁰ Not surprisingly, lying in matters of religion is particularly obnoxious and Augustine reiterates the point in the second treatise on lying – simply entitled *Against Lying* and addressed to the Spanish priest Consentius – where he strongly condemns the idea of infiltrating *agents provocateurs* into groups of Priscillianist 'heretics'. Such *agents provocateurs*, it was proposed, by falsely claiming to belong to the sect, could acquire

¹⁰⁷ Also *DeMag.* 12.39; 13.41–43. See Colish (1985), II, 189–198.

¹⁰⁸ See Kirwan (1989: 198–203). Kirwan rightly observes that Augustine is aware that discussion of compensatory lying cannot be distinguished from the broader question of doing evil that good may come: a question which always calls for further investigation of what always counts as evil. ¹⁰⁹ *Ep.* 47.2; *CMend.* 1.39; *Sermo* 180.8.9.

¹¹⁰ In 411 (see *Ep.* 125 to Alypius and 126 to Albinus), Augustine had serious practical and theoretical problems when his congregation in Hippo extracted an oath, more or less by force, from Pinianus, a visiting millionaire whom they wanted to press-gang into ordination. See L. J. Swift, 'Augustine on the Oath of Pinianus', *CIA*, 1, 371–379. Note that in *Ep.* 125.3 *Regulus*, the hero of *CD* 1.15, is cited approvingly for exemplary courage in refusing to break an oath.

knowledge of its members, who could then be rounded up more effectively.

The reasons behind Augustine's rejection of actions of this sort help us to see something of his general view of absolute rules. Lying is an affront to God partly because, as Augustine emphasized from his earliest Christian days, God himself is to be identified as Truth. But it is worth noting that the arguments which Augustine uses about lying are a special kind of 'agent-relative' consequentialism, where the consequences are not states of affairs but the condition of one's own soul. For example, by telling an untruth one may save someone else's life (*On Lying* 6.9; 9.14; 13.22–24), but it is better, Augustine believes, to say nothing at all.¹¹¹ While Augustine is regularly prepared to tolerate 'institutionalized' evils in the form of prostitutes, pimps and executioners (*On Order* 2.4.12),¹¹² if their abolition would cause more harm than good, in the case of lying as a typical act of a moral *individual* he sees a further principle: that no one should himself commit even a venial sin to avoid a greater sin being committed by others, since moral acts are agent-relative. The consequences for the soul may be tragic. What counts for me is what I should do. Nevertheless, the innocent should be protected and, if necessary, a man must sacrifice himself to achieve this result, or, in the case of keeping silent, to make what must often be a futile attempt to achieve this result.

Clearly a primacy of the call to preserve oneself guiltless and 'undivided' is at work here, as well as the idea of not offending Divine Truth by lying, and it seems that this is linked to a very strong sense of the individual's responsibility not to disfigure the divine image (*Sermon* 9.15). Each person is responsible for the well-being of his own soul. That may have painful consequences, not only for oneself but also for others, as in the case of the martyrs whose baptism of blood is alone the equivalent and more than the equivalent of the Christian baptism ordinarily prerequisite for their salvation. Their families and friends, as well as themselves, will suffer for their adherence to truth. That is bitter and regrettable but unavoidable. Augustine defends not only the Socratic position that it is better to suffer evil than to do

¹¹¹ Augustine is troubled by 'human feeling' in hard cases (*CMend.* 9.20; 18.36), just as he is 'as a man' at the dreadful consequences of not being baptized (*Sermo* 26.14.15); cf. Kirwan (1989: 203).

¹¹² Though Christians are not allowed to be pimps (*Sermo* 77A4), slave-traders (*IoEp.* 7.8; *Sermo* 42.2; 86.11; 177.10), actors or prostitutes (*AdSimp.* 1.2.22; *FidOp.* 18.33).

it, but the stronger view that it is also better for someone else to suffer than that I should do evil. That, at least, frees him from effective moral blackmail (cf. *Against Lying* 9.20: the case of Lot's daughters), though not from the charge of 'Pilatism'.

The idea of individual responsibility, and with it the necessary rejection of any subordination of means to ends – for the choice of means may be as corrupting as the choice of ends – can similarly be observed in Augustine's opposition to any killing by private individuals, even in self-defence.¹¹³ Only rulers and their institutional employees, such as soldiers or hangmen, are licensed, under strict rules, to kill. Here the absolute prohibition on 'private violence', especially on taking the law into one's own hands, is again anti-consequentialist in the ordinary sense of the term;¹¹⁴ the only consequences which matter are the effects on the soul of the agent. 'Private violence' demoralizes and brutalizes the agent (*Sermon* 82.3). We shall see in a later chapter that for Augustine it is one of the sadder features of political and social life that in the *public* world consequentialist compromises have to be made in order to keep any order: a regrettable, even a vicious necessity.

For the moment, however, we shall ignore the special moral problems which seem to arise over life as a public figure; that is, if a Christian is permitted to have such a life, a matter to which we shall return. At times Augustine comes close to suggesting that God's commandments were given us as individuals, virtually outside the social and political order. That, in part, is why they cannot be fulfilled. For we are condemned to live in a social and political order, an order where we have *other relationships* than those directly with God or even directly with our 'neighbour'. Public life involves operating within a set of institutions which are not made by God.

In private life, however, and for private individuals, moral absolutes prevail in the matter of killing, even of killing in self-defence, let alone in a pre-emptive strike (*On Human Responsibility* 1.4.9). God has uttered commandments, not suggestions. The only questions, therefore, would be what exactly each commandment says and what is to count as breaking it. In the case of killing – and Augustine held that the commandment referred unambiguously to any 'private' killing – that seemed obvious enough. As with lying, however, Augustine presumably thought that some killings are

¹¹³ Cf. *Ep.* 47.5: 'Killing . . . to save oneself is not acceptable to me'.

¹¹⁴ Note Augustine's reasons for condemning the lynching of a brutal official in Hippo (*Sermo* 302.11.10–19.17).

condonable, perhaps even venial, compared with others. For, as we have seen, sins are equal *qua* sins, but not *qua* deserving of punishment or *qua* damaging *in themselves* to the moral character of the agent.

It is the individual, not the society, whose mind is made in the image of God, and the individual therefore for whom 'godlike' behaviour controlled by love of sinners is mandatory. To be killed is to be put outside the possibility of earthly reform, and this is the basis of Augustine's hostility to 'private' killing. His treatment of killing, even in self-defence, seems to be worked out in regard to absolute rules, in an analogous way to that of lying. To lie is to offend God as truth; to kill a person, at least as a private individual, is apparently to put him out of the way of repentance and the mercy of God; hence it is offensive to God. But if that is Augustine's concern, we may wonder whether official lying might not be justified and accepted in a similar way to official killing. For the moment we may leave that aside, adding only that it is the private individual (alone with the Alone) who in the end faces his God; his 'political' activity, in so far as it merely subserves and maintains human institutions, is always to be subordinated to his salvation and the stricter rules which that end necessitates. Thus, as we shall see, when 'necessary' political activity offends 'religious' norms – rather narrowly conceived – it is especially liable to restriction.

Augustine's attitude is conditioned by the non-democratic principle that most people have no kind of official status as *de facto* public officials. He leaves little room for the authority and powers of the ordinary individual simply as a citizen, a member of society. Be that as it may, this much is clear that in regard to our private capacities there are absolute rules, for example against lying and killing, and the rational support of these rules depends on the directly religious claims that God's nature makes on us. Bluntly, it is the existence of God which necessitates and justifies the absolute rules, even though the absolute rules may, from God's point of view, be rules of thumb, in that he himself may at times justly suspend them.

But God has also established certain 'institutional' rules; not – at least in Augustine's mature thought – the rules of the political institutions of the Christian Empire or of any other temporal organ of government, but the rules of institutions which transcend the political and social in the claims they make on our individual lives. In particular, he has established the institution of matrimony, the basis of proper human society, with which is associated a series of absolute

commands and prohibitions, such as against remarriage when one's previous spouse remains alive,¹¹⁵ or against unilateral declarations of sexual unavailability by spouses.

Augustine cites a rather unusual case when preaching on the Sermon on the Mount (1.16.50). He will not condemn the behaviour of a woman of Antioch who in the reign of Constantius had agreed to sleep with a powerful official to secure the release of her husband from unjust imprisonment. His only caveat, which is based on the principle that in marriage the bodies of the spouses belong to one another – indeed that the two are 'in a way' not merely one body, but one *persona* (*On Psalms* 75 (74).4) – is that the husband must agree, as happened in this case.¹¹⁶ How does Augustine's view of absolute prohibitions in such a case differ from his thesis about lying which we considered earlier? He seems to suggest that in the Antiochene case, while adultery is always wrong, the woman's actions do not count as adultery. An account of her motivation would explain this: with her husband's consent, she acts for his good in the only manner available to her. Apparently some claims of love (but arguably only where the 'love' is not suspect, i.e. appears to be authentic Christian love) override a rule. The Antiochene case may be compared with the unequivocal condemnation of 'wife-swapping' (with the consent of all parties) mentioned in the nearly contemporary *On Human Responsibility* (1.3.6). Here, of course, the motivation would be the sinful pursuit of pleasure.¹¹⁷ Do as you would be done by does not justify in that case. It is how one ought to be done by which counts.

Nevertheless, the definition of 'adultery' which Augustine must subscribe to, so far as can be judged from the two cases, is not merely having some kind of sexual relationship with a person other than

¹¹⁵ For divorce, see Schmitt (1983: 222–224); van Bavel (1989b: 44). Marriage is discussed further in chapter 6, below.

¹¹⁶ It is probable that Augustine's unwillingness to condemn is influenced by his memory of a biblical parallel (*CFaust.* 22.37): Abraham had on two occasions passed off his wife as his sister to protect himself from a king's anger. What if the king had had intercourse with her? Augustine wants to believe that Abraham's faith that God would protect his wife's chastity enabled him to take the risk. But he admits that there is doubt whether Sarah would have been right or wrong to accept intercourse. He prefers his explanation that there was no real risk because 'it is not the same thing for a woman to have two men as for a man to have two women'. Further, Sarah was right to obey her husband in this case, just as *he* was to obey her when she told him to have intercourse with her maid-servant. Note that Augustine's suggestion that Abraham's willingness to take the risk shows him to be a man of faith is paralleled elsewhere in his Old Testament exegesis. Rahab, who tried to protect two Israelite spies and is thus spared by Joshua (2:5; 6:25), *might* have remained safe even if she had not lied (*CMend.* 17.34)! ¹¹⁷ Cf. *DeCont.* 12.27.

one's husband or wife. Normally that would 'count' as adultery, but there are exceptions, presumably themselves forming a pattern. It is not, then, that *adultery* is ever justifiable, but that occasionally – here perhaps because of the nature of the gifts of husband and wife to one another – what might look like adultery does not count as such. Perhaps an analogue is to be found with killing more easily than with lying, since lying, as a curiously religious offence like blasphemy and apostasy, may be always forbidden. As killing does not count as murder when performed by licensed 'killers', so sexual acts with someone other than a spouse may not always count as adultery. The context of 'licensed' killing is the institutions of political society, where, regrettably, there is a requirement to kill. The context of 'licensed adultery' – Augustine does not modify his hesitant discussion in the *Reconsiderations* – is the special obligation to promote the life, health and offspring of the partner which is imposed by the marriage vows and the resulting institution of marriage, an institution more important than any political institution.

What we have demonstrated is not that there are no exceptionless norms in Augustine's moral universe, but that what is exceptionless may need a more than facile identification. Augustine thought that the arrangement he made in Carthage with his concubine was a kind of 'deal' (*foedus, pactum*) for mutual sexual satisfaction (*Confessions* 4.2.2), though it exhibited at least in part one of the features of a genuine marriage, a loyalty (*fidem tori*) between the parties as long as the deal lasted. Morally it could not be marriage because marriage is a specific contract for sexual activity 'for the sake of legitimate children'¹¹⁸ and (only secondarily) as a help to the weaknesses of the partners.¹¹⁹ Marital acts are not in Augustine's normal view an aid in the development of affection. Nevertheless, marriage as a whole is a kind of friendship, and thus calls for affection and mutual companionship.¹²⁰ Sexual behaviour has to be subordinated to that friendship, and friendship takes priority over other wishes of the partners, so long as its claims do not involve direct disobedience to God (as they did in the case of Adam and Eve).

Hence the approval for the actions of the woman of Antioch, provided that the unique institution of marriage, established by God, makes a demand of this kind on her. Yet in holding that she should

¹¹⁸ On the *tabulae matrimoniales*, see chapter 6, p. 212, note 19 below.

¹¹⁹ See P. Ramsay, 'Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption', *JRE* 16 (1988), 56–86.

¹²⁰ *Sermo* 51.13.21; *CJul.* 5.16.62; *DBC* 1.1.

show her devotion and affection for her husband by satisfying the lust of a vicious politician, Augustine might seem to run the risk of compromising his principle that even venial sins should not be deliberately committed to ward off the greater sins of others. If his position is to be consistent, he has to admit that the woman of Antioch committed no sin. His language ('I do not condemn') indicates both his nervousness at applying his own principle, and his recognition of the principle to be applied.

There are, then, absolute rules of varying kinds in private life and in the institutions of private life,¹²¹ and they are absolute because they (and nothing else) are what 'love' demands, that is, as far as we can see, what God wants. They are often painful to obey and they will involve the abandonment of certain hopes when particular means are forbidden. Above all, they must be based on a striving for singleness and straightforwardness of heart,¹²² without the will to deceive. As we shall see, it is the inability to live without regrets that is so painful a feature, in Augustine's view, of life in the public domain. Private life, and best of all celibate life, is preferable in this respect. But we can leave aside the question of whether men should wish to be public figures until the next chapter, where we shall also see whether 'consequentialist' arguments of a more familiar type are more acceptable than they are in cases of private life. For in private life 'end-state' consequentialism seems to be unequivocally condemned because it always leads to the corruption of the agent; it is a form of self-mutilation or even self-destruction. A particularly informative version of it, indeed, would license self-slaughter, which Augustine condemns in the *City of God*.¹²³

Finally we must note a traditional, and at first sight disturbing exception to Augustine's otherwise consistent account of absolute

¹²¹ Marriage is in fact an ambiguous institution. It is also an institution of public life, for the good of the 'city'. But for our present purposes it is private; the 'sacrament' of marriage is administered by the two parties as individuals.

¹²² Such 'simplicity' and 'chastity' of soul is symbolized by the *simplex nuditas* of the unembarrassed Adam and Eve before the fall (*GPO* 2.34.39; cf. *GenMan.* 2.13.19). This 'simplicity' is deceived by the double-talk (*astutia*) of the serpent. As we have noted, the struggle for sexual chastity is part of the normal human struggle for a united self.

¹²³ *CD* 1.16ff., 1.26 (suicide to avoid rape is wrong); for the proper attitude of the victim of rape see *Ep.* 111.9, *DeMend.* 19.40.

Augustine's position is easier to defend if we accept his premiss that suffering is only bad if it is undeserved; hence that there is nothing wrong with the *criminal's* being burned to death under Roman Law (*DLA* 3.9.28, cf. *AdSimp.* 1.2.18) or with the suffering of animals (though not the deliberate infliction of pain on animals, *DLA* 3.23.69). Animals cannot 'deserve'; we grow out of being sentimental over the death of pet sparrows (3.5.17).

moral rules. God himself made the rules: not, of course, arbitrarily, but in accordance with what he is. It follows that God himself may suspend them, as it is taught he did in the Old Testament or in Church History. As we have seen, there is a limited sense in which from God's point of view moral rules are rules of thumb. Augustine's reasons for such a view are apparently embarrassing: he must, for example, defend Abraham's intended killing of Isaac, Samson's self-destruction and the suicide of nuns to avoid rape. His position is difficult; these actions are right since the Scriptures and the tradition approve them as in accordance with God's will. The only consistent defence he can offer for his position is that God's commands are for the best, and must be obeyed; but in more normal circumstances, although it is true that God's commands should be obeyed because they are God's, it will always be the case that these commands will 'conform' to the absolute rules by which indeed they can be confirmed to be God's. It is hard not to suppose that in the cases of Samson and Abraham (which are not logically similar) what has trapped Augustine is no mistake of logic or ethical theory, but, somehow, a 'mistake' in exegesis – and perhaps in the rape cases a 'mistake' in the account of tradition. Doubtless his reply would be that scriptural (and ecclesiastical) inerrancy must be maintained – or where is the belief in God which man needs to lead him to our 'fatherland'? But it is at least open to question whether this attitude does not commit him more generally (against his will) to a cruder version of divine command theory: we simply do what God says, if we can know what that is. Note, however, that we are more likely than the ancients to be puzzled by Augustine's attitude. Even the Stoics were prepared to suppose that God could intervene in history (sometimes in their own histories) to tell them to do unusual things (such as committing suicide).¹²⁴

CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

Human life as we experience it is grimly regrettable; it is the living out of Adam's fall and punishment. Part of that punishment is the necessity under which we live of social and political activity: in general of action as well as, or even instead of, contemplation. Of course, the conflict between the two lives was a problem Augustine

¹²⁴ Cf. Rist (1969a: 242–243).

had inherited from his classical past, as well as from the Bible and ascetic traditions of Christianity, but its intensity was increased as his Christian life progressed. First he was a leisured layman cultivating 'philosophy' at Cassiciacum; then, after returning to Carthage in 388, he became a 'slave of God' at Tagaste; then, some two years later, he began to make his lay community less an individualistic search for God and more monastic and communal – perhaps after the deaths of his son Adeodatus and his close philosophical friend Nebridius.¹²⁵ Finally in 391, against his will, he was ordained and a few years later, in 396, he became a bishop in the no-holds-barred world of North African ecclesiastical politics. Augustine himself condemned his earlier attitude of distaste for the humdrum ordinary life of clerics¹²⁶ which he had previously viewed from the standpoint of that 'higher' contemplative life to which he had aspired even before his conversion, and which had led him, according to the *Confessions*, so far as to share a vision of God as the 'in itself' (*idipsum*) with his mother at Ostia shortly before her death (9.10.23–25).¹²⁷ Such a vision, of course he knew, is no regular feature of the contemplative life, but its rare confirmation. Yet it should be noticed that in Augustine's early writings there is a far greater readiness to see contemplation as directed towards 'Platonic-style' vision, while in the later work it is more assimilated to ordinary living 'in Christ', for Christ is the only true image of God.¹²⁸

Augustine finds symbolic figures to represent action and contemplation: the two wives of Jacob (*Against Faustus* 22.52), Peter and John (*On John's Gospel* 124.5f.), and above all Martha and Mary. Contemplation is always regarded as superior to action but, especially after about 402 (*Against Faustus* 22.52), action is our normal vocation in this life – indeed our weakness after the fall condemns us to it – while contemplation, rarely to be achieved, is to be hoped for in faith. In its fullness it will only be available at the end of time: then 'he will show greater works' (John 5:20; *On John's Gospel* 21.5).¹²⁹ The rejection of Neoplatonic interpretations of realized mystical experience in this life is clear.

¹²⁵ Cf. G. Folliet, 'Deificari in otio: Augustine, *Epistula* 10.2', *RA* 2 (1962), 225–236; Brown (1967: 135–136); Bonner (1984b: esp. 275–277).

¹²⁶ *Sermo* 355.2; Possidius, *Vita* 4; cf. Brown (1967: 138–139).

¹²⁷ *Idipsum* will be discussed in chapter 7.

¹²⁸ However in important respects (including the *ardentiore affectu*) the 'vision of Ostia' is not simply Platonic-style. It is communal: there are two people, Augustine and Monnica; the 'context' is a discussion of the life of the saints; it is a vision of the Mediator. See the comments of Starnes (1990: 263) who compares the vision of Ostia with Augustine's earlier vision at Milan (7.17.23). ¹²⁹ Cf. 19.4–5; 124.5–6; see Burnaby (1938: 63–66).

A further complication to Augustine's view of the relationship between contemplation and action is introduced by his gradual abandonment of the 'Porphyrian' version of the separation of the soul from the body, and indeed by his rehabilitation of the relationship between the soul and the body both in Paradise and 'in peace'. We should recall that in his first commentary on Genesis Augustine speaks in traditional terms of Adam and Eve as symbolizing the intellectual and appetitive aspects of the soul. Later he holds that they symbolize the contemplative and active aspects of the mind.

In such changing uses of symbols we see that Augustine's account of the good life itself has changed, that instead of being concerned with 'intellectual' versus 'appetitive', or soul versus body, he is concerned rather with direct contemplation of God as against life in the world, the *saeculum*. For that – mysteriously – is where we are, where we must live out our lives under providence. But in our lives there is for the Christian a constant tension between direct concern with God (in contemplation) and action among and for his fellows. Thus, the clash between the demands of contemplation and those of action seems almost a later echo of Augustine's earlier dilemma about how to reconcile devotion and love of God with that concern for one's neighbour which is included in love of God rather than a means towards it. Furthermore, Augustine moved from seeing the body merely as the instrument of the soul to seeing it also as the soul's beloved, the soul's object of serious responsibility, and to be retained, even with its sexual differentiations, in the Resurrection. Similarly however, just as the body is 'in' the soul, so action can become 'in' contemplation.

For humans are created 'in his image', and as Augustine's thoughts developed, the primacy of direct contemplation yielded place to doing simply what God, through Christ, wishes us to do. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that just as Augustine shifted from desiring to be rid of the body to seeking to integrate it with the soul into a Christian whole, so contemplation and action seem increasingly subordinated to the overriding desire for a Christian life which transcends them both. What matters is less whether one acts or contemplates, but whether one's loves are ordered by God so that genuine virtue, of whatever sort, is possible in the circumstances.

Such virtue would perhaps be best achieved by the mixed 'action' and 'contemplation' of the monastic life and the monastic ideal – this will be considered in the next chapter – but is it possible outside that special environment? The measure of Augustine's recognition that in

this life proper actions (indeed possibly perfect actions) can and must be performed by laymen in the *saeculum*, far removed from the ways of professional slaves of God (*servi Dei*), can be seen in the old bishop's urging a general not to desert his command for the monastery.¹³⁰ Just as the weakness of the body will only be overcome at the Resurrection, the tension between contemplation and action – like many another tension – will not be overcome in this life. The perfect life, the life of uncompromising love, is not achievable this side of the grave. Bodily weaknesses and 'secular' circumstances, as well as the weaknesses of the soul itself, prevent us from achieving the perfect, single-minded and 'single-hearted' ideal. That has to be accepted by the saint as a new and humbling demand of Christianity, but providentially so.

¹³⁰ See *Ep.* 220 to Count Boniface. In Augustine's gradual rehabilitation of the possibilities for virtue (even the obligation to virtue) in ordinary lay Christian life, we find an interesting meeting of minds with Pelagius. Pelagius' view was that Christian perfection is possible, and therefore an obligation, for all. Where Augustine differed, of course, was in his emphasis on the need for special grace to achieve it. Markus' chapter, 'A Defence of Christian Mediocrity', in *The End of Ancient Christianity* (1990), is thus mistitled as well as challenging. In a passage in which Augustine tells Pelagius that a man who 'acts from the faith which works through love, indulges his incontinence within the bounds of marriage . . . even for sheer pleasure . . . will put up with the wrongs done to him with less than complete patience', etc. (*CzEp.* 3.5.14), will be received into the company of the saints, Augustine is no laxist. He is making the point that to achieve that much (with the help of grace) is to achieve a great deal. Pelagianism is not heroic, merely unrealistic.

CHAPTER SIX

Individuals, social institutions and political life

The primary and everyday power of a man over a man is that of a master over a slave.

(Augustine)

Glorious things are spoken of you, city of God.

(Psalm 86.3)

THE HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SETTING

It must ever be impossible to detail all the factors which govern our attitudes to the society in which we live or wish to live. Two, however, are obvious enough: firstly, the sort of world itself which surrounds us – to understand which involves us in historical investigations and explanations; secondly, the goals we propose for our own lives. In the case of Augustine the historical questions are complicated by the unusual events of his own lifetime: not only, though importantly, the establishment at the end of the fourth century of Catholic Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, a process accompanied by the active suppression of other forms of Christianity and a concerted attack on pagan temples, rituals and cults; but also far-reaching geopolitical changes within the social structure of the Roman Empire as a whole. Whereas at the beginning of Augustine's lifetime, and indeed during the period of his youth and of his years in Italy, the Roman *imperium* still seemed fixed and more or less unchanging, from the early fifth century the foundations of that society itself were shaken by barbarian onslaughts – Rome itself was briefly ruled by Alaric's Goths in 410 – and by factionalism and separatist pressures from within. Hence came an increasing decentralization, a fragmentation of the imperial power and a decline in the prosperity of the cities which formed the building-blocks of the Empire itself.

Mounting taxation, absentee landlords, decaying public roads and

a widespread insecurity increasingly came to characterize large parts of the Christian Empire, and though his own part of the world was for long more protected than many others, Augustine died while his city of Hippo was under siege by Vandals who had eventually crossed the straits of Gibraltar to pillage the rich and hitherto secure North African provinces. In brief, while the institutions with which Augustine had grown up remained externally little changed, in his later years they came to look increasingly like an unstable facade. In Augustine's mind a growing awareness of political and social instability goes hand in hand with the development of theological and philosophical reasons for shifting his views on the relationship between the individual and his society. That much is certainly correct, even if nothing further be established about possible causal relationships between the impending collapse of Augustine's social and political world and his increasingly pessimistic estimate of the prospects for even the better earthly societies.

Although from the time of his conversion Augustine had always recognized the effects of the fall on human nature and human capabilities, it is as true in the area of his 'social' thought as elsewhere that his views changed substantially with his rediscovery of Paul. His ensuing conception of the effects of original sin and the need for grace were clearer and harsher. He came gradually to envision a new and unclassical attitude towards society and therefore towards the character of Christian participation in society. When he was converted in Milan to a form of platonizing Christianity, he inherited not only Christian traditions about the need for Christ as a mediator, but the classical view that perfection is possible in this life. As we have seen, his first thoughts after conversion centred on a withdrawal from public life and, as he put it himself in a letter of c. 389, a desire for leisure to divinize oneself now (*deificari in otio*).¹ As we have also seen, such attitudes were encouraged at first by Augustine's minimalist (and rather 'Plotinian') reading of the commandment of love of neighbour, whereby the thrust of that commandment was diverted to concern with the soul of the neighbour, and indeed to a rather 'impersonal' understanding of that soul, rather than to the 'corporal works of mercy'. Indeed, society in general – even Christian society – was rather to be ignored, and Augustine was later willing to admit to a rather dismissive attitude to the cathedral clergy, embroiled as they

¹ Cf. Folliet (1962). For the postponement of divinization, see above pp. 49–50.

often were in the far from immediately spiritual concerns of their flocks.

When seen against such a background, it is hardly surprising that Augustine took over many standard assumptions about the nature of society and the role of those who are, to whatever degree, necessarily caught up in it. He saw society as a function of the world of sensible particulars. In the *Reconsiderations* he reproves himself both for sounding too like Porphyry in speaking of leaving sensibles behind, and for identifying the kingdom of God with an apprehension of Platonic forms. In such a view of reality society is merely a lower part of the hierarchy of being stretching down from God towards bare matter, and so has to be transcended in our contemplation of the intelligibles. Augustine early on took this transcending as at the same time a rise from the physical to the intelligible, and as a development of the inner man at the expense of the outer. The outer man is the man limited to the world of sense; the inner man is the Plotinian and Christian sage to be raised above ordinary material concerns.² Hence Augustine turned to a form of lay monasticism, that is, to a withdrawal from the world in which sets of individuals contemplate their God. The view of the world behind such withdrawal – even though it be withdrawal in community – reveals only a small part of the peculiarly Augustinian temper with which we become acquainted in the *City of God*.

There is continuity as well as discontinuity in Augustine's changing view of human society. Although he was to repent of his somewhat conventional treatment of the inner man and his proper area of operations, Augustine had already identified pride as the basic and besetting human weakness. Hence when he began to reflect on society, and on the position of the Christian in the world rather than in retreat from the world, the role of pride in forming not only human minds but human institutions, necessarily became a constant and central concern.

If withdrawal from the world, in the form of a still platonized monasticism,³ seems a natural step for Augustine to have taken after

² See F. E. Cranz, 'The Development of Augustine's Ideas on Society before the Donatist Controversy', *HTR* 47 (1954), 255–316, at 274 = *Augustine*, ed. Markus (New York 1972), 336–403, at 349.

³ See R. A. Markus, 'Vie monastique et ascétisme chez Augustin', *CIA* 1, 119–125. Markus is well aware of the changes in Augustine's attitude to monasticism: at first the ascetic withdrawal from the world; later, the emphasis on the construction of an ideal community where the lust for 'private' property (already properly rejected by the heroes of Old Rome) could be superseded.

his conversion, his attitude towards such withdrawal, or rather towards the moral life of those within the monastic institution, could hardly remain unaffected by his developing attitude towards the condition of fallen man. Besides ceasing to believe that a Platonic vision of the Forms is itself constitutive of success in the good life, and increasingly insisting that the lives of the Platonists themselves, though properly oriented towards the immaterial, were vitiated by pride and even demon-worship,⁴ Augustine de-intellectualized and 'Paulinized' the concept of the inner man. A grasp of intelligible realities, however achieved, is in itself no purification of the inner man or passage to the kingdom of God. If a man is to withdraw from ordinary secular society, a new kind of monasticism and a new kind of withdrawal is required, not just from the world but into a community which is more than a collection of individuals. Such a community would be a foreshadowing of heaven: how much of a foreshadowing, and how far Augustine contradicted his own principles in his optimism about it, remains to be considered.

Augustine himself was to be simultaneously a 'withdrawn' monk and a priest (and later bishop) active in the world in a dramatic and ongoing fashion. He began to see that the world had to be recognized as a place where the Christian and the non-Christian must meet, where God's word must be preached and his sacraments administered, while love of neighbour must be worked out in both corporal and non-corporal acts of mercy. More fundamentally, Augustine came to emphasize that mere withdrawal into Platonic or Platono-Christian isolation would not, and could not, withdraw a man from pride. He began to observe regularly that the religious life, especially in its cult of virginity, is open to its own peculiar temptations, and that the overcoming of these temptations is a sign of a special grace.⁵ During the 390s Augustine gradually came to recognize that in a sense the 'world' is unavoidable, or at least avoidable only in hope, and that its temptations cannot be avoided and may be merely substituted by withdrawal. It therefore becomes urgent to understand the structures of secular society and what relationship they may have to the possibility of a Christian life. Yet Augustine could offer no clear formulation of

⁴ For Augustine's condemnation of this side of Platonism (not necessarily only in Porphyry, though he is often singled out), see *Conf.* 7.9.15; *Sermo* 192.1; *DUB* 4.5-6; *CD* 8.14-27; 10.24, 26-27; 18.5. Augustine perhaps read Porphyry's *Against the Christians* in about 399 (TeSelle 1970: 251). Note *Sermo* 241.7.7: 'The most bitter enemy of Christian faith.'

⁵ *DSV* 42.53; cf. 51.52; *Ep.* 21.16; *CD* 1.28.

the proper relationship between 'Church' and 'State' precisely because the State is an interim measure – while we await the End.

Here we return to Augustine's 'historical' situation. The world as he knows it consists both of its historical, 'material' reality, and of his view of what has been made of that reality by previous Christian and pagan thinkers. On the second component we may be brief, for the ground has been well trodden, but the former needs more extended treatment, since the realities of Roman North Africa seem to have given Augustine certain indications both of what human society 'really' is and of the nature of a possibly ideal society, that is, of what he came to call a City of God.⁶

As for the social theories of previous Christians and pagans, two broad but contrary traditions existed. Most Greek philosophers, from the time of Plato and Aristotle, believed that the city could and should function as a development-centre for human excellence, and that man is by nature a creature whose growth can best be nourished in the right kind of political and social environment – which is to be identified with a more or less idealized version of the city-state. Within the Greek tradition only Epicurus and a few of the Cynics differed sharply from this general position.

Among the Christians, however, attitudes to civic life were necessarily more complex. Some, like Augustine's North African predecessor Tertullian, rejected non-Christian society in its entirety as demonic, a school for nothing but vice.⁷ Others, while emphasizing the necessity for the predominance of Christian principles, thought that Christianity could 'despoil the Egyptians' (Exodus 3:22),⁸ that is, take from pagan society and pagan thought whatever might nourish the growth of a Christian culture. But before the time of Constantine, it was not possible for a Christian to hold that Roman institutions and governmental mechanisms could in and of themselves have a role in the development of a specifically Christian life and Christian culture, let alone that the Roman Empire might itself be a major instrument in salvation-history.

⁶ For further discussion of the motif of the two cities before the *City of God*, see esp. Lauras/Rondet (1953) and Cranz (1954 = 1972: 347–352). For examination of the 'purpose' of the *City of God* and its manifold philosophical and theological roots, see van Oort (1991), who emphasizes the influence of Jewish/Christian traditions of catechesis as well as the ideas of an apologia for and an explication of the Christian faith (*Retr.* 2.16).

⁷ Tertullian, *De Praescr.* 7; *Apol.* 46.

⁸ For such allegorical readings of the Exodus passage see *Conf.* 7.9.15; *DDC* 2.40.60–61; *CFaust.* 22.91; *EnPs.* 47 (46).2. For other patristic parallels see *BA*, xi, 583–584.

AUGUSTINE IN THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE

In the fourth century Christian assumptions about the Empire had to be re-examined. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea and publicist of Constantine's Christian Empire, held that Rome itself was an episode in secular history foreordained to promote the spread of Christianity and now the vehicle of Christian culture itself.⁹ Many of his contemporaries and fourth-century successors (among them Prudentius, Ambrose and Augustine's protégé Paul Orosius) subscribed to weaker versions of this thesis. Orosius, in particular, was inclined to talk boastfully of 'Christian times', partly in pursuit of a Eusebian thesis, partly to reject the charges of pagans that under the Christian régime a stable and civilized world had collapsed. On the contrary, he maintained, we are much happier now.

Augustine too spoke of 'Christian times', especially between 405 and 415 in *The Harmony of the Evangelists* and the first five books of the *City of God*.¹⁰ The phrase 'Christian times' has various senses: it may allude to times in which pagan philosophy has been superseded (*True Religion* 3.3); or in which Christianity has flourished while paganism itself has been suppressed and heresies put down by the Christian Emperor Theodosius and his sons. Its broadest reference is to the whole period from the Incarnation to the Second Coming, that is, to the period of the Church on earth which had been prophesied in the Old Testament (*City of God* 18.27–36).

Certainly the destruction of paganism and the flourishing of the Church under Christian Emperors encouraged Augustine to suppose that the structures of society itself, especially the power of the Emperor and of the oligarchical élites of the Greco-Roman cities, are part of the divine order. With that he could persuade himself that obedience to the laws of a Christian state should afford few moral dilemmas for the good Christian believer, for unless the rulers interfere in ecclesiastical matters and religious belief, they may be assumed to be governing, as Christian Emperors, in accordance with some approximation to the divine will. Thus he held that Christians might at times resist those laws clearly recognizable as wrongful, but they should not rebel or try to overthrow the established order.

⁹ See F. E. Cranz, 'Kingdom and Polity in Eusebius of Caesarea', *HTR* 45 (1952), 47–66, T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA, 1981). For possible connections between Eusebian political theology and the decline of Christian millenarianism – as well as some judicious remarks about Augustine's abandonment of millenarianism and its influence – see Bonner (1989). ¹⁰ For a nuanced discussion, see Madec (1975).

Normally a Christian, like a soldier, simply obeys orders (*Against Faustus* 22.25, *On Human Responsibility* 1.5.11–12; 1.15.32–1.16.34), for the responsibility for the orders rests with those who give them. In Augustine's treatment of law in the first book of *On Human Responsibility* (1.15.31–16.35) we can see how his early optimism about Christian society might seem justified.

He begins by distinguishing the moral law from the laws which can be organized as a human legal system. Law codes are concerned with the distribution, protection and preserving of 'private goods', that is, of divisible sensible objects. They do not forbid us from loving temporal goods (as the moral law might), but they forbid us indulging our love for other people's temporal goods (1.15.32). Naturally, they make no provision for the sharing of 'intelligible' or religious goods, for these are available to all, and my possession of such a good in no way entails that my neighbour possesses less.¹¹ At this stage it is easy to see Augustine's view of the relationship between the 'eternal law', which encodes the divine reason, and the temporal law which human law-givers promote. For unless 'temporal laws' are true images of the eternal law, they are not 'authentic'.

In such a formulation we recognize the Platonic theory of image and original, with all the difficulties of its practical application in society. Just as the sensible world is an image of the eternal, indeed, as a whole, the best possible image of the eternal, so proper temporal law is the best possible image of the eternal law or divine reason. Within such a framework, we should expect to find – as in Platonic and Stoic theodicies¹² – a defence of apparent imperfections of law and institutions (such as the appointment of public executioners) as 'evils' necessary for the good of the whole; and so we do in *On Order*: executioners are horrible but necessary, as are pimps and prostitutes (2.4.12). Society would be worse off if they were eliminated. Thus it is easy to tolerate social unpleasantnesses; they may not always, if properly understood, be repugnant. But Augustine is not tempted into explaining all evils (even all social evils) as merely apparent. *On Order* and *On Human Responsibility* bear witness to his early preoccupation with such problems, though the merely conventional nature of the comment might make us hope that he could not have been satisfied with it for long – as proved to be the case. He grew steadily more aware of how undesirable social evils are, while always finding them inevitable. Such a growth was itself part of his developing recognition

¹¹ Cf. 83Q, 79.1.

¹² E.g. *Enn.* 3.2.18.87, and for interesting discussion see Kirwan (1989: 66).

that the problem of the relationship between the moral law and positive laws and institutions is also more painful than *On Human Responsibility* had suggested.

Although Augustine's growing concentration on human wickedness and folly, even in the later parts of *On Human Responsibility* itself, was to compel a retreat from his 'Platonic' satisfaction with law, as from any excessive confidence in the necessary, let alone the educational features of civic institutions, growing pessimism about the educational value of such institutions was fuelled in the first place less by a direct critique of classical political theory or of Eusebian visions of an idealized Christian Empire than by general reflections on the history of the Roman people and by first-hand experience of the actual conditions and institutions of the Roman world, especially those of North Africa itself. It is this set of institutions which, in the end, he was to re-evaluate and find inherently and irredeemably ambiguous. Yet the Roman Empire is only a dominant instance of society as such: hence his growing pessimism about all human societies.

THE FAMILY, POWER AND LAW IN THE EARTHLY CITY

Recall first and foremost that we are considering a very hierarchical society. Augustine observes in the world around him – and assumes that in this the world around him is typical – that society consists in layer upon layer of power-bases, forming a hierarchy of obedience. At the top is the Emperor, and more generally the government and the army (in so far as they can ultimately be distinguished); below these come oligarchies, major and minor, consisting of individually more or less powerful 'families'. Below these families are the 'nomads' of the ancient world, unattached labourers and the vast mass of slaves. By the word 'family' is to be understood not merely a nuclear family (father, mother, children), but a household within which the nuclear family, for which there is no clear word in Latin, resides. The *familia*, or household, will include the dependent tenants, near-serfs and slaves. Many of these people will be members of a 'family', but will have no 'family' of their own.¹³

¹³ For recent discussion of the 'family', see R. P. Saller, 'Familia, Domus and the Roman Conception of the Family', *Phoenix* 38 (1984) 336–355 and esp. Shaw (1987: 3–51), though his reading of Augustine is sometimes (e.g. p. 28) ideologically tinted. For the expansion of the nuclear family into part of the 'public space' above it, see Shaw, 'Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire', *Historia* 33 (1984), 457–497, at 481, 484.

Thus the whole of society, from the Emperor's *familia* at the top, can be seen as a set of families of diminishing power and importance. The more powerful are conspicuous and wish so to be. Augustine records the sighs of the poor, as they pass a vast walled estate: that belongs to Senator so-and-so; he's a lucky man (*On the Psalms* 33 (32).2.2.18). It is easy to recognize the difference between this world and that of the Greek city-states in which political theory began. There is little sense of the public weal, though promoting public works and public shows is a necessary part of the route to power and influence. The world is a series of atomic factions, often struggling in the law-courts and even on the battlefield for predominance (though united in general support of the *status quo*, and certainly dedicated at least to maintaining their own status). The Emperor is the most powerful 'family-man'. If his authority (and the authority of lesser power-units) were taken away, anarchy would result, as in a modern city during a police strike.

Within families also there is hierarchy. The central relationships are those between the father and his wife and the father and his sons (or heirs). Such relationships, like others within the 'family', are based on power and expressed in hierarchy. The father's role is to maintain 'domestic peace' (*pax domestica*, *City of God* 19.16).¹⁴ He employs different methods with his different subordinates. He has to 'tame' his sons,¹⁵ by force and law if necessary, and by threats of disinheritance. To prevent them giving trouble it is best to keep them waiting for their inheritance. For, quotes Augustine disapprovingly, you hear 'I will not give my son the property, for then he will no longer obey me' (*Sermon* 45.2). Moreover, if laws were removed, no husband or father – let alone king, general, judge or slave-owner – could halt by threats and punishments the freedom and sweet taste of sinning (*libertas et suavitas peccandi*).¹⁶ The wife too is to be disciplined and subjugated, by blows if necessary, while the slaves are to be kept in line with the whip.¹⁷ All, especially the sons, are to regard the father with respect and dutifulness (*pietas, obsequium*).

When discussing Augustine's view of the difficulties of overcoming

¹⁴ Cf. *Conf.* 9.9.20.

¹⁵ *De Utilitate Ieiunii* 4.5. 'If you want an inheritance, don't run from a flogging' (*Sermo* 15A.3; cf. 55.5).

¹⁶ *CGaud.* 1.19.20. Note the two classes of sins thus restrained: *facinora* (sins against others) and *flagitia* (sins against oneself or God); cf. *Conf.* 3.8.15–16.

¹⁷ Cf. Shaw (1987: 18). But the father is to love his son as well as whip him (*Sermo* 14A.5 = Frangipani 9.5, of 428 at the earliest).

the evil and lasting effects of 'carnal custom', we noticed his insistence that the grip of such custom can often only be broken by a short sharp shock. That is also, as we shall see, a 'loving' response to the obstinacy of heretics,¹⁸ and more generally Augustine identifies a mixture of 'love' and 'fear' as the appropriate attitudes to be demanded of social inferiors. Hence, as we have seen, the son has to be tamed – rather like an animal – and in relation to her husband the wife's position is also somewhat servile. There is supposed to be 'marital affection', but 'servility' is part of her marriage vows. A man's wife, says Augustine, is his 'dear' (*cara*), his 'partner' (*coniunx*) and his household slave (*famula*, *On Psalms* 144 (143).6). If she rules, there is a 'perverse peace'. Monnica herself used to point out to her fellow wives in Tagaste that by accepting their marriage-deeds, they had in effect accepted a contract to obey their husbands (*Confessions* 9.9.19).¹⁹ Telling the story, Augustine adds that those women of Tagaste who did not follow Monnica's advice and example continued to experience the humiliation and cruelty of regular beatings. The point of such 'discipline' was the maintenance of domestic peace and harmony (*concordia*), and the upholding of the father as a member of the more honourable sex.²⁰

'Peace' then is the object of this hierarchical society: peace in the Empire as a whole and peace in the 'families', large and small, of which it was made up.²¹ According to both official pronouncements and no doubt much popular practice, such peace could best be secured by a 'loving' relationship between the various inferiors and superiors: such would be the case in the 'ideal' society. But where the 'love' of an inferior failed, it could be re-enforced by blows and whippings, a discipline by inconveniences (*disciplina*, or *coercitio*; *per molestias*), or, in the case of states, by war.²² The superior too was

¹⁸ Note the description of the Manichaean as 'You fool, you stubborn, argumentative, rightly-hated mule' (*Sermo* 72A.5).

¹⁹ Cf. *Sermo* 51.13.22; 132.2.2 (*imbecillior sexus*); 332.4.4: 'You are the master, she is the slave'; 37.7: 'She considers the matrimonial tablets to be the instruments of her purchase.' It is not clear how far the tablets implied a more or less servile condition in relation to the *paterfamilias* in the phrases *ancilla* and *instrumenta emptionis suae*. Scholars often seem to judge the question out of partiality (e.g. van Bavel, (1989b: 15)). For *imbecillior sexus*, see Dixon (1984), van Bavel, *ibid.* 6–9.

²⁰ Cf. *Sermo* 51.20.30 on the higher dignity – in the order of nature and God's law – of Joseph; that is, 'according to the flesh'; cf. 83Q 11.

²¹ On the 'peace of Babylon' (the earthly city), the peace of hope and the peace of heaven, see the comments of Burnaby (1938: 53–60).

²² *CD* 15.4; 19.7. Cf. the attitude of Mrs Thatcher who during the run-up to the Falklands War, according to her Defence Minister, 'always preferred the military option'.

supposed to show benevolence – and doubtless often did – but it remained up to him, in the last resort, whether his love should be shown in – or replaced by – some degree of severity, which in the case of unbridled and hasty men no doubt often degenerated into cruelty.

In the family situation two factors in particular seem to have diminished the use of 'kindness' and increased the likelihood of force and abuse: the prevalence of drunkenness, which Augustine once hoped, in a letter (29.5), to 'confine to the household' – where its dangers would at least be restricted to members of the 'family';²³ and the slave-system itself which habituated all masters to the regular use of the whip when they were crossed, and to the regular sexual usage and abuse of female slaves, in (perhaps blatant and deliberate) disregard of their wives – a practice of which Augustine disapproved but could apparently do little to prevent. As the master would put it: 'Can I not do what I want in my own house?'²⁴

Such, in very broad outline, was the situation of domestic and non-domestic hierarchy within which Augustine grew up, worked and preached. It is clear that he regarded it as faulty in all kinds of ways. His sermons (e.g. 62) teem with condemnations of the physical and moral pressures exerted by the powerful on the weak, but the abuses were, in Augustine's view, abuses of an underlying proper order. 'It is the natural order of things for mankind', he said in a sermon probably preached soon after 410 (§32.4.4), 'that women should serve men, and children their parents, because this is just in itself, that the weaker reason (*ratio*) should serve the stronger'. In considering the implications of such a hierarchy for Augustine's developing account of the task of the lawgiver and of the value and role of society as a whole, we must again turn directly to the effects of the fall.

In the third book of *On Human Responsibility* Augustine claims that after the sin of Adam we were all afflicted with 'ignorance' and 'difficulty': that is, with the inability to perform what we know to be good even if we can see it clearly. Now if our abilities were damaged beyond a certain point, we should be unable to recognize justice at all, but that is not the case, for Augustine holds that we can still recognize the basic natural hierarchy: God over man, soul over body, men over

²³ Shaw (1987: 31) supplies many references; see also Van der Meer (1961: 131, 137, 513–527).

²⁴ *Sermo* 224.3.3; cf. 153.5.6. Sometimes Augustine heard about such attitudes from wives (*Sermo* 82.8.11). When he himself, in Milan, had dismissed the mother of Adeodatus, his resort to what seems to have been a slave-concubine was regarded as socially acceptable in a betrothed man.

animals, etc. Some of us, indeed, such as the Platonic philosophers, can by reason alone see further than others and even identify something of the world of intelligible truths. Yet a detailed understanding and interpretation of God's intended version of the social hierarchy will often elude us, and Augustine himself interpreted it differently at different times. Certain fundamental questions, however, may be discerned: What was the hierarchical order of mankind and of society *before* the fall? How does that order compare with our actual situation? What is the nature of the divine society for which we long?

Augustine's mature views on the origin of human society are spelled out in the *City of God*, though a number of other texts may be used to supplement that 'huge and arduous work'. As we should now expect, not only the Rome of the historians, but the society which we have briefly described in North Africa will present the true face of society willed and ordered by God, but distorted by men. Recalling *On Human Responsibility*, we might expect that in the *City of God* Augustine would begin his treatment of better or worse human societies by considering the relationship between the human laws of those societies and their divine exemplars; but Augustine's view of fallen man has developed considerably since *On Human Responsibility*, and honest and distorted wills and loves will now be at the centre of his social analysis.

Already in an earlier treatment of law (*True Religion* 31.58) Augustine had changed his emphases. The eternal law, of course, remains,²⁵ and the good legislator bears its 'unchanging rules' in mind when framing his earthly ordinances. But now the eternal law does not 'prescribe' human laws directly; rather, it is a pattern against which human legislation can be checked. In the language of the later work *Against Faustus*,²⁶ the eternal law, the divine reason or *will of God* (note the emphasis on God's voluntary action as well as, though not instead of, his rationality) orders the preservation of the natural order and prohibits its disturbance. By 'natural order' Augustine now means only the order which we find in the physical world. As the *Literal Commentary* on Genesis will put it (8.9.17), the operations of human (and angelic) wills are no longer included within the realm of

²⁵ Cf. P. Schilling, *Die Staats- und Soziallehre des hl. Augustinus* (Freiburg 1910); P. A. Schubert, *Augustins Lex-aeterna-Lehre nach Inhalt und Quellen. Beitr. z. Gesch. d. Phil. d. Mittelalters* 24/2 (Münster 1924); Deane (1963: 90); R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Saint Augustine* (Cambridge 1970, new introduction in revised edition 1988), 87–89.

²⁶ *CFaust.* 22.27, 28, 30, 43, etc.

'nature'. Thus, briefly, 'eternal law' has come to have two areas of application: one in nature (excluding human and angelic agency), the other in the will. For the purposes of a study of human law and human institutions we need only be concerned with the relation of the eternal law to the will.²⁷

According to the first book of *On Human Responsibility*, human law could and should be an evident image of divine law. If not, it is no true law. In the *City of God*, however, all the activities of civic life are enveloped in shadow or darkness (*in tenebris socialis vitae*, 19.6). Within *On Human Responsibility* itself Augustine had drawn a distinction between human nature as originally designed by God and our 'second' nature, nature in its fallen state. Unfallen Adam would have taken his decisions in a spirit of love for God and with perfect and happy consistency of will. Now things are otherwise, and even the best lawgiver is struggling in the dark. God himself knows the difference between the right and the wrong in every case, and lays down precepts accordingly: thou shalt not kill, for example. But that is an absolute rule only for the private individual. God himself will know when it does not apply, and overrule it. More problematically, it may be overruled by properly constituted authorities,²⁸ who may wage wars and execute criminals. But when? And with what intentions?

Book 19 of the *City of God* indicates the kind of grave dilemmas a just lawgiver or magistrate will face as he attempts to order human affairs rightly. In language with which we can readily sympathize, Augustine writes with great feeling of the good man who must act in ways which he would long to avoid. He may not feel remorse, but he can hardly help feeling regret. It is a temptation for the good to keep out of political and public life altogether for fear of getting their hands dirty (19.6); that temptation, Augustine now tells us, is to be resisted, for such pains are part of the moral penalty which sinful humanity must face; Count Boniface is soon to be urged to stay out of a monastery, and citizens of the kingdom of heaven may hold public office (*On Psalms* 52 (51).6).

²⁷ In the same section of the *Literal Commentary* (8.9.17) Augustine also presents a double notion of providence, a *providentia naturalis* (concerned with nature apart from human and angelic wills), and a *providentia voluntaria* (concerned with agency and human behaviour). See further *CD* 19.15; with Markus (1987-1988: 87); Corcoran (1985: 80); C. Boyer, 'La notion de nature chez saint Augustin', *Doctor Communis* 8 (1955), 65-76; *DTC* 13 (968-969, within 961-984). Such distinctions may be necessary to separate persons from other 'natural' objects. (Something similar is found in Kant.)

²⁸ *Ep.* 204.5; *CD* 1.21; 1.26-27; cf. D. X. Burt, 'Augustine on the Morality of Violence: Theoretical Issues and Applications', *CIA* III, 25-54, at 41.

For in the world of second nature, in which we have lived since the fall and in which the Christian layman must operate, has arisen the 'earthly city', and that earthly city, often called Babylon, is set over against the city of God, the Jerusalem of the Psalmist of which 'Glorious things are spoken' (86.3). Two different outlooks, two different sets of loves, produced the two cities (*City of God* 14.28), but the cities and the loves – as Tyconius had suggested – are mingled together in our present age (*saeculum*). Love of God is contrasted with a love of self that reaches its nadir in contempt for God and a desire to usurp his privileges. As we have seen, both before and after his ordination (and down to the tenth book of the *Confessions*), Augustine regularly cited John's 'triple concupiscence' (sensuality, 'curiosity' – the vain love of learning anything and everything – and political ambition (*ambitio saeculi*)), and he had always urged that the root of all this evil is pride. When in the *City of God* he concentrated on the perverse love which forms the earthly city,²⁹ he naturally pays special attention to the pride of 'political ambition', the sinister influence of which permeates the whole of public and social life.

ROMAN HISTORY AND THE TWO CITIES

'Christian times' were seen as having been foretold by the prophets, and especially in the early years of the fifth century Augustine inclined towards a triumphalist vision of the Christian Roman Empire: not that the Emperor is to be vested with any messianic features, but the secular state, with its hierarchies of obedience, can be the means not only of spreading, but of directly correcting Christian life. Pagans can be suppressed, though they are not to be forcibly converted; heretics – as we shall see – can be recovered by 'inconveniences' (*per molestias*): more generally, the kingdom of God can be promoted both by and as the civil society. But we have also observed in Augustine's declining optimism over the dilemmas of the human lawgiver, a diminished confidence that a cheering scenario will be achieved. In developing his theory of the 'love' that produces the earthly city, Augustine came to see with increasing clarity that the Christian Roman Empire was not immune to the problems of that earthly city – and neither was the visible Church. In that realization he harked back, characteristically, to the 'counter-cultural' origins of Christianity, and especially of the Christianity of North Africa.

²⁹ *CD* 14.28. Advance notice is already given by *GenLitt.* 11.15.20. Yet Augustine is already pondering the will to power in *DVR* 45.84.

The more triumphalist version of Augustine's view of the civil power in a Christian Empire derives, historically, from Origen and Eusebius either directly or through the mediation of Ambrose, but when in the *City of God* Augustine begins to look back at the history of Rome itself, he turns for inspiration to a different, and largely pagan, tradition, to the tradition of Roman historical writing, and in particular to the writings of the Republican historian Sallust.

It is a mistake, however, to think that the *City of God* owes its origin exclusively to problems generated by the sack of Rome, for Augustine was meditating it, as the *Literal Commentary* on Genesis implies (11.15.20), well before Alaric's fateful blow. Beginning with book 11 the latter part at least of the *City of God* is concerned less with a defence of Christianity against the charge that it should be held responsible for Rome's decline³⁰ – a topic central to books 1 to 10 – than with the theory of the underlying 'loves' which always form a psychological setting for social and political life. The implication for political science is that Augustine is concerned not with the best régime, let alone with the educational value of the 'best' state, in the classical manner, but with the basic flaws that must be discerned in each and every form of political society. It is true that in the classical political theory of Plato and Aristotle there is often a more fundamental distinction between self-serving and non-self-serving governments than on the subsequent question of whether these governments are formed by one man, by a few, or by the majority. Augustine's more radical concern is to show that all forms of government in the 'earthly city', whatever their apparent claims to fairness on the one hand or some sort of 'meritocracy' on the other, are driven by an underlying but perverted love of self and an arrogant contempt or disregard for man's proper subordination to God.

Love of power in the earthly city may take the form of greed and an incessant desire to exalt the private over the communal. We have already noticed how that desire is a perversion of the love of the true and immaterial good. Augustine had inspected it theoretically as early as *On Human Responsibility* (2.7.19; 2.19.53), but its effects are spelled out with remorseless precision in the *City of God* (18.2ff.). Every individual is driven by his passions to pursue his private goals. Hence the city of man remains in the chronic condition of civil war. Though the explanatory thesis of the two loves is rarely approached in the first ten books of the *City of God*, the arrogant nature of the

³⁰ Cf. *Sermo* 81.8–9; 105.11.12–12.13; 296.5, 6–9.10; also *Ep.* 138 on whether Christian practices are disastrous to the security of the state.

earthly city is already apparent; the connection between the immediate political problem of defending Christianity against the accusations of the pagans and the more basic analysis of the godlessness underlying the whole of secular history (and Roman history in particular), is presented in striking fashion in the Preface to the work. The New Testament, says Augustine, tells us that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6); Virgil, the heroic poet of Rome, and thus the spokesman for ancient and particularly Roman values, attributes a godlike role to the secular city, indeed to Rome itself, in the famous statement of the *Aeneid* (6.853) that it is Rome's mission 'to spare the conquered and beat down the proud' ('parcere subiectis et debellare superbos').

The 'proud' and the 'conquered' are, of course, any other people who have stood in the way of the Imperial City, so an evaluation of the true nature of that city's ambitions, summing up *a fortiori* the ambitions of all other less 'successful' earthly cities, can be attained if we examine the behaviour of Rome as she built up and maintained her Empire. Such an investigation will also afford the opportunity to inspect the character of the individuals who inspired and engendered the Roman achievement – people like Cato, Lucretia, Regulus – and those whose memory the Romans condemned, like Sulla and Nero. Pursuing such an enquiry, Augustine chooses, in the early books of the *City of God*, to echo much of the tone set by writers within the Roman tradition itself. Yet behind this appropriation of traditional historiography lies a further – and Christian – dimension: Augustine holds that the ideals of a people can be discerned in the nature of their gods and in their attitudes to the objects of their worship. That is indeed a characteristically 'patristic' view; Greco-Roman Christians sensed that, to understand *Christian* values and practices, it is supremely important to discern the nature of the 'Christian God' (*Deus Christianorum*, *Unfinished Work* 5.64).

Augustine could have had no dispute with one part of traditional Roman 'theory': that it is *somehow* appropriate for conditions of domination and subservience to exist in the political and social world. Such conditions are divinely prescribed and provide the framework within which all authority, even within the secular city, must necessarily be exercised (*Against Faustus* 22.73). They remain essential despite the abuses of power which take place within their hierarchical framework, and there was 'domination', though tempered and redeemed by loving care, even in the world of man's 'first' and

unfallen nature. Yet to maintain a divinely given hierarchy is one thing; to love power for its own sake (without concern for God and one's neighbour who should together be the objects of human love) is quite another: indeed, a perversion of the first. In itself power should not be shunned (*The Trinity* 13.13.17), but it should be loved only as the means to a proper end (*Against Faustus* 22.78).

In the writings of ancient historians and philosophers alike, there is a tendency to think of the love of domination only as a love of the excesses which such domination can bring, the side-effects in the form of wealth that can be flaunted in the faces of the have-nots or less wealthy, unrestricted access to the bodies of beautiful women and young men, and more broadly the opportunity at one's whim (*libero arbitrio*) for over-eating, over-drinking and general over-indulging – often made all the more attractive by consciousness that such behaviour is at the expense of those helpless to prevent it. Of course, the ancient thinkers decry such behaviour as unjust, and Augustine himself observes that 'without justice' kingdoms are merely companies of brigands (*City of God* 4.4): that Alexander the Great is a pirate on a grand scale.

But Augustine declines to follow the classical philosophers in arguing that justice is yet the basic building block of human society and the key to an understanding of the state.³¹ The earthly city, he writes in the Preface to the *City of God*, aims at domination and is dominated by the lust for domination itself. In so far as cities in the world are 'earthly cities' – and all are 'earthly cities' more or less – it is not their justice which sets them apart, but the variations in degree of their will to power. Love of power, a lust for domination, drives them on. Virtually everyone loves to rule and craves glory (*On Psalms* 1.1); it is the delight of demons to dominate a deluded soul (*City of God* 10.19).

In treating of such earthly societies *qua* societies, Augustine is not thinking of the 'families' or households of which they are ultimately composed, and which contain a (perverted) hierarchical order of their own. He is thinking of those political structures which, lacking justice, are little better than bands of organized criminals. His point is that, if such structures exhibit justice, it is by a sort of 'accident', a means to an end; justice is not the necessary 'love' which forms the city itself, and Cicero was wrong in supposing that there is ever 'true justice' in such a community.³² Even Rome in its better days was far

³¹ For recent comment, see A. J. Parel, 'Justice and Love in the Political Thought of Saint Augustine', *GPD*, 71–84. ³² *CD* 2.21.2; cf. 19.21; 19.24; Cicero, *DeRep.* 1.25.42.

from being 'an association of men united by a common sense of right' ('coetum iuris consensu . . . sociatum'). It is better (19.24) to say – in the manner of Plato (*Republic* 5.462B4ff.) – that Rome (and all human societies) are a multitude of rational beings united by agreement in the objects of their love. When we identify the objects of their love, we shall know what sort of society they may be, and Rome will be revealed as the Empire of the brigand.

The Roman historian Sallust, much quoted in the *City of God*,³³ won Augustine's favour by attempting to understand the springs of human behaviour in the context of the inherently vicious character of man himself. Such an approach, for Augustine, is appropriate to our fallen or second nature. But Sallust is a writer in a tradition which continued after his death, a tradition of historiography, it has been said by Syme, in the manner of the Roman and the Senator. Augustine's pagan sources, from whose own mouths he reckoned to convict pagan Rome, include, in addition to Sallust himself, Cicero, Varro and Virgil: all critics of the so-called 'Greek period' of Roman history, the last days of the Roman Republic: a period of which the mentality is regularly evoked by the use of such words and concepts as *factio* (party-animus), *potentia* (crude power), *dominatio*, the struggle to be the leader (*dux*) or even, in hope and (in Imperial times) in reality, to be a god (*deus*). For us, Tacitus, whom Augustine seems hardly to know, is the best representative of this tradition of writing. It is Tacitus who tells us in his *Histories* that he is writing about 'freedom' (*libertas*) and other such fine-sounding words, and that no one sought the slavery of others and domination for himself without appropriating them.

Already in the *Confessions* (2.4.9) Augustine had seen his teen-aged theft of pears as a gratuitously vicious act, a love of evil for its own sake, and his remarks about himself at this time are consciously modelled on the portrait of the Roman revolutionary Catiline, as presented in a monograph by Sallust (25.11; cf. *On Psalms* 109 (108).3). Elsewhere in that same monograph (2.2; cf. *City of God* 2.18) Sallust had popularized the phrase 'lust for power' (*libido dominandi*), a lust which Augustine thinks was peculiarly well-developed in Rome and which underlay Roman Imperial achievement. But there is a problem, as we shall see, in the relation of this lust (which most would recognize as a vice) to what some might suppose to be a legitimate

³³ Cf. Hagendahl (1967: 244).

pursuit of fame and good reputation. It is an aim of Augustine, in some of the early books of the *City of God*, if not to collapse love of glory into lust for domination, at least to band them together.

There is a clear difference, he allows, between desire for glory and honour and the lust for domination, but there is a slippery slope between the two. Nero, typically, descended the slope; though he cannot merely be identified with the better figures of Rome's past, like Regulus. Reverting to a Stoic idea (5.20) Augustine insists that to put virtue at the behest of fame – in its way an empty conceit – is as bad as to put it at the behest of pleasure, with the Epicureans. Certainly the judgement of 'good men' in such matters must be taken seriously; but the only definitive standard is the judgement of God, available only to those who have right belief; for others the slippery slope will be impossible to avoid. Indeed, it is Augustine's more general view that even apparently ordinary virtues slide readily into their associated perversions: avarice, for example, readily grows from prudent domestic thrift.

Sallust, apparently, had sharply criticized the early and 'heroic' period of Roman history as well as the 'decadent' late Republic.³⁴ He had also claimed that the early Romans had been prepared to sacrifice other attractive vices to the lust for power – at least as long as they had external enemies to fear. But when Rome had destroyed the rival power of Carthage, the struggle for domination became 'internalized' into Roman society itself. For his part, Augustine holds that fear and greed, as he puts it elsewhere (*On Psalms* 39 (38).11), drive every secular society, and he insists that even the early 'heroic' period of Rome was far from free of pride and arrogance (*City of God* 3.12–15). He draws attention to the brutalities of Romulus, including the murder of his brother and the rape of the Sabine women, then moves on to the factional oppression of the Roman plebeians. Drawing material from Sallust's *Histories*, he lists the reduction of the poor to slavery, the executions and floggings, the punitive taxation and enforced military service. Thus, as Augustine sees it, the lust for power, which his predecessors had tended to ascribe only to a period of Roman 'decadence', is better understood as a mark of the Roman character from the beginning, though at times it was masked, as Sallust had said, by a fear which pulled society together.

According to Sallust, the most distinguished among the Romans,

³⁴ J. H. Waszink, 'Sull'Influsso di Sallustio nella Teoria della Storia di Agostino', *CIA*, 1, 227–231.

driven by desire for glory and praise, longed for war – which, Augustine remarks drily, accomplished the slaughter of thousands of people. For the desire for praise regularly manifested itself in a struggle for ‘freedom’, in the sense of ‘freedom from’: in the first instance in liberation from the Tarquins, but it shifted to the desire for freedom from *all* restraint, thus necessarily entailing a lust for power itself, since how, except by the possession of power, could one be free from all restraint? The search for honour and glory is ‘transcended’, above all (5.19) in the person of Nero who ranged far beyond the desire for fame, indeed who now despised it if only his greed for domination could be satisfied: a despiser of fame, avid for power (‘contemptor gloriae, dominationis avidus’).

Thus the lust for power is seen not just as a perversion of the search for fame, but, in politics at least, as its natural last stage. This indeed is what we should expect, for in Augustine’s account of politics, love of ‘domination’ entails that very contempt for God which is the mark of perverse self-love and the freedom to sin on a grand scale. Only fear, in fact, prevents love of fame from resolving itself into lust for power, and we have seen elsewhere how, in our fallen state, fear is often beneficial for the soul. It is important to recognize that Augustine is not just saying (in the Stoic manner) that lust for power is a virtuous thing, namely love of glory, which has got out of hand. He is identifying it as the ultimate ‘natural’ product of love of glory itself. Here we recall the earlier phrase – part of the ‘triple concupiscence’ (1 John 2:16) – ‘ambition in the world’ (*ambitio saeculi*); to desire such distinction is itself a vice. Cato is condemned in book 1 of the *City of God* (1.23) as a particularly heinous offender in this regard, for he killed himself, in Augustine’s view, to deprive Caesar of the glory of pardoning him. He could not endure, that is, the glory of another because he saw it as infringing on his own glory. If only Caesar could have been put down, the need for suicide would never have arisen!

Such then is the lust for power. Its victim, instead of accepting the hierarchy and power structure laid down by God, by God’s will, as the book *Against Faustus* had put it, tries to reorder human relations at his own whim. The psychological results of such behaviour are disastrous, and the temptations of office-holding are thus revealed as peculiarly corrosive for the individual. Quoting Cicero’s *Tusculans* (5.19) – ‘O miserum cui peccare licebat’ – Augustine pities the man who has the opportunity to sin (*City of God* 5.26): a Platonic theme, indeed, and Augustine remains in the Platonic tradition when he

dilates on how active membership of the 'earthly city' tends to unfit a man for membership in the city of God. Even the fall of a powerful man, the usual final fruit of his ambition, is unedifying: it brings out little more than a viciousness and impotent desire to dominate in the populace around him: people glory in the downfall of the great with ill-concealed envy and malice.³⁵

Notice, however, an important claim with which Augustine goes beyond the Platonic original, or at least the Platonic original as presented in the portrait of the tyrannical man of the *Republic*. For in the figure of Nero, as we have observed, Augustine comes close to identifying a power-seeker who cares for nothing other than power itself. Admittedly, his discussion still fails to distinguish unambiguously between the love of power for its own sake and a love of the side-effects of power: those possibilities of mistreating others for one's own satisfactions which we have identified as a distinctive feature of the classical portrait of the tyrannical man. That is, we have not quite found Augustine identifying the joyless tyrant, the 'ice-cold' political monster who prefers to dominate from behind the scenes; if only he can dominate. Perhaps only a bureaucracy could perfect such a figure.

Yet Augustine is not far from describing him, for as far back as *On Music* (6.13.41), he had specified the perverse love of 'having other souls subordinate to oneself'. Elsewhere, as we have seen, he identifies the compulsiveness, the near-addiction, of vicious habits, of which the satisfaction, though craved, is always unsatisfying. That too, it might seem, is Platonic, though generally in the *Republic* Plato chooses rather to emphasize the multiplicity of lusts in the tyrant and his consequent loss of simplicity, the fact that the tyrant 'wants it all now'. This is more characteristically the mark of the evil man, the man far from God, the man whom Augustine identifies in his own person in the *Confessions* (2.1.1) when he says that he needs to gather himself together again 'following the dispersal of my affections which tore me apart when I turned away from you, the only Unity, and lost myself in multiplicity'. Like the Platonic tyrannical man, the Augustinian sinner is torn apart by his desires: 'If all the possibilities (for lust) come together at the same time and all are desired equally, the four desires tear the mind to pieces in their mutual opposition and into more fragments if there are an even greater number' (*Confessions* 8.10.24; 10.17.26).

³⁵ *EnPs.* 51 (50).3; cf. *EnPs.* 46 (45).2, perhaps on the fall of Stilicho. On the likelihood of the downfall of the great see *Conf.* 10.28.39.

Yet Augustine develops much further, and with concrete examples, the insight which Plato had begun to sketch out in his notion of the tyrant as the corruption of the philosopher-king. For in the soul consumed with the lust for power, there is an overruling concern for a false unity, a 'unity over against our Unity', as Augustine liked to say of the 'schismatic' Church of the Donatists, or of the joint opposition of pagans, Jews and schismatics. This shadow-unity is both like and unlike God and God's kingdom. The vicious man is single-minded in his search for power and his aggrandizement of self; the virtuous man is engrossed by the love and will of God. It is clear, therefore, in the *City of God* and elsewhere, who is the exponent of the lust for power, a more than human vice, in its most extreme form. If *libido dominandi* is the quintessence of arrogance, then Satan himself is its supreme instantiation.³⁶

That the lust for power is the false divinity of the earthly city and a sinister shadow of the love of God is shown most clearly if we consider the gods of the two cities and their religious ways. Augustine claims in the opening of the *Confessions* that even in its fallen state man's soul 'naturally' longs for the peace and repose which come only from submission to the will and love of God.³⁷ Hence the earthly city – and the earthly mentality – also longs for a kind of peace and order, but it is characteristically the peace won by conquest: the peace which the tyrant has imposed by force on his subjects, the city on her rivals: the pseudo-order which parodies the re-establishment of the lost harmony of paradise (*City of God* 19.13). Moreover, into the parallelism between the two kinds of peace Augustine weaves a different theme, drawn from his understanding of God's providence. It is a mark of God's nature to be able to bring good out of evil:³⁸ not, that is, to eliminate the evil (a matter to which we shall return in the next chapter), but to enable it to be put to good account. Hence the 'peace' of the earthly city, the city founded in despite of God, can also, despite itself, bring certain benefits to man.

These benefits, however, are not the 'educational' opportunities the philosophers demanded of an actual or reformed version of the classical Greek city-state. In the *City of God* and other works of the same period, Augustine seems to have no confidence at all that the 'state', the earthly city, can instruct our morals or form our characters

³⁶ Cf. *DVR* 13.26.

³⁷ For the universal human desire for peace see *EnPs.* 147 (146).2.20–21, *CD* 19.12–13.

³⁸ Cf. *Sermo* 114.5; *IoEv.* 27.10; *OpImp.* 5.60.

as honourable citizens. On the contrary, moral education must be sought in the teeth of the works and ideals of a secular society, for in the earthly city (*City of God* 18.2.1), 'The society of mortals is spread over the world, in all its diversity of different regions, though it is linked together in a certain kind of community by sharing the same nature. Nevertheless, each group seeks its own advantages and its own satisfactions; while what is sought is not sufficient for anyone, or for everyone. Thus society is normally divided against itself, one part, the stronger, oppressing the other . . .'³⁹ The most extreme form of this constant struggle is the direct competition for political authority among the world's leaders; at other levels of society, where mastery can be achieved only to a lesser degree, and over fewer people, the lust for power may be compelled to take the form of competition for cash and property, accompanied as before by the oppression of the poor and weak. That is why frugal living is a necessity for moral improvement (*City of God* 4.3), and more basically why life is often a hell on earth (22.22) and at best a race towards death (13.10).

IMPERIAL PEACE

If the culture of classical Athens forms the background to Platonic and Aristotelian beliefs about the educational role of the better human societies, the bleak and brutal hierarchies of Roman North Africa are the setting for Augustine's more pessimistic estimation of the edifying power of the state. Augustine's Africa is deformed by misery (*Literal Commentary* 11.35.48), madness (*City of God* 22.22, 89-94) and the sufferings of children (*Against Julian* 5.1.4). Yet few beyond the sufferers are concerned. In Augustine's rather Hobbesian universe, the stronger will impose some kind of rule and some kind of peace, and willy-nilly that 'peace' will somewhat restrain the hand of

³⁹ Cf. *EnPs.* 30 (29).11.17; *Sermo* 50.4.6; Markus (1987-1988: 6-7). Often in Augustine the earthly city is represented by the sea, as in the following magnificent passage of *EnPs.* 65 (64).9 (AD 412); see Deane (1963: 47) and Corcoran (1985: 86): 'The sea symbolizes this present age, embittered with salt and tossed by gales where men by their perverse and depraved desires have become like fish that devour each other. Note the evil sea, the bitter sea raging with waves; note with what type of men it is filled. Whoever desires an inheritance without desiring the death of another? Who desires profit without desiring loss for someone else? How many seek to climb by the failure of others? How many desire others to sell their goods so that they themselves may buy them? How they mutually oppress, and those who are able, devour! And when one greater fish has devoured a lesser, it is itself devoured by a greater one still. Oh wicked fish! You want to make the little one your prey, but you yourself will become the prey of a bigger one.' For the 'bitter sea of humanity', see also *Conf.* 13.17.20; *EnPs.* 33 (32).3; 39 (38).11; *CD* 20.15; and for devouring fishes, *CD* 19.5-9.

other malefactors. If in the struggle a good man (and *a fortiori* a good Christian) comes to the top, for example as Emperor, there will not only be the longed-for peace,⁴⁰ but, in proportion to the ruler's personal rectitude, an active concern for the well-being of others and even for their religious growth. Yet such choicer growths of peace are no automatic product of any political system; the 'function' of a political system as such is limited to cowing the vicious into respect for law, just as Rome herself has battered her rivals into submission. The 'peace' of civil laws, Augustine assured Macedonius (*Letter* 153.6.16), secures the safety of the innocent and may induce wrongdoers to call on God. At best it turns out to be an effective kind of softening-up process, at worst a device for the securing of a sullen compliance. No ruler, by skill or force or fraud, can produce stable peace in a fallen world (*On Psalms* 85 (84).10). Yet even the possibility of limited success is enough to account for Augustine's concern with civil peace and order, and explain his views on broader questions about the legislation of morals. Although no one can be morally bettered by legislative severity, if he is restrained from vice he thereby profits from an enforced opportunity, perhaps otherwise unavailable, to take a few hesitant moral steps.

Despite Augustine's unambiguous approval of the official use of force, when needed, to compel obedience and secure order, there are times when he makes no secret of his misgivings: misgivings themselves to be understood as a constitutive part of the inherited sadness of our fallen state. Sometimes he wonders whether coercive measures, though in some respects beneficial, may not do more harm than good. Thus in a letter to Paulinus of Nola and his wife Therasia (95.3, of about 408), he observes that many of those punished are not improved; perhaps a larger number may actually be made worse. More disturbingly still, those who punish may themselves become more vindictive: a novel and fundamental anxiety to which we must return.⁴¹

What difference will it make – precisely – if the rulers are Christian? At the minimum, terrorizing by the public authorities will enable the subdued to be taught by Christian teachers, since Christians will be free to teach. Yet will even the Christian ruler be unable to use the laws for directly educational purposes? Such a question brings us back to Augustine's later disillusionment with the

⁴⁰ For the tradition of thanking the Emperors for bringing about a considerable degree of peace and security, see Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.13.9ff. ⁴¹ See Gallay (1955a); Corcoran (1985).

triumphalist account of the Christian Empire which had stirred him in his earlier years as bishop of Hippo. As a way of approaching his later views, we may consider his treatment of two Christian Emperors in the *City of God*: Constantine who first legalized Christianity (5.25), and Theodosius who imposed it in more thoroughgoing fashion, by force, as the established religion.⁴²

Of Constantine Augustine says surprisingly little in the *City of God*: only that he was sole ruler of the Empire and died in peace. Elsewhere we hear of his concern for Christian unity. Of Theodosius we have more, rather in the manner of traditional panegyric, Augustine's old *forte* (5.26.1). He looked after members of the Imperial family like a true and fatherly Christian, motivated not by desire for more power (*cupiditas regnandi*) but by love and concern for doing good (*beneficiendi caritate*).⁴³ He destroyed the images of the false gods and was generous to his defeated enemies. He trusted in the power of prayer, was a constant support of the Church and did penance 'in religious humility' for a massacre at Thessalonica. Above all, 'he was happier to be a member of the Church than ruler of the world' and must be counted among the genuinely pious (*veraciter pius*). His public persona is eulogized largely in terms of 'private' virtues. He is a good family man and landowner writ large. His virtues are social rather than political, for in an ideal society there would be no politics, only order; yet order itself in the *saeculum* is often only the fruit of domination.

The theme of the City of God and the earthly city long pre-dates Augustine, though the names of the cities may differ. For pre-Constantinian Christians, the option of total separation from the 'world' seemed easy at times, in as much as the Empire, its magistrates and its army were often and obviously hostile and regularly soaked in paganism. But such an easy opposition between 'Church' and 'world' could not survive the Christianization of the Empire, and the problem of reconciling the two was exacerbated when the Emperors passed from tolerating Christianity to active suppression of both its pagan rivals and 'heretical' or schismatic dissidents. In such Christian

⁴² For some interesting remarks on Constantine's differing policies towards paganism (tolerated in the West and proscribed in the East), see T. D. Barnes, 'Religion and Society in the Reign of Theodosius', *GPD*, 155-175, at 158-159. For the sources of Augustine's knowledge of the career of Constantine, see J. Szidat, 'Constantine bei Augustinus', *REA* 96 (1990), 243-256.

⁴³ *CD* 15.7.1 contrasts 'loving concern' (*caritate consulendi*) for others with *cupiditate dominandi*; the latter is the mark of Cain and of the earthly city. (The former sounds like the eulogy of Theodosius as a member of the city of God.) See also 19.14, where 'pride' (*superbia*) is contrasted with 'compassion' (*misericordia providendi*); also 19.16.

times the Eusebian solution – that the Empire is part of the divine plan of salvation, a further stage in God's organization of human destiny and therefore itself a quasi-divine institution – could be fatally seductive. Yet not only personal experience of the brutally uncertain behaviour of a Christian Imperial power (Augustine was powerless to prevent the judicial murder in 413 of Count Marcellinus, his friend and devoted Catholic ally in the suppression of Donatism), but a growing realization – promoted by the obvious Imperial decline – that the Empire itself was just another power-structure which had come to be and would pass away, ruled out any further Byzantine approximation of the City of God to the Christian Empire. Augustine's theological mind was happily concentrated by Roman weakness as well as Roman unreliability.

The 'spiritual' persecution of Christians who try and live devoutly does not cease with the Christian Empire, and the physical torments of early Christian times will very probably return (*City of God* 18.51–52). Nothing in Augustine's general theory of man upholds any divinization of the Christian state, and the Theodosian settlement, followed by the death of the Western Emperor Honorius in 408 and the sack of Rome, encouraged a more realistic estimate of the chances of any permanent 'good times' under Christian rulers. The Empire, Christian or not, is made up of fallen human beings, of whom no man knows which God has chosen to save. If I were to hazard a guess, Augustine had long ago told Simplicianus (1.2.22), God would laugh me to scorn.

Thus the Christian Empire and its rulers are viewed as a hotch-potch of the saved and the reprobate, as is the visible Church itself. On that Augustine comes to agree with the Donatist Tyconius, though it would certainly have been tempting – if unreasonable – for him to suppose that, if not the Christian Empire, at least the Christian Church might be identified with the City of God. Such a temptation could indeed only have been reinforced by his own high estimate of the spiritual responsibilities of Christian bishops: an estimate itself buttressed by the various social pressures which were thrusting such bishops into an ever more prominent secular role, so that soon they might appear to be the leaders of a potential state within the state. If not in Augustine's day, at least in the not too distant future, the collapse of secular authority, if not of secular power, in the West, could only make way for theocratic claims – if not by a Christian Emperor, then by a Christian bishop. And, as we shall see, Augustine

himself finds it difficult to give a coherent account of the necessary spiritual authority of the bishop within the morally mixed society of the visible Church.

Ironically enough, it was probably experience of the effects of the suppression of Donatism which dissuaded Augustine from too optimistic a view of the moral prospects of the visible Church, let alone those of the visible Christian Empire. At first he worried that a forcible incorporation of the Donatists would lead to 'false' (*ficti*) Catholics who would contaminate the pure sheep of Christ (*Letters* 23.7; 34.1). In these anxieties we recognize a reflection of the Donatist (and frequent pre-Constantinian) view that the Church must be seen to contain only the pure and select few. Later Augustine gave up his concern about the immediate quality of his newly recruited Church members, recalling that we shall only know at the Last Judgement who, even among the baptized, are the sheep and who are the secret or less than secret goats. So the visible Church joins the visible Christian state as 'mixed' and ambiguous institutions.

Yet Augustine's loss of faith in the divine nature of the civil power was accompanied by no lessened zeal for the use of that power to control pagans and schismatics. More generally, his conviction increased that civil and military authorities were necessary and should stay at their posts. As we have seen, he had come to hold that an unpleasant shock is often necessary to break the spell of vicious habits, including the vicious habits of barbarian intruders upon the Imperial Peace,⁴⁴ and that it is the duty of Christians, as also of others in authority, to bring about such shocks where necessary. If the Emperor happened to be a Christian, he would have the opportunity to act firmly, effectively and deliberately for the glory of God; if he were a pagan, he would not, of course, promote the interests of a Christian society directly, but his mere imposition of order and 'peace' would providentially allow the good to thrive, or at least to remain alive and in greater security.

But God's providence is the fruit of his unfailing love, and God is just, though his justice surpasses human understanding. Hence if God punishes by imposing hardships, he can reasonably be held to do so out of love. It is much more difficult, however, to understand how any

⁴⁴ For a recent account of Augustine's ideas on the unfortunate necessity of just wars, see R. A. Markus, 'Saint Augustine's Views on the Just War', *Studies in Church History* 20 (1983), 1-13, with *CD* 4.3, 12.23, 19.7, 22.6. On the right way of waging a war see *CFaust.* 22.74; and on moral behaviour by soldiers *Ep.* 189.4, *QHept.* 6.10; cf. *Ep.* 138.15.

public official, be he Christian or pagan, can be similarly and unambiguously benevolent. In Augustine's universe the moral challenge for such an official would seem to be threefold: How can he know that his severity is motivated by love? How can he know that his severity does not accidentally injure the innocent? How can he justify using different principles of behaviour in his public and his private capacity?

All such questions reflect the nature and the moral obscurity of action in the earthly city. God alone, Augustine has told us (*Confessions* 10.36.59), is capable of acting among men 'without arrogance' (*sine tyfo*),⁴⁵ for even as infants we impotently seek to dominate (1.6.8). And it is God who has imposed on us the penal and somnambulist state of our present existence. Enveloping that present existence, there are social structures which are maintained by men of varying moral capacities. These structures, which provide a framework for the obligations of human society (*officia societatis humanae*, *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* (1.26.49)),⁴⁶ require constant maintenance. If they are allowed to decay, even the shadowy 'peace' which we enjoy will disappear. In maintaining them, the ruler, Christian or otherwise, is performing the public obligations of his office, yet he remains subject to the blindness and weakness of fallen man. As Augustine says of himself in the *Confessions* (10.36.59), he is tempted by 'the desire to be feared or loved by other men'. That, as Augustine understands it, is the temptation of a worldly career, but such worldly careers are necessary to maintain 'peaceful' structures in a fallen world.

If Christians are not merely to retire from civic duties – and in Augustine's view that is no practical option for most of them – they must try to live a Christian life and practise the Christian faith while at the same time struggling to maintain the shadowy peace of the *saeculum*. To do this, they are authorized to use their 'love' to maintain social structures, though – as we shall see in the highly informative case of slavery – not to change them, *since no change in the present social structures would be an improvement*. Hence it will be the duty of the Christian ruler to be loved and feared like his 'good' pagan counterpart, and as a Christian he will also be required to promote the spread of Christianity by whatever means are at his legal and moral disposal. If

⁴⁵ For the significance of the term *tyfus*, see the interesting survey of P. Courcelle, 'Le Typhus, maladie de l'âme d'après Philon et d'après saint Augustin', *Corona Gratiarum. Festschrift E. Dekkers 1* = *Instrumenta Patristica 10* (Bruges and The Hague 1975), 245–288 = *Opuscula Selecta* (Paris 1984), 329–372. ⁴⁶ Cf. Cranz (1954), 298, note 162 = (1972), 369, note 162.

this entails what we would call persecution or the suppression of rival cults, that is an effect which the Church accepts as her own responsibility. In these cases it is the ruler *qua* church member rather than the state which persecutes, for *qua* state-official the ruler is concerned only with maintaining the peace and security of his dominion. Augustine is specific that he persecutes precisely because he is a 'son of the Church',⁴⁷ though the Christian ruler has no standing obligation to persecute. Interestingly, Augustine is silent about the actual use of force against the Manichaeans.

Even in maintaining the civil peace, the ruler, whether good or bad, operates largely in the dark; that is part of the 'hell of this wretched life' (*City of God* 22.22.4). Hence, as Augustine has earlier observed (19.6), he may perform frightful acts out of ignorance. In a judicial interrogation designed to establish one man's innocence, he may torture, even kill another innocent party. The maintenance of peace and order justifies violent acts by officials, and the maintenance of the Christian religion justifies violent acts by Christian officials where necessary. The contrast of this with what is permitted in private life is striking and might be challenged as arbitrary. We have seen how in private life Augustine forbids the Christian to kill even in self-defence – though with the *caveat* that killing, even of the innocent, is permissible if directly commanded by God, as God commanded Samson and Abraham. This exception may be an analogue, in private life, to the severities permitted in public life against heretics. As we saw in the matter of lying, special rules for moral conduct must be followed when 'God's business' – as Augustine defines it – is being transacted directly. Or it may be that the exceptional cases of Samson and Abraham are rationalizations forced on Augustine by his literal reading of events in the Old Testament, which he has to combine with upholding a belief in God's justice.

In *Letter* 47.5, as we have seen, Augustine tells Publicola that 'in regard to killing men so as not to be killed by them, this view does not please me, unless perhaps it should be a soldier or a public official. In this case he does not do it for his own sake, but for others or for the state as a whole to which he belongs, having received the power lawfully in accord with his public character.'⁴⁸ Even for public

⁴⁷ See *Sermo* 8.8 to the people of Caesarea in Mauretania, where Ps. 17:38 is cited (*persequor inimicos meos*); cf. *Sermo* 44.2 on the suppression of idol-worship.

⁴⁸ Cf. *DLA* 1.5.11. See, generally, D. X. Burt, 'To Kill or Let Live: Augustine on Killing the Innocent', *PACPA* 58 (1984), 112–119, and (1987).

officials, the power to punish stops preferably (though not necessarily⁴⁹) short of death or maiming.⁵⁰ We should note too that the death penalty is specifically rejected for heretics or schismatics since it deprives them of the chance to repent and leaves them exposed to the fearsome judgements of God (*Letter* 100).

Public officials, soldiers and others may be licensed to kill and torture, and not only in self-defence, but private citizens may not. We have suggested that one of the reasons for this dichotomy is to be found in Augustine's particular fear of futile attempts to alter the essentially unchangeable social networks of domination and subservience. There is also an important pragmatic consideration: his undoubtedly well-founded anxiety that private killings will degenerate into the blood-lust of the vendetta (*Letter* 47). Both factors – his theoretical pessimism and his realistic anxieties about the taste for violence – can be recognized in his reaction to the lynching of a barbarous public official in Hippo by his own infuriated congregation. On this occasion the bishop delivered an impassioned and classically Roman denunciation of taking the law into one's own hands (*privata licentia*).⁵¹ Nothing in what he said suggests, of course, that Augustine thought that public officials can never be faulted; indeed, quite the contrary. However, he insisted that any punitive action which can and must be taken for the sake of 'peace' and good order must be taken 'impersonally', despite the risk of mistakes and injustices in the process. 'No one individual has the private right to kill even a guilty man' (*City of God* 1.17). In such statements we notice that the powers of ordinary citizens are almost non-existent. Plato and Aristotle, despite their similar fears of violence, would have shuddered at such an empty concept of citizenship, but in this Augustine speaks from his own late Imperial background, far from the virtues of the classical *polis*.

A further interesting example of the operation of the ban on

⁴⁹ Cf. *CD* 1.21: 'The agent of authority is only a sword in the hand, and is not responsible for the killing': a thesis already noted which spells out some of the more unacceptable consequences (including the denial of personal responsibility) flowing from Augustine's sharp distinction between public and private morality. For Abraham and Samson, see also *Retr.* 2.22 and *CD* 14.15.1; cf. Burt (1984: 115). Asked whether bishops should intercede on behalf of those condemned to death, Augustine suggests that mercy may always be shown: if those about to punish reflect on their own lives, they will find themselves as guilty, perhaps even of similar offences, as the condemned. That is an argument for showing mercy, though Augustine implies neither that the death penalty is always undeserved nor that it should always be remitted (*Ep.* 153.3.6; cf. *IoEv.* 33.5; *Sermo* 302.18.16), though 'nothing should be done through desire of hurting' (*Ep.* 153.6). The desired blend of justice and mercy in a ruler seems somewhat analogous to the blend of justice and mercy in God; see the following chapter.

⁵⁰ *Ep.* 133.2; cf. 139.2.

⁵¹ *Sermo* 302 (cf. 49.7), with Van der Meer (1961: 142–143).

'private violence' in a 'grey' area where public and private 'moralities' meet – and also an example of Augustine's embarrassment at behaviour sanctioned by Church tradition, not to speak of the Old Testament – can be found in book 1 of the *City of God* in his treatment of suicide. Normally – and consistently with his wider views – Augustine holds that suicide, that is, private self-killing, counts as murder; hence it cannot be justified on consequentialist grounds as a way of preventing oneself being victimized (even raped or murdered) by someone else (1.17-23). Yet he admits (chapter 26) that suicide to preserve virginity has been approved by the Church – though we should consider that consecrated virginity may be viewed as a quasi-public institution like marriage, requiring special rules for behaviour deemed to be religious. Augustine's preferred way out is again to suggest that perhaps in these cases, as with Samson, it was a divine command which proposed suicide, sanctioning the suspension of ordinary rules.

Divine commands and the unfortunate exigencies of public officials apart, are there further theological presuppositions behind Augustine's rigorist position against private self-defence if the attacker's death will result? Apparently so, for rather as Augustine holds that it is not in our power to reform the underlying evil structures of secular society, but only to vary them, so – fatalistically – he apparently held that the private killing of others cannot be justified even in self-defence because a man's own life is ultimately not within his own power to preserve. He seems to have made his own the words he put into the mouth of Evodius in *On Human Responsibility* (1.5.12), that it is hard to see how that man can be free of a disordered love of the transitory who fights for things which he can lose against his will. That again seems to smack of the Stoic fallacy that, because we have to die sometime, it is unimportant when we die.

If this was Augustine's position when he began to write *On Human Responsibility*, we might expect that when he began to take the commandment of love of neighbour to include looking after one's neighbour's bodily needs, he would think that the question should be re-opened. For to die is not only to lose one's own life but to lose the opportunity to help others, those who might be dependent or in need of assistance. In the case of the head of a household, for example, his position might be regarded as analogous to that of an office-holder, like a magistrate, with secular obligations and responsibilities beyond those to his own spiritual well-being. Plotinus, according to Porphyry,

clearly recognized such a division of responsibilities (*Life* 8), but Augustine apparently insisted on his sharp division between human responsibilities in families, which though in a pre-deformed state would have existed even among unfallen human beings, and those 'political' responsibilities which are mere functions of the earthly city. Hence the 'special licence' of public figures *qua* office-holders cannot be extended to the 'non-political' domain of the household hierarchy. Augustine knew that religious celibacy was an obvious way of freeing oneself of many relationships lesser than that directly between God and the self. He appears to have failed to see that the head of a Christian family – not to speak of the roles of all the members of a family who directly share 'secular' responsibilities – could not be delineated on such a 'clerical' model. While he had concluded that the 'servant of God' is committed to love of neighbour, he remained less aware that the lay 'servant' must work out the responsibilities of that love in a manner substantially distinct from that of the religious. His legitimate dichotomy between the city of God and the earthly city doubtless tempted him to lump Christian behaviour together and to identify it too closely with what is appropriate to the celibate religious – despite his own modifications of certain 'individualistic' features of the religious life itself.

Despite Augustine's rigorous moral demands on every individual in his private capacity, the behaviour of a public figure *qua* public seems to be governed by two basic conditions only: he must preserve peace and order as best he may, and that will include risking the deaths of the innocent – though the theory of original sin would make him aware that no one is 'really' innocent – and he must carry out God's commands even if they involve the killing of the innocent. In the former case certainly, and presumably also in the latter, severity may bring regret and sadness, but presumably not remorse. The good ruler will attempt to avoid wrong-doing, but the kind of actions he must take are of such a sort that he will often be uncertain that he is doing what is right. Whereas in private life in most cases a man knows what he must do and what he must not do whatever the consequences, in public life he is driven not only by what he is commanded not to do, but by his overall responsibility to maintain peace and stability, which will involve taking frightful actions for consequences of which he is responsible though they are unforeseeable. One might again object that whatever rather artificial limits Augustine recognizes for 'public life', the actions of virtually every adult who holds any kind of

responsibility for others are to some degree of this kind. At that rate only the anchorite would be free of public responsibility. Perhaps it is in order to avoid such a slippery slope that Augustine tries to restrict 'public activity' to the acts of public officials. The root of the problem, however, remains untouched: the wish to hive off the private and Christian domain of the area of a man's relations with God or with his 'neighbour' (the latter rather unrealistically construed) from the public and ultimately more ungodly arena, and to apply different, even though conflicting, rules of conduct for each. It is not clear that Augustine would be conceptually disturbed – though he is certainly morally disturbed – by the paradoxes created by the need for social and public order; they are aspects of the ultimate unintelligibility of the world of fallen man, a world to which we are, in this life, condemned. Only the City of God is intelligible and coherent, and the remorselessness of political life is part of its penal character.

What is certain is that Augustine is insufficiently aware and insufficiently precise about the problem of what means are acceptable in pursuit of desirable ends in public life, as in the case of judicial torture – everywhere accepted in his day, as long before and long after – ordered by a responsible magistrate. In *On Human Responsibility* (1.5.11) he had claimed that bad laws are not laws, and should not be obeyed, but he offers little by way of guidelines for those who receive evil orders in strict accordance with questionable laws,⁵² and his later diminishing confidence in the possibility of 'good' laws must not have encouraged him to offer any. Had a soldier refused to carry out a legitimate order to torture, Augustine normally would have thought that he had no business to disobey. He would probably have only been concerned with the soldier's conscience if the order was related to the suppression of Christianity or directly infringed one of the commandments; then at least it would not have been a legitimate order. Yet, as we have seen, even certain infringements on the commandments (including that against killing) are tolerated in public life – in the sense that there is a different interpretation from that which is binding for private individuals. The soldier would always be told to give his superiors the benefit of the doubt; the

⁵² Some guidelines may be found at *Conf.* 3.8.15–16. Sins are either 'against nature', or against custom when breaking custom is unnecessary, or against direct divine commands (i.e. the ten commandments). But matters of interpretation when the individual is under pressure from the state are far from clear.

burden of responsibility would be theirs. Concern for order thus overrides concern for individual responsibility. Yet if so few people – in a fallen race – are fit for individual responsibility, why is anyone fit for it? In particular, why is a bishop so fit?

SLAVERY AS A TEST CASE

We can further examine Augustine's willingness to sanction the use of force to maintain peace in the earthly city – by officials, and with consequentialist reasoning, i.e. 'What do we have to do to get the resulting and desired end-state of peace and order?' – if we consider slavery, an institution which we would almost universally regard as unjust.⁵³ Augustine discusses slavery in the *City of God*, where he tells us (19.15) that no slaves are mentioned in Scripture before the time of Noah. Slavery, obviously a prime example of 'domination', is in his view a product of the fall, part of our penal condition. 'Sin is the original cause of slavery',⁵⁴ and by slavery here he means not only the mastery of one individual by another, but the mastery of one nation or people by another. Christ, Augustine says elsewhere (*On Psalms* 125 (124).7), did not abolish the institution of slavery; rather he turned bad slaves into good ones. Slavery is essential in our fallen condition – another example of good being brought out of evil – for it is 'ordained by the law which enjoins the preservation of nature [sc. fallen nature] and forbids its disturbance' (*City of God* 19.15). The word 'nature' is informative; it helps us to understand why Augustine shows no interest in institutional reform, even of such an institution as slavery. Our 'natural' condition now is a penal one, and it would be futile (and perhaps even blasphemous) to imagine that we can do away with the master–slave relationship without *per impossibile* going back to the 'first nature' of the Garden of Eden.

For Augustine assumes that even if certain forms of slavery, such as he knew in his own society, were to disappear, they would be replaced by others. The name might change; perhaps slaves would no longer be called 'slaves'. The reality would remain unchanged. Augustine would readily recognize the concerns underlying the phrase 'wage-slaves'. Slavery in some form is endemic, and there is no point in trying to do the impossible and be rid of it. In any case, it is a *useful*, if 'penal', feature of society. God did not plan it, but he allowed man to

⁵³ For details, see R. Klein, *Die Sklaverei in der Sicht der Bischöfe Ambrosius und Augustinus* (Stuttgart 1988); Corcoran (1985); Van der Meer (1961: 135–136).

⁵⁴ *GenLitt.* 11.37.50 (c. 414); cf. *QHept.* 1.153 (419).

impose it on himself, and what God allows, in the sense of accepts as an appropriate 'self-inflicted' penalty by men, should be left in place. Augustine is able to back this appeal to a combination of 'providence' with the Stoic 'Lazy Argument' with a further set of 'Stoicizing' attitudes with which his Christian as well as his pagan contemporaries were familiar: the slave can be morally free within the institution of slavery, and it is moral freedom which 'really' matters. Christ orders obedience to one's masters; hence for the slave to obey his master is to obey Christ (*On Psalms* 125 (124).7)⁵⁵ – except, of course, if he obeys an overtly anti-religious command. In any case, the institution of slavery may inhibit pride in the slave, just as rape may inhibit it in the nun.

Augustine is ready to point out that some of the luckier slaves are better off than free men (*Sermon* 159.5), but he is well aware of the abuse of slaves, and like the Stoics he regularly urges masters to treat their slaves well.⁵⁶ If they do that, they need feel no regret at owning slaves, though they should not abuse the social system by selling free-born individuals into slavery – a practice which Augustine spent much money trying to mitigate.⁵⁷ If we ask why the master, or indeed other Christians, have no further obligation, we can identify Augustine's replies in his own descending order of importance:

- 1 Slavery is unavoidable in some form in fallen society, though without the fall it would be unnatural. Now, however, all slaves are guilty slaves (*City of God* 19.15), because all men are guilty men, though there is no 'natural' reason (it is only due to the meaningless accidents of fallen society) why a particular master should be a master rather than a slave, and vice versa. It follows from this that, although all slaves are equal in humanity with their masters (*On Psalms* 25 (24).7), their freedom is only to be achieved eschatologically. No one has the right to be 'freed' in this life; indeed in the strict sense no one *can* be free in this life. In the same sermon, at first sight paradoxically, Augustine identifies slavery as the 'most conspicuous' example of the power of one man over another. Such power, he adds, is found in nearly every household.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Cf. *SL*. 26.14; *IoEv.* 43.7.

⁵⁶ E.g. *DSD* 1.19.59; particularly masters should bring slaves to God 'affectionately' (*CD* 19.16).

⁵⁷ For Augustine's strictures on slave-trading in free citizens (but only in free citizens), see *Ep.* 24*; cf. 10* 2 to Alypius (on slave-raiding by agents of Galatian *mangones* in the 420s), and 185 (of 417); also *Sermo* 15A.4 (= Denis 21), probably of after 418. The last politically unstable years of Augustine's life seem to have produced a revival of such raiding. For the slave-trade in general, see also *IoEp.* 7.8; *Sermo* 42.2; 86.11; 177.10.

⁵⁸ Slaves were fairly cheap, perhaps roughly the cost of a war-horse (7 *solidi*). See p. 167 above.

- 2 The preservation of existing society is the best we can hope for; it guarantees a modicum of good order.
- 3 The slave (and the master) can adopt Christian attitudes to the slave-system, but since some form of slavery is unavoidable, there is no point in raising the question of whether tolerance of slavery itself is compatible with Christian morality. Jesus did not waste his breath in denouncing what is as inevitable as death in a fallen world.
- 4 It does a man no personal harm to own slaves, provided he is free from a 'lust for power' over them. The implications of that reply have wide significance in Augustine's ethics.

The claims to obedience which the master may make are absolute, as we have seen, except when his demands conflict with the ten commandments or otherwise infringe the prerogatives of God. Here again Augustine's unwillingness to attack the *institution* of slavery seems connected with his limited (though, as we have seen, gradually expanding) notion of love of neighbour. He knows that people do not always want to be slaves, and that even good masters would not want to be treated as slaves are treated. But if the master could believe that his only responsibility is not to damage the slave's soul – granted that on some occasions at least he can claim he is not *necessarily* doing this – then he can overlook the 'corporal' danger he or his actions may be doing. Thus more generally the problem of whether any institution should be reformed should be reduced to the question of whether it is 'religiously' offensive. Certainly pornographic mimes and gladiatorial shows in honour of demons are religiously offensive, but, for Augustine, slavery as such is not.

However, even if we grant Augustine's strongest point, that slave-like institutions are endemic and cannot be eliminated, we seem still required to ask whether that implies that we should not *try* to remove them. In our private lives, Augustine is regularly prepared to emphasize both that the struggle against 'concupiscence' is unending, and that concupiscence (let alone sin) cannot be eliminated in this life (*Sermon* 151.5.5), but he does not consider applying the same heroism to institutional reform, presumably in part because institutions are not individuals, but only influential on individuals. In that case, we may still ask whether some kinds of slavery are less harmful to their victims, even to their victims' souls, let alone to their bodies, than others. If the answer is in the affirmative, it is hard to see why it would not be a 'religious' matter, under the rubric of love of neighbour, to

struggle for these better kinds. Augustine's difficulty again seems to be that he identifies 'religious' matter too restrictively, this time in terms of the opportunity to avoid obvious transgressions of the commandments, the freedom to preach, to perform one's cultic and liturgical activities and to suppress the manifestations of other religions or heresies. Despite his expanded understanding of the teaching of love of neighbour – developed, as we have seen, for good moral and religious reasons – he has not expanded it enough in a positive direction and he has not considered whether one's neighbour can be 'hated' systemically. He has still over-estimated the importance of the first part of Christ's double 'summary' of the law – which doubtless is prior in moral as well as religious *theory* – at the expense of the second, which is equally vital in religious and moral *practice*.

Perhaps Augustine might protest that just as the magistrate has to put up with the unpleasantness of his civil authority, so the master has to put up with the unpleasantness of being a master. The parallel does not hold, for Augustine regularly *recognizes* the ambiguities and resulting painfulness of public office, but does not find any such pain in the life of the 'good' master. His underlying failure here seems to be that he thinks that a candid acceptance of gross social inequality does no harm to the soul and is thus in no way religiously offensive, and that a search for the deeper, existential causes of an institutional injustice would demonstrate that attempts at institutional reform are pointless. As we shall see, analogous attitudes permeate his views on persecution, encouraging him to accept and implement it for the cause of religion.

TOWARDS A THEORY OF PERSECUTION

Following in the footsteps of Ambrose, his 'father in faith', Augustine had no qualms about the suppression of paganism by the civil authorities, but though the laws of Theodosius and his sons after 399 were both more severe and more widely enforced than anything seen before – banning all sacrifices and closing pagan temples – they compelled no one to become a Christian (*Theodosian Code* 16.10.10), and there is no evidence that Augustine ever thought they should. With the enthusiastic support of Bishop Optatus of Milev, who cited Old Testament precedents, severe measures had also been enacted against the schismatic Donatists in the mid-fourth century,⁵⁹ but for

⁵⁹ Cf. E. Lamirande, *Church, State and Tolerance: An Intriguing Change of Mind in Augustine*

the moment no further action was taken against them. That changed in 405 when, anticipating a request by the Catholic bishops of Africa, the emperor Honorius included the Donatists in the ban on heresy and promulgated several decrees against them: they could not make contracts or bequests, their churches were to be surrendered to the Catholics, their services were forbidden and their clergy could be exiled; under some circumstances, abetting the secret practice of Donatism was to be punished by flogging with leaden rods.⁶⁰ Even more draconian measures were introduced in 412 (*Theodosian Code* 16.5.52); it was now a criminal offence merely to be a Donatist, and specifically Donatists, as erring brothers, were to be compelled, as pagans and Jews were not, to conform to Catholic Christianity (*On Psalms* 47 (46).31).

At an earlier stage Augustine had opposed such persecution. Writing in 396 to Maximinus, the Donatist bishop of Hippo (*Letter* 23.7), and in a second letter (34) to Eusebius, he had said that he had no interest in compelling anyone to be a Catholic against his will through fear of the civil authorities: statements more in line with his earlier confidence in man's residual ability to choose something of the right himself. Gradually, however, his view shifted. He moved from the use of force to *protect* Catholics to its use to compel Donatists to become Catholics. A number of texts chronicle the course of the change,⁶¹ and in letter 93, written to Vincentius in 408, after the first successes of Honorius' persecuting edicts, he offers a detailed explanation of his revised position.

Augustine presents five sequential points, regularly moving from arguments for the suppression of Donatist violence to advocacy of the

(Villanova 1975), 59–62. As regards Jews, although Augustine is frequently irritated by their customs and practices (such as their women dancing on roof tops at festivals), there is no suggestion that they should be proselytized. They will be converted at the end of the world, see *Sermo* 63B.2 (= Morin 7.2); P. Borgomeo, *L'Eglise de ce temps dans la prédication de saint Augustin* (Paris 1972), 148. For detailed discussion of Augustine's treatment of Jews, see B. Blumenkranz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins* (Basel 1946), esp. 194–198; also *Sermo* 5.5, 9.3, 62.12.18, and on Jewish 'self-righteousness', *Sermo* 175.1.1; *EnPs.* 139 (138). 8.

⁶⁰ *Codex Theodosianus* 16.5.37–38; cf. Lamirande (1975: 10).

⁶¹ *CEp*Parm. 1.10.16 (about 404); *CLit*Pet. 2.84.184 (402–404). The latter text seems to limit the use of force to the suppression of Donatist atrocities, that is, to the restricting of acts rather than of 'thoughts'. In 405 come *Ep.* 86 to Caecilianus and *Ep.* 87 to Emeritus, the Donatist bishop of Caesarea (in Mauretania). There is certainly a hardening of Augustine's position in *Ep.* 89 to Festus: he now urges not only the suppression of heretical 'atrocities', but the suppression of heretical beliefs. Thus, in 412, the 'crimes' of the Donatists are bracketed with their 'insane obstinacy' (*Ep.* 139.1). The most elaborate later account of Augustine's views is to be found in *Ep.* 185 to Boniface and in the *Contra Gaudentium*. By this time he has written off the Donatist hard-liners. See also *Retr.* 2.5.32.

suppression of belief itself. There is no serious argument that Donatism *necessarily* leads to violence. Yet it is only intimidation which prevents many half-hearted or terrorized Donatists from converting to Catholicism; hence killings and maimings by the fanatical minority of Donatists must be stopped; martyrs are only such if their cause is just. Severity to the 'lost sheep'⁶² is in fact mercy ('Compel them to come in' (Luke 14: 21–23) first appears in *Letter* 93.2.5),⁶³ since it leads to salvation, though the Donatists do not recognize friends when they see them (*Letter* 185.2.7). In religion as elsewhere force is necessary to break evil habits, for it impels a man to 'recognize the truth which he had overlooked'.

Augustine addresses his previous fear of false converts. Pressure, he correctly says, can bring 'real' converts. (But does that consequentialist argument imply that force ought to be applied?) He calls to witness the strong Catholic feelings of the formerly Donatist-dominated city of Hippo itself, where previously many 'were held back . . . by the heavy chains of force of habit' (93.5.17).⁶⁴ Thus the effect of force can be to save souls against their will. But there is still a difference between pressuring lukewarm Donatists and persecuting the hard core of the Donatist Church, for it was not mere habit but conviction which fortified the Donatist martyrs. Augustine makes no distinction; in both cases the persecutor acts as God's agent. The only alternative, he says elsewhere, is to leave the Donatists to everlasting perdition (185.3.14; cf. 173.1.3). Allowing no room for the 'Lazy Argument' – 'Leave it to God' – in this case, he believes that the bishop must recognize his responsibility to act (93.1.2). It is the Church herself who, through those of her sons who are officials, must persecute (*Letter* 173.10, of 416).⁶⁵ Augustine thus argues against bishops who, like his earlier self, were hesitant about the use of force (*Reconsiderations* 2.48.74 on *The Correction of the Donatists*).

God, in his love, can be severe; his 'discipline' may range from 'the

⁶² Lamirande (1975: 33).

⁶³ Cf. *Sermo* 112.1–7 (after 411). The text appears to have been 'discovered' after Augustine had begun to license persecution.

⁶⁴ Cf. claims made about mass-conversions to Catholicism elsewhere (*Ep.* 204, 209, etc.).

⁶⁵ Cf. *DNC* 2.3.9. This is the 'agonized' sense in which it is true that Augustine is 'der erste Dogmatiker der Inquisition' (H. Reuter, *Augustinische Studien* (Gotha 1887), 501, note 3), though he would have stuck at many of the practices, above all to the executions, wrought by the Inquisition (or Inquisitions). See note 49 above and for more general concerns about judicial torture, *CD* 19.6 (though heresy and schism are not in question here). Klein's objection to Reuter (1988: 82, note 69) suggests something of a whitewash driven by modern 'sensitivities'.

schoolmaster's rod to the torments of the martyrs' (*Confessions* 1.14.23). That may seem a reasonable proposition, especially when accompanied by the firm belief that God is never unjust. Recall too that, as with his injunctions to Abraham and to Samson, for Augustine God can intervene directly to command what is normally forbidden. When he does, he will act through love and justice, with full knowledge of the effects of what he does. Yet an obvious question which arises in the case of persecution is whether the *human* agent can act in a godlike manner, and more specifically, whether the authorized magistrate, whose severities surpass those permitted the private citizen, can be sure of the goodness of his own will to love and justice. Augustine holds that the unjust use of power is corrupting; how then does the magistrate, not to speak of the persecutor, the ecclesiastical authorities and above all the bishop, who in this case stands behind the civil power, know that their intentions are good, their motives pure and that their own souls will therefore take no hurt? From everything Augustine has said about the behaviour of fallen humanity, we might suppose that there would be a high risk that their motives would be mixed, and to that degree dangerous, different from the mind of God.

In pursuing this question, we may identify three Augustinian principles at work: (1) that the Catholic Church, as persecutor, can know the quality of its own motives; (2) that if such motives are pure, the agent is not corrupted by actions in accordance with them; and (3) that it is the duty of the Christian to promote the spread of Christianity by all proper means. (An example of improper means would be lying.) We may consider each of these principles in turn.

Point (3) may be taken first, since it underlies any consideration of the other two. It involves the question of which means are appropriate to the spread of Catholic Christianity and which are not. Augustine, like Optatus of Milev, certainly thinks that force can be an appropriate means, licensed by God himself in the Old Testament examples of Moses and Elijah. But because God can act in certain ways, do we know that human beings are licensed to do so? In principle, Augustine's answer to this is Yes, and the corollary will also apply, as we shall see: what God 'cannot' do, we too are forbidden to do. As regards the use of force, God will normally require human agents, whether they be willing or unwilling, and he presumably can turn human (sinful) institutions (such as slavery, imperial power, etc.) to his good purposes if he so chooses. Thus, since God works through

man, Augustine's problem – difficult enough, indeed – is not whether *in principle* force may be used for 'religious' reasons, that is, for the suppression of pagans and the correction of heretics and schismatics, but by whom it may be used, and more practically whether its use may or may not be expected to be effective.

Of that effectiveness, however, Augustine came to have no doubt when Donatists turned Catholics in impressive numbers. At a more immediately pressing level he was also eventually able to report of the 'Circumcellions' – apparently migrant workers who often provided the 'strong-arm men' for the 'party of Donatus' – that 'their violence is over; they are now kept in order, and are attached to the land, having given up both the name and occupations of *circumcelliones*' (*Against Gaudentius* 1.29.33). Augustine had thus come to assimilate such normal use of police-power to maintain law and order with its use to compel religious conformity. Using force to restrain a religious fanatic from killing and maiming may be different in kind from forcibly preventing him from attending his chosen place of worship, but Augustine thought he had learned from Scripture that God himself had legitimized the use of force in both cases.

That is not to say, however, that any or every degree of force (let alone of fraud) is appropriate for the particular end of the suppression or conversion of heretics and schismatics. The good of conversion cannot justify all means. The death penalty, as we have seen, is inappropriate, for it deprives the victim of the chance of repentance. Sometimes, however, Augustine treats the matter of the appropriate means more carefully. We have noticed his rejection of the suggestion of the Spanish priest Consentius that deception is an appropriate means for entrapping secret Priscillianists. That is interesting not only as an example of Augustine's rigorism in the general matter of lying, but of his unwillingness in some cases, though not in all, to allow a 'laxer' attitude in 'public' than in 'private' life. Public officials, as the 'arm' of the law, may be allowed to kill, but, especially in religious matters, they are not allowed to lie, i.e. to pervert truth. As we have seen, the explanation is that the particular means, the use of lies, is in direct contrast to the nature of the end, that is, to God who is truth. For while God may use force, thus legitimizing the possible use of force in His cause and as his instrument, God does not lie, and lying is thus forbidden. Thus again, the basis of moral norms is the existence of God himself. Without him, they would not exist. Conversely, since they exist, they imply his existence.

So much for the theoretical legitimacy of persecution, provided the appropriate people are persecuted and in ways appropriate to God's own methods. But – we now come to Point (2) – Augustine had always insisted that moral behaviour is, at least in the private domain, agent-relative, that is, that the relevant question is not, 'Will I achieve my ends if I do X?', but, 'Is X appropriately done by me?' For Christians the latter question would become, 'Is X appropriately done by me as a Christian?' Augustine is sure that some professions, such as acting and pimping, are not appropriate for Christians; they corrupt the soul and their practitioners cannot be admitted as catechumens.⁶⁶ Hence this question, applied to public life, will become: 'Is X an appropriate act for a Christian official who should fear the corruption of his soul?' In the particular case of persecution the question will be: 'Will persecuting religious rivals endanger a Christian soul?' Augustine is in no doubt that it will *not*, *provided*, as we have seen, that we act in the spirit of love. Severity in the spirit of love is appropriate for all masters; the man who loves his neighbour, we hear as early as *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* (1.28.56), will strive to lead him by degrees from fear of God to love of him. It may not be pleasant for the agent, but it is necessary; that is part of the discomfort of living in a fallen world.

Which brings us to our original Point (1): how do we *know* that we are acting in the right spirit? The premiss is that, even in the matter of persecution, we should love and then do what we wish ('Dilige et quod vis fac'), for if the root of one's actions is true love, it is impossible that anything but good should arise from them.⁶⁷ Yet, as we have seen, only God loves perfectly. How, then, can we know that our motives are pure?

Augustine thought that we can discover our hidden motives and repair our secret deficiencies by a proper introspection.⁶⁸ In part, no doubt, he was right, and he seems to have succumbed to the temptation of thinking that his own theory of the effects of the fall on human nature should be underemphasized in this case. Since God wished for conversions, he would surely provide the proper means to

⁶⁶ On actors, stage-managers, pimps, prostitutes and gladiators, see *FidOp.* 18.33; cf. 27.49 with the discussion of Van der Meer (1961: 358). Note *Sermo* 77A.4: it is better to be a beggar than a pimp or a bandit.

⁶⁷ *IoEp.* 7.8. See Gallay (1955a) – and as justification for persecuting Donatists, pp. 551–552. Of course, it has far wider applications; we have seen how love underpins all the virtues.

⁶⁸ For discussion, see J. Gallay, 'La conscience de la charité fraternelle d'après les Tractatus in primam epistolam Joannis de S. Augustin', *REA* 1 (1955b), 1–20.

achieve them. For God had apparently given scriptural legitimization to violence for religious purposes: Augustine especially cites the 'force' brought to bear to secure the conversion of Paul (*Sermon* 129.4), as well as numerous Old Testament examples. He was confident that what the Church does *qua* Church must be divinely inspired. What else could inspire an honest bishop in such a matter?

Clearly, despite Augustine's mature view that the Church on earth is itself a mixed community of the saved and the reprobate, his faith in its ability to discern when to take severe measures overcame his theory of human nature. He would not accept the Gospel, he once said, if the Church did not authenticate it (*Against the Letter of the Foundation* 5.6): an intellectually respectable if rather startling claim. But while emphasizing that the Church will lead us into all truth, in the matter of persecution Augustine appears to underestimate the fact that it is also composed of human beings, partaking of the 'mystery of iniquity', the iniquity of all men, individually or in groups.

The tension we encounter in Augustine's attitude to persecution is only part of the wider problem of Christian exclusivity which is largely beyond the scope of our present discussion. The Church is not in fact, but only in hope, to be identified with the City of God; yet there is also a sense in which its eschatological hope is already realized. Augustine began to explore the complicated ramifications of this in his discussions with the Donatists about the effectiveness of baptism when conferred by a schismatic or by an immoral minister,⁶⁹ but he made little attempt to harmonize his thoughts on such practical questions with his broader theories of the honesty, the 'motherly virginity' of the *Catholica* as a whole.⁷⁰ Admittedly the Catholic Church must be seen in a different light from the Church of the Donatists. Yet the faults of individual members might be thought to reflect on the nature of the whole body in a comparable, though not identical, way in the two cases. In the end, the possibility of resolving the problem of the legitimate limits of persecution in an Augustinian framework might seem to reduce itself to a scrutiny of the self-understanding or self-deception of each individual persecuting bishop or his 'arm'.

⁶⁹ Cf. D. F. Wright, 'Donatist Theologoumena in Augustine? Baptism, Reviviscence of Sins and Unworthy Ministers', *CIA*, II, 213-224.

⁷⁰ *Sermo* 213.7 (= *Guelf.* 1.7). For Augustine's views of the Church, see, generally, J. Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (Munich 1954), and E. Lamirande, *L'Eglise céleste selon saint Augustin* (Paris 1963).

FALLEN MARRIAGE: A HYBRID INSTITUTION

Marriage, according to Augustine, is an institution which has both a public and a private dimension, and which existed both before and after the fall. Hence a more extended treatment of marriage will be especially revealing of the two sides of our earthly life. The first natural bond of society, Augustine holds, is that between man and wife (*The Good of Marriage* 1.1; 3.3). The purpose of marriage, even before the fall (as he eventually determined), included the procreation of children:⁷¹ that, according to his mature thesis in the *Literal Commentary*, is why Eve was created. Hence those intending to marry should want children if they want sex (*Agreement of the Gospels* 2.1.2), though they are still married when they are infertile or sterile, or have taken a joint vow of abstinence for the right reason (*Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.17.19).⁷² Marriage is concerned more essentially with the intended *birth* of children than with their conception through sexual intercourse, which is a means to an end. Indeed, Augustine allows that any 'monogamous' cohabitation, if intended to be lifelong and in which children are not avoided, counts as a marriage; thus various forms of Roman concubinage could be marriage (*The Good of Marriage* 5.5).

To this original purpose of marriage – the birth of children – further goods are complementary: the loyalty of the spouses (which of course existed before the fall), and in Christian times the *sacramentum*, the sign of the indissolubility of the bond (*vinculum*) of marriage,⁷³ which further symbolizes and manifests in a fallen world the permanent contract and covenant between unequal partners: Christ and his Church (Eph. 5.23). This 'sacrament' – Augustine's use of the word is wider than that of contemporary Catholicism – is somehow analogous to baptism; it cannot be undone. Even after separation 'something conjugal' (like the baptismal 'character') remains (*Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.10.11; *Adulterous Marriages* 2.4). In *The Good of Marriage* (7.7; 15.17) indissolubility (and hence a ban on remarriage during the lifetime of a spouse) is limited to Christians because of the

⁷¹ Cf. *GPO* 2.40; *Retr.* 1.10.2 (correcting *GenMan.*); 1.19.5 (correcting *DSD*).

⁷² Hence Mary and Joseph are married (*DNC* 1.11.12; *CJul.* 5.12.46–48), contrary to the opinion of Jerome.

⁷³ For 'vinculum, vinculum foederis' (*DNC* 1.10.11), etc., see Schmitt (1983: 223). For 'fides, proles, sacramentum', see *DBC* 24.32; *DNC* 1.17.19; etc. Full documentation is given by Schmitt (232–233). The *sanctitas* of the sacrament takes precedence over the infertility of the woman (*DBC* 18.21), or any other supposed justification for remarriage, so long as both parties are alive.

'sacrament'; later it seems to apply theologically to all marriages, but particularly to those of Christians.⁷⁴ A sacrament, of course, is a special sort of sign, and thus can be discussed under that general rubric. A new theological thesis of Augustine's maintains that it is a sign which relates to divine things.⁷⁵ It reveals and conceals an invisible grace and power.

Such are the three purposes of marriage, but its essence is something different. Marriage seems to be a variety of friendship in which the sexual element is to the fore and is directly connected with children: babies are born in marriage 'from the parents' friendship' (*Sermon* 9.6.7); hence Augustine agrees with Roman law (*consensus non concubitus*) that the consent of the parties and not physical consummation makes the marriage, and 'conjugal love' (*caritas coniugal*) is its essence.⁷⁶ In a fallen world, however, even friendship (including marital friendship) can be corrupting: Adam allows himself to sin 'out of friendly goodwill, so as not to be severed from his only companion'.⁷⁷

Like all institutions in his world, Augustine sees marriage as a hierarchical institution, even before the fall: Eve is subordinate to Adam and this subordination is increased by the penal effects of the fall itself.⁷⁸ The institution of marriage should be harmonious, but although nothing is more social than man, nothing is more quarrelsome (*discordiosum*) than man in his fallen state (*City of God* 12.22). The fact that Eve was made from Adam's flesh shows how 'dear' (*cara*) she should be (12.28.1). But the problems of any harmonious hierarchy are exaggerated by the fall. Augustine warns husbands that the purpose of marriage is not the gratification of lust, and he assures prospective fathers-in-law that their daughter is being given away, in accordance with the marriage contract, to bear legitimate children; her parents are to become grandparents, not pimps.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *FidOp.* 7.10; *DNC* 1.10.11; *CJul.* 5.12.46.

⁷⁵ *Ep.* 138.7; cf. *CD* 10.5. Cf. Fêret (1940: 238, and 239) on the similarity of sacramental signs to what is signified; cf. *Ep.* 55.21; 98.9. Note (e.g.) *Ep.* 90.10 to Boniface on the effectiveness of baptism.

⁷⁶ In Eden marriage was a chain not *voluptariis nexibus corporum* but *voluntariis adfectibus* (*DNC* 1.11.12); cf. *PeccMer.* 2.39.44; *CJul.* 5.9.37. For marital affection *Sermo* 51.13.21; *CJul.* 5.16.62.

⁷⁷ *GenLitt.* 11.42.59; *CD* 14.11; cf. Clark (1986a). Men can be ashamed of honourable sexual behaviour to their wives when they are 'out with the boys' (*Sermo* 9.11.12). In such company sex with slave-girls is a 'joke'. For the more general problem of when friends become cronies, see below.

⁷⁸ *GenMan.* 2.11.15; 2.11.19 ('domination' increases after childbirth); *GenLitt.* 8.23.44; 11.37.58. At the very late *OpImp.* 6.26 (but only there) Augustine hesitates over whether Eve was subordinated before the fall.

⁷⁹ *Sermo* 51.13.21-22; cf. 9.11.18; 37.7; 278.9, etc. The *Digest* links marriage not with cohabitation but with consent (17.30). For more on the *tabulae matrimoniales* see Schmitt (1983: 265). Note that Julian identified marriage as a 'union of bodies' (*CJul.* 5.16.62).

Marriage is an institution unique in that it is both an institution of civil society (falling under the provisions of civil law) and also a religious institution: that is as founded by God and existing as a sacrament. Hence although it exhibits the ambiguous moral qualities of other secular institutions, these ambiguities are apparent only in its perverse condition after the fall. Before the fall, the state and political activity were unnecessary, but marriage existed. Thus while the state itself is a regrettable necessity in our fallen world, marriage is a divine institution which sadly displays its 'fallen' condition in the often 'unharmonious' attitudes of the spouses – which may result in violence – in the easy corruption of their friendship itself into 'croneyism', and even in the quality of the sexual activity which is normally integral to it.

While marriage founded by God has a goodness which no political society can match, as a fallen institution it is distinct from and inferior to the institution of consecrated virginity. The state of 'holy' virginity presents the spiritual fruitfulness of the Church (*Holy Virginity* 1.1); the virgin 'generates' the faithful, like the martyr who also gives up worldly 'goods' (45.46).⁸⁰ But though holy virginity, like marriage, is a state of commitment (and hence cannot be destroyed by rape),⁸¹ it is not a sacrament or sign. It is a foretaste of the heavenly kingdom itself,⁸² in which procreation is unnecessary, for the 'time for embracing'⁸³ is past. Marriage, on the other hand, is a sacrament, a sign of the spiritual reality of the oneness of the spouses, and of the complete union of Christ and his Church which in the world now exists only in hope.

We must distinguish between Augustine's general account of marriage and of the body – goods which after the fall are often 'used' corruptly – and his specific account of sexuality and sexual behaviour *within* marriage; for the latter, as we have seen, now involve 'good use of an evil', that is, the evil of concupiscence.⁸⁴ Without the fall, sexual activity would have fitted harmoniously into the complete marital relationship of Adam and Eve. But such harmony has not survived; now sexual activity constantly risks becoming habituated as compulsive

⁸⁰ Like the martyr, the virgin requires perseverance to the end (*DSV* 52.53).

⁸¹ *CD* 1.16–18; cf. Evodius in *DLA* 1.5.12. ⁸² *DNC* 1.13.14; *DSV* 4.4; *Sermo* 132.3.3.

⁸³ *Ecl.* 3.5. After Christ the *tempus continendi* has arrived (*DNC* 1.13.14); there is no longer an absolute command to be fruitful and multiply.

⁸⁴ *CJul.* 3.7.15; *OpImp.* 2.45; 2.57; 5.24; cf. *DBC* 3. It is one of the advantages of continence or virginity that it makes no 'use' of the evil of *concupiscentia* at all (*OpImp.* 5.17). It is characteristic of God regularly to bring good out of evil; cf. *IoEv.* 27.10; *OpImp.* 5.60 and chapter 7 below.

lust. In the *Confessions* Augustine supposes that such would have been the fate of his own proposed marriage.⁸⁵ For him, though not for all or even most people, celibacy was the only route to that sexual 'simplicity' which is needful for the restoration of the unity of the self.

The problem of sexual activity within the institution of marriage is exacerbated by an important assumption which Augustine shares with most of antiquity, or at least with most ancient *theorists* of marriage. He normally holds that sexual activity occurs for two, and only two, reasons ('What do you use a woman for?', is the way the ancients pose the question): for the generation of children, as the marriage contract proposes, and for the selfish enjoyment by one party of the other.⁸⁶ Only rarely does Augustine hint at a third motive: 'There is a certain dignity in our fervent pleasures when a man and woman come together realizing that they are parents' (*The Good of Marriage* 3.3). Augustine hardly notices that sexual activity within marriage as the setting for procreation can have a beneficial unitive effect and develop marital affection.⁸⁷ He holds – reasonably enough – that the marriage pact (*foedus*) cannot be reduced to a deal to provide for mutual sexual exploitation on the condition of openness to children. But Augustine goes further: sexual activity simply for pleasure is a sin, though a 'venial' one; that will be considered further. Moreover, Augustine reduces its psychological impact on the couple to a merely physiological 'remedy': partners can help one another overcome their random physical urges by canalizing them into the safety of their marriage-bed.⁸⁸

Unfallen people, Augustine thinks, would not need that sort of safety-net. The Hebrew patriarchs, he assures us, were not womanizers (*mulierosi*);⁸⁹ they only had intercourse with their wives for the sake of

⁸⁵ See M. E. Miles, 'The Body and Human Values in Augustine of Hippo', in *GPD*, 55–67, at 60–61; *Conf.* 6.12.22; 6.15.25.

⁸⁶ *DeMor.* 1.30.63: 'You have given authority to husbands over their wives, not to enable them to enjoy the weaker sex, but to carry out the laws of true love'; cf. *Conf.* 13.32.47. We may compare the good husband's attitude to the use of sex to that of the good ruler to the use of power (*causa consulendi*). In a fallen world both marriage and political authority easily exhibit abuses of a hierarchical relationship. ⁸⁷ Cf. Bonner (1987b: 274).

⁸⁸ Note, however, Augustine's rejection of the 'male' idea that men 'have to have sex' in a way that women do not, for 'Do not women have flesh too?' (*DCA* 2.20–21, *Sermo* 9.12). It is rather that women, he thinks, combine equally powerful sexual drives with a greater valuation of chastity (*Sermo* 9.12). Admittedly this is reinforced by the husband's watchfulness, fear of laws and the force of custom, but Augustine believes it is greater anyway. That is in line with his general claim that women – typified by Mary Magdalene – though 'weaker', are emotionally (*affectu*) stronger.

⁸⁹ *DBC* 13.15; cf. 22.17; 26.34; *DNC* 1.8.9; 1.9.10; 1.13.14; *Sermo* 51.22,23,25.

offspring. Augustine defends the polygamy of Old Testament times and slightly hesitates over whether even in Christian times a wife might not permit her husband to have intercourse with another woman for the sake of children. The patriarchs might enjoy their wives, or, as when Isaac was observed fondling Rebecca (*Against Faustus* 22.46), they might 'descend to the weakness of the female sex'; it is appropriate and humane to do that, but only on those specific occasions on which both are performing their duty (*officium pietatis*) to be fruitful and multiply. Nevertheless Augustine admits that he knows of no similar cases of such dutiful restraint among his (fallen) married contemporaries, nor does he expect to.⁹⁰ Couples should do penance regularly to compensate for that.

Marriage is partly a secular and partly a religious institution. Augustine's anxiety about sexual activity just for pleasure derives from his overall position – shared by many in antiquity, Christians and pagans alike – that pleasure may be enjoyed when it accompanies a right act, but that acts should not be performed simply for pleasure: a traditional but perhaps faulty attitude to pleasure. And he can see no other reason, apart from the desire for children, for sexual acts. Yet other restrictions which Augustine places on sexual activity are the direct result of the religious claim that men and women are of equal moral status, being both in the image of God. That is the basis of a number of the challenges his sexual ethics makes to the conventions of his day: his insistence, for example, that fidelity to a spouse is as obligatory for husbands as for wives, that both must share their 'mutual servitude'.⁹¹ The traditional sexual liberties of the husband (also frequently attacked by philosophers) are to be curtailed – and that is to include not only their regular frequenting of brothels (*Sermon* 9.14–15) but also a ban on the use of slave-girls. Here is an area where wifely subservience is out of place; women should not simply ignore unfaithfulness in their husbands, whether patiently or in a spirit of worldly wisdom (*Sermon* 392.4.4). Both spouses should fear the adultery of the partner for their partner's sake.

⁹⁰ *Sermo* 9.18. As we have noted, sexual activities with a spouse, outside the frame of procreation, constitute a 'venial' sin. They are redeemable by alms-giving or recitation of the Lord's Prayer (*Ench.* 21.78; *CJul.* 5.9.40; *DBC* 6.6; 10.11; 13.15; *DNC* 1.15.17). Note that 1 Cor. 7:6 is misunderstood by Augustine to refer to venial *sin* rather than merely permissible behaviour. Cf. van Bavel (1989b: 34); Ramsay (1988: 69–70); E. Samek Ludovici, 'Sessualità, matrimonio e concupiscenza in sant'Agostino', in *Etica Sessuale e Matrimonio nel Cristianesimo delle Origini*, ed. R. Cantalamessa (Milan 1976), 244, 246, with references. Augustine would count the use of the 'safe period' as a venial sin.

⁹¹ 1 Cor. 7.4; cf. *DBC* 6.6; *QHept.* qu. 153; *DCA* 2.4.8; *Sermo* 332.4.

Men are not only restricted to their own wives; they are restricted to them *per vaginam*, and coitus interruptus (apparently a favourite with the Manichaeans) is banned as aiming to counter fertility (*Against Faustus* 22.38; cf. 15.7). The Manichaeans also recommended the use of what they thought of as a 'safe period' – immediately after menstruation! Augustine rejects that recommendation (*Morals of the Manichaeans* 2.18.65), along with 'poisons of sterility' (*Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.15.17) and anal intercourse, which, though better with a prostitute than with a wife (*Good of Marriage* 11.12), is against nature, that is, unconnected with conception. All such activities result from substituting a wrong end (namely pleasure) for the proper end, the begetting of children. Abortion, as we have seen, counts as killing (*Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.13; 1.15). Abstinence, on the other hand, is said to promote marital affection,⁹² and is required in Lent. All sexual exploitation of oneself or others disfigures the divine image (*Sermon* 9.14–15; cf. 52.17) or the body as the temple of God.

Just how seriously Augustine takes the view that the partners' bodies belong to one another – and in a sense are one another – and the premium he places on marital loyalty can be seen from specific instances. For in the marriage act the two persons in a way unite into one (*On Psalms* 75 (74).4). From *Letter* 262 we learn that Ecdicia, the addressee, had declared herself sexually unavailable to her husband and had begun to dress as a widow; she had also given away money to wandering monks, all under the plea of religion. Augustine is unimpressed. Unilateral declarations of celibacy are wrong and Ecdicia must dress to please her husband, even if the clothes he likes seem 'unbecoming'; that is, certainly, rich and probably somewhat diaphanous. She must follow the example of Esther (15.16).

The second instance is more unexpected. Augustine observes that 'carnal' lovers love with a jealous possessiveness: they do not wish others to see their wives naked,⁹³ and this is a mark of the necessary inferiority of such love to the love of God. This claim brings us back to another and more striking case we have already considered: that of the woman of Antioch who, with her husband's approval, slept with a powerful man to secure his release from unjust imprisonment. Her conduct is to be viewed as an extreme example of *fides*; yet (like many politically suitable acts) it is essentially ambiguous. Ambiguity,

⁹² *Sermo* 132, 205, 208, 209.

⁹³ *EnPs.* 34 (33).2.6: *amet zelo pestifero*. Such possessiveness might seem to indicate the inferiority of marital 'goods'; higher goods are to be shared.

however – or perhaps rather regrettable necessity – has elsewhere been shown to be a pervasive feature of the *saeculum*; we have seen how it pervades the proper exercise of political power by honourable men. Augustine is in no doubt that sex, like power, is among the major casualties of the fall. Both are associated with the primary natural bond of society between man and wife.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

From the half-human, half-divine, fallen but sacramental institution of marriage, let us return to the *saeculum* itself. We found that Augustine's attitude to slavery and to persecution entailed that, since we are all justly slaves and dependent on God's mercy, we need have few qualms about the 'social' implications of the implementation of that mercy or about how God's ways are worked out in our fallen society. Donatists should be brought into the Church in any way consistent with God's nature, and a similar unconcern with the 'choice' of the recipient can be seen in Augustine's insistence to masters that their slaves should be baptized: an attitude on which he was in complete agreement with the Donatists and other groups in North Africa. It is the Christian responsibility of the master to Christianize his estates (*Letter* 98.6), though once again there are (hardly voluntary) life-styles among the slaves which make the bishop pause. In *Faith and Works* (19.35) Augustine asks whether a concubine (apparently a slave) should be baptized. Is it the duty of the master to baptize her? Augustine seems to recommend baptism, but only if the girl promises that she will avoid further unions if she is dismissed from this one.⁹⁴

On this paternalistic note it is appropriate to summarize Augustine's view of society by reverting to his break with much of the classical past. In Augustine's view the state as we know it is the product of our 'second' nature; it has the value of restraining vice, maintaining a 'shadow' peace (*Letter* 153. 6.16) and tranquillity, but of itself has no positive educational power. At best it softens people up, on religious and other matters, so that they can be educated by Catholic preaching. Thus politics, contrary to the view of Aristotle and later Aquinas, is a mark of fallen society. Yet if man is not 'originally' –

⁹⁴ The case resembles that of the mother of Adeodatus, who took a vow of this kind on returning to Africa. Presumably if the girl remained a slave, however, she would not have the option of refusing sex to her master.

'naturally' in the sense of Augustine's first nature – a political animal, he is certainly a social animal dependent on *marriage* and with a strong sense of community. Before the fall (at least for Augustine after about 400), God had created Adam and Eve to form a society of love and affection.⁹⁵ Then the man and the woman were in the 'active' image of God. They were created by God and looked back (very platonically as well) towards their source (*The Trinity* 12.11.16).

But although before the fall there was to be solidarity, for the *massa* of mankind was not yet a 'mass of perdition', there was still to be authority, though authority had no need to coerce: loving beneficence would have evoked loving obedience. Even after the fall, Augustine observes, but before the coming of slavery, just men were 'shepherds', lording it over animals, rather than kings (*City of God* 19.5). In our present society some slight relic of this is left in the individual household, which even in its fallen state is natural in a way in which political institutions never can be. Yet even there, as we have seen, force will habitually be required to promote the loving relationship we were once given in peace.

Outside the family, that unfallen condition may be better reflected in the monastic life, the life in community which replaced Augustine's early 'Neoplatonic' ideal of more solitary 'contemplation', and which he was tempted to equate with 'God's Republic' (*respublica*) itself.⁹⁶ Here too, however, he shows a tendency to confuse the ideal with the actual – just as when in treating of the power of Church authorities to suppress their enemies in God's own spirit of love and justice, he often forgot, or at least underestimated, that the fallen nature of humanity must be reflected in the mixed nature of the Church, itself a mixed collection of the virtuous and the vicious, both in its collectivity and in its individual leaders.

The monastery was to be a group who are sexually continent, preferably virginal, and in such a community Augustine hoped to recognize a foretaste of heaven; for the individual virgin does not merely point to heaven but in some sense is a 'heaven' already. In similar vein Augustine hoped that the absence of private property in

⁹⁵ *DBC* 1.1.1; *GenLitt.* 11.33.50; *QHept.* 1.153; cf. Schmitt (1983: 89–94); Clark (1986b).

⁹⁶ *OpMon.* 25.32, with the discussion of Markus (1990: 78–81). Following Augustine's infectious enthusiasm, Markus (as well as D. X. Burt ('Augustine on the State as a Natural Society', *CAug* (1991), 1, 155–166)) perhaps underestimates the other side of Augustine's view of the monastic life, his realistic assessment of the dangers of pride, though he is certainly aware of it. For the development of Augustine's views of the monastic life see A. A. Sage, 'La contemplation dans les communautés de vie fraternelle', *RA* 7 (1971), 245–302.

the monastery would reflect and promote a heavenly mentality (as Plato in his way had hoped also for his Guardians), with no private possessions but a common good life for all. He was bitterly disappointed when, in his own monastery in Hippo, one of the brethren was discovered to have lied about his retention of private wealth.⁹⁷

At other times, however, Augustine shows his more realistic self, remembering that even in the monastic *part* of Church society, the vices of family (not to say human) life will survive recognizably and need correction, and pointing out that arrogance is a uniquely strong temptation for unwary virgins whether singly or in community. Augustine took the family as the model for a monastic society,⁹⁸ and the coercive love of the father is thus carried over to the 'abbot' as well. A monk, according to one of Augustine's letters (20*.5), was flogged for talking to a nun at the wrong time of day: 'Domestic peace dates its origin in the ordered concord of command and obedience among those who dwell together' (*City of God* 19.14). To secure such concord force would not have been necessary before the fall; now it is necessary not only in the home but even in the monastery.

What sort of human society could Augustine consider to be ideal, and to which the best society of a fallen world must approximate? It would be a community of households, transparent to one another and living without guile, centring their lives on the Christian basilica. There would be minimal 'public' or 'secular' space in such a city: no theatres, no shows, no circuses, but adequate bread distributed by honest Christian officials. Good and unchallenged order would prevail and each person would accept their place in the hierarchy. The pious layman would replace the classical 'citizen' in something of a return to the 'natural', ordered, but unpolitical 'state'. Something similar seems to have been envisioned by John Chrysostom,⁹⁹ but the total disappearance of the secular, in such a scenario, would be for Augustine the mark of the never-to-return Garden of Eden, and thus, in this life, merely utopian. For among the earthly fragments of the City of God to which baptized Christians will normally belong are intermingled the duties, obligations and pains of the 'earthly city'. Hence in so far as the Christian has to operate publicly in that city (most Christians will do so, even if they are clerics), he has to operate

⁹⁷ *Sermo* 355.3.

⁹⁸ See Corcoran (1985: 50–51); Markus (1987: 119–125, at 121). Corcoran compares the duties of the head of a household (*CD* 19.14) with those of a religious superior (*Rule* 7.46).

⁹⁹ See Brown's illuminating account (1988: 313–316).

with a strict code of moral rules which will lead him to necessary but regrettable actions in which innocent lives are sometimes sacrificed and in which unhappy means are at times to be justified by desirable ends. Such things will occur both in support of the 'peace' which is the mere shadow of the kingdom, and in activities which may be regarded as directly the work of God: that is, the preservation of the Catholic faith and practice, rather incompletely conceived as belief in Christ, the preaching of his Name and the performance of his sacraments. From the 'Hellenic' point of view Christianity will seem to have replaced culture, or at least Hellenic culture. The later Neoplatonists claimed to see around them the triumph of the 'enemies of the good and the beautiful'.

For just as, in our search for our human identity, we do not know who we are, so in reflecting on our society, we hardly know in which city we live; or rather, of necessity, we live either entirely in the earthly city or in a perplexing mixture of the two. In our private and household capacities, or in a monastery, we may at least approximate to the City of God; in our public capacities the paradox seems to be that as Christians we are nearest to the City of God when we realize – at least if we hold office or have public duties, even servile ones – that to secure a shadow of a good we have to act in ways which would be unthinkable in a perfect and unfallen society. Without God's grace society itself shows that we are in the fellowship of the damned, the *massa perditionis*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Evil, justice and divine omnipotence

God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to allow evil to exist.

(*Enchiridion* 8.27)

BEING AND GOODNESS

In sorting through Augustine's descriptions of man's nature, knowledge, loves and hates, as well as of the harsh and morally disoriented society in which he lives, we have always tried not to lose sight of his insistence on the necessity of a radically theistic explanation of the facts that he has unearthed. In Augustine's view, only a theistic explanation makes sense of the gap between man's aspirations to the good life and the reality of the life he lives. Below the 'problems' of man lies the 'problem' of God.

Thus far, apart from treating the basic question of arguments for God's existence in chapter 3, and noting Augustine's insistence, against the 'Greeks', that creation is from nothing and that thus there is a huge and unique gap between the nature of God and those of his creatures, we have faced the problem of God only indirectly. In finally confronting parts of Augustine's 'philosophical' theology head-on, it is easy to begin with the obvious point that – Trinity and Incarnation aside – Augustine's account of God is much indebted to its Platonic or Neoplatonic roots; and Augustine saw something even of the Trinity in Neoplatonic theory. The unchangeable Platonic Forms, in an old tradition, exist in God's mind.¹ Augustine's God too must be unchangeable; he can will change but not change his mind.

As with the God of all Platonists and Christians, there is a sense in

¹ 83Q 46; the Forms are in the Son (*Ep.* 14.4) as Word (= Logos), as the Neoplatonic Forms are in *Nous*. Augustine has to be careful: the Forms are in the Word, but the Word (unlike the Plotinian *Nous*) is not subordinate. Moreover, the Forms are not the *equal* of the Word; otherwise to see a Form would be to see God in his essence. Note that even in Plotinus there is at times a curious priority of *Nous* over its 'objects' (the *noēta*).

which Augustine's God is unknowable (*On Psalms* 145 (144).6; *Sermon* 117.3.5). It is easier to assert *that* he is than *what* he is; it is also easier to say what he is not (*On Psalms* 86 (85).12).² On the other hand Augustine avoids the Plotinian expression that God is 'above being'; he prefers to say that he is being itself (*ipsum esse*),³ or true being, or *idipsum*. The difference probably has more to do with fear of being misunderstood than with metaphysical substance: the Latin 'beyond *esse*' might in any case convey a different sense (or no sense) from the Greek 'beyond *einai*' ('beyond finite being').

With varying degrees of success, God can yet be approached through faith and reason. The relation between the two, as Augustine saw it, has been discussed in chapter 3. The example of the Platonists convinced Augustine that some success in understanding God can be achieved without explicit faith in Christ, for God is deeper than ourselves in our own hearts. Some of the Platonists, indeed, 'by the sharpness of their minds', can see further than Christians who look in the spirit of faith (*The Trinity* 4.15.20). Nevertheless, 'whoever thinks that in this mortal life a man may so disperse the mists of bodily and carnal imaginings as to possess the unclouded light of unchangeable Truth and . . . cleave to it with an unswerving constancy understands neither what he seeks nor who he is that seeks it' (*Harmony of the Gospels* 4.10.20).

Probably via Varro, Augustine had acquired the (historically false) notion that Plato had divided philosophical theology into three parts.⁴ In 'logic' God as 'Truth' is to be understood as the guarantor both of the meaning of propositions and of the corresponding intelligibility of the world to which they refer, as well as the light by which we delight to understand its intelligible structure (*delectatio*

² For more on various sorts of *docta ignorantia* see *Ep.* 130.28; *Conf.* 12.5.5; *EnPs.* 86 (85).23; *CD* 12.7. Note *DeOrd.* 2.16.44: 'Deusque scitur melius nesciendo' (cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 25).

³ *EnPs.* 135 (134); *IoEv.* 38.8-9. Augustine's usage is closer in this respect to a later Neoplatonic tradition (or perhaps a continuing Middle Platonic tradition), stemming from Porphyry, which preferred to speak of 'being alone' (*to einai monon*). See P. Hadot, 'La métaphysique de Porphyre', in *Porphyre*, ed. H. Dörrie (Geneva 1966), 125-164, at 141-156; and Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris 1968), 283-286. In the first instance, Augustine's natural intermediary for this tradition could have been Victorinus (or Ambrose). In *EnPs.* 122 (121).3 he strikingly refers to God as the *idipsum* in which man can participate. For *idipsum* in general, see Solignac in *BA* (1962b), xiv, 550-552. For 'I am who I am' (Exodus 3:14), see further *Sermo* 223A.5 (= Denis 2.5), 6.4-5, 7.7, 341.8.10; *EnPs.* 50 (49).14, 122 (121).5, 135 (134).6; *Conf.* 9.4.11; *De Trin.* 3.2.8.

⁴ See for example *CD* 8.4-8, with P. Hadot, 'La présentation du platonisme par Augustin', in *Kerygma und Logos*, ed. A. M. Ritter, Festschrift C. Andresen (Göttingen 1979), 272-279, at 272-275; F. Regen, 'Zu Augustins Darstellung des Platonismus am Anfang des 8 Buches der Civitas Dei', in *Platonismus und Christentum*, ed. H. D. Blüme and F. Mann, Festschrift H. Dörrie (Münster 1983), 208-227.

veritatis, *City of God* 19.19): hence 'deconstructionist' attacks on the possibility of objective meaning would be – and are – implicitly a denial of God's existence. In physics God is the first cause of the universe, which he created from nothing, not from his own substance.⁵ In ethics God is the 'end of human life', the 'repose' which we all seek (*Confessions* 1.1.1; *City of God* 11.31), the standard by which we order all our loves and determine our decisions about priorities in the application of moral theory to practical problems.

Augustine knew, but declined to follow, the standard Neoplatonic description of God – still available in Victorinus – as the One. Rather, he followed another lead of Victorinus (*Against Arius* 4.19) in thinking of God primarily as being itself – as *to einai monon*, Porphyry's alternative to 'beyond being' or 'the One'. God is also said to be 'true being'⁶ – or supreme being (*City of God* 12.2) – which implies that all created beings are less 'true'. God, as Augustine learned in Milan and later taught the largely uninformed Latin Church, is also immaterial. Since any being must be 'somewhere' (*Soliloquies* 1.15.29) – another traditional and Platonic idea – God must be 'everywhere' (*On Human Responsibility* 3.19.53). Even if he were material, he would have to be everywhere; otherwise something could 'intrude' on him (*Confessions* 7.1.1). To be, in the strict sense, is to be unvarying, immune to change, naturally eternal. Since being admits of no change, whatever is more 'true' is more 'simple'. We have seen that the worse human beings become, the less simple they become; in Augustine's language, the less simple they are the less they *are*: 'If you want to escape unhappiness, love your desire to be' (*On Human Responsibility* 3.7.21).⁷ Among God's primary attributes are simplicity and unchangeability.⁸ That which remains without change 'truly' is. All other beings, in so far as they 'exist', partake in some way in being, of which God is the 'truest' – that is, the only possible 'true' – being.⁹

⁵ Cf. *DLA* 1.2.5, *Solil.* 1.1.2, *ImmAn.* 6.11. Even unformed matter is created *ex nihilo* (*GenMan.* 1.2.4, 1.7.11); God, for the Christian Augustine, is never just the informer or organizer of the cosmos. See esp. Du Roy (1966: 234). *Facere* (creating from nothing) is often contrasted with *condere* (arranging, crafting, forming a species or set).

⁶ For *summus deus*, cf. *Sermo* 117.5 and for the use of *essentia*, *BA*, xxxv, 494–496. For Porphyry, cf. Hadot (1966: 153–154).

⁷ Even the suicide would prefer to live, other things being equal (*DLA* 3.6.18–19).

⁸ *IoEv.* 38.10; cf. *Sermo* 6.3.4 and 7.7: 'To be is the name of unchangeability'; *CD* 8.6; 11.10; *DeTrin.* 6.6.8; 7.2.2.

⁹ For God as being and others as possessed of 'less being', see Gilson (1960–1961: 21, 210–211); E. Zum Brunn, *Le dilemme de l'être et du néant chez S. Augustin*, 2nd edn (Amsterdam 1984), 83–90. Cf. also *Conf.* 7.11.17 where all things derive their being from God.

In addition to thinking of God as being itself, the Neoplatonists, following Plato, also thought of him as the Good, since they identify being as the Good. Take away all good, says Augustine, and nothing remains (*On Human Responsibility*, 2.20.54). Hence for Augustine whatever exists, down to the level of matter itself which has a minimum capacity to be formed, is good in so far as it exists.¹⁰ Here, a metaphysics of degrees of participation looks more ordinary. For while it may seem strange to think of something as having less 'being' – until this is glossed as having less simplicity or unchangeability – it is easy to think of things as being more or less good. But even in the case of goodness, from a Christian perspective there might seem to be danger that the Neoplatonic language would encourage a confusion of the Creator and the creatures. There is no theory of the analogy of being in Augustine, nor in other Neoplatonically influenced thinkers of antiquity. But though that may seem an oddity to us, it does not seem so to Augustine; nor does he believe that the distance between Creator and creatures is in any way compromised. He does not assume that, if God is good and, say, a man is good, we must infer that there is a common higher goodness in which God and man share. Rather he thinks that in so far as a man is called 'good', that is because he partakes or shares in the unqualified goodness which is God.¹¹

God does not share in goodness (or unchangeability or immortality); he is identified as goodness. The same goes for being. Hence when God wishes to make fallen men 'gods',¹² according to Augustine's mature theology, he enables them to survive death and participate in his divine unchangeability and immortality by the special grace of

¹⁰ *DLA* 3.7.21. Note Augustine's semantic association of *nequitia* with *ne quidquam* (*DVR* 11.21) and also with *non esse* (*DBV* 4.30). A nature which is simply not good cannot exist (*CD* 19.13). Matter is a *nihil aliquid* (*Conf.* 12.6.6). It is, as we have seen, created, but it tends, of itself, to nothingness (*GenLitt.* 1.4.9, cf. *83Q* 18). We have seen how Augustine relates this 'deficient nature' of matter to the origins of moral evil as its necessary condition (*DLA* 2.20.54; *CD* 12.7; etc). In the *Confessions* the spiritual delinquent slips back into a Platonically-coloured 'region of unlikeness' (7.10.16, 1.10.23; cf. 2.10.18). For the reception of form, see *DVR* 18.36; *DFS* 2.2; *DNB* 18.18.

¹¹ On participation in goodness, see, for example, *Ep.* 140.10 (AD 412); for participation in wisdom see *83Q* 51.3, and more generally *GenLittImp.* 16.57; *83Q* 13; *DVR* 43.81.

¹² On deification, a theme which unites Augustine with Greek patristic writers, see V. Capánaga, 'La deificación en la soteriología agustiniana', *AM*, II, 745–754; G. B. Ladner, 'St. Augustine's Conception of the Reformation of Man to the Image of God', *AM*, II (1954), 867–878; Bonner (1984a: 508–514) and (1984b: 291–292). Note esp. the 'Athanasian' (and Irenaeian) approach in *Sermo* 192.1.1 ('Deos factururus qui homines erant, homo factus est qui Deus est'); also *Sermo* 166.4 with Bonner (1987a: 206). For an early version of the theme see Folliet (1962) on *Ep.* 10, but there Augustine still thinks that 'deification' can occur in this life.

'adoption', as described by St Paul.¹³ The notion of adoption shows again how Augustine has used Christian teaching to reconstruct Platonic theorizing along 'theocentric' lines. The Platonists and Augustine agree that man is to become 'like God', but Augustine holds – since the soul is not naturally immortal – that such a reconstruction of the fallen image, so that it can again partake in likeness, requires the direct action of God himself. This direct action is God's adoption of man in Christ. A man participates in God's diversity when his 'unlikeness' is taken away, when he is no longer wandering, as Augustine himself had done, 'in a region of unlikeness'. Adoption is God's action in removing all unlikeness and allowing us to participate in God's divinity (*The Trinity* 4.2.4).

Augustine takes over the metaphysical schema of participation from his predecessors in the Platonic tradition, and there are arguments in his works for the existence of God: we have met a famous 'Neoplatonic' one from the nature of mind to be found in *On Human Responsibility*.¹⁴ Augustine also regularly appeals (as in the *City of God* 11.4) to the order and design of the created universe as evidence for a planning deity, and argues from the existence of morals and values to the objective source of those values, as from the existence of 'truths' knowable as such to us to the existence of Truth itself. But as we have seen, and in common with the vast majority of his contemporaries, he generally assumes that the existence of God and even his providence (only, or almost only, denied by Epicureans) may be taken for granted. Atheists, he says, are rare,¹⁵ and in the *Confessions* he recalls that, even when flirting with scepticism, he never abandoned his belief in God's providence (6.5.7; 7.7.11). What interests Augustine, and in this he is typically an 'ancient' man, is not whether God exists, but what kind of God exists. In particular, he wants to know what God has done, what he will do, and what he is able to do. Such questions arise from his characteristic blend of historical and metaphysical interests.

¹³ Galatians 4:5; cf. *Sermo* 166.15.17. From 'sons of men' we become 'sons of God' (*Ep.* 140.4.10). Adoption by grace specifically repudiates the notion that we are of divine substance: 'ex gratia sua deificatos, non de substantia sua factos' (*EnPs.* 50 (49).2).

¹⁴ *DLA* 2.17.45–46. See pp. 68–71 above; cf. *De Trin.* 8.2.3–8.5.8.

¹⁵ *Sermo* 69.2.3; cf. *EnPs.* 53 (52).2. In *DVR* 38.69 the disillusioned polytheist is said occasionally to abandon worship altogether. Nebridius (perhaps the most philosophical of Augustine's friends) was interested in arguments about both the existence of God (*Ep.* 4.2: 'illa tibi notissima ratiuncula'; see p. 68 above) and his nature (*Conf.* 7.2.3). It seems not unlikely that Augustine's own 'philosophical' interests would have developed differently had Nebridius lived longer, but he died soon after returning to Carthage, in 389 or 390.

EVIL AND OMNIPOTENCE

'Unde malum?' Whence did evil arise (*Unfinished Work* 6.16)? That broad question, still raised in Augustine's last work, and its narrower but more fearsome associate 'Whence did moral evil arise?' – both already much discussed by providentialists both Christian and non-Christian before Augustine's time – was the most important and most enduring challenge to Augustine throughout his life. He debated the origin of moral evil as a Manichaean; he was still arguing it with Julian at the very end. What is the relation of evil to matter? Since matter is created from nothing, and 'nothing' has no 'nature', as Augustine reiterates tirelessly (*Incomplete Work* 5.44), does evil have no nature? Above all, is God the cause of evil? Or is his omnipotence compromised, as the Manichaeans held, by his failure to master it? In attempting to answer such questions, Augustine's philosophical predecessors often restricted their difficulties by distinguishing types of evil or by denying that what appears to be evil is really evil at all – except to evil men. Thus plagues, diseases, even the unjust acts of rulers, were held by the Stoics to be evil only to those who have wrong ideas about what constitutes happiness and morality. Only a morally vicious character, they said, is 'really' evil.

Augustine was never wholly satisfied with this, and he often attempts to soften the underlying dilemmas.¹⁶ God brings good out of evil, he frequently observes, as in the case of the sufferings of criminals condemned to the mines, or even of the Devil himself (*Sermon* 125.5; *City of God* 11.17).¹⁷ And echoes of the simplistic and unscrutinized Stoic notion that the existence of evils, even of moral evils, contributes to the beauty of the whole, persist into Augustine's later writings; they are like the dark colours which show up the beauty of a portrait.¹⁸ It may be that the 'innocent' suffer as a warning against hidden pride or the risk of it; we have seen Augustine raise the possibility that occurrences of rape and the institution of slavery may be explained in such ways.

Although Augustine follows the Stoics and Neoplatonists in distinguishing moral evils from others, he insists that the others are

¹⁶ So confronted with the question of why there are dangerous animals, the early Augustine observes that the tools in a workshop are dangerous if we do not know how to handle them (*GenMan.* 1.16.25), while he later makes a similar comment on the fires of hell (*DNB* 38).

¹⁷ Cf. *Sermo* 114.5; 214.3; *IoEv.* 27.10; *OpImp.* 5.60; see for further references *BA*, LXXII, 555.

¹⁸ *CD* 11.18,23; *Ench.* 3.11. The idea is prominent in the early *DeOrd.*: the bedraggled appearance of conquered cocks adds to the 'beauty of the contest' (1.8.25).

really evils. That is especially emphasized in the anti-Pelagian works, above all in his replies to Julian, to back up his claim that the fallen world has indeed become a place of suffering; the suffering is real, even for the good, even for Christ. We see such evils in grotesque cases of mental and physical deformity, even in children; we observe the nausea of pregnancy and the pains of childbirth and the misery of funerals.¹⁹

There is a distinction between 'natural evils', the evils that befall us apart from human agency, and 'moral evils', the evils that we bring about through our false loves which engender crime and sin. Although that distinction cannot be obliterated, the sufferings of the 'innocent' are genuine sufferings, whatever their origins. Why then do they occur? In his Manichaean days Augustine had found an answer to this; there is, besides the good God, a second and diabolical principle which is the cause of pain and misery. Human beings are a battleground on which neither God nor the Devil can conquer. God is good but weak: too weak, as the philosophical Nebridius had pointed out (*Confessions* 7.2.3); 'cruelly weak' as Augustine himself was to put it in his last reply to Julian (*Incomplete Work* 1.120). For Augustine not only wanted to follow the Christian (and Platonist) view that God is good, but the Christian view that he is all-powerful. He wanted to argue, in fact, that everything bad is either caused by a soul other than God, and is permitted by God for His 'Good' reasons, or is inflicted by God for reasons of justice. As we shall see, Augustine's continuing fear of God's 'weakness' is part of the explanation of his harsher attitude to the providential governance of the world.

Christians had always prayed to God as 'almighty', but in early days they seem to have engaged in little reflection on the nature of this omnipotence. It is not immediately obvious why this should have been so, but presumably 'omnipotent' seemed self-evident: God could do anything, whatever he wanted. What else could the word intend? It is clear, however, that the potential problem Christian thinkers faced was very different from that faced by Plato or Aristotle or the Stoics. For these philosophers God or the gods are not omnipotent, but their role, though important, is limited in the cosmos. Perhaps the

¹⁹ *OpImp.* 1.22 (on the sufferings of small children), with *Ep.* 166, to Jerome; 2.87; 3.154; 3.160; 6.31; 6.41 (on funerals); cf. *CD* 22.22 (on disease). That there is a special sense (as we have seen) in which *no* suffering is undeserved, because of our solidarity in Adam, is also regularly emphasized (*Conf.* 7.16.22, *CD* 20.2; *OpImp.* 2.87; etc.).

problem of omnipotence did not immediately arise in Christianity because the philosophical tradition of Christianity was Greek, and Greek philosophy did not concern itself with omnipotence.²⁰ As we shall see, Augustine holds as both traditionally taught and as self-evident that God is omnipotent – what we may call the omnipotence premiss. Yet though he frequently confesses such omnipotence,²¹ he devotes little space to close analysis of what ‘omnipotence’ entails.

The idea of God’s omnipotence naturally reached Augustine from Jewish as well as Christian sources. Hence, in order to become more aware of the sort of problems that might arise for a Christian in the Platonic tradition, it is helpful to glance at a Jewish thinker of the first century AD, in the same tradition. Philo of Alexandria made a number of radical suggestions about God’s omnipotence which serve to highlight something of what Augustine inherited. Augustine himself presumably knew little or nothing of Philo first-hand, but his influence came to him indirectly through Ambrose and Origen. Our concern, however, is not so much with the sources of Augustine’s difficulties over omnipotence, as with the difficulties which arise if the omnipotence of the Jewish God is treated in a philosophical context.

Like Augustine, Philo accepted objective moral standards, Platonic Forms, let us say, of Justice and Holiness. What would be the relationship of these Forms to an omnipotent God? We may assume that ‘omnipotence’ originally had a simplistically ‘physical’ reference. When Augustine, for example, says that God’s ‘will’ is the cause of all things, or that God does what he wants, he seems to mean that he *makes* what he wants (the Latin *fecit* in *On Psalms* 135 (134).10 sums up

²⁰ Note the remark of J. F. Ross, *Philosophical Theology* (Indianapolis and Cambridge 1980), 198, on Boethius’ treatment of omnipotence: ‘From a man who wrote a logic text, the blithe mixture of formal and informal fallacies is refreshing.’ But Boethius does not deserve so much censure; he is treading largely untrodden ground, even after Augustine had written (not too effectively, as we shall see) about omnipotence. Burnaby (1938: 230) is one of the few scholars who has noticed the importance of the problem: ‘Augustine never realized that his own conception of grace required nothing less than a revolution in his thought of the divine omnipotence’; but even Burnaby seems to limit the difficulties too much to the workings of grace, which was merely where they surfaced (see Fredriksen (1988: 95)).

²¹ E.g. *Sermo* 213.1, where God is said to have made things spiritual and corporeal, 214.2–5, where in chapter 3 we read that ‘He cannot do what he does not will to do’ – a promising but undeveloped move; also *De Trin.* 5.5.6 (where to be, and to be God, good and omnipotent are the same); *GenLitt.* 9.17.32 (where God’s power is not arbitrary and is mitigated by the ‘strength of his wisdom’). In general *potentia* must serve *iustitia* (*De Trin.* 13.13.17). Perhaps the most interesting treatment (e.g. of God’s inability to sin, to undo the past, etc.) is to be found at *CFaust.* 26.5.

the ambiguity²²). Whatever physical object can be made can be made from nothing by God,²³ and God can do what he wants with his creation, with his creatures. At first, such 'obvious' truths remained unexamined. In the Bible there is no scrutiny of the relationship between God and what is logically possible and impossible, no analysis of what kind of divine actions or behaviour would contravene laws of logic, little query as to whether God could (or would) literally do anything, and in so doing contravene logical or ethical canons.

Nor is the logical issue raised by Philo. For him the problem (though he seems not to recognize it as a problem) is in the area of the objective norms of ethics, the 'Platonic Forms'. Are these 'moral' Forms attributes of God or are they creatures of God? If they are attributes, then the question might be raised – it seems to be raised by implication in Augustine – whether, if we know the Form, say of Justice, we know God himself.²⁴ In his mature thought Augustine not only held that knowledge of God is only 'through a glass darkly' in this life, but that it always, and necessarily, remains incomplete, since God is infinite.²⁵

Whatever the problems of the Forms as God's attributes, Augustine does not tread the path of Philo in an alternative explanation: that the Forms are God's creatures (existing in the Logos, a divine but 'created' image through which God acts),²⁶ for – leaving aside all the 'Trinitarian' problems such a solution must introduce – Philo's view entails not only that physical objects are created by God, but that moral norms too are God's creatures. Philo, however, did not discuss the serious difficulty which his solution invites, namely whether God could have created an alternative set of standards and values;²⁷ he merely *assumes* that (perhaps because of his nature) the moral standards which God has created are those he should have created, or

²² For the close connection between God's will and his power (*potentia*) see *Conf.* 7.4.6 ('voluntas et potentia dei deus est'). *Potentia* is not a 'nice' word in classical and Ciceronian Latin; it suggests not merely absolute authority but often also illegitimate authority exercised in arbitrary actions. Augustine does not avoid it, but sometimes notes that God's power is not 'reckless' (*temeraria*, *GenLitt.* 9.7.32). The devil is *amator potentiae* (*De Trin.* 13.13.17); he must be overcome by *iustitia*.

²³ At *De Trin.* 3.4.9 the will of God is the cause of all corporeal things.

²⁴ There is no need to delay over the old question of whether Augustine is an 'ontologist'; he is not. Whatever we may know of God's attributes, there is, as we have seen, a sense in which God is unknowable. See Bonner (1984a: 499–500), especially his remarks on Augustine's treatment of 1 Corinthians 4:7 in the *De Trinitate* and *Retractationes*.

²⁵ See Bonner (1984b: 271–272) and earlier in this chapter.

²⁶ Cf. Dillon (1977: 159–160), with *De Cher.* 9.27–28; cf. 35.125, *QExod.* 2.68.

²⁷ Cf. *De Opif. Mundi* 16.

perhaps could only have created. Plotinus too – unlike Philo a first-hand source for Augustine – never directly raises the question of whether the One could produce a different kind of world of Forms, but undoubtedly assumes that he could not, since the world of Forms is the best possible product. He assumes that it is a matter of logical necessity that if (or rather since) the One is creative, it will create the only possible set of moral and other standards.

Augustine's position is more complicated than Plotinus'; in fact, as a biblicist's, it is closer to Philo's. He holds that whatever God creates is created deliberately by his loving will, not merely by the logical necessity of his creative nature itself.²⁸ Thus he must assume not merely that any divine creation of moral norms could only produce the moral world of which we are dimly aware – something of it is shown to us by the Law – but that God would not (and could not) have *wanted* to create anything else. If we say that God (or a man) could not (bring himself to) do something, we do not mean that he has not the physical power to do it,²⁹ but that if he did it, he would not be what he is. Thus one way of understanding omnipotence is to claim that God is able to do all that he *wants* to do. What he does not want to do, such as lie, he cannot do (*Sermon* 214.3.60; cf. 214.4.85). Augustine himself, in fact, is willing to say that God's unwillingness to sin implies that, though he has complete 'liberty', he has no 'possibility' of sinning (*Incomplete Work* 6.11). A similar, and godlike, 'limitation' is apparent in the power of the saved in heaven; especially in some of Augustine's later writings it appears that the final and greatest freedom (*libertas*) of the will is not to be able to sin.³⁰ That freedom, obtained by participation in God's freedom and by God's gift of adoption, enables the elect to become the kind of 'people' that the triune God is, to enjoy a moral deification in that they are unable to sin because they can never want to sin.

We conclude that one of Augustine's assumptions about God's omnipotence is that his power could not embrace the false 'liberty' to

²⁸ Plotinus' One does not, in fact, create deterministically: see especially *Ennead* 6.8, on the Will of the One, so any crude antithesis between a Christian and a Neoplatonic position here will be over-drawn. See T. J. van Bavel's balanced bibliographical note in 'The Creator and the Integrity of Creation', *AS* 21 (1990), 1–33, at 24, note 28.

²⁹ See N. Pike, 'Omnipotence and God's Ability to Sin', in *Divine Commands and Morality*, ed. P. Helm (Oxford 1981), 67–82, at 81–82.

³⁰ *DCG* 12.23; *Ench.* 29.111; etc. This is the last of the four 'times' into which Augustine divided salvation history after about 392 (before the Law, under the Law, under Grace, in peace); see *83Q* 61.7, 66–68; *ExpPropRom.* (AD 394) 13–18, 2, 10; *AdSimp.* 1.1.2. Previously (e.g. in *GenMan.* 1.23.35ff. and *DVR* 26.49) there were six stages, each corresponding to a day of creation.

alter moral 'creaturely' norms. When Augustine accepted and then rejected Manichaeism, he was convinced that God is not the direct cause of evil; what he came to believe as a Christian was not only that he is not such a cause, but that, although he is the sole omnipotent creator, he could not be such a cause. Moreover, since God is Truth, what He sees as evil is and always must be unvaryingly evil.

Augustine does not directly face questions about whether God can perform the logically impossible, but we can see from our ethical examples that there are some things which he cannot do. Thus his omnipotence is to be understood – in characteristically patristic manner – primarily as the power to make and unmake in the physical universe, and above all to create and presumably to annihilate that universe – always provided such activity is good and involves no change in the divine mind and the divine nature. Hence Augustine sees no difficulty about predicating all the traditional moral virtues such as justice, as well as the specially Jewish and Christian moral virtue of mercy, of this omnipotent God. Yet it is precisely his insistence that God is both omnipotent and just and merciful which causes him great difficulties in formulating an intelligible and convincing account of God as saviour and redeemer of mankind.

INCARNATION AND PREDESTINATION

In his mature writing, at least, Augustine holds that the function of the Incarnation of Christ is twofold: to atone for human sinfulness through the humility of the Cross (*Sermon* 68.11), and to raise men (or some men) by the inspiration of example and by the efficacy of the sacraments to the everlasting peace of heaven.³¹ Within that theology

³¹ Christ is an *exemplum* and an *adiutorium* (*De Trin.* 4.13.17, 4.3.6, *Ep.* 137.12; *Sermo* 101.6, etc.); see W. Geerling, *Christus Exemplum. Studien zur Christologie und Christusverkündigung Augustins* (Mainz 1978), 213, 220–222.

A detailed account of Augustine's view of the 'mechanics' of the atonement is beyond the scope of this book. It is certainly true that Christ is an 'example' for men to follow, but, as we have seen, it is the whole point of Augustine's developed theory of grace (not to speak of his dissatisfaction with Neoplatonic notions of self-salvation) that in their fallen state merely seeing Christ's example would not enable them to do the right thing. That is where God's own act in founding the Church and its sacraments comes in. Mere following the good example would imply Pelagianism. In any case, even if men could learn to act morally in and of themselves on all occasions, that would not enable them to overcome death and 'enter' eternal life; for that kind of 'religious' salvation logically requires God to 're-create' us as 'divine'. Any separation between a perfect moral life – even if that were possible – and the 'salvation' of the agent is avoided by the Augustinian solution.

For a good introduction to Augustine's views of the atonement, arguing that he combines a version of the 'ransom' theory of Ambrosiaster (which accounts for the punishment of the

must be encapsulated the position that God cannot be the direct cause of evil. That might lead us to wonder whether it was Augustine's view that God would bring all the sadnesses of human life to a good and happy conclusion. But that is only true in a pickwickian sense. For there is no doubt that Augustine came to think – indeed probably always thought – that the majority of mankind, after death, will come to a bad end.³² To attempt to see this as he would have, we must put ourselves in the place of all those – virtually everyone in antiquity – who had no qualms about the savage penalties meted out by the civil and military authorities to those who had forfeited their 'right' to better treatment. Among the Greeks, Romans, Jews and other ancient peoples, there is no objection to 'cruel and degrading' punishments as such, provided that they are inflicted on genuinely guilty parties. Augustine could at least be sure that God makes no mistakes on that score.

That non-Christians (that is, most people) deserve such punishments would have been the normal, though not universal, Christian assumption. Indeed it was an easy supposition in the penal times when to be a Christian was not infrequently to run the risk of official persecution or local pogrom. What could be more natural than to suppose that the enemies of Christ (seen as the vast majority of mankind and typified by the local or imperial power) would be called to account at the Last Judgement? The pagan masses, it was supposed by the Christians in their midst, could have applied to join the Church,

sons of Adam) with something of the 'satisfaction' theory (which allows for the removal of guilt) later developed by Anselm, see TeSelle (1970: 165–176); further J. Rivière, *Le dogme de la Rédemption chez saint Augustin*, 3rd edn (Paris 1933); G. Aulén, *Christus Victor* (New York 1951); van Bavel (1954), Dewart (1984). Emphasis on sacrifice seems to begin about 392. The earliest detailed version of Augustine's position is at *DLA* 3.10.31; further extended discussion is to be found in *De Trin.* 4 and 13, and in the *Enchiridion*. The historian of moral philosophy might further wish to consider what sort of 'rights' the devil has.

Several questions must be distinguished. How did the Incarnation 'reconcile' men to God (i.e. from God's point of view)? What effect on the individual soul (at least of the elect) does the Incarnation have? How are we thus adopted by God (Gal. 4:5, cf. *ExpGal.* 30)? How does God 'prepare the will', as Augustine will normally come to put it, especially during the Pelagian controversy? See A. A. Sage, 'Praeparatur voluntas a Deo', *REA* 10 (1964), 1–20.

³² A remnant is spared (*AdSimp.* 1.2.22); cf. *DDP* 14.35; *Ep.* 190.3.12 (to Optatus, AD 418): 'ut multitudine incomparabili plures sint eis quos in sui regni gloriam . . . praedestinare dignatus est . . . quam nullius momenti sit apud deum iustum quantalibet numerositas iustissime damnatorum'; *Ep.* 194.2.3–4. But though God may not bother, Augustine at times does.

It still perhaps might be thought that Augustine has no logical right to know that anyone is damned, since his account of the inscrutability of God's justice implies that no one can be identified who is saved (unless explicitly so informed by God, like the penitent thief). See below p. 275. But his account of baptism (see below) certainly entails that many are lost.

but refused to do so; on the contrary they had often tried to force Christians to join them in pagan worship and the specific repudiation of the name of Christ. In Augustine's day the pagans had lost the power to persecute – though sullen hostility could still readily burst into open violence³³ – but their activities in the theatre and the circus, above all their sacrifices (until forbidden by Theodosius) marked them as diabolical, as still 'unredeemed' members of the 'mass of sin'.

Observation of the 'unredeemed' behaviour of pagans (not to say many Christians) was supported, as Augustine saw it, by theology and the Bible. Christ is both the Redeemer and the Judge of the human race. As the Redeemer he saves and restores the guilty; as the Judge he separates the sheep from the goats, which shows that there really are goats. There are ecclesiastical reasons too, associated with the purpose and effects of baptism, to which we shall return later.

If the majority of mankind stands condemned, is that condemnation in accordance with God's will or does it thwart that will? Certainly it does not thwart God's foreknowledge (or knowledge) of future events,³⁴ of which Augustine is always certain and which he defends as early as *On Human Responsibility* (3.2.4–3.4.11).³⁵ In Augustine's time and in the philosophical tradition which he inherited – reaching him in this case largely from Cicero – the problem of God's foreknowledge was usually linked with questions about divination. Augustine knew that in his works *On Fate* and *On Divination* Cicero had followed the Sceptics in rejecting divination at the price of abandoning God's foreknowledge (*City of God* 5.1–11). He himself found that too high a price to pay, and his main objection to Cicero – in which he largely follows the Stoics – is that from God's knowledge of the 'fixed order of causes' it does not follow that nothing depends on human choice, for that choice itself is one of the causes God knows (5.9). God knows infallibly the strength and weakness of the human will, so that only in that theologically innocuous sense may actions of the will be said to be 'fixed'.

³³ Augustine's biographer and friend Possidius was lucky to escape with his life in an anti-Christian riot in Calama in 408; see, generally, Van der Meer (1961: 37–45).

³⁴ Although Augustine regards God's knowledge as atemporal (and thus strictly as 'knowledge' rather than 'foreknowledge'), he also discusses future contingents in terms of foreknowledge. Perhaps God's activity must be 'double-dated', so that he 'timelessly' achieves temporal effects. See Kirwan (1989: 177–179), though Kirwan's earlier suggestion (172) that 'God foreknows the future in the attenuated sense of knowing what, at any time, happens later than that time', would certainly be unacceptable to Augustine.

³⁵ Before the *AdSimp.* Augustine held that God predestined those whom he had *foreseen* would believe (*ExpPropRom* 55). Later he abandoned this, for faith itself is a gift: 'What have you which you did not receive?' (1 Cor. 4:7).

In the discussion of foreknowledge in book five of the *City of God* Augustine still makes no link between God's foreknowledge and God's predestination. The two questions were originally distinct, coming from distinct historical worlds, and foreknowledge need not, of itself, entail predestination. However, when near the end of his life in 428/9, Augustine offers a definition of predestination, he claims that it is nothing other than God's 'foreknowledge and preparation of those acts of kindness (*beneficia*) by which those who are saved are saved' (*The Gift of Perseverance* 14.35).³⁶ That, admittedly, leaves it unclear whether the foreknowledge and the preparation are separate 'acts' of God or whether, as most of his successors and probably Augustine himself assumed (18.47), the two are identical and God's foreknowledge is God's predestination. Be that as it may, let us assume God to have foreknowledge and ask what Augustine means when he speaks of that foreknowledge, as he seems to, as predestination, or indeed what he means when he speaks of predestination itself, for God can hardly predestine what he does not foreknow!

Unfortunately we must begin by observing that, even in his use of the word 'predestination', Augustine has compounded our difficulties by the informality of his language. The core of his theory of predestination was first aired in the second part of the first book of replies to Simplicianus, but although the verb *praedestinavit* (1.2.8) occurs in that book, the noun *praedestinatio* ('predestination') does not; Augustine prefers the term 'plan' (*propositum*) from Romans (9: 11b).³⁷

It is a reasonable hypothesis that Augustine's thoughts about predestination were or became precise, but that his language remained rather casual. A passage of the *Enchiridion* (of 421/2) reveals some of the problems his theory involves,³⁸ and makes a familiar move about God bringing good out of evil in an attempt to solve them: 'As the Supreme Good, he makes use of evil deeds for the damnation of those whom he had justly predestined to punishment and for the salvation of those he had mercifully predestined to grace. For as far as they were

³⁶ Cf. *DPS* 10.19; 17.34. ³⁷ Cf. Marafioti (1987: 260).

³⁸ *Ench.* 26.100 (cited by Bonner (1987a: 213a)). The ambiguous reference to 'double predestination' in some sense recurs in *Ep.* 204.2 (c. 420) to Dulcitius: 'seeing that God, by a hidden, though just, arrangement has predestined some of them to the ultimate penalty'. Similarly we find 'predestination to death' in *AnOr.* 4.16; but predestination to death does not involve the intervention of God to 'death' in the way that the predestination to life involves the intervention of God to save (cf. G. Bavard, 'La doctrine de la prédestination et de la réprobation d'après S. Augustin et Calvin', *REA* 5 (1959), 431-438, at 433; Rist (1969b: 427-428)). After the definition of the 'predestination of the saints' in *DDP* 14.35, Augustine observes that the rest are 'left in the mass of perdition by a just divine decree'; that is, God does not intervene to save them. See further below.

concerned, they did what God did not will that they do, but as far as God's omnipotence is concerned, they were quite unable to achieve their purpose. In their very act of going against his will, his will was thereby accomplished.'

Two particular points should be noted: first that God's omnipotence cannot be thwarted – this immediately settles one of the problems we were considering earlier in this chapter; secondly that the phrase 'predestined to punishment' is ambiguous. It could mean (Calvin wrongly supposed this to be Augustine's view) that God's just will, in his 'original' plan for the world, was to punish – perhaps harm would be a more appropriate term – a large part of the human race; or – Augustine's actual position – it could mean that God's original plan, formed 'before the establishment of the world' (*The Predestination of the Saints* 17.34) allowed for the fact that many would fail to respond (for whatever reasons) to the Redeemer and would thus fail to escape their due punishment. A possibility Augustine certainly ruled out is that God intended some (or all) of these to be saved, but was thwarted in that intention by man's sin. Rather, his original intention was to intervene to save some and to allow the loss of others. Augustine was well aware of the distinction between an omnipotent God's positively willing something and his *being* willing to let something happen ('non ergo fieri aliquid nisi omnipotens fieri velit, vel sinendo ut fiat, vel ipse faciendo', *Enchiridion* 24.95).

Notoriously such an account of the 'double' will of God runs up against what seem to be the obvious meanings of certain scriptural texts; especially 1 Timothy 2:4, 'God wishes all men to be saved', seems to mean more than that God would be quite happy if all men were saved. Augustine faced this difficulty in the *Enchiridion* itself (24.97). His answer is on the dialectical lines we should expect; we know that all are not in fact saved (27.103). Consider the moral capacity of infants: they cannot of themselves accept or reject the offer of salvation – which shows that a deliberate choice by an agent is not the determining factor in whether someone is saved or not, for some infants, dying without making a personal choice, are saved. Thus, since God's omnipotence must be presumed (27.103), 'God wishes all men to be saved' has to mean merely that all those who are saved are saved by God's will.³⁹

³⁹ It is notorious that Augustine's mature account of original sin entails the 'punishment' of unbaptized infants (e.g. *Ep.* 166.4.10 to Jerome). But their 'very light penalty' is light enough, Augustine curiously says (*CJul.* 5.11.44), that it is better for them to have been born than not. One wonders what kind of 'punishment' he had in mind, unless, of course, it is the 'penalty' of exclusion. The question of whether any convicted sinners (apart from Judas in

Elsewhere, in other late writings, Augustine claims that 'all men' must mean 'all the elect' or 'men of every sort'.⁴⁰ Such forced interpretations, to which he is impelled by a combination of his theory of grace with the apparent facts about who is saved and who is not, are challengeable on grounds both of exegesis and of incompatibility with much else of Augustine's own theology, for they raise the possibility of God's love being restricted, despite his gift of his Son.⁴¹ On the matter of exegesis, indeed, Augustine's interpretation, though probably not Augustine himself, had been challenged before 426 by his contemporary John Cassian: 'If God does not will that one of his little ones shall perish' (Matthew 18.14), 'How can we imagine, without the greatest blasphemy, that he does not wish all men, but only some in place of all, to be saved? Therefore those who perish, whoever they may be, perish against his will.'⁴²

Matt. 26:24) would have been better unborn (and in what sense) must be discussed further.

⁴⁰ *DGC* 15.44, *CJul.* 4.8.44; cf. *CD* 22.1.2. There are inadequate grounds for thinking that such views are the result of a hardening of Augustine in his later life (as claimed by Burnaby (1938: 231): 'The work of a man whose energy had burnt out, whose love had grown cold'). They exist substantially since the reply to Simplicianus in 396.

The claim of J. P. Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris 1980), that in the reply to Simplicianus God worked through a *vocatio congrua* which would allow the sinner the freedom to choose or reject, whereas in the writings after 418 he simply established in the saved a will to believe, seems erroneous. In the *AdSimp.* itself the will is set, presumably by means of the arrangement of the circumstances of a man's life by God. Admittedly the phrase *voluntas praeparatur* (Prov. 8:35) does not occur in the reply to Simplicianus, but the concept itself is evident enough. Burns is right to distinguish between God's arrangement of circumstances and the resulting effect on the soul of the agent, but wrong to see in this distinction an example of development in Augustine's thought. It is by the arrangement of circumstances that the call is made and the will 'prepared'. Note that in the reply to Simplicianus' second question Augustine raises the matter of the effect of God's call on the will; the problem (since many are called and few are chosen) is whether or not the call is *effectrix bonae voluntatis* (1.2.13). When God calls (appropriately), he does so in such a way that the will becomes a good will.

If that is right, then Marafioti's claim (1987: 265, in the footsteps of Burns) that Augustine abandons the notion of a *vocatio congrua* in the *AdSimp.* itself is also misleading. Admittedly the words may be dropped, but the concept is not. Rather, Augustine sets about explaining how God's call, if, but only if, appropriate, could affect the will for good.

In this connection Augustine's later attitude to Mary is of interest. He will not query Pelagius' claim that she was sinless 'out of honour to the Lord' (*DNG* 36.42). In this she is unique among human beings, and her perfect sinlessness, her state of 'good will', requires that grace is given 'in every particular' (*omni ex parte*). Thus, whatever her circumstances, she is given enough to survive unscathed. God's assistance is always appropriate and produces the appropriate result.

⁴¹ So Bonner (1987a: 215) at the conclusion of a very helpful discussion.

⁴² Cassian, *Conl.* 13.7.2 (*CSEL* xiii, 369, 13-16). For the date see Markus (1990: 177). Markus seems to be right that Cassian's immediate target is in fact Pelagius (who in effect denied God's 'graceful' intervention to save mankind, thus being willing to leave salvation up to the few of us who succeed). Whether Cassian had a secondary target, i.e. Augustine, in his sights must remain uncertain, though there is no evidence for it. We do not know how much Cassian knew of Augustine's theories.

Quite apart from questions of exegesis, however, and of the precise object of Cassian's attack, his objection is philosophically important because it raises the possibility of God's will being thwarted, thus challenging the basic assumption about omnipotence on which Augustine at least partially rested his case. Cassian does not insist on the logical incompatibility of the propositions that 'Men possess the free will which God originally intended for them' and that 'God's will that they be saved must prevail', but that is the implication of his remarks, as is clear in a hypothetical case. For Cassian's position – which Augustine could not have accepted because of his view of omnipotence – is that *if* (but only if) anyone perishes, then he perishes against the will of God. And there is certainly the possibility of someone perishing if men are given free will. Thus Cassian saves the exegesis of scripture at the expense of some kind of restriction on God's omnipotence, while Augustine sacrifices the clear meaning of Paul's text for a theory (or rather an assumption) about omnipotence.⁴³

We can see, then, that on Augustine's account of God's omnipotence, God could have saved everyone (else he would be 'cruelly weak'), but elected not to do so; that is, he did not want to do so. Why should that be so? Fortunately (if that is the right word), Augustine's paradoxical answer to that at least is clear: there is a sense in which it does not matter whether people are saved or not; yet the salvation of man is at the same time a glorious act of God's merciful love.

As descendants of Adam we are all members of the 'mass of sin', guilty of Adam's sin. Since we are all guilty, we are all punished. Moreover, if punishment is just, then it is good to punish, simply

⁴³ Cassian's text also highlights another problem for interpreters of Augustine: how seriously damaged is human nature by the fall? Occasionally Augustine suggests that our nature (as image of God) is dead (*OpImp.* 5.9; *Ench.* 9.30), but that seems to be hyperbole. In *GenLitt.* 6.27.38 we read that Adam 'lost this image' (cf. *EnPs.* 73 (72).26), but in the *Reconsiderations* (2.24.2) Augustine corrects that: 'I should rather have said', he observed, 'that the image is so deformed that it needs "re-formation"'. The hyperbole derives from the claim that we are dead in sin (*OpImp.* 5.9), by which Augustine means that we have been left for dead and would die if left unaided. His more precise view is that we are 'half-dead' (*semivivus*) like the traveller to Jericho (*DNG* 43.50) or vitiated (44.76) and needing a doctor (3.3). But last vestiges (*extrema vestigia*) of reason recalling the creation of man as in the image of God are not extinct (*CD* 19.13.2; 22.24.1–2; *SL* 28.48; *OpImp.* 6.20). Cf. Bonner (1984a: 504–505).

Similar hyperbole – an unfortunate rhetorical trait in theology – has damaged Augustine's reputation, and caused considerable later confusion and suffering, in a related matter (again unfortunately involving the popular manual *Enchiridion*). There (9.30) Augustine says that *liberum arbitrium* was lost – for though a man can kill himself, he cannot revive himself – as a result of sin; and in the same apparently over-heated period (c. AD 421) he told Julian that we should speak not of a 'free will' but of a 'slave will' (*servo arbitrio*, *CJul.* 2.8.23). In both these texts Augustine disastrously exaggerates his claim in the heat of polemic. The context of the *Ench.* shows that he means not that *liberum arbitrium* is lost, but that what he elsewhere calls *libertas* – an openness to truth – is lost; similarly with *servo arbitrio* in *CJul.* 2.8.23.

because it is just; it would be a piece of unfairness (*iniquitas*) not to punish in such circumstances.⁴⁴ Augustine seems to think of justice primarily, if not exclusively, as the setting aright of what has become disordered, the restoring of a proper balance. It would offend that balance *not* to punish the guilty in proportion to their guilt. Augustine would agree with the Aristotle of the *Poetics* (1453A2) that there is nothing tragic (or regrettable) in seeing an evil man getting his deserts. Thus the problem, as Augustine would rephrase it (at least from 396 onwards), is not, 'Why does God not save everyone?', but 'Why does God save anyone?'; for we are all justly condemned. The problem would be not God's justice, but God's mercy which would seem unjust, or at least at the expense of justice.

Hence our immediate challenge to Augustine should be reformulated. If all are justly condemned, but some are saved, could not those who remain condemned reasonably appeal their lot, since such restricted mercy indicts God for unfairness? But Augustine has no time for such a plea, for as was the case with ancient convicts, the guilty have no 'rights' or standing at all, and cannot therefore be the objects of mistreatment: 'Who are you to complain against God?'⁴⁵ Yet even if *the condemned* have no right to complain, perhaps the saved could lodge an appeal on their behalf. The appeal, however, would still involve considerations of 'fairness' rather than of Augustinian 'justice', and, as we shall see, Augustine brushes it aside. It is solely God's prerogative to show mercy if he wishes. Yet prerogative or not, does it still not leave him open to a charge of an arbitrary use of power, even of an arbitrary enforcement of justice? Augustine certainly rejects arbitrariness; we must consider the kind of reply he will make.

How does Augustine know that we are all guilty, and that it is absolutely clear that not all are saved (*Enchiridion* 27.103)? As we have seen, he has the theological premiss, derived from Scripture, that we all fell in Adam and are punished as members of the *massa peccati*. He also appeals to empirical evidence; in particular, as we have noticed, to the apparently pointless sufferings of the 'innocent' or seemingly innocent, especially young children. Their suffering indicates their *de*

⁴⁴ *DLA* 3.9.26; 3.15.44; *DNB* 9.20; *DeCont.* 6.15; *CD* 12.3; cf. Kirwan (1989: 77–78, 146–150).

⁴⁵ Augustine appeals in this connection to the labourers in the vineyard of Matt. 20.11ff. (*AdSimp.* 1.2.15; *DDP* 8.17). Theologically, however, he often suggests that Paul's reply is good enough and, as we have seen, ancient legal practice was on his side. Yet he remains uneasy, while uncertain how to locate his unease.

More generally we shall notice that no ancient thinker would simply assert that justice is egalitarian fairness, or even – in many cases – that fairness is the most important element in an account of justice.

facto guilt. To understand the significance of this we need to consider Augustine's view of the purposes of punishment and the relationship between punishment and justice.

It is 'good' for 'bad' things to exist; otherwise God would not tolerate them (*Enchiridion* 24.96). Since God is just, therefore, he would only allow the sufferings of mankind, especially of the 'innocent', for one of two good reasons: either to punish them for actual guilt – the sin of Adam in which we all share – or to begin the process of purification of the human soul. Punishment thus is broadly purifying or retributive, or perhaps a combination of the two, and in a world governed by a just God there can be no other explanation of seemingly pointless and undeserved suffering. We suffer because we are guilty and ought to suffer.

There is nothing particularly unusual about a theory of punishment as purificatory, and we have documented Augustine's growing conviction that human beings need 'inconveniences' to make them face up to and break the evil practices to which they have grown accustomed and from which they derive perverse satisfaction. So a just God, in punishing to purify, is like a good magistrate or father. Certainly Augustine holds that for the *elect* punishments are profitable; they are part of the way in which grace works upon our wills and loves; they are part of the mechanism of God's call. Yet the aim of divine chastisement, and the threat of eternal punishment itself, is not simply to terrify, for to be terrified of God is not to love righteousness: 'The man who is afraid of sinning because of hell-fire is afraid not of sinning but of burning.'⁴⁶ 'What a man enjoys doing, he does freely' ('liber facit qui libens facit', *Grace and Original Sin* 1.13.14): that is, from love, not fear. A man may be properly terrified, but he is to be terrified *into* love of God; he cannot fear and love at the same time. He may be compelled before he wants to do good, but he cannot be under compulsion when *actually* wanting to do good. *Cogi velle* – to be compelled to want – is a contradiction in terms, as Augustine insistently tells both Manichaeans and Pelagians.⁴⁷

What of the punishments of those foreknown to be damned? For

⁴⁶ *Ep.* 145.4, against Pelagius' hell-fire preaching, quoted by Brown (1967: 372). Recall the Pelagian text which points out that Adam was likely to sin because he had not yet even witnessed the execution of a human being (*PL* Supp.1.168g). Augustine emphasized the therapeutic aspect of punishment especially after the sack of Rome (*EnPs.* 137 (136).9; *GenLitt.* 11.35.48ff.). But even if hell-fire preaching (like the sword of the magistrate) does not immediately induce virtue, it certainly clears the ground for it (cf. *Sermo* 31; 62.13, etc.). Fear moves people to seek baptism (*CatRud.* 5.9) and keeps the bishop tirelessly at his work (*Sermo* 82.15). ⁴⁷ *De2An.* 12.16–18, *CFort.* 17.

them the 'inconveniences' are not purgative, merely penal⁴⁸ – though they serve as warnings to the elect – and Augustine is well aware that punishment, indeed suffering in general, does not always purify; it may well degrade.⁴⁹ The question thus remains: Is it just always to punish crime, even if the criminal will not be reformed? To this Augustine's answer is Yes. It is always just to punish a criminal; hence God's punishments are always just, but it may be merciful (though not apparently unjust) for him to remit his sentence.

Why is it that in saving the elect God is satisfied with less than strict justice? For Augustine that is a misleading question. The sacrifice of Christ is due payment for the sins of Adam and of all men, so God does obtain strict justice. What remains puzzling, then, is why the sacrifice of Christ is not enough for everyone, since those for whom it is not enough are no more responsible for their failure than the lucky ones are responsible for their success. Augustine is aware of this difficulty and sometimes attempts to dispose of it by driving a wedge between human and divine equity. Disposing of the complaint that it is unfair for some to be shown mercy while others are not, he told Simplicianus (2.2.16) that human ideas about equity are as frail as 'dew in the desert'. If he were to pronounce on who he believed would be saved, God would laugh him to scorn.⁵⁰ God's justice – indeed God's nature itself – is inscrutable (*Sermon* 341.7.9): 'I call God just for want of a better word; he is beyond Justice.' So that although God's activities may seem inequitable (or unjust), that is because we are judging by human standards of equity and justice and not by God's.

How far is Augustine justified in drawing such a distinction between human and divine standards? Julian of Eclanum thought that Augustine's account of the justice of God preserved the name of justice but nothing recognizable of its substance. Yet in reply to Julian's observation that he is astonished that a Christian could have any doubt about the equity of God, Augustine merely insinuates his distinction between the justice of God and human notions of justice.⁵¹ Julian suggests (*Incomplete Work* 3.24) that while men try to prevent injustice, Augustine's God does not, thus appearing patently unjust. That appears to be fallacious, since a just man will not try to prevent

⁴⁸ *DCG* 14.43; *DNC* 2.35.59. ⁴⁹ Cf. Burnaby (1938: 204).

⁵⁰ *InSimp.* 1.2.22; *IoEv.* 45.12; *DeBapt.* 5.27.38.

⁵¹ *OpImp.* 3.7; cf. M. Lamberigts, 'Julian of Aeclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator', *Augustiniana* 38 (1988), 5–24, at 15, and Brown (1967: 392–393), though Brown's suggestion that Neoplatonic theories about the ineffable One affected Augustine's ideas about the hidden justice of God seems implausible. No strictly moral qualities such as justice are appropriate to the Plotinian One.

every act of injustice, and Augustine has the right to claim that we cannot fully capture God's justice in our feeble reflections on its operations on earth, or in imitating it in our own 'just' acts. Yet Julian's underlying point is that the justice of Augustine's God appears *totally unlike* human ideas of justice. If that were the case, then on purely Platonic grounds we could form no notion of justice at all; nor could we even usefully claim to be attempting to act justly. Augustine's difficulty lies not in his insistence that God's justice is vastly superior to our own, or to anything we can imagine, but in that it seems (to Julian) to be a different kind of thing altogether, merely being given the same name.

Furthermore, if such an unbridgeable gap between our world and God's must be avowed in the case of justice, why is justice unique? Have we no idea of any other of the virtues either: love, mercy, humility or chastity? Clearly Augustine would not want to make such a claim; nor would he even claim that it is only through the Incarnation that we can form *any* proper notion at all of the virtues. Something of the good is always impressed on the hearts even of the pagans, so in his portrait of the Roman hero Regulus in book one of the *City of God*, Augustine recognized that Regulus had a significant notion of courage, honour and patriotism, as do those who read of him. Thus there is no reason why justice should be uniquely incomprehensible, and Julian's attack is more serious than Augustine would allow.

Julian concentrates his conceptual fire on Augustine's vision of justice; he merely denies the first premiss of Augustine's alternative line of defence that since infants are guilty of the sin of Adam, there is in any case no question of their being punished unjustly. He would have been on stronger ground as a controversialist – though he would not have wished to claim that all are saved – if he had simply concentrated on the question of why some of the supposedly guilty are punished, while others are not. For if it is true that all are guilty, Augustine's God is not unjust in punishing; nor is he incomprehensible in so doing. Even so, and quite apart from the shaky exegesis of 1 Timothy, Augustine's position is still vulnerable in that the Redemption is to be restricted in scope, although all that prevents at least a larger number of the lost being saved is the fact that the God who intervened to save some declined to intervene to save others. Yet if a larger number, why not all? And if not all, why a larger number?

We are back, then, to our earlier dilemma of why the sacrifice of

Christ is insufficient recompense for the sins of all, and we shall consider its two possible solutions, neither of which Augustine will openly embrace. He thus seems to leave himself without an answer except for the appeal, already made in his reply to the questions of Simplicianus, to the Pauline 'O Altitudo', and with the observation that a clay pot has no claim on its maker. But the literalism of such a reply shows up its underlying weakness: God is supposed to evaluate his own created image – for whom he offered his Son – in the same way as a potter a clay pot.

Yet the literalism is the product of no simple mindlessness or philistinism; it depends on an important and fundamental disharmony between two visions of the relationship between God and man, which Augustine – along with many other religious thinkers – has failed to overcome. On the one hand God has made man from dust; hence man is as nothing compared with God. On the other, God has made man *into* his image, and thereby freely bestowed on him a great value. The image of the pot and its maker is appropriate to the first portrait – compared to God you are a sheep (*Sermon* 26.15) – but inappropriate to the second, whereby even sheep have a certain value, but men much more.

Of the possible resolutions of Augustine's difficulties about why God limits the number of the saved, the first, as we have seen, is that his actions are simply arbitrary, a solution which Augustine always professedly declines. That would indeed be unjust, and Augustine – after all – has some very specific notions about divine justice and wants to reconcile divine omnipotence and divine justice while avoiding the attribution to God of arbitrary favouritism. The second solution – which Augustine would also reject – is of the sort apparently recognized by Cassian, namely that God's omnipotence can be thwarted in particular cases of his own choosing. Roughly, the argument would appear to be that, if God has created beings of a certain sort, he has necessarily committed himself to the logical consequences of his creative activity. He cannot, as it were, undo the past. By creating men in his own image he must allow them the option of deliberately rejecting even his 'appropriate' or custom-made call to salvation. His only alternative would be to *replace* the guilty party by an innocent one – another kind of 'failure'. For to be able to reject God was a part of Adam's (man's) nature from the beginning. If such 'power' were to be taken away by the gift of faith through grace (as after 396 Augustine holds is possible for the persevering elect), then

the nature of man has been fundamentally changed. Thus, if salvation is to be *for men as they originally were*, and if only some are saved, that is because God has allowed his will to salvation to be thwarted (provided Augustine's tendentious interpretations of 'God wishes all men to be saved' are abandoned).

When the elect in heaven are 'in peace' and enjoying *libertas* – the God-given freedom to choose the good alone – their state is not what Adam enjoyed, but something superior. They have been remade *in melius* (*Literal Commentary* 6.20.31). The just are to be divinized, to enjoy a higher state where sin is no longer a possible option. But this, as well as being still open to the objection, 'If some, why not all?', raises a further difficulty (not voiced by Cassian) of why, if the last state is better than the first, God created the first state at all. Why, that is, did God make Adam capable of sin, when he could, being omnipotent, have made him, like the elect of heaven, unable to sin in the first place?⁵² In *On Human Responsibility* (2.1.1) Evodius raises this point, at least by implication. Why, he asks, did God create man with free will? To this Augustine answers that without free will (as Adam had it) man could not act rightly. True enough, but then why is it somehow 'better' for the state of Adam to be replaced by the state of the saints? Or, even though God could have created Adam incapable of sinning, *could* he only have created the state of the saints *after* he has created the original state of Adam?

Why did God create what seems to be a less than perfect Adam? For, if he was perfect, the saints are to be second-best. Is this in itself to ascribe an inadequate goodness to God? Augustine's answer seems to be that God originally created the best of all possible worlds *at that time*, but that Adam's fall gave him the opportunity to create something even better – thus characteristically bringing good out of evil. That solution carries with it the implication that the 'new' world – the world after the fall – is superior, indeed again the best possible. Despite the fact that it is full of sins and that many are lost, the sins of mankind and the condemnation of the vast majority of them subtract nothing from the perfection of the whole and from the goodness of God. Such apparent sins and evils just 'do not count'. Such a position,

⁵² Cf. *De Cont.* 6.16. Augustine himself seems to suggest that God was thwarted in so far as he wanted (though preferring rather than determining) Adam to remain sinless (though capable of sinning), and in so far as he would have rewarded him with the inability to sin. But Adam's fall, and God's subsequent salvation of the elect, entails only that God was thwarted in his original (and more universally salvific?) preference for that time, not in his atemporal will. Is this another case where 'double-dating' is required?

however, commits Augustine to at least the following three theses, all of which are questionable, and of which the second is question-begging – while the third seems to many in the contemporary West to be morally repugnant, a reflection of the systemic callousness of ancient society which we have found colouring many of Augustine's social attitudes:

- 1 A potential sinner with free will is better than a creature without free will (*On Human Responsibility* 3.5.15; *On Continence* 5.16).
- 2 Whatever sins a man commits, it would be false to say that it would have been better (though not, at least in the case of Judas, for him), if he had not been born. Thus, a Hitler, with the crimes of Hitler, is better than no Hitler. So too Augustine tells Julian that he would not dare say it would have been better for the Sodomites not to have existed (*Against Julian* 5.11.44).
- 3 It is a mistake to think that a world without punishments (even eternal punishments) and the suffering of the innocents would be better than the present world. It does not matter if a man is hurt if he has no merits (*On Human Responsibility* 3.22.68). In fact the present world – now that it has been able to come into existence – is better than the previous best possible, the world of unfallen Adam. As the late Augustine suggests, God's grace to Adam was a gift in the happy days of innocence, but his gift through Christ is more powerful and hence superior (*Rebuke and Grace* 10.28).

Thus it makes no difference to the goodness of God whether he condemns some, all, or many (*On Human Responsibility* 3.24.72), so long as he condemns them justly, and provided he holds all three of the above theses, Augustine may believe that his account of theodicy and of God's goodness is safe. Yet even apart from the three theses one might still conclude that safety has been secured at the price of the reappearance of arbitrariness. If it 'makes no difference' whether God is strictly just or whether he is merciful, why does he decide on the Incarnation? Arbitrariness seems to have replaced love in the equation. Will further consideration of the possibilities open to God help to save Augustine's position?

In the *Enchiridion* Augustine speaks in the language of Genesis of God viewing the world as first created and seeing it as 'very good' (*valde bonum*).⁵³ He always insists that God is not directly responsible

⁵³ Kirwan (1989: 67) notes that Augustine offers no systematic defence of the view that God 'could not have worked things better'.

for evil, but in itself that does not commit him to the belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. On the other hand, because Adam was very good, even the best possible, is no reason why God could not have foreseen that he and his descendants would become better still. The mere fact that the last state is to be better than the first is no serious objection to a claim that at any given time this world is not only very good, but the best possible, *and* that 'overall' it is the best possible.

Possible worlds apart, we are confronted at every turn with Augustine's insistence (with apparent scriptural support) that some, perhaps many, are really lost. Are we finally to maintain our conclusion that for all his intentions to the contrary his solution to this – above all his axiom that it does not matter how many are saved – involves him in collapsing omnipotence into arbitrariness after all?

Let us return to the reasons Augustine will offer for his problematic position. His first argument, as we have seen, is empirical: we have to infer from the kinds of lives people appear to live right up to the end that they die as sinners, and that is reinforced by the scriptural themes that many are called but few are chosen, and that Christ is both Redeemer and Judge. And now we must introduce what in the special context of the North African Church was perhaps an even more compelling theological datum: the necessity of baptism for salvation and the forgiveness of sins. Clearly many are not baptized; therefore, the argument runs, many are not saved. Even if Augustine had persisted with the slightly more generous idea which he introduced in his work *On Baptism* (4.22.29) (perhaps as late as 405/6) in discussing the case of the penitent thief, that even without baptism not only martyrdom but explicit conversion ('fidem conversionemque cordis') is sufficient for salvation, that would still have left a huge number in 'outer darkness'. For Augustine understands 'conversion' as a specific belief in Christ – which, as he often notes himself, is only possible for those who have heard of him. Further, it is not enough just to have heard; *pace* the Donatists,⁵⁴ a specific adherence to the universal Church as the body of Christ is demanded. Thus God's apparent demand for baptism and Church membership seem to spring naturally from his arbitrariness about salvation – unless baptism and Church membership is the only option God *could* offer: a possibility which Augustine might have had good reason to take seriously.

⁵⁴ The Donatists are parochial; they think the real Church is more or less limited to Africa; but 'securus iudicat orbis terrarum' (*CEpParm.* 3.4.24).

In his account of salvation Augustine presents a theological counterpart to his thesis of the solidarity of fallen man in an historical Adam, namely the solidarity of the saved in an historical Christ – interpreted as the solidarity of those consciously, knowingly and deliberately admitted to baptism and the eucharist in the Catholic Church, and living up to their calling. Augustine knows, and quotes (*On Baptism* 4.17.24), the famous text of Cyprian (*Letter* 73.21) that there is no salvation outside the Church ('salus extra ecclesiam non est'). In his view, if Catholic baptism and the eucharist were not necessary, it calls in question the very necessity of the Incarnation which is 'applied' through these means. As we might put it, could not God have saved mankind (or some of it) in some other way? We considered the solution that God had an obvious option: he could have made us already 'in peace'. Augustine rejects that because the salvation and divinization of man can come about only as the end-product of the Incarnation of God, and in bringing about the Incarnation God achieves – for the second time – the best of all possible worlds. If there had been a better way to save mankind, God would have known it, but what better way could be conceived than adoption as his sons? Yet just as we cannot be all one in Adam unless there was an Adam, so we cannot be one in Christ unless Christ himself has lived on earth as a man. But even this does not solve the problem, for not only is Christ free from original sin, he also is 'predestined' not to sin (*Predestination of the Saints* 15.31).⁵⁵ Why then could Adam not have been so predestined? Augustine's answer is that it was better that he could not be. He had a better destiny; he is not yet a God-man until he is saved in Christ.

If the general outline of Augustine's explanation of the mechanics of divinization can be thus identified, then (once again) the fall of Adam seems desirable, if not essential, if God's best purposes for his 'image' are to be fulfilled – but we have still failed to confront the problem of the apparent arbitrariness of grace itself. Could the sheer irrationality 'built in' to all that is other than God, which is certainly a necessary condition for the fall, itself point us towards an explanation? At first glance it seems implausible that creaturely 'irrationality' is not merely a condition but even the explanation of God's selectivity; that might indeed seem to leave the God of the Christians 'cruelly weak', ominously like the God of the Manichaeans.

⁵⁵ Cf. *DDP* 24.67–68, *De Trin.* 4.13.17; with Bernard (1964) and M. J. Chéné in *BA* (1962), xxiv, 821–824.

In an earlier chapter we saw that Augustine comes close to finding the fall of Adam inevitable,⁵⁶ though not logically so, because, as he suggests in texts which range chronologically from *The Nature of the Good* to *On Marriage and Concupiscence* and the *City of God* (14.13),⁵⁷ the possibility of sin in man is an inevitable concomitant of the creation of an independent being from nothing: 'A nature cannot be degraded by a vice of the will (*vitio voluntatis*) unless it is made from nothing. That it is a nature is the result of its being made by God, but that it falls away from what it is is because it is made *de nihilo*' (*City of God* 14.13).

Although Adam's fall seems to be 'almost inevitable', its near-inevitability in no way diminishes his guilt (*Incomplete Work* 5.39). Adam's fall is the star instance of God's bringing good out of evil. God did as well as possible in creating Adam, giving him every possible opportunity to function freely in the path of righteousness – and foreseeing his Redemption. When Adam fell, he fell in full knowledge (*City of God* 14.11), and by free choice, and he is thus justly punished by God. But the 'necessity' of the fall (in God's plan) does seem to have entailed the 'necessity' of the Incarnation, in that since it was a man who fell, it must be another man (Christ Jesus) who is the agency of the restoration of man not to the state of Adam – from which he now *knows* he could fall again⁵⁸ – but to beatification, to the better state of heaven. And by virtue of this beatification the best possible world is secured, though this time there could be no repeat performance. Nothing 'better' than the Incarnation could be given by God. Finally, if the Incarnation is 'necessary', then physical incorporation into Christ seems 'necessary' too for those who will be saved. Yet if Augustine's solution to the problem of God's apparent arbitrariness is that we *must* be incorporated into Christ in baptism if we are to be saved, why did God not provide for the baptism of all, or at least the opportunity for baptism for all? Certainly he has not done so, and the problem of arbitrariness might thus seem to have been pushed a stage further back rather than resolved.

Thus, for Augustine, if Jesus is to be a man, he must be born among men, and plainly, if he is to be the Redeemer, he must be born among fallen men. If God's omnipotence is to prevail in bringing good out of

⁵⁶ See pp. 106–108 above. In the *Exultet* for Holy Saturday we hear 'O certe necessarium Adae peccatum'.

⁵⁷ Cf. *OpImp.* 5.60 and 5.39, where Augustine notes not that everything created from nothing can sin but that everything which can sin is created from nothing.

⁵⁸ Even the good angels might fall like Satan if unsupported by God, according to *OpImp.* 5.58.

nothingness and the evil of sin, then the 'results' of Adam's sin have to include the appearance of men better than Adam, though the only possible improvement on Adam is a 'man' unable to sin. Thus God, who originally made man 'very good', perfects him by making him both a man and in Christ more than a man, an 'adopted' son of God. Thus, paradoxically, the divine status which fallen man attempted to grasp for himself is granted to the elect, uniquely and undeservedly, by God. But this best possible outcome *could* only have been brought about by the two-stage process of the fall and consequent redemption of man. Without evil, good could not be brought out of it. Good surpassing evil – a second creation – is better than the goodness of innocence; yet in the first stage God could only create innocence, with no admixture of evil in the nature of Adam.

THE VISIBLE CHURCH AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

Even if the Incarnation is 'necessary', is there more to be said about why Augustine holds that membership of the visible Church (with only a very few possible exceptions) is a necessary, though not a sufficient condition of the salvation which can only come about through Christ? Or have we what looks like a supplementary 'arbitrary' decision of God to do it that way, thus guaranteeing the seemingly unimportant consequence that many more are 'lost' – since an arbitrary desire to save only a few is expressed in an arbitrary decision that alone among the baptized can the saved be found?

Attempts to answer these questions involve considering the 'communal' side of our individual human character. In examining Augustine's account of our 'communal' sin in a previous 'communal' life 'in Adam', a life not specifically our own, we emphasized that part of what he hopes will be explained by his theory of the fall of the 'common' soul in Adam is the phenomenon of a common 'humanity' in which we individuals participate, having as it were as seed within us a humanity which is a common ingredient and source of 'solidarity'. It was in virtue of that common participation that we all fell in Adam, so that it is necessary that the common humanity be reassembled in a new unity in the new Adam, that is, in Christ. But not simply in Christ's person: more specifically in Christ's continuing body, the Church. Thus our 'wholeness', our singleness of heart, can only be produced and nourished within the Church. A person baptized but living outside the Church is like a perfectly formed but amputated hand.

What then is the salvific community? For Augustine it can only be the *Catholica*, the Catholic Church throughout the world. Non-membership of that community entails non-attainment of the advantages of the community, while deliberate separation from the Church is nothing more than a disastrous refusal to be 'communally' healed. That is why the breach of unity is the most terrible feature of the Donatist 'church' or faction,⁵⁹ the *pars Donati*. Now although Augustine may have been tempted, especially in his early Christian days, simply to identify the visible Church with the Body of Christ, we have already seen something of how reflection on the composition of that body introduced important modifications to his position. These modifications were apparently reinforced by his enthusiastic reading of the oddly anti-Donatist theory of the Church formulated by Tyconius, a Donatist rejected by the Donatists themselves.⁶⁰

In Tyconius' third Rule – often noted not to be a rule at all but an essay on God's promises and the Law (*De promissis et lege*)⁶¹ – Augustine found an assertion of justification by faith and not by works, but it was justification in accordance with God's knowledge of man's faith, of the kind which Augustine himself abandoned when he wrote his replies to Simplicianus. Yet although Tyconius' view of faith is that of the earlier Augustine rather than the later, the two theologians were engaged with similar problems, and at least in their emphasis on justification by grace reaching similar conclusions. Furthermore, especially in Tyconius' first Rule on 'The Lord and his Body', Augustine discovered a theory of the Church which greatly influenced his own speculations on the City of God. Rejecting the Donatist notion of the Church of the pure, Tyconius argued that the visible Church on earth is itself a mixed body, partly the body of the Lord and partly the body of Satan. Augustine developed the theme further, insisting that, although our communal self is to be satisfied and amended within the Church, the Church itself becomes a necessary but not a sufficient instrument of salvation. It is the body of Christ, but in the world it can also enfold another kind of body, for

⁵⁹ On the validity but inefficacy of Donatist sacraments (and on Augustine's appropriation of various Donatist themes in this connection), see Wright (1987).

⁶⁰ In *Ep.* 41.2 of 396/7 to Bishop Aurelius of Carthage, Augustine writes that, as often before, he wants to know Aurelius' view of Tyconius' *Liber Regularum*. On Augustine's reading of Tyconius, see A. Pincherle, *La formazione teologica di Sant'Agostino* (Rome 1947), 185–188 and TeSelle (1970: 180–182), with the caveats of Babcock (1979: 67–74). Cf. also Fredriksen (1988: 99–101).

⁶¹ Since P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, 7 vols. (Paris 1901–1923) v, 182–185, cited by Babcock (1979: 68).

many are called and few are chosen. Those baptized are on the right road, but like the traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho, they may be mugged en route (*Sermon* 131.6).

Nonetheless it is through membership of this mixed body, which is nevertheless the living and continuing body of Christ, that men can first be purged of original sin in baptism, and secondly, through the sacraments and the general opportunity for Christian living, be given the grace to persevere to the end. It may seem as if by thus more or less restricting the channels of grace to this mixed body, the Church, Augustine is now unnecessarily restricting the workings of the divine omnipotence itself, which we have elsewhere seen him so eager to defend. Perhaps Augustine's view of the ecclesiology of salvation indicates a too casual acceptance of early Christian (especially North African) habits of mind, but in two respects already noted he has gone beyond such uncritical acceptance. He declines to divide mankind into us and them – we being the Church – since the Church itself is divided into the elect and the rest. Secondly, his notion of incorporation, first into Adam, and then into the body of Christ in the Church, is a theologically elaborate way of explaining the fall and restoration of that element in each individual person which is not individual but shared with the mass of humanity. Moreover, his claim that we are saved not only *through* the Church, but also physically *in* the Church, is predicated on the view that no one else could 'stand in' for our *individual* membership in the human community. Yet that theological explanation is itself open to objection: Christ, it may be said, has already stood in for us. To that Augustine would counter that the logical implication of such a reading of the Incarnation would be that it does not matter whether *anyone* belongs to the visible Church at all. In fact, he would continue, mankind is saved, but individual men must be purified one by one (*The Trinity* 4.2.4).

Augustinian man is, in the special sense we have discussed, a social and corporate animal; Augustine is certainly not a 'particularist'. Sometimes it has been proposed that, in his account of the Church, he only wants to maintain that, if anyone is saved, he is saved through Jesus Christ. Of course, that is the main plank of his position. But his proper insistence that Christianity is an historical religion or it is nothing leads him to an admittedly literalist insistence that, since all are guilty, only those who directly and 'historically' pass into the body of the Christian ecclesial community by a liturgical act, who are reborn in the Church's womb in the waters and the white robe of

baptism, could be 'candidates' for salvation.

As with Augustine's concept of divine justice, to which we have referred above, so here with his notion of our understanding of God's plan for the salvation of the elect, we are confronted with an ultimate unintelligibility, perhaps embedded in the ultimate unintelligibility of a man's fall into evil and nothingness itself. Yet merely to assert, as Augustine often does, that God's nature is ultimately beyond our understanding, is inadequate comment on the fact that when God has chosen to make himself clearer to us, for example in the Scriptures, we still find his actions unintelligible to the point of clashing with our most fundamental notions of intelligibility.

Furthermore, in the final analysis, it is probably true that Augustine's most basic reason for holding that the saved must be limited to an unidentifiable group of Church members is to be found in his analysis of baptism as more or less the only path to the forgiveness of our sins (*The Soul and Its Origin* 1.11.13). That insistence leads him to deny the obvious meaning of scriptural texts, as we have seen, and thus to cut down a source of knowledge about God's nature, and this despite the fact that for Augustine that source derives somehow from God himself, and therefore has all the marks of divine rather than of merely human invention, an authentic source of the very faith which Augustine seeks to understand.

We conclude that Augustine lacks the conceptual resources to distinguish omnipotence from arbitrariness in God and thereby compromises the workings of the power of God's love, itself a peculiarly Augustinian divine attribute. With his inadequate account of omnipotence he combines an ingenious but incomplete account of baptism to produce – for reasons which are much more than reducible to the historical practices of the North African Church – the ultimately incoherent account of salvation which 'Augustinianism' designates. To escape from his difficulties he needs at least a more powerful analysis of omnipotence and a substantive thesis about the baptism of desire.

Can we probe Augustine's tragic dilemma further by returning once again to his view of the exact purposes of Christ's coming to earth as a man? Perhaps the extraordinary concreteness of his assessment will in itself be enlightening. A passage of *On Nature and Grace* (4.4),⁶² written in about 415 in direct reply to Pelagius, sums up

⁶² Noted by A. H. Armstrong, *St Augustine and Christian Platonism* (Villanova 1967), 58 in an emotional discussion.

Augustine's theory of just condemnation as well as of the role of the Saviour:

Those who are not freed by it (that is, by the grace of Christ's blood), whether because they were not yet able to hear or because they were unwilling to obey, or even because, since by reason of their age they were unable to hear, they did not receive the washing of new birth, which they could receive and by which they would be saved, are altogether justly condemned; for they are not without sin, either because they drew it from their origin or because they added to it by their bad behaviour . . . The whole mass, therefore, is liable to punishment, and if all were given the punishment of damnation which is owing to them, they would, without doubt, not be given it unjustly.

Augustine has been described as 'par excellence a penologist',⁶³ and this disturbing but informative passage from *Nature and Grace* easily provokes such a judgement. He envisages fallen man as locked or glued together in a chaotic and evil lump from which individuals can be prized free in joining a different kind of body, that of the Incarnation. For the sacrifice of Christ's body, as we have seen, is viewed in two aspects: God's justice is somehow satisfied and men are able to join the new divine unity. They do this by imitation of the example of Christ, by sharing in his humility and his suffering, and by the change of 'will' which, in some circumstances, will result from the physical and certainly – in Augustine's sense – 'personal' connection with Christ in the eucharist. Of the manner of this progress of the soul, suffice it to say that while in his earlier days Augustine is more liable to emphasize the following of Christ as an example, the sacramental, and therefore inevitably baptismal, approach grows ever stronger in his anti-Donatist and anti-Pelagian writings. It seems that this is usually the only way by which the inspiration of God's love can be kept alive, and without this love we cannot be virtuous. From the time of the early work on *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* Augustine had emphasized that right action (which would include religiously right action) is only perfected by right belief and the love of God. The 'historical' account of the fall of Adam and the consequentially and prior planned redemption by Christ led him to hold that this right belief and love of God had to be conscious, deliberate and explicit in each historical individual who is saved.

As we have seen, at least part of the explanation of that historical thesis is unconnected with Augustine's problems with omnipotence.

⁶³ T. Allin, *The Augustinian Revolution in Theology* (London 1911), 129, cited by Bonner (1984b: 508).

Church membership, as conceived by Augustine, is the theologically and psychologically appropriate mechanism for human salvation. It is appropriate that 'social' and 'communal' beings should be redeemed socially, and membership in a corporate body is appropriate for the redemption of that part of us which is not just 'our own life'. We need to be reformed and glued back together as members of the new Adam. Critics, therefore, can never accuse Augustine of not taking the solidarity of mankind seriously, though they may worry that his literalism is a shadow of his long-abandoned materialism, given new life, perhaps, by his concern for the unclassical doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

Even beyond this awareness of human solidarity, what remains at the end of Augustine's Christian life, as at the beginning, is an overwhelming sense of the importance and reality of human wrongdoing, both in itself and in its consequences, and a claim that as a result of that wrongdoing it is just if the scope of God's mercy is restricted. In itself that emphasis on human evil is a proper counterweight to the classical dogma of human perfectibility, for Augustine understood – rather than merely stated – that it is characteristically human to be capable of vice as well as of virtue. Yet it seems that in his eagerness to correct an excessive classical optimism he was drawn into errors both exegetical and philosophical which can be summed up in his extraordinary and ultimately unintelligible limitation of the love of God. Augustine himself always thought of paradoxes as a challenge, and it seems that in his treatment of the paradox of God's love and God's justice he left much unfinished business. That claim, at least, he would have been the first to concede.⁶⁴ It is ironic to observe that in the case of love the unfinished business is in an area of his thought where the harmony of Christian belief and 'Platonic' theories of love as inspiration is a constant and powerful feature of his moral and spiritual universe.

Among non-Pelagians, especially the monks of Hadrumetum in Africa and in Provence who were concerned about Augustine's theory of predestination, it was not the small number of the saved which was the main source of anxiety but the belief that, if God had decided in advance who is to be saved, there is no point in preaching, or in living a monastic life, or in tolerating the rebukes of one's

⁶⁴ Augustine regularly makes a distinction in what he says between what is 'of the Church', which his readers should accept, and what is merely his own, for which they should pardon him: *DVR* 10.20; *De Trin.* 15.28.51 (on the Trinity itself).

abbot.⁶⁵ That anxiety, again, involved a version of what the Stoics used to call the 'Lazy Argument': if I am ill, there is no point in seeing a doctor, for if I am going to get better, I shall get better anyway. Like his Stoic predecessors, Augustine had little difficulty in disposing of that kind of sophism. If one is predestined to be saved, it will be through such exercises as those of the monastic life – or another Christian form of life – and so one should perform them faithfully. The consequences of not doing so will be lethal, and will so demonstrate that one was not predestined to salvation, and the good Christian, as also a good Platonist, will love to carry them out.

⁶⁵ Cf. Brown (1967), 399–401.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Augustinus redivivus

You are known throughout the world: Catholics honour and esteem you as the man who restored the ancient faith; and, what is a mark of greater glory, all heretics hate and denounce you.
(Jerome)

If Augustine were alive today, he would speak as he spoke a thousand and more years ago.
(Pope Paul VI)

It is part of a Catholic disposition to express willingness to accept correction if one is mistaken.
(Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 2.5)

AUGUSTINE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Augustine's body eventually rested in the now obscure Church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro in Pavia, but his influence remained alive and visible. Had he lived longer, he would have continued the contemporary debate about the quality of his own work. Suppose him to have been allowed to return to life in the late twentieth century to write his *Reconsiderations* over again. Suppose that, in so doing, he were not only to update his material where he found it necessary, but to persist with one of the principal objectives of the original work: to leave behind a set of writings from which the enemies of the Church, above all Pelagians of various stripes, could draw no comfort.

One of the reasons for the surviving historical influence of Augustine is that he escaped from his own philosophical past and bequeathed himself, apparently – but only apparently – without such a past, to his Western successors. But if Augustine's philosophical and theological strength derives in part from his comparative intellectual isolation, that isolation contributed in less happy ways to the reception of his writings and to the nature of his influence, both before and after his death.

As a young man Augustine read Cicero and Virgil, and later Plotinus, Tyconius and Porphyry – and thought about them. By contrast, if we may oversimplify a little, many of his successors read just Augustine, against a background of Scripture, and thought about *him*. That, in part at least, is what he must have foreseen when he wrote the *Reconsiderations*. He would be the authority; his views would be canonized as authoritative proof-texts rather than as starting-points for more impartial investigations. A nearly inevitable side effect of such reverence, as we observed at the outset, was the likelihood that Augustine himself would be misread, even tendentiously, so that he might harmonize with someone else's convictions. Notorious cases can easily be recalled: Aquinas, as we mentioned, wanted to find his own Aristotelian theory of the nature of the state and its effects on the individual in Augustine's far more pessimistic and unsettling portrait of even the better forms of fallen human society. For all his foresight, Augustine could not conceive of a Christian thinker being more or less *comfortable* in Christendom.

The fate of the 'pure' Augustinian theories themselves also awaited their social applications. Augustine's arguments for coercing the Donatists and Pelagians were not designed to provide a universal theory of persecution, though it was possible to use them to develop one. Their strengths and weaknesses would have been much better understood if they had been approached critically rather than reverentially by Augustine's successors. For certain tragic features of 'Augustinianism' derive not simply from a reading of Augustine's writings but from an uncritical use of those writings as documents *ex cathedra*; and, although Augustine seems to have foreseen that, and tried to guard against it, it is not surprising that his cautions and warnings were limited to those areas which he himself recognized to be in error, or unfinished business, or just misleadingly formulated. Like the rest of us, Augustine could identify some, but not all, of his own weaknesses. Some were eventually better identified by others, an eventuality which Augustine himself would have acknowledged readily enough. In the Preface to books 2 and 3 of *The Trinity*, intended not only for a 'pious reader', but for an independent reviewer, he insisted that he would rather be right than persuasive. In his 'after-life' he was sometimes forced to be persuasive where he was wrong.

Augustine was a stubborn, even at times a perverse, defender of his own positions, but part of the tragic side of Augustinianism is that his

work was received uncritically for so long – to the point of being treated as virtually a symbol of Christianity itself – that when in the Enlightenment the rebellion against Christianity broke out, its fury was often directed at Augustine in particular, and often fuelled by contempt for Calvinist and Jansenist ‘restatements’ of his positions. The resulting criticisms of Augustine were launched with a mindless and indiscriminating hostility which often persists today, while the power and persuasiveness of many of Augustine’s ideas, and the perspicacity of many of his observations, were ignored in the flood of emotional condemnations let loose on his (and his followers’) excesses in theory and practice.

Against the background of these observations, let us return Augustine to life and assume him to be a critic of his own works who would have learned something both from later philosophical and theological speculation and enquiry and from his own further reflections. Let us, however, allow him sufficient space for only an overview of his revised reflections. Where would he generally want to stand by what he has said, and where would he want to change and innovate? A critic of the late twentieth century might answer differently from his counterpart of a hundred years ago, for a just consensus has been reached that one of Augustine’s great strengths is his power to observe and document the disastrous and terrifying results which come about when men, singly or in groups, are able to grasp at absolute freedom of choice. Intellectuals once dreamed – and persuaded others to dream – that with the development of improved social and educational conditions, the moral behaviour of individuals would likewise improve. On such a view the history of twentieth-century Europe should have been one of moral progress and enlightenment. The SS, the concentration camps and gulags, not to speak of the millions of the aborted and the callousness towards the starving ‘Third World’, have demonstrated the shallowness of that kind of optimism. Augustine’s sombre account of the workings of the ‘earthly city’ looks far more challenging than it did to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century liberal, who thought he had outgrown Hobbes’ similarly ‘Augustinian’ account of the state of ‘nature’. In particular, in this century we have seen star instances of an Augustinian *libido dominandi*, of a sheer lust for power at its crudest: power, said Goering, is my fist on your throat.

Augustine’s reflections on the conditions of human life may often look more plausible than his suggestions about the origins of those

conditions. His observation of the abject misery of much of the human race seems more plausible than his inference that this misery is due to a specific 'original' sin and its concomitant punishment. To say that is to question the theory erected on the observations, not the observations themselves. Of course, we can challenge the observations themselves too, and it is easy to allow that the world is not always as black as Augustine sometimes wants to paint it, and that his pessimism about the educational role of certain forms of human society is far too indiscriminating. Nonetheless, to the middle-class Western liberal's contentment with his material circumstances, social prospects and the moral growth of humanity, our returned Augustine would merely have to retort: tell that to the starving, the homeless and the tortured; their numbers do seem rather large and unlikely to diminish until you change your hearts. Even in the more sheltered and protected parts of modern society Augustine would have no difficulty in pointing to the various 'carnal customs', crazy violence and mass hysteria to which we are regularly (and addictively) exposed on daily news shows or as entertainment. He would have little difficulty in explaining the appositeness (and therefore attractiveness) of black comedy. A commentator on Black Monday's Stock Market collapse observed, in Augustinian language, that 'The market is driven by greed and fear – and today it's fear.'

So Augustine would be quite happy to fight his corner against modern optimism about the present state of human nature, and to insist that, even if one could not tell by observation that it is 'fallen', it certainly behaves *as if* it were fallen. But just as Augustine tried to learn from contemporary thinkers, Christian and non-Christian, the 'schismatic' Tyconius as well as the supposedly orthodox Cyprian, so, looking back on his *explanation* of the world which he had so closely observed, he would be able to isolate a number of areas in which critics, including Catholic critics, have objected to his inferences or simply brought learning to bear of a kind to which he had no means of access. Some of these criticisms might induce him to rethink something of his attitude to 'secular' culture in *Christian Teaching*; we shall return to that.

The areas of concern to which Augustine's critics might redirect him would include the following: exegesis, philosophy, theology: especially the theology of the Church. Naturally these areas are interlocking, but for purposes of exposition they may be treated separately. 'Augustinus redivivus' could hardly object to our scrutinizing

his work in the way in which he himself scrutinized the philosophical 'principles' of the ancient world he replaced. That is the point of this final chapter, though the scrutiny must remain little more than a sketch. Augustine himself would doubtless reply at daunting length and with a great wealth of scriptural quotation.

EXEGESIS

Like all Patristic writers, Augustine treated the Old Testament as a historical document – especially in his most interesting exegetical work such as the literal commentary on Genesis – in a far more literal sense than is now reasonable to take for granted; and that applies especially to the book of Genesis. That is not to say, of course, that Augustine thought of anything biblical as 'merely historical'; indeed the reverse is true. It means in particular, however, that he felt committed to believing that some kind of Golden Age had existed in the past, in the Garden of Eden, and that God's commands as recorded in the Old Testament, as in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, are to be taken literally as historical events. Adam and Eve walked about the Garden (presumably in about 4004 BC), and God gave Abraham the order to sacrifice Isaac.

On the matter of a Golden Age in the past Augustine might reply to his twentieth-century critics, as he did to his contemporaries, that if Adam, or the human race, had not once lived sinlessly and happily, then God created morally inadequate or even sinful beings. Hence he is the author of evil, directly responsible for moral evil. But Augustine is also committed in his writings to the belief that God created Adam in the full knowledge that he would fall, that Christ would be sent as Redeemer, and that the last state of (at least some) men would be far better than the first. Thus if he is prepared to allow that a 'best possible world' permits some kind of progressive development of man's moral nature – implying that what was once the best possible can become what is no longer the best possible – why should he back away from allowing that man's moral journey, his *peregrinatio* to a better 'place', *began* with his 'fallen' condition at the beginning of the human race?

'Augustinus redivivus' could argue that early man was developing capacities for morality which beasts do not possess. The Law, as he had urged sixteen hundred years ago, was handed down when men were sufficiently advanced as not merely to have some dim notion

that there is a difference between right and wrong, but when they were able to understand that difference more and more in moral rather than utilitarian, egoistic or ritually 'effective' terms. That is, with some reference, first indirectly and then directly, to the idea of a moral God, a God who not merely gives commands, but by specifying the basic areas of those commands, indicates something of his own 'moral' and spiritual nature. In thus reformulating his position, 'Augustine' could still hold that we inherit our 'ignorance' and 'difficulty' from earlier stages of our spiritual growth and from the corrupt social conditions which such defective forms of understanding will necessarily perpetuate and from which the human race cannot free itself by its own efforts.

Many factors impeded the historical Augustine from such a view of the past, one of them being his insistence on a historical rendering of the first chapters of Genesis. We know, he thought, that at a particular time a particular individual, called 'Man' (Adam) – an individual, he came to think, who somehow summed up all the possibilities of humanity – was created with full knowledge of the best life for man, and the capability of claiming it for himself. Without the 'literal' reading of Scripture to support it, the notion that our universal sinfulness implies not only a 'universal' sin and punishment, but also an earlier quasi-perfection of man would lose much of its persuasiveness. Augustine could then be less inhibited about seeking an alternative explanation of the miserable features of our human condition and the universal moral weakness and sinfulness with which we are familiar.

On the other hand, as 'Augustinus redivivus' would be quick to recognize, the loss of a historical Adam would also require a new explanation of a quite different feature of humanity: our common sense of identity and 'solidarity'. But alternative theological explanations could be developed on a genuinely Augustinian base. If we are all, in some way, in the image of God, we are in that very respect fundamentally similar in character, and have evolved in a fundamentally similar way, whether there be one Adam or many. The phrase 'our common humanity' need not be reduced to a merely sentimental cosiness or a symbol of our whistling in the dark, while the dark side of the similarity of the human race would lie not in our common and inherited sin, but in our common and inherited *liability* to sin derived from our 'naughtiness' (as a creation *ex nihilo*) – a fruit of our similar development to be understood as something like the *concupiscentia*

which the historical Augustine powerfully described for the benefit of Pelagians, and which 'Augustinus redivivus' could cheerfully reassert. But any such moves would also run up against Augustine's understanding of baptism in ways which 'Augustinus redivivus' would have to consider under the general rubric of theological updating.

A literal treatment of Genesis involves more than difficulties about human sinfulness. It exacerbates Augustine's problems about the 'moral' aspect of divine commands and punches holes in his account of moral norms which can apparently be breached in instances of the incomprehensible but just judgements of God. The story of the sacrifice of Isaac may be taken as typical, and it is the one which has perhaps had the most disturbing and devastating afterlife – Mill's denunciation is well known¹ – but Augustine also finds in his treatises on lying that the holy women who discover the infant Moses – not to mention other Old Testament figures – are economical with the truth in ways that embarrass his general theory. Sometimes that embarrassment is reinforced by Augustine's strong awareness of the rightness of Church practice which appears to contradict his norms. Lying, especially in matters of religion, he holds to be wrong, but yet there seem to be scriptural instances of it; suicide is self-murder, but what about Samson? And Church authorities have approved of nuns killing themselves to avoid rape. In such cases Augustine seems to have evaded his difficulties by letting assumed and specific divine commands overrule his preferred moral theory, and by accepting that Scripture and Church tradition give clear indications of when such unusual commands of God have occurred. There is more wrong with this than that it opens the door to future abusive claims to have received a special divine sign to authorize acting in what would otherwise be an unchristian fashion.

'Augustinus redivivus' would be able to avoid at least some of these problems with the help of modern techniques of biblical exegesis, used in good faith to clarify scriptural texts and thus 'understand the faith', rather than as devices for rationalizing away unwelcome theological possibilities; and perhaps he could apply similar modes of thinking to the activities of the Church and of its devout members. He could preserve without difficulty a historical Abraham, bred in a world where it is religion to pay back, in a literalist sense, to God what God

¹ For a good modern treatment, see N. Kretzmann, 'Abraham, Isaac and Euthyphro: God and the Basis of Morality', in *Hamartia: The Concept of Error in the Western Tradition*, eds. D. V. Arieti, L. P. Gerson and E. Stump (New York and Toronto 1983), 27–50.

has first given, and so, intending to sacrifice his son, believing – but not knowing – that God commanded him to do so. Thus the story of the sacrifice would be read not as God changing his mind about sacrifice, or testing Abraham's faith in a peculiarly callous way, or about Abraham being willing to kill the precious and innocent son directly under the justification of a genuinely divine command, but as a turning point in the growing awareness of God's chosen people of the true nature of the sacrifice due to God.

Human sacrifice was, indeed, widespread among Semitic and other peoples, and thus presumably in the 'world' of 'Abraham' himself; it came to be rejected by the Jews as their understanding of God's nature developed. For, although God theoretically would have the power to give the order for such a sacrifice, his nature, as they began to understand it, would rule it out. Improved exegesis would thus help 'Augustinus redivivus' to begin a serious remodelling, or rather a serious first analysis, of his notions of omnipotence. As the theory of inherited sin (rather than inherited sinfulness) looks weaker when divorced from the historical account of a perfect Adam in the Garden, so easy Christian authorization for directly killing the innocent (at least in private life) becomes less plausible when deprived of an apparent exemplar justified by an historical divine command. Of course, in the matter of Abraham and Isaac, the theological claim about man's putting the things of God first and being *willing* to sacrifice what he holds most dear will survive – as will the claim, in the case of Adam, about the solidarity of the human race in God's image. What will be changed will be our (and Augustine's) understanding of the nature of the God who is to be put first, the nature of the *Deus Christianorum*.

If the exceptions to moral rules caused by direct divine command are thus removed, Augustine's basic moral theory will become more consistently anti-consequentialist, or at least we can say that there will be no circumstances in which an end, apparently given by divine command – that is, pleasing to God – ought to be pursued without due scrutiny of the means to that end; and if otherwise unacceptable means are to be used, at least some justification other than a crude divine command theory (God just does want this to be done) must be found. We have shown that Augustine seems to suggest that in public life (in the life of the individual in his social, non-familial capacity) there is a need for consequentialism. The removal of problems caused by literalist scriptural exegesis will simplify the evaluation of Augustine's

public morality. He will be able to scrutinize his attitude to public behaviour unacceptable in private life in terms of his general theory of the nature of public life – the strengths and weaknesses of which we have already considered – without the distraction of further problems introduced by exceptional divine commands recorded in Scripture or in the tradition and practice of the Church.

'Augustinus redivivus' would, I think, wish to adopt the exegetical principle that one cannot take the same attitude to the historicity of the Old Testament as one takes towards the New, nor can one's attitude to the Old Testament be uniform throughout all of its length. This would bring him (and us) to a wider and possibly very fruitful question. Augustine assumed a Golden Age in the past but, in the majority of his Christian life, an even more golden one in the future. So a development of man beyond Adam, beyond the past which must be undone, is already possible. Even in his theory that the Old Testament prefigures the New Testament (and that the New fulfils the Old) there is a developmental side, since, through the coming of Christ, what was merely prefigured is expressed clearly and directly.

Augustine, indeed, should even say 'more and more directly', for he knows that there are degrees of opinion, and therefore in a sense a development of received doctrine even among the Christians of the patristic age. He himself, when charged with introducing novel theories about grace and predestination, was able to cite a little 'traditional' evidence, both from the practice of the Church in its prayers and liturgy and in baptizing 'for the forgiveness of sins', and from the thought of various heroic figures of the past: Ambrose, say, or Cyprian. Looking back on his own work after 1600 years, he would recognize – even if he did not recognize it during his lifetime – that his theories may have been adumbrated by Ambrose or Cyprian but that the implications which he himself drew from the words of Ambrose and Cyprian had certainly not always been drawn or even intended by their original authors.

There would thus be a parallel between the development of Christian consciousness about saving grace and the development of Jewish consciousness from the Old to the New Testament (and within the Old Testament itself) about the overall understanding of the workings of God and his Providence. We see in Augustine's own varying attempts to interpret Genesis a development of the 'literal' commentary at the expense of the allegorical. Certainly if 'Augustinus redivivus' were to use developmental principles of exegesis, the role of

allegory would be further played down (though with no necessary loss of the wider spiritual sense of Scripture) at the same time as the literal interpretation was invigorated with a more scientific historical knowledge. For if the darkness through which God is seen is gradually lightened (substantially so in the New Testament as compared with the Old), then the need to find a more complete revelation within the Old Testament is superseded. Moreover, were Augustine to apply an at least analogous principle to the New Testament itself, he would still not need to deny that this more or less datable body of material includes all truths necessary for salvation; all he would commit himself to would be the belief, which is indeed already implicit in his treatment of theological themes, that even if all necessary truth is to be found in the New Testament, the process of understanding that truth will be cumulative and continuous until the life of man 'under grace' gives way, at the end of time, to the life of man 'in peace', and further that this is God's intent, manifest in Christ's words that 'The Spirit will lead you into all truth.'

PHILOSOPHY

After Augustine had been pressed into the priesthood in Hippo in 391, he requested time off from his new duties to study the Scriptures, since from now on he was to make scriptural evidence the touchstone of truth. Scripture was to be a check on the unauthorized reflections of secular philosophy; yet, he was convinced, it would never lead to indefensible and irrational theories in philosophy itself. If his methods of exegesis are to be revised, partly at least along the lines we have briefly sketched, it is inevitable that this revision will affect certain of his more strictly 'philosophical' claims, for his 'philosophy' is in a sense empirical: it depends on using two identifiable sources of evidence.

The first source resides in our ability to inspect the world in which we live in as careful and 'scientific' a manner as possible. That will lead to very specific and in themselves non-religious claims about the nature of man's present life, about his lust for power, his competitiveness, his inability to accomplish what he remotely sees as right, his constant production of evil even in the course of the pursuit of the good, as for example: wars may be just, but they are obviously also productive of misery for those involved. (That in itself does not mean that they should not be fought.) Moreover, among adults at least (leaving aside the theory of original sin), there are no innocents; though some have

less opportunity to be vicious, or have a less unfortunate, more protected and less tempted past. Or it may be that one has become too tired to be vicious, or that a new vice has suppressed another, more obvious one. 'I have often observed', Augustine once wrote to a pious widow, 'out of personal experience, that with the decline of sexual lust, avarice increases' (*The Good of Widowhood* 20.26).

Augustine's second 'empirical' source is the data provided by Scripture and Church tradition. That too is evidence, and is the raw material of theorizing. To know the origin of the soul, Augustine tells us in his later works, is not necessary for salvation, but that does not stop him constantly attempting to understand it. The basic truth that man is saved is given by God; the understanding of it is a matter for progressive, and inspired, thinking within the Christian community. Once that distinction is made, a number of theories, perhaps of secular origin, may be applied to the scriptural data, so long as they do not conflict with it.

In *Christian Teaching*, at least, Augustine offered a rather narrow account of which secular sciences are likely to be of much use to the Christian, for as we have already observed, Christian theology is narrowly conceived in terms of what is obviously and immediately relevant to salvation. That harsh and influential assessment was in part a reaction to an earlier project, with which Augustine had been concerned at Cassiciacum and Tagaste, to Christianize the manuals of rhetoric, dialectic and other secular sciences: a project which also, despite *Christian Teaching*, had a great impact on the Middle Ages. 'Augustinus redivivus' would probably not want to go back to those manuals. He would recognize that that particular attempt – designed to satisfy the dilettantism of an élite – to pour new wine into the old wineskins of an over-formalized set of late antique academic disciplines was seriously defective (cf. *Reconsiderations* 1.6). Some of the materials of that curriculum, however, might be retrieved and embedded in a new educational framework.

In his reassessment of the educational scene 'Augustinus redivivus' could recognize the implications of an historical fact already noticed. In his own lifetime he had come to believe that his successors would read Augustine where he himself had read Plotinus, Cicero, Tyconius, Virgil and Sallust, in addition to 'Catholic' works. Historically he was largely correct about that, as we have seen, but the results were often unfortunate. If in *Christian Teaching* Augustine taught that a narrow prescription of studies was quite adequate for the Christian thinker,

he had forgotten about his own experience, or rather he had assumed, naturally, that the set of positions he had eventually reached – via Cicero, Mani, Plotinus, Paul and the rest – could be handed on by readings largely made up of the Scriptures alone and the ‘Catholic’ commentators, including himself. He would now see that in the short run this prescription was sufficient but in the long run that it was not. In this recognition ‘Augustinus redivivus’ could identify his own undue trust in authority, his undue confidence in the perspicacity and goodness of Catholicism in the *saeculum*, and beyond that a far-reaching psychological error on the part of his historical self. The experience of Augustine’s ‘pupils’, in his own or in later generations, could not be that of Augustine himself – not even if they knew, as some of them did, Augustine’s conclusions to his own problems. In default of such experience blind alleys are unavoidable, are indeed often worth going down. It is not always possible to know that an alley is blind until one has observed – at or near the other end – that there is no way out. In the more or less homogeneous society in which Augustine’s works lived for their first thousand years, this problem presented itself only on the margins of intellectual life. It is the continuing value of Augustine’s works in a pluralist society like our own which makes it important. In the face of intellectual challenges which cannot be suppressed by force, the mere authority of a text (even a respected text) will guarantee neither its acceptability nor even its comprehension. Hence to defend himself, and to allow other Augustinians to defend themselves and him, ‘Augustinus redivivus’ will recognize a much wider culture of unscriptural and non-ecclesiastical sources than he conceived to be necessary in *Christian Teaching*.

‘Augustinus redivivus’ would be too intelligent to overlook such an obvious challenge from contemporary culture. For ‘Augustinus historicus’, too, was in the first instance a man preaching and writing for his own contemporaries, albeit a man whose judgement as to his views being taken seriously, indeed quasi-canonically, by many later generations, was correct. As we have seen, when the backlash came, it was like the French Revolution, the more savage for being long delayed.

Thus we can reasonably enquire, beyond having a wider understanding of what is necessary ‘Catholic’ reading, what ‘Augustinus redivivus’ might want to change, or at least to develop, in ‘philosophical’ matters, in the modern sense of the word ‘philosophical’. First and most obviously, he would need to do more with his theory of man. For Augustine the problem of the unity of the human being, of what he

called the *totus homo*, was the problem of the relationship between myself (conceived non-materially) and my body; he explained this as a difference between two substances, one immaterial and the other material. Hence his problems were (and are) twofold: What kind of a relationship can there be between an immaterial and a material substance? If the relationship is integral, how can the soul survive, say, from the death of the body to the Last Judgement (however that is conceived, whether temporally or non-temporally)? To make his task easier in the twentieth century, 'Augustinus redivivus' could make two moves, though he might still reasonably insist that a completely satisfying *solution* to the problem is beyond the 'limits of philosophy'. The first move would be to correct his misreading of a non-dualist tradition with which he had some (but could have had more) familiarity; the second, to ask himself whether at least some (though not all) of his philosophical reasons for dualism had become irrelevant even by the time of his own maturity, say by AD 400.

The non-dualist tradition available to him was, of course, the Aristotelian, though among almost all of his contemporaries Aristotelianism was substantially modified by Platonizing interpretations. But Augustine knows of Aristotle's account of the soul as the form of a living body, and largely on the authority of Plotinus is prepared to dismiss it more or less out of hand. It is unnecessary to go into the historical reasons for this, but he seems to have thought that Aristotle's theory adds up to little more than a claim that the soul is some kind of harmonious arrangement of the bodily parts, a claim which Aristotle himself (as well as Plato in the *Phaedo*) had specifically dismissed.

The historical Augustine would have had at least two strong objections to the 'harmony' theory: first, that it fails to take into account the character of the predicates which we attribute to the soul rather than to the body (justice, for example, and the other virtues); second, that it fails to account, as Plato had already noted, for the fact that I can tell my body what to do, indeed that I can tell it to do what is painful and unpleasant. For it is generally true that a dualistic or 'Platonic' account of the soul is a useful model for explaining moral phenomena, especially the phenomena of moral conflict, and more broadly the impossibility of human relationships outside 'moral space' or a 'moral dimension'. An Aristotelian theory, on the other hand, is more successful in describing the apparently 'metaphysical' unity of the human person, at least when viewed as a 'scientific'

subject: a point which, as we have seen, Augustine has to leave quite problematic, while nevertheless insisting that it is ultimately solvable. Our inability to solve it, he preferably (and perhaps rightly) supposes, may be a function of that fallen state itself which presents for our inspection only a *fragmented* self, while the unfragmented self is only a 'memory'.

In common with other Platonists, the historical Augustine provided a fine account of certain aspects of our moral nature (which necessarily cannot be left out of an account of *man* and which for the Platonist form the most important part of any account of man), but at the cost of generating startling paradoxes about personal identity. Sometimes he fudged these by speaking too imprecisely of our loss of simplicity after the fall. For talk of simplicity raises the question of *what* should be simple, and in that connection Augustine is inclined to answer 'the soul' or 'the heart', thus giving only a moral answer to what is both a moral and a metaphysical question. It would be characteristically bold of 'Augustinus redivivus' to insist that that is more or less all that can be said.

In political philosophy, however, 'Augustinus redivivus' could push his views of the role of the earthly city a little further. Certainly he would retain and even, in view of recent history, strengthen his hostility to earthly utopianism, and he would fight hard for his claim that social corruption and new forms of slavery pervade all human institutions, even the Church. But he would have to question his assumptions about the relationship between churchmen and the Church itself with the aid both of contemporary advances in psychology and of stricter adherence to his own theories. For, as we have seen, while the historical Augustine was well aware, despite moments of exuberance, of the dangers of sinful pride for those pursuing the technically 'religious' or monastic life, he was less careful about the risks of *libido dominandi* (and of other vices, especially the subordination of means to ends) among the clergy, and especially among those encumbered with the burdens of the Catholic episcopacy. He was too little aware of the difficulty of spotting 'unloving' attitudes among the agents of church-directed acts of coercion, too ready to forget the agent-relative aspect of actions in favour of 'effectively' rooting out evil. He held, as we saw, that clerical (and even Christian) self-scrutiny will eliminate self-deception, or cruelty dressed up as kindness, and thereby made an assumption out of character with his own customary portrait of the 'second nature' of man. Although he

had no theoretical intention of allowing the City of God to be identified with the visible Church, or even with its bishops or other leaders, in practice he slid nearer to doing so than is permissible under his own theory.

If Augustine lived again to reconsider these questions, they would certainly push him further into reconsideration of how far his dichotomy between public and private behaviour, or the behaviour of man *qua* man vis-à-vis man *qua* public office-holder, stands up to moral scrutiny. From this might come revisions of his earlier ideas about the morality of obeying orders, the legitimate application of supposedly divine suspensions of moral rules, and more generally the relationship between moral means and moral ends in public life. But 'Augustinus redivivus' would not need to abandon his intuition that there really are things which the good man must at least *accept* in public life which he would not tolerate in his private life. And he would have to face the resulting difficulty of where the line in public life should be drawn, for unless the good man is to withdraw entirely from the public domain, he must be able to give a rationale for drawing it somewhere. Perhaps further inspection of the 'judgement' of Aristotle's man of practical wisdom would help him in such reconsiderations.

'Augustinus redivivus' must correct (along Augustinian lines) not only Augustine's treatment of the City of God (in the guise of its imperfect and mixed Christian population here on earth), but also his view of the possibly educative role of the 'earthly city' in our everyday lives. As we saw, Augustine offered no support for the 'naturalness' of political society, except in so far as it is a product of fallen nature, but he thinks that it has its uses. These uses, however, seem excessively limited. At least in the *City of God* he holds that the role of the state is merely to impose peace on egregious violence and to control egregious vice. There is no directly educational role for the 'earthly city', since, presumably *qua* earthly, it has nothing good to give. Its role is limited to 'concentrating people's minds' so that they can be taught, preferably by Christians. 'Augustinus redivivus' would have either to enlarge his view of the role of the City of God on earth by an expansion of his rather narrow view of what is to be understood as 'religious' matter, or accept that the earthly city has a wider educational role than he originally allowed. If he took the former option, it would be in line with what we suggested earlier would be his 'reformed' view of 'secular' culture and its inclusion in a wider concept of Catholicism. It would

thus be 'Catholic' as well as (for some) fulfilling to play the violin. If he took the second option, he would have to allow that the secular city *qua* secular has more to offer than he thought, though he could still insist – again on authentic Augustinian principles – on a wary realization that its valuable offerings are packaged with enticing invitations to worship false gods. In either case, he would recognize that his view of human society was as much coloured by his life in the declining Roman Empire as the views of Plato and Aristotle had been coloured by the exuberant and pagan city-state.

As for officials and public servants, is 'Augustinus redivivus' still to suppose that, when exercising their official duties, they are at best merely 'enforcers', that if they do more than suppress, they are acting not as members of the earthly city but of the City of God? He might now wish to admit that some of the implications of his dichotomy between public and private were inadequately worked out, depending as they did on the claim that the imposition of an entirely self-interested (God-contemning) peace is the only possibly helpful role for civil government – and that simply because the earthly city is ultimately corrupt. In fact, Augustine seems to have inferred (falsely), from the fact that the earthly city is ultimately founded on self-love carried to the point of a contempt for God, that *no positive* goods it might promote could be seriously educative, but only perverse. Thus all earthly societies would seem to be equally bad *in practice*, not merely in potentiality. In modifying this excessively apocalyptic thesis, while still maintaining his original principle that every society *tends* towards its finished form, whether divine or diabolical, 'Augustinus redivivus' could recall that he did, in fact, find noble (even though ultimately inadequate) features in pagan societies, and that he did thus allow them an 'educational' role other than their mere ability to deploy force to keep the 'peace'.

For all that, 'Augustinus redivivus' would find no reason to abandon his generally harsh estimate of human or 'humanist' moral successes, or his persistent onslaught on man's habit of divinizing anything rather than God. He could still allow only that man's idolatries will differ at different times of a man's life, in different institutional circumstances, and in different historical epochs. Perhaps some idolatries are worse than others, though who but God can tell? 'Augustinus redivivus' might add that he himself once tended to idolize the 'intelligible' as distinct from the also God-created 'sensible', and in so doing risked the spiritual pride of the Platonists.

If Augustine were required to modify his attitude to exegesis and to develop his analyses of human beings and human society, especially by a more systematic application of some of his own principles, he might conclude that human life is not less, but even more problematic than his historical self had once claimed. He had no time for the reform of many human institutions (such as slavery), at least in part because he thought them unreformable, or that their evils, if suppressed in one guise, will merely reappear in another, like the hundred-headed hydra. Yet his own principles could have told him that that is no reason to decline the attempt at institutional reform. For it does not follow, 'Augustinus redivivus' would admit, taking a bitter Augustinian pill, that because human slavery will always present its darkened face, that that face will always be equally dark (though improvements may indeed fail), nor – and here is the Christian rub – that, intractable though it may prove, attempts to improve it should not continually be made. For the fact that the task is discouraging, since endless, should only provoke the Augustinian, particularly, to pray for perseverance to the end. The reform of institutions appears to involve the same frustrations, and for the same reasons, as the reform of personal lives. Neo-Augustinian man, like the Neo-Augustinian God, will require himself to be as much challenged and thwarted by the one as by the other.

In at least one area of institutional life – and one not unrelated to slavery – 'Augustinus redivivus' will find cause for optimism and hope of further progress: the institution of marriage and beyond that the relationships between men and women and the understanding of the nature of men and women as such. If 'Augustinus redivivus' were freed to undertake a reappraisal of his philosophical past, here would be a body of material to which he should wish to pay special attention. He would now recognize that the nature of the hierarchical structure of marriage may at least in part be socially conditioned rather than divinely decreed, and there is nothing in his principles to prevent him also recognizing that, if there is authority and subordination, it may be either of the male to the female or of the female to the male (depending on needs and circumstances), while in both cases it is the *abuse* of authority and subordination – the *libido dominandi* – which is wrong, not authority and subordination as such. That, 'Augustinus redivivus' will now say, he always recognized in part; his new position is that voluntary subordination *of either party* is from time to time right and Christian, and that the friendship between spouses which is

evidenced in such voluntary subordination is peculiarly expressed and enriched by the shared sexuality of marriage. And, he will add, developing his earlier account of the Resurrection of the body and of the *imago Dei* of Genesis, that men and women can be equally in the image of God *in their souls*, but distinctively as male and female. That is what is symbolized by their complementary and immutable physiological differences, and the understanding we have of God himself is thus not altered but enhanced.

LOVE, GRACE AND MAN'S FALLEN CONDITION

We have noticed how Augustine's problems about predestination can be brought into the sharpest focus if we concentrate on the charge that his mature theory involves him in a contradiction. His conviction about the unredeemed condition of large parts of the human race combines with a murky account of God's omnipotence to produce a theology which fails to do justice to his own theory of God's love. If we assume 'Augustinus redivivus' to be aware of the difficulties about love and omnipotence, we can also assume him to be able to focus on a further tension in his original proposals, related to the problem of omnipotence itself and which we have already identified, which if resolved would further mitigate the harshness and inequity which have plagued Augustine's account of God. This tension lies in the perceived status of fallen man. Normally, as we have observed, Augustine held that after the fall he is mutilated, grievously injured, a morally limping wreck, but that some sparks or traces of his originally noble condition remain. We have also noticed that at times, and especially in influential texts like the *Enchiridion*, this nature appears to be completely dead; however, it is clear that such hyperbole is not to be pressed as Augustine's most considered conviction.

This means that while 'Augustinus redivivus' can insist as firmly as ever that without grace perfection and salvation are impossible, he is not committed as much as he supposed to the view that man of his nature contributes nothing. However, his 'contribution' has to be identified with greater precision. Pelagius emphasized one important point which Augustine underplayed: man was 'originally' good, and has not completely perished; therefore a certain goodness remains. That goodness, Augustine can maintain, achieves nothing without grace, but without grace might it not at least try and fail? What then would be the nature of such an attempt which, if unassisted, would

end in futility? It cannot be humility in the original Augustinian sense, for that is 'active' in that it implies a recognition of the Creator and the gulf between God and man, but perhaps it can be a 'passive' humility in a more 'Platonic' and cognitive sense. What the remains of human nature could contribute, then, would be not positive faith in God, nor even in goodness, but a 'negative' sense that man is inadequate; not yet a realization that Grace gives faith and love, but only that 'Law' does not, as Paul had pointed out and as Augustine had told Simplicianus. Indeed he said regularly that 'Law', written in the heart, makes us aware of what we *cannot* achieve – not that we are worthless (the perversion of the theory to which Augustine and his friends like Evodius and Paulinus sometimes succumbed), but that we cannot be as good as we 'ought' to be. Perhaps 'Augustinus redivivus' could concede that much to the Pelagians: the taste of Socratic self-knowledge, a taste wholly ineffective in itself and even conducive to despair rather than hope and salvation.

As we have seen – and greatly to the enrichment of the Christian tradition – Augustine made full use of the early Patristic tradition of the symbolism of the love of the human soul, seen as female, for God. His language, as is widely recognized, is highly and regularly erotic. The soul is a woman in love, as in the *Song of Songs*, longing desperately for her lover. She cannot compel him to come; she cannot appeal to any obligation on his part; she cannot be happy (except as deluded) without him.

To continue the image, what the Augustinian Christian needs is to be naked before God. Candidates for baptism in Augustine's cathedral in Hippo symbolized this by going down naked to be reborn in the water, but by then they had faith, and their nakedness is thus the nakedness of hope. Platonists too, and many others, conceived of the spiritual life in terms of the stripping off of garments,² above all the stripping off of the 'tunic of love of fame'. But in the Platonic tradition that stripping is a liberation which we can perform for ourselves. Once again 'Augustinus redivivus' can tell the 'Greeks' that what they see they must do they cannot do unaided. Perhaps if the Augustinian soul cannot, on its own, be naked and unafraid except by God's grace, at least she can be naked enough in self-knowledge to recognize her own weakness, even if still unconscious of it *vis-à-vis* the strength of God. Her nakedness then symbolizes no salvation, no

² See J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge 1967), 188–192.

self-motivating coming to God, but a recognition of the pointlessness of life without him and a mute appeal for help. It is therefore better, because more honest, 'Augustinus redivivus' could allow, for her to abandon her clothes and be naked. But it is a nakedness, not of the bridal-chamber of the *Song of Songs*, but rather of the concentration-camp. It is, after all, the historical Augustine who could be struck both by the 'hell of this world' and by the extraordinary beauties within it.

RHETORIC AND THE DANGERS OF THEOLOGY

The most violent and bitter reaction to Augustine's theology has centred, perhaps more than anywhere else, on his account of the nature of God, especially the God of the anti-Pelagian treatises. We have noticed how it is often problems of exegesis which led Augustine to his more notorious theological positions, some of which have suggested horrifying developments; and that there are also philosophical obscurities, particularly about omnipotence, which have further exaggerated the difficulties exegesis has provoked. The Christians of the ancient world, and none more than Augustine himself, insisted that it was above all in their concept of God that they were so much in advance of the pagans. It was the *Deus Christianorum*, the Christian God – a phrase Augustine used in his last reply to Julian (*Unfinished Work* 5.64) – whose revealed nature demands the supersession of classical notions of human perfectibility, of the divinization of the state or of its rulers, or of power in general, and above all classical ideas which diminish in multifarious ways the distinction between man (or the universe) and its Creator. Yet that same *Deus Christianorum* will subsume under himself the world of Forms and objective value demanded by the Platonic tradition and by Platonic love.

Christian theology and Christian attempts to explain the *Deus Christianorum* on the basis of the Scriptures and of writers in the Catholic tradition, as Augustine had it, have developed slowly since his time. The conservatives of one era, like Augustine's, have often become the heretics or schismatics of the next as the development of theology passes them by. In the process of development, errors of thought, judgement and exegesis – some almost inevitable – are common. Moreover, for every error in exegesis or reflection on man or on the life of Christ, a parallel theological error, or error about God, is liable to arise, and such errors will normally be exacerbated by the

ancient habit (of which Augustine is by no means free) of relying on a comparatively small number of proof-texts. It is rarely that an obviously dubious piece of exegesis forms the foundation of an Augustinian theological thesis, but it is less rare to see him settling on a text which confirms (or which he thinks confirms) a theory already formulated elsewhere, and preaching it in season and out. *In quo* (for the Greek *eph' hōi*) *omnes peccaverunt* is, as we have seen, a misleading Latin rendering which Augustine came regularly to misinterpret; *voluntas praeeparatur a Deo* is a text which by no means asserts the precise Augustinian account of God's prevenient grace, though it certainly suggests a theory of prevenient grace doing *something* to the human will.

There is little doubt that had Augustine written less polemical material he might have benefited philosophically and theologically. Not that one cannot write good philosophy while engaging in polemic, but as a polemicist Augustine's training was in rhetoric, and that training left him with the rhetorician's habit of forming dichotomies (often too unnuanced) of his subject matter. Not that dichotomies are useless, as 'Augustinus redivivus' might object. After all, people really are either saved or not: ultimately, that is, either *servi Dei* (slaves of God) or *servi diaboli* (slaves of the devil). One cannot be both moral and immoral at the same time and with reference to the same act. One can, as a Stoic-sounding Augustine would put it, either act through the love of God and neighbour or for some other reason. But it was possible to object against the Stoics (as it is possible to object against many ideologues) that to say that X is simply right or simply wrong is to miss out much of the story; for not only is it possible to do right for the wrong reasons, it is also possible to do right for more or less good reasons. Because all human motives are mixed, there is nothing to prevent some sets of motives from being actually better than others.

Moreover, it is not only in his broad and ultimate identification of the two strictly alternative kingdoms that Augustine's dichotomizing leads him into trouble. Here is another dichotomy: sexual intercourse as he sees it is either for lust or for the deliberate production of children (or perhaps for both at the same time). There is no further possibility. Again, suffering is either for punishment or for correction: all suffering must ultimately be explainable as directed to one or the other. The option that the suffering of particular individuals might at times be neither punitive nor corrective, but merely the bitter result of someone else's sin or ignorance is neglected. The trouble with

dichotomies – and rhetoricians (and sophists) love to impale their opponents on them – is that they force the complexities of the world into an oversimplified pattern.

To deny the usefulness of some of Augustine's dichotomies is not to deny the significance of all of them. Unless that could be established separately in each case, we should merely have generated another kind of fallacy. At his best, indeed especially when reflecting on the ambiguities, beyond human capacity to resolve, of moral and political decision-making, Augustine knows that simple either-ors are frequently misleading. But he often wrote to put down opponents, and for an audience whom he assumed he must persuade to follow authority by means of Christianized rhetoric rather than with stricter forms of argumentation – which, with luck, might come later, if the people can be 'weaned from the breasts' of rhetoric to the heavenly silence of contemplation.³ Hence, Augustine's rhetorical training often led him astray, especially when allied to extremist tendencies of an African tradition going back to Tertullian and the heroic days of the martyrs, and to Stoic moral theory – which Tertullian also found congenial in spite of himself. If Augustine's three greatest works are the *Confessions*, *The Trinity* and the *City of God*, the first two, it should be noted, are hardly polemical at all, while the third, though certainly full of polemic, is so broad and all-embracing that the impact and attendant risks of Augustine's more dangerous rhetorical manner are greatly reduced.

Suppose 'Augustinus redivivus' were able to approximate to that dispassionate look-back at history and at the influence of his own words (and deeds) that one supposes he might attain to in heaven. He would make strong claims for the perennial interest of his observations on human nature, on his time and culture, on the culture of his immediate classical past, and on the nature of God himself. He would also recognize the historical pains and miseries which, owing to his lasting prestige, some of his own theological theories, especially about predestination and baptism, have produced, and the historical persecutions and iniquities for which his attitudes towards the use of force have to some degree been responsible. On seeing all that, he would affirm once again two of the claims he affirmed strongly even in much of his early work, and nowhere more vigorously than in *On Human Responsibility*. On the one hand it is possible for man to have

³ See O'Rourke-Boyle (1990: esp. 133–139).

some understanding of himself, and of the God in whose image his self has been created. On the other hand that understanding is the vision of men (even when assisted by God through Scripture and the Church) who only see through a glass darkly, whose vision is a vision obscured by 'ignorance' and 'difficulty': by their lack of knowledge, above all of knowledge of what is right, and by their inability to act in accordance with even the limited knowledge they possess. 'Augustinus redivivus' would admit that one of the effects of that ignorance and difficulty, and of his own ignorance and difficulty in particular, has been suffering in the 'darkness of human society'. But it is by Augustinian principles that he can make such an admission.

For 'the corruption of the best is the worst' is a Platonic proposition which Augustine applies especially to the fallen angels and to his fellow men. It would follow from this principle that theological (or quasi-theological) propositions are the most dangerous and disastrous if they go astray. Even honest and honourable thinking about God has always brought sinning and trouble to mankind in its train – for if God exists and is not identical with man, then man's view of him is liable always to be mistaken, to become idolatrous, and so dangerous. But if we ask 'Augustinus redivivus' whether that means we should not think about God, since we know it will bring pain and darkness as well as the pleasure of enlightenment, and ask him to consider the question with particular reference to the fact that it is in his defective account of the most important part of his theology – the part also recognized by himself as the most important – namely his account of God's love, that he has himself been found to be inspired, yes inspiring, but still wanting, then we shall find that these are questions to which he will give the same answer, and for similar reasons, as he gave to the question he faced in his own later life as to whether the Christian should hold public office in civil society. Of course he should, says Augustine, and he should know the risks he will run and even the harm he will be liable to do. That, oddly but appropriately enough, is a classical, as well as a Christian theorem, and it is easy to see why Augustine was not only the man who saw through the idolatries of Greco-Roman antiquity; he was also himself, in every unguarded moment, an admirer of the classical hero – just as Plato, whose tradition he had found so vital a medium for his Christian psychology and theology, had been, while suspicious of the moral influence of poets, an admirer of Homer and the 'most Homeric' of the Greeks. For like the ancient thinkers almost to a man – and this

English usage I take, like the Latin *homo*, to include woman – Augustine lived by the inspiration of the Good, or the nearest he could come to it, and was impelled by it to do good at any cost. Imagine Hector, or Socrates, or Praxiteles, or Antigone, or Hipparchia, or Sappho inspired by the Christ-man, Jesus.

APPENDIX I

Porphyry's account of the sentence in the De Magistro

In *The Master* (2.3) Augustine quotes the following line from Virgil:

Si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui.

When Augustine's son Adeodatus is asked how many signs the line contains, he replies Eight – surprisingly if his father is supposed to be availing himself of Stoic theory. Thus he seems to assume that each individual word is a sign but that the verse as a whole, or the proposition [if] *p*, does not signify or refer to anything further, that is, beyond what is signified by each of its parts. Nevertheless, commentators on *The Master* often assume that for Augustine sentences do have some signification beyond that of the individual words of which they are composed, and that Augustine follows, but does not state, let alone defend, a theory to that effect. In fact the commentators are right, but they do not know why they are right.

The theory derives from Porphyry, and Augustine probably acquired his familiarity with it from one of Victorinus' commentaries, either that on Aristotle's *Categories* or that on Cicero's *Topics*.¹ It may be briefly explained as follows: when Porphyry decided, contrary to the view of his master Plotinus, that Aristotelian logic could be put to the service of Platonic metaphysics, he argued precisely that a proposition about the 'ordinary' world, which, prescinding from Platonic metaphysics, appears to make sense, consists of a subject plus a concept (*noēma*, or *ennoia*) which indicates the special and disambiguating features of the subject in each case. (If the concept is a second-order word (like a universal), it may be called an *epinoia*.) Thus the reference of the whole proposition is the same as that of its subject-sign, which acquires a privileged status such as it also appears to enjoy in *The Master*.

¹ The best discussion of the Porphyrian theory is to be found in S. Ebbesen, 'Porphyry's Legacy to Logic: A Reconstruction', in *Aristotle Transformed*, ed. R. Sorabji (Ithaca, NY 1990), 141–171.

Furthermore, Porphyry seems to have linked a distinction between first- and second-order predicates – the latter being descriptions in a sort of metalanguage not of physical objects or events in the ordinary world, but of human intellectual activity in describing that world (the talk of 'universals', 'nouns', 'classes', etc.)² – with an account of fallacies. He called first-order predicates names or expressions of 'first imposition' (*thesis*), while second-order predicates, in his metalanguage, are names of 'second imposition'. Normally, when we speak and listen, we assume that predicates are of first imposition,³ but they may not be. Obviously, if we confuse a predicate of first imposition with one of second, we get a fallacy.

This certainly reminds us of *The Master*, for there Augustine writes (8.24) of a *loquendi regula* when considering a pair of fallacies. The first sophistry is as follows: 'When you utter "lion", a lion comes out of your mouth; a lion is a horrid beast; therefore a horrid beast comes out of your mouth.' Such absurdities seem 'appealing', Augustine suggests, because 'lion' refers both to the word 'lion' (that is, it refers to itself), and to lions, whereas it is a law of speaking (*loquendi regula*) that when we hear a name, we naturally think first that it refers to what it ultimately signifies (that is, that 'lion' refers first to a lion), not to itself.

How does the Porphyrian account of sentence-signification help us to understand our tendency to confuse 'lion' with a lion? Augustine thinks that we can understand this if we consider the other sophism invoked by *The Master*, this time in 7.23. The argument runs as follows: you are human; human is a noun; therefore you are a noun. The fallacy, of course, is similar to the previous one: this time 'human' is confused with human. Having no use/mention distinction available, and no inverted commas, Augustine still suggests that this fallacy is less puzzling than the other, and less likely to direct our mind in a misleading fashion from the sign's being a sign of itself ('human' is a noun; that is, according to Porphyry, a word of second imposition) to its being a sign of that to which it refers. For the word 'noun' itself always and only signifies signs (and not other realities).

At first sight this seems to be of little help, for the sign 'noun', for Augustine, would apparently refer both to itself, that is to the word 'noun' which we may utter (just as 'lion' may refer to the uttered word 'lion') and to the *res* to which 'noun' refers, that is, to a noun. (As in,

² Cf. Porphyry, *In Cat.* 57, 32–33. ³ Cf. Boethius, *In De Int.*² 1.1, pp. 39–40 Meiser.

'I'm uttering the word "noun" to name a noun.') But consider the *regula loquendi* to which Augustine refers. This rule, we have seen, is that when we hear a name, we naturally think of the name as in the first instance referring beyond itself. We might assume, of course, that Augustine is merely appealing to common sense, but that assumption would be mistaken. Philosophically he can do better than that, for, as we have suggested, he almost certainly knew of a quite sophisticated theory of meaning which enables us to *explain* why it is that when we hear the word 'lion' (a word of first imposition), we are much more likely unthinkingly to refer it to a lion than to the word 'lion' – thus leaving ourselves more open to sophistries – whereas we are less likely so to become confused over the word 'noun', which is a word of second imposition, a part of our metalanguage.⁴

The advantage of this account of Augustine's appeal to a Neoplatonic theory is that it makes sense of *The Master*.

⁴ For a similar 'Porphyrian' fallacy, cf. Boethius, *In Cat.* 26 (*CAG* 4.2) 26: 'Socrates is a man; man is a species; therefore Socrates is a species.'

APPENDIX 2

Traducianism, creationism and the transmission of original sin

In a review-article in *IPQ* (1989) of O'Connell's book on *The Origin of the Soul in St Augustine's Later Works* I was puzzled as to why, if Augustine's final position on the origin of the human soul is neither traducianist (the soul as well as the body is handed down from one's parents) nor creationist (individual souls are constantly being created by God), these two rejected hypotheses are still apparently on the table until the end of Augustine's life (e.g. *Incomplete Work* 2.177–181). O'Connell thinks not only that Augustine was unprepared to be too dogmatic, but that as a wary ecclesiastical campaigner he was concerned not to give a handle to dangerous opponents.

Augustine at least 'knows' that our souls all shared Adam's sin, so that what he expresses ignorance about is not 'our' existence 'in Adam', but only how, after existing in Adam, our souls arrived in our present bodies. Yet it is still strange that creationism is not rejected outright, for it implies the making of new (and therefore guiltless) souls. Now it is true, as O'Connell regularly notes, that creationism was a very popular Christian belief outside North Africa. (Both Jerome and Pelagius subscribed to it.) So it may be that, since Augustine can find no knock-down scriptural text or reasoned argument against it, his profession of ignorance merely reflects an unwillingness to condemn a position so widely and traditionally held. Compare his unwillingness to condemn women who had committed suicide to avoid rape, because he knew they had been honoured in the Church as martyrs.

Augustine knows (and tells Jerome in *Letter* 166, for example) that squaring creationism with original sin is peculiarly difficult. He at least is convinced (though all his predecessors may not have been) that the primal sin is a sin of the soul, i.e. pride or self-willed apostasy from God. Of course, those who thought that the primal sin was exclusively caused by the body, or by the soul's presence in the body

(which might otherwise be a necessary but not a sufficient condition of sinning) would have had no difficulty with creationism. But Augustine, despite certain logical problems we have discussed, was not of that opinion.

There is a further complication, and perhaps an obscurity common both to Augustine and to O'Connell. In the third book of *On Human Responsibility* Augustine first presents his famous four theories about the 'origin' of the soul: traducianism, creationism, the fallen-soul theory, and what O'Connell has dubbed the 'sent' theory, whereby souls pre-exist their bodies and are sent down by God to govern them when the time is ripe for the particular body to be born. Of these the 'fallen soul' theory seems to involve a radical ambiguity whereby it is not on all fours with the other three hypotheses. It is not just a theory (as are traducianism and creationism) about how the soul comes into the body; it at least implies a further theory about the nature of the soul itself. A corollary of this is that it might be *combined* with either creationism or traducianism.

In Augustine's later works certain facts about our fallen state are held to be indubitable (e.g. in *Letter* 190.1–4 of 418/9 to Optatus), and of these two are essential: that 'we' are guilty (in or as Adam); that our souls are non-material and cannot be reduced to body. Any theory which can maintain both these contentions and combine them with either traducianism or creationism could be acceptable to Augustine. *Augustine's* principal sticking-point seems to be that he is not persuaded that either combination is safe. For, as we have seen, creationism seems to involve the production of an innocent soul by God – which compromises the doctrine of original sin – but traducianism seems to imply that the soul is handed down, like the body, in (or even as) the material seed. But how can sinfulness (such as pride) be a property of matter? It seems therefore that O'Connell has followed Augustine in not explicating the possible relationships between an account of the fallen soul and the theses of creationism and traducianism.

Creationism, it can hardly be denied, is left on the table almost as a matter of courtesy only. It must be admitted, however, that scholars like Lyonnet (1967), with his spiritual traducianism, and Y. de Montcheuil ('L'hypothèse de l'état originel d'ignorance et de difficulté d'après *De Libero Arbitrio* de saint Augustin', *Mélanges théologiques* (Paris 1946), 93–111), with his more orthodox and quasi-Aristotelian variety, have more, though not enough, evidence from Augustine's

text on their side.¹ There is no doubt that Augustine associates the transmission of 'original sin' with *libido*, particularly displayed in the autonomous action and sensation of the genitals, especially the male genitals. (It was common medical knowledge since Aristotle (*Generation of Animals* 1.727B7)² that while males need complete, reflexive (and for Augustine 'irrational') arousal to accomplish their role in achieving conception, females do not.) After the fall, as we have seen, every child is born as a consequence of *concupiscentia carnis* (*Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.24.27), and that *concupiscentia carnis* is an unavoidable symbol of the rebellion of the 'flesh' against the 'spirit' which we all now experience (*Against Julian* 4.4.34-4.8.44).³

Of the connection between fallen sexual intercourse and the transmission of original sin there can be no doubt; but the manner of that transmission is as, and similarly, obscure as the more general relationship between the *substances* which are soul and body in human beings. Just as soul and body are linked, but we do not know how, so the presence of autonomous movements in erection and orgasm indicates the presence of the 'immaterial quality' of sinfulness to the material seeds which are transmitted. But Augustine *cannot* be an 'orthodox' traducianist because sinfulness cannot be a *property* of seeds, and there is no evidence for Lyonnet's 'spiritual traducianism', which perhaps he should have proposed, but which he would presumably have rejected as ultimately also materialist. Yet it is by the *ratio seminum* (*Unfinished Work* 2.177) that *we* (not just our bodies) are one in Adam.⁴ Augustine says more than that original sin is 'drawn down' and 'propagated' by intercourse. Perhaps hoping for a less 'material' metaphor, he says not only that it is 'caught': a *morbus corporis* like gout (*Unfinished Work* 2.177) – which might be caused by a

¹ G. Folliet, 'Trahere/Contrahere peccatum: Observations sur la terminologie augustinienne du péché', *HS*, 118-135, has made the important philological point, with implications about the care Augustine sometimes took in making distinctions, that *trahere* always refers to the sin inherited from Adam, while for personal sin Augustine uses *contrahere*.

² Cf. *DNC* 2.15.30.

³ Cf. *OpImp.* 6.22 on *libido*, and for autonomous movements *CD* 14.17; 14.20; *GPO* 2.34.39; *DNC* 1.24.27; 2.7.18; *C2EpPel.* 1.16.32-33, etc. However, Augustine needs to register some degree of 'spontaneous' female arousal if females are also to exhibit the effects of original sin; hence such effects are noted: *CD* 14.24; *DNC* 2.13.26; *C2Ep.* 1.16.32: 'illa [Eve] in occulto contra arbitrium voluntatis'; *CJul.* 4.13.62. Julian denies female *libido* at *CJul.* 5.5.23.

⁴ The seed is seminal reason plus matter (*CD* 22.14; *DBC* 20.23). The embryo is nourished by the mother (*GenLitt.* 10.20.35). Note that Julian – perhaps better read in medical literature – apparently has a 'double-seed' theory (*DNC* 2.13.26; cf. *OpImp.* 2.56; 2.83; 3.85).

daimon, and which could be handed down by 'contagion'⁵; he also offers the suggestion that we might incur it by 'being affected' (*Against Julian* 5.14.51) – as a woman was affected who looked at a picture of a handsome man during intercourse. That was supposed to have helped her bear more handsome children.

No wonder Augustine is convinced that neither standard traducianism nor creationism can be a complete explanation of all the puzzling phenomena! His inability (or unwillingness) to make his own position clear is probably not unrelated to his perceived incapacity to explain the more basic nature, in our fallen state, of our soul-body complex and its imperfect phenomenological unity.

⁵ Cf. *CJul.* 6.9.24.

APPENDIX 3

Augustine and Julian: aspects of the debate about sexual concupiscentia

In 419, or a little later, Julian attempted to pin a charge of Manichaeism on Augustine, claiming, among other things, that Augustine's account of sexuality in marriage implied that the marriage act is vicious in itself.¹ For Augustine had insisted from as early as *The Desserts of Sinners* (1.29.57) that the 'disobedient members' indicate original sin and the birth of children 'in concupiscentia' (2.4.4).

The ensuing argument, still unfinished when Augustine's death prevented the completion of the last work *Against Julian*, was partly provoked by Augustine's use of the word *concupiscentia* itself. As we have seen, what he meant to represent by this term, at least in the phrase *concupiscentia carnis*, was a generalized weakness of the 'flesh', to which we can improperly assent.² But 'misunderstanding' arose from the fact that, though *concupiscentia* is not limited to sexual desire, autonomous sexual arousal, being its most obvious visible effect, conveniently served as a symbolic representation of the phenomenon as a whole.

Augustine's assessment of the origin of this general weakness,³ which he saw as a defect, not a sin, and which in its sexual form makes males look like animals,⁴ is that it is acquired as a penal result of the fall. According to Julian, however, Augustine's 'real' view is that sexual desire is sinful in itself, not merely that it is vitiated by the sinfulness of Adam. Against this rendering of Augustine's position,

¹ See for example *C2Ep.* 1.2.4; 1.5.10; *DNC* 2.5.15; 2.9.34; 2.23.38; 2.29.49; 2.29.50; *OpImp.* 1.24; 1.115.

² Cf. *DNC* 1.23.25; *C2Ep.* 1.13.27; *CJul.* 5.3.8. See also, esp., Clark (1986b: note 288) on *libido*, and (298) on *concupiscentia*.

³ Note the terms *infirmilas* and *languor* (*CD* 14.19; *CJul.* 2.1.3; 2.4.8). See above p. 136.

⁴ *Bestialis motus* (*PeccMer.* 1.16.21; cf. *GenLitt.* 11.32.42; *CJul.* 3.21.47); *bestialis libido* (*CJul.* 4.8.2). Animals, however, have no fault in this regard, because they have no reason (*DGC* 2.40.46; *CJul.* 4.14.74; *OpImp.* 4.38; 4.41).

Julian offered his own alternative, that *libido* as presently experienced is to be described as a morally neutral 'natural appetite' (*Marriage and Concupiscence* 2.7.17, apparently only in men (*Against Julian* 5.5.23)), or as 'vigour of the members' (2.35.59). Thus, where Augustine offered a partly psychological and also erotic account of arousal in both males and females, Julian's picture is more or less physiological, and androcentric.⁵ Where Augustine distinguished between arousal, as between everything else, before and after the fall, Julian did not.

Julian failed to understand the nature of Augustine's concern with what he saw as a revolt of the senses and of the body generally. For that seems to be the thrust of Augustine's concerns about arousal and orgasm. For first, intercourse, as presently experienced, occupies our attention fully; hence we cannot think rationally (so he claims) at the time; second, it is accompanied by a loss of control of the 'will' over the body.⁶ This temporary submersion of reasoning in orgasm (so also he claims with little argumentation) is less than ideal: 'Even if one seeks bodily pleasure with good intent, that is, to beget children, can one think, in the act itself, I do not say of anything related to wisdom, but of anything else at all . . . is not its climax completed by a certain submerging of the mind altogether?' (*Against Julian* 4.14.71). Note the difference of tone, however, between this late passage, in which Augustine is worried about orgasm because it seems to imply a loss of the highest form of integration of the personality, with a cruder version, which merely contrasts intellectual and physical experiences, with which Augustine was satisfied in the *Soliloquies* (1.10.17): 'I feel that there is nothing which casts down the intelligence of a man from the heights more than the caresses of a woman, and the contact between bodies without which it is impossible to possess a wife.'

Julian's attack on Augustine depends on rejecting, or misunderstanding, Augustine's belief that before the fall, in God's original plan, we must have been 'all of a piece', so that not being self-indulgent pleasure-seekers, we would only have desired intercourse when we intended to procreate, and our actions on those occasions would have been fully controlled.⁷ As we have seen, Augustine normally holds

⁵ Cf. Fredriksen (1988: 112, on eroticism). Julian thinks of marriage itself, contrary to the view of Augustine, as simply a union of bodies (*CJul.* 5.16.62).

⁶ Since, as we have seen, the ancients noted that arousal in a woman is unnecessary for conception, they often thought of it as peculiarly degrading. Augustine does not take this point of view.

⁷ *Ep.* 184A.3 of AD 417; *CD* 14.10.15–16; cf. *DNC* 1.5.6. Our rational and painless state in the Garden also meant no labour pains and defloration for women (*CD* 14.26).

that intercourse occurs exclusively for one of two purposes, though those purposes may be combined: the first is to get pleasure for oneself. Does Julian think that ejaculation is the ultimate goal of union, asks Augustine (*Marriage and Concupiscentia* 2.8.19)? Did Julian himself have sex with his wife whenever he felt like it (*Against Julian* 3.14.28)? According to Augustine intercourse for pleasure is simply a form of exploitation (*Confessions* 3.1.1; 4.2.2; 6.15.25). He says he exploited his concubine's body as if she did not have a soul. The second and proper reason for intercourse is the begetting of children, whereas he had himself impregnated his concubine outside the 'deal' (*foedus*) he had made with her. As a result she became pregnant 'contrary to my (or our) vow' (*contra votum*, *Confessions* 4.2.2).

Julian's aim was to show up Augustine as a crypto-Manichaean. But he did not (or could not) think his opponent's position through: it is highly unlikely that he was concerned with the possibility of purely 'unitive' intercourse between spouses, or with developing his challenge to Augustine's account of the singleminded heart and personality of the unfallen Adam, let alone his implied claim that original sin had changed human sexual physiology itself – a claim which any contemporary evaluation would need to take account of. Julian's aims were more limited and more immediately polemical: to establish that Augustine's view of (especially, but not exclusively) male sexuality, with its unwanted erections and times of impotence,⁸ makes an evil of sexuality itself. Augustine's most careful comment on this is to be found in a 'politically' sensitive letter to Bishop Atticus of Constantinople (*Letter* 6*. 5–8): it is not the marital need and responsibility (*concupiscentia nuptiarum*) of procreating (*officium generandi*) that is to be faulted. The fault lies in the 'weakness' for sex (*desiderium concubendi*; *concupiscentia carnis*) which marks out sexuality as we experience it in the fallen, and hence fragmented, state of our personalities, as always potentially exploitative.⁹

A similar point about *concupiscentia* is to be found in various of Augustine's replies to Julian: there was a proper *concupiscentia* for marrying, as for other goods, in Paradise, and sexual acts would have

⁸ *DNC* 2.35.59; *CJul.* 4.13.62.

⁹ Cf. *OpImp.* 4.49 for *concupiscentia nuptialis*. See Brown (1988: 405); also Miles (1990: 64) on the distinction between Augustine's accounts of the body as such and of sexuality. As we have noted earlier, the most damaging difficulty in Augustine's position seems to lie not in the points castigated by Julian, nor in his realistic estimate of the likelihood of sexual exploitation, even in marriage, but in his restricted accounts of the possible purposes not of marriage itself, but of sexuality within marriage.

been pleasurable. Perhaps, even, there was a proper sexual desire (*libido*),¹⁰ but if so, it remained under the control of the good will.¹¹ Adam would have sowed his seed like a farmer.¹² Augustine would probably need to say that such a *libido* can be hypothesized but not imagined by us in our fallen state, since it is not 'discordant' (*discordiosum*).¹³

Why is Augustine so disturbed about the loss of control and the suspension of the active use of reason which accompanies the sexual climax? Part of the answer is that he seems to think of such loss as a harbinger of death, which is the price of sin for us as for Adam, and consists of the body's separation from the soul's embrace and governance (*Literal Commentary* 9.9.17; *City of God* 14.25); also he identifies *concupiscentia carnis* as a disordered preference for a lower self, which in itself would be a sign of alienation and disintegration.¹⁴ But Augustine goes too far. He wants to insist that sexual desire as we now experience it is corrupted, while a reply to Julian, who says that it is morally neutral, need only claim that such desire is 'damaged', not that it is an evil.¹⁵

In favour of the view that sexual physiology is morally neutral and that Augustine's attitude to it has a puritan, that is Manichaean, colouring, Julian advances a number of 'anthropological' and sociological arguments. Some of these, such as that cultural factors are important in a consideration of different attitudes to nudity, are of considerable interest, but they do not always address Augustine's main concerns. At one point, for example, Julian brings up the nakedness of animals, missing Augustine's point that humans are not animals (*Incomplete Work* 4.41). On the other hand, Augustine had been unwise enough to claim that the instinct to cover one's genitals arose out of a sense of shame as an inevitable result of the fall (*City of*

¹⁰ *CJul.* 4.11.57; cf. 4.14.65, *OpImp.* 4.69: 'aliud est usus carnis, aliud concupiscentia carnis'. See the discussion in Schmitt (1983: 96–105) and Lamberigts (1991: 388–391).

¹¹ *CzEp.* 1.17.34; *OpImp.* 1.68; cf. Clark (1986b: 296).

¹² *DNC* 2.14.29; cf. Clark (1986b: 300). ¹³ Cf. *CD* 14.10 and Brown (1988: 408).

¹⁴ *CD* 14.3; *GenLitt.* 10.12.20; cf. Brown (1988: 418). For an unusual contemporary exchange about whether spontaneous erection is peculiarly attractive or whether 'preparing oneself' for intercourse is equally or more so, see Kirwan (1987: 196). Kirwan, who likes the idea of making oneself ready, seems the better Augustinian.

¹⁵ Thus Augustine appears as a 'sexual Calvinist'. Though he normally (but not always) says that our fallen nature is damaged but not wholly corrupt, he seems to think of our proper *libido* as wholly corrupt, though capable of being put to good use.

God 14.17),¹⁶ but as Julian replies, the matter is more complicated. Augustine himself had noted (*Christian Teaching* 3.12.18) that nudity is appropriate at the baths,¹⁷ but inappropriate at drunken and salacious dinner parties. Julian echoes this (*Incomplete Work* 4.44), adding that it is appropriate to athletes and the baths but unsuitable for public meetings. Julian's view is that covering one's nakedness is a matter of differing conventions and of differing jobs – Peter was naked at work as a fisherman (John 21:7) – and that Adam before the fall was merely uncivilized, like the Scots. Perhaps the point Augustine should have made – and intended to make – is not that men are ashamed at being seen naked, but that they are ashamed at being seen erect. Perhaps again that is not quite right, for if that were the point, then despite his remarks about unwanted arousal in females after the fall, he could offer no parallel explanation as to why women might not wish to be seen naked. His real view, however, seems to be that people do not wish to feel (or be seen to feel) aroused, and perhaps in the case of women that they do not want, except on special occasions, to arouse men.

Augustine is inclined to oversimplify the question of shame to suit his purposes as a controversialist: it is patently false that people are always ashamed of nudity, and was more obviously false in his day and place. On the matter of the autonomous movement of the sexual organs he may be on firmer ground, but even here the temptation to use *ad hoc* arguments is often too strong for him.¹⁸ While in the *City of God* (14.20) he denies that the Cynics had coitus in public, on the (false) grounds that they could not have enjoyed it, he claims elsewhere (*Unfinished Work* 4.45) that they did indeed act in this way, since their natural sense of shame had been corrupted by false doctrines.

Augustine thinks that all 'weaknesses' (whether physiological or

¹⁶ Even marriage 'blushes' at the nakedness of the genitals and looks for privacy (*CD* 14.20; *Pec. Mer.* 2.22.36; *GPO* 2.37.41; etc.). Augustine may confuse two factors: fear of nakedness with a desire for privacy and therefore for more uninhibited intimacy.

¹⁷ Augustine's *Rule* permits monks to visit the public baths, though not alone (5.5–7); indeed it commands them to do so for medical reasons. It is not clear whether the sexes were segregated in Augustine's time (cf. J. Jüthner, 'Bad', *RAC* (1950), 1, 1138–1141). They were not segregated in Carthage in the time of Cyprian who reproves nuns for bathing naked in the presence of men (*De Habit. Virg.* 19). For aristocratic women's unconcern about nakedness in the presence of men of a lower class, see Brown (1988: 315) on the public baths in Antioch. Cf. E. Barbier, 'La signification du cortège de "Projecta"', *Cahiers Archéologiques* 12 (1962), 7–33. For the fourth century, see M. R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston 1989), 28; and more generally Lamberigts (1991: 379).

¹⁸ So, rightly, Brown (1967: 385, 388–390).

their psychological counterparts, like shame) indicate our penal condition (*Against Julian* 6.9.27); Julian thinks that this is just how God made us, and appears unpuzzled by the presence of such human 'defects', whether real or imaginary (*Unfinished Work* 6.26, 27, 29), in the sexual area. But the argument between the two becomes most interesting when Julian raises the question (discussed in Appendix 2) of how an action of the 'will', that is, the sinful behaviour of Adam, can affect the seeds with which the human race is propagated (*Against Julian* 6.9.24), thus causing them to transmit both sinfulness and guilt for past sins. On any account this is a searching question, and Julian raised it repeatedly:¹⁹ whether the soul is handed down, as the 'traducianists' claimed; whether it is newly created by God for each individual; or whether, as Augustine held, we are to suppose that our souls had a 'common' life in Adam and we were 'that one man' (*Unfinished Work* 2.178). For in each case how can something immaterial (in this case, sin and guilt) affect the material body? That is an old Stoic poser for the Platonists to which, as we have seen, Augustine fails to come up with more than a sketch of a possible solution.

Augustine believed that, as a matter of fact, we are both 'socially' and 'genetically' damaged by our ancestors, going back to the guilty Adam. He thought he saw evidence for our sinfulness and our punishment in the ordinary human condition. The way in which one man's sin can affect other people's *souls* is a question Augustine's theory of our common life makes a powerful attempt to solve. Yet a further question for 'dualists' is still on the table. If the soul is to have an effect on the *body*, then the soul must be material, so Julian tells Augustine. Augustine is revealed after all, he claims, as a follower of Tertullian, and indeed ultimately as a Manichaean.²⁰

Julian's attack was ultimately less effective than it might have been. He would have been more philosophically damaging if, instead of trying to paint Augustine as a Manichaean, he had questioned Augustine's whole 'dualistic' theory of soul and body as separate substances – one immaterial and the other material – and of the possible interaction between them. He was prevented from taking full advantage of the problem of the relationship between soul and body by his own assumption that sexual *concupiscentia* is just bodily – which is precisely what Augustine reasonably denied. Julian indeed even

¹⁹ See Lamberigts (1988: 13–14) for further references and discussion.

²⁰ For further references, see *OpImp.* 1.6; 1.27; 1.66; 2.14; 2.27; 2.202; 3.10; 3.23; 3.64; 3.181; 3.324; 3.355.

assumes that Jesus must have experienced such *concupiscentia*, just as we do, since he also ate, sweated, bled and grew a beard.²¹ Yet, although he makes an interesting theological point in insisting that if Jesus had no *concupiscentia* he could not be tempted as we are (*Incomplete Work* 4.50), but only as Adam was (and perhaps we were in Adam), he fails to press home a philosophical attack on Augustine's account of the human person itself.

Julian persistently ridicules Augustine's theological claim that the insubordination of the bodily members to the mind is a fitting punishment (and the symbol of a more all-embracing punishment) for a soul that claimed to be God and lord of creation. For now, according to Augustine, the human soul cannot even control the body which was intended to be subordinate to it. Such ideas, Julian thinks, are unworthy of the justice of God,²² but in concentrating on the theological, Julian has passed up the opportunity to develop a searching critique of Augustine's fundamental claims about the soul and the body. Interestingly, Julian appealed to Aristotle in the course of his attack on Augustine's treatment of the relationship between 'will' and the seeds; uninterestingly he failed to develop an Aristotelian-style alternative to Augustine's account of man as a whole.²³ Julian's failure was precisely as a philosopher.

²¹ *OpImp.* 4.47; 6.41. Note that Augustine says that Jesus could have had children: a point about the goodness of marriage as such (*OpImp.* 4.49).

²² See Brown (1967: 391–393) and for further discussion of God's justice, chapter 7.

²³ Cf. F. J. Thonnard, 'L'Aristotélisme de Julien d'Eclane et saint Augustin', *REA* 11 (1965b), 296–304.

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