

**COUNTERING THE SECULARIZATION OF THE  
DISCOURSE ON EVIL: AN AUGUSTINIAN  
THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**by**

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## INTRODUCTION

September 11, 2001 was a day to shatter the complacency of Americans. But how we move forward depends on whether we are willing to accept and to face up to the realities about human nature that it revealed. On that day, two airplanes were forcibly flown into the Twin Towers in New York City; one airplane was purposefully flown into the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., and a fourth airplane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. These catastrophes, which caused the deaths of thousands of people, did not happen because of machine malfunction, natural disasters, or any type of accident; they were a deliberate act of human design. They were an attack against the United States and its people by radical Muslim terrorists whose only apparent goal was to cause death, destruction, and fear. In the weeks that followed the event, the president of the United States, George W. Bush, referred to these acts and the men that perpetrated them as evil. In *Modernity and the Problem of Evil*, Alan D. Schrift expresses offense at the use of the word *evil* to categorize these acts and the men who performed them, he says:

Perhaps most distressing, we are told that “we learned a good lesson on September 11<sup>th</sup>, that there is evil in this world,” and that “it’s essential that all moms and dads and citizens tell their children we love them and there is love in the world, but also remind them there are evil people.” And, the president said explicitly, “We’re fighting evil.” Were these comments citations from Tolkein’s *Lord of the Rings*, one might be comfortable with the ease with which the personification of evil has been effected.<sup>1</sup>

Surely, the death and destruction purposefully wrought by the terrorists are more distressing than “the personification of evil.” What is evil if not personified? Human beings, every right thinking person will agree, are the only rational, intellectual beings on earth. It is recognized that animals have a measure of intelligence, but no one claims that they have rationality or the capacity for understanding ethics or morality. Their intelligence is instinctual, a feature of their ability to learn and to adapt for survival. Therefore, since humans are the only creatures able to identify or differentiate between good and evil, evil is by definition “personified.” A cat will play with a mouse, chase it, toss it, and basically terrorize it before

killing it, but the cat has no sense of morality, no understanding of causing pain, so the cat's actions are not evil; they are instinctual. But the men who planned, who hid their intentions, and brought death and destruction to thousands of unsuspecting people understood that they were unleashing pain, death, and terror and to do so was their purpose. Therefore, their actions reasonably can be described as evil.

Saint Augustine of Hippo did not shy away from the problem of evil, despite the fact that its existence challenged his faith. His autobiographical work, *Confessions*, tells his life story, but its true purpose and theme is to explain how he searched for and found God. In his search for God, Augustine confronted and explored the problem and meaning of evil. For Augustine, "evil" is lack; a lack of God. Augustine questions and advises his readers: "Why do you try to stand in your own strength and fail? Cast yourself upon God and have no fear. He will not shrink away and let you fail."<sup>2</sup> Augustine's analysis of evil shows that when God is not at the center of an individual's life and the individual's will is not willingly and completely submitted to the will of God that individual is capable of evil. It is when a person is capable of evil acts or of *rationalizing* evil that evil is possible. Moreover, evil remains evil regardless of whether an individual or a group collectively regards it as such.

Augustine is not afraid to ask the difficult questions:

Where then does evil come from if God made all things, and, because he is good, made them good too? It is true that he is the supreme Good, that he is himself a greater Good than these lesser goods which he created [including humankind]. But the Creator and all his creation are both good. Where does evil come from?<sup>3</sup>

In his philosophical quest to answer these questions, Augustine developed an understanding of human nature and mankind's capacity for evil that is worth studying and recognizing as wisdom 1500 years after he wrote it. The world has changed so as to be unrecognizable from the early Christian world with its pagan influences in which Augustine lived. We live in a postmodern, consumer driven, media saturated world, but people and human nature remain driven by the same desires, hopes, dreams, capacities for good and evil. However, modern man's arrogance has

increased along with our knowledge of the workings of the natural world, our ability to manipulate and control our environment, and our technological advances, so that in our postmodern world evil and people acting out of evil can cause much wider spread damage, pain, destruction, and death than has ever before been possible in human history. Names and events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century spring immediately to mind: Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot's Killing Fields, genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia, Idi Amin's brutal military dictatorship, atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki,\* indeed the list could go on and would include the terrorist attacks of 9/11, which demonstrates the continuation of the modern problem of aggressive evil into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Only by recognizing and understanding the root causes of evil can we hope to combat its existence. Therefore, bearing in mind the evil that has hung over our modern world like the clouds of Sauron's menace hung over Middle Earth, it is essential that we abandon secular biases and revisit the works and words of Saint Augustine to reach a thorough understanding of humanity's propensity for evil and for the existence of evil in a good world created by a good God.

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\* I do not intend here to contribute to or to comment upon the debate about the morality or necessity of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I include it here purely as an example of horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century world and mankind's impulse and ability to develop more effective and powerful methods for killing.

## EVIL AND THE FAILURE OF MODERN/POSTMODERN PHILOSOPHY

Schrift's critique of the personification of evil is motivated by a desire to frame the discussion of evil "within a secular but normative discourse that strives to understand the modern world."<sup>4</sup> Schrift's introduction to *Modernity and the Problem of Evil* also questions the use of the word "evil" and wonders: "is 'evil' just 'bad + God,' or do we need a concept of 'evil' that is distinct and different from 'bad' or 'wrong'?"<sup>5</sup> This impulse for the secularization of evil and for the relativization of the term *evil* to *bad* allows postmodern man<sup>†</sup> to indulge in what Reinhold Niebuhr calls "man's easy conscience." In *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Niebuhr describes the power of the phenomenon: "Our introductory analysis of modern views of human nature has established the complacent conscience of modern man as the one unifying force amidst a wide variety of anthropological conceptions." Niebuhr elaborates on the paradox of such an attitude given the facts of 20<sup>th</sup> century history:

The universality of this easy conscience among moderns is the more surprising since it continues to express itself almost as unqualifiedly in a period of social decay as in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century heyday of a bourgeois culture. The modern man is involved in social chaos and political anarchy. . . . Contemporary history is filled with manifestations of man's hysteria and furies; with evidences of his daemonic capacity and inclination to break the harmonies of nature and defy the prudent canons of rational restraint. Yet no cumulation of contradictory evidence seems to disturb modern man's good opinion of himself.<sup>6</sup>

As already noted, we can sadly find ample 20<sup>th</sup> century examples of the social chaos, political anarchy, and daemonic capacity of which Niebuhr speaks. However, modern secular culture cannot address and respond adequately to the problem of evil when "man's easy conscience" permits modern man to refuse to recognize it. As Charles T. Matthews describes it in *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*: "But it is not only that there has been precious little serious sustained reflection on the problem of evil, what is worse is that we rarely realize this; indeed our intellectual energies seem to have been spent more on avoiding thought about evil than on

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<sup>†</sup> In refusing to bow to the pressures of political correctness, I will use the traditional terms "man" and "mankind" when referring to all human beings both male and female without sexism when those terms are appropriate. I will also use recognized gender neutral terms such as humanity, human, human beings, etc. when they seem more appropriate to the discussion or simply for variety.

confronting it.”<sup>7</sup> In the wake of the Enlightenment, the conquest of the primacy of the empirical over the theological and the philosophical has been the conquest of the secular over the religious and spiritual. Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* summarizes the devaluation of philosophy:

It was not in the Middle Ages but in modern thinking that philosophy came to play second and even third fiddle. After Descartes based his own philosophy upon the discoveries of Galileo, philosophy has seemed condemned to be always one step behind the scientists and their ever more amazing discoveries, whose principles it has strived arduously to discover *ex post facto* and to fit into some over-all interpretation of the nature of human knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

This scientific worldview that Arendt exposes presupposes progress, which is perhaps why moderns have found a means and a necessity to attempt to bury the problem of evil. Mathewes explains the result of this societal denial: “While the emerging Enlightenment consensus portrayed a world of reason and light, it ignored the dark passions of human existence.”<sup>9</sup> One could say the modern consciousness was *compelled* to “ignore the dark passions of human existence.” The challenge of *rationalizing* human evil within the Enlightenment mindset was even beyond the reason of one of the Enlightenment’s leading thinkers, and the tendency to avoid the problem persisted into the modern age according to William McBride, Professor of Philosophy at Perdue University:

. . . Faced with the question of evil, then, Kant, the quintessential modern Enlightenment philosopher, is at once forceful (. . . as he elaborates on the radical evil within us) and yet confused, and he eventually confesses defeat.

On the whole, the cliché that much of modern Western philosophy after Kant, imbued as it mostly was with a spirit of optimism and belief in moral as well as technological progress, neglected the question of evil, or at least of radical evil is true. . . . But it was possible for Simone de Beauvoir to assert confidently, and with considerable truth, at the end of the first chapter of *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté*:

“In a metaphysics of transcendence, in the classical sense of the term, evil is reduced to error; and in humanistic philosophies it is impossible to account for it, man being defined as complete in a complete world. Existentialism alone gives—like religions—a real role to evil.”<sup>10</sup>

Yet evil undeniably exists so it is either arrogant, foolishly optimistic, or irresponsible to pretend that “rational man” is above such things. And religion has fared even worse than philosophy in the modern consciousness. According to Peter Dews in his essay “Disenchantment

and the Persistence of Evil,” the mere fact that Kant, the darling of Enlightenment philosophy, proposed a quasi-religious description of what he called “radical evil” to avoid employing the religiously charged terminology of “sin” was enough to arouse condemnation by his

“Enlightened” contemporaries:

In a letter to Herder, Goethe wrote that Kant had “criminally smeared his philosopher’s cloak with the shameful stain of radical evil, after it had taken him a long human life to cleanse it from many a dirty prejudice, so that Christians too might yet be enticed to kiss its hem.” The judgment that the concept of evil that Kant proposes is essentially a Christian residue, a reformulation of “original sin,” has been repeated up to the present day. Most contemporary Kantians, for example, appear to believe that they can provide a reworked version of Kant’s rational grounding of morality without referring substantively to the concept of evil.<sup>11</sup>

It seems to me that Goethe’s own “dirty prejudice” is plainly apparent and not very “enlightened.”

Goethe’s condemnation of Kant’s “Christian residue” raises the question, why this need to remove theological considerations or explanations from the discussion of the undeniable existence of evil? Why the apparent need to divorce theology from philosophy as if philosophy is somehow superior to theology? The Enlightenment produced the perception that persists today that religion is somehow irrational. In the popular modern and postmodern consciousness, science has won out as the only rational explanation for the phenomenon that the world exists, and philosophy is somewhat more legitimate than religion because it, at least, does not posit the existence of God. But, if as Webster’s College Dictionary defines, philosophy is “the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being, knowledge, or conduct,” Augustinian theology cannot be excluded.<sup>12</sup> Augustine’s theology, as we shall see, is built on the foundation of reason and argument in his search for the truths of being, God, and knowledge. He approaches abstracts with a rational analysis, always testing his conclusions against opposing arguments and bringing them to logical conclusions. Therefore, I choose to describe Augustine’s thought as his theological philosophy.



If we are truly rational, we will recognize that secular rationality is doomed to failure in explaining the existence of evil, and that is why Kant was compelled to resort to “a reformulation of ‘original sin.’” And if according to Kant, who “it seems clear . . . must be regarded as the first formulator of the modern problem of evil,” human evil is “an intrinsic tendency to prioritize their particular interests over the universalizable requirements of the moral law” than rationality is itself an inducement to evil since self-interest is clearly the most rational course for any individual, regardless of its (self-interest’s) morality or lack thereof.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, rationality cannot define or prescribe morality because self-interest is what Kant describes in his definition of evil and what could be more rational than self-interest. Indeed, could not this prioritizing of self-interest conform to Darwinian scientific survival of the fittest? This sort of thinking reached its frightening apex in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, who wrote in *The Anitchrist*:

What is good?—Everything that heightens our feeling of power, our will to power, the power in man itself.

What is bad? Everything that comes from weakness. . . .

Not contentment, but rather more *power*; *not* peace at all, but rather war; *not* virtue, but rather excellence (virtue in the renaissance sense: virtù, virtue without sanctimony).

The weak and misbegotten should go to their destruction: that is the first principle of *our* humanism. And they should be helped along their way.

What is more harmful than any vice? Active pity for all the misbegotten and the weak—Christianity. . . [emphasis in quoted material]<sup>14</sup>

It seems clear that the world needs waking up from the complacency that postmodern secularism encourages about the nature, causes, and existence of evil. The prevalent insistence on a secular narrative that posits vague notions of morality, ethics, and “complete man” is just a means to avoid recognition of the real problem of human evil. In “Violence and Secularization, Evil and Redemption,” Martin Beck Matuštik addresses the failure of the secularized discussion of evil in the modern and postmodern world:

Yet, the enlightened notion of rationalized evil is both existentially counterintuitive and historically falsified: radical evil in the post-Kantian age has remained anywhere but within rational boundaries. If human evil as we know it in the last hundred years has been transgressing all rational frames, then is there anything wholly secular about violence? The radicalness of radical evil must be clarified outside of the safe boundaries of mere reason.<sup>15</sup>

And Hannah Arendt in *The Banality of Evil* destroys any idea that evil can be explained by relying on a purely secular, philosophical, and rational framework:

Just as the law in civilized countries assumes that the voice of conscience tells everybody “Thou shalt not kill,” even though man’s natural desires and inclinations may be murderous, so the law of Hitler’s land demanded that the voice of conscience tell everybody: “Thou shalt kill,” although the organizers of the massacres knew full well that murder is against the normal desires and inclination of most people. Evil in the Third Reich had lost the quality by which most people recognize it, the quality of temptation. Many Germans and many Nazis, probably an overwhelming majority of them, must have been tempted *not* to murder, *not* to rob, *not* to let their neighbors go off to their doom . . . , and not to become accomplices in all these crimes by benefiting from them. But, God knows, they had learned how to resist temptation.<sup>16</sup> (emphasis in the original)

Arendt describes with chilling clarity how Nazism had turned normal morality upside down. A modern, secular, and rational philosophical framework is inadequate to confront the reality that that which is normally acknowledged as good in civilized society became evil and that which is evil became good in the “rational” state of Nazi Germany. Moreover, we must recognize that Nietzsche’s “first principle of humanism” that the “weak and misbegotten should go to their destruction” had been enacted by Hitler and the Third Reich. In Hitler’s Third Reich we see lived out the tragic failure of modern philosophy and rationality.

Bearing in mind the inadequacy of rational philosophy to understand evil or to recognize human capacity for evil and acknowledging that evil reached staggering levels in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is time to take off the silk gloves and return to a view of evil that is not afraid of absolutes, the concept of God, or the spiritual dimension to human evil. Part of the reason that secularism fails to adequately address the problem of evil is because secular narratives do not have the language to comprehend evil because evil is a spiritual issue. To understand evil, it must be accepted that evil is not a secularly rational matter; evil is at its core a spiritual battle. Despite, or perhaps because of, humanism’s and secularism’s reluctance to get dirty with the ugly reality of human evil (or worse to elevate evil to virtue as in Nietzschean philosophy), in the post-Enlightenment West the reality of evil has promoted the widespread abandonment of theology in favor of humanist and secularist philosophies. Theodicean arguments lost their potency against rationality

and enlightenment. How can God be good? How can there be a God when evil exists in the world? With tragic irony, the very thing that could help people to understand evil, to combat evil, and to put the humanity back into humanity has been rejected. Nietzsche proclaimed: “God is dead . . . and we have murdered him!”<sup>17</sup> God is not dead, but effectively he has in many ways become dead to the postmodern world. It is time to revive God.

## AUGUSTINE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE EXISTENCE, CHARACTER, AND NATURE OF GOD

I have argued that modern and postmodern philosophy failed to adequately address the existence and problem of evil because of the impulse to view evil through the lens of a secular rational worldview. But that does not mean that reason is absent from theology or, specifically for the purposes of this discussion, from Augustine's thought. Those who argue that faith is without reason or is not motivated by reason must never have read Augustine's writing or, at least, not read it with an unbiased mind. Augustine was a classically educated rhetorician and teacher. Cicero, Varro, Vergil, Ovid and others, as well as the works of the Neo-Platonists inspired Augustine.<sup>‡</sup> Cicero's *Hortensius* sparked his love of philosophy so much so that "it caused him to consider the possibility of devoting himself wholly to the study of philosophy, but he did not give up his classes in rhetoric."<sup>18</sup> Augustine speaks of his discovery of philosophy in *Confessions*: "In Greek the word 'philosophy' means 'love of wisdom' and it was with this love that the *Hortensius* inflamed me."<sup>19</sup> Although he was inspired by pagan classical writers, Augustine found their philosophy constrained by the filters of their pagan worldview. Of *Hortensius* Augustine qualifies his enthusiasm: ". . .the only thing that pleased me in Cicero's book was his advice not simply to admire one or another of the schools of philosophy, but to love wisdom itself, whatever it might be, and to search for it, pursue it, hold it, and embrace it firmly."<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, Augustine's search for wisdom was pure and not constrained by a pre-conceived worldview that excluded the spiritual as are the rational secular attempts to understand evil that I have discussed. It was his love of truth and wisdom that led Augustine to God, and once he found God, his love of God led him to develop a comprehensive theological philosophy. Ultimately, Augustine found the vision of his pagan predecessors incomplete and unsatisfactory

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<sup>‡</sup> For a complete discussion of Augustine's education see Vernon J. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom: Life and Philosophy of the Bishop of Hippo* (Milwaukee, Wis.: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1945) referring especially to chapters I-IV.

as he sought to understand the cause and reason for creation and for man's uniqueness within creation. But, in his search for truth, Augustine never abandoned the rigors of philosophy. Arendt says of Augustine: "He became the first Christian philosopher because throughout his life he held fast to philosophy." And for Augustine wisdom, philosophy, and God became inextricably linked: "Now, if wisdom is God, who made all things, as is attested by the divine authority and truth, then the philosopher is a lover of God."<sup>21</sup> In the book *Augustine: On the Inner Life of the Mind*, Robert Meagher, Professor of Humanities at Hampshire College, commented on Augustine's thought: "Augustine the philosopher is neither dogmatic nor systematic nor secular. Rather, his thought is pervasively questioning, personal, and prayerful, as ours must be if we are to think with him, walk his way, even if only imaginatively, for a while, and with little conviction."<sup>22</sup> I hope that we *can think with* Augustine with a *generous* measure of conviction.

I would like to propose that we move forward in our discussion by agreeing to the premise that God exists because the existence of God is central to the problem of evil as Augustine approached it. However, our and Augustine's first dilemma in understanding evil arises from the apparent contradiction of the existence of evil in a world created by a good God; therefore, many readers might protest that to assume the existence of God is too grand a premise given that contradiction. I do not want to get bogged down in the question of God's existence, but I think it is important to take a moment to consider what Augustine had to say about it. In Augustine's theological philosophy the mind and man's capacity for rationality not only set human beings apart from the rest of creation but also signified the existence of God: "These premises have been firmly established: that the rational soul is made blessed only by God. . . . There is nothing more powerful than this creature, which is called the rational mind; nothing more sublime. Whatever is above it is certainly the creator."<sup>23</sup> In Book Two of *On Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine uses a Platonic formula of discourse between himself and a person named Evodius to elaborate his argument for that which is above the rational mind and to argue for,

among other things, the existence of God. Since Augustine builds his argument premise upon premise, always testing his premises against opposing arguments before reaching his conclusions, it is difficult to summarize his rationale for something as elemental as the existence of God; nonetheless, such an attempt is required.

Augustine bases his argument on a hierarchical framework of what is known and perceivable by the physical senses to postulate that which can only be understood by the inner sense to recognize the existence of God. Augustine tells Evodius: “although, we must firmly and steadfastly believe that God exists, how can this be made manifest?”<sup>24</sup> Augustine begins his argument by eliciting agreement on the premise of the superiority of human reason from among those things that are discernible: “So a nature that has existence but not life or understanding, like an inanimate body, is inferior to a nature that has both existence and life but not understanding, like the souls of animals; and such a thing is inferior to something that has all three, like the rational mind of a human being.”<sup>25</sup> Evodius agrees to this but counters: “What I call ‘God’ is not that to which my reason is inferior, but that to which nothing is superior.” To which Augustine responds: “Then it will be enough for me to show that something of this sort exists, which you can admit to be God. . . .”<sup>26</sup>

For Augustine the primary elements of the superior thing are that it be unchangeable and eternal. Augustine asks Evodius “if you found nothing above our reason except what is eternal and unchangeable, would you hesitate to call that ‘God’? For you know that material objects are changeable.” Evodius consents to agree, and Augustine hastens to point out that reason does not qualify as the superior thing because “reason itself is clearly changeable. . . .”<sup>27</sup> Augustine begins his search for the superior unchangeable thing by leading Evodius to acknowledge that “each of us possesses a distinct rational mind.” From this he asks Evodius if there is anything that is “common to all who think. . . . that remains unchanged and intact whether they see it [by this Augustine does not mean just physically “to see” but also “to understand”] or not.” Evodius says yes and offers “the order and truth of number” as an example. From Evodius’s own example of

the order and truth of number, irregardless of a person's ability to understand, Augustine leads Evodius to admit that even though each of us has a distinct mind and distinct senses that there are some things that "exist, complete and immutable, and can be seen in common by everyone who uses reason."<sup>28</sup> Having gained agreement on this point, Augustine furthers his argument:

Augustine: But don't you think that wisdom is nothing other than the truth in which the highest good is discerned and acquired? . . . I want you to tell me whether wisdom, like the order and truth of number, is a single thing that presents itself to all who think; or rather, just as there are as many minds as there are human beings, . . . so there are as many wisdoms as there are potentially wise persons.

Evodius: *If* the highest good is one thing for everyone, then the truth in which that good is discerned and acquired must also be one thing that is common to all."<sup>29</sup>  
[emphasis mine]

But Evodius doubts that the "highest good is one thing for everyone," so Augustine is compelled to convince Evodius that even though people make different choices about "different things as their highest good" that "it does not follow from that assumption that wisdom itself is not one and common to all, simply because the goods that human beings discern and choose in it are many and various. That would be like thinking that there must be more than one sun, simply because we perceive many and various things by its light." Ultimately, Augustine argues: "the light of wisdom, in which those things can be seen and pursued, is a single thing common to all the wise."<sup>30</sup>

Having shown that the highest good is the light of wisdom in which all good things are pursued by the wise, the pivotal point has been reached in Augustine's argument. Augustine asks Evodius: "And you surely could not deny that the uncorrupted is better than the corrupt, the eternal than the temporal, and the invulnerable than the vulnerable?" To which Evodius responds: "Could anyone?"<sup>31</sup> Augustine then explains through a series of arguments that truth is all those things, uncorrupted, eternal, and invulnerable. And our minds are none of those things. Augustine concludes by equating truth and wisdom to God, and his final argument is worth quoting at length for its splendor and clear spiritual rationality:

. . .the beauty of truth and wisdom is not obscured by the crowds of eager listeners. It is not used up in the course of time; it does not move from place to place. . . .

It is not in any place, but it is present everywhere. It warns outwardly and teaches inwardly. It changes for the better all those who see it, and no one changes it for the worse. No one judges it, but apart from it no one judges rightly. And so it is clear beyond any doubt that this one truth, by which people become wise, and which makes them judges, not of it, but of other things, is better than our minds.

Now you had conceded that if I proved the existence of something higher than our minds, you would admit that it was God, as long as there was nothing higher still. I accepted this concession and said that it would be enough if I proved that there is something higher than our minds. For if there is something more excellent than the truth, then that is God; if not, the truth itself is God. So in either case you cannot deny that God exists. . . .<sup>32</sup>

Recognizing that Augustine believed emphatically in the existence of God, it becomes apparent that to arrive at an understanding of the meaning of evil in Augustine's view, it is necessary to come at it from reverse because Augustine is not primarily interested in evil. Augustine is more interested in the meaning of good, of righteousness, and the nature of God than he is in "evil." Augustine's interest in evil stems from the problem that evil presents in understanding the nature of God and in the effect that his own capacity for evil has on his search for God. Therefore, to understand Augustine's conception of evil, we must understand what Augustine considers the nature and being of God, how evil complicated his perceptions of God, and how a lack of God permits evils. In *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, Charles Mathewes describes this relationship between the being of God and Augustine's concept of evil:

God's absolute goodness so exhausted the conceptual space of transcendence for Augustine, that evil had to be solely a consequence of the created order's swerve away from God. . . .

I take as central the famous (or notorious) Augustinian account of evil as privation, and sin as perversion. But, as the above implies, the Augustinian tradition is not primarily fixated on evil and sin, for those concepts are an integral part of, and disastrously distorted apart from, an essential positive, indeed ecstatic cosmology.<sup>33</sup>

The first attributes of God that Augustine came to understand in his "ecstatic cosmology" are that God is eternal—"your years never come to an end"—the source of all good—"you my, God are the source of all good"—and "Truth itself."<sup>34</sup> I have already described in detail how Augustine came to understand God as Truth. Furthermore, as we have seen in Augustine's argument for the existence of God, Augustine perceived that God in his eternalness is also immutable: "My ideas were always changing, like the ebb and flow of the tide, but you never



allowed them to sweep me away from the faith by which I believed that you were, that your substance was unchangeable, and that it was yours to care for and to judge mankind.”<sup>35</sup>

Augustine found the seed for his understanding of the unchangeableness of God in the works of the Platonists. In *City of God* Augustine describes the Platonists argument:

The Platonists, who were clever, learned, and trained . . . , easily concluded that the primary form is not those things which have been convincingly proven to be changeable. In their view, both body and soul admit of greater or lesser degrees of form, and thus, if they could lack all form, they would not exist at all. They saw that something exists in which exists the primary form, which is unchangeable and therefore not admitting of degrees of comparison. They quite correctly believed that the beginning of things is there, that it was not made, and that from it everything was made.”<sup>36</sup>

But Augustine struggled with understanding the essence of God as something that could exist unlike creation as “lack[ing] all form” and yet existing:

When I tried to think of my God, I could think of him only as a bodily substance, because I could not conceive of the existence of anything else. . . . And because such little piety as I had compelled me to believe that God, who is good, could not have created an evil nature, I imagined that there were two antagonistic masses,<sup>§</sup> both of which were infinite, yet the evil in a lesser and the good in a greater degree.<sup>37</sup>

Augustine would eventually come to recognize God as spirit and to understand that God and God’s goodness is found in the state of being incorruptible. Augustine came to see that God is not only the source of all good but he is also the totality of unchanging good—“whatever your nature might be, you must be incorruptible. For no soul has ever been, or ever will be, able to conceive of anything better than you, who are the supreme, the perfect Good.”<sup>38</sup> In *Confessions* Augustine proclaims with a poignant prose that borders on the poetic of his wonder, amazement, and love of God as he understood the person and attributes of God. God is not only unchanging goodness but God is also eternal, merciful, just, and all-powerful; he is the creative force of the universe. On God’s creativity and eternalness: But you, Lord, live for ever and nothing in you dies, because you have existed from before the very beginning of the ages, before anything that

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<sup>§</sup> This is a reference to Manichaeism to which Augustine subscribed for a time in his search for God. Followers of Manichaeism believe that there are two antagonistic forces in the universe, one for good and one for evil. Augustine eventually rejected these doctrines in his Christian belief that nothing is equal to God who is eternally and unchangeably good.

could be said to go before, and you are God and Lord of all you have created.<sup>39</sup> And on God's power, mercy, and justice:

You, my God, are supreme, utmost in goodness, mightiest and all-powerful, most merciful and most just. . . . You are my God, my Life, my holy Delight, but is this enough to say of you? Can any man say enough when he speaks of you? Yet woe betide those who are silent about you! For even those who are most gifted with speech cannot find words to describe you.<sup>40</sup>

## RESOLVING EVIL IN A WORLD CREATED BY A GOOD GOD

Although *On Free Choice of the Will* develops an Augustinian argument for the existence of God, the essential question that Augustine addresses in *On Free Choice of the Will* is the question of whether God is the cause of evil since God “set up the initial conditions and laws of nature.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the work begins with this question from Evodius: “Please tell me: isn’t God the cause of evil?”<sup>42</sup> We have seen that Augustine emphatically argues for the goodness of God. So if God is good, eternally good and unchangeable, and God created the entire universe, what is the source of evil? Augustine does not equivocate on the fact that God is the creator of our universe in which evil undeniably exists, despite the obvious challenges that the fact poses to his theology:

But it is much more surprising that some even of those who, with ourselves, believe that there is only one source of all things, and that no nature which is not divine can exist unless originated by that Creator, have yet refused to accept with a good and simple faith this so good and simple a reason of the world’s creation, that a good God made it good; and that the things created, being different from God, were inferior to Him, and yet were good, being created by none other than He.<sup>43</sup>

I do not intend to craft a theodicy as such because I do not believe that God needs any justification. What I intend to do here is present an analysis of the problem and its impact on Augustine’s thought. Explaining the dichotomy between a good creation created by a good God and the existence of evil in that creation is a key component of Augustine’s theological philosophy. The problem that bothered Augustine as he came to understand the greatness, the vastness, the eternalness, the immutableness, the holiness, and goodness of God was that he could not equate God with the reality of the evil that he saw around him. It is a question that continues to concern contemporary Christians as well as those who would use the existence of evil as a rationale for disclaiming the existence of God. Therefore, since this question was of vital concern to Augustine himself and continues to be a question of concern to both believers and nonbelievers today, it is a question well worth exploring in our discussion of an Augustinian perspective on evil.

The incorruptible nature of God was essential to Augustine's understanding of the existence of evil and mankind's capacity for evil. "So once I had seen that the incorruptible is superior to the corruptible, I had to search for you in the light of this truth and make it the starting point of my inquiry into the origin of evil, that is, the origin of corruption, by which your substance cannot possibly be violated."<sup>44</sup> Augustine came to see clearly that if humanity was incorruptible, then humanity would be equal to God, and that is a nonsense; nothing is or can be equal to God. As we saw in *On Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine argued for the existence of God based on the fact of God's superiority to man and to man's ability for rational thought. But, the question remains if God is good, his creation must be good, so from where does evil come?

As Augustine searched for God and sought to understand the being of God, he was confounded by the existence and meaning of evil. Within the context of his desire to understand God, Augustine struggled to comprehend how evil could exist in a world created by a good God: "Although I believed that you were free from corruption or mutation or any degree of change, I still could not find a clear explanation, without complications, of the cause of evil."<sup>45</sup> This question is a very difficult one, and I personally struggled as I searched through Augustine's theological philosophy for the link between God's good creation and the existence of evil. Augustine argues: "So, it became obvious to me that all you have made is good, and that there are no substances whatsoever that were not made by you."<sup>46</sup> God who is good, who is "Eternal Truth, true Love, beloved Eternity" is the sole creator of the world, yet evil exists. The dichotomy is solved by the observation that all things created "are real in so far as they have their being from [God], but unreal in the sense that they are not what [he] is."<sup>47</sup> God is everywhere and in everything, but Augustine articulates a distinction between "a lower order" and "higher orders" of creation with God as the highest order.<sup>48</sup> As we have seen, Augustine held that God alone is incorruptible. In refuting Manichaeism, Augustine elaborates on this distinction between human beings as part of the created order and God as creator:

. . . the soul which has shown itself capable of being altered for the worse by its own will, and of being corrupted by sin, and so, of being deprived of the light of eternal truth--that this soul, I say, is not a part of God, nor of the same nature as God, but is created by Him, and is far different from its Creator.<sup>49</sup>

It is man's difference from God that makes him susceptible to evil but his likeness to God which makes him good: "If they were of the supreme order of goodness, they could not become corrupt; but neither could they become corrupt unless they were in some way good."<sup>50</sup> All things made by God are not evil in themselves, "yet in the separate parts of your creation there are some things which we think of as evil because they are at variance with other things. But there are other things again with which they are in accord, and then they are good. In themselves, too, they are good."<sup>51</sup> And evil can only exist as a corruption of good natures because God being Supreme Good can only makes things good; therefore:

"good can exist without evil, as in the true and supreme God Himself, and as in every invisible and visible celestial creature . . .; but evil cannot exist without good, because the natures in which evil exists, in so far as they are natures, are good. And evil is removed, not by removing any nature, or part of a nature, which had been introduced by the evil, but by healing and correcting that which had been vitiated and depraved."<sup>52</sup>

A man is evil and his nature is depraved when he is at variance with the perfect will of God.

Augustine expresses it thus: "And when I asked myself what wickedness was, I saw that it was not a substance but perversion of the will when it turns aside from you, O God . . ."<sup>53</sup> So, to Augustine, evil is not any kind of essence; it is a lack: "for no nature at all is evil, and this [evil] is a name for nothing but the want [lack] of good."<sup>54</sup>

Frequently, people who do not believe in God or the existence of a transcendent being couch the reason for their disbelief around the fact of evil in our world. We have explored how Augustine resolved the problem in his theological philosophy. They, like Augustine, question how evil can exist in a world created by a good God. However, unlike Augustine, there is an element of disingenuousness in the question from those who use evil as an excuse to disclaim the existence of God. They are not seeking to understand the existence of evil but instead are using it as a means to prove that God does not exist or that God is in some way unworthy of our worship,

allegiance, or obedience. I have always felt that this is purposefully misleading reasoning and that it is, in fact, off the point. A better, genuine question for those who sincerely question how God could be good and permit evil is, “how could God be good and not allow evil to exist?” To clarify, our question should be concerned with the relationship between man’s evil and God’s sufferance of man’s evil. By this I mean, evil by who’s measurement—by mine, by yours, by your enemy’s, by the person’s who disagrees with you about an issue of morality, or by the person’s who makes a judgment about the evilness of a single act? Who is to decide? The Bible tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed. . . .”<sup>55</sup> So, therefore, if God could only be good by not allowing evil to exist, God would be obliged to destroy all of his creation, which unlike God, is necessarily subject to corruption. Certainly, he would be obliged to rid creation of human beings who have the freedom of will to choose or to resist evil, unlike say an apple which cannot choose to turn rotten or not. So, in fact, God shows his goodness and his mercy in that he allows us the freedom to choose evil, (to choose to have a lack of God, a lack of good, in our lives) all the while providing a means whereby we can be forgiven for our evil through Jesus Christ. That is true goodness; that is the goodness of God enacted through his mercy which withholds his righteous judgment while simultaneously making a way for us to be restored to him through his grace. Therefore, the existence of evil in our world does not negate the goodness of God or provide a rationale for rejecting his existence.

## HUMAN NATURE AS CREATED BY GOD AND MANKIND'S CAPACITY FOR EVIL

In describing Augustine's analysis of the existence of evil in a world created by a good God, we saw that evil arose from mankind's corrupted will. But how did mankind's will become corrupted, and what is the nature of man as created by God? Niebuhr briefly describes man: "Man is, according to the Biblical view, a created and finite existence in both body and spirit."<sup>56</sup> Niebuhr's concise statement reveals much about the important aspects of humanity that are central to a discussion about human evil: man is created; he is finite; man is a created being of both body and spirit; both body and spirit are finite. Niebuhr posits his description according to the Bible, and Augustine developed his understanding of man's nature, existence, and capacity for evil from the Bible, beginning with humankind's creation in Genesis. To examine human nature and human evil, let us begin "in the beginning."

I have already discussed that humanity is created and that man as God created him is good. In fact, Genesis tells us that when God created the world, at each stage of creation he called the things that he had created "good," but when he created man, he said that what he had created was "very good."<sup>57</sup> God created humanity "very good" in that the man and the woman were created in the image of God: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion . . .'"<sup>58</sup> Dominion is one aspect of humanity's likeness to God. Whereas God has dominion over the entirety of creation, God granted humankind dominion over earth and all its creatures. But, humankind is also like God as "being," as "rational," and as "moral." As created by God, we are like God in that human beings are aware of "being" as is God: "Can it be that any man has skill to fabricate himself? . . . Surely we can only derive them [being and life] from our Maker, from you, Lord, to whom living and being are not different things, since infinite life and infinite being are one and the same."<sup>59</sup> Though not infinite like God, finite awareness of "being" is a part of our humanness. We do not generally refer to animals as "animal beings" because "being" or, more specifically, an "awareness of being" is restricted to humans. Animals are not aware that they exist in the way

that people are. Animals do not fear death because they have no understanding of their temporality or mortality. “Being” is a uniquely human experience, and our human, God-given awareness of being is inherent to our evil because our awareness of being is, at least partially, a function of our “rational” being in that God has granted us a rational mind: “God, then, made man in His own image. For He created for him a soul endowed with reason and intelligence, so that he might excel all the creatures of the earth, air, and sea, which were not so gifted.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, as possessors of a rational mind, we are accountable as moral beings. “This trinity, then, of the mind [i.e., memory-understanding-love] is the image of God, not because the mind remembers itself, understands itself, and loves itself, but rather because it can remember, understand, and love its maker. And when it does this, the mind is made wise. If it does not do this . . . the mind is foolish. Let the mind, then, remember, understand, and love its God after whose image it has been made.”<sup>61</sup> As “moral” beings our morality is activated by our God-given free will to choose whether to use our mind to remember, understand, and love God or not to do so: “no one can doubt that human being has been made in the image of the one who created it . . . according to the rational mind where there can be knowledge of God. . . .”<sup>62</sup>

So how did the “very good” thing that God created (humanity) become evil and capable of evil acts? Augustine saw that humanity becomes capable of evil when God is not at the center, when God is not the supreme desire of our being. Looking at himself as a child Augustine saw clearly how despite the gifts and the blessings that God had given him he did not have God as his focus: “But my sin was this, that I looked for pleasure, beauty, and truth not in him but in myself and his other creatures, and the search led me instead to pain, confusion, and error.”<sup>63</sup> Choosing to turn from God as the center began in the beginning with the “very good” people that God created in his image. With the exception of Jesus Christ who was “like the Father, of divine nature,”<sup>64</sup> the story of Adam and Eve provides the only example of the difference between a life and will completely and willingly surrendered to God and a life that is not. Before Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation offered by the snake to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good



and Evil in the Garden of Eden, they lived in perfect harmony with God in a perfect world. When Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of God, they committed the first sin. Pride and will were the rebellious agents in their sin. We shall look at pride in more depth later, but for the moment I want to focus on their will and the results of their sin on human nature. Adam and Eve took God out of his rightful place as the center of their world, and they desired something (to be like God on their own terms by eating of the tree from which God had forbidden them to eat) more than they desired God:

For the soul does many things out of a perverse desire, as though it were forgetful of itself. For in that more excellent nature which is God, it sees certain intrinsically beautiful things. And, although it ought to stand fast to enjoy them, it wills to assign those things to itself and wills not to be like God by God's doing but by its own doing to be what God is. Thus the soul is turned from God, set in motion, and slips into less and less, which it supposes to be more and more.<sup>65</sup>

Although in the quoted text above Augustine was not speaking directly of that first sin of Adam and Eve, upon reading it I was struck by the applicability to their motivation and desire and how the propensity for a rebellious will has been perpetuated in their offspring. Moreover, the evilness of their sin was compounded by the ease with which the prohibition (not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) could have been kept according to Augustine in his allegorical epic *The City of God*:

Therefore, because the sin was a despising of the authority of God—who had created man; who had made him in His own image; who had set him above the other animals; who had placed him in Paradise; who had enriched him with abundance of every kind and of safety; who had laid upon him neither many, nor great, nor difficult commandments, but, in order to make a wholesome obedience easy to him, had given him a single very brief and very light precept by which He reminded the creature whose service was to be free that He was Lord—it was just that condemnation followed, and condemnation such that man, who by keeping the commandments should have been spiritual even in his flesh, became fleshly even in his spirit; and as in his pride he had sought to be his own satisfaction, God in His justice abandoned him to himself, . . . to live dissatisfied with himself in a hard and miserable bondage. . . .<sup>66</sup>

Despite the ease with which they could have chosen obedience, they asserted the will that God had given them and acted in disobedience. So, their sin was both passive and active. Their sin was passive in that they were tempted externally by the snake and active in that they reached out

by choice and ate the fruit. By their act of will, sin and evil entered God's perfect earthly creation. Ironically, Adam and Eve gained knowledge of evil by committing evil. It was not that the fruit "contained" the knowledge of good and evil; it was that through their act of disobedience they learned that they were capable of acting under the direction of their own will rather than under the will of God, and sin and evil was the result.

Their disobedience resulted in punishment and an element of that punishment was a change in their natures. It is important to recognize that the punishment and the change in nature was an inevitable consequence of their act of will inflicted as a change in their natural state from the state in which they had been created by God. In *On the Nature of the Good*, Augustine spells out the means and manner of the change:

For he had also made this prohibition to show that the nature of the rational soul ought not to reside in its own power, but, rather, ought to be made subject to God, and to show that this nature guards the order of its own salvation by obedience and corrupts that order by disobedience. Hence, he also called that tree, which he forbade to be touched, the tree of discernment of good and evil (Gn.2.9); for when one would have touched it contrary to the prohibition, one would experience the penalty of sin and would thereby discern the difference between the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience.<sup>67</sup>

It is like the change in skin that takes place when it is burned. If a child reaches out and puts their hands into a flame, even though their parent has warned them not to do so, the skin will become burned, and if the burn is serious enough the skin undergoes a permanent change. The burn and the change in skin is an inevitable consequence of the act, whether the parent wills it or not. Here I am speaking of physical matters; therefore, the analogy is limited, but it is similar to the spiritual change by which Adam's and Eve's natures were irrevocably changed. It is their irrevocably changed nature that all the offspring of Adam and Eve inherit and which is referenced when we talk about inheriting "original sin." By not retaining the created nature given them by God which "guards the order of its own salvation," redemptive work by God became necessary and was accomplished in Augustinian and Christian theology by Christ on the cross. When we talk about original sin, we must remember that Augustine is not putting forward the idea that we are born with sin but that through original sin we will inevitably but not by necessity sin because

we have inherited a nature that prefers its own way and has lost its natural salvation. As

Augustine explains, we have inherited a nature that has turned from wanting God's will to wanting its own will:

I say that there was in that first-formed human being the will's freedom of choice. He was so made that nothing whatsoever would resist his will, if he wished to observe the precepts of God. However, after he sinned of his own free will, we, who have descended from his stock, were cast down into necessity.<sup>68</sup>

Our "necessity" is to return to the state of grace that the man and the woman had in the garden in which nothing would resist their will to be obedient to God. But, our altered will is no longer naturally to will obedience, hence, humanity's need for a savior.

As we have seen, when Adam and Eve walked in harmony with God in the garden they did not desire anything outside of the will of God and what God had given them until the first act of sin, which was an act of rebellion and rejection. Once that had happened, the nature that God had given them had altered from a nature that was turned, that was focused, that was perfectly submitted willingly and completely to the will of God and became a will intent on having its own way. And humanity has been struggling with this rebellious will ever since. This is tied into (or related to) what Nietzsche would call the "will to power." The self-willed will now recognizes its own power and desires to act in that power.

"And you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gn. 3.5). From these words we see that sin was made to prevail through pride . . . they were unwilling to be under God but preferred to be in their own power without God, so that they would not observe his law. . . . Therefore, they were persuaded of this, to love their own power to excess.<sup>69</sup>

We have inherited this altered nature motivated by pride that prefers its will to God's will. It is about preference and choice. Choice was a key element of this transformation from a submitted will to a rebellious will to power. And as the sin itself had been both passive and active, so was their choice. Until tempted, Adam and Eve had not made an active choice; their choice of obedience had been passive in that they were created in perfect communion with God and had remained passively in that role. When given the choice to remain in the role of a will submitted to the will and plan of God or to choose their own will above God's will, they chose their will, and that is when sin and the capacity for evil entered creation. Because God is good, the will and plan of God was that by obedience everything humanity did would be good. Having sinned they stepped out of God's will, and they became capable of evil. Each person today is born already with a personal will and nature subject to the inherited *will to power* outside the will

of God, and each must choose whether to submit the will and come back into alignment with God or to continue in choosing the self will above the will of God. It is humanity's exercise of a rebellious will that made and continues to make evil possible. A will that is completely surrendered to a good God is incapable of evil because God is incapable of evil. But even the most holy, good, and righteous person is not perfect. The Bible tells us "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."<sup>70</sup> And in *Confession* Augustine uses the works of Saint Paul to illustrate this point:

For even if a man "inwardly applauds God's disposition," how is he to resist "that other disposition in his lower self [will], which raises war against the disposition of his conscience, so that he is handed over as a captive to that disposition towards sin, which his lower self contains?" For "you have right on your side, O Lord, but we are sinners, that have wronged and forsaken you; all is amiss with us."<sup>71</sup>

## HUMAN NATURE AS A LEGACY OF ADAM AND EVE

Augustine personally experienced the struggle to resist sin and the commission of evil. He experienced both the passive and the active nature of sin. He was tempted, and he chose to act sinfully. We have seen that Augustine argued that evil happens when God is not at the center and that the sin of Adam and Eve has left humanity with a rebellious will. Knowing all this, what causes even those who profess the Christian faith to choose evil and sin before God? Augustine identifies three main causes that cover a multitude of temptations to self-will: pride, worldly distractions, and elevating the creation above the creator move God out of the center. These causes of evil are interrelated, so shall my discussion of them be directed. Our pride deceives us into believing that we are made for our pleasure and not made for God's pleasure. We then fall victim to the rule of sin that becomes the force of habit in our lives that overrides our will. Our will then becomes further corrupted to desire the temporal, corruptible things of the world more than the eternal, incorruptible God. And when our will is not completely surrendered to God, we are susceptible to the rule of sin which becomes force of habit, and it is a vicious cycle.

Augustine explains that the cycle as it happens begins with our pride:

You were my true Joy while I was subject to you, and you had made subject to me all the things that you had created inferior to me. This was the right mean, the middle path that led to my salvation, if only I remained true to your likeness and by, serving you, became the master of my own body. But when I rose in pride against you . . . even those lower things became my masters and oppressed me. . . .<sup>72</sup>

Again in *City of God*: "And this vice, what else is it called than pride? For 'pride is the beginning of sin.'" And in *On Music*: "The beginning of human pride is the apostasy from God . . ."<sup>73</sup>

Reinhold Niebuhr has quite brilliantly analyzed the relationship between man's pride in his awareness of his place above the rest of the created order and his understanding as a rational being of his finiteness and mortality. The insecurity and anxiety produced "by the ambiguity of his position, as standing in and yet above nature," leads man to distrust God and to assert his self-will in an attempt to feel secure, which inevitably leads to evil. "The ego which falsely makes itself the centre of existence in its pride and will-to-power inevitably subordinates other life to its

will and thus does injustice to other life.”<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche has argued that God does not exist and God is dead, and as a result of that premise our natural impulses are to rise to the top, to seize, basically, whatever we want. That is human nature, the nature to seize and to grab without thought for others. Nietzsche maintains that Christian morality tries to dumb down our natural impulses.<sup>75</sup> We have tragically seen the results of that kind of reasoning and the acceptance, indeed the encouragement, of that kind of philosophy. But Augustine’s paradigm is more subtle and also more interesting. His argument is that because we are rational, because we can understand the glory of God, because we can appreciate the immensity and magnificence of his creation, we should realize that we are not God, and we understand that we, although empowered with the ability to be in control of ourselves, are not in control of others, creating the anxiety that Niebuhr talks about but in a different way. The anxiety that Augustine identifies is an anxiety generated by our inability to permanently hold onto that which we desire: “Fear attacks from one side and desire from the other, an empty and deceptive happiness; from one side, the agony of losing what one loved; from the other, the passion to acquire what one did not have. . . .”<sup>76</sup> It strikes me that we also on some level comprehend that the only one who can hold onto everything which he desires is God, so we seek to be like God. We seek to be God. Pride, the original sin of wanting to be like God, has at its root insecurity, fear, and anxiety. But our true security comes from desiring that with which we are in total control and cannot lose--our relationship to God.

The argument is concluded:

All sins come about when someone turns away from divine things that truly persist and toward changeable and uncertain things. These things do have their proper place, and they have a certain beauty of their own, but when a perverse and disordered soul pursues them it becomes enslaved to the very things that divine order and law commanded it to rule over.<sup>77</sup>

Adam and Eve enjoyed total security and peaceful lack of wanting, which is also completeness and contentment, until the snake introduced doubt into their minds and with doubt, insecurity.

The second trap that makes mankind susceptible to the rule of sin is to elevate the creation above the creator. As we have seen, this type of sin can be a result of insecurity and pride. Augustine warns his readers:

If the things of this world delight you, praise God for them but turn your love away from them and give it to their Maker. . . . The good things which you love are all from God, but they are good and sweet only as long as they are used to do his will. They will rightly turn bitter if God is spurned and the things that come from him are wrongly loved.”<sup>78</sup>

Augustine also recognized that we have no excuse for choosing to worship the creation rather than the creator. In *Confessions* Augustine quotes chapter one from Paul’s letter to the Romans no less than eight times:<sup>\*\*</sup>

Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or four-footed animals and reptiles. Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped the creature rather than the creator. . . .<sup>79</sup>

Therein was Augustine’s problem, which is a central cause of evil. God who is immutable, eternal, perfect goodness, and absolute truth should have been the central desire and driving force of his life and will, instead his corrupted will to power was the driving force. Specifically, Augustine admits that lust was what drove him; sexual pleasure was what he desired. God allows us the freedom to choose. When God is not at the center, he abandons us to sin and allows us to suffer the consequences of our choices. Augustine came to comprehend and believe what he had been told “that we do evil because we choose to do so of our own free will, and suffer it because your [God’s] justice rightly demands that we should.”<sup>80</sup>

Augustine humbly explains how he came to his understanding of the process whereby the Rule of Sin and the Force of Habit come to consume our will, and it is important to understand because it is the process that makes a person capable of evil even if our conscious will is to live

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<sup>\*\*</sup> *Confessions*, 94, 95, 146, 147, 151, 152, 154, 158. Generally he quotes only Romans 1:20 but on occasion 1:20-25.

righteously. The rule of sin becomes a force of habit that wears away at our will and at any goodness in us until none remains—evil results. In *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, Mathewes offers a description of the Augustinian perspective of the phenomena:

This [the sin in us that wars with our better nature] is indicated in what is perhaps Augustine’s most famous line from. . . *Confessions*: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you.” On this account, then, evil is really in us, in the sinful misdisposition of our will, articulated in our habits (both individual and social) and bad judgments; but it is in us as being a contradiction, a destruction or corruption or ourselves, a self-harm we inflict on our natural integrity.<sup>81</sup>

Augustine tells of his own sin as an example to explain the process. He reveals how as a boy he stole pears with some of his friends, not because he was hungry but for “a greedy love of doing wrong.” Moreover, he admits that the “real pleasure consisted in doing something that was forbidden” and “from the thrill of having partners in sin.” He loved the sin because it created “the illusion of liberty by doing something wrong.”<sup>82</sup> Pride made him want to imagine himself as equal to God, and he could imagine equality with God by willfully doing wrong. He found that the theft “brought no happiness” but his will persisted in asserting itself. As he grew, he found himself seeking God but dragged down by “the habit of the flesh.”<sup>83</sup> Augustine had become a slave to lust rather than the servant of God. Augustine explains: “I was held fast, not in fetters clamped upon me by another but by my own will. . . . For my will was perverse and lust had grown from it, and when I gave in to lust habit was born, and when I did not resist the habit it became a necessity.”<sup>84</sup> Habit had become “a potent enemy” that his will could not resist even when he wanted to change.

Augustine saw himself engaged in a battle of wills: “So these two wills within me, one old, one new, one the servant of the flesh, the other of the spirit, were in conflict and between them they tore my soul apart.”<sup>85</sup> His revelation of the battle between the spirit and the flesh is very Pauline, and Augustine himself quotes St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians: “the impulses of nature and the impulses of the spirit are at war with one another.” I, myself, was reminded of Paul’s letter to the Romans:



. . .but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . .So I find it to be a law that when I want to do good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.<sup>86</sup>

However, this does not mean that “the flesh” of itself is bad. Augustine is frequently at pains to explain that every nature and every creature created by God is good and that “if all natures would observe their own proper measure, form, and order, there would be no evil.”<sup>87</sup> The problem of evil occurs when the flesh moves out of its proper place in the natural order, when the will and desires of the flesh take precedence. This essential fault is that which caused Adam and Eve to sin, preferring something above God, but the flesh itself is not evil. Letting the temporal flesh control the immortal soul and spirit is just another form of idolatry. But Augustine also acknowledges the soul itself can be corrupted and, indeed, “the corruption of the body, which weighs down the soul, is not the cause but the punishment of the first sin; and it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible.”<sup>88</sup> Augustine makes it clear that neither soul nor flesh should be held above God: “. . . for in its own kind and degree the flesh is good, but to desert the Creator good, and live according to the created good, is not good, whether a man choose to live according to the flesh, or according to the soul, or according to the whole human nature, which is composed of flesh and soul. . . .”<sup>89</sup>

Paul’s theology helped Augustine to contextualize and make sense of his own battle against lust, which had come to have a greater power over him than his desire for God. Augustine identified lust as the primary type of worldly distraction. And, although for Augustine sexual lust was the lust with which he most struggled, in *The City of God* he defined lust in a more universal sense:

. . .the name “lust”. . . is the generic word for all desires. . . . There is, therefore, a lust for revenge, which is called anger; there is a lust of money, which goes by the name of avarice; there is a lust of conquering, no matter by what means, . . .; there is a lust of applause, which is named boasting. There are many and various lusts, of which some have names of their own while others do not. For who could readily give a name to the lust of ruling, which has yet a powerful influence in the soul of tyrants. . . .<sup>90</sup>

The pleasures of the flesh and the distractions of the world give us a temporary sense of relief, a temporary sense of peace from the insecurity arising from our awareness of our finiteness and the battle of our will that does not want to submit to God's will. The irony is that our spirit only finds true peace in surrender to God. Augustine says, "I was quite sure that it was better for me to give myself up to your [God's] love than to surrender to my own lust. But . . . I was still a slave to the pleasures of the second."<sup>91</sup> Through Paul, Augustine had come to understand the reason for and the possible outcomes of his struggle. He could continue to let the rule of sin dominate his life or he could surrender his will to God and find the "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding."<sup>92</sup>

If, as Augustine argued, "the rule of sin is the force of habit, by which the mind is swept along and held fast even against its will, yet deservedly, because it fell into the habit of its own accord," how do we break the cycle?<sup>93</sup> How do we overcome our inclination to evil? Augustine found that the cycle can only be broken through conversion and confession. Confession is necessary for salvation, and Augustine had to admit to God that "it was abominable wickedness to prefer to defeat your ends and lose my soul rather than submit to you and gain salvation."<sup>94</sup> Confession is two fold; it is confession of sin and confession of the need for and a deeper desire for God than the temporal things of this world. In *Confessions*, Augustine describes his personal experience of confession, repentance, and conversion to Christianity. Augustine suffered through his confession and conversion. Before he could confess his sins to God, he had to admit his sinfulness to himself. This is a common stumbling block because the pride that protects and camouflages our anxiety and insecurity prevents honesty and encourages self deception, but Augustine says that God set his sins before him: "You were setting before my own eyes so that I could see how sordid I was, how deformed and squalid. . . . I saw it all and stood aghast, but there was no place where I could escape from myself."<sup>95</sup> Yet his soul still did not want to give up its grip on his life and the rule of sin did not want him to abandon the force of habit through which he sinned. "But I still postponed my renunciation of this world's joys, which would have

left me free to look for that other happiness [which] I ought to have prized above the discovery of all human treasures and kingdoms. . . .”<sup>96</sup> Augustine’s soul “fought back . . . . It remained silent and afraid, for . . . it feared the stanching of the flow of habit, by which it was wasting to death.”<sup>97</sup> That battle of the will that desired the things of the flesh against the things of the spirit raged in him until he cast himself upon God who converted him so that he “stood firmly on the rule of faith” in victory over the rule of sin.<sup>98</sup>

Augustine recognized that Jesus is our perfect example and necessary for our submission to God. Augustine tells how he understood that he needed to desire God above all things, but he was unable. He says, “I began to search for a means of gaining the strength that I needed to enjoy you, but I could not find this means until I embraced the ‘mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ . . . . nor had I learnt what lesson his human weakness was meant to teach. The lesson is that your Word, [Jesus], the eternal Truth, which far surpasses even the higher parts of creation, raises up to himself all who subject themselves to him.”<sup>99</sup> If God is love and if God “did not withhold his own son, but gave him up”<sup>100</sup> for the sake of humanity, we have the perfect example for goodness towards others in both the Father and the Son. If our universe could expand beyond ourselves with God at the center and if we could have a truly completely and willingly surrendered will, we would cease to be capable of evil.

## TRUTH WITH A BIG “T”

How can we appropriate what Augustine learned about God, human nature, and evil for a postmodern world. In postmodern pop culture, pop icons have no real identity according to Jack Solomon in a piece about MTV: “the look is everything: character, the spirit that lives beneath the skin, is nothing.”<sup>101</sup> Solomon puts forward the idea that these pop icons mimic the times: “In the postmodern worldview, there is no such thing as the essential ‘me.’”<sup>102</sup> But it is my opinion that to believe that the external mask is everything and that there is no essential identity to each of us is to fool ourselves. The spirit and the soul that lie *beneath* the skin are everything, whether we acknowledge it or not. It is the spirit that drives people to put on the masks to play roles because the world in which we live has become so false. Denying that ultimate truth exists does not make it so any more than denying that gravity exists will make one weightless. We have seen that Augustine’s theological philosophy is concerned with the pursuit of Truth, which he equates with God, as eternal and unchanging. When Augustine discovered philosophy by reading *Hotensius*, he recounts its impact in *Confessions*: “It altered my outlook on life. . . . All my empty dreams suddenly lost their charm and my heart began to throb with a bewildering passion for the wisdom of truth.”<sup>103</sup>

“What is truth?” Webster’s defines truth in the first instance as “the true or actual state of a matter,” and in the second instance as “conformity with fact or reality; verity.”<sup>104</sup> In modern usage, truth is frequently synonymous with *fact*, as in scientific *facts*. This sort of truth is what Hauer and Young in *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey into Three Worlds* refer to as a “‘referential’ understanding of truth,” which they explain to be a “statement. . . that can be verified empirically.”<sup>105</sup> But even scientific *facts* do not always turn out to be *true*. Scientists held as fact for years that Pluto was a planet, but now they are not so sure. Panda bears were not bears, but now it appears they are. Verity, one of the defining characteristics of truth, is from the Latin *veritas*, meaning “the state or quality of being true.”<sup>106</sup> We have come full circle back to *truth*, except that verity in the second instance of definition in Webster’s allows for “something

that is true, as a principle, belief, or statement.” *Belief* permits truth that is not strictly empirical. Hauer and Young agree asserting that “statements that are referentially ‘false’ or at least ‘unverifiable’ may be ‘true in other respects.’”<sup>107</sup> Moreover, in the list of Webster’s definitions for truth is a definition that is listed as: “(often cap.) ideal or fundamental reality apart from and transcending perceived experience.”<sup>108</sup> The truth that Augustine sought is that capitalized *Truth*, the fundamental reality.

However, postmodernism is not a friend of Truth. Jean-François Lyotard defined postmodernism thus: “Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives.”<sup>109</sup> This “incredulity toward metanarratives” describes the postmodern emphasis and affinity for relativism and perspectivism and its rejection of ultimate all-embracing truths. Since postmodernism is concerned with relativism or, at the least, perspectivism then it is only fair to acknowledge that Augustine understands the constraints imposed by relativism and perspectivism. What I mean is that Augustine recognizes that there are numerous worldviews and philosophical and theological perspectives; he had read enough to know that, so in his writing Augustine is at pains to persuade and convince through argument and reasoning that the model in which he believes is Truth. Even Nietzsche, shall we call him the grandfather of postmodernism, did not go so far as to suppose that there was no such thing as ultimate truth but only, in his opinion, that it was not within the province of any individual to have a full enough perspective to comprehend truth. But Nietzsche and the postmodernists are not as original or as radical as they might suppose. Indeed, Saint Paul (writing nearly 2,000 years ago), whose writing and theology profoundly influenced Augustine, admitted mankind’s limited knowledge of ultimate truth when he wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then [after death and resurrection] face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known [by God in his infinite knowledge].”<sup>110</sup> In regards to the existence of ultimate truth, Arthur Asa Berger, postmodernist writer and professor emeritus of broadcast and electronic

communication arts at San Francisco State University, explains Nietzsche's position on the existence of capital "T" truth within a perspectivist perspective, no pun intended, in this way:

The "perspectivist" point of view, which stems from the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's writings, suggests that facts don't exist independent of the perspectives of the people asserting them. All that we can do, Nietzsche tells us, is offer our interpretations of reality, which means the more interpretations we can offer of something, the closer we come to finding out the truth of the matter. But some perspectives, Nietzsche tells us, are better than others, which means that Nietzsche is not a relativist and does not argue that there's no such thing as truth and that anyone's opinion is as good as anyone else's.<sup>111</sup>

Augustine was convinced that *Truth* exists, and his life's search was to discover and to understand the *Truth* of the universe, God, and creation, including humanity. Moreover, Roland Teske in his 1992 Saint Augustine Lecture, "Saint Augustine as Philosopher: The Birth of Christian Metaphysics" quotes Augustine to show that Augustine was passionate that *Truth* be held not by faith alone but by reason:

Correct your position . . . not so that you reject faith, but so that what you already hold by solid faith, you may also see by the light of reason. . . . Heaven forbid that God should hate in us that by which he made us more excellent than the animals. Heaven forbid, I say, that we believe so that we do not accept or seek a rational account, since we could not believe unless we had rational souls.<sup>112</sup>

If postmodernism rejects what Lyotard calls the metanarratives of history and humanity that modernism embraced, which were based upon "a belief in scientific rationality and all-embracing theories of truth and progress,"<sup>113</sup> moving beyond postmodernism will allow us to re-embrace the notion that ultimate truth does exist. The first step towards understanding evil is recognizing that the entire universe is a metanarrative written by God. It is God's metanarrative that Augustine sought to unfold and comprehend his entire life. I believe that it is time to re-embrace Augustine's old metanarrative with an open mind. Augustine offers a balanced, rational view of humanity and evil that encompasses the metaphysical—God—and his part in the story.

We have been looking at Augustine and his writing to come to an understanding of evil. But we should not let that persuade us to accept the frequently accepted bias that Augustine was pessimistic. As stated earlier, Augustine confronted the problem of evil because he was searching for God and for Truth; ultimate, eternal, not relativistic or perspectivistic truth. In seeking God,

Augustine was forced to come to terms with and to understand how evil could exist in a world created by a good God, but evil was not his inspiration or his goal. It is worth remembering that, and it is important to acknowledge that Augustine was deeply interested in happiness and in joy. But as Augustine came to understand his faith and to develop his theological philosophy, he came to realize that humankind's highest joy and happiness is not found in the temporal things of this world but in Truth and in God:

. . .since the highest good is known and acquired in the truth, and that truth is wisdom, let us enjoy to the full the highest good, which we see and acquire in that truth. For those who enjoy the highest good are happy indeed. This truth shows forth all good things that are true, holding them out to be grasped by whoever has understanding and chooses one or many of them for his enjoyment. . . .It is just the same with a strong and lively mind. Once it has contemplated many true and unchangeable things with the sure eye of reason, it turns to the truth itself by which all those true things are made known. It forgets those other things and cleaves to the truth, in which it enjoys them all at once. For whatever is delightful in the other true things is especially delightful in the truth itself.

This is our freedom, when we are subject to the truth; and the truth is God Himself, who frees us from death, that is, from the state of sin. . . . “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” For the soul enjoys nothing with freedom unless it enjoys it securely.<sup>114</sup>

So, Augustine teaches us that all souls seek and desire happiness but they seek it in the wrong places. He leads us in understanding that adherence to temporal things that “can be lost against [one's] will” deprives us of happiness and leaves our will restless and susceptible to sin acted out as evil.<sup>115</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Returning to where we began, with the idea that evil can in some way be secularized, in reference to the essays that make up the book *Modernity and the Problem of Evil*, Allan Schrift says:

“Together, they offer various ways to think about how a philosophical concept of evil might avoid falling into a theologically motivated discourse.”<sup>116</sup> But I think, and we have seen in the analysis of Augustine, that such an attempt is futile and pointless. It is like talking about a forest fire while refusing to recognize the flames that are causing the damage. Augustine makes clear that evil exists, and evil is at its root a spiritual issue. We can *not* talk about evil productively or attempt to overcome its effects without recognizing the spiritual dimension of evil. And if, as Augustine says, evil is a lack of good, God’s place, as humanity’s creator and as the Supreme Good, is as elemental as flames to fire in understanding and countering humanity’s capacity for evil. Moreover, without recognizing the spiritual root of evil it is impossible to overcome it individually or corporately in human society. It is like doctors who, unable to recognize that germs caused illness or to understand the importance of blood, tried to treat and cure ill patients by bleeding them. All they did was remove what patients needed most to effect a cure—healthy blood. Likewise, trying to resolve evil without recognizing the role of the spirit and the need for a healthy spirit with God at the center is futile. Such a resolution leaves out what we need the most to eliminate evil—God.

With the advent of the Enlightenment people learned to confuse knowledge with truth and logic with wisdom. But secular rationality and empiricism do not always lead to truth. Sometimes they do not even lead to clarity, and Augustine argues that to put rational knowledge, which he valued, before wisdom is folly:

If, then, this is a right distinction between wisdom and science—that to wisdom belongs the intellectual knowledge of eternal things, while to science belongs the rational knowledge of temporal things—it is not difficult to judge which is to be put before or to be put after the other. . . . no one doubts that the former is to be preferred to the latter.<sup>117</sup>



Tragically, modern man seems to have abandoned wisdom in preferring the latter. Another way in which Augustine would have conceived this difference is in his allegory of the two cities in *The City of God*: “there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities, according to the language of our Scriptures. The one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh [temporally according to scientific secularism], the other of those who wish to live after the spirit [eternally according to wisdom and Truth].”<sup>118</sup> Augustine makes plain the piece that is missing in comprehending evil in the human equation is God and knowledge of eternal Truths. If evil is the absence of good, as darkness is the absence of light, humanity with the absence of God at the center becomes an agent capable of evil.

The reason that I find Augustine so compelling is because I have made the journey that he made in seeking Truth. I have observed the beauty, the wonder, the mystery, the awesomeness that is creation and asked the questions that Augustine asked. I have seen that I exist, and that I think, that I am rational, but that I am also an emotional and spiritual being, and I have recognized in horror my own capacity for evil and the capacity for evil in those I love. I have asked, “What is the cause of evil in a world created by a good God?” The wholeness and logic of Augustine’s theological philosophy answers all my questions regarding evil, as they answered his. Augustine was always sincere and passionate. In our current cynical age that sneers at sincerity as naïve or even dangerous, I would argue that we could use a little sincerity and honesty. It is time to reject our “easy conscience” and to have the courage to take a good, hard look at where secular rationality in the discourse of evil has led us in an age when inhuman evil against humanity has shocked generations: Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995) 200,000 deaths; Rwanda (1994) 800,000 deaths; Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge (1975-1979) 2,000,000 deaths; Nazi Holocaust (1938-1945) 6,000,000 deaths; Rape of Nanking (1937-1938) 300,000 deaths; Stalin’s Forced Famine (1932-1933) 7,000,000 deaths; Armenian Genocide in Turkey (1915-1918) 1,500,000 deaths; Idi Amin’s tyranny in Uganda (1971-1979) 80,000-500,000 deaths, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 caused 2973 deaths.<sup>119</sup> The greatest tragedy of our times is that people

continue to elevate all sorts of things above God. Humankind has become so proud of its reason and knowledge that it has lost sight of the fact that all knowledge, all talents, all gifts come from God. We think we are so clever because we are discovering the workings of the universe. But our limited knowledge is nothing compared to the maker of the universe who set what we are just coming to understand about the universe in motion. Our world is so full of material distractions and pleasures that the very possessions with which God has blessed us become distractions from the one who made us for his pleasure. As long as we continue to elevate the creature (ourselves) above the creator, and as long as we choose our will over God's will, evil will persist in the world.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Alan D. Schrift, *Modernity and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, ed. Betty Radice (St. Ives, England: Penguin Books, 1961), 176.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.
- <sup>4</sup> Schrift, *Modernity and the Problem of Evil*, 4.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>6</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man, A Christian Interpretation: Volume 1. Human Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), 93, 94.
- <sup>7</sup> Charles T. Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.
- <sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 294.
- <sup>9</sup> Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, 34.
- <sup>10</sup> William L. McBride, "Liquidating the 'Nearly Just Society': Radical Evil's Triumphant Return," in *Modernity and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 29.
- <sup>11</sup> Peter Dews, "Disenchantment and the Persistence of Evil: Habermas, Jonas, Badiou," in *Modernity and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 53.
- <sup>12</sup> *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*, ed. in chief, Robert B. Costello (New York: Random House, 1996), 1014.
- <sup>13</sup> Peter Dews, "Disenchantment and the Persistence of Evil: Habermas, Jonas, Badiou," 52.
- <sup>14</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, excerpt from *The Antichrist*, trans. Eugen Kelly, 1980, in *Ethics and the Search for Values*, ed. Luis E. Navia and Eugene Kelly (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1980), 356.
- <sup>15</sup> Martin Beck Matušík, "Violence and Secularization, Evil and Redemption" in *Modernity and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 44.
- <sup>16</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1977), 150.
- <sup>17</sup> Nietzsche, qtd. in Navia and Kelly, 346.
- <sup>18</sup> Vermon J. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom: Life and Philosophy of the Bishop of Hippo* (Milwaukee, Wis.: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1945), 17.
- <sup>19</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 59.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1993), 243.
- <sup>22</sup> Robert Meagher, *Augustine: On the Inner Life of the Mind* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 3.
- <sup>23</sup> Augustine, *Tracts on the Gospel of John* in *Augustine: On the Inner Life of the Mind*, ed. Robert Meagher (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 118.
- <sup>24</sup> Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, Trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 38.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 44, 46.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.
- <sup>33</sup> Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, 64.
- <sup>34</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 27, 25, 24.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.
- <sup>36</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Michael W. Tkacz and Douglas in *Augustine: Political Writings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 63.

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- <sup>37</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 104.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 137.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 26.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 23.
- <sup>41</sup> Thomas Williams, trans. in Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), xiii.
- <sup>42</sup> Augustine, *Free Choice*, 1.
- <sup>43</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 366.
- <sup>44</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 137.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., 136.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., 148.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., 147.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 366.
- <sup>50</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 148.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 458.
- <sup>53</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 150.
- <sup>54</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 365.
- <sup>55</sup> Rom., 3:23-25 NKJV (New King James Version).
- <sup>56</sup> Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, 32.
- <sup>57</sup> Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31 RSV
- <sup>58</sup> Gen. 1:26 RSV
- <sup>59</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 26.
- <sup>60</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 407.
- <sup>61</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 14.12.15 in Meagher, 131.
- <sup>62</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, in Meagher, 180.
- <sup>63</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 40.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., 145.
- <sup>65</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 10.5.7 in Meagher, 155.
- <sup>66</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 462.
- <sup>67</sup> Augustine, *On the Nature of the Good*, 34-37 in Meagher, 165.
- <sup>68</sup> Augustine, *Argument against Fortunatus*, 22 in Meagher, 81.
- <sup>69</sup> Augustine, *On Genesis against the Manichaeans*, 2.15.22; 2.16.24 in Meagher, 164.
- <sup>70</sup> Rom. 3:23 NKJV.
- <sup>71</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 155.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., 143.
- <sup>73</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 385; *On Music* 6.13.40 in Meagher, 165.
- <sup>74</sup> Niebuhr, 178, 179, specific quotes. Niebuhr's analysis condensed here runs from pages 150-252.
- <sup>75</sup> Navia and Kelly, *Ethics*, 345-349.
- <sup>76</sup> Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, 18; entire argument by Augustine encompasses all of Book One.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid., 27.
- <sup>78</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 82.
- <sup>79</sup> Rom. 1:20-25 RSV.
- <sup>80</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 136.
- <sup>81</sup> Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, 74.
- <sup>82</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 47, 52, 50.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., 152.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid., 164.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid.,.
- <sup>86</sup> Rom. 7:14-15,21-23 RSV
- <sup>87</sup> Augustine, *On the Nature of the Good*, 34-37 in Meagher, 166.
- <sup>88</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 444.
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid., 446.
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid., 464.

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- <sup>91</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 165.
- <sup>92</sup> Phil. 4:7 RSV
- <sup>93</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 165.
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.
- <sup>100</sup> Rom. 8:32 RSV
- <sup>101</sup> Jack Solomon, *The Signs of Our Times* (Los Angeles: Jack Tarcher, 1988), 227-29 in Berger, 8.
- <sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>103</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 58.
- <sup>104</sup> Webster's, 1432.
- <sup>105</sup> Christian Hauer and William A. Young, *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey into Three Worlds* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2005), 30.
- <sup>106</sup> Webster's, 1480.
- <sup>107</sup> Hauer and Young, 30.
- <sup>108</sup> Webster's, 1432.
- <sup>109</sup> Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv. in Berger, 2.
- <sup>110</sup> 1 Cor. 13:12, NKJV.
- <sup>111</sup> Arthur Asa Berger, *The Portable Postmodernist* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), XV.
- <sup>112</sup> Roland Teske, "Saint Augustine as Philosopher: The Birth of Christian Metaphysics," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 17-18.
- <sup>113</sup> Berger, ix.
- <sup>114</sup> Augustine, *Free Choice*, 56. (John 8:31-32).
- <sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.
- <sup>116</sup> Schrift, *Modernity and Evil*, 9.
- <sup>117</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, in Meagher, 186.
- <sup>118</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 441.
- <sup>119</sup> <http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/index.html>;  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/09/03/death.toll/>;  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/aug/18/guardianobituaries>