I

# Introducing the Issues

The aim of this study is to arrive at an understanding of the meaning that Augustine gave to the ideas of virtue, vice, and sin, ideas which lie at the very heart of his thought and which are key to understanding the contribution that he made, not only to moral thought but also to political and social thought and to Christian doctrine itself. My study is timely because over the last two or three decades, there has been a growing interest in 'virtue' ethics as an important and distinctive approach to moral philosophy. I seek to provide insights into the historical development of this normative approach, in particular, to shed light on the crucial transition between classical 'pagan' Greek and Roman ideas of virtue and vice, and Christian ideas of virtue and vice. There have been many distinguished contributions on the subject of Augustine's ethics; in what follows I acknowledge the assistance that these writings have provided me and seek to weave the insights found in these works together with my own insights derived from a fresh reading of important passages in Augustine's writings. The resulting synthesis offers original insights on a topic about which there has been too little clarity, namely, what Augustine meant by the key notions of virtue and sin. My belief is that clarifying this will add in a significant way to the existing scholarship on Augustine's ethics.

A study focused upon the meaning that Augustine gave to the ideas of virtue and sin is long overdue. More than eighty years ago, Joseph Wang Tche'ang-Tche began his monograph *Saint Augustin et les vertus des païens* by emphasising that any study of Augustine's moral philosophy needed to begin by investigating the meaning that he assigned to the term



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"virtue."[1] Wang noted that the notion of virtue was fundamental for understanding Augustine's thought, and criticised those who ignored the need to investigate its precise meaning and who thereby were in danger of offering explanations of his moral thought which had "nothing Augustinian" about them.[2]

I will return to what Wang had to say about virtue below. His warning that we cannot assume that we necessarily know what Augustine meant by the ideas of virtue and sin, and the related ideas of "good deeds" and "bad deeds," and their many cognates, is the starting point for the present study. In what follows, I begin with the assumption that these are all notions which require careful investigation to establish their frame of reference for Augustine, much as we would investigate the meaning of any other important idea in his writings.

Given the centrality of virtue and sin in his thought, the absence of a study dedicated to his understanding of these ideas is a significant lacuna in the extensive scholarship on Augustine and his legacy. While my main purpose in what follows is to remedy this, I also have two further aims. An additional reason for undertaking this study lies in the possibility that Augustine's moral thought in some way broke with the moral traditions of Greece and Rome. Augustine claimed to see shortcomings in the moral traditions that he had inherited from classical antiquity, and to have improved upon them, and these claims deserve to be investigated. Establishing whether and in what sense his moral thought was innovative is an important purpose of the present study.

Augustine's moral thought is of inherent interest for a further reason. He was clear that to be a Christian was to be virtuous; the acquisition of Christian faith was the moment of acquiring virtue. Hence, his understanding of virtue offers an insight into how he understood the nature of Christian conversion and the meaning of the Christian life. What did he see in Christian faith which made the presence of virtue in the Christian believer inevitable? What was virtue that it was inseparable from Christian faith? In claiming that virtue was found only among Christians, and that it was necessarily found among them, Augustine also declared that virtue could not be a human achievement but must be given by divine grace. How did he explain this claim? Augustine is one of the most influential figures in western Christianity, and, as such, his

[1] Joseph Wang Tche'ang-Tche, *Saint Augustin et les vertus des païens* (Paris: Études de Théologie Historique, 1938).

[2] Ibid., p. 7.

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understanding of what it meant to be a Christian merits being made the focus of critical study. Exploring his moral thought is a key means to do this, and this is the third main purpose for undertaking the present study.

Thus, this study has three principal aims: to offer a systematic account of Augustine's ideas of virtue and sin, to explain in what sense his understanding of these ideas broke with the non-Christian moral philosophies that preceded it, and to understand Augustine's claim that to possess Christian faith was to be virtuous. While these are my main aims, this study also seeks to achieve one more thing. Current assessments of Augustine's social and political thought are closely tied to a certain interpretation of his moral thought. Hence, by offering an in-depth analysis of his views on virtue and sin, this study also offers a critical evaluation of the current understanding of his social and political thought. In numerous studies of his political outlook, his conviction that human beings were incorrigible sinners until they were assisted by grace is read as leading him to reject the idea that non-Christians could achieve social and political justice.[3] In examining what Augustine meant by sin and virtue, including the virtue of justice, the following assesses whether or not such a reading of his views on politics and society is in fact correct.

Augustine discussed the virtuous and the sinful in nearly every work which he wrote, from his sermons and letters, which frequently deal with moral themes, to his formal treatises, including his anti-heretical writings, his works of exegesis, and his major works on the Trinity and the City of God. Given the impossibility of dealing adequately with all these writings in the course of one monograph, any work such as mine needs to make choices about how to navigate this sea. One choice which scholars sometimes make is to package his work chronologically, dealing with either his early writings, his writings from mid-career, or his later thought. Another choice is to study a discrete set of writings which spans his whole career, such as his sermons or letters. I am not satisfied with the utility of either of these approaches when it comes to exploring such a major theme in his thought as the nature of virtue and sin. Both approaches run the risk of missing important statements about virtue and sin which would help to clarify allusions found elsewhere in his writings. Instead, my approach has been threefold. First, I make use of writings known to contain

[3] A number of these studies are discussed in more detail below. See also Katherine Chambers, "Augustine on Justice: A Reconsideration of *City of God*, Book 19," *Political Theology* 19 (2018): 382–396, for a discussion of those scholars who have found this view in *City of God*, Book 19.

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explorations of themes of central relevance to this topic, such as *On the Happy Life*, *The Catholic Way of Life*, *Confessions*, *On the Spirit and the Letter, On Christian Doctrine*, and *The City of God*. Second, I have been guided to texts, or passages from texts, by discussions in the scholarship on Augustine's moral and political thought. I have not depended on these secondary writings for my understanding of Augustine's thought, but I have used them to ensure that I have not overlooked important passages. Third, I have used Augustine's discussion of certain biblical passages (such as 1 Corinthians 13:3 and Philippians 3:6–9) as a guide, exploring his comments on these passages wherever they occur in his writings. Augustine's writings are copious, and I certainly do not claim to have found every passage which could be usefully discussed in relation to my theme; nonetheless, I have endeavoured to be as comprehensive as possible.

## LOVE AND ACTIONS

In some well-known passages, Augustine defined virtue as a kind of love: this love had as its central characteristic the fact that the Christian God was loved.[4] In a number of other passages, he identified sin with another kind of love, namely, carnal concupiscence, which he associated with the love of temporal things.[5] He also indicated that people sinned in loving

[4] In *De Moribus Ecclesiae*, 15.25, Augustine wrote, "I would not define virtue in any other way than as the highest love [*summum amorem*] of God.... Now since this love, as I have said, is not of things in general, but rather love of God ..." (the Gallaghers' translation reads "the perfect love of God," but I prefer the more literal "the highest love of God"). In Letter 155, at 4.13, he declared, "And yet even in this life there is no virtue but to love what one should love." In Letter 167, at 11 and 15, he stated, quoting from 1 Timothy 1:5, "For *love from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned*, is the great and true virtue, for it is *the goal of the commandment*.... And to summarize in a general and brief statement the notion that I have of virtue, insofar as it pertains to living well, virtue is the love by which one loves what should be loved." Teske's translation reads "love ... is a great and true virtue," but I have followed J. G. Cunningham's translation here, which I think is more consistent with the second statement that "virtue is the love by which one loves what should be loved." Finally, in *De Civitate Dei*, 15.22, he wrote, "it seems to me that a brief and true definition of virtue is the order of love (*ordo amoris*)" (I have changed Bettenson's "rightly ordered love" to the more literal "the order of love").

[5] For example, he writes in *De Perfectione Justitiae*, 13.31, "Concupiscence, that is, the sin dwelling in our flesh." This quote comes from Jesse Couenhoven, "Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin," *Augustinian Studies* 36.2 (2005): 359–396 at 376. Other passages discussed by Couenhoven (pp. 372–379) include *De Nuptia et Concupiscentia* 2.9.22, *Ad Simplicianum* 1.2.18 and *De Perfectione Justitiae*, 6.12 and 6.15, *Contra Julianum Opus Imperfectum* 6.41. See also Jesse Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ:*

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themselves to the contempt of God.[6] Among modern scholars, these statements about virtue and sin have been interpreted in two different ways. I will begin by outlining the first of these interpretations, before turning to discuss the scholarship in which this interpretation is found, sometimes only implicitly; then I will discuss the alternative approach.

To date, the most influential interpretation of Augustine's view of virtue is the one that informs accounts of his social and political thought. This reading accepts that he defined virtue as loving God, and then finds that by defining virtue in this way, he implicitly identified it with doing the things that God wanted us to do in all areas of our lives. According to this interpretation, Augustine's view was that until we loved God we would often lack a reason to do the actions that God wanted us to do and also often lack the knowledge of what these actions were. God wanted us to do things like give money to the poor, minister to the sick, preach the Christian gospel, and serve others in numerous other ways. This interpretation concludes that only people who were virtuous through loving God would be regular doers of these actions. In this way, this view considers that, for Augustine, while virtue was a matter of our loves, it was also, in effect, a matter of our actions: it was only through loving the Christian God that we would be inspired to be consistent doers of the actions that God required of us.

These studies also argue that Augustine considered that what God wanted us to do was often hard to decipher and that this also helps to explain the importance that he placed on love for God as virtue.[7] According to this view, Augustine held that human ignorance of God's will meant that we required the written moral teachings found in the Bible; in addition, since explicit rules for conduct might prove an insufficient guide to God's will in some situations, we could only be sure of doing God's will in everything by totally surrendering ourselves to loving God and hence being guided by God in all our actions.

*Agency, Necessity and Culpability in Augustinian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 31–37.

[6] *Civ. Dei* 14.28, "We see then that the two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self."

[7] Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), has laid particular stress on the idea that Augustine thought that fallen human beings were often ignorant of what God wanted them to do in their social and political lives and consequently dependent on God's direct guidance to conduct themselves appropriately in these spheres.

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Thus, even though the above interpretation notes that Augustine defined virtue in terms of love, it nonetheless considers that he looked upon actions as implicitly a part of the meaning of virtue. In particular, it considers that, for Augustine, the presence or absence of love for God in itself determined the kind of actions that we did. The result is that this reading finds that he could have defined virtue equally well in terms of what we did – he defined being virtuous as loving God, but, according to this reading, he could equally well have defined it as being a consistent doer of sociable, other-oriented actions and of all those other things which, in any given situation, God wanted us to do.

This reading of Augustine's moral thought explains his understanding of sin, or vice, along similar lines. It finds that he defined all sin as an excessive love for the self, and then interprets this sinful self-love in a certain way. In particular, loving ourselves excessively is understood as entailing a failure to do the things that God wanted us to do: God set down rules for our conduct, including the requirement that we looked after our neighbours' physical and spiritual welfare ("love your neighbour as yourself"), and, moreover, God offered to guide our behaviour at all times, but sinners gave to themselves the love that was owed to God and hence they flouted God's rules and refused to seek God's guidance. Instead, their self-love led them to seek to advance their own temporal interests, whether in pursuing physical pleasures, material riches, political power, or popular renown at all costs and by any means.

In this way, this reading likewise holds that Augustine understood sin as having unambiguous implications for our actions: it recognises that Augustine defined sin in terms of love, but holds that he understood this love in such a way as to mean that he saw being a sinner as just as much a matter of our actions as of our loves. In particular, being a sinner is taken to refer to being the kind of person who did not choose to seek God's guidance for one's conduct and normally did not choose to act sociably towards other people. Instead, being a sinner is understood to mean having a tendency towards doing all those things which God did not want us to do, including things which harmed others, such as seizing more than one's fair share of earthly goods and oppressing and tyrannising anyone weaker than oneself.

Thus, this interpretation of Augustine's understanding of virtue and sin finds that, while he defined virtue and sin in terms of differing loves, these terms also, in effect, described the fact that we either did or failed to do the things that God wanted us to do. For this reason, this interpretation has been particularly influential in shaping twentieth- and

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twenty-first-century accounts of Augustine's social and political thought. For example, this view of virtue and sin can be found in Herbert Deane's classic study, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (1963). Deane takes Augustine's understanding of "sin" to equate to socially destructive selfishness or egoism: "the fraternity and concord natural to human society have been shattered by the egoism of sinful men."[8] He notes that Augustine distinguished "sin" from "sins": for Deane, the former described something fundamental about a person's character, namely, their arrogant egoism; the latter described actions which were condemned by God.[9] In this way, Deane finds that, in Augustine's eyes, sin in the form of egoism produced in sinners a tendency to commit "sins" – a sinful person was possessed by an overweening self-regard ("each man, from the moment he is born, is infected with the original sin of pride and the blasphemous desire to place himself at the center of the universe"[10]), and this attitude led to a desire to acquire for oneself power over everyone else and more than one's fair share of earthly goods: "once the nature of man has been corrupted by sin each man seeks to gain possessions and wealth at the expense of others and each seeks to gain mastery over others."[11] "To the citizens of the earthly city, however, wealth, fame and power are the highest goods, and they will do anything necessary to obtain them."[12] Hence, Deane observes, "in the earthly city … there is constant conflict and strife, not only against the good but among the wicked themselves, since each man and each group seeks a larger share of material goods than the others and each strives for mastery and power over the rest."[13]

Deane's work concludes by finding that Augustine was a political realist.[14] This reading of Augustine as a political realist or political pessimist has become standard in histories of political thought.[15]

[8] Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 95.

[9] Ibid., pp. 16–17. [10] Ibid., p. 17. [11] Ibid., pp. 93–94. [12] Ibid., p. 34.

[13] Ibid., p. 33. [14] Ibid., p. 221.

[15] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Augustine's Political Realism," in Robert McAfee Brown, ed., *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986; first published in 1953), states that realism means taking into account "the factors of self-interest and power," and so having no "illusions about social realities" (p. 123). "Augustine was, by general consent, the first great 'realist' in Western history" (p. 124). Mikka Ruokanen, *The Theology of Social Life in Augustine's "De civitate Dei"* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), notes that this reading of Augustine as a political realist dates from the middle decades of the twentieth century (pp. 15 and 83–90).

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In particular, Augustine is taken as repudiating classical humanism's positive evaluation of human beings' natural capacity to choose sociable conduct, and replacing this political idealism with his political realism or pessimism. For example, one of the most influential texts in this field – Quentin Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978) – maintains that the foundations of modern political thought lie partly in the early *quattrocento* humanists' recovery of this classical idealism and their consequent rejection of Augustine's assumptions about the inability of human beings to acquire the political or civic virtues except with the assistance of grace.[16] Skinner claims that the Renaissance humanists rejected "the entire Augustinian picture of human nature."

> St Augustine had explicitly laid it down in *The City of God* that the idea of pursuing *virtus*, or total human excellence, was based on a presumptuous and mistaken view of what a man can hope to achieve by his own efforts. He himself argued that, if ever a mortal ruler succeeds in governing virtuously, such a triumph can never be ascribed to his own powers but "only to the grace of God."[17]

Skinner holds that the recovery of the optimistic ancient belief in the unaided human ability to act sociably and promote the common good "represents an almost Pelagian departure from the prevailing assumptions of Augustinian Christianity."[18]

Behind the conclusions of Skinner lies the work of Deane, and also of Robert Markus, whose study, from 1970, of Augustine's theology of society is one of the most influential statements of the view that Augustine's moral pessimism equated to a social and political pessimism.[19] Markus finds that from the 390s, Augustine came to see that his theology, especially his conception of fallen humanity's helpless enslavement to sin ("the endemic liability to sin"; "Augustine's sombre vision of the nasty brutishness of man in his fallen condition"[20]), entailed a rejection of a sense of humanity's progress through history towards perfection.[21] For Markus, Augustine realised that human beings would always remain sinful, and hence that the laws and policies which they devised to shape their social lives would always be inadequate to create a truly just society. Even the coercive measures taken by governments to eliminate our anti-social actions

[16] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume 1: The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 93.

[17] Ibid., p. 91, quoting from *Civ. Dei* 5.19. [18] Ibid., p. 95.

[19] Robert Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[20] Ibid., pp. 85 and 95. [21] Ibid., p. 81.

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and impose concord upon us would have only a limited degree of success: our social and political lives would remain deeply imperfect; at best, government could eliminate some, but not all, social ills.

> The condition of man consequent on Adam's fall does not allow for the achievement of the harmony and order in which alone man can find rest. Tension, strife and disorder are endemic in this realm. There can be no resolution, except eschatologically. Human society is irredeemably rooted in this tension-ridden and disordered *saeculum*. It was this radically "tragic" character of existence for which ancient philosophy, in Augustine's view, could find no room.[22]

Markus emphasises that this viewpoint was the product of a development in Augustine's thinking about society: his initial views held more in common with the idealism of ancient Greek and Roman political thought, namely, "that politics was a matter first of discerning the lineaments of the right ordering of society in the natural world, and then embodying this discovered order in social arrangements."[23] For Markus, as Augustine's thought developed, he came to the view that this right ordering escaped both human beings' ability to discern and their ability to implement and held instead that the achievement of the right order in social affairs lay in the next life, not in this one.[24] Hence Augustine came to conceive the function of the state as restricted to performing the valuable but limited task of "securing some precarious order, some minimal cohesion, in a situation inherently tending to chaos."[25]

Thus, Markus saw Augustine's mature view of political life as rejecting the optimism of classical antiquity. For Greek and Roman political thinkers, life in the *polis* was understood as promoting virtue. This is the ancient Greek idea of *paideia*: the cultivation of ideal citizens who uphold the values of the *polis*. In contrast, for Augustine, according to Markus's reading, government simply acted as a bulwark, holding in check to some degree our competitiveness and lust for power: at best, we were forced through the threat of punishment into maintaining a kind of imperfect and temporary peace with our fellow citizens.

The view of Augustine as a political pessimist remains the consensus among modern commentators on his political and social thought. Recent interpreters of Augustine, however, have been particularly interested in the question of the extent to which he thought that Christians could free themselves from the sinfulness engulfing the rest of humanity and accomplish the deeds that God wanted them to accomplish, thereby having an

[22] Ibid., p. 83. [23] Ibid., p. 75. [24] Ibid., p. 84. [25] Ibid., p. 95.

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impact on their societies for the good. This issue is explored especially in the work of Robert Dodaro. Dodaro has developed the insight that Augustine considered that sinners' inability to shape their social and political lives in conformity with justice was the product as much of "ignorance" as of "weakness": "In Augustine's view, all these philosophies [Pelagian, Stoic, Manichean, Platonist, Donatist and "ancient and contemporary political culture"] hold that, in principle, the human soul is able to know what is required for the just life, even without divine assistance."[26]

Dodaro sees Augustine as arguing, in contrast, that Christian piety was an essential characteristic of the good political leader because people were only relieved of their ignorance of what constituted a truly just thing to do in a given situation through this piety: the Christian graces of faith, hope, and love alone allowed public officials to grow in the knowledge of the nature of what judgements and decisions ought to be made in the social and political spheres. Hence, Christians were able to administer their states differently to non-Christians, aligning their decisions more closely with God's will for the conduct of human affairs, because they were guided by faith, hope, and love. Thus, Dodaro argues that what Augustine offers in his letters to public officials "is a set of religious practices through which Christian statesmen undergo transformation through a deepening of their love of God that results in a gradual deepening of their political wisdom."[27]

As a result, Dodaro's work has encouraged scholars to attribute a guarded political optimism to Augustine – he is read as being deeply pessimistic about the actions of those outside grace, but guardedly optimistic about the ability of Christians, aided by grace, to bring about social and political improvements in their societies. For example, Bruno writes that an "Augustinian" political theory necessarily tempers pessimism with a recognition of "the positive effects that Christians can have in public office"[28]; "Christian virtue is necessary to produce the limited good that is possible in human society."[29]

[26] Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 212–213.

[27] Dodaro, "Ecclesia and Res Publica: How Augustinian Are Neo-Augustinian Politics?," in Lieven Boeve, Mathijs Lamberigts, and Maarten Wisse, eds., *Augustine and Postmodern Thought: A New Alliance against Modernity?* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2008), pp. 245–246.

[28] Michael Bruno, *Political Augustinianism: Modern Interpretations of Augustine's Political Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), p. 300.

[29] Ibid., p. 309.

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While modern studies of Augustine's social and political thought remain divided over the question of the extent to which his pessimism was alleviated by the role he gave to Christians as promoters of social and political justice,[30] they share a common understanding of his moral thought. Although they do not offer an explicit definition of the meaning of virtue and sin for Augustine, they operate with the common assumption that, for him, the virtuous life was distinguished from the vicious life by reference not just to people's loves but also to their actions, including their conduct in the social and political spheres. Hence, these accounts read his comments on virtue and sin as having a straightforward relevance to his thinking about the conditions for creating the ideal *polis*. For this reading, things like giving to the poor, telling the truth, and, in more general terms, giving others their due of social and political goods would be consistently found only among those who possessed virtue, understood as love for God. Likewise, this reading finds that people who were sinful because they loved temporal things and loved the self excessively would inevitably fill their lives with those actions which God did not want – things like stealing, murdering, lying, committing adultery, and, in general terms, failing to give others their due of social and political goods. Hence, these studies conclude that Augustine viewed those societies which he labelled as vicious and sinful – pagan Rome, the earthly city – as characterised by a failure to progress towards the ideal form of social and political life.

Such an assumption about the meaning of virtue and sin for Augustine might seem to be invited, given Augustine's language of two, contrasting cities – the earthly city and the heavenly one. Yet all assumptions need to be interrogated: Augustine identified two cities, and two citizenships, but did he see these as inevitably distinguished from each other by two standards for social and political life? What if his understanding of virtue and sin, good deeds and bad deeds, really had no straightforward translation into the political and social spheres? He himself wrote of virtue and sin as different loves, and held that the two cities were distinguished from each other by their differing loves; he maintained that they had different

[30] Peter Iver Kaufman, *Incorrectly Political: Augustine and Thomas More* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), thinks that the depth of Augustine's political pessimism cannot be over-stated: for Kaufman, Augustine preached the spiritual dangers of committing oneself to orchestrating meaningful political reform (pp. 131–132); "personal righteousness" was rarely compatible with "political practice" (p. 229).

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rulers and different destinies.[31] These things in themselves sufficed to distinguish the two cities – hence, the mere fact that he wrote of two cities does not, in itself, provide evidence in favour of the view that he thought of these cities as differing from each other in their standards for the conduct of social and political affairs.

Thus, while the above interpretation has proved to be the most influential reading of Augustine's notions of virtue and sin, it has not gone unchallenged. In particular, the openness to the possibility of a different reading of Augustine's moral thought is characteristic of studies which investigate his discussion of the virtue of pagans. These studies do not assume that Augustine viewed all pagans as inevitably driven by selfish motives simply because he concluded that they loved themselves at the expense of loving the true God. They are open to the possibility that, for him, the virtuous and the vicious or sinful were not necessarily distinguished from each other by their actions at all; instead, they suggest that the only necessary difference that he saw between virtuous people and sinners was their different loves.

Recent studies of Augustine's idea of pagan virtue have made use of the insights found in the work of Wang Tch'ang-Tche.[32] For Wang, Augustine had no doubt that pagans could lead lives in which outwardly or materially their deeds were no different to those of Christians: like Christians, their loves could lead them regularly to promote other people's welfare, to tell the truth, to be faithful to their spouses, to give others their due of social and political goods, and to do all those other actions which were desired by God. Pagans could do these actions, and yet they would remain sinners on account of their sinful loves, whereas when Christians did these same actions, they were virtuous through their virtuous love for God.[33]

For Wang, the fact that Augustine allowed that pagans could possess a kind of virtue, although they would never possess "true" virtue, supported the conclusion that Augustine understood the lives of pagans

[31] See, for example, Letter 138, to Marcellinus, at 3.17, where Augustine stated that the distinctive features of the heavenly city were that "[its] king is truth, [its] law is love and [its] limit is eternity."

[32] Joseph Wang Tche'ang-Tche, *Saint Augustin et les vertus des païens* (Paris: Études de Théologie Historique, 1938), especially "Les fausses vertus, positivement mensongères ou simplement décevantes."

[33] Ibid., p. 30: The action of a pagan would be "viciée par des intentions moins pures." "Nous sommes loin de ceux qui réduisent l'attitude morale à des actes materiellement accomplis, sans en examiner les rapports avec la finalité suprême de l'agent."

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and Christians as inevitably distinguished only by their loves. In particular, Wang's view was that in attributing a kind of virtue to pagans, Augustine accepted that pagans and other non-Christians could share with Christians a disposition to do the right kind of social and political actions, but, if so, this disposition would be founded upon loves which stopped short of being right – all non-Christians would always fail to love the true God, and in this sense, they would always be sinners, but they could nonetheless love in such a way as to ensure that they were consistently sociable and other-oriented in their actions.[34] In that case, they could be said to possess a kind of virtue – a "false" virtue – because, while they would always act for lesser loves, these loves could be of a nature to lead them always to do the right kind of deeds.[35] In this limited sense, their loves would resemble the Christian love for the true God, and hence it was possible to describe these loves as "false" virtues. Yet these loves were actually sins: "false" virtues were really vices, although vices with some resemblance to true virtue. The only true virtue was love for the true God; consequently, all pagans were sinners because they all loved things which were not the true God. Nonetheless, some among them loved in such a way as to ensure that they always did the actions that God wanted us to do – these loves were still sins, but they could also be called false virtues.

Wang Tche'ang-Tche's study remains an important reference point for recent studies of Augustine on pagan virtue.[36] These studies thus propose an alternative reading of Augustine's moral thought in which loves alone, rather than loves and actions, are at the heart of his distinction between virtue and sin. According to this alternative reading, people who gave all their goods to feed the poor, or were faithful to their spouses, or who sacrificed their lives for others, were sinners if in doing this they lacked

[34] Ibid., p. 31: "L'élément matériel de ces actes a beau cöincider avec celui des actes de vraie vertus, il ne sert en rien à l'acquisition du souverain Bien."

[35] Ibid., pp. 43–45.

[36] Terence Irwin, "Splendid Vices? Augustine For and Against Pagan Virtues," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8.2 (1999): 105–127; Terence Irwin, "Augustine," in *The Development of Ethics, Volume 1: From Socrates to the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Michael Moriarty, "Augustine on Pagan Virtue," in *Disguised Vices: Theories of Virtue in Early Modern French Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in E. Stump and N. Kretzmann, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 205–233; John Marenbon, "Augustine," in *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

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love for the Christian God. Love for God was virtue, and all other loves were sins; hence to do good – to do something virtuous – did not refer simply to doing an action which God wanted us to do, but rather to doing one of these actions while having virtue, in the form of love for the true God, present in one's soul.

Thus, there are currently two very different ways of interpreting Augustine's notions of virtue and sin, leading to two very different interpretations of his social and political thought. One sees Augustine as breaking with pre-Christian Roman and Greek political thinkers who thought that it was possible to educate people to be good citizens. Instead, he is read as maintaining that the path to good citizenship lay through Christian conversion, with political and social virtue the gifts of grace, rather than the results of human effort. This reading understands him as interpreting the Christian teaching that fallen human beings were always sinners in the absence of grace as meaning that people could not be reliable doers of socially and politically just actions outside the Christian faith. Non-Christians would normally displease God, not only at the level of their loves but also at the level of their actions. Christians were uniquely placed to lead their societies in the direction of social and political justice.

The alternative reading finds that Augustine's Christian convictions did not lead him to formulate a new social and political message. It holds that his moral thought did not have a transparent political meaning – what he condemned morally was not necessarily behaviour which was damnable politically or socially. Hence, it finds that Augustine could accept that pagan cities would not necessarily differ from Christian ones in terms of the 'outward' lives that their citizens led: in both, people could distribute material resources fairly, and treat others in a sociable, other-regarding way – both could do all the actions that God wanted people to do and hence both could achieve the ideal *polis*. For this reading, while Augustine held that non-Christians were morally ignorant, all that he held that they were necessarily ignorant of was the moral requirement to love the Christian God – they were not ignorant of what they must do to shape their societies in accordance with the highest standards of social and political justice because doing these actions was not, in itself, to be virtuous. Rather, this reading finds that, for Augustine, such social and political achievements never had any value for eternal life until they were combined with love for the true God, since it was only through being combined with this love that they became truly virtuous.

Which of these two readings of Augustine on the nature of virtue and sin is the correct one? In order to decide between these alternatives, we

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need new insights into Augustine's moral thought. This is because both interpretations leave certain things unexplained. The first account assumes that Augustine thought that people would generally have no motive to do the actions that God wanted them to do until they were moved by love for God; it also assumes that, for him, many of these actions would be hidden from us until we loved, and were guided by, God. Yet it is not clear why Augustine would have thought either of these things. Why should the proper ordering of human affairs be hidden from human beings? Why should love for God be the only thing that could reliably move us to respect this order in human affairs? Arguably, in attributing these views to Augustine, this account has made a further assumption: namely, that, for Augustine, the actions that God wanted us to do – the things that constituted the 'outward' dimension of our lives – were morally good in themselves. In other words, this account has assumed that he looked on an action such as giving to the poor not simply as an action which God wanted people to do, but as itself an example of something virtuous. This account notes that Augustine defined virtue and sin as different loves, but in assuming that only people who were virtuous through loving God would do the actions that God wanted, this account has arguably assumed that Augustine regarded these actions as themselves examples of virtue.

But what evidence is there that Augustine thought that actions themselves were virtuous things? The first account either needs to find evidence that Augustine regarded not just love but actions, too, as in themselves virtuous; or it needs to find some other explanation for its claim that Augustine considered that people who failed to love God would necessarily often be ignorant of the actions that God wanted them to do, and often be reluctant to do these actions when they were known.

The second account claims, in contrast, that people who failed to love God, and so loved something else in the place of God, could nonetheless know about which actions God wanted them to do and be moved to do these actions. Yet this account also lacks an explanation of why Augustine would have thought that this was the case. In short, both accounts find that, for Augustine, when we loved certain things we would be consistent doers of certain actions, but neither has produced a satisfactory explanation of why Augustine thought that this was so.

Finding an explanation of Augustine's thinking on this issue requires, first, that we discover what Augustine thought was involved in 'loving' something – that is, we need to discover what he meant by 'love,' and hence what he thought it meant to love God, to love the self and

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neighbour, and to love temporal things. Second, we also need to understand how he thought people came to identify correctly the actions that God wanted people to do: if he thought that this was something which people could only know, or only know completely, through a direct communication from God, then this would suggest that he thought that Christians alone were able to do these actions. Alternatively, if he thought that it was possible for everyone to identify these actions correctly through the exercise of reason, then, provided that he understood the love that was sin in such a way as to allow that it was possible to love with this love and yet be moved to do these actions, this finding would support the conclusion that he saw no obstacle to non-Christians consistently doing the actions that were desired by God. That is, this would support the conclusion that he did not think that being virtuous, understood as loving God, was, in effect, equivalent to doing the actions that God wanted people to do, since it would mean that he allowed that these actions could be found consistently in the lives of sinners too.

At the same time, neither of the above interpretations offers an explanation of why Augustine chose to define virtue and sin in terms of our loves. Without an explanation of this, our understanding of Augustine's notions of virtue and sin will remain incomplete, even after we have explained the connection that he saw between loves and actions. Hence this study is concerned to establish this as well – namely, why exactly Augustine thought of virtue and sin as loves.

## AUGUSTINE AND EUDAIMONISM

My study argues that to answer these questions we need to have a better understanding of the framework within which Augustine developed his account of the nature of virtue and sin. I propose that the key to acquiring this better understanding lies in grasping his relationship to the ancient moral tradition of eudaimonism. Eudaimonism is a promising avenue to explore in looking for a way to understand Augustine's ethics because Augustine framed some at least of his moral reflections in explicitly eudaimonist terms. This observation is valuable as a counterweight to the idea that as a Christian moralist, Augustine's moral reflections must have had an entirely different basis to that of pagan moral philosophy. On the contrary, Augustine's writings bear witness to his engagement with non-Christian moralists, particularly the Stoics, Cicero, and the Platonists, all of whom were working in the eudaimonist tradition.

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The eudaimonist account of virtue and sin has many similarities with the second interpretation outlined above – the one found in studies of Augustine's notion of pagan virtue – but it goes further than this interpretation in offering a definition of love and an explanation of the connection between our loves and our actions. Eudaimonism identifies virtue and vice as different loves, and firmly distinguishes virtue from our actions, while also explaining why people whose love was vice were able to know about and do the same actions as the virtuous. In addition, eudaimonism offers an explanation of why virtue and vice are correctly conceived of as different loves.

This indicates that an inquiry into Augustine's view of eudaimonism is a promising avenue to pursue in seeking to understand which of the above two interpretations of his notions of virtue and sin is the correct one. Hence my study asks how much his account of virtue and sin owed to the eudaimonist tradition and, in particular, whether his thought is best understood as a development within this tradition, or as involving a break from it, or possibly a complete rejection of it. Assessing Augustine's debt to eudaimonism is a matter not only of understanding Augustine's own thought but of understanding ancient eudaimonism as well. Hence, the rest of this chapter focuses on giving an outline of the Stoic-Platonic tradition in eudaimonism as Augustine understood it.

## VIRTUE, SIN, AND "HAPPINESS"

In the early twentieth century, Anders Nygren recognised Augustine as working within the eudaimonist tradition, but argued that, by basing his notion of love on eudaimonism's *eros*, Augustine had made use of a notion of love which was incompatible with Christianity.[37] Instead of *eros*, Nygren proposed that one of Christianity's key ethical teachings was the need to model our love on God's selfless *agape*-love – he charged that Augustine, under the influence of Platonism, had failed to have a sufficient grasp of the Bible's teaching about *agape*.

Nygren thought of *agape*-love as a selfless love: it was the unconditional and self-sacrificial love that God extended to humanity. He held

[37] Anders Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, trans. Philip Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953). See "The *Caritas*-Synthesis: Augustine's Position in the History of Religion." An important early critical response to Nygren's work is John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (1938; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007).

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that *eros*-love, in contrast, was inherently egocentric. For Nygren, Augustine's idea of virtue as *caritas* gave insufficient emphasis to the New Testament's teaching about *agape* and instead was based principally on the self-centred *eros*-love of eudaimonism.[38] Consequently, for him, Augustine had overlooked a central pillar of the Christian approach to ethics. In fact, Nygren held that Augustine was responsible for a centuries-long failure among Christian thinkers to distinguish adequately the Christian notion of love from that found in pagan moral philosophy.[39]

In recent years, there are two scholars who have engaged closely with the question of Augustine's debt to eudaimonism: Oliver O'Donovan and Nicholas Wolterstorff.[40] Both scholars conclude, contrary to Nygren, that Augustine broke with the ancient tradition of eudaimonism. What follows first considers O'Donovan's arguments and then turns to consider Wolterstorff's.

In part in reaction to Nygren, O'Donovan has argued that Augustine departed in a major way from the eudaimonism of the classical tradition. While O'Donovan does not contest the importance of *eros*-love for Augustine, he finds that Augustine's version of *eros* did not place his moral thought in as much tension with the selfless love praised in the New Testament as Nygren supposed. Instead, O'Donovan argues that Augustine's version of *eros* for God allowed him to avoid the sort of egocentricity which was present in classical, pagan eudaimonism. Thus, O'Donovan's view is that Augustine was not a thorough-going eudaimonist in the classical tradition, but rather rejected the eudaimonism that he encountered in pre-Christian sources and offered something new instead: for O'Donovan, Augustine made use of some of the language of eudaimonism and of its idea of *eros*-love for God, but actually had a substantially different basis for his definition of the moral life.[41]

In particular, the difference between Augustine and classical eudaimonists, for O'Donovan, lies in their different ways of understanding what is involved in *eros*-love for God. For O'Donovan, Augustine held that there was no beginning to our love for God – there was no point at which we chose to start loving God. This was because everyone, in some way,

[38] Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, pp. 459, 472, 476, 499 and 532. [39] Ibid., p. 561.

[40] Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1980); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Augustine's Rejection of Eudaimonism," in James Wetzel, ed., *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[41] O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love*, p. 154.

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naturally loved God; God was the end towards which we were all drawn by our very natures.[42] Hence, no one selected God as their goal; rather, God was the natural goal of human nature and so God was the goal that we all sought, all along, from our very births. To be virtuous, people must explicitly name God as their goal, that is, they must have an "*explicit* love of God."[43] O'Donovan holds that this is where a "realist" account of God as our goal elides into a "positivist" account, since to love God explicitly involved identifying God with "the transcendent God of Christianity."[44] Even though to be virtuous we must explicitly "posit" the Christian God as our goal, nonetheless, according to O'Donovan's reading, Augustine held that the Christian God was the implicit goal even of the vicious. Thus, for Augustine, "man's goal is an objective reality which the subject has not chosen for himself and his orientation to which is a necessity of his creation."[45] We did not choose to make God our goal; rather, God simply was our goal: everyone, in one way or another, explicitly or implicitly, had as their goal to possess God. In other words, for Augustine, a person's love does not take a new direction or acquire a new object when they become a Christian; rather, becoming a Christian means correctly identifying what it was that we were loving all along.

O'Donovan concludes that, as a result, there was an important way in which Augustine's version of *eros* avoided egocentrism, and this was overlooked by Nygren. According to O'Donovan's reading, Augustine held that in aiming for God, no human being was seeking to gratify their own ego; that is, having God as our goal was not the result of our own choice, and so it was not the result of simply consulting our own inclinations. Rather, God was the goal given us in our human nature: in loving God we were moved by a love which was not chosen by us and from which we could not free ourselves because it was part of our very nature.

In contrast, O'Donovan finds that the tradition of eudaimonism which Augustine encountered in classical authors held that human beings had no natural goal; instead, for classical eudaimonists, everyone chose for themself what to aim for. O'Donovan considers that this was the core of the egocentrism of the eudaimonism of the Stoics and Platonists. At the heart of their eudaimonism was a notion of love which was fundamentally self-centred because they considered that people selected their own goals – they said to themselves that X or Y was desirable for its own sake and so sought X or Y as their end: "every object of desire [is] posited by the

[42] Ibid., "Cosmic Love," pp. 19–24. [43] Ibid., p. 147. [44] Ibid., p. 17.
[45] Ibid., p. 156.

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subject as desireable for himself."[46] Hence, according to this understanding of eudaimonism, classical eudaimonists considered that people simply exercised their own unconstrained choices in deciding what to love: for classical eudaimonists, we were simply gratifying our egos in having God as our goal. While, for Augustine, having God as our goal was not a human choice at all, but simply a fact about human nature, for the Platonists, for whom God was also the goal, having God as our goal was something which we willed for ourselves, and so, at base, we simply sought to please ourselves in seeking God.

Thus, O'Donovan concludes that the notion of love espoused by classical eudaimonism was "positive" love – positive love refers to positing one's goal "where one will[s]."[47] A person might posit God as "the end of one's joy"[48] or might posit some other end; in either case, our love was self-centred in having reference only to our own preferences. In contrast, O'Donovan maintains that Augustine rejected positive love and instead embraced the notion of "cosmic" love. Cosmic love understands that an objective order of love exists, with God as the final end of all human desiring, and hence cosmic love does not have the self's individual choices at its centre and so avoids the kind of self-centredness at the heart of classical eudaimonism.[49]

Thus, for O'Donovan, Augustine did not remain within the classical tradition of eudaimonism, as expressed particularly by the Stoics and the Platonists, but broke with it in a significant way by finding that human beings' love for God was given to them by their human nature itself: everyone was driven by the love for God, even though most people failed to name God as their explicit goal. At the same time, O'Donovan recognises that the notion of cosmic love brings with it the problem of "immanence."[50] For O'Donovan, Augustine understood human beings as naturally drawn back to God as the source of their being, the centre towards which all their desires were moving. This involved an idea of God as immanent rather than truly transcendent ("the force which draws these moving galaxies of souls is immanent to them, a kind of dynamic nostalgia rather than a transcendent summons"[51]).

In this way, O'Donovan's view is that, for Augustine, the virtuous have their lives oriented towards the objective of knowing the Christian God; the lives of the vicious are also directed to this end, although they will not

[46] Ibid., p. 156. [47] Ibid., p. 28

[48] Ibid., p. 28, quoting from *De Doctrina Christiana* 3.37. [49] Ibid., p. 28.

[50] Ibid., p. 157. [51] Ibid., p. 157.

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be aware of this since what sets the virtuous apart from the vicious is an explicit awareness that it is the Christian God whom they are seeking. O'Donovan also accepts that, on one level, this drive to attain one's end could be construed as self-centred; but he argues that, on another level, given that this drive is ineradicably part of human nature, it makes little sense to view it in these terms: if our end is something which it is given us in our very natures to seek, then seeking this end cannot be identified as an egoistic thing to do since we have no choice at all in this matter. Rather, for O'Donovan, the egoism inherent in classical eudaimonism lies in the element of choice which remains part of its account of the happy life: in classical eudaimonism, while people have no choice but to seek happiness, yet they must choose to give a particular meaning to this goal; because eudaimonism understands people as seeking a goal which is, in this sense, determined by themselves ("posited" by them rather than given in their nature), O'Donovan finds that a kind of egoism remains at its heart.[52]

O'Donovan's account of Augustine's ethics notes that Augustine departed from classical eudaimonism in one further way. O'Donovan considers that classical eudaimonism was monist: there was one end for human action – one thing of value which it was right for human beings to seek; this one thing was encompassed by the idea of the "supreme good."[53] Human happiness consisted in having the supreme good; while the *summum bonum* might consist of a number of things, it was still a unitary concept, so that human life had one end; there was one valuable thing, namely, whatever we posited as constituting our happiness.

For O'Donovan, Augustine shared classical eudaimonism's monist theory of the good: he defined the supreme good as God and embraced the idea that the supreme good was "the only true end of all human action"[54] – the end of our action was to know God. Yet he also departed from classical eudaimonism in finding that there were certain things, such as the neighbour's welfare, which it was right for human beings to pursue even though these were not included in the content of the supreme good.[55]

O'Donovan's view is that classical eudaimonism also viewed the neighbour's welfare as something which we ought to seek, but it reached this conclusion by including the neighbour's welfare within its concept of the supreme good, so that the welfare of one's neighbours became a good. Classical eudaimonism was able to do this, however, only because it

[52] Ibid., p. 156. [53] Ibid., pp. 115–116. [54] Ibid., p. 115. [55] Ibid., pp. 115–116.

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located happiness in this life – it had a "historical" conception of the supreme good: the happy life, as defined by eudaimonists like Cicero, included the society of other people in the here and now ("Reasons could be adduced to show that a historical supreme good would have to include a social life. Classical moralists argued that life without friends was insupportable"[56]). But, for Augustine, the happy life was found at the end of history, in eternal life with God: the welfare of other people, at least in this earthly life, was not part of Augustine's picture of happiness.

Consequently, O'Donovan finds that Augustine was not able to view the neighbour's earthly welfare as included within the supreme good. O'Donovan's view that eudaimonism had a monist account of the good, and that this account was shared by Augustine, in turn, leads him to conclude that Augustine was unable to view the neighbour's earthly welfare as a good. O'Donovan finds, however, that this did not prevent Augustine from viewing the welfare of our neighbours as something which we ought to seek. This is because he finds that Augustine's ethical reflection was largely "cast in a deontological form"[57]: for Augustine, the things that we ought to do during our earthly lives were mostly not to be discovered through a theory of the good; instead, O'Donovan argues, Augustine's view was that to know what we ought to do, we generally needed to heed "the voice of authority" ("the merciful self-communication of God"[58]), which was found in the Bible. The biblical command of love-for-neighbour indicated that one's neighbour's welfare was something which we must strive to promote throughout our earthly lives; through viewing this biblical command as the source for their knowledge of what they must do, Christians learned that they must seek the well-being of their neighbours. Other teachings in the Bible revealed what this welfare consisted in, so that Christians were able to learn in more detail what actions they ought to do. Hence, through viewing the teachings of the Bible as authoritatively instructing us as to the nature of right and wrong, Christians learned that human beings must seek the earthly well-being of their neighbours even though this strictly formed no part of the Christian concept of the good (which Augustine understood as located in a heavenly afterlife).

In this way, O'Donovan considers that Augustine broke with classical eudaimonism in two ways. First, Augustine broke with it by identifying

[56] Ibid., p. 115. See also p. 41, Stoic eudaimonism was "an apology for social responsibility."

[57] Ibid., pp. 154 and 157–158. [58] Ibid., p. 43.

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the goal given in human nature, not as something subjective, which human beings must posit for themselves, but as something objective – every human being, in fact the whole universe, was drawn to the Christian God as the "source and goal of being";[59] this objectivity in Augustine's account of the goal of human life means that the charge of self-centredness cannot be brought against him. Second, for O'Donovan, Augustine broke with classical eudaimonism because he did not find everything which we ought to pursue summed up by the concept of the supreme good; instead, for Augustine, we discovered what our duties were towards other people by turning to the authoritative teachings of the Bible.

Turning now to Wolterstorff's account, Wolterstorff agrees with O'Donovan that Augustine broke in important ways with the classical tradition of eudaimonism; however, his understanding of the nature of this break differs from that of O'Donovan. For O'Donovan, Augustine's account of the good accepted classical eudaimonism's monism: everything of value was contained in the idea of the supreme good; for Christians, the supreme good – in the enjoyment of which we lived happily – was God. Hence, when Christians cared for their neighbours' welfare, they did not do so because they saw this welfare as part of the supreme good, but because they heeded the biblical command of neighbour-love and discovered in the Bible the many different things involved in caring for other people.

For Wolterstorff, however, Augustine was led by the Bible's command that we "love our neighbour as ourselves" to reject classical eudaimonism's monism.[60] Wolterstorff argues that Augustine found in this biblical command both a command to regard the neighbour's welfare as a good, and a condemnation of those who failed to regard their neighbours' welfare as a good in its own right, separate to the supreme good. That is, Wolterstorff proposes that, for Augustine, this command condemned classical eudaimonism because it demanded that we set aside considerations of our own *eudaimonia* as our reason for regarding our neighbour's welfare as a good.[61] The monism of classical eudaimonism held that the well-being of our neighbour could possess value only through regarding their welfare as part of the happy life: this was to include the neighbour's welfare within our conception of the supreme good. The supreme good was living happily; if we chose a picture of the happy life

[59] Ibid., p. 157. [60] Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, p. 211.
[61] Ibid., p. 153.

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which included other people's welfare, then we would regard their welfare as a good – but this was to regard their welfare not as a good in its own right but rather as receiving its worth only in relation to what we chose to think of as the happy life. In contrast, Wolterstorff argues that Augustine read the Bible as insisting that human beings have worth in their own right: their welfare was a good, but it was not subsumed into the notion of the supreme good; it had inherent worth separately to the notion of the supreme good.

Wolterstorff notes that if human beings can judge things to be good, even though they do not regard them as part of the supreme good, then this exposes the monism of classical eudaimonism to a new charge of egoism. For Wolterstorff, the biblical command to love one's neighbour as oneself reveals that human beings can act for an end other than their own happiness; in doing so, this command identifies acting for the sake of one's own happiness as a choice – we can choose to set aside considerations of our own happiness in promoting our neighbours' welfare, or we can choose to make the thought of our own happiness our reason for promoting our neighbours' welfare.[62] The result will be the same in terms of our actions; moreover, in both cases, we will have made our neighbour's welfare our end. Nonetheless, despite these similarities, there will be a self-centredness present in the choice to view my neighbour's welfare as part of my supreme good which is not present in viewing my neighbour's welfare as a good in its own right: in the former case, I will have chosen to seek other people's well-being from a consideration of my own happiness, because I have chosen to believe that their happiness or well-being matters for my own; in the latter case, I will have chosen to seek their welfare without any thought for my own happiness.[63] Consequently, Wolterstorff argues that the biblical command to "love one's neighbour as oneself" establishes that the monism of classical eudaimonism makes classical eudaimonism self-centred: the biblical command demands that self-love be placed on the same plane as neighbour-love, and this means that we must pursue the neighbour's welfare as a good, while refraining from looking upon it as part of our supreme good.

This understanding of the self-centredness of classical eudaimonism, although it differs from that formulated by O'Donovan, nonetheless still depends on O'Donovan's view that classical eudaimonism offered a positivist account of happiness. For Wolterstorff, it is through choosing

[62] Ibid., p. 208. [63] Ibid., pp. 153 and 211.

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to view other people as having worth only in relation to one's own happiness that a classical eudaimonist is self-centred. Wolterstorff's view is that it is possible for us to view other people as having worth in their own right – since the Bible commands us to do precisely this; hence the choice to relate their happiness to my own – to see their welfare as mattering only because it matters to my happiness – is self-centred. It is not selfish, in the traditional sense of selfishness, but it is nonetheless focused upon myself. Hence, Wolterstorff's account lays stress, like O'Donovan's, on the element of choice, or selection of ends, in classical eudaimonists' formulation of the nature of *eudaimonia*.[64]

Thus, for Wolterstorff, Augustine's view was that, with the command of neighbour-love and the example of the Good Samaritan, the Bible instructed Christians to value, as a good in its own right, the well-being of every human being: we were to value our neighbour's welfare, not through reckoning it as something necessary for our own happiness, but through seeing it as having inherent worth.[65]

In this way, Wolterstorff gives Augustine's ethics a somewhat different basis to that given it by O'Donovan. For O'Donovan, Augustine held that when Christians sought to promote others' welfare, they did so because they understood God as commanding them to do these things. For Wolterstorff, in contrast, Augustine thought that when Christians sought to promote others' welfare, they did so, first and foremost, because they valued this welfare: God certainly told Christians to promote this welfare but God also told them that this welfare was a good and hence something which they ought to value. That is, Christians promoted others' welfare because they believed that God wanted them to look on others' welfare as an end in itself – as something worth seeking in its own right. Christians were to tell themselves, "God pronounced his creation good. We must do so as well." As part of God's good creation, even mutable things were "genuine life-goods."[66]

Wolterstorff's view is that this account of Augustine's ethics better accommodates Augustine's acceptance of grief.[67] If O'Donovan is correct in finding that, for Augustine, Christians sought to promote others' welfare simply because they understood God as commanding them to do so, then it would follow that, for Augustine, Christians had no reason to grieve when they failed to achieve what they sought to achieve. Augustine's view would be that, while Christians would always seek to

[64] Ibid., pp. 153 and 211. [65] Ibid., pp. 217–218. [66] Ibid., pp. 199 and 220.
[67] Ibid., "Augustine's Break with Eudaimonism," pp. 192ff.

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promote the welfare of their neighbours, in accordance with the divine commandments, if they proved unable to protect others from harm, they would not be led to sorrow over their suffering; to grieve over something always implies that we invested that thing with a level of worth – we experience sorrow when we think that something good has been lost. Wolterstorff's point here is that investing anything with any level of worth leads us to experience grief at its loss; the possibility that grief might be an emotion which we experience only upon the loss of things which we see as necessary for happiness is not considered by Wolterstorff.

Thus, Wolterstorff's view is that Augustine considered that human beings would grieve over the loss even of mutable things: his view is that, for Augustine, sorrowing over the loss of mutable things was inescapable for human beings and that this was as it should be.[68] Since to grieve over something indicates that we value it, it follows from this that Augustine must have believed that God wanted Christians to look on even mutable things as goods. As noted already, Wolterstorff finds that Augustine considered that the command to "love others as we love ourselves" meant that Christians were not to look on these things as part of the supreme good – they were not to suppose that these things were needed for happiness; rather, this command meant that Christians were to regard these things as having worth in their own right – for Augustine, our view ought to be that, while transient things like our neighbours' temporal health played no part in our happiness, yet these were ends which were genuinely worth seeking, so that their loss was genuinely a source of grief for us.[69]

As noted already, Wolterstorff's view is that classical eudaimonism was able to look on mutable things like human beings' health as goods only by viewing them as part of the supreme good; for Wolterstorff, classical eudaimonism had a monist account of the good – it could only give value to things by finding a place for them in an account of happiness. At the same time, Wolterstorff acknowledges that eudaimonism is not prima facie committed to this monist account of the good; instead, his point is that, historically, this was the theory of the good which was adopted by ancient eudaimonists. His view is that, given that the eudaimonist tradition that Augustine encountered in his readings of the Stoics and Platonists had this monist account of the good, Augustine's reasons for rejecting it must have come from outside this tradition, through his encounter with the teachings of Christianity.

[68] Ibid., pp. 197–198. [69] Ibid., p. 199.

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In making this argument, Wolterstorff recognises that Stoicism might not seem, on face value, to offer a monist account of the good; that is, he recognises that the Stoics seemingly anticipated Augustine's rejection of monism. This is because the Stoics identified certain mutable things, like the health of our bodies, as "preferred indifferents." With the idea that these things were "indifferent," the Stoics expressed the notion that these things had no importance for happiness – they were not the supreme good.[70] Yet with the idea that these things were "preferred," the Stoics indicated that these things were nonetheless worth seeking – they had value (they were goods), even though they contributed nothing to our happiness.

Hence, Stoicism seems to offer a challenge to Wolterstorff's thesis that Augustine broke with the classical eudaimonist tradition through rejecting a monist account of the good. This is because it would seem that the Stoics themselves were not monist; in writing of the worth of mutable things, Augustine would therefore appear to be simply making use of a Stoic idea. Wolterstorff argues, however, that this was not so: Augustine did not make use of the Stoic account in this respect, because, Wolterstorff argues, the Stoics had no coherent account of the value of the things that they called preferred indifferents.[71] Wolterstorff's criticism of the Stoics in this regard turns on his particular understanding of their conception of the happy life. He argues that the Stoics viewed the happy life as the life of mental tranquillity – that is, the life free from emotions.[72] This view of the happy life allowed the Stoics to classify mutable things like bodily health as "indifferent" to human happiness: their view was that the happy life consisted in a certain state of mind, not a certain state of body, so that Stoic sages considered that they, and other people, were able to be happy regardless of the condition of their bodies. Yet, Wolterstorff points out, the view of the happy life as the mentally tranquil life also meant that it was impossible for the Stoics to define things like bodily health (my own or that of my neighbour) as "preferred," that is, as things which had value in their own right.[73] As we have seen, Wolterstorff argues that to view anything as a good – to see value in anything – meant making oneself vulnerable to the emotion of grief at its loss. Consequently, Wolterstorff finds, the Stoics were debarred by their own definition of the happy life as the tranquil life from regarding any mutable thing as preferred: they could not look upon any of these things as good

[70] Ibid., pp. 161ff. [71] Ibid., pp. 173ff. [72] Ibid., p. 172.
[73] Ibid., pp. 168 and 176ff.

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because to do so would be to make a life of mental tranquillity (a life free from grief) an impossibility. Hence, he concludes, Augustine must have found grounds to define mutable things as goods outside Stoicism, with the result that, in looking on these things as goods, Augustine must have broken with the classical tradition in eudaimonism.

O'Donovan and Wolterstorff are the main scholars in recent years to address the issue of Augustine's relationship to eudaimonism. For this reason, when seeking to understand the influence of eudaimonism upon Augustine's ethics, their interpretations must necessarily be the starting point. As the above will have made clear, O'Donovan's and Wolterstorff's views rest upon particular readings of classical eudaimonism as well as upon particular readings of Augustine. Hence, before beginning my analysis of Augustine's thought, it will be helpful first to explore whether or not their readings of classical eudaimonism are accurate ones.

Whereas O'Donovan claims that it was Augustine's unique insight that "man's goal is an objective reality which the subject has not chosen for himself and his orientation to which is a necessity of his creation,"[74] I argue on the contrary that this was an insight shared by all the thinkers whom Augustine encountered in the eudaimonist tradition. "Happiness" (*eudaimonia*) in eudaimonism was defined objectively as whatever final goal was given human beings in their nature. Eudaimonism was concerned with identifying, through the study of human nature, exactly what this fundamental goal was. O'Donovan overlooks this and so he mistakenly sees Augustine as departing from classical eudaimonism by giving an "objective" account of human being's goal; on the contrary, Augustine encountered this objective account in his classical sources themselves.

Thus, in my reading, classical eudaimonism and Augustine's own thought are actually in agreement with each other on the issue that O'Donovan sees as setting them apart. Hence, I find that, in this regard, Augustine's ethics remained firmly within the tradition of classical eudaimonism, and that classical eudaimonism itself did not fall into the trap of egocentricity first identified by Nygren and further described by O'Donovan. As will be seen, I also find that neither classical eudaimonism nor Augustine was monist in its account of the good. They both shared the insight that things had inherent worth independently of the supreme good. Consequently, I find that there was nothing necessarily "deontological" about Augustine's account of ethics: in common with classical

[74] Ibid., p. 156.

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eudaimonists, he was able to argue that reason itself placed upon us a moral obligation to pursue the neighbour's welfare.

I also find that Augustine was in agreement with classical eudaimonism on the issues that Wolterstorff sees as setting them apart. In particular, I find that Wolterstorff incorrectly characterises the Stoic understanding of the happy life as the life of mental tranquillity. On the contrary, for the Stoics, and for Augustine as well, the happy life – *eudaimonia* – was the life lived in complete agreement with human nature.[75] This definition of the happy life allowed both the Stoics and Augustine to give a place to the emotions in *eudaimonia*: when we lived fully in accordance with our nature, we would experience emotions, but only those emotions which were themselves in complete accordance with our human nature. Hence, the only emotions which were bad in themselves – that is, which had no place in the happy life – were the emotions that were inappropriate to us as human beings; every other affective response had a place in the happy life.

It is important to be aware that studies of Stoicism are beset by the problem of finding an adequate English translation for the Stoic idea of *pathē*, normally translated as passions. More specifically, the *pathē* were bad passions, since the Stoics also recognised good passions, the *eupatheiai*.[76] The passions, whether good or bad, were strong emotions, but the bad passions were defined as disturbances or perturbations – they were things which disturbed our peace of mind. In other words, the *pathē* were passions which were not in accordance with our human nature; mental peace or tranquillity referred to having a mind in its natural state, which meant a mind free from those passions which were defined as unnatural.[77] Hence, when we lived the happy life – defined as the life that fully accorded with human nature – the only emotions from which we would necessarily be free were the *pathē*.

Thus, in eudaimonism, the passions were the strong emotions that arose from our thoughts about the things that we needed for happiness; for the Stoics, these passions were never appropriately felt in relation to anything mutable – that is, in relation to any of the preferred indifferents – since these things were, by definition, unnecessary for happiness. It has

[75] See note 91 below.

[76] Margaret R. Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), pp. 51–53. Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 47–51.

[77] Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, p. 42 (*pathē* were disobedient to reason). Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, Volume 1: Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), p. 42, the bad passions are "anti-natural."

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been noted that the Stoics identified four passions (joy, desire, fear, and grief), while insisting that only joy, desire, and fear could be found as both *pathē* and *eupatheiai*; there was no good passion of grief, but only a bad one.[78] This was because the Stoics understood grief as the strong emotion that we felt when we believed that we had lost something essential to our happiness. The Stoic view was that, when our thoughts about happiness were completely correct, we would never experience grief precisely because to have completely correct thoughts about happiness was to be happy: for the Stoics, we needed only to have completely correct thoughts about the life in complete accordance with human nature to live that life. Hence, the virtuous – the sage – would never experience the passion of grief since to be a sage was to have everything needed for happiness; yet the vicious, or foolish, would experience grief, and they would also experience joy, desire, and fear as bad passions. Each of these bad passions was felt through viewing some mutable thing as needed for happiness: the bad kind of fear was the fear that we felt when we believed that we might inadvertently lose, or fail to attain, some temporal thing which we viewed as necessary for happiness, while to rejoice in the possession of some mutable thing as though it were happy-making or to desire it as though it would make us happy were the bad kinds of joy and desire – the ones that were out of accordance with the natural state of our minds.

Hence, for the Stoics, it was through misunderstanding the nature of human happiness – that is, through misunderstanding what was involved in living fully in accordance with human nature – that we experienced these bad passions. In particular, it was through regarding something external to us in the sensible world – some mutable thing – as needed for human happiness that we experienced grief and experienced fear, joy, and desire as *pathē*. Fear, joy, and desire were part of both the happy and unhappy life; hence, the distinctive thing about the unhappy life, for the Stoics, was the experience of grief.

The Stoics were intent on giving an account of the passions that were necessarily present or absent from the life in full accordance with human nature. They were not concerned to describe what other emotions might be present in that life, since their view was that it was the intrusion of the bad passions, the *pathē*, which brought our affective lives out of accordance with human nature. Thus, for them, our emotions in relation to the

[78] Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, p. 54.

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preferred indifferents would always be correct – they would always accord with our nature – provided that we continued to view them as indifferent to our happiness; so long as we did this, we would look upon them as preferred – that is, as goods in themselves, but as unnecessary for happiness; consequently, our emotions for them would never become passions, but this was entirely compatible with finding that we would have feelings for them ('indifferent' did not mean that we felt nothing for them).[79] The exact nature of these feelings was arguably uninteresting to the Stoics, since their point was that, while our view of the happy life was correct, these feelings would always be in accordance with the natural state of our minds.

In this way, the Stoics were able to give a coherent defence of their notion of 'preferred indifferents' – they were able to defend the idea that even mutable things possessed a level of inherent worth, while also arguing that this worth was distinct from the worth possessed by the supreme good (the thing that brought our lives fully into accordance with human nature). Their view that we would never experience grief in relation to these things, while ever we continued to look upon them as indifferent to our happiness, did not involve them in a contradiction, since they defined grief as the strong emotion that we felt when we lost, not any good, but the thing that we looked upon as our supreme good – the thing that we thought of as making us happy. Hence, while I agree with Wolterstorff that Augustine did look upon mutable things as goods, I do not agree that this involved a break with Stoicism: the Stoic theory of the good was not monist, since they were able to give a coherent account of the worth of mutable things, and Augustine's theory of the good was not monist either.

Wolterstorff argues, however, that Augustine's view was that we would experience grief even in relation to those things which we regarded as preferred indifferents, meaning, in relation to those things which we regarded as good but unnecessary for happiness. If this is correct, then arguably this would have involved Augustine re-defining grief as something which was not always a passion, since we have seen that the passions were, by definition, the emotions that were experienced only in relation to those things which we regarded as needed for living happily; by definition, we did not experience passion in relation to those things which we regarded as goods, but as unnecessary for happiness.

[79] Ibid., p. 35.

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A weakness in Wolterstorff's account is that it is not clear what reason Augustine could have had to give this new meaning to grief. In what follows I find that Augustine did not claim that grief could be something which was not a passion. This is because I find that Wolterstorff is incorrect in his view that, for Augustine, human beings inescapably experienced grief through caring about and losing mutable things. On the contrary, in those passages in which Augustine discussed the grief that everyone, including the virtuous, necessarily felt in the course of this earthly life, I find that he claimed that this grief sprang not from the fact that we had valued and lost some mutable thing, but rather from the fact that we had valued some immutable thing which, in the conditions of temporal existence, we could never secure to ourselves; we grieved when this thing definitively escaped our possession because we rightly regarded it as needed for happiness.

Thus, Augustine was able to reach the conclusion that everyone would experience grief because his picture of *eudaimonia*, or the fully natural life, did not entirely agree with that of the Stoics, or any other classical eudaimonist. I find, however, that Augustine's picture of *eudaimonia* remained consistent with classical eudaimonist principles, even while it was innovative, with the result that I do not view him as breaking with the ancient tradition in eudaimonism. This chapter concludes by giving an account of ancient eudaimonism in order to provide a basis for analysing Augustine's relationship to this tradition in the chapters that follow.

## ANCIENT EUDAIMONISM

Eudaimonism was the dominant tradition in ancient moral philosophy[80] and Augustine would have encountered it in all his reading. Thus, his understanding of it could have come from many sources: through Cicero's *Hortensius* he had access to Aristotelian understandings of the happy life (the now lost *Protrepticus*);[81] he had access to Stoic thought through Marcus Varro's *On Philosophy*, which is now lost, and probably through

[80] Julia Annas, "Ancient Eudaimonism and Modern Morality," in Christopher Bobonich, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 265.

[81] Michael W. Tkacz, "St. Augustine's Appropriation and Transformation of Aristotelian *eudaimonia*," in Jon Miller, ed., *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 70.

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other Stoic doxographies which are also lost;[82] and his understanding of the eudaimonism of the Platonists came through his own reading, in Latin translation, of the Neoplatonist works of Plotinus and Porphyry.

Augustine himself gave an account of his intellectual influences in *Confessions*, and this also establishes that he was familiar with the Stoic-Platonic tradition in eudaimonism. He did not describe himself as ever tempted to become a Stoic;[83] rather, it was Cicero who was important to him as a very young man, and through Cicero, he explained that he was led to accept the Manichean approach to morals for a long period in his twenties.[84] Later, it was the Neoplatonists whose approach impressed him most among all non-Christian thinkers.[85] Nonetheless, despite the fact that he was more directly engaged with later thinkers in the eudaimonist tradition, he was knowledgeable about the Stoics and about the way that these later thinkers had modified or disagreed with the Stoic approach.

In this way, Augustine would have been aware of a number of different approaches among eudaimonists, but this does not mean that classical eudaimonism would have appeared to him as something incoherent or contested. Rather, I think that he would have understood the work of later thinkers, in particular, Cicero and the Neoplatonists, as building upon and improving the work of the Stoics. He would have been aware of them as, in a sense, the end products of a tradition which stretched back to the Stoics and beyond, but which had also been modified through the centuries and which contained new insights. The idea of this eudaimonist tradition in moral thought involves the idea that all eudaimonist approaches shared certain principles in common and that it was an evolving understanding of the proper application of these principles that drove changes within the tradition. Thus, in what follows, I attempt to give an account of what these underlying eudaimonist principles or insights were.

Eudaimonism used the terms "virtue" and "vice" in a distinctive way. It understood virtue and vice or sin as the human contributions – the contributions of our wills – to achieving the happy life or to keeping us in

[82] Sarah Catherine Byers, *Perception, Sensibility and Moral Motivation in Augustine: A Stoic-Platonic Synthesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 13 and 93.

[83] He might have been typical of his generation in this regard. Tad Brennan, "The Stoic Theory of Virtue," in Lorraine Besser-Jones and Michael Slote, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2015). Brennan notes: "by the fourth century, very few still identified as Stoics. But Stoic ethical treatises continued to be read by non-Stoics" (p. 32).

[84] *Conf.* 3.4. [85] Ibid., 7.9.

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unhappiness. More specifically, in the Stoic-Platonic tradition, virtue was that voluntary thing which guaranteed happiness to human beings, while vice was the voluntary thing that kept us miserable. Hence eudaimonism held that to establish what virtue and vice were, we needed to inquire into the conditions of human happiness: we needed to discover what distinguished the wills of people who were imprisoned in a miserable existence from the wills of people who were happy (or who were certain to become happy).

In this way, eudaimonism held that we would arrive at the correct understanding of virtue when we had correctly understood the nature of human happiness: in eudaimonism, virtue and happiness were so intimately connected that all we needed to know in order to know the nature of virtue was what it meant to be happy. But what does it mean to be happy? The difficulty of reaching agreement about this has been seen as a key problem with eudaimonism.[86] O'Donovan suggests that ancient eudaimonists' claims about human happiness were really just expressions of their own preferences – some chose to understand human happiness as one thing, and others as another thing; there was no possibility of giving a realist or objective account of human happiness, and so ancient thinkers gave a positivist account – they posited the happy life wherever they willed.

On the contrary, ancient eudaimonists offered a realist account of happiness and virtue. In eudaimonism, happiness, *eudaimonia*, was a term with a specific meaning. Eudaimonists claimed that everyone identified happiness as the goal, but they held that in saying this people were saying something very specific: they found that everyone agreed in regarding happiness as their ultimate goal, but they took this as evidence that there was an ultimate goal which was common to us all, meaning a fundamental goal which was given us in our human nature, and so this was what we were all referring to when we talked about happiness. In other words, ancient eudaimonists found that our talk about happiness was evidence that human life was oriented to a common end: there was a single end which moved us all – the ultimate goal of human life.

Consequently, eudaimonists focused their inquiry on identifying what this goal was. That is, in starting with the claim "everyone desires to be happy" they understood themselves as starting with the claim "everyone has a common goal": their starting point was the idea that human life was oriented towards a common objective, which we were all seeking all the

[86] Julia Annas, "Virtue and Happiness," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 15.1 (1998): 37–55, at 51–55.

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time and which, in one way or another, explained everything which we did or desired.[87] Their assumption was that, since this goal was given in human nature, it could be identified objectively through the study of human nature.

To identify what this universal goal was, eudaimonists found that they needed a clear picture of human nature. Since they noted that human beings and animals had certain things in common, they began by looking at the lives of animals and noting that they were shaped from birth by particular concerns and interests.[88] They then sought to identify the underlying desire that unified and explained these various concerns and interests. For some eudaimonists, animal behaviour was merely inspired by the desire for pleasure or for self-preservation. The Stoics, however, considered that "pleasure" and "self-preservation" were both inadequate explanations of animal behaviour: they held that the desire for pleasure or self-preservation simply did not account for the wide variety of behaviour manifested by animals. Instead, the Stoics concluded that everything which animals did could be explained by the desire to live in accordance with that animal's unique nature: in everything which they did, animals showed their awareness of the particular kind of animal that they were; they showed that they had grasped "the ends for which [they had] been framed by nature."[89] In short, for the Stoics, the underlying drive which explained all the particular concerns and interests of an animal was the drive to live as it was fitted to live.[90] Thus, the Stoics held that every animal possessed "an orientation towards appropriate function ... [a] disposition to carry out the kinds of activities implicit in its physical constitution."[91]

By showing that animals' goal was to live in a manner appropriate to their natures, and then by studying the behaviour of human beings from a young age, the Stoics aimed to show that this was the basic drive of human beings too, namely, not simply for pleasure or even for self-preservation, but to live as it was appropriate to human beings to live.[92]

[87] Brad Inwood, "Reason, Rationalization and Happiness in Seneca," in *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 251: "the *finis* or *telos* of human beings is called happiness." For example, Seneca (Letter 76.8–11) states that every animal, including human beings, was seeking "the goal of its own nature." Discussed by Inwood, p. 251.

[88] Jacob Klein, "The Stoic Argument from *Oikeiōsis*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 50 (2016): 143–200, at 149–150.

[89] Ibid., p. 161. [90] Ibid., pp. 145–152. [91] Ibid., p. 161.

[92] Inwood, "Reason, Rationalization and Happiness": "The happy life was a life in accordance with nature" (p. 252). See also Brad Inwood, "Stoicism," in David Furley, ed., *The Routledge History of Philosophy, Volume 2: From Aristotle to Augustine* (London:

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In short, for the Stoics, human beings naturally desired not just to live but to live fully in accordance with their nature: they shared with animals the inborn goal of leading a life in which they performed the functions inherent in their natures and lived in every way as befitted their human constitution.

Thus, the Stoics held that the goal to which everyone was drawn at all times was the goal of living fully in accordance with human nature: our common, fundamental goal ("happiness") was the life that accorded completely with our nature as human beings. They did not require people to posit this as the meaning of happiness – they did not think that we had a choice about whether or not to desire as our goal the life according to nature. Rather, the Stoics held that this was human beings' fundamental drive from birth and throughout their lives – they held that the desire to live the fully human life was our most basic goal, inborn in us and ineradicable from us, shaping and explaining every aspect of our lives. This was the state for which all human beings were yearning all the time – a yearning which they did not learn, but which was given in their human nature itself. Thus, the Stoic tradition of eudaimonism offered a realist, not a positivist, account of happiness and virtue. The question investigated by eudaimonists in asking, "What does it mean to be happy?" was "What fundamental goal drives all human beings?," to which the Stoics answered, "The desire to live fully in accordance with human nature."

Other thinkers who followed in the Stoic tradition of eudaimonism, including Cicero and the Neoplatonists, did not necessarily agree with the Stoics about what the life fully in accordance with human nature consisted in, and hence they reached different views about the nature of virtue. Nonetheless, despite disagreeing among themselves about the identity of this life, they agreed about how to establish its identity: the nature of this life was established by studying human nature itself – its limitations and unique capacities, as well as its natural desires. Having identified what the fully human life looked like, these thinkers agreed that this would inform us of what we must do to ensure that we lived this life, and hence reveal the nature of virtue.

Routledge, 1999): "in their ethics the Stoics claimed that the key to human fulfilment lay in living a life according to nature" (p. 224). See also p. 240 where Inwood quotes from Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 7.87, "Zeno, first, in his book *On the Nature of Man*, said that the goal was to live in agreement with nature, which is to live according to virtue." Brad Inwood, *Stoicism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 82, has a summary of Stoic conceptions of the goal of life.

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This was the tradition of eudaimonism to which Augustine was heir through the writings of the Stoics, Cicero, and the Neoplatonists; for brevity's sake, I will call this the Stoic-Platonic tradition of eudaimonism.[93] It gave an objective account of the goal driving human beings; hence, it did not fall into the trap of positivism and egoism outlined by O'Donovan and Wolterstorff. Human beings understood that they were seeking happiness at all times – that is, they understood that their nature had a fundamental goal. Hence, the question was, what was this fundamental goal which, in one way or another, explained all human desires and shaped the whole of human life? The Stoic-Platonic tradition maintained that it had established that this goal was to live the fully human life, and hence this tradition set out to identify everything involved in living this life.

The Stoics and Platonists agreed that identifying everything involved in living the fully human life would in turn reveal the nature of virtue, since they understood virtue as ensuring that our lives would fully conform to our natures. Thus, the thinkers in this tradition shared certain common conclusions about the identity of virtue because they agreed about certain features of the fully natural life. They agreed that there were, evidently, many ways in which human beings already lived a human life: we necessarily lived within the limitations of our natures; certain capacities were natural to us and these underwent a natural development in the course of our lives; moreover, we all experienced natural desires. In all these things, we were clearly all already living as human beings. Nonetheless, these thinkers also agreed that there were a number of ways in which we did not necessarily live in accordance with our natures.

The first of these concerned the rational life. The Stoic-Platonic approach held that a comparison between humans and other animals established that what distinguished human beings from all other animals was the possession of reason. Hence, the fully human life must necessarily be the fully rational life.[94] Living in complete accordance with our human nature required that we lived in complete accordance with the dictates of reason. Consequently, it was necessary to establish what these dictates were and to scrutinise our lives to identify the ways in which we failed to conform to the teachings of reason.

[93] Here, I follow Byers, in *Perception, Sensibility and Moral Motivation*, who writes of a "Stoic-Platonic synthesis."

[94] Inwood, "Stoicism": "It follows for the Stoics that one of the principal jobs of ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is the working out of what reason dictates" (p. 241).

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The Stoic doctrine of *oikeiösis* played a central role in explaining how the life that human beings learned to live when they heeded the dictates of reason differed from, but was related to, the life that they began leading from birth.[95] It explained, for example, how the natural concern that we had for our own health and well-being, and for the health and well-being of those near to us, became the rational concern for the health and well-being of the whole of humanity. The Stoics began by noting that from their youngest years, prior to coming under the influence of reason, human beings sought and upheld the welfare of those in their immediate circle – without any teaching, they sought to promote the well-being of the small society of their family and friends. The observation that these things were naturally pursued by us allowed the Stoics to conclude that mutable things like the health of the body (one's own or others') had intrinsic value: for the Stoics, the things that we naturally sought were necessarily good things – things of value – since a good, quite simply, was whatever a human being naturally sought for its own sake (and not as a means to something else).[96] Hence, mutable things like good physical health had value since it was evident that everyone sought these things as an end in themselves: everyone would prefer to have these things (for themselves and those close to them), rather than to lack them.

Thus, the Stoics noted that human beings naturally sought these things for themselves and their friends, and naturally sought them as ends and not means, with the result that these things were goods. They also held that we learned from reason to seek these things for the whole of humanity. When we reached adulthood, the point of rational maturity, we learned from our reason that our family and friends were in essence no different to the rest of humanity. We saw that to value the health of our family and friends in its own right, and yet not to value other people's health and well-being in the same way, when everyone else shared the same needs and vulnerabilities as those closest to us, was not in accordance with reason.

In other words, reason confirmed that not only our own health and welfare but the health and welfare of every human being was a good.

[95] Klein, "The Stoic Argument"; Tad Brennan, "*Oikeiösis* and Others," in *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties and Fate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Sara Magrin, "Nature and Utopia in Epictetus' Theory of *Oikeiösis*," *Phronesis* 63 (2018): 293–350.

[96] See Jacob Klein, "Making Sense of Stoic Indifferents," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 49 (2015): 227–282; I. G. Kidd, "The Relation of Stoic Intermediates to the *Summum Bonum*, with Reference to Change in the Stoa," *Classical Quarterly* 5 (1955): 150–172.

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This insight that the welfare of everyone was something of inherent value, in turn, motivated us to seek to provide for and protect every human being, inasmuch as this lay within our power. We were not motivated to pursue their welfare because we viewed their welfare as part of the supreme good, or as the means to our happiness; rather, we were motivated to pursue their welfare because we viewed it as a good – as something which it was fitting for us, as human beings, to pursue and to pursue for its own sake. The supreme good referred to that thing in having which we would be happy; valuing the welfare of every human being was something which we would do in the happy life (since it accorded with our nature), but we will see that the Stoics did not view actually achieving my own or others' welfare as something which was necessary for happiness. Hence, they viewed human welfare as a good, but not part of the supreme good. In short, for the Stoics, the fully natural life was the fully rational life, and valuing the health and well-being, not just of those near to us but even of those who were only distantly connected to us, was in accordance with reason, with the result that pursuing their welfare for its own sake was likewise in accordance with reason.

The above might suggest that in the Stoic-Platonic tradition of eudaimonism, being virtuous was one and the same thing as valuing the welfare of everyone and so treating every other human being in this other-oriented, sociable way. In fact, this tradition was clear that this was not enough for virtue: doing this brought people closer to leading the fully natural life, but it was insufficient to guarantee that their lives were fully in accordance with human nature.[97] Hence, doing this was not what it meant to be virtuous; people could do this and yet remain vicious.

For the Stoics and Platonists, learning from reason to value as a good in its own right the welfare of all human beings was only the first step

[97] Matthew Sharpe, "Stoic Virtue Ethics," in Stan van Hooft, ed., *The Handbook of Virtue Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 34: "Yet the aim of Stoic virtue ethics, like Aristotle's before it, is not simply that one should externally do what is right"; "right action is not the highest end for the Stoics" (p. 41); "the only truly good thing was the knowledge that all external things were indifferent to us ... This knowledge was virtue" (p. 35). Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 213: "Simply making the right selection [doing the right action] does not constitute virtue, although it is essential for it. The virtuous man thinks of his action as being right and in accordance with Nature's will. He thinks of himself as doing the action because man was made for acting thus." Colish, *The Stoic Tradition*: "virtue and vice, for the Stoa, are not a collection of deeds ... On the basis of this view, the Stoics achieve a radical internalizing of ethics. Although virtue ought to express itself in outward acts, ethics deals primarily with inner motivations" (p. 43).

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towards achieving the life that was fully in accordance with our natures. We also needed to pursue others' welfare in a way which itself accorded with human nature. We naturally sought the well-being of ourselves, and of those close to us, and we learnt from reason to seek this for all human beings; but, to accord with our nature, our pursuit of these things needed to be governed by reason. Reason told us that, as human beings, certain things lay within our powers and certain things did not. In particular, reason told us that human beings exercised only an imperfect control over mutable, temporal things, including human health. As something beyond the complete control of our human nature, mutable things like our physical welfare were necessarily things which human beings could fail to acquire, or lose once they had acquired them; hence, the possession of these things was not something demanded by the life in full accordance with human nature – as things which escaped our full control, we could live in complete accordance with our nature as human beings even while lacking these things.[98] As noted already, this meant that, while the Stoics and Platonists viewed certain mutable, or temporal things, like human health, as goods, they did not view them as the supreme good. Instead, they understood them as 'preferred indifferents' – things which it was in accordance with human nature to pursue as ends in themselves, but things which were not necessary for living the fully natural life.

Importantly, the above considerations allowed eudaimonists to conclude that certain thoughts would be present in our minds when we lived in complete accordance with human nature. In particular, living in complete agreement with human nature involved thinking that, while everyone's temporal well-being was of inherent worth, it was not a good which we needed to have in order to live happily (it was not the supreme good). This did not change the fact that we would seek these things, but it ensured that we would not seek them in an inappropriate way. In short, in addition to seeing temporal things as having inherent worth, the fully natural life would also be characterised by the thought that none of these things was actually necessary for living the life that we were all striving to live. Consequently, while we would continue to regard these things as goods – and so strive to attain them – we would not view having them as a condition for achieving our fundamental goal of living fully in accordance with human nature.

The same line of reasoning established further characteristics of the fully natural life. In particular, it established that when we lived fully in

[98] Sharpe, "Stoic Virtue Ethics": "external things are neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness" (p. 31).

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accordance with human nature, we would have whatever thing or things it was natural for us to have: whatever this thing might be, it would be something which was within the power of every human being to have; hence, it would not be anything mutable or temporal. Moreover, it established that to be sure of having this thing, we needed only to will to have it, since this thing, whatever it was, was something which was fully within the power of a human being to have.

Consequently, the Stoic-Platonic tradition concluded that living fully in accordance with human nature involved a number of things: as a first step, it involved learning from reason to look upon the welfare of everyone as a good in its own right, and so seeking this for its own sake; in addition to this, it also involved learning from reason to seek this welfare correctly through recognising that, as a temporal thing, we did not need to have it in order to live in accordance with human nature; and, furthermore, it involved correctly identifying what it was that, as human beings, it was natural for us to have – this thing was called the supreme or highest good and it would not be any mutable (temporal) thing. Finally, living the fully natural life necessarily involved actually having this thing or things: we would live in complete accordance with human nature in the possession of the highest good, meaning that the highest good must be something which, in willing to have it, we would be sure of having it.

Virtue was that thing which guaranteed that we would live in complete accordance with human nature, and, moreover, virtue was always a matter of our wills. This led the Stoic-Platonic tradition to the conclusion that virtue was simply a matter of thinking correctly about the identity of the supreme, or highest, good. When we thought correctly about the identity of the highest good, our lives would have all the above characteristics: we would correctly identify what it was natural for human beings to have (since this was the highest good); we would be sure to think correctly about the value of mutable things (since we would understand them as goods, but not the highest good); and, finally, thinking correctly about the identity of the highest good would mean that we would will to possess this thing: since the highest good, by definition, was something which we would be sure to possess simply by willing to have it, simply willing to have this thing would ensure that it would be ours. Consequently, the meaning of virtue was to think correctly about the identity of humanity's highest good: in thinking correctly about the identity of the highest good, our wills would be in a state to ensure that we lived the fully human life.

Likewise, this tradition found that vice referred to thinking of anything temporal or mutable as needed for happiness, since thinking in this way in

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itself trapped us in the unhappy life. Mutable things were not things which were needed for the fully natural life and so to think of them as such was a thought which had no place in the fully natural life, with the result that while we thought in this way, we failed to live in complete accordance with human nature. In addition, the Stoic-Platonic tradition found that thinking of something as the highest good involved experiencing a certain emotion for that thing: this was the emotion of *eros*, or passionate love. *Eros* was the strong emotion that we experienced for whatever we thought of as needed for happiness.[99] Consequently, this tradition found that vice involved *eros* for mutable (temporal) things, while virtue involved *eros* for the true highest good.

The above discussion of the Stoic-Platonic tradition of eudaimonism establishes that this tradition has the potential to illuminate many of the moral claims made by Augustine. In particular, his claim that virtue was a kind of love becomes explicable when his thought is placed within the framework of this tradition in eudaimonism, as does his view that all sinners loved temporal things. Moreover, this tradition offers an explanation of the connection between our loves and our actions: it explains why, when we loved certain things, we would be sure to do certain actions, and why, when we loved certain other things, we would be unwilling to do these actions – something which accounts of Augustine's moral thought have hitherto failed to explain adequately.

Consequently, my study seeks to understand whether or not Augustine accepted these insights from the Stoic-Platonic tradition in eudaimonism and so developed his account of virtue and sin within this tradition. Chapters 2 and 3 ask whether or not Augustine thought that virtuous people and sinners were necessarily distinguished from each other by reference to their social and political lives. These chapters find that he did not think that this was the case, and so I find that current accounts of his social and political thought are mistaken and must be rejected. This finding is consistent with the conclusion that Augustine was working within the Stoic-Platonic tradition of eudaimonism, since this tradition likewise maintained that vicious people could lead lives full of sociable actions and do all the other actions that the virtuous also did. Chapters

[99] Frisbee Sheffield, "Love and the City: *Eros* and *Philia* in Plato's Laws," in Laura Candiotto and Olivier Renault, eds., *Emotions in Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), p. 336. Christopher Gill, "Stoic *Erôs* – Is There Such a Thing?," in Ed Sanders, Chiara Thumiger, Chris Carey, and Nick J. Lowe, eds., *Erôs in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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4–6 provide further evidence that Augustine was working within this tradition of eudaimonism. These chapters show that, for him, Christianity was true eudaimonism: for him, the Stoics and Platonists, and other non-Christian moralists, correctly understood eudaimonist principles, but had failed to understand these principles well enough to see the flaws in their own application of them. Christianity alone contained the complete understanding and correct application of these principles and so Christianity alone succeeded in being thoroughly eudaimonist. Chapter 7 addresses the important topic of Augustine's understanding of self-love and neighbour-love, showing that he understood these ideas from within the framework of eudaimonism as well. Chapters 8 and 9 focus on his understanding of the nature of sin, showing that his ideas of original sin and personal sin also make sense from within eudaimonism.

Thus, my conclusion in this study is that Augustine did indeed share the above insights with the Stoic-Platonic tradition in eudaimonism, with the result that I do not agree with O'Donovan's and Wolterstorff's views that Augustine broke with classical eudaimonism. I find that he remained within this tradition, but he nonetheless developed new insights which he believed were consistent with, and required by, the principles that the Stoics and Platonists defended. I find that these insights led him to his distinctive claims that Christians alone were virtuous, and that they were virtuous through grace.

In what follows, I find that what is remarkable about Augustine's thought is that he found a place within the ancient eudaimonist tradition for all of Christianity's most distinctive claims. My view is that Augustine was convinced that all of Christianity, including its understanding of virtue and sin and its doctrine of divine grace, made sense within the framework bequeathed to him by pagan philosophers. This challenges the view that, in the history of thought, Christianity has always been perceived as necessarily something 'interruptive' or as something which marks an absolute break with antiquity.[100] For Augustine, Christianity was about continuity and fulfilment; it did not reject pre-existing systems of thought; it did not offer a new basis for ethical judgements. Rather, for

[100] Milbank claims that Christianity should be seen as interruptive ("My case is that one needs to emphasize more strongly the interruptive character of Christianity, and therefore its difference from *both* modernity and antiquity," p. 399). Milbank believes that Augustine agrees with him. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

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Augustine, reason was an accurate and complete guide to what God required of us in our treatment of other human beings; and, moreover, reason led us to the brink of Christian conversion through telling us when we were mistaken about the identity of the true God. Thus, for him, Christianity was inseparable from what he judged to be the ancient world's best philosophy: Augustine worked within this philosophy to make sense of the meaning of Christianity.[101]

[101] Thus, I locate my work in the tradition of writings on Augustine's moral thought that have attempted to appreciate more fully his debt to ancient philosophy. Sarah Catherine Byers (2013) is a prominent recent contribution to this field. I am particularly indebted to Byers' careful explanation of the presence of Stoic and Platonic themes in Augustine's account of moral motivation: I do not attempt to rival her outstanding study of the integration of specific Stoic and Platonic ideas and terminology in Augustine's moral psychology. What my work offers instead is an explanation of how this Stoic-Platonic synthesis gave Augustine his particular definitions of virtue and vice, or sin. This does not form part of Byers' study and so in making this the focus of my work, I am offering something new. Another important recent study of Augustine's engagement with ancient moral philosophy is Brian Harding's *Augustine and Roman Virtue* (London: Continuum, 2008). It will be evident by now that I agree with Harding's conclusion that "*The City of God* can and should be positioned within an ongoing tradition of Latin reflection of virtue and happiness rather than as something foreign to, and entirely opposed to, that tradition" (p. 149). However, it will also become evident, particularly in Chapter 3, that I disagree with Harding's understanding of Augustine on the *libido dominandi* and, more generally, that I disagree with his analysis of Augustine's "immanent critique" of ancient Roman ethics.

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