Augustine and the Legacy of Guilt

Mary Grey

The task facing a feminist theologian when asked to reflect on the legacy of St Augustine and sin is indeed daunting. For when confronting contemporary understanding of sin and guilt, it is frequently assumed that the legacy of guilt and the whole burden of responsibility for sin which women have borne in Christianity is somehow to be laid at Augustine's door. So the problem underlying this paper is basically a *historical* one: how much responsibility for pessimistic views of human nature can be traced to what Augustine actually wrote and taught? Secondly, to reflect critically on Augustinian notions of sin will inevitably obscure the *positive* dimensions of his thought—in particular, his views on community, sacrament and Christology. For this I apologize in advance. But no one will thank me for tracing the legacy of Augustine's teaching on sin through the anguishings of Luther and the rigorous extremism of Baius and Jansenius to the Papal encyclicals of this century. Instead, I begin by sketching sin-consciousness today. I then look briefly at Augustine's doctrines in the context of 4th-century Christianity. Thirdly, I focus on certain threads, presumed to be the Augustinian legacy, and in the last section I look at attempts to re-present 'the sin of the world' suggesting an alternative based on feminist psychological research.

I: Whatever happened to sin?

What is striking today is a distinct absence of guilt feelings. Karl Menninger's book *Whatever Became of Sin?* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), drew attention to the growing absence of sin as a meaningful category, a factor which he attributed to the 'original sin' of our day, namely, flight from responsibility. A survey by the Dutch sociologist Kerkhofs (*The Tablet,* 26 February 1985) of Christian European attitudes to sin and guilt revealed that about 40% of those interviewed had never experienced any feelings of regret about their actions! Seemingly we are presented with a lack of moral awareness on a terrifying scale, as leading statesmen are exonerated from corruption scandals and SS officers from the Nuremberg trials onward present themselves as guiltless and blame-free. We ourselves have been presented with the underlying causes of African famine which point to the responsibility of our society: but if Britain feels any guilt, she has learnt to live with it; guilt must not interfere with the politics of consumerism.

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And yet there are moments which pierce this protective veneer: when Oppenheimer dropped the first atomic bomb, he declared, 'and now science knows sin'.

Perhaps flight from responsibility can be a subtle form of internalised guilt: Hannah Arendt's comment that 'morally speaking, it is hardly *less* wrong to feel guilty without having done something specific, than it is to feel free of all guilt if one is actually guilty,[1]' alerts us to the full spectrum which guilt feelings take. But what is taken as the all-pervading legacy of Augustine is the experience of being fallen in a fallen world, in need of redemption, salvation and integrity. The myth of the Garden of Eden is still present as a symbol of this lost integrity, as primal innocence, nostalgia for a lost Golden Age, nostalgia which, as Harvey Cox once pointed out[2], travel agents have been quick to exploit by offering distant golden beaches, tropical fruit and illusory temptations to get away from it all! Nor is this sense of lost integrity confined to humanity: 'Nature, too, mourns for a lost good', as Tillich preached[3]; the entire creation is flawed. But the 'fallenness' of the human situation is experienced in its strongest form through a sense of ineluctable corruptedness—total moral depravity in some Protestant evangelical circles—a pessimism about the body and sexuality, a belief that the will is flawed (we are either 'weak-willed' or 'wilful'), and a sense of the inevitability of original sin, of which pride is the dominant expression—this last despite the frequent re-interpretations by theologians over the last twenty-five years.

Pessimism about humanity and the meaning of existence has taken many forms. For theologians like Tillich it was fashionable to speak of alienation, estrangement: 'We are estranged from the ground of our being, from the depth of our existence'[4]. Rollo May spoke of apathy[5], resulting in a lack of ability to feel and experience, issuing from a disjunction of will, eros and creative imagination. This was the language of the 60s. In the 80s, hard on the heels of the development of philosophic personalism, we have seen the breakdown of personal relationships on an enormous scale, going hand-in-hand with a recall to supposed traditional Victorian family values and a massive increase of depressive illnesses. It is this last factor which is most significant here. The sense of impending doom of the nuclear threat, the endangered environment and the punitive morality evoked by the Aids epidemic have seriously questioned the survival of the world, causing depression as to the future—or lack of it—for large numbers of young people.

Could this be the ultimate punishment for sin? Although both men and women suffer from depression, the causes tend to be different, and twice as many women as men suffer from depressive illnesses and have to live with depression as a permanent factor of their lives. (The suicides of Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath and many others testify to the seriousness of this.) If there is an established link between lack of self-esteem and the way women internalise guilt for the sin of the world, is this part of the

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Augustinian heritage?

Finally, the one-sided analysis of sin as pride has brought many problems: if Augustine is right, how would he see the relationship between Christian and State in the teeth of the cultural legitimation of pride manifested in Thatcherism, which encourages self-mastery in exactly the way which Augustine denounced, and even negates the concept of society which he was at pains to construct?

One current response is to denounce Augustinian pessimism and the redemption spirituality it engenders. Matthew Fox's broadsides are well-known:

> It (that is, redemption spirituality) practically wrote women off the face of the spiritual map, locking them up whenever possible ... It has put the body down and called this repression holy ... It has substituted private 'righteousness' for biblical justice; it has taught sin-consciousness rather than peoples' capacity for the Divine ...[6]

Thus Fox's Creative-centred spirituality and much of the emergent Feminist Spirituality offer an alternative by uncovering the rich resources celebrating creation, by beginning with ourselves as God's good creation, and by focussing on original grace and blessing instead of sin. For many this is a satisfying approach, and certainly therapeutic to anyone with a weak sense of self-esteem. To me it has an unrealistic approach to evil and offers no theodicy. To understand why the experience of one man should still hold such sway—despite revisionist attempts—and why such a pessimistic interpretation of humanity as flawed should have taken such a penetrating grip, I return briefly to the years following that August of 386 in Milan.

II: Another tree, another garden, another city

I begin with a sketch of Augustine's views on sin. The first difficulty is our philosophical perspective: how can 20th-century thinkers, European post-Cartesian individualists of a Thatcher society, appreciate the world-view of a north-African bishop poised on the uneasy fulcrum of the Manichean-Pelagian see-saw? How can a society which expects a degree of gender awareness empathize with a world-view where, in the words of Peter Brown, 'it is a comfortable and dangerous illusion to assume that, in much of the evidence, the presence of women is even *sensed*'[7] (my italics).

Attempts are made to explain Augustine's doctrine of sin in terms of his Manichean years, then in the context of his struggle against the Manicheans and subsequently in terms of his battle with the Pelagians, with the need to stress human solidarity in sin and guilt which *only* God's grace can remedy. The *Confessions* of Augustine is an unparalleled account of a spiritual struggle with sexual desire, which remained all his life, and of which his opponent, Julian of Eclanum, appears to have little understanding. It is this struggle for control over desire which has such

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consequences for Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 1—3. Peter Brown, in his study of Augustine[8] and his more recent book on *Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*[9], shows how in the first three centuries the Genesis myth had been understood as meaning that the source of evil lay not in creation—as in Manicheism—but in human choice. Even if Christian freedom and sanctity was interpreted in ascetic terms of sexual renunciation, this was a liberating message in the context of a pagan society, where the Church was an island of hopeful serenity, surrounded by demonic forces. For John Chrysostom the story of the Garden proclaimed human *freedom*: for Augustine it was a story of human *bondage*. Thus the explanation is at a more complex level than simple the personal struggle of Augustine or the fact that the social scene had changed.

Augustine's teaching, vividly depicted in both *Confessions* and *City of God*, contrasts two cities, earthly and heavenly, and the symbolism of two trees, the Tree of Adam's temptation and that of Augustine's own, over against which Christ, the Tree of Life, would offer the only hope. Writing thirteen years after his Baptism (c.400), recalling the time when he went stealing pears from the orchard, Augustine sees himself as summing up exactly the same human predicament as Adam: 'In the sixteenth year of the age of my flesh ... the madness of raging lust exercised its supreme dominion over me' (*Conf.* 2.3.). Through sexual desire, he says (and he means 'concupiscentia', 'libido' in a negative sense, not sexual desires rightly used), 'my invisible enemy tracked me down and seduced me' (*Conf.* 2.3.). But whereas earlier, rejecting the Manichean view of evil as energy, he had sought refuge in a Catholic interpretation of freedom of choice in the face of desire, the maturing Augustine thought that the will, though free, in practice is flawed and corrupted as punishment for sin.

This, then, is the key to the whole story. The sin of the Garden of Eden is the direct consequence of the fallen will. Sin in terms of pride—the dominant interpretation of this—is an expression of the corrupt will. Lack of control of sexual desire—concupiscentia/libido—is equally an expression. But where Chrysostom saw Adam as a single individual, with the possibility of the choice not to imitate him, Augustine saw him as a microcosm of the human race:

> The entire human race that was to pass through woman was contained in the first man when that married couple received the Divine sentence condemning them to punishment and *humanity produced what humanity became, not what it was when created, but when, having sinned, it was punished.* (*City of God*, 13.3).

The orientation of the will in terms of self-assertion is a turn from greater to lesser good, the shift itself being 'the original evil'. But no adequate explanation is ever given by Augustine of the causes of the will's corruption. The will in pre-lapsarian time would have been entirely set on God[10]. But Augustine went further. The desire to master one's will

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is a fatal temptation—the desire for self-mastery is perversity, and the rebellion of sexual instincts and desires, which happens out of the will's control, is proof and penalty of our rebellion against God and as such is universal and ineradicable. Not that Augustine invented the notion of original sin itself: the concept is found in Tertullian (*De Anima* 40) and originates in an older Jewish-Christian belief in human solidarity in sin: what is correctly the legacy of Augustine is the belief that each individual inherits punishment due to sin manifested by the flawed will.

Why, then, was such a pessimistic analysis so influential? Elaine Pagels in her book *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*[11] suggests the controversial thesis that Augustine's theology of original sin could make intelligible not only the state's imperfection, but the Church's imperfection as well:

> By insisting that humanity, now ravaged by sin, now lies helplessly in need of outside intervention, Augustine's theory could not only validate secular power, but justify as well the imposition of Church authority—by force, if necessary, as essential for human nature. (p.125)

According to Pagels, not only did Augustine's views serve to legitimate the authority of the emerging imperial Church, but the fairly universal belief that disaster and suffering are the wages of sin offers us the alternative of guilt to helplessness (p.144). His view appeals, she writes, 'to the human need to imagine ourselves in control, even at the cost of guilt' (p.144). Guilt is the price to be paid for the sense of being in control over nature, for on Augustine's view, as contrasted with Julian's, death and suffering are always the punishment for sin, and not inbuilt into the structures of biological determinism.

There is a certain appeal about this solution, but I think, first, that she has too easily assumed that Augustinian pessimism over the individual's internal conflict led him to advocate subjection to earthly authority: Augustine's exaggerated gloom over the flawed will can be better explained by the need for re-creation in Christ and the life of grace; secondly, I think that existential guilt is a more complex phenomenon than either he or she suggests. It is on the relationship between this and what Augustine said that I now focus.

III: The legacy of Augustine

What then is the precise legacy of Augustine in relation to what he actually said? I concentrate on three points: first, the scapegoating of women for sin, particularly sexual sin; secondly, the dominant understanding of sin as pride; and, thirdly, the difficulties ensuing from seeing sin as disobedience: all three within a consciousness of being fallen, in a fallen world.

Can the blame for the scapegoating of women for sexual sin be fairly laid at Augustine's door, as is usually the case in feminist theology? First, Augustine is clearly a man of his times in seeing women

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as the weaker sex, both physically and socially[12]. (He uses words like 'infirmior', 'imbecillior', 'fragilitas' and 'delicatior' and finds support from the text of 1 Peter 3.7, 'Men, honour your wives, as befits the weaker sex'.) But it is not clear that he considered women as inferior morally, spiritually or even intellectually. When it comes to responsibility for sin he is clear that *both* are guilty. The question of intellectual inferiority is ambiguous. Usually Augustine is accused of completely despising women on the grounds of texts like *De Gen. ad Litt.* 9.3.6, where he says that the only possible help a woman could be to a man is to bear children. But if seen against the background of the Manichean condemnation of procreation, it can be understood as a move by Augustine—inadequate though it may be to our eyes—to valorize the physical aspect of marriage in contrast with marriage as mere spiritual friendship. But, because his world is hierarchically-ordered, he does see the submission of woman to man as part of created order, although this ought to be more in terms of loving service (*De Gen. ad Litt. XI*). It is the punishment of sin which changes this to domination. But Augustine does not one-sidedly blame Eve for the sin of the Garden:

> But the man could not bear to be severed from his only companion, even though this involved a partnership in sin. He was not on this account less culpable, but sinned with his eyes open ... Although they were not both deceived by credulity, yet both were entangled by snares of the devil and taken by sin. (*City of God,* 14.11).

Given this, to what extent can Augustine be blamed for the imputing of blame for sin to women and our consequent internalising of guilt for it? First, the fact that he saw punishment for sin as sanctioning the social domination of men over women, stronger over weaker, continues to have tragic repercussions. Not only sexism but racism is given social sanction:

> Such as men are now, is the order of peace. Some are in subjection to others, and while humility helps those who serve, pride harms those in power. But, as men once were, when their nature was as God created it, no man was slave to either man or sin. However, *slavery is now penal in character,* and planned by that law which commands the preservation of the natural order, and forbids its disturbance. (*City of God,* 19,15)

But though Augustine saw the master/slave situation as punishment for sin and not as part of God's original plan (*City of God* 19.15), the just exercise of this relationship is always exhorted. Here the relationship of 'libido' in sexuality and what Augustine calls the 'libido dominandi' (lust for domination) is important and often missed as a part of his teaching. He calls this 'lust for domination' 'the most pitiless domination that devastates the hearts of men' (*City of God* 19.15), and is thus aware of its misuse in public affairs, especially war. But he, and Church teaching of succeeding generations, have most frequently focussed on 'libido' in the context of sexuality and therefore the damaging links between the two which we now see—the sexual abuse of children and women in powerless

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situations—have not been made.

Whereas Augustine alone cannot be blamed for not condemning slavery—he follows in a long tradition—yet it was the legitimisation of it as punishment for sin which had harmful consequences, thus allowing Calvinism and subsequently the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa to make tragic use of the belief in a divinely-sanctioned social order: the worst consequence of this is the internalisation by the oppressed of the mentality of the oppressor—a situation which Augustine would never have wished.

Secondly, given this social sanctioning of the domination of women both as punishment for sin and as being the weaker sex, the condemning of women to suffer pain in childbirth—an explicit part of Augustine's theology, whereas Julian saw this as natural, and anyway subject to enormous cultural variations—has had damaging consequences. The severest imputation of blame to Augustine and his interpretation of Gen. 3.16 has come from Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich. The giving of relief to women in childbirth, wrote Adrienne Rich, according to the clergy, would 'rob God of the deep earnest cries which arise in time of trouble'[13]. Referring to efforts to improve obstetric care she continues: 'The lifting of Eve's curse seemed to threaten the foundation of patriarchal religion; the cries of women in childbirth were for the glory of God the Father'[14]. Thus she describes the Rev. Richard Polwhele's complacent observations on Mary Wollstonecraft's death following childbirth: 'She had died a death that strongly marked the distinction of the sexes, by pointing out the destiny of women, and the diseases to which they were particularly liable'[15]. Even if this reaction is exaggerated—and Augustine himself would not have agreed that the cries of women were for the glory of God the Father—it points to a paradox of Christianity. If we are a faith centering around the fact of Incarnation, God becoming human, it is paradoxical that the initial event by which this occurred—Mary giving birth to Jesus—should have to be seen to be so different from the way that ordinary women give birth. Thus Mary escapes the punishment of ordinary women: birth-giving, instead of being seen as a powerful symbol of Divine creative activity, is considered as rightly painful, and associated with the dubious legacy of out-of-control sexuality and with the sexual taboos which restricted women in both Judaism and Christianity.

So, not only have women all-too-successfully symbolised the debased carnality of human nature—the phrase 'fallen women' sums it up accurately—but also, in many cases, have internalised the mentality of the 'fallen woman'. Thomas Hardy's Tess of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, George Eliot's Hetty in *Adam Bede*, Mrs Cranford's *Ruth*, Charles Dickens' Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, portray both the despised sexuality of the prostitute, or used innocent girl, and the doomed double stereotyping of the woman as idealised innocent virgin or sinner deserving punishment. All these authors echo

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quite amazingly 4th-century pessimism as to female sexuality. Whereas Augustine never made the explicit association of sexuality and death which Chrysostom did in *De Virginitate* ('For where there is death, there is sexual copulation, and where there is no death, there is no sexual copulation either'), yet the pessimism is ever-present, even though he struggled all his life with the body's importance for theology. And there is no escape from the gallows for Tess; Eliot's Hetty is reprieved only to be deported. Nancy is murdered by Bill Sykes, and Mrs Cranford's Ruth, after a life of sanctity 'expiating' the wrongs inflicted on her, is killed off by a fever. Julia Kristeva, the Bulgarian feminist philosopher, sees the problem as being the difficulty of women in joining the symbolic, Christian, monotheistic, paternal social order. 'All she can do', says Kristeva,

> is to engage in an endless struggle between the orgasmic maternal body and the symbolic prohibition—a struggle that will take the form of guilt and mortification and culminate in masochistic *jouissance*. As St Augustine marvellously put it, 'No-one, to my way of thinking, would ever prefer virginity to martyrdom' (Holy Virginity LXVII, 47). Thus the ecstatic and the melancholic, the two great female archetypes of Christianity, exemplify two ways in which a woman may participate in this symbolic Christian order.[16]

The tragic aspect of this is the violent abuse inflicted on women as a result of despised sexuality[17]. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite has pointed out that many battered women collude in their abused status. That 'she has deserved it' is the sharpest pointer to the fact that she has internalised the guilt of being woman. But in both these areas—the ethic of domination/submission in both racism and sexism—the causal connection with the actual teaching of Augustine cannot be proved. It is the link between the penal character of sin and its societal expressions which has proved so damaging.

Thirdly, the socially-sanctioned subordination of weaker to stronger has been made worse by Augustine by his analysis of sin as pride. Pride is still cited as the first of the deadly sins. Pride was the dominant analysis of sin, according to Reinhold Niebuhr[18], whose views are still influential. Niebuhr's answer lay in 'the shattering of the self' and in the concept of sacrificial love. Many feminist theologians have pointed out that 'the shattering of the self' is a damaging concept where there is no positive self-image in the first place, a possibility which neither Augustine nor Niebuhr ever considered. Sacrificial love, said Niebuhr, 'completes the incompleteness of mutual love by initiating the movement toward a loved one without reckoning a response'[19]. This is relevant where there is a self to assert, not where it has never existed. The concept of 'self-sacrifice' can be extremely harmful: the radical feminist stance of Mary Daly and Sheila Collins—is to reject this violently, claiming it means 'the radically unrewarding handing-over of their identity and energy to individual

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males'[20]. Sheila Collins insists that the preaching of virtue as self-sacrifice has 'impaled women on the Cross of self-sacrifice'[21]. While I see this as a dangerous dismissal of the concept of sacrificial love—would anyone *really* want to deny the possibility of giving life and energy to a chosen ideal?—a point is made that sacrificial scapegoat imagery may fail to engender compassion and sympathy for the other. The psychiatrist Thomas Stasz argued that the inability to aspire to the ethic of self-sacrifice can drive a person into identifying with the oppressor. Thus the scapegoat role may help neither victim nor oppressor. As he argues:

> To perceive blacks as victims does not, it seems, lead whites to sacrifice anything tangible to help the victims. The notion of sacrifice added to the burden of guilt almost guarantees resistance and rationalisation.[22]

So, in conclusion, I argue, first, that Augustine's analysis of sin as pride does not apply to those with weak or no sense of self. Augustine, indeed, is remarkable for his concept of 'self-love', both in terms of the natural attraction present in friendship and the tendency of any organism towards self-protection. He is remarkable in that it is difficult for him to harmonise this 'amor sui' with a love based directly on God: but he never considers the situation which I describe—that sin demands a wholly different analysis, when there is no real self to start off with. Valerie Saiving Goldstein's now famous article on 'The Human Condition'[23] (1960) had argued for two basic forms of sin (although this was already noticed by Kierkegaard in *The Sickness unto Death*[24]). Pride is rightly seen as the dominant sin in a culture which values external achievement, self-assertiveness, self-differentiation, independent individualism and the separation of humanity from nature. But this frequently does not describe the temptations of women as women. These, says Valerie Saiving Goldstein,

> are better suggested by such terms as triviality, distractibility and diffuseness, lack of an organising centre or focus; dependence on others for one's own self-definition; tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence; inability to respect the boundaries of privacy; sentimentality, gossipy sociability and mistrust of reason: in short, underdevelopment and negation of self.[25]

What is described here is more one form of female sin, which is in fact much more complex. Its relevance for the Augustinian legacy is that where Christianity's dominant symbolism is that of Cross, sacrificial imagery, the injunction to 'lose your life in order to find it', where, in other words, the victim role is idealised and socially-sanctioned, the guilt of women is increased. Hence much contemporary feminist literature concentrates on the quest for self. 'This above all: to choose *not* to be victim', says the nameless protagonist of Margaret Attwood's novel, *Surfacing*[26]. True self-denial could be taken on, writes Carolyn Osiek, 'only when a woman had sufficient psychological maturity to come to terms with her own sinfulness of fear, passivity and paralysis'[27]. Thus by being insensitive to the way pride is *socially* structured through the

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dynamic of dominance/submission—in other words, considering it in isolation from the social structures in which it is lived out—Augustine made it possible for the oppressor/victim situation to be intensified, even reinforcing the victim in his/her own oppressed situation. Finally, by seeing pride as the sin of disobedience—both to external commands and to the sinful self—obedience to superiors has been sanctioned in many cases in a way harmful to legitimate self-development, and in extreme cases as avoidance of personal responsibility. That 'I was merely obeying orders' has masked culpability for numerous atrocities.

IV: Original sin revisited

Thinking did not freeze with Augustine, although his remained the dominant Christian interpretation of human nature until this century. But recent revisionist attempts are now influential. For example, Schoonenberg's re-interpretation of original sin as 'the sin of the world', the result of our 'being situated' in sinful contexts and structures, has moved us forward[28]. But how does our 'being situated' relate to Augustine's 'punishment for sin'? Guilt, according to Schoonenberg, is only incurred when original sin is considered existentially, when it is realised that 'the sin of the world' will always be accompanied by 'some faint foreshadowing of a personal decision, probably of a personal sin'[29]. We collude, we exercise some complicity in our situation. Yet we are still left with the problem of the flawed will and damaged sexuality, and Augustine's interpretation of suffering and death as the wages of sin.

Considerable insights are offered by philosophy and psychology. The will is seen as integrated with the intentionality of the human person. Psychoanalytic theory has attempted to explain motivation through the influence of unconscious drives, and the conflict—often unconscious—between ego, id and superego. There are similarities—but not identification—between the pre-conscious libido and conscious ego, and the struggle for control between flesh and spirit. But there is no need to appeal to a fall from a superior state to explain id-ego conflict:

> Lamentation over an imagined lost paradise is replaced by hope for an originally flawed but improvable human nature, hope that the divided self may become whole, and will and appetites integrated.[30]

Sebastian Moore saw the experience of evil as the price of self-awareness, as the birth of self-consciousness and the dawning of self-awareness[31].

Similarly, Dorothee Soelle saw the Fall more as a story of human development than as a lapse into guilt and sin. But Revisionist attempts, in order to present a more profound grasp of the human situation before God, need to take into account the gender implications of the internalisation of guilt and sin. Yet Feminist theology offers much more than a gender analysis of sin. I believe there *is* a way to meet the conflicts engendered by the flawed will with which Augustine wrestled, but, owing to a deficient anthropology of human nature, remained entrapped.

First, contemporary understanding attempts a less fragmented

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approach to human nature, showing sexuality as deeply integral to human personhood and therefore to spirituality. Sexual intercourse is considered as an integral and potentially enriching part of marriage—a possibility which, sadly, Augustine could not envisage[32]. Secondly, feminist theologians like Rita Brock and Carter Heyward are trying to redress the negative effects of the denigration of the body by creating not just embodied theology, but a theology integrating sexual and erotic feeling. Thirdly, an aspect of the spirituality of the Wicca movement, as described by Starhawk, is the recovery of the power of the female will. But this is not evoked in the sense of self-assertion *over against* another, but attuned to the will of the group or community, and sensitive to environmental influences of wind, seasons of the year, as well as to bodily feeling and spiritual discernment.

My own suggestion as to a way forward is based on Heidegger's ontology of care, developed through feminist psychology as part of a theology of mutual relation. The 'being situated' of the human person, the 'da-sein' of Heidegger, is characterised by care for being. Care, as the concrete enactment of the potentiality of being, endows the 'being-there' with all its worldly capacities—not the least of which is 'willing' or 'volition':

> The phenomenon of care in its totality is essentially something that cannot be torn asunder, so any attempts to trace it back to special acts or drives like willing and wishing or urge and addiction, or to construct it out of these, will be unsuccessful. ... Willing and wishing are rooted with ontological necessity in Dasein as care...[33]

So, power to exercise choice is grounded in structures of care: 'In the phenomenon of willing, the underlying totality of care shows through'[34]. Time does not allow discussion of the difficulties of this view as contrasted, for example, with that of Ricoeur. What is interesting is the way that Heidegger's assertion that only when touched by the reality of being, namely Care, is 'Da-sein' able to question motives for choices and assess responsibility for enacting them, fits with feminist developmental psychology and deriving ethical structures. I refer, of course, to the work of Carol Gilligan[35], Jean Baker Miller[36] and the ongoing work of the Stone Centre for Development Services and Studies, as well as to recent work in Process philosophy. Gilligan's theory, that women operate on the basis of an ethics of care, as opposed to Lawrence Kohlberg's of justice (fairness or respect for rights), issues from an understanding of the self-in-relation, within an organic understanding of the universe based on mutuality and interdependence. But what Heidegger wrote is contradicted by the experience of women: 'When fully conceived, the care structures *include* the phenomenon of selfhood'[37]. And Rollo May adds,

> When we do not care, we lose our being, and care is the way back to being. If I care about being, I will shepherd it with some

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attention paid to its welfare, whereas if I do not care, my being disintegrates.[38]

Yet much of women's experience points to the opposite. Where developmental paths are faithful to empathizing with others, enhancing a sense of connectedness with others, in fact caring for being and making choices from this connectedness, because society's structures are *not* those of caring, and relational qualities are devalued, this has contributed to low self-esteem, an increase of guilt and the frequency of female depression mentioned earlier.

Augustine's legacy has had consequences which he would not have wished. For, in a society where self-assertion and competitive individualism are highly prized, fidelity to care for being in a Heideggerian sense, to connectedness with others within a relational view of the world, has brought in many cases guilt and the apparent punishment of depressive illness. But if, instead of a one-sided analysis of sin as pride, sin could be seen as far more complex, namely, as setting oneself against the relational grain of existence—the refusal of care and connection—on both interpersonal and structural levels, then 'falling' would not be related to an imagined historical primeval fault and inherited guilt: rather, falling would become 'falling into co-creation' in the formation of structures of integrity. Surely then the human city would manifest not the structures of domination, but the structures of care, by giving voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless ...

1 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* Rev. Ed., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 298.

2 Harvey Cox, *The Seduction of the Spirit,* Wildwood House, London, 1974.

3 P. Tillich, 'Nature, too, Mourns for a Lost Good', in *The Shaking of the Foundations,* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1963.

4 P. Tillich, 'The Depth of Existence', in *ibid.*

5 Rollo May, *Love and Will,* Dell Publishing, New York, 1969.

6 Matthew Fox, *Western Spirituality: Historical Roots, Ecumenical Routes,* Bear and Co, Santa Fe, 1981, p. 3.

7 Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity,* Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p. xvi—xvii.

8 Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine,* Faber and Faber, London, 1972.

9 Peter Brown, *The Body and Society, op cit.*

10 See W.S. Babcock, 'Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 1988, p. 28—55: 'But it is in relation to the angelic fall that Augustine explicitly addresses the question of the origin of evil will, and here, despite his best efforts, his analysis swivels between a position that, in effect, reduces the first evil act to a random outcome, a chance association between agent and act, and a position that, in effect, makes the first evil will a function of God's withholding aid.'

11 Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent,* Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1988. For critical reviews of her controversial thesis see R.J. O'Connell, in *Theological Studies* 50/1/1989/p.201, and Gilles Quispel in *Vigiliae Christianae* 43/1/1989/pp.100—103.

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12 I acknowledge a debt to Professor T.J. Van Bavel OSA of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, for his comments and for his article *Augustinus's Denken over De Vrouw,* Bijdragen 48, (1987), pp.362—396.

13 Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution,* New York, W. and W. Norton, 1976, p.168, cited in Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism,* London, The Womens' Press, 1979, pp.258—9.

14 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

16 Julia Kristeva, 'About Chinese Women', in *The Kristeva Reader,* ed. Toril Moi, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, tr. Sean Hand, p.147.

17 The victim status of women has even been used as an argument *against* the ordination of women: 'Well are women warned from serving on the altar Who, by nature of their creation, from Caucasia to Carbonek, share with the sacrifice the victimisation of the blood ... Womens' flesh lives out the quest of the Grail...' Charles Williams, *The Region of the Summer Stars,* D.S. Brewer, Cambridge, 1938, p. 26—7.

18 Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* Vols I, II, New York, 1964.

19 Cited in Judith Plaskow, *Sex, Sin and Grace: Womens' Experience and The Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich,* Yale University 1976, p.134.

20 Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology,* p.374.

21 Sheila Collins, *A Different Heaven and Earth,* Valley Forge, 1974, p.84.

22 Thomas Szasz, quoted by Collins, *A Different Heaven,* p.89.

23 Valerie Saiving Goldstein, 'The Human Condition: A Feminine View', in *Journal of Religion,* vol 490, 1960, reprinted in *Womanspirit Rising,* eds. Christ and Plaskow, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1974, pp.25—42.

24 S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death,* New York, Doubleday, 1954, 183—4.

25 Goldstein, *op. cit.,* p. 37.

26 Margaret Attwood, *Surfacing,* The Womens' Press, London, 1979.

27 Carolyn Osiek, *Beyond Anger, On Being a Feminist in the Church,* Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1986, p.79.

28 'This fact of our being situated', he wrote, 'is an inner determinism of every human being and this corresponds to the fact that original sin exists in everybody as something proper to him'. P. Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin,* London, Sheed and Ward, 1965, p.186.

29 *ibid.* p.181.

30 Stephen Duffy, *Original Sin Re-Visited,* in *Theological Studies* 49, (1988), p.612.

31 'We are stumbling after a union with a dreamed-of and unknown God and that is our greatness and our wretchedness'. Sebastian Moore, 'Original Sin, Resurrection and Trinity', *Lonergan Workshop* 4, (1983), pp.85—98.

32 'The fatal flaw of concupiscence would not have seemed so tragic to Augustine, if he had not been even more deeply convinced that human beings had been created to embrace the material world. The body was a problem to him precisely because it was to be loved and cherished'. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society, op cit.,* p.425.

33 Heidegger, *Being and Time,* New York, Harper and Row, 1962, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, p.231.

34 *ibid.,* p.232.

35 Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice?* Harvard University Press, 1982.

36 Jean Baker Miller, *Towards a New Psychology of Women,* Boston, Beacon, 1976.

37 Heidegger, *Being and Time, op cit.,* p.370.

38 Rollo May, *Love and Will, op. cit.,* p.286.

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