Georgia State University
Digital Archive @ GSU

Philosophy Theses | Department of Philosophy

11-30-2007

Between Being and Nothingness: The Metaphysical Foundations Underlying Augustine's Solution to the Problem of Evil

Brian Keith Kooy
bkooyusa@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/philosophy_theses

Recommended Citation
Kooy, Brian Keith, "Between Being and Nothingness: The Metaphysical Foundations Underlying Augustine's Solution to the Problem of Evil" (2007). *Philosophy Theses.* Paper 32.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Philosophy at Digital Archive @ GSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Archive @ GSU. For more information, please contact digitalarchive@gsu.edu.

BETWEEN BEING AND NOTHINGNESS: THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS UNDERLYING AUGUSTINE'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

by

BRIAN KEITH KOOY

Under the Direction of Dr. Timothy M. Renick

ABSTRACT

Several commentators make the claim that Augustine is not a systematic thinker. The purpose of this thesis is to refute that claim in one specific area of Augustine's thought, the metaphysical foundations underlying his solutions to the problem of evil. Through an exegetical examination of various works in which Augustine writes on evil, I show that his solutions for both natural and moral evil rely on a coherent metaphysical system, conceived of and expounded upon within a Platonically influenced Christian context.

INDEX WORDS: Augustine, Evil, Good, Theodicy, Metaphysics, Ontology, Free Will, Christianity, Manichaeism, Platonism, Plato, Neoplatonism, Plotinus

BETWEEN BEING AND NOTHINGNESS: THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS UNDERLYING AUGUSTINE'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

by

BRIAN KEITH KOOY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2007

Copyright by
Brian Keith Kooy
2007

BETWEEN BEING AND NOTHINGNESS: THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS UNDERLYING AUGUSTINE'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

by

BRIAN KEITH KOOY

Committee Chair: Timothy M. Renick

Committee: Tim O'Keefe
Louis A. Ruprecht, Jr.

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
December 2007

DEDICATION

To my father, who is with me always.

"*My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad*."

Proverbs 23:15

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The effort and good will of many people have enabled completion of this work. First and foremost I offer my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Timothy M. Renick, my advisor, who supported me throughout my thesis with his patience and knowledge whilst allowing me the room to work in my own way. I attribute the attainment of my master's degree to his encouragement and effort and without him this thesis, too, would not have been completed or written. The members of my committee, Dr. Tim O'Keefe and Dr. Louis A. Ruprecht Jr., deserve special thanks. Their honest yet considerate criticisms of this work have helped much in improving its quality. I am also indebted to the faculty and staff of the Department of Philosophy, the Department of Religious Studies, and the University Library at Georgia State University. Dr. Glenn Magee, Professor of Philosophy at the C. W. Post Campus of Long Island University, deserves recognition for introducing me to the study of philosophy and for filling my heart with a never-ending "passion for the wisdom of eternal truth." I am especially grateful to my dear wife Kyoko (Claire) Murata Kooy. Her support, encouragement, good humor, quiet patience, and unwavering love were undeniably the bedrock upon which the past two years of my life have been built. Her tolerance of the many hours I spent locked away in my study with Augustine is a testament in itself of her unyielding devotion and love. Finally, I thank my family, my mother, Margot A. Kooy, who is the source of my strength; my brothers, Craig and Daryl, and my sister, Gwyn, for their love and support; and my brother, Dr. Vernon E. Kooy, for his philosophical guidance and encouragement. My father, Rev. Dr. Vernon H. Kooy, my inspiration, my teacher, and my friend, passed away before he could see this work completed. This thesis is dedicated to him.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 EARLY CHRISTIAN AND MANICHAEAN INFLUENCES 7

Early Christian Influences 7

Introduction to Philosophy 9

Manichaean Influences 11

The Manichees and Evil 12

3 NEOPLATONIC INFLUENCES 19

Bishop Ambrose 19

Augustine's Introduction to the Writings of the Neoplatonists 20

Neoplatonism Defined 22

Platonic Influences on Neoplatonism 23

Plotinus's Metaphysical System: The One, Intellect, and Soul 25

Matter and Evil in the Plotinian System 30

Plotinus's Influence on Augustine 32

4 NATURAL EVIL 38

Early Conceptions of Evil 38

Initial Inquiry into the Nature of Evil 39

Natural Evil Explained 40

Evil as a Privation of Being 44

Measure, Number, and Weight 48

Measure, Number, and Weight Defined 50

Evil as a Privation of Measure, Number, and Weight 55

The Nonexistence of Natural Evil 56

Comments on the Coherence of Augustine's Solution to Natural Evil 57

5 MORAL EVIL 60

The Problem of Moral Evil 60

The Metaphysical Components of Moral Evil 61

The Will Defined 68

The Will, Moral Evil, and Sin 69

The Metaphysical Foundation of Moral Evil 71

The Will as the Cause of All Natural Evils 77

Comments on the Coherence of Augustine's Solution to Moral Evil 79

6 CONCLUSION 82

The Nature of God 85

Augustine's Cosmology: Why Anything Exists Other Than God 87

The Nature of Created Being 89

The Hierarchy of Being 90

Immutability and Mutability 91

Augustine's Metaphysical Dualism 91

Evil: The Loss of Being 92

Closing Thoughts 94

BIBLIOGRAPHY 95

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Of the many theological and philosophical issues on which Augustine wrote, none seemed to capture his imagination more than the so-called problem of evil. Indeed, the problem seems to have puzzled Augustine for most of his adult life, as indicated by the number of times the topic appears in his writings. In recognition of this fact, John Hick points out "from his earliest to his latest writings Augustine was continually turning to the problem of evil. His characteristic teaching on the subject appears not only in the great works of his maturity, *De Civitate Dei*, the *Confessiones*, and the *Enchiridion*, but also in a succession of earlier books going back to his controversies with the Manichees."[1] Questions regarding the origin and nature of evil drove Augustine to inquiry into such diverse topics as the cause of human perversity, the nature of God, the nature of reality, freedom of the will, divine providence, and the grace of God, to name just a few. In this regard, as G. R. Evans observes, "Augustine's account of the problem of evil came in the end to embrace almost every area of his writing, as he perceived more and more of the ramifications of the subject."[2] Finding a solution was not, however, purely an academic exercise for Augustine. As illustrated in the *Confessiones*, Augustine witnessed, experienced, and participated in evil firsthand, and it was these experiences that seem to have compelled him to search for a solution.

The problem of evil, as will be discussed here, is the apparent incompatibility of the presence of any evil in the world, both natural and moral, with the existence of a creative God who is conceived of as: (1) omnipotent or all-powerful, (2) omniscient or all-knowing, and (3) omnibenevolent or all-good; in other words, a God that possesses what are commonly known as

---

[1] John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 43.
[2] G. R. Evans, "Evil," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 340-341.

the traditional Christian omnipredicates. As the problem is often stated: if God is omnipotent, God must have the power to remove all evil from creation; if God is omniscient, God must be aware of evil's presence; and, if God is omnibenevolent, God would want to eradicate any vestige of evil so as not to cause harm to creation. But evil has not been removed. Therefore, the presence of evil along with the existence of a creative God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good are in conflict.

There are several ways to avoid the dilemma. A monotheist, for instance, could maintain that God lacks the power to remove evil, questioning God's omnipotence; or that God is unaware of the evil, denying God's omniscience; or that God does not want to remove the evil, challenging God's goodness. One could also maintain, as did the Manichees, the existence of two gods, one that is responsible for the good and the other responsible for evil. But if any one of these scenarios is asserted, then belief in the traditional Christian God of Augustine would need to be abandoned. Augustine's challenge, then, as a Christian theologian and a philosopher, is to provide a rational explanation for evil, while still maintaining the traditional omnipredicates of God.

Augustine's discussion of evil can be divided into two types: natural evil, evil that affects physical objects, such as disease, wounds, and disfigurement; and, moral evil, evil that spiritual beings originate, such as pride, cruelty, and deceit. The starting point for Augustine's solution is that evil is nothing more than a privation of the good (*privatio boni*). But what Augustine intends this to mean is often difficult to discern in the many works in which he writes on the topic. Two problems complicate an analysis of Augustine's solution. First, Augustine uses different terms to characterize the privation. While the majority of Augustine's discussions focus on evil as a privation of the good (*Confessiones* VII.12, *Enchiridion* 4.12-14, *De Natura*

Boni VI, XVII), in other treatises, and indeed sometimes within the same treatise, he describes the privation as either: (1) a privation of substance (*Enchiridion* 3.11, *De Civitate Dei* XII.3, *De Natura Boni* XX); (2) a falling away from Being toward non-Being, non-existence or nothingness (*De Moribus Ecclesia Catholicae* 2.2.3, *De Trinitate* V.2); or, (3) a privation of "measure, number, and weight" (*De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Question 6, *De Natura Boni*, XXIII). The second problem complicating an analysis is that Augustine wrote many of his treatises, especially the anti-Manichaean treatises, not to present his philosophical viewpoints in a well-ordered, organized, and systematic manner, but rather, to address a specific heresy that he was attempting to combat or refute. The result is that his discussions on the topic often appear disconnected and discontinuous. Because of this, Augustine is regarded as a non-systematic thinker in much of the secondary literature.

Despite these apparent problems, I will argue that a single coherent account of Augustine's solution to both natural and moral evil can be revealed. As such, I will demonstrate that the solutions that Augustine provides for both natural and moral evil rely on a similar metaphysical foundation that can be discovered through a careful examination of the many texts in which he discusses the topic. In addition, I will argue, contrary to the opinion of several commentators, that while Augustine may not have been a systematic writer, he was indeed a systematic thinker, at least in regards to the metaphysical foundations underlying his solutions to the problem of evil.

Three claims are generally made by commentators when asserting that Augustine is not a systematic thinker. First, writers such as Albert C. Outler, Eugene TeSelle and N. Joseph Torchia point out that, rather than attempting to develop an organized system of thought drawn out of a few fundamental principles or following a rigorously formulated method, Augustine's

theological and philosophical viewpoints are instead worked out within the context of dealing with real problems that he encountered.[3] As already pointed out, such is often the case with the problem of evil, as many of the works in which Augustine discusses evil were written to refute Manichean doctrines. Second, Augustine's philosophical and theological views are characterized by TeSelle and Torchia as being a continually evolving inquiry, rather than a well worked out systematic whole.[4] As such, according to these writers, each stage of Augustine's thought must be examined, "in and for itself in the attempt to discover its exact pattern and framework."[5] There is continuity and coherence in Augustine's thought, according to TeSelle, but it is a continuity and a coherence that is constantly changing depending on the circumstances of the issue at hand.[6] In this regard, William J. Bouwsma points out, Augustine's writings "evolved out of rich and varied experiences, the changing circumstances of his external life, and above all his inner development."[7] Augustine's thought, therefore, according to Bouwsma, can "be apprehended fully only as a set of tendencies rather than a system; its coherence is biographical, rather than structural."[8] Finally, commentators such as Adolph Harnack argue that Augustine's writings contain not only inconsistencies in details, but indeed, completely opposite views and conflicting lines of thought. For example, according to Harnack, in his conflict with Manichaeism and Donatism, Augustine formulated a doctrine of freedom, the Church, and the means of grace "which has little in common with his experience of sin and grace, and simply conflicts with the theological development of that experience—the doctrine of predestinating

---

[3] Albert C. Outler, "Introduction," in *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, trans. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), 16; Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 344; N. Joseph Torchia, *Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Theology of St. Augustine: The Anti-Manichaean Polemic and Beyond* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), ix.
[4] TeSelle, 20; Torchia, ix.
[5] TeSelle, 20.
[6] TeSelle, 20.
[7] William J. Bouwsma, "Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought," in *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 23.
[8] Bouwsma, 23.

grace."[9] In short, according to Harnack, "as a Christologian . . . Augustine bequeathed more gaps than positive material to posterity."[10]

In response to these criticisms, I concede that Augustine's reasoning on several theological issues is indeed unclear, confusing, and, at times, even fallacious. Augustine admitted so himself in regard to several of his works in his *Retractiones*, a work written late in Augustine's life in which he systematically reviewed his entire literary output.[11] For instance, writing about *De Inmortalitate Animae* in the *Retractiones*, Augustine states, "because of the intricacy and brevity of its reasoning, it is so obscure that even my attention flags as I read it and I, myself, can scarcely understand it."[12] Augustine found *De Mendacio Liber Unus* to be equally confusing, describing it in the *Retractiones* as "vague, complicated, and entirely irksome."[13]

I concede also that the *Retractiones* demonstrate rather unequivocally, as pointed out by TeSelle and Torchia, that Augustine's thought was constantly evolving throughout his life. Even a cursory reading of the *Retractiones* will demonstrate that in this work Augustine clarified, revised, and even retracted statements and assertions he had made previously in his writings. Commenting on such revisions, Allen D. Fitzgerald points out, "Augustine's works were not for him accomplishments of the past, but living testimonies to faith that were just as subject to change and improvement as he was."[14]

In addition, I concede that Augustine's *overall* approach to his philosophical and theological thinking is not systematic in the sense that: (1) he did not follow a strict formalized method; and, (2) some of the positions he formulated early in his life are in conflict with those

---

[9] Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 5, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), 101.
[10] Harnack, 102.
[11] Mary Inez Bogan, "Introduction," in *Saint Augustine: The Retractions* (*Retractiones*), trans. Mary Inez Bogan (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1968), xiii.
[12] *Retractiones*, 20.
[13] *Retractiones*, 117.
[14] Allan D. Fitzgerald, "Retractiones," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Group, 1999), 723.

written later on. However, in regard to the problem of evil, the only topic that I wish to address in this thesis, it is my supposition that Augustine did indeed develop a highly systematic metaphysical theory of the nature of reality, which remains consistent throughout the treatises in which he writes on the subject. Thus, while Augustine could never be characterized as a systematic writer, his discussions on the problem of evil, I shall argue, do indeed reveal that he was a systematic thinker.

My essay will be arranged in the following manner. In Chapter Two, I present an historical account of the early Christian and Manichaean influences on Augustine's developing viewpoints, which eventually came to influence his solution to the problem of evil. As Augustine's solution is in many ways a reaction to the Manichaean doctrines to which he was exposed during his nine-year association with the sect, it is necessary to have an understanding of these doctrines and how they influenced his philosophical and theological outlook. In Chapter Three, I continue the historical theme and discuss one of the other major influences on Augustine's solution, the philosophy of the Neoplatonists, concentrating on the philosophy of Plotinus. In Chapter Four, I examine Augustine's privative treatment of natural evil. Here I show that a coherent metaphysical account can be derived from the various ways in which he characterizes evil. In Chapter Five, I demonstrate how Augustine uses his metaphysical solution for natural evil as a starting point for his solution to the problem of moral evil, in the sense that when human beings sin they fall away from God not just morally, but ontologically as well. Based on the findings of my investigation I will demonstrate in Chapter Six, the Conclusion, that Augustine did, in point of fact, develop a coherent metaphysical system which serves as the basis for his philosophically influenced solution to the problem of evil.

CHAPTER TWO: EARLY CHRISTIAN AND MANICHAEAN INFLUENCES

Augustine's search for a solution to the problem of evil was, in many ways, intimately linked to his lifelong pursuit of truth and wisdom and his interest in using reason to provide answers to the problems that troubled him. This search for wisdom aided by reason led Augustine through at least three religious and philosophical systems relevant to this study: Christianity, Manichaeism, and Neoplatonism, all of which contributed to how he viewed evil and accounted for its presence in the world.[15] It is the first two of these systems, along with Augustine's introduction to philosophy through Cicero's *Hortensius*, that will be examined in this chapter.

Early Christian Influences

One of the earliest influences on Augustine's intellectual development was that of the Christianity to which he was exposed during his youth. Though many of the details of Augustine's religious upbringing remain unknown, it is possible to establish a few basic facts from the description he provides in the *Confessiones*. For example, Augustine reports in the *Confessiones* that his father Patricius was a pagan and that his mother Monica was a Christian.[16] He also tells us that as a boy his mother initiated him into the catechumenate of the Catholic Church and that as a catechumen he "was blessed regularly from birth with the sign of the Cross and was seasoned with God's salt,"[17] rites performed, according to some scholars, to help

[15] This is not to suggest that these are the only influences on Augustine's thought. Augustine's own account in the *Confessiones* reveals that he was influenced by a variety of sources. Due to space limitations, however, I will limit my discussion to the influence that Christianity, Manichaeanism, and Neoplatonism had on his solution to the problem of evil.
[16] Augustine, *Confessiones*, I.11, in Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), 32. Hereafter referenced with the abbreviation *Conf.*
[17] *Conf.* I.11, 32.

preserve the soul from the corruption of sin[18] and to ward off attacks from demonic forces.[19] In addition, Augustine tells us that his mother postponed his baptism during childhood, even after he fell seriously ill for fear that he was not ready at such a young age to put an end to his sinful ways.[20] Furthermore, Augustine reports that from an early age he believed in the God of Christianity and in Jesus as Christ[21] and that he prayed to God on a regular basis.[22] In fact, according to Augustine, everyone in his family believed in the God of Christianity and in Christ, except for his father, who remained a pagan until he converted shortly before his death.[23] Beyond these few details, however, we know very little about Augustine's early involvement in Christianity or the Church. We also know very little about the religious education he received, except that it more than likely came almost entirely from his mother.[24]

Although Augustine provides us with little information regarding his religious upbringing, it would probably be a mistake to conclude that his early exposure to Christianity left no indelible mark on his religious and intellectual development. As John J. O'Meara points out, "from these early years with Monica" the young Augustine got at least "certain childish notions of God's nature and a child's approach to Scripture."[25] Furthermore, O'Meara tell us, "in adolescence and early manhood [Augustine] always preserved a great reverence for the name of Christ, and a strong link between him and Christ was always in the background in the person of his mother."[26] As we shall see, although Augustine did not fully convert until the age of 32, his

---

[18] John M. Quinn, *A Companion to the Confessions of St. Augustine* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 41.
[19] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 80.
[20] *Conf.* I.11, 32. According to Quinn (41), this was a fairly normal custom for Christians during the time period as sins committed after baptism were considered more malicious in the "eyes of God."
[21] *Conf.* I.11, 32.
[22] *Conf.* I.10, 31.
[23] *Conf.* I.11, 32; IX.9, 10.
[24] *Conf.* I.11, 32; II.3, 38.
[25] John J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: An Introduction to the Confessions of St. Augustine* (London: Longman, 1980), 38.
[26] O'Meara, 38.

early experiences with Christianity established a deep and abiding connection, even as he investigated other religious and philosophical systems.

Introduction to Philosophy

In his nineteenth year, Augustine read the *Hortensius*, a short exhortation to the study of philosophy written by Cicero.[27] The work seemingly had a profound effect on him. As he tells us in the *Confessiones*, the work altered his outlook on life and filled his heart with the desire for wisdom and truth.[28] Elsewhere he tells us that the *Hortensius* turned him away from the "desire of riches"[29] and toward the "study of philosophy."[30] The one fault Augustine found with the work was that it made no mention of Christ.[31] So deep was Augustine's attachment to Christianity during this time period, at least if we are to believe his account in the *Confessiones*, that he tells us that "nothing could captivate [him], however learned, however neatly expressed, however true it might be, unless [Christ's] name were in it."[32] Such a reaction, according to Peter Brown, would have been quite understandable. Having been raised in a Christian household, a pagan wisdom without the name of Christ would have been unimaginable for the young Augustine as Christianity would have been presented to him from childhood as a form of "True Wisdom."[33]

Burning with this desire for wisdom imbued with the name of Christ, Augustine reports that he turned next to the Bible to "examine the holy Scriptures."[34] What he found there, however, disappointed him as the text "seemed quite unworthy of comparison with the stately

---

[27] *Conf.* III.4, 58.
[28] *Conf.* III.4, 58.
[29] Augustine, *Solioquia* 1.10.17, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. John H. S. Burleigh, vol. VI of *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 33.
[30] *Conf.* VIII.7, 169.
[31] *Conf.* III.4, 59.
[32] *Conf.* III.4, 59. Augustine reiterates this point in *Conf.* V.6, 97, where he tells us, "there is no other teacher of the truth besides yourself, no matter how or where it comes to light."
[33] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 29, 31.
[34] *Conf.* III.5, 60.

prose of Cicero."[35] Two factors may have prompted such a reaction. First, as Brown observes, stylistically the Old Latin Bible available to Augustine at this time was filled with slang and jargon which would have been abhorrent to someone raised on the eloquence of Cicero.[36] In this regard, it would not have been a book "to impress a man whose mind was full of elegant Ciceronian diction and Virgilian turns of phrase."[37] Second, as noted by Brown and Henry Chadwick, Augustine would have been put off by the immoral actions of the patriarchs in the Old Testament and contradictory passages he would have found in the New Testament, such as the long, conflicting genealogies of Jesus,[38] as these passages would not have contained the wisdom and truth for which he was searching.

Augustine's disappointment with the Scriptures, however, may have gone much deeper than just an aversion to their crude literary style and textual contradictions. As N. Joseph Torchia points out, Augustine's negative reaction was probably also "reinforced by the extreme conservatism and anti-intellectualism of the North African Christianity with which Augustine was familiar."[39] Such a view is supported by Roland J. Teske, who states that Augustine's

> . . . references to the terror of superstition and the yoke of authority that he found in the Catholica would seem to indicate that he not merely could not find within the Church solutions to his intellectual problems, but met with a conservative anti-intellectualism that refused to deal with them.[40]

Brown concurs with Teske's assessment, noting that the North African Church was exceptionally narrow minded, oppressive, and exceedingly sensitive to any challenge to its authority.[41]

---

[35] *Conf.* III.5, 60.
[36] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 31.
[37] Henry Chadwick, *Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10-11.
[38] Brown, 31; Chadwick, 10-11.
[39] Torchia, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 97-98.
[40] Teske, "Introduction," in *Saint Augustine on Genesis: Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees and on the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske, vol. 84 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 9.
[41] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 31-32.

Manichaean Influences

Augustine's failure to find the truth in the Catholic Scriptures, and quite possibly his reaction to the narrow-mindedness and authority of the North African Church, seemingly led him to become an auditor (literally, a "hearer," but more specifically, a lay-person) in the Manichees, an "eclectic faith"[42] that merged a variety of belief systems and worldviews, including Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, astrology, and science, among others.[43] Based on the revelations and teachings of the self-proclaimed prophet Mani (216-277 CE), the Manichees preached a form of radical dualism that seemed to have appealed to Augustine for a number of reasons. First, the Manichees claimed to know the truth. As Augustine tells it, "'Truth, and truth alone' was the motto which they repeated . . . again and again."[44] Because Augustine also desired to know the truth—indeed, as he tells us "the very marrow of [his] soul yearned for it"[45]—he became more deeply involved with the group and the promise of truth that they preached. Second, the Manichees claimed to provide a truer and purified version of Christianity by rejecting the Old Testament, which they saw as "crude and repulsive."[46] In rejecting the Old Testament, the Manichees drew attention to passages which they considered inconsistent or contradictory, either with each other or with statements in the New Testament.[47] In this regard the Manichees pointed out that it was credulous to believe that the Scriptures contained the Wisdom of God when one part of the Bible contradicted another.[48] Such a viewpoint would have held some attraction for Augustine, because, as already stated, he found the Scriptures too

---

[42] Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 44.
[43] A. V. Williams Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism, With Special Reference to the Turfan Fragments* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 3-20; Torchia, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 65-67.
[44] *Conf*. III.6, 60.
[45] *Conf*. III.6, 60.
[46] T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 75.
[47] L. H. Hackstaff, "Introduction," in Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L.H. Hackstaff with an introduction by L.H. Hackstaff (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1964), xxii.
[48] Colin Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of Confessions I-IX* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), 68.

unsophisticated in style for his literary tastes.[49] In addition, the Manichees espoused a strict rationalism which they contrasted with the naive faith demanded of Catholic believers.[50] As such, they claimed that reason alone could provide access to an understanding of the universe and ultimately to truth, a feature that would have "appealed strongly to the philosophical disposition of the young Augustine."[51] Moreover, the Manichaean emphasis on Christ must have held a special attraction for Augustine, as the absence of the mention of Christ in the *Hortensius* was the one fault that he found with the work. The Manichees, thus, as Carol Harrison points out, "enabled Augustine to reconcile himself, or so it seemed, to a more coherent, rationally defensible, superior form of Christianity" than that taught to him by his mother.[52] But perhaps the primary reason why Manichaeism appealed to Augustine at this point in his life was that it provided a rational answer to the question he puts forth in his dialogue *De Libero Arbitrio*: "What is the source of our evildoing?"[53]

The Manichees and Evil

The Manichaean solution to the problem of evil is founded on a radical dualism deeply rooted in the cosmogony or creation myth of the sect.[54] Simply stated, the Manichees maintained the existence of two eternal, but opposed, corporeal deities, one good and the other evil. Light was identified with the God of goodness, the Prince of Light, while darkness was identified with the Devil, the Prince of Darkness. The realms of the two gods were separate,

---

[49] Mary T. Clark, *Augustine* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 2. See also: Donald X. Burt, *Augustine's World: An Introduction to His Speculative Philosophy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 15.
[50] Scott, *Augustine*, 74.
[51] Hackstaff, "Introduction," *On Free Choice of the Will*, xxii.
[52] Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24.
[53] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* (*De libero arbitrio*) I.1.1, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 3. As Augustine puts it, the answer to this question drove him "into the company of heretics," meaning, the Manichees.
[54] My description of the Manichaean cosmogony is based on a description provided by Starnes, *Augustine's Confessions*, 64. See also O'Meara, *The Young Augustine*, 70-75.

except where they touched one another along a common border. While attempting to expand his empire, the Prince of Darkness gained command of a small corner of the Kingdom of Light, fusing the once separated Kingdoms. Within this captured realm, the Prince of Darkness took particles of Light captive and trapped them in its matter. According to the myth, the natural universe we experience was created by the merging of the two realms of light and dark, good and evil. In this way, all of nature, including human beings, is composed of the mixture of tiny particles of these two contraries in varying degrees. The natural universe is thus a battleground of the two contrary forces in which evil tries to prevail over the good, and the good attempts to overcome the evil.

As a part of the physical universe, human beings are also a part of the battleground between good and evil, driven sometimes by the one side and sometimes by the other. Sin is understood to originate in the evil principle within human beings, while goodness is understood to originate in the good principle.[55] Because the Prince of Darkness is responsible for the creation of the natural universe, the evil forces within human beings are identified with the body and matter, while the good is identified with the spirit, the Prince of Light. The goal of life, according to the Manichees, is to identify oneself with the forces of good, the spirit, and to avoid any activities that would strengthen the forces of evil, matter.

The Manichaean solution to the problem of evil, then, essentially absolves human beings from the moral evil they perform by attributing such evil to the work of a dark force in the universe of which humans have no control. Such a view must have provided both comfort and relief to the young Augustine, who recognized that while he committed evil, he seemingly could not control himself from perpetrating it. Indeed, as Augustine tells us,

---

[55] Hackstaff, "Introduction," *On Free Choice of the Will*, xxii.

> It flattered my pride to think that I incurred no guilt and, when I did wrong, not to confess it so that you might bring healing to a soul that had sinned against you. I preferred to excuse myself and blame this unknown thing which was in me but was not part of me.[56]

This was why, according to Augustine, he still associated with the elect of the Manichees, even after he had, for the most part, disassociated himself from most of their teachings.[57]

Despite the comfort which such an explanation may have afforded, the Manichaean solution may also have been attractive to Augustine for a number of other reasons as well. For one, the Manichaean solution removed one of the main challenges posed to Christianity: How could a perfectly good and benevolent God of creation not in some way be ultimately responsible for the evil that exists in the world? Such a dilemma may be expressed by the following statements:

1. God is omnipotent (all-powerful).
2. God is the highest good (the most benevolent).
3. Everything that exists (other than God) comes from God.
4. Only good things come from the highest good (God).
5. Evil exists.

To Augustine the young rhetorician, the last statement would most certainly have appeared inconsistent and contradictory with the first four. Surely, if God is the creator of all that exists, then God must be the creator of evil as well. But how could an all-good God be the author of evil? And if God is all powerful, then certainly God should be able to create a world in which evil does not exist, or at least one in which it is eradicated. The inconsistency between the statements would appear insurmountable.

The dilemma has been described by Gareth B. Matthews as the "Consistency Problem of Evil."[58] To avoid the inconsistency, any one of the first four statements could be denied. In fact, the Consistency Problem arises, according to Matthews, only when "omni" attributes are

---

[56] *Conf.* V.10, 103.
[57] *Conf.* V.10, 104.
[58] Gareth B. Matthews, *Augustine* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 106.

assigned to God, in particular, the attributes of being all-powerful and all-good.[59] The Manichean system attempts to overcome the Consistency Problem by asserting the existence of two gods, one responsible for all that is good and the other responsible for all that is evil. Arranging their cosmogony in this way the Manichees were able to absolve the good god—the god identified with the Christian god—of all responsibility for both creating and allowing evil's presence in the world.

In addition to offering an explanation for the existence of evil, Manichaeanism may also have been attractive to Augustine because it offered a solution to one other theological problem which troubled him: his inability to conceive of God and evil as anything other than material substances. As already pointed out, the Manichaean cosmogony myth conceived of both the good and evil gods as corporeal substances. Unlike the god of Christianity, however, the good and evil gods of Manichaeanism were not conceived of as possessing human forms. One of the Manichaean criticisms of the Christian faith was that the God of the Old Testament is often depicted anthropomorphically.[60] Accepting the criticisms of the Manichees against the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament, Augustine tells us that, although he thought it outrageous to believe that God had the shape of a human body, he could not conceive of God as anything other than as a bodily substance.[61] Augustine's difficulties were further exasperated during this time by his reading of Aristotle's *Ten Categories*. Based on his understanding of the

---

[59] Matthews, *Augustine*, 106.

[60] Augustine, *Contra Epistolam Manichai quam vocant Fundamenti* (*Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental*), Chap. 23 in *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, trans. R. Stothert, vol. IV of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 139. See also, *Conf.* III.7, 62.

[61] *Conf.* V.10, 104. See also *Conf.* III.7. Here Augustine characterizes his ignorance of God's nature as such: "My ignorance was so great that these questions troubled me. . . . I did not know that God is a spirit, a being without bulk and without limbs defined in length and breadth. For bulk is less in the part than in the whole, if it is infinite, it is less in any part of it which can be defined within fixed limits than it is in its infinity. It cannot, therefore, be everywhere entirely whole, as a spirit is and as God is. Nor had I the least notion what it is in us that gives us our being, or what the Scriptures mean when they say that we are made in God's image."

book, Augustine believed that all existing reality could be reduced to the ten categories that Aristotle proposed.[62] As such, Augustine believed that the categories must hold for God as well. As Augustine explains it:

> [The study of the categories] made difficulties for me, because I thought that everything that existed could be reduced to these ten categories, and I therefore attempted to understand you, my God, in all your wonderful immutable simplicity, in these same terms, as though you too were substance, and greatness and beauty were your attributes in the same way that a body has attributes by which it is defined.[63]

Augustine's materialistic conception of reality applied to his conception of evil as well. In Book V of the *Confessiones*, Augustine tells us that he believed that evil too must be some kind of "shapeless hideous mass,"[64] which might be solid or rarefied like air.[65] Although Augustine continued to search for answers to both the problem of evil and the nature of God within the doctrines of Christianity, he tells us that, at least during this period of his intellectual development, he believed "there could be no answer to the objections raised by the Manichees against the Scriptures."[66]

Eventually, however, Augustine began to lose interest in the Manichean doctrines and practices. This seemingly occurred for a number of reasons, as pointed out by Augustine in several of his writings.[67] First, Augustine came to doubt the scientific accuracy of the predictions made by the Manichaean astrologers and scientists when he compared them to the

---

[62] The categories specified by Aristotle are: substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, situation, condition, action, and passion. See Michael V. Wedin, "Aristotle," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45.
[63] *Conf.* IV.16, 87-88.
[64] *Conf.* V.10, 104.
[65] *Conf.* V.10, 104.
[66] *Conf.* V.11, 105.
[67] See for example, *Conf.* VII.2-3, 135-136; Augustine, *De moribus Manichaeorum* 19.67-72, in *Saint Augustine: The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life* (*De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum*), trans. Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966), 111-114; and, *De natura boni* XLII-XLVIII, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. John H. S. Burleigh, vol. VI of The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 340-348.

findings of "genuine scientists."[68] Second, Augustine came to realize that many Manichees did not practice the asceticism and morality that the group preached.[69] As Augustine tells us in *De Moribus Manichaeorum*, during the years he spent with the Manichees he did not know of a single member of the Elect who was not in violation of the group's own precepts.[70] Third, Augustine tells us in the *Confessiones* and *De Natura Boni* that he began to doubt the Manichaean solution to the problem of evil, which raised concerns about the power, corruptibility, and supposedly good nature of the all-good God.[71]

Augustine's final disillusionment, however, at least if we are to believe his account in the *Confessiones*, was the result of a disappointing encounter he had with a certain Manichean bishop named Faustus. Augustine was promised by other members of the sect who were unable to answer his questions that Faustus would be able to do so and that he would have no difficulty

---

[68] See for example, *Conf.* V.5, 95-96. Writing about the inaccuracies of Manichaean science Augustine states: "But who asked that any Manichee should write about science as well as religion, when we can learn our duty to God without a knowledge of these things? For you have told man that wisdom is fearing the Lord. Even if Manes did not have this true wisdom, he could still have had a very good knowledge of science; but as he knew no science and yet had the effrontery to try to teach it, he could not possibly have had true wisdom. For it is sheer vanity for a man to profess his learning, even if it is well founded, whereas it is his duty to you, O God, to confess his sins. Manes, departed from this duty. He wrote at great length on scientific subjects, only to be proved wrong by genuine scientists, thereby making perfectly clear the true nature of his insight into more abstruse matters. Because he did not want them to think lightly of him, he tried to convince his followers that the Holy Spirit, who comforts and enriches your faithful servants, was present in him personally and with full powers. Therefore, when he was shown to be wrong in what he said about the sky and the stars and the movements of the sun and the moon, it was obvious that he was guilty of sacrilegious presumption, because, although these matters are no part of religious doctrine, he was not only ignorant of the subjects which he taught, but also taught what was false, yet was demented and conceited enough to claim that his utterances were those of a divine person."

[69] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 19.67-72, 111-114.

[70] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 19.67, 111.

[71] *Conf.* VII.2-3, 135-136; *De natura boni* XLII-XLVIII, 340-348. As Augustine states in *De natura boni* XLII, 340-341: [The Manichees] "tell us that certain souls, parts of the substance of God and sharers in the divine nature, as they will have it, went down, not of their own accord but at the command of their Father, to fight against the race of darkness, which the Manichees call the evil nature; that they were defeated and taken captive and were imprisoned for ever in a horrible sphere of darkness. These souls, of course, did not sin voluntarily. In this way, according to their vain profane babbling, God freed part of himself from a great evil, but condemned another part of himself which he could not liberate from the enemy, and yet celebrated a triumph as if the enemy had been defeated. What wicked and incredible audacity to say or believe or proclaim such things about God! When they try to defend this they fall with closed eyes into worse error. For they say that mixing with the evil nature causes the good divine nature to undergo such evils; by itself it cannot and could not have suffered the like. As if an incorruptible nature is to be praised because it does itself no harm, and not because nothing else can harm it. Now, if natural darkness harmed the divine nature, and the divine nature harmed natural darkness, the fact that they did each other harm mutually means that there are two evils."

providing Augustine with clear explanations to his queries.[72] But although Augustine found Faustus to be a man of agreeable personality and an eloquent speaker, he was, in the end, unable to answer the questions Augustine put to him. As Augustine tells it in the *Confessiones*,

> As soon as it became clear to me that Faustus was quite uninformed about the subjects in which I had expected him to be an expert, I began to lose hope that he could lift the veil and resolve the problems which perplexed me.[73]

So devastating was this encounter to Augustine's confidence in the Manichees, that it seemingly precipitated the end of his nine-year association with the group.[74]

Having lost faith in Manichaean doctrines, Augustine spent a period of time "treating everything as a matter of doubt, as the Academics . . . hovering between one doctrine and another,"[75] preferring, as he tells us, the theories of some of the philosophers over those of the Manichees. As we shall see in Chapter Three, it was by combining Catholic doctrines with the philosophy of the Neoplatonists that Augustine was able to find solutions to the problems that troubled him, especially those concerning the nature of God and the nature of evil.

---

[72] *Conf*. V.6, 96.
[73] *Conf*. V.7, 98.
[74] As Augustine tells us in *Conf*, V.7, 99: "The keen interest which I had had in Manichean doctrine was checked by this experience, and my confidence in the other teachers of the sect was further diminished when I saw that Faustus, of whom they spoke so much, was obviously unable to settle the numerous problems which troubled me."
[75] *Conf*. V.14, 108-109.

CHAPTER THREE: NEOPLATONIC INFLUENCES

At the age of 30, Augustine accepted a position in Milan as a teacher of rhetoric.[76] It was here that Augustine first came into contact with the philosophy of the Neoplatonists. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the doctrines of these philosophers, more specifically the doctrines of Plotinus, which had a significant impact on the development of Augustine's metaphysical system and his solution to the problem of evil.

Bishop Ambrose

Although it is impossible to establish with any certainty, it may have been Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, who first introduced Augustine to the philosophy of the Neoplatonists. According to some scholars, Ambrose had knowledge of the writings of Plotinus as it is possible to trace literal borrowings from Plotinus in the Bishop's surviving sermons.[77] Augustine tells us in the *Confessiones* that he attended the sermons of Ambrose,[78] and that it was while listening to these sermons that he began to appreciate that the Catholic faith could be defended against the arguments and objections of the Manichees and to "unravel the tangle woven by them."[79] As recalled from Chapter Two, under the influence of the Manichees, Augustine rejected parts of the Old Testament as absurd and the actions of the patriarchs as immoral.[80] Ambrose, however, interpreted and preached the Scriptures allegorically, and it was through this method that Ambrose provided Augustine with a reasonable explanation for his objections to the Scriptures. Speaking of the effect Ambrose had on him, Augustine tells us in the *Confessiones*,

---

[76] *Conf.* V.13, 107.
[77] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 85. See also, Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man, A.D. 386-391* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 4; P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les 'Confessions' de saint Augustin* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968), 98-102, 122-124; John J. O'Meara, "Augustine and Neo-Platonism," in *Recherches Augustiniennes* I (1958): 91-111.
[78] *Conf.* VI.13, 107.
[79] *Conf.* VI.3, 114.
[80] *Conf.* III.7, 62-63.

> I was glad . . . that at last I had been shown how to interpret the ancient Scriptures of the law and the prophets in a different light from that which had previously made them seem absurd, when I used to criticize your saints for holding beliefs which they had never really held at all. . . . And when he lifted the veil of mystery and disclosed the spiritual meaning of texts which, taken literally, appeared to contain the most unlikely doctrines, I was not aggrieved by what he said.[81]

By applying this allegorical method, Augustine began to see that the Scriptures were "not absurd at all."[82] In fact, as he tells us, "they can be understood in another sense, quite fairly."[83] Thus Augustine discovered a new found respect and faith in Catholicism from which he learned that one could be a Christian without ceasing to use one's reason.[84]

Augustine's Introduction to the Writings of the Neoplatonists

By his own account, Augustine's first acknowledged contact with the writings of the Neoplatonists was through a number of books given to him that were translated from the original Greek into Latin.[85] What these books were and who authored them is a subject of debate within the secondary literature.[86] According to Brown, they may have included treatises by Plotinus translated into Latin by Marius Victorinus and possibly at least one work by Porphyry.[87] It is known through Augustine's treatises that he was familiar with the writings of Plotinus, for he tells us that Plotinus is "praised as having understood Plato more fully than anyone else."[88] But while it appears that Augustine had some familiarity with the thought of Plato, including Plato's so-called theory of Forms, most scholars doubt that he ever read or even had access to any of

---

[81] *Conf.* VI.4, 116.
[82] *Conf.* VI.11, 126.
[83] *Conf.* VI.11, 126.
[84] O'Meara, *The Young Augustine*, 118.
[85] *Conf.* VII.9, 144.
[86] There is an extensive amount of literature discussing the debate. For a summary bibliography, see Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 8, note 32. See also James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: The Confessions (Introduction, Text and Commentary)*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 421-424.
[87] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 85. For example, Augustine quotes directly from the *Enneads* of Plotinus in *De civitate Dei* IX.17, X.2, and X.15. Augustine discusses Porphyry in *De civitate Dei* VII.25; X.9-11; X.21-24 and, X.26-30.
[88] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* IX.10, in Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 371.

Plato's writings, other than perhaps a brief section of the *Timaeus* (27d-47b) translated by Cicero.[89] The reason is that for most of his life Augustine possessed only a rudimentary knowledge of the Greek language.[90] While he was instructed in Greek as a boy, from what he tells us in the *Confessiones*, he never liked it and apparently never applied himself to learning the language until very late in life.[91] Because of this he had to rely on translations, the supply of which was extremely "erratic."[92] Augustine seems to have been familiar with the major themes of certain Platonic dialogues, such as the *Meno*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus*, as he expresses knowledge of them in several of his works, but "there is no evidence that he ever saw the texts of these dialogues, either in Greek or Latin."[93]

Regardless of which authors Augustine may have read, it is clear that Neoplatonism had a considerable influence on his thought, both as a Christian theologian and as a philosopher. For instance, in the *Confessiones* Augustine tells us that it was within the writings of the Neoplatonists that he found many ideas similar to those in Christianity, as he tells us in Book VII: "No one has come closer to us [Christians] than the Platonists."[94] It was through these ideas that Augustine was able to break free from Manichaean materialism. As such, Neoplatonism freed Augustine from his former physical conceptions of God [95] and enabled him to conceive of God as an immaterial substance.[96] It likewise allowed Augustine to realize the goodness of all

---

[89] Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 256-257. Augustine discusses the creation theme of the *Timaeus* in *De Civitate Dei* VIII.11, 328.
[90] John Hammond Taylor, "Introduction," in *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, no. 41 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, ed. Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt, and Thomas Comerford Lawler (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 5.
[91] *Conf.* I.13, 33.
[92] Brown, *Augustine*, 268.
[93] Bourke, *Augustine's Love of Wisdom*, 18.
[94] *Conf.* VII.9, 144. Augustine uses the term "Platonists" to describe these philosophers, as the term "Neoplatonism" was not coined until the nineteenth-century. See: John Dillon and Lloyd P Gerson, eds. "Introduction," in *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), xiii.
[95] *Conf.* V.10, 104; VII.1, 133.
[96] *Conf.* VII.10, 107.

creation as created by a single good god.[97] Moreover, it freed Augustine from the Manichaean conception of evil as a physical entity that could impose itself upon the good.[98] Following Plotinus's conception of evil in the *Enneads*, Augustine was able to conceive of evil as privative in nature, a privation of the good or *privatio boni*,[99] which in human beings could be attributed to the misuse of free will when it turns aside from God.[100]

Neoplatonism Defined

Neoplatonism, according to Eyjolfur Emilsson, is usually defined as the philosophy of Plotinus, a third-century Egyptian Greek, and his followers, such as Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus.[101] Though the philosophical viewpoints of these philosophers were often quite different from one another—indeed, as Emilsson states, the Neoplatonism of the third-century was "no unified school of thought, but a label put on various Platonically inspired thinkers at different places during this period"[102]—what they all had in common was their claim to be followers, interpreters, and improvers of Plato.[103] Additionally, they held in common an interest in the metaphysical aspects of Plato's thought, as opposed to his ethical-political interests. These philosophers did not, however, confine themselves solely to the doctrines of Plato. As pointed out by O'Meara, Neoplatonism was more than just an expansion of Plato's thought, but in fact was a synthesis of Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, and Pythagorean elements,[104] hence, the use of the term "Neoplatonism" to describe the views of these philosophers.

---

[97] *Conf* VII.3-5, 136-139.
[98] *Conf.* VII.3, 136.
[99] *Conf.* VII.12, 148.
[100] *Conf.* VII.16, 150.
[101] Eyjolfur Emilsson, "Neo-Platonism" in *From Aristotle to Augustine*, ed. David Furley, vol. 2 of the *Routledge History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1999), 356. Augustine mentions these philosophers by name, along with Apuleius in *De civitate Dei* VIII.13.
[102] Emilsson, 357.
[103] Sharon M. Kaye and Paul Thomson, *On Augustine, Wadsworth Philosophers Series*, ed. Daniel Kolak (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), 7.
[104] O'Meara, *The Young Augustine*, 135.

Platonic Influences on Neoplatonism

Syntheses aside, some knowledge of Plato's metaphysical doctrines are essential to an understanding of Neoplatonism. Providing a description of these doctrines, however, is difficult. One of the reasons for this is that Plato presented his philosophical views, not in treatises, but in the form of dialogues. How the views discussed in these dialogues are to be understood is a point of disagreement in much of the secondary literature. One of the most famous metaphysical doctrines ascribed to Plato is his so-called belief in a realm of abstract objects that he called "Forms" or "Ideas." Plato's discussion of these Forms in the dialogues has led some interpreters to argue that he had a "theory of Forms," even though no full account of such a theory is ever completely provided by him. In fact, in at least one dialogue, the *Parmenides*, Plato raises serious objections to the Forms. These objections, as well as Plato's inconsistent method of discussing the Forms, have led some scholars to argue that Plato never espoused a specific theory of Forms.[105]

Whether or not Plato actually believed in the existence of the Forms, there is at least some consensus as to the general outline of the theory that has been ascribed to him. Central to this doctrine is Plato's description of a dual nature of reality, in which beyond the sensible world of physical objects is posited the existence of another realm that is non-physical, non-spatial, and non-temporal.[106] The entities that Plato assigns to this realm are the Forms or Ideas. The objects of the changing physical world somehow derive their existence from the Forms, and as such, are considered to be mere imitations or imperfect copies of the eternal realities.[107] In this way, the

---

[105] See for example, Drew A. Hyland, "Against a Platonic 'Theory' of Forms, in *Plato's Forms: Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. William A. Welton (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), 257-272.
[106] Plato, *The Republic*, 509d, in *Plato Complete Works*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1129. See also *Phaedo* 79a, in *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 69.
[107] *Phaedo* 100c, 86.

Forms are similar to what we would call concepts or universals, except that the Forms do not depend on the human mind for their existence. Rather, it is the mind that depends on the Forms for its knowledge, not only of the Forms but of all changing reality as well.[108] Because the Forms are not a part of the physical world, they are not perceived by the senses, but "by the reasoning power of the mind."[109] Likewise, because the physical world is in a state of constant change, true scientific knowledge of it is impossible. Real knowledge, indeed wisdom,[110] is only to be found in the contemplation of the eternal unchanging Forms, which are the true causes of appearances.[111]

The word "Form" is the English translation of Plato's Greek terms *eidos* and *idea*, which derive from the verb *eido*, which means "to see."[112] A Form, as such, seems to be something akin to a pattern which all things of a particular type or kind relate in order to be of that kind. In this way, Forms are like "paradigms or standards . . . by which the qualities of particular things can be judged."[113] Hence, the Form of *x* denotes what it is to be *x*, which is the same as what it means to be a good *x*. To say that a particular human being, for example, is a good human being is to say that it possesses all the qualities that a good human being should possess. The more closely a human being exhibits or possesses the qualities of the Form of human being the more fully it participates in or fulfils its Form. In this way, every use of the word "good" in the world of opinion, the world of particulars, "points toward the Form of the property for which the particular thing is praised."[114] That being said, Plato also talked about Forms of abstract

---

[108] *Phaedo* 79a-79d, 69-70.
[109] *Phaedo* 79a, 69.
[110] *Phaedo* 79d, 70.
[111] Kaye and Thomson, *On Augustine*, 7.
[112] Welton, *Plato's Forms*, 3.
[113] Welton, 3.
[114] Nickolas Pappas, *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Plato and the Republic* (London: Routledge, 1995), 137.

concepts, such as beauty, justice, and equality. It would be a mistake, therefore, to state that Plato's discussion of Forms is limited to physical objects only.

From information provided in the dialogues, Plato also seems to advocate a belief in a hierarchy of Forms, with the Form of the Good holding the top position. For instance, in the *Republic*, the Form of the Good is described as both the best and the most real of all that exists [i.e., possessing the most Being],[115] although, as Plato states, the "Good is not Being, but superior to it in rank and power."[116] Moreover, though the Form of the Good is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge, such that "what gives truth to the thing known and the power to the knower is the Form of the Good."[117]

Below the Good, at the next level of abstraction, are the Forms, which participate in the Good.[118] In this way the Good is the source of Being of the other Forms,[119] and can be viewed as a "Form of Form-ness,"[120] possessing what is best of all the other Forms. Below the Forms are the sensible objects, or the particulars of the everyday world, which participate in and imitate the Forms.[121] Sensible particulars are not perfect copies of the Forms which they imitate, however. On the contrary, they are imperfect copies, but yet they still exhibit qualities of the Forms in which they participate.[122]

Plotinus's Metaphysical System: The One, Intellect, and Soul

The Neoplatonists developed, interpreted and expanded upon these ascribed doctrines of Plato. The most notable Neoplatonist, Plotinus, wrote a series of treatises which were edited and

---

[115] Plato, *Republic*, 5083-509a, 1129.
[116] *Republic* 509b, 1130.
[117] *Republic* 508e, 1129.
[118] Luban, "The Form of the Good in the Republic," 161.
[119] Luban, 165.
[120] Pappas, *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Plato and the Republic*, 137.
[121] Plato, *Parmenides* 129a, in *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 363.
[122] In the *Phaedo* 74e, for example, equal things are described as resembling imperfectly the Form of equality.

compiled by Porphyry, Plotinus's disciple, into a work known as the *Enneads*, so named because the treatises are arranged into six groups of nine.[123] Plotinus particularly developed Plato's conception of the Good (which Plotinus also called the One), the hierarchy of the cosmos, and the sense of separation between the intelligible and physical realms. Such an expansion of Plato's metaphysics was, according to T. Kermit Scott, "an elaborate, complex, obscure and often paradoxical attempt to provide a picture of reality that would capture th[e] double sense of alienation from and identity with the source of all being, while at the same time provide guidance for those seeking a 'return' to complete unity with the original source;"[124] a theme which Augustine utilizes in his solution to the problem of moral evil.

Plotinus's metaphysical system is comprised of three basic principles or hypostases: the One, Intellect, and Soul. At the top of the Plotinian system is the One, which Plotinus equated with the Form of the Good of Plato.[125] Three main characteristics of the One are relevant to our present study of Augustine. First, the Plotinian One is "beyond Being."[126] Because it is beyond Being, Plotinus tells us that it is not possible to describe or to have knowledge of the One or even to talk about it.[127] As he states, "it is . . . truly ineffable: for whatever you say about it, you will always be speaking of a "something."[128] We can only grasp the One indirectly by deducing what it is not, or by speaking about what comes after it.[129]

That being said, Plotinus does indeed have quite a lot to say about the One. First, the One is the supreme simplex. As the supreme simplex it is entirely without multiplicity or

---

[123] "Ennead" is the Greek word for "nine."
[124] T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 95-96.
[125] Plotinus, *Enneads* VI.9.3 and I.7.2, trans. A. H. Armstrong, *The Loeb Classical Library*, ed. G.P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 311, 271.
[126] *Enneads* I.7.1, 271, V.3.14, 23. In other passages, Plotinus refers to the One as God. See: *Enneads*, I.1.8, 111; V.7.1, 87; VI.9.6, 323.
[127] *Enneads* V.4.1, 141.
[128] *Enneads* V.3.13, 117.
[129] *Enneads* V.3.14, 121.

composition.[130] It is simple because it is perfect, and because it is perfect, it is independent of everything, while everything else is dependent on it.[131] In addition, because it is "altogether simple, it is self-sufficient [and] needs nothing,"[132] it lacks nothing, and it is the "measure and bound of all things, giving from itself intellect and real Being and soul and life and intellectual activity."[133] Furthermore, "it is the greatest of all things, not in size but in power"[134] and "must be understood as infinite not because its size and number cannot be measured or counted but because its power cannot be comprehended."[135]

The second important characteristic of the One for this study is that it is that on which everything depends for its existence.[136] In other words, the One is the cause of both things coming into existence and of their being sustained in existence by continuous participation in the One.[137] As Plotinus explains it, "that which is not the perfect unity, but rather a multiplicity," meaning everything that is not the One, "is kept in Being by this 'one.'"[138] All that exists, then, both visible and invisible, is a product of the One's power, which "overflows to create a succession of types of existence."[139] In addition, for Plotinus, in a similar manner in which particulars participate in the Forms for Plato, everything that exists participates in "an image of the Good . . . for what they share in are images of existence and the One."[140] A consequence of the overflow process, however, is that each successive level of existence below the One

---

[130] *Enneads* V.4.1, 141.
[131] John Bussanich, "Plotinus's Metaphysics of the One," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd P Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 46.
[132] *Enneads* V.2.1, 59; VI.9.6, 325.
[133] *Enneads* I.8.2, 281.
[134] *Enneads* VI.9.6, 323.
[135] *Enneads* VI.9.6, 323.
[136] *Enneads* I.7.1, 271.
[137] *Enneads* V.3.15, 123; V.3.17, 133; VI.7.23, 159; VI.7.42, 219.
[138] *Enneads* V.3.15, 123
[139] W. T. Jones, *The Medieval Mind, The History of Western Philosophy* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1969), 14.
[140] *Enneads* I.7.2, 271.

decreases in reality or Being, as the distance away from the One increases.[141] Consequently, all levels of existence lower than the perfectly good One are less than perfectly good. As Plotinus puts it, anything that is derived from the One cannot be better or transcend the One, hence, "it must be worse, and this means more deficient."[142]

The third characteristic of the One relevant to this study is that it is that "to which everything aspires."[143] As Plotinus explains it, the One "must stay still, and all things turn back to it, as a circle does to the centre from which all the radii come."[144] This is because all things are naturally disposed to direct themselves toward that which is best, which is the Good.[145] The Good, as the Good, "does not look or aspire to something else, but stay[s] quiet."[146] Rather, the Good gives "other things the form of Good, not by its activity directed to them—for they are directed to it, their source."[147] In this way, "there is an essential double movement in all being, a movement of procession outward or descent, and a movement of return or conversion to the higher generative principle."[148]

But if the One is an unchanging simplex, how can it be the source of everything else that exists? In other words, why is there anything else besides the One, and how does the multiplicity arise from it?[149] The answer, according to Plotinus, is that everything else is produced from an involuntary process of emanation from the One. As Plotinus puts it, "when anything comes to

---

[141] Jones, *The Medieval Mind*, 14.
[142] *Enneads* V.3.15, 123.
[143] *Enneads* I.7.1, 269. In regards to this statement by Plotinus, Armstrong tells us that this is Aristotle's definition of the Good (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.1094a3) as applied to the transcendent Platonic Good.
[144] *Enneads* I.7.1, 270.
[145] *Enneads* I.7.1, 269.
[146] *Enneads* I.7.1, 269.
[147] *Enneads* I.7.1, 269.
[148] Kevin Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005), 28.
[149] *Enneads* V.9. 14, 319.

perfection we see that it produces, and does not endure to remain by itself, but makes something else."[150]

The first emanation out of the One is Intelligence or Intellect.[151] It is here that multiplicity occurs; as Intelligence is not the One, and therefore not a perfect simple, the realm of Intelligence must be more than one. The realm of Intelligence corresponds roughly to Plato's realm of the Forms or Ideas. As Plotinus puts it, Intelligence "thinks the real beings [Forms] and establishes them in existence."[152] In addition, "all the things . . . which exist as forms in the world of sense come from the intelligible world."[153] As the One is beyond Being, Intelligence is true Being. Hence the Forms possess true Being, while the particulars which participate in the Forms possess less Being. The things of sense, as Plotinus explains it, are an "image of the real form, and every form which is in something else comes to it from something else and is a likeness of that from which it comes."[154] In this way, "the objects of sense are what they are called by participation, since their underlying nature receives its shape from elsewhere [the Forms]."[155]

Emanating from the realm of Intelligence is the realm of Soul. The realm of Soul, according to Plotinus, has two levels: "a higher level where it acts as a transcendent principle of form, order, and intelligent direction and the lower where it operates as an immanent principle of life and growth."[156] This lower level, according to Plotinus, is Nature.[157]

---

[150] *Enneads* V.4.1, 143.
[151] From the Greek word *nous*; sometimes translated as "spirit" or "mind."
[152] *Enneads* V.9.5, 297.
[153] *Enneads* V.9.10, 309.
[154] *Enneads* V.9.5, 297.
[155] *Enneads* V.9.5, 299.
[156] Armstrong, "Introduction," in the *Enneads*, xxii. See IV.3.1, 35 and IV.8.7, 417.
[157] Armstrong, xxii. See *Enneads* III.8.3, 371.

Matter and Evil in the Plotinian System

Emanating out of the lower level of Soul is matter.[158] What Plotinus calls matter is a substrate that is at the extreme opposite end of the hierarchy from the One and which acts as a receptacle for the Forms. When acted upon by the Forms, this substrate takes on shape and qualities that become the many and varied objects of the physical universe.[159] All physical objects, then, are "composed of matter and form: form in relation to their quality and shape, and matter to their substrate, which is undefined because it is not Form."[160] In this way, both Intellect and Soul are responsible for all existent physical bodies, Soul being responsible for the creation of matter, the substrate of everything that is created, and Intellect being responsible for the Forms, which act upon matter to give it the qualities that differentiate everything created out of the impression of Form on matter. Thus, Plotinus describes Intellect as a "craftsman" as the Forms bestow shape upon the matter of Soul to create sensible, physical objects.[161]

In addition, as matter is at the extreme opposite end of the hierarchy from the One, which is beyond Being and equated with the Good, matter as formless non-Being is equated with absolute Evil. In this way, Evil is a sort of Form of non-existence or non-Being.[162] As Plotinus explains it:

> One can grasp the necessity of evil in this way. Since not only the Good exists, there must be the last end to the process of going out past it, or if one prefers to put it like this, going down or going away: and this last, after which nothing else can come into being, is evil. Now it is necessary that what comes after the First should exist, and therefore that the Last should exist; and this is matter, which possesses nothing at all of the Good. And in this way too evil is necessary.[163]

---

[158] Giorgio Tonelli, "Plotinus," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1967), 354.
[159] *Enneads* II.4.1, 107; II.4.4, 113; II.4.6, 119; V.9, 293.
[160] *Enneads* II.4.7, 119.
[161] *Enneads* V.9, 293.
[162] *Enneads* I.8.3, 283.
[163] *Enneads* I.8.7, 299.

Evil, and as such, matter, then, "is a privation of Good and a pure lack of it."[164] Anything that comes into contact with matter, as explained by Plotinus, also suffers a lack or a privation of Good.[165] When Plotinus calls matter evil, however, he does not mean that the "stuff" that things are made of is evil. For Plotinus, everything in the physical universe is good. It is only when something does not have what it should or might have, that matter and evil play a role.[166] In other words, evil, for Plotinus, is an absence of what should be present in a thing, a sort of failure to exist at the fullness of the existent's potential. As Plotinus explains it, matter is the same thing as the "otherness" that is opposed to the Forms.[167] Therefore, though it is non-existent, it has a certain sort of existence in this way, and is the same thing as privation, "if privation is opposition to the things that exist in rational form."[168] In this way, privation is a "facet of ordinary experience glimpsed in all sorts of minor forms of absence, ugliness, decay, and moral and physical failings, as well as in death and more extreme cases of moral corruption."[169]

Thus, in a similar manner to Plato, when an object fulfills or fully participates in its Form, the object can be said to be fully actualized or fully reaching its potential. When it falls short of its Form, then it falls short of its potential. As Plotinus puts it, when "we see an ugly face in matter, because the formative principle in it has not got the better of the matter so as to hide its ugliness, we picture it to ourselves as ugly because it falls short of the form."[170] Hence, as Lloyd Gerson explains it: "Matter is what accounts for the diminished reality of the sensible world, for all natural things are composed of forms in matter."[171] However, the object or body

---

[164] *Enneads* I.8.4. 289.
[165] *Enneads* I.8.4. 289.
[166] Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus*, 8.
[167] *Enneads* II.4,16, 149.
[168] *Enneads* II.4,16, 149.
[169] Corrigan, 224-225.
[170] *Enneads* I.8.9, 303.
[171] Lloyd Gerson, "Plotinus," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plotinus/ (accessed April 7, 2007).

that lacks something is not the same as evil, for as Plotinus tells us: "Anything which lacks something, but has something else, might perhaps hold a middle position between good and evil, if its lack and its having more or less balance."[172] Consequently, a thing can be perfect on the level of its own nature when it fully participates in its Form.

Plotinus's Influence on Augustine

Equipped with this Neoplatonic conception of reality, Augustine arrived at a new understanding of the nature of God and acquired the starting point for his solution to both natural and moral evil. Indeed, as we shall see, Augustine's solution to the problem of evil is intimately linked to this new understanding of God.

Augustine's initial conceptions of God were deeply rooted in his nine-year association with the Manichees. As stated in Chapter Two, the Manichees, in order to explain the presence of evil in the world, posited the existence of two gods, one good and the other evil.[173] These gods, according to Manichaean doctrine, are corporal in nature and seemingly mutable, as the good and evil gods are engaged in a constant struggle or battle for domination. When the evil god wins, evil occurs; when the good god wins, good occurs.

With the aid of the Platonic and Neoplatonic metaphysical conceptions of reality, however, Augustine was able to come to a new understanding of God and Being. First and foremost, Augustine accepted the two worlds of Plato: "an intelligible world where truth itself resides," which includes God and the Forms, and the "sensible world that we . . . sense by sight and touch," that is made in the image of the true world.[174]

---

[172] *Enneads* II.4.16, 149.
[173] Augustine, *De moribus Manichaeorum* 1.10.16, in Augustine, *The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life* (*De Moribus Ecclesiae Cahtolicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum*), trans. Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966), 15: "For you maintain there are two Gods, one good, the other evil."
[174] Augustine, *Contra Academicos* 3.17.37.25, in Augustine, *Against the Academicians and the Teacher*, trans. Peter King (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), 87.

Second, Augustine accepted the Platonic view of the simple Good: that "there is a Good, which alone is simple, and therefore immutable."[175] This simple Good for Augustine is God. From this simple Good, all other goods were created, that is to say, "made, not begotten." They are made, because if they were begotten, they would be simple and equal to God. These other goods, however, are not simple, and therefore, they are not immutable.[176]

Third, Augustine came to the realization that that which is incorruptible is better than that which is corruptible, and that that which is incorruptible in any way would be the most perfect and the most Good, God.[177] Augustine comes to this conclusion by contemplating the Goodness of God. His discussion on the topic can be outlined in the following way:

1. God is Goodness itself,[178] utterly and entirely better than the things which he has made.[179]
2. To be corrupted is not good.[180]
3. Therefore, the substance which is God cannot be corruptible since, if it were, it would not be God.[181]

Thus, the goodness of God implies God's incorruptibility.

Fourth, with the assistance of the Platonic and Neoplatonic conception of the One and the Forms, Augustine was able to appreciate that that which is immaterial is more real and possesses more Being than the particulars of the physical world experienced with the senses. With this new understanding Augustine could now conceive of God as an incorporeal, infinite, immutable, and incorruptible being. In addition, with the help of the Neoplatonic conception of the One, Augustine was able to conceive of God as the source of Being for all that exists.[182] There is one important difference in Augustine's understanding, however. While the Neoplatonists conceived

---

[175] *De civitate Dei* XI.10, 462.
[176] *De civitate Dei* XI.10, 462.
[177] *Conf.* VII.4, 137.
[178] *Conf.* VII.3, 136.
[179] *Conf.* VII.5, 138.
[180] *Conf.* VII.4, 137.
[181] *Conf.* VII.3, 137.
[182] *Conf.* VII.20, 154.

of the One as beyond Being, Augustine conceived of God as possessing full Being. Augustine provides support for his divergence from the Plotinian account by quoting Exodus 3:14 where God reveals his name to Moses as "I am the God who *is*."[183] In other words, according to Augustine, God names himself Being itself—*ipsum esse*—as unqualified existence.

Using this passage of Exodus as a starting point for his discussion of God's metaphysical nature as it relates to created beings, Augustine tells us in the *Confessiones* that when he considered the things that are of a lower order than God, he saw that they possess neither absolute Being, nor are they entirely without Being. They are real in the sense that they derive their Being from God, but unreal in the sense that they are not pure Being. For, as Augustine tells us, "it is only that which remains in Being without change that truly is."[184]

Augustine discusses the same passage from Exodus in *De Civitate Dei*. Here he clarifies: (1) the distinction between God and created beings; (2) the distinction between created beings from one another; and, (3) his use of the word "Being":

> For God is the Supreme Being – that is, He supremely is; and He is therefore immutable. He gave Being to the things that He created from nothing, then, but not a supreme Being like His own. To some He gave being more fully, and to others he gave it in a more restricted way; and so he arranged natural entities according to their degrees of Being. (Just as the word 'wisdom' [*sapientia*] comes from 'to be wise' [*sapere*], so from 'to be' [*esse*] comes 'Being' [*essentia*]: a new word, indeed, which was not used in the Latin speech of old, but which has come into use in our own day so that our language should not lack a word for what the Greeks call *ousia*; for this is expressed very exactly by *essentia*.)[185]

Thus, while God possesses pure Being, everything else that has been created by God possesses degrees of Being, depending on where they are ordered in the hierarchy of creation.

Augustine's metaphysical hierarchy, however, is more complex than just a distinction between the Being of God and the Being of created things. Augustine's metaphysical outlook

---

[183] *Conf*. VII.10, 147.
[184] *Conf*. VII.11, 147.
[185] *De civitate Dei* XII.2, 500.

also divides all existing things into three layers of reality.[186] At the top of the hierarchy is God; in the middle are created spirits, such as angels and human souls; at the bottom are living and non-living physical objects, such as bodies, plants, and rocks. Within the hierarchy, God possesses full Being; angels and souls possess less Being than God, and physical objects possess less Being than angels and souls. Additionally, there is an ontological hierarchical order of created beings. Those that have life, according to Augustine, are placed above those that do not and those that have the power of generation are placed above those that do not have this capacity. Among living things, sentient creatures are placed above those that are not sentient. As such, animals are placed above trees. Among sentient creatures, those that possess intelligence, human beings for example, are placed above those that lack this capacity, such as cattle. Lastly, among the intelligent creatures, immortal creatures, such as angels, are placed above human beings who are mortal.[187]

Augustine also distinguishes each level in the hierarchy in relation to the "quality of immutability."[188] God, existing at the top of the hierarchy of Being, is eternal and immutable. Since the Forms, according to Augustine, exist in the mind of God, the Forms are also eternal and immutable.[189] The level below God consists of all created spirits, including angels and human souls. Angels and souls are immutable in regards to place. That is, they are not "strictly locatable in spatial terms, and hence cannot be said to move about, change, from one place to

---

[186] Bourke, *Augustine's View of Reality*, 3.
[187] *De civitate Dei* XI.16, 470.
[188] Bourke, 3.
[189] As Augustine states in his response to Question 46 in *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, in Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*. trans. David L Mosher, vol. 70 of *The Fathers of the Church*, ed. Hermigild Dressler (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1977), 79-81: "As for these reasons [Forms], they must be thought to exist nowhere but in the very mind of the Creator. For it would be sacrilegious to suppose that he was looking at something placed outside himself when he created in accord with it what he did create. . . . It is by participation in these [Forms] that whatever is exists in whatever manner it does exist." Notice the difference between Augustine's placement of the Forms and that of Plotinus. For Plotinus, the Forms exist in Intellect, the second hypostasis below the One, while for Augustine, the Forms exist within the Mind of God.

another."[190] However, because angels and human souls are created beings, they do undergo some change: they grow older in time and they experience moral and cognitive changes. At the lowest level of the hierarchy are physical bodies, both living and non-living, which, according to Augustine are all mutable and in no way immutable. As such, they are susceptible to change with respect to both place and time.[191]

Addressing the question of why God ordered the universe according to a hierarchy and did not create everything equal, Augustine tells us: "Because there would not be everything if everything were equal. For there would not be the many kinds of things which make up the universe in its hierarchy of created things from the first and second levels of created things right down to the last."[192] Thus, a world in which everything is not equal, according to Augustine, is more complete than one in which everything is equal. Even lesser goods, which human beings may find distasteful, such as mice or fleas,[193] add to the perfection of the whole and the beauty of the universe.[194]

Finally, one additional difference between Plotinus and Augustine should be mentioned regarding the creation of existing beings other than God. For Plotinus everything that exists was created out of an involuntary process of emanation from the One. For Augustine, however,

---

[190] Robert J. O'Connell, *Imagination and Metaphysics in St. Augustine. The Aquinas Lecture, 1986* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1986), 1. Though this may sound "puzzling," as O'Connell explains it, Augustine did not believe that human souls "move about as our bodies move from one place to another" (1-2). Rather, Augustine conceived of human souls, and angels, as being "everywhere and nowhere, quite literally 'neither here nor there'" (2).

[191] As Augustine states in his letter to Coelestinus: "There is a nature which is susceptible of change with respect to both place and time, namely, the corporeal. There is another nature which is in no way susceptible of change with respect to place, but only with respect to time, namely, the spiritual. And there is a third Nature which can be changed neither in respect to place nor in respect to time: that is, God. Those natures of which I have said that they are mutable in some respect are called creatures; the Nature which is immutable is called Creator. Augustine, "Letter XVIII," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. I: The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine, With a Sketch of His Life and Work*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 236.

[192] Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 46, 74.

[193] *De civitate Dei* XI.16, 470.

[194] Augustine, *De vera religione* XL.76, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. John H. S. Burleigh, vol. 6 of *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 264-265

everything that exists was created by God by a free, generous act of the Divine will.[195] Hence, God created, "not from any necessity, not because He had need of any benefit, but simply from His own goodness: that is, so that it might be good."[196] Augustine's departure from Plotinus on this point is clearly influenced by Christian Scripture, especially the book of Genesis, which demands such a deviation from the Plotinian cosmology.

Departures from the Plotinian conception of creation aside, it is clear that the philosophy of the Neoplatonists, especially that of Plotinus, had a profound impact on Augustine's metaphysical view of reality. From Plotinus Augustine was able to formulate a new conception of God, establish a metaphysical conception of reality based on Christian understandings of creation and, as we shall see in Chapter Four, formulate the basis for a solution to the problem of evil.

---

[195] Torchia, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, x.
[196] *De civitate Dei* XI.24, 481.

CHAPTER FOUR: NATURAL EVIL

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: First, I will provide an exposition of Augustine's privative solution to natural evil. Although Augustine's solution has been discussed many times in the secondary literature, certain aspects of his account have been somewhat neglected, specifically his discussion of evil as a privation of measure, number, and weight. In this regard I will attempt to provide a more detailed account of this facet of Augustine's solution in order to show how it is related to his explanation of evil as a privation of goodness and Being. Second, I will show that a single coherent account of Augustine's privative explanation can be discerned from the various ways in which he describes evil, as a privation of goodness, Being, and measure, number, and weight.

Early Conceptions of Evil

As discussed in Chapter Two, Augustine's nine-year association with the Manichees significantly influenced his early conception of evil. During this time he tells us that he conceived of evil as some kind of an "actual bodily substance";[197] a "shapeless . . . hideous mass which might be solid."[198] As a Manichee, Augustine believed that this material mass of evil was capable of opposing God, whom he also conceived of as a bodily substance, "extended in space, either permeating the world or diffused in infinity beyond it."[199] It was not until Augustine came into contact with the philosophy of the Platonists, particularly the idea that reality is divided into intelligible and sensible things,[200] that he was able to conceive of God as an immaterial

[197] *Conf.* V.10.20, 105.
[198] *Conf.* V.10.20. See also IV.15.24, 86 and VII.1.1, 133.
[199] *Conf.* VII.1.1, 133.
[200] By sensible things Augustine means, "those things which can be perceived by the body's sight and touch" and by intelligible things he means, "those which can be understood by the vision of the mind." *De civitate Dei* VIII.6, 321.

substance:[201] "By reading these books of the Platonists I had been prompted to look for [T]ruth [God] as something incorporeal, and I caught sight of your invisible nature, as it is known through your creatures."[202] This new conception of immaterial substance freed Augustine from his earlier conception of evil as a bodily substance as well. But if evil is not a bodily substance, as the Manichees claimed, then what is it? This is the starting point from which Augustine begins his Neoplatonically influenced inquiry into the nature of evil.

Initial Inquiry into the Nature of Evil

Augustine begins his inquiry into evil, not as do the Manichees in terms of the "whence" of evil, but rather in terms of defining the "what." Describing the difference in *De Moribus Manichaeorum*, Augustine tells us that the Manichees "perpetrate the greatest of all absurdities [by attempting to seek] out the origin of an unknown thing."[203] But this, according to Augustine, is to ask the wrong question. The correct procedure, as he explains it, is to first discover the nature of evil and then to explore its origin.[204]

In proceeding to begin with the "what" of evil, Augustine is more specifically asking: "What is the metaphysical nature of evil? Does evil exist as a separate entity and does it have Being? If so, what is the nature of the Being which evil might possess? Is evil a substance, perhaps an immaterial substance? Or is it something entirely without substance, perhaps the opposite of substance, and hence, the negation of Being itself, as thought Plotinus?" Adding to the challenge of responding to these questions is the obligation for Augustine, as a Christian, to

---

[201] *Conf.* VII.XX.26, 154.
[202] *Conf.* VII.XX.26, 154.
[203] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.2.2, 66.
[204] Augustine's preference for inquiring into the "what" before the "whence," can seemingly be traced to the *Enneads* of Plotinus. In *Ennead* I.8.1,279, Plotinus writes: "Those who enquire whence evils come, either into reality as a whole or to a particular kind of reality, would make an appropriate beginning of their enquiry if they proposed the question first, what evil is and what is its nature. In this way one would know whence it came and where its seat is and what it affects, and one would be able to decide the general question whether it really exists." Using this as a starting point, Plotinus characterizes the "what" of evil in Ennead I.8.4, 289, as the privation of good. As Plotinus writes: "[Evil] is altogether without any share in good and is a privation of good and a pure lack of it."

maintain the traditional omnipredicates of God, especially God's omnipotence and goodness, as well as the goodness of creation.[205]

Natural Evil Explained

Augustine frames his discussion of the nature of evil within the context of the nature of God and of creation. As discussed in Chapter Three, God for Augustine is both Goodness itself[206] and the highest or the most pure Being.[207] As pure Being—indeed, Being itself—God is eternal, unchangeable, and immortal.[208] As an unchangeable being, God is not susceptible to corruption or a degradation of His Being.

All other things that exist, according to Augustine, were created by God *ex nihilo* or out of nothing.[209] By this Augustine does not mean that God created the heaven and the earth and all that resides in it out of His own substance.[210] If this were the case then everything that existed would be equal to God.[211] Nor does Augustine mean that there is a substance called "nothing" from which God created. Unlike man, God does not need any material out of which to create; God is omnipotent, and as such He is "able to make out of nothing, i.e., out of what has no existence at all."[212] So while it is true, according to Augustine, that God created everything out of formless matter (an almost nothing that was created on the third day of creation), this formless matter was created completely out of nothing by God.[213] Furthermore, according to Augustine, because everything that exists was created by the one good God, everything created by God is

---

[205] *Conf.* VII.5.7, 138-139.
[206] *Conf.* VII.3, 136.
[207] *Conf.* VII.10, 147.
[208] *De natura boni* I, 326.
[209] *Conf.* XII.7, 284.
[210] *Conf.* XII.7, 284.
[211] *Conf.* XII.7, 284.
[212] *De natura boni* I, 326
[213] *Conf.* XII.8, 285: "For you, O Lord, made the world from formless matter, which you created out of nothing. This matter was itself almost nothing, but from it you made all the mighty things which are so wonderful to us." See also, *De natura boni* I, 326: "Therefore, if the world was made out of some unformed matter, that matter was made out of absolutely nothing."

likewise good.[214] Because created things were not created *from* God, however, but rather *by* God out of nothing, they are not equal to God's goodness, and therefore not wholly and completely Good.[215] As Augustine puts it in *De Natura Boni*, all things created by God "are not supremely good, but they approximate to the supreme good."[216] But if all things are created good, even though not supremely good, then how can we speak of evil?

The answer, according to Augustine, resides in the nature of beings that are created out of nothing. Based on Augustine's Neoplatonic understanding of the nature of God, God is the only being that is completely good, eternal, and immutable. Because created beings are not supremely and unchangeably good, but only approximate the good, their good is, as Augustine puts it in the *Enchiridion*, capable of diminution and increase.[217] Hence, because created Being is created out of nothing, it is, by its very nature, susceptible to change. This is because only that which truly *is*, God, is immutable.[218] It is the change from a state of goodness which a created being was intended to possess—the degree of goodness with which it was created—to a lesser state of goodness that Augustine characterizes as evil.[219] As already noted, Augustine's most frequent phrase to describe or define evil is *privatio boni*—privation of good—but Augustine also uses the terms deprivation, corruption, lack, diminution, loss, defect, and negation.[220]

---

[214] *Conf*. XII.7, 284-285.
[215] *De natura boni* I, 326.
[216] *De natura boni* I, 326. See also *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.4, 69.
[217] Augustine, *Enchiridion* 4.12, in *Saint Augustine: Christian Instruction, Admonition and Grace, Christian Combat and Enchiridion*. trans. Bernard M. Peebles. ed. Ludwig Schopp, vol. 2 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1966), 377.
[218] As Augustine puts it in *De natura boni* I, 326: "The Supreme Good beyond all others is God. It is thereby unchangeable good, truly eternal, truly immortal. All other good things derive their origin from him but are not part of him. That which is part of him is as he is, but the things he has created are not as he is. Hence if he alone is unchangeable, all things that he created are changeable because he made them of nothing. Being omnipotent he is able to make out of nothing, i.e., out of what has no existence at all, good things, both great and small, celestial and terrestrial, spiritual and corporeal. Because he is just, he did not make the things he made out of nothing to be equal to him whom he begat of himself. Therefore, all good things throughout all the ranks of being, whether great or small, can derive their being only from God."
[219] *Conf*. III.7, 63.
[220] Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 53.

So far, then, Augustine's explanation of the "what" of evil can be outlined as such:

1. God is supremely and unchangeably good.
2. God created all things.
3. Because the things created by God are created *by* him (out of nothing), as opposed to being created *from* him (from his nature) they are good, but they are not supremely nor unchangeably good.
4. Since created things are not immutably good, the good in created things can be diminished and increased.
5. Evil is the diminution (deprivation, corruption, etc.), of good in a created thing.

In the *Confessiones*, Augustine further clarifies the relationship of privation to the good, by stating:

> It was made clear to me also that even those things which are subject to decay are good. If they were of the supreme order of goodness, they could not become corrupt; but neither could they become corrupt unless they were in some way good. For if they were supremely good, it would not be possible for them to be corrupted. On the other hand, if they were entirely without good, there would be nothing in them that could become corrupt. For corruption is harmful, but unless it diminished what is good, it could do no harm. The conclusion then must be either that corruption does no harm—which is not possible; or that everything which is corrupted is deprived of good—which is beyond doubt. But if they are deprived of all good, they will not exist at all. . . . So we must conclude that if things are deprived of all good, they cease altogether to be; and this means that as long as they are, they are good.[221]

Reiterating this point in Book III of the *Confessiones*, Augustine explains that "evil is nothing but the removal [privation] of good until finally no good remains."[222]

From these passages we can conclude that:

1. Every actual entity is good; a greater good if it cannot be corrupted (God), and a lesser good if it can be (all created being).
2. Only those things that are good (but not supremely good) can become corrupt or evil.
3. Where there is evil, there is a corresponding corruption of the good.
4. Where there is no privation of the good, there is no evil.
5. As long, then, as a thing is being corrupted, there is good in it of which it is being deprived.
6. If, however, the corruption comes to be total, there is no good left, because it is no longer an entity at all.
7. Corruption, then, cannot consume the good without also consuming itself.

---

[221] *Conf*. VII.12.18, 148.
[222] *Conf*. III.7.12, 63.

From this analysis it is clear that evil cannot exist on its own. Rather, evil can only exist in something that has some trace of good in it. Contrary to the doctrines of the Manichees, then, evil for Augustine cannot possess Being, and therefore, it cannot be a substance. If evil were a substance, then it would have to have been created by God and derive its Being from God. As such, it would have to be good, because all things or substances that are made by God are good. But evil is not good; if it were it would not be evil. As Augustine puts it in the *Confessiones*: ". . . whatever is, is good; and evil, the origin of which I was trying to find, is not a substance, because if it were a substance, it would be good." Consequently, evil has no Being of its own. "Corruption" according to Augustine, "does not exist in itself; it exists in some substance which it corrupts, for corruption itself is not a substance."[223] As with Plotinus, this does not mean that the substance that is corrupted is or becomes evil. Rather, it is the corruption or privation of the goodness of the substance that is called evil.[224] As stated so far, then, Augustine's explanation of evil as a privation of good directly refutes the doctrines of the Manichees who stated that evil was caused by an evil materialistic god. For Augustine, however, no such god could exist because pure evil cannot exist, as a completely evil god would have no Being or existence.

But if this is all that Augustine has to provide as a solution or explanation to the problem of evil, such an answer would seem rather mundane and, indeed, not very helpful in our quest to understand the "what" of evil. Two questions arise from Augustine's explanation: (1) What does Augustine mean by his use of the word "good?"; and, (2) How can a privation of good explain the "what" of evil? The key to unlocking the answers to these questions is to comprehend the relationship between Being and goodness in Augustine's metaphysical system.

---

[223] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.5.7, 69.
[224] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.5.7, 69.

Evil as a Privation of Being

Central to Augustine's understanding of natural evil as a privation of the good is the equating of Being with Goodness, a view that, although not specifically stated as such, can be deduced, from the manner in which Augustine discusses the good and Being in the treatises in which he discusses evil. One of the most concise ways in which Augustine makes the connection between the two terms is by saying that whatever exists is good.[225] According to this view, the highest Good, God, has the most Being or existence. As Augustine tell us: "there is no greater good than God Himself"[226] and "God . . . cannot be called anything other than Being Itself."[227] A thing has Being, according to Augustine, "when it remains, stands firmly, and is always the same. . ."[228] God, for Augustine, then, is that being which is the highest Good, that possesses the most Being, and that is immutable. Because God is the highest Being and immutable, God is also incorruptible.[229] All other beings, as created beings, derive their Being from God.[230] Hence, as already discussed, every created being has less goodness and less Being, than does God. Created beings, as created beings, are susceptible to change and therefore corruptible and susceptible to losing their Being. "For what undergoes a change," according to Augustine, "does not retain its own Being, and what is subject to change, even though it may not actually be changed, can still lose the Being which it had."[231]

---

[225] *Conf.* VII.12, 48.
[226] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 1.11.18, 18.
[227] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 1.14.24, 21.
[228] Augustine, *De beata vita* 2.8, in vol. 1 of *Writings of Saint Augustine,* trans. Ludwig Schopp (New York: Cima Publishing Company, 1948), 54.
[229] Augustine, *De Trinitate* V.2.3, in Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, vol. 45 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1963), 177.
[230] In *Conf.* VII.20, 154, Augustine states: "I was sure that it is you who truly are, since you are always the same, varying in neither part nor motion. I knew too that all other things derive their being from you, and the one indisputable proof of this is the fact that they exist at all." And in *De Natura Boni* I, 326: "Therefore, all good things throughout all the ranks of being, whether great or small, can derive their being only from God."
[231] *De Trinitate* V.2.3, 177.

When Augustine speaks of evil as the privation of the good, then, he is equating goodness with Being. Consequently, any privation of that which is good is also a privation of Being. Evil, therefore, is the privation or the falling away from Being toward non-Being or nothingness. Augustine's clearest statement of this is in *De Moribus Manichaeorum,* where in discussing the "what" of evil he states:

> If . . . you wish to know what corruption [evil] is, notice the state to which it tends to bring what it corrupts, for it affects these things in accordance with its own nature. By corruption all things cease to be what they were and are brought to non-permanence, to non-being, for being implies permanence. Hence, what is called the Supreme and Perfect Being is so called because it endures in itself. Anything that changes for the better changes, not on account of its permanence, but because it had been altered for the worse, that is, it had suffered a loss of essence [Being], a loss which cannot be attributed to the being [God] who produced the essence.[232]

Hence, created beings can both change for the good or for the worse. When a being changes for the worse, it loses both goodness and Being, and, as such, suffers evil. When a being changes for the better, it regains the goodness and the Being which it lost through the process of privation or corruption.

But what does it mean for a created thing to lose its Being? Does not something either exist or not exist? And if so, then how can we speak of a being undergoing a loss of Being or existence? What would it mean for a thing to lose its Being and be brought toward non-existence or nothingness?

In order to understand what Augustine means by a loss of Being, it is important to have an understanding of Augustine's metaphysics of creation. As already discussed, God stands at the top of the hierarchy of Being as pure Being; God simply *is.* Everything else that exists, other than God, was created out of unformed matter, which was created from nothing. It was this unformed matter that received the Forms, which exist in the mind of God, which then resulted in

---

[232] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.6.8, 70.

the various objects of reality.[233] Augustine, like Plato and the Neoplatonists before him, conceives of the Forms as eternal and unchanging.[234] Everything else that exists, i.e., spiritual beings, such as angels and souls, and the various objects of the sensible world, participate in the Forms. It is through this participation in the Forms, according to Augustine, "that whatever is exists in whatever manner it does exist."[235] Hence, it is by participating in the Forms, that all created beings derive their Being. In addition, a created thing is created by God with an intended level of goodness and Being; "an existence," as Augustine explains it, "that is perfect for a thing of [its] kind."[236] When a being maintains this level of intended goodness and Being, the being can be said to be fully participating in or fulfilling its Form, at least to the degree that it is able as a created object. When a being is corrupted, however, it does not fully participate in its Form and thereby loses some of the goodness and Being which it was intended to possess.

Thus, the "what" of evil can be said to be the result of a created being deviating from or not fulfilling its Form, to the extent that it is able to do so as a created being. When this is the case, the created being in question possesses less Being than it should and would possess if it were fully actualizing or fulfilling its Form.[237] Being or existence, then, is not an all or nothing condition for Augustine. Rather, a being can experience degrees of Being or existence: from fully participating in its Form, to the loss of so much good and Being that the created being borders on non-existence or nothingness. The path a created object takes from fully participating

---

[233] *De vera religione* XVIII.36, 242. See also, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 46, 79-81.
[234] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 46, 79-81.
[235] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 46, 79-81.
[236] *De libero arbitrio* 3.7.75, 85.
[237] As explained by Etiene Gilson, "Evil is the privation of a good which the subject should possess, a failure to be what it should be." In Etiene Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960), 144.

in its Form to eventual nothingness begins as soon as the object is "born" so to speak, as all created temporal objects will eventually cease to be due to their creation out of nothing.[238]

So far, then, we have seen that evil for Augustine is a privation or decrease in the intended good or Being ("good" and "Being" being correlative terms), that a created being is intended to possess. But what kind of change does a thing have to undergo in order for it to lose the good and the Being which it is intended to possess when fully participating in its Form? Augustine discusses wounds and diseases "as deprivations of that good condition proper to it called health,"[239] but he does not provide many other examples when he discusses evil as a privation of good or Being in regards to other kinds of changes a created thing might experience that would be categorized as evil. Just what kind of change in a created being, then, is necessary for evil to occur? Would a qualitative change in any of the accidental properties of an object qualify as an evil? For instance, would a change in a human being from a tan complexion to a pale complexion be considered a corruption—a loss of good and Being—and, hence, an evil, according to Augustine? [240] Likewise, if a third leg would allow human beings to move more quickly from one place to another, would the addition of a third leg be considered an increase in the good or Being of a human being? It would seem that Augustine's explanation of evil would be rather problematic if we take the terms "decrease" or "increase" of the good or Being to mean any change in a being's prior condition. The answer to the question "What constitutes a change of good and Being for Augustine?" is to be found in his discussion of evil as a privation of what he calls: "measure, number, and weight."

---

[238] As Augustine puts it in *De libero arbitrio* 3.7.72, Benjamin and Hackstaff, 103: "As for temporal things, they have no existence before they exist; while they exist, they are passing away; once they have passed away, they will never exist again. And so, when temporal things are yet to come, they do not exist; further, when they are past, they do not exist. How can they be thought to be permanent, when for them, beginning to exist is the same as proceeding toward nonexistence?"

[239] *Enchiridion* 3.11-4.12-13, as quoted in Henri Marrou, *St. Augustine and his Influence Through the Ages*, trans. Patrick Hepburne-Scott (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 87-88.

[240] See Christian Schäfer, "Augustine on Mode, Form, and Natural Order," *Augustinian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2000): 63.

Measure, Number, and Weight

The basis for Augustine's treatment of evil as the privation of measure, number, and weight is located once again in Augustine's understanding of the nature of God and created being. In the Book of Wisdom, a book in the Old Testament Apocrypha, it is read of God that He has "disposed all things by measure and number and weight."[241] Augustine reflects and comments on this passage in his discussion of creation in *De Genesi ad Litteram* and asks whether measure, number, and weight could have existed before creation such that God could have arranged all things in accordance with them, "or whether they too were created." [242] Augustine concludes that they did exist before creation, and as such, that they could only have existed in God, because nothing existed but God before the creative act. Because all created things receive their Being from God, these principles are imparted by God to all created being, both spiritual and corporeal. But, Augustine adds, even though measure, number, and weight are in God, "He is neither measure, nor number, nor weight, nor all three."[243] God transcends the creatures which he has created, hence, "He is surely not identified with these three things as we know them in creatures, the limit in things that we measure, the number in things that we count, the weight in things that we weigh."[244] Rather, according to Augustine, God is "the Measure without measure . . . the Number without number . . . and the Weight without weight."[245] In other words, God simply *is* measure, number, and weight, just as God *is* Being, while at the same time imparting these to all that He has created.

---

[241] Wisdom 11.21.
[242] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.3.7, in Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vol. I, Books 1-6, vol. 41 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, ed. Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt, and Thomas Comerford Lawler (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 108.
[243] *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.3.7, 108.
[244] *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.3.7, 108.
[245] *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.3.7, 108.

It should be noted that Augustine uses a variety of terms to characterize the triadic formula, including: "extension, number, and weight" (*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*);[246] "measure, form, and order" (*De Natura Boni* and *De Civitate Dei*);[247] "measure, number, and order" (*De Liberio Arbitrio* and *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*);[248] "unity, number, and order" (*De Musica*);[249] "unity, form, and order" (*De Trinitate*);[250] and finally, "one, species, and order" (*De Vera Religione*).[251] Though Augustine does not explain why he changes the terminology, what does seem obvious from the various passages in which he discusses the triadic formula is that measure, form, and order (or their variants), are ontological principles that apply to all created beings, corporeal and incorporeal.[252] Explaining the ontological role of the principles in *De Natura Boni*, Augustine tells us that "all things are good, better in proportion as they are better measured, formed, and ordered, less good where there is less measure, form, and order"[253] Where they are present in a created being in a high degree there are great goods, where they are present in a low degree there are small goods, and where they are absent altogether, there is no

---

[246] Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manicchaeum* XX.7, trans. R. Stothert, in vol. IV of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of The Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 255.
[247] *De natura boni* III, 327; *De civitate Dei* XI.15, 470.
[248] *De libero arbitrio* 2.20.203, Williams, 83. See also Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* I.16.26, in Saint Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske. vol. 84 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 73.
[249] Augustine, *De musica* VI.17.57, in *Saint Augustine: The Immortality of the Soul, The Magnitude of the Soul, On Music, The Advantage of Believing, On Faith in Things Unseen*, trans. Ludwig Schopp, vol. 2 of *The Fathers of the Church* (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1947), 377.
[250] *De Trinitate* VI.10.12, 214.
[251] *De vera religione* VII.13, as quoted in Bourke, *Augustine's View of Reality*, 51. Note that Augustine held the view, as did Plotinus and other Platonists, that created things are characterized by being both a *one* and a *many*. A one in that every created being can be identified as one particular thing, and a many in that any created being is composed of several parts. As Augustine states in *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.6.8, 70-71: ". . . to the extent that a thing acquires unity, to that extent it has being, for unity brings about the harmony and uniformity by which composite things have their measure of being. Simple things exist in themselves because they are one, but those which are not simple imitate unity through the harmony of their parts, and, in the measure that they achieve this harmony, they exist."
[252] *De natura boni* III, 327.
[253] *De natura boni* III, 327.

goodness.[254] For Augustine, then, there would appear to be a direct correlation between the ontological principles of measure, form, and order, and good and Being. Where measure, form, and order exist to a greater degree in a being, the being possesses more good and more Being. Where they exist to a lower degree, the being possesses less good and Being.

Measure, Number, and Weight Defined

As with many terms used by Augustine, a precise definition of the meaning of the words "measure," "number," and "weight" is nowhere provided. Perhaps the most concise explanation of the triadic formula is given by Augustine in *De Genesi ad Litteram* where he tells us that "measure places a limit on everything, number gives everything form, and weight draws each thing to a state of repose and stability." Measure, as defined in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, then, is somehow associated with the concept of "limit." But such a definition is not very helpful in determining how the term is to be understood as a part of Augustine's overall metaphysical system. The meaning becomes clearer, I suggest, when it is observed, as noted above, that Augustine also uses the terms "extension," "oneness," "unity," and, as noted by Bourke, even "existence," to express the same concept.[255]

At its most basic level, when something is "measured," it can be understood as being extended in space and/or time. Hence, the use of Augustine's correlative term, "extension." Understood in this way, a tree, for instance, has a specific extension that can be measured in regards to its width, its length, its breadth, and its duration of existence. This extension is limited

---

[254] *De natura boni* III, 327.

[255] Bourke, *Augustine's View of Reality*, 20. See *De musica* VI.17.57, 377 and *De Trinitate* VI.10.12, 214, for Augustine's treatment of "measure" as unity. See *De vera religione* 7.13, 232, for Augustine's treatment of "measure" as "Being." Rendering measure as Being, in this passage in *De vera religione*, Augustine writes: "There is one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When this Trinity is known as far as it can be in this life, it is perceived without the slightest doubt that every creature, intellectual, animal and corporeal, derives such existence [measure] as it has from that same Trinity, has its own form, and is subject to the most perfect order. . . . For every thing, substance, essence or nature, or whatever better word there may be, possesses at once these three qualities: it is a particular thing [it exists]; it is distinguished from other things by its own proper form; and it does not transgress the order of nature."

in the sense that it is not infinite, but is confined to specific, finite measurements. In this way, to be measured implies existence, in that only something that can be measured, in some way or another, can be said to exist.

In addition, any created being that is measured or extended in this way possesses the quality of oneness, in the sense that it is one thing. Only God, however, is a perfect one; anything else possessing the quality of oneness is also a many in that it is composed of several elements or parts. Thus, anything that is one thing, other than God, is a unity composed of a many. Using the example above, a tree is a composite of many parts, including branches, roots, and leaves, among other things. These parts, however, compose a unity of one tree. If this interpretation is correct, then what Augustine seems to be advocating is that any created being that is measured has extension; any created being that has extension is one thing; any created being that is one thing is a unity composed of several parts; and, any created being that is a one-unity has Being simply by the fact that it possesses these qualities. As Augustine explains it,

> To be . . . is nothing but to be one. And so, to the extent that a thing acquires unity, to that extent it has being, for unity brings about the harmony and uniformity by which composite things have their measure of Being. Simple things [i.e., God] exist in themselves because they are one, but those which are not simple imitate unity through the harmony of their parts, and, in the measure that they achieve this harmony, they exist.[256]

The meaning of the second term of the Wisdom triad, "number," is also somewhat difficult to grasp due to what appear to be at least two different senses of the use of the word in Augustine's writings: (1) as number itself, and (2) as a substitute for the words "form" and "species." In regards to the first use, in *De Libero Arbitrio*, Augustine stresses the fact that number is that which gives form to each and everything.[257] In this sense, Augustine appears to

---

[256] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.7.10, 72.

[257] As Augustine puts it in *De libero arbitrio* 2.16.42: "Behold the heaven, the earth, the sea; all that is bright in them or above them; all that creep or fly or swim; all have forms because all have number. Take away number and they will be nothing. From who have they their being if not from him who has made number? For they exist only in

be maintaining the ancient tradition started by the Pythagoreans that numbers are the principles of all things.[258] The tradition is best articulated by Philolaus (470? – 390? BCE), who in his book on the Pythagorean doctrines states, "All things have a number . . . and it is this fact which enables them to be known."[259] Aristotle (384-322 BCE), writing of the Pythagoreans in his *Metaphysics*, adds that "since . . . all other things in their whole of nature seemed to be modeled on numbers, and numbers seemed to be the first things in the whole of nature, [the Pythagoreans] supposed the elements of number to be the elements of all things."[260]

Augustine seems to hold a similar view of numbers as the principles or elements of all things, in that numbers are what give an object its unique form. Thus, as Augustine states, "Whatever changeable thing you may look at, you could not grasp it at all, either by the sense of the body or by the contemplation of the mind, unless it had some form composed of numbers, without which it would sink into nothing."[261] Augustine's use of the word "number" in this sense, then, seems to be related to the concept of extension, in that only something that has shape (physical objects) or anything that exists in time (physical objects and spirits) can be measured numerically in some way.

The second sense in which Augustine uses the term "number"—the sense in which he seems to use the term in the Wisdom triad—is less difficult to grasp, especially when it is noted,

---

so far as they have number." *De libero arbitrio*, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. John H. S. Burleigh, vol. VI of *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 161.

[258] Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression*, no. 152 of Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969), 33. According to David L. Mosher, Augustine shared two important convictions with the Pythagoreans concerning numbers: "(1) that numbers (or at least the laws governing them) are objective, timeless, and unchangeable features of the universe which are of fundamental importance, not only for the actual structuring and ordering of the universe, but also for the understanding of it; and (2) that numbers have special symbolic meanings which, for Augustine at least, somehow derive from their privileged metaphysical status." See Mosher, "Introduction," *De vera religione*, 28.

[259] Hopper, 34.

[260] Aristotle, *Metaphyiscs* A.5, 985b, as quoted in Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (New York Barnes & Noble, 1970), 1.

[261] *De libero arbitrio*, 2.16.171, Williams, 62. It is unclear in this passage, whether Augustine is using the word "form" to mean "shape" or whether he is referring to the Forms of Plato.

as seen above, that Augustine sometimes substitutes the words "Form" and "Species" for the principle term. Thus, in discussing the triadic principles in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Augustine writes: "[God] limits everything, forms everything, and orders everything." The passage becomes easier to understand when it is remembered that for Augustine the Platonic Forms have their origin in the mind of God and that, as Augustine puts it in *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, it is by participation in these [Forms] that whatever is exists in whatever manner it does exist."[262]

Augustine's use of the word "species" as a correlative term for "Form," and as such, "number," can be understood in the same manner. In discussing the Ideas (Forms) of Plato in his reply to Question 46 in *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Augustine states: "in Latin we can call the ideas either 'forms' (*formae*), or 'species,' (*species*), which are literal translations of the word."[263] Hence, when in *De Civitate Dei* Augustine writes that "All natures, then, simply because they exist . . . have a species of their own,"[264] the word "species" should by all accounts be read as correlative with the term "Form." From these passages it seems clear enough that Augustine's use of the terms "number," "species" and "form," in this sense all refer to the Forms of Plato.

Turning to the third term of the Wisdom triad, "weight," Augustine again uses the word in two different senses in his works: (1) to indicate the place a body assumes that is suitable to its own nature, and (2) to indicate the place a created thing has in the order or hierarchy of created Being. In regards to the first sense of the term, Augustine tells us in the *Confessiones* that a body inclines by its own weight towards the place that is most fitting for it. This place is not

---

[262] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII,* Reply to Question 46, 79-81.
[263] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII,* Reply to Question 46, 79.
[264] *De civitate Dei* XII.5, 504.

necessarily the lowest place, but rather one that is best for a thing of its kind.[265] Thus, stones come to rest at a place that is best for stones, fire comes to rest at a place that is best for fire, and souls come to rest at a place best for souls.[266] When things are dislodged from their proper place, however, "they are always on the move until they come to rest where they are meant to be."[267]

The second sense of the term becomes more obvious when it is remembered, as shown above, that Augustine sometimes substitutes the word "order" for "weight" in the triad. In this sense, Augustine's use of the term seems to be related to the place a created thing has in the order or hierarchy of created being. This conception of a created hierarchy is a key theme of Augustine's metaphysics and is discussed by him in many of his treatises. For example, in *De Genesi Contra Manicheos*, Augustine writes that during the act of creation "God arranged the forms of all things by ordering and distinguishing them in their places and ranks."[268] As was seen in Chapter Three, Augustine divides or orders all existing things into three layers of reality. At the top of the hierarchy is God; in the middle are created spirits, such as angels and human souls; and, at the bottom are living and non-living physical objects, such as bodies (both human and animal), plants, and rocks. In addition to these three layers, each created being holds a specific place in the created order of reality based on the amount of Being given to it by God: "To some He gave being more fully, and to others he gave it in a more restricted way; and so he arranged natural entities according to their degrees of being."[269] When a thing exists at its

---

[265] *Conf.* XIII.8, 317: "A body inclines by its own weight towards the place that is fitting for it. Weight does not always tend towards the lowest place, but the one which suits it best, for though a stone falls, flame rises. Each thing acts according to its weight, finding its right level. If oil is poured into water, it rises to the surface, but if water is poured on to oil, it sinks below the oil. This happens because each acts according to its weight, finding its right level. . . . In my case, love is the weight by which I act. To whatever place I go, I am drawn to it by love. By your Gift, the Holy Ghost, we are set aflame and borne aloft, and the fire within us carries us upward."
[266] *Conf.* XIII.8, 317. As we shall see in Chapter Five, the natural place that is best for souls to come to rest is with God.
[267] *Conf.* XIII.8, 317.
[268] *De Genesi contra Manicheos* 1.3.5, 53.
[269] *De civitate Dei* XII.2, 500.

intended level of being, it is said to fully *be*, at least to the degree that it is able as a created being. Any loss in a being's level of Being, and hence its intended order in the hierarchy, would be considered an evil. Likewise, any turn toward a being's intended level of order would be a turn toward Being, and a restoration of the goodness which it was intended to possess. In this sense Augustine's use of the terms "weight" and "order" have a teleological significance for an individual being as well. Since each being has an intended level of Being in the hierarchical order, a certain degree of perfection and stability is reached when that level is attained. It is this level of perfection to which each being should aspire if it is to fulfill its intended level of order and Being in the hierarchy. Here Augustine seems to maintain a similar view to that of Plotinus, in that all things are naturally disposed to direct themselves toward that which is best, which is the Good.[270] Speaking of the teleological aspect of order as it relates to Being, Augustine tells us in *De Moribus Manichaeorum* that when things change for the better they tend toward Being and order, so far as these things can be attained by created beings.[271]

Evil as a Privation of Measure, Number, and Weight

The answer to the question of what constitutes a significant change in a created being in order for that change to be considered an evil should now be fairly obvious: only privations of measure, form, and order are considered evil for Augustine.[272] Changes such as a tan that wears off are merely accidental changes that do not affect the measure, number (form), and weight (order) of a being. Hence, such changes would not be considered evil. Likewise, the lack of a third leg in a human being is not a privation, regardless of whether the addition of a third leg would improve a human being's mobility, because having a third leg is not a necessary condition

[270] *Enneads* I.7.1, 269.
[271] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.7.10, 72.
[272] *De natura boni* XXXVII, 338: "If all natural things would preserve their proper measure, form and order, there would be no evil." See also, *De natura boni* XXIII, 333: "Measure, form, and order are said to be bad when there is less of them than there ought to be."

for a human being to fulfill its intended potential as created by God. In fact, a third leg would actually interfere with the level of measure, form, and order that a human being was intended to possess as a third leg is not how God intended human beings to be formed.

The Nonexistence of Natural Evil

Augustine's investigation into natural evil as a privation of good, Being, and measure, form, and order, leads him to conclude that evil does not exist.[273] Augustine's intent here is not to claim that evil is an illusion. The phenomenological and physical experience of evil was all too familiar to Augustine in the form of suffering, pain, sickness, and death. This fact is made explicitly clear throughout the *Confessiones*. What, then, is the basis for Augustine's assertion?

Augustine provides two answers. The first answer is located, once again, in the creation of beings out of nothing. As already stated, all created beings are good because they were created by the supremely good God.[274] But because created beings are not supremely good, their good is capable of diminution and increase.[275] Hence, though it is not necessary that a creature will suffer disease, which is a privation of health, having been created out of nothing makes a creature susceptible to doing so. Why would an all-good God allow such changes to occur? The answer is that God simply could not have made creation any other way. God was free to create or not create, but God was not free to create incorruptible beings. If God had done so, then everything would be immutable and, hence, equal to God, because only God is that which truly is. This susceptibility to be corrupted, however, is not a defect of created beings. Rather it is an inherent feature of the nature of beings created out of nothing.

Augustine's second answer is rooted in human perception. Human beings consider parts of creation to be evil because they are in conflict or variance with other things, for example,

---

[273] *Conf.* VII.13, 148-149.
[274] *Enchiridion* 4.12, 377.
[275] *Enchiridion* 4.12, 377.

death with life, pain with pleasure, and sickness with health. But according to Augustine, these things are in accord with other things of the universe and when they are in accord with these things, they are good in themselves.[276] Thus, even poison can be considered a good when used in the proper manner.[277] In order to see this fact, however, one must look at creation in its totality, and not just to those things that seem bad to us. In so doing, one will no longer wish for a better world because one will realize that even though the "higher things are better than the lower, the sum of all creation is better than the higher things alone."[278] Augustine goes so far as to state in *De Ordine* that the contrast between good and evil is necessary in order to maintain the harmony of the universe. In this way, according to Augustine, the beauty of all things is configured from the opposites.[279] Therefore, God is not to be blamed with the faults that trouble us. Rather, God is to be praised when we contemplate all the natures which He has made, "for just as the opposition of contraries bestows beauty upon language, then, so is the beauty of this world enhanced by the opposition of contraries."[280] Thus, according to Augustine, God "admonishes us not to condemn things thoughtlessly, but rather to inquire with diligence into the utility of things."[281]

Comments on the Coherence of Augustine's Solution to Natural Evil

The question that remains to be answered is whether a coherent account can be realized from the various ways in which Augustine characterizes evil as a privation of goodness, Being, and measure, number, and weight. For the most part, the answer to this question has been

---

[276] *Conf.* VII.13, 148-149.
[277] *De civitate Dei* XI.22, 476-477.
[278] *Conf.* VII.14, 149-150.
[279] Augustine, *De ordine* 1.7.18, in *Saint Augustine: The Happy Life, Answer to Skeptics, Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil, Soliloquies*, trans. Robert P. *Russell*, vol. 1 of *The Fathers of the Catholic Church* (New York: Cima, 1948), 256. See also, *Soliloquia* I.1.2, 344: "O God, by whose ordinance the uttermost discord is as naught, since the less perfect things are in harmony with the more perfect."
[280] *De civitate Dei* XI.16-17, 471-472.
[281] *De civitate Dei* XI.22, 477.

provided in the above explication. However, it may be worth reviewing some of the components of that explication in order to determine whether the various ways in which Augustine discusses his privative account provide evidence for a unified metaphysical system.

As will be recalled from the above examination, Augustine frames his discussion of the "what" or nature of evil within the context of the nature of God and creation. As the most perfect and immutable being, God possesses the most good and Being. All created beings are good, but because they were created out of nothing, as opposed to being created out of God's substance, they possess less good and Being, are mutable, and therefore susceptible to change. Augustine's most prominent characterization of natural evil, as described in works such as the *Confessiones* and the *Enchiridion*, is that evil is a privation of the good that a created being was intended to possess, to a lower level. For instance, sickness and disease are privations of the good health that a human being should possess in order to function fully. Natural evil in this way can be said to be parasitic on the good, because only that which is good can become evil and suffer a degradation or corruption of its intended level of goodness. Since to be good, for Augustine, is to exist, good and Being become correlative terms in Augustine's metaphysical vocabulary. Hence, another way to speak of natural evil is to say that it is a privation or corruption of Being, the possible tendency for a being, because it was created out of nothing, to fall towards the non-Being or non-existence from which it was created. In addition, as discussed above, created beings are also fashioned by God with an intended degree of measure, number (form), and weight (order). To be measured, for Augustine, is to possess the qualities of extension, oneness and unity. To be numbered or formed is to participate in the eternal Forms of God's mind. And to be weighted or ordered is for a created being to take its proper place in the hierarchy of created Being. In this way, measure, form, and order can be viewed as necessary

components of Being, for without them no being could possibly exist. At its most fundamental metaphysical level, then, natural evil—the "what" of evil—is a privation of measure, form, and order, which, as already discussed, a being must possess in order to possess Being and goodness. In this way, the seemingly inconsistent ways in which Augustine characterizes evil as a privation can be seen to be interconnected and part of a unified metaphysical system that describes the nature of Being itself; the nature of created Being; and, the relationship between the two.

CHAPTER FIVE: MORAL EVIL

The discussion of Augustine's solution to natural evil in Chapter Four revealed that natural evil is described by Augustine as the privation or falling away of a created being, due to its creation out of nothing, from its intended level of good, Being, and measure, form, and order to a lower level. The purpose of this chapter is: (1) to reveal Augustine's solution to the problem of moral evil; and (2) to show how Augustine uses his metaphysical explanation of natural evil as a foundation or starting point for his explanation of moral evil. The metaphysical connection between Augustine's solution to natural and moral evil, I argue, provides additional evidence for a unified and coherent metaphysical system.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that, for the most part, I will not be discussing Augustine's so-called free will defense of God or his views on original sin, except to the extent that each is relevant to my discussion of the metaphysical background or foundation of moral evil. Thus, I will not provide a critique or analysis of Augustine's free will defense as to whether it is logically consistent or whether it is successful as a theodicy for God and the acknowledged existence or presence of evil in the world. In addition, I will not address the issue of whether God's foreknowledge of our sins contradicts our free choice in sinning. Such issues have been discussed to a great extent in the secondary literature and are beyond the intended scope of this thesis.

The Problem of Moral Evil

The underlying problem of moral evil, in regards to God, is similar to the problem of natural evil: If, as Christian doctrine maintains, God is all-good and all-powerful; and, if God is the creator of all that exists, including human souls; and, if everything that God created is good;

then, how did moral evil, evil that originates from the actions of spiritual beings, enter the world? Furthermore, if God is indeed the creator of everything, then is not God somehow ultimately responsible for the creation or existence of moral evil? Augustine states the problem in *De Libero Arbitrio*, as such:

> We believe that everything that exists comes from the one God, and yet we believe that God is not the cause of sins. What is troubling is that if you admit that sins come from the souls that God created, and those souls come from God, pretty soon you'll be tracing those sins back to God.[282]

The answer that Augustine provides for this dilemma is what will be examined here.

<u>The Metaphysical Components of Moral Evil</u>

Augustine's solution to moral evil is intimately linked to at least five metaphysical concepts: (1) the nature of God; (2) the nature of created being; (3) a teleological quest of human beings for the happy life; (4) a distinction between eternal and temporal beings; and, (5) a conception of free will in spiritual beings. It is within the concept of free will that Augustine posits the origin of moral evil, and, as will be seen, all other forms of evil as well.

As will be recalled from Chapters Three and Four, God, according to Augustine's Neoplatonically derived metaphysics, is: Goodness itself;[283] the highest or the most pure Being;[284] and, pure measure, form, and order. As pure Being, God is eternal, unchangeable, and immortal.[285] As an unchangeable or immutable being, God is not susceptible to corruption or a degradation of Goodness, Being, or measure, form, and order. All other beings that exist, both physical and spiritual, were created by God out of nothing. Having been created out of nothing, created beings, including spiritual beings, such as angels and human beings, possess a number of

---

[282] *De libero arbitrio* 1.2.11, 3.
[283] *Conf.* VII.3, 136.
[284] *Conf.* VII.10, 147.
[285] *De natura boni* I, 326.

characteristics, some of which they share with God and others of which set them inherently apart.

First, because God is good—indeed, goodness itself—everything created by God is likewise good, or as Augustine sometimes puts it, "everything good comes from God."[286] From this, according to Augustine, "we can understand that human beings too are from God,"[287] for as Augustine states, "human beings are good things, since they can live rightly if they so will."[288] Second, because created beings were created by God out of nothing, and not from a part of God's substance, created beings possess less good, and hence, less Being than God. As such, "when God made man," according to Augustine, "although he made him very good . . . He did not make him what he himself is."[289] Third, as supreme, eternal Being, God is immutable. All other beings, however, having been created by God out of nothing, are mutable. Having been created out of nothing, there exists within all created beings the possibility of a tendency to lose their goodness and their Being. In other words, to return to the nothingness from which they were created. It will be remembered from Chapter Four that it is the change from a state of good, Being, and measure, form, and order that a created being was intended to possess—the degree of good, Being and measure, form, and order that a created being possesses when it is fully participating in its Form—to a lesser state of good, Being and measure, form, and order that Augustine characterizes as natural evil.[290] As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, Augustine maintains a similar, although not identical, definition of moral evil, but applies it to the concept of the will and its ability to turn toward or away from God, the supreme Being. It is this willful act of turning away from God that Augustine characterizes as moral evil,

---

[286] *De libero arbitrio* 2.1.4, 29.
[287] *De libero arbitrio* 2.1.4, 29.
[288] *De libero arbitrio* 2.1.5, 29.
[289] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 2, 27.
[290] *Conf*. III.7, 63.

which thereby produces a privation, corruption, or lessening of Being in the soul in all spiritual beings, and in both the soul and the body in human beings.

The third metaphysical component of Augustine's account of moral evil is a teleological quest for happiness or the happy life, which is intimately linked to the most perfect good, God. Augustine discusses the happy life in a number of treatises, including *De Libero Arbitrio*, *De Trinitate*, and *De Beati Vita*, but perhaps the most detailed account is provided in *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*. Here, in a discussion of how according to reason human beings ought to live, Augustine takes as his starting point the position that everyone "wishes to live happily,"[291] a position that Augustine accepts as being so foundationally universal that he states, "there is no human being who would not assent to this statement almost before it is uttered."[292] This happy life is to be found in that which is supremely good for man, which Augustine reasons cannot be something inferior to human beings, because whoever strives after something inferior becomes inferior.[293] Instead, according to Augustine, the happy life lies in the "possession of a good than which there is no greater."[294] In other words, the happy life for human beings lies in the possession of that which is supremely good, which according to Augustine, a person cannot lose against one's will, for no one can be confident in a good that one knows can be taken away.[295]

In order to discover this good, Augustine provides an analysis of the composition of a human being where he concludes that a human being is composed of both body and soul and that the soul is superior to the body because the soul provides the body with life and that which

---

[291] Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.3.4, in *Saint Augustine: The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life* (*De Moribus ecclesia Catholicae et de Moribus Manichaeorum*), trans. Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher, vol. 46 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966), 5.
[292] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.3.4, 5.
[293] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.3.5, 6.
[294] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.3.5, 6.
[295] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.3.5, 6.

causes the body to be at its best.[296] Because the soul is superior to the body, according to Augustine, then the soul must rule over the body for the perfection of both. How does the soul achieve perfection for both itself and the body? By means of virtue, which is the soul's own perfection. Hence, in regards to morals, when we consider what kind of life one must lead in order to attain happiness or the supreme good, it will be, according to Augustine, the kind of life that makes that part of human beings that is supremely good—the soul—perfect, through the possession of virtue and wisdom.[297] As Augustine states, "good morals pertain to that part of us which inquires and learns, and these are acts of the soul."[298] When human beings are ruled by a virtuous soul, their body is "ruled both better and more worthily and is at its best because of the perfection of the soul ruling it rightly."[299]

Augustine concludes from this discussion that the supreme good that perfects the soul through the possession of virtue and wisdom is God, such that when we follow after God we live well and if we reach God we live not only well but happily.[300] All that is best for us, according to Augustine, is to be found in God, our supreme good.[301] Therefore, "we must not stop at anything below Him, nor seek anything beyond, for the first is fraught with danger and the second does not exist."[302] On the other hand, if we turn our attention away from God, our souls

---

[296] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.5.7. 8.
[297] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.5.8, 8-9. In regards to the soul being that which is supremely good in humans, it needs to be remembered that for Augustine the soul exists on the second level or tier on the hierarchy of Being, between the perfect good, which is God, and all other created goods, such as human bodies. Thus, not only is the soul better than the body because it rules the body, but also because it possesses more Being than the body.
[298] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.5.8, 8.
[299] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.5.8, 9.
[300] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.6.10, 10. Remember that for Augustine, God is at the top of the hierarchy of Being. Since the soul, as a spiritual being, exists on a higher level than physical beings, only God can be the supreme good for the soul.
[301] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.8.13, 13.
[302] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.8.13, 13.

will not be perfected through the possession of virtue and wisdom and we will be unhappy. One errs, according to Augustine, only in separating oneself from God.[303]

For Augustine, then, to strive after and reach God spiritually through reason is happiness itself.[304] We strive after God by loving Him and we reach God, as Augustine puts it, by "touching Him in a wonderfully spiritual way, and being illuminated and pervaded utterly by His truth and holiness."[305] Augustine uses the authority of Scripture to support his claim by quoting New Testament passages from the Gospel According to Matthew and Paul's Letter to the Romans: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind,"[306] for "to those who love God all things work together unto good."[307] On the other hand, the farther the mind departs from God "in fondness and greed for things inferior to Him [i.e., for the love of sensible things the goodness of which is not supremely good], the more [the mind] is filled with foolishness and misery."[308] To act in such a manner is to separate oneself from God. A mind can return to God, the supreme good in which our true happiness resides, by (1) confessing that it can fall victim to foolishness and deceit for the love of the things of the sensible world,[309] and (2) by the grace of God "who calls him to penance and forgives his sins. For who shall deliver the unhappy soul from the body of this death [the soul that has turned away from God], except by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord?"[310]

The distinction that Augustine makes between the love of God who is supremely good and the love of sensible things, which, though good, are less good than God, reveals a dichotomy in Augustine's metaphysics between the love of that which is eternal and immutable and the love

---

[303] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.11.19, 18.
[304] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.11.18, 17.
[305] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.11.18, 17.
[306] Matthew 22:37, 38, as quoted by Augustine in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.11.18, 17.
[307] Romans 8:28, as quoted by Augustine in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.11.18, 17.
[308] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.12.21, 19-20.
[309] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.12.21, 20.
[310] *De Trinitate* 12.11.16, 358.

of that which is temporal and mutable, or as Augustine sometimes puts it, the difference between the love of that which is higher, God, and that which is lower, all created sensible things.[311] As mentioned previously, God alone, for Augustine, is eternally immutable and supremely good. Human souls, existing on the second level of Augustine's three tiered metaphysical hierarchy are good, but are not supremely good, while all other physical bodies are less good than human souls. For Augustine, then, if we desire to be happy, we should turn our attention away from created sensible things, which are temporal and of a lower order, and instead turn our minds toward God, who is eternal and of a higher order on the scale of Being.[312] As Augustine explains it in *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, truth is not something that can be gained from the bodily senses. Therefore, it is "in our own greatest interest that we are admonished to turn away from this world, which is clearly corporal and sensible, and to turn with all haste to God.[313] Indeed, according to Augustine, to look upon material things with desire and with admiration is to be "deceived and led astray by false goods."[314] In regards to these temporal transitory things, the temperate human being, according to Augustine, must "love none of them nor look upon them as desirable for their own sake, but . . . must utilize them . . . with the moderation of a user rather than the passion of a lover."[315]

Such a view is in agreement with Augustine's acceptance of the Platonic separation between the intelligible and physical realms as discussed in Chapter Three. As will be remembered from that discussion, the intelligible realm of the Forms for Plato and the Neoplatonists is eternal and unchanging, while the physical realm of corporeal objects is temporal and mutable. Because the physical world is in a state of constant change, true scientific

---

[311] *Conf.* VII.7, 143.
[312] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 35, 66.
[313] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 9, 41-42.
[314] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.19.36, 33-34.
[315] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.19.36, 33-34.

knowledge of it is impossible. Real knowledge is only to be found in the contemplation of the Forms, which are the true causes of appearances.[316] The good, therefore, "turn their love away from [temporal] things that cannot be possessed without the fear of losing them,"[317] because they are constantly changing.

Consequently, according to Augustine, there are two types of things: eternal things, such as God and the Forms that exist within God's mind, and temporal things, such as corporeal objects which change over time; and, two types of human beings, those that pursue and love eternal things, and those that love and pursue temporal things.[318] The choice to "follow and embrace" one or the other, as Augustine puts it, "lies with the will."[319] Since the love of the supremely eternal being—God—leads to happiness or the happy life, it follows then that it is the will that is the vehicle by which spiritual beings, such as angels and human beings, can choose to turn toward God and be happy or away from God and be unhappy. In fact, it is by turning toward God that human beings will come to possess wisdom[320] and the virtues that constitute an upright and honorable life.[321] Thus, according to Augustine, "those that will to live upright and honorable lives, if they will this more than they will transitory [corporeal] goods, attain such a good so easily that they have it by the very act of willing to have it."[322]

This brings us to the last metaphysical component of Augustine's explanation for moral evil, the will, and more specifically, freedom of the will. As seen from the discussion in the previous section on the love of eternal and temporal things, Augustine posits the existence of a will in all spiritual beings created by God. This will is the vehicle by which human beings turn

---

[316] Kaye and Thomson, *On Augustine*, 7.
[317] *De libero arbitrio* 1.4.30, 7-8.
[318] *De libero arbitrio* 1.16.114, 27.
[319] *De libero arbitrio* 1.16.114, 27.
[320] Augustine, *De immortalitate animae* 12.19, trans. G. C. Leckie, in vol. 1 of *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, ed. Whitney J. Oates (New York: Random House), 312.
[321] *De libero arbitrio* 1.13.97, 22.
[322] *De libero arbitrio* 1.13.97, 22-23.

their attention toward or away from that which is eternal or that which is temporal, thereby leading a happy or unhappy, virtuous or unvirtuous, wise or unwise, life. It is also within the movement of the will in which moral evil, and, thus, sin, resides. As we shall see, Augustine is very explicit that it is not God who is responsible for the evils that are caused by spiritual beings. Rather, moral evil, indeed all evil, is a result of the misuse of the will.

The Will Defined

Augustine acknowledges the existence of his own will in the *Confessiones*. Here in attempting to determine the cause of evil Augustine states that he knows that he has a will, as surely as he knows that there is life in him, because when he chooses to do something or not to do it, he is certain that it is his own self, and not some other person, who made the act of will.[323] Not only is Augustine certain that he has a will, but when he chooses to do something that can be characterized as either bad or good, he knows that it is his will that is the cause of his bad or good action.[324] This acknowledgement that the will is freely able to choose between sin and right action, happiness or unhappiness, is the starting point for Augustine's explanation of the whence or origin of evil.

One of the clearest definitions Augustine provides for what he means by the word "will" is in *De Duabus Animabus Contra*. Here, in attempting to defend the freedom of the will against the Manichaean view that human beings sin necessarily as a result of the evil element trapped within their bodies, Augustine defines the will as "a movement of mind, no one compelling, either for not losing or for obtaining something."[325] Augustine clarifies his definition by stating

---

[323] *Conf.* VII.3, 136.
[324] *Conf.* VII.3, 136.
[325] Augustine, *De duabus animabus contra Manichaeos* I.X.14, in Augustine, *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Controversy*, trans. Richard Stothert and Albert H. Newman, vol. 4 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 102-103.

that when we will something, our mind is moved toward it and we either obtain it or we do not obtain it. If we do obtain it then we will to retain it and if we do not obtain it then we move to acquire it.[326]

A number of important considerations in regards to moral evil can be discerned from Augustine's definition. First, the will is an act of the mind, which for Augustine resides in the soul. Second, the act is defined in regards to a movement, either toward obtaining something or for not losing something already obtained. Third, the movement must not be compelled or forced but must be free and voluntary in order for the action to be willingly produced. If the movement is compelled, then the movement or action is performed unwillingly.

The Will, Moral Evil, and Sin

Having examined the components of moral evil, it is now possible to investigate how Augustine uses these components to explain the origin of evil and how that origin is influenced by the metaphysics of Augustine's explanation for natural evil.

Rejecting the viewpoint of the Manichees that moral evil is a necessity due to the merging of both good and evil forces within created beings, Augustine attributes all moral evil to the misuse of the freedom of the will with which God endowed rational beings.[327] Rational creatures, including human beings and angels, sin (commit evil) when, out of a desire for things outside themselves, they turn their minds away from God, who is the supreme Good, and turn toward created things that are of a lower order in the hierarchy of creation, either themselves or some other thing created by God, which though good are not the supreme good.[328]

---

[326] *De duabus animabus contra Manichaeos* I.X.14, 103.
[327] *De libero arbitrio* 3.17.167, 104.
[328] *Enchiridion* VIII.23, Outler, 353-354. See also, *Conf.* VII.16, 150. It is interesting to note that Augustine's conception of evil as a misuse of the will is strikingly similar to a view expressed by Plotinus in *Ennead* 5.1.1. Here Plotinus states that the evil that causes souls to ignore and forget God has its source in self-will, which occurs out of a desire for self-ownership. Souls that take this path drift further and further away from God, until they come to "lose even the thought of their origin in the Divine." The turning away is not just a turn toward self, but toward other

It is important to note that it is not the substance to which the will turns that is evil, nor is it the substance that is the cause of the evil will. As a created substance, the substance to which the will turns is good because it was created by God who is supremely good. Neither is it the free will itself that is evil.[329] Rather, it is the turning of the will away from God and toward a thing or things of a lower order that is evil.[330] The first rational beings that sinned in such a way were the wicked angels, as Augustine calls them. While the good angels were blessed, because they continued to "cleave to Him Who supremely is,"[331] the wicked angels became wicked because they turned away from the supreme Being and turned to themselves, who have no such supreme existence.[332] The nature of their sin Augustine tells us, was pride, for "pride is the beginning of sin."[333] Thus, "though the angels who became wicked were indeed created good, they nonetheless became evil by their own will."[334] Even the devil, according to Augustine, is evil only insofar as he has been perverted by his own will.[335]

In a similar manner, the first humans that sinned, Adam and Eve, also turned away from God and toward themselves. When human beings were created, their nature was created faultless and without sin, according to Augustine.[336] They did not remain good, however, for they became carnal by loving carnal things.[337] As with the wicked angels, their sin was pride, for when their souls abandoned God and turned to itself and willed "to enjoy its own power as if

---

things that are lower, and hence more inferior, than self. The result of the turning away, according to Plotinus, is: (1) a separation of the soul from God (V.1.1, 11); and, (2) deserved punishment (III.2.4, 59).

[329] *De libero arbitrio* 2.19.53, 68.

[330] *De civitate Dei* XII.6, 506; *De vera religione* XX.38, 243; *De natura boni* XXXVI, 338.

[331] *De civitate Dei* XII.6, 505.

[332] *De civitate Dei* XII.6, 504.

[333] *De civitate Dei* XII.9, 510.

[334] *De civitate Dei* XII.9, 510.

[335] *De vera religione* XIII.25, 237.

[336] *De natura boni* III, 523.

[337] *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 51, 84.

without God, [they] swell[ed] up with pride, which is the beginning of every sin."[338] This pride, according to Augustine, is a perverse kind of elevation "to forsake the foundation upon which the mind should rest [God], and to become and remain, as it were, one's own foundation."[339]

The Metaphysical Foundation of Moral Evil

At this point an important question arises regarding the metaphysics of Augustine's explanation: What is the cause of the misuse of the will that makes it turn from what is supremely good to something lower on the hierarchy of goodness? In other words, if the will was indeed created good, as were all other things created by God, then how could a good will turn bad?

In response, Augustine explains that an evil will is the efficient cause of evil action, but nothing is the efficient cause of an evil will.[340] Rather, the cause of the evil will is not *efficient*, but *deficient*, because the evil will is not an effect of something, but a defect. For, "to defect from that which supremely is, to that which has a less perfect degree of being: this is what it is to begin to have an evil will."[341] There is, then, according to Augustine, no essential cause of an evil will. The will itself is the source of evil in rational mutable beings.[342] On the other hand, to attempt to go further and discern the cause of the defect is like wishing to see darkness or hear silence. Both are known to us not by their appearance, but by their lack of appearance.[343] Darkness and silence are not caused, according to Augustine; they occur simply when light and sound are respectively absent.

---

[338] *De Genesi contra Manicheos* 2.9.12, 108.
[339] *De civitate Dei* XIV.13, 608.
[340] *De civitate Dei* XII.6, 505; *De libero arbitrio* 2.20.54, 69.
[341] *De civiate Dei* XII.7, 507.
[342] *De civiate Dei* XII.9, 509.
[343] *De civiate Dei* XII.7, 508. See also, *De libero arbitrio* 2.20.54, 69: ". . . every defect comes from nothing, and that movement of turning away, which we admit is sin, is a defective movement."

Such an answer on the part of Augustine would appear to make the cause of the will's turn toward evil something relegated to the realm of mystery. But Augustine has more to say on the topic and it is within his explanation of the defect of the will that his solution for natural evil is used as a foundation for his solution for moral evil.

As already discussed in Chapter Four, central to Augustine's solution to natural evil is the privation, corruption, or defect of the goodness, Being, and measure, form, and order of a created thing, due to its having been created out of nothing. According to Augustine's explanation, everything that exists is created good. However, because things are created out of nothing they possess less good, less Being, and less measure, form, and order, than does God. Natural evil, as described by Augustine, is the falling away from the intended level of goodness, Being, and measure, form, and order, with which a created being was intended to possess, toward a lower level.

In a similar manner, Augustine describes moral evil as a voluntary defection of the will from God, Who is goodness itself and Who possess the most Being, to something that possesses less good and less Being, either to oneself or to some other created thing. This defection on the part of the will is described by Augustine as a flaw that is "contrary to the nature[344] of the thing in which the flaw is present."[345] This is not to say that God is responsible for the flaw. Indeed, as has already been pointed out, all natures are good because all natures are created by God Who is supremely good. But, all spiritual natures can deviate or defect from the supreme good through an act of self-will, and, thus, become flawed and less good themselves.[346] Thus, evil is

[344] Augustine clarifies his use of the word "nature" to mean "substance" in *De libero arbitrio* 3.13.128, 96. It is unclear, however, whether Augustine intends his use of the word "nature" here to refer to something that has independent existence or whether it is used to refer to essence or Being or whether Augustine is conflating the two meanings.
[345] *De libero arbitrio* 3.13.134, 98.
[346] *De libero arbitrio* 3.13.134, 98.

not a necessary condition for human beings. Rather, human beings choose to do evil through a voluntary misuse of the will.[347] In this way God is not responsible for the evil that human beings perform when they misuse their will. God does indeed give humans free will, but it is up to us to use it correctly. When we misuse our will we commit evil. When we use it correctly, however, we become wise and virtuous, attain the happy life, and assume our proper place in the hierarchical order of created being.

The question that remains to be answered is: What is it about a created nature that makes the will susceptible to turning away from the Supreme Good that is God toward something that possesses less Being, either oneself or some other corporeal object? In other words, why does a will become corrupted such that it defects from the Supreme Good and what are the effects of the defection on the being that turns away? The basis for Augustine's answer is derived from the answer he provides for how and why a body becomes corrupted in regards to his solution for natural evil: an evil will can only exist in a nature that was created out of nothing.[348]

Why should a will that exists within a soul made from nothing become defective? In a similar manner to natural evil, a will that is created out of nothing has less good and less Being than does God. Hence, while God is Being itself and immutable, a will made from nothing,

---

[347] *De libero arbitrio* 3.1.9, 72: "This movement of the will is similar to the downward movement of a stone in that it belongs to the will just as that downward movement belongs to the stone. But the two movements are dissimilar in this respect: the stone has no power to check its downward movement, but the soul is not moved to abandon higher things and love inferior things unless it wills to do so. And so the movement of the stone is natural, but the movement of the soul is voluntary. If someone were to say that a stone is sinning because its weight carries it downward, I would not merely say that he was more senseless than the stone itself; I would consider him completely insane. But we accuse a soul of sin when we are convinced that it has abandoned higher things and chosen to enjoy inferior things. Now we admit that this movement belongs to the will alone, and that it is voluntary and therefore blameworthy; and the only useful teaching on this topic is that which condemns and checks this movement and thus serves to rescue our wills from their fall into temporal goods and turn them toward the enjoyment of the eternal good."

[348] *De civitate Dei* XIV.11, 604. As Augustine puts it: ". . . though an evil will is not according to nature, but contrary to nature because it is a defect, it nonetheless belongs to the nature of what it is a defect, for it cannot exist except in a nature. But it can only exist in a nature which the Creator created out of nothing, not in that which he begot out of Himself, as He begot the Word through Whom all things were made. For, although God formed man of the dust of the earth, the earth itself and all earthly matter were derived from nothing at all; and when man was made, God gave to his body a soul which was made out of nothing."

though created good,[349] has within its nature the potential to become defective. Thus, according to Augustine, though the existence of the will as a nature, which is created good, is due to its creation by God, its falling away from its nature is due to its creation out of nothing. In this way, only a nature created out of nothing can be perverted by a defect because it is mutable.[350] The turning away of a rational being from God results in an ontological loss and downward movement from a higher level of Being toward non-Being or nothingness.[351] Consequently, spiritual beings have a greater measure of good and Being when they cling to God and a less perfect degree of good and Being when they turn away.[352] In this way, the will "is the source of evil in mutable spirits, by which the good of their nature is diminished and depraved."[353] The soul, in which the will resides, however, does not reach a state of nothingness as a result of the ontological loss; souls, according to Augustine, are immortal and hence, could never be destroyed.[354] But they do suffer an ontological loss that brings them closer to nothingness.[355]

Not only does the soul suffer an ontological loss as a result of turning away from God toward inferior things, but the body suffers an ontological loss as well. This occurred first as a result of the first sin of Adam and Eve. Prior to this sin, the first human beings, according to Augustine, were "neither troubled by any disturbance of the mind nor pained by any disorder of

---

[349] *De civitate Dei* XIV.11, 604.
[350] *De civitate Dei* XIV.13, 608-609.
[351] *De civitate Dei* XII.6, 505; XIV.13, 609.
[352] *De civitate Dei* XII.6, 505.
[353] *De civitate Dei* XII.9, 509.
[354] See, for example, *De immoralitate animae*.
[355] *De civitate Dei* XIV.13, 609. Again, this view is similar to a view expressed by Plotinus in *Ennead* III.IX.3, McKenna and Page, 137: "The partial Soul [i.e., all souls beneath the third hypostasis of Plotinus] is illuminated by moving towards the Soul above it [i.e., the third hypostasis for Plotinus]; for on that path it meets Authentic Existence [pure Being]. Movement towards the lower is towards non-Being: and this is the step it takes when it is set on self; for by willing towards itself it produces its lower, an image of itself—a non-Being—and so is wandering, as it were, into the void, stripping itself of its own determined form. And this image, this undetermined thing, is blank darkness, for it is utterly without reason, untouched by the Intellectual-Principle, far removed from Authentic Being [God]. As long as it remains at the mid-stage it is in its own peculiar region; but when, by a sort of inferior orientation, it looks downward, it shapes that lower image and flings itself joyfully thither."

the body."[356] As such, they "lived according to God in a Paradise both corporeal and spiritual."[357] After the first sin, however, both the soul and the body of the first humans suffered degradation, such that, while the first humans were previously blessed with eternal life, after the Fall they became both dead in spirit and doomed to die in body also.[358] As a result of their ontological falling away from the Creator, the bodies of human beings were condemned to endure pain, to grow old and to suffer death.[359]

In a similar manner, all descendents of Adam also suffer a corporeal ontological loss when they commit evil. This loss is due to the relationship that the soul has to the body. As the soul is that which gives life to the body, any ontological loss in the soul results in a similar ontological loss in the body. On the other hand, when the body perfectly obeys the soul and the soul perfectly serves God, the body cannot be affected by evil, "for it can be so affected only by sin or its punishment."[360] The consequence of the misuse of the will, then, is not only an ontological loss in the soul, but physical disorder as well. In this way, when God is neglected, the soul feels the movements it gives the body and becomes less than it was, and the body, "by this offense of its mistress [the soul]" in turn also becomes much less.[361] Indeed, asks Augustine,

> . . . what is the suffering called physical, if it isn't the sudden corruption of the health that the soul itself, by the bad service it has made of it, has exposed to this corruption? What is the suffering called moral, if it isn't the deprivation of these changing possessions which the soul enjoyed or had hoped to enjoy?[362]

---

[356] *De civitate Dei* XIV.11, 603.
[357] *De civitate Dei* XIV.11, 605.
[358] *De civitate Dei* XIV.15, 612.
[359] *De civitate Dei* XIV.15, 612. See also, *De vera religione* XV.29, 238.
[360] *De vera religione* XVI.32, 240.
[361] *De musica* 6.5.13, 338.
[362] *De vera religione* XII.23, as quoted in Zum Brunn, *St. Augustine: Being and Nothingness* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1988), 52.

The body, as a result, receives the consequences and punishment of the sin caused by the misuse of the free will in the soul. When the soul turns away from that which is mutable and temporal, however, it provides the body an easy life. Thus the health of the body will be at its best when the body has been restored to its former stability because the soul has turned back toward God.[363]

It is important to note that creation out of nothing does not necessitate that a good will will turn away from God and suffer an ontological loss toward non-Being or nothingness. Just as creation out of nothing in Augustine's solution to natural evil does not necessitate that a healthy body will suffer disease or sickness, although it will eventually suffer death. But creation out of nothing does make both corporeal and spiritual natures susceptible to the *possibility* of falling away from their intended level of being to a lower level. In regards to moral evil, this susceptibility occurs when a human being willingly misuses their will and turns away from God. Indeed, an act is not characterized as evil or as a sin, according to Augustine, unless it is performed by a voluntary and uncompelled act of the will. In this way the will must be willing to freely turn away from the supreme Being of God toward inferior beings. Actions that are not voluntarily performed as a result of a free will are not sins at all, and hence, are not deserving of punishment.[364]

Because the misuse of the will is voluntary and not necessary, God, according to Augustine, should not be blamed for the evil that human beings commit. God gave human beings free will because they cannot live rightly and achieve the happy life without it.[365] "No action would be either a sin or a good deed" however, "if it were not performed by the will, and so both punishment and reward would be unjust if human beings had no free will."[366] Thus,

---

[363] *De musica* 6.5.13, 373-338.
[364] *De civitate Dei* XII.8, 508.
[365] *De libero arbitrio* 2.1.5, 30.
[366] *De libero arbitrio* 2.1.5, 30.

according to Augustine, it is better for human beings to have free will than to have been created without it.

As stated previously, it is not the substance to which the will turns, whether it be its own body or another corporeal object, that is evil. Having been created by God, all corporeal objects are good in themselves. But the evil that results from the soul's willful turning away from God "cannot exist without the good; for the natures in which evil exists are certainly good, insofar as they are natures."[367] As such, in a similar manner to natural evil, the evil that results is not eliminated by the removal of the nature or substance in which it has arisen. Rather, the evil is removed "by the healing and correction of the nature which has become vitiated and depraved."[368] In the case of the soul, this is accomplished only by the grace of God which heals the soul and allows the soul and body to resume its proper intended level of Being, thereby achieving a life of wisdom, virtue, and happiness.

The Will as the Cause of All Natural Evils

The effect of the first sin by Adam and Eve would appear to be much graver than just an ontological loss of the soul and a degradation of the body for these first human sinners and their descendents. In addition, Augustine also seems to advocate, in at least some of his writings, that the Fall was also responsible for all other types of natural evil as well, including earthquakes, floods, pestilence, crop failures, etc. This view first appears in *De Libero Arbitrio*, where Augustine states that "a wicked will is the cause of all evils."[369] In this way, Augustine seems to hold that the perfect order of the universe was somehow disrupted as a result of the disobedience

[367] *De civitate Dei* XIV.11, 605.
[368] *De civitate Dei* XIV.11, 605.
[369] *De libero arbitrio* 3.17.167, Benjamin and Hackstaff, 126.

of Adam and Eve. The purpose of the disruption, according to Augustine, is punishment for sin.[370]

If this interpretation is correct, however, it would appear that other parts of creation must also suffer as a result of the Fall. Could Augustine really be suggesting that animals and plants must be punished because of the misuse of the will by Adam and Eve? While Augustine does acknowledge that animals suffer pain, since animals are not rational he does not seem to think that it is the same type of pain felt by human beings. Hence, as he states in *De Moribus Manichaerum* in arguing against the Manichaean doctrine that it is wrong to kill and eat animals, "in as much as we can perceive by their cries that animals die in pain . . . we make little of this since the beast, lacking a rational soul, is not related to us by a common nature."[371] Augustine holds a similar view regarding plants.[372] Thus the fact that natural disasters in their role as punishment for human sin may also kill plants and animals does not seem to be a concern for Augustine. Augustine supports his view by quoting passages of Scripture, reminding us in *De Moribus Manichaerum*,

> that Christ Himself shows that to refrain from the killing of animals and the destroying of plants is the height of superstition, for, judging that there are no common rights between us and the beasts and trees, He sent the devils into a herd of swine and with a curse withered the tree on which he found no fruit.[373]

---

[370] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus* 1.3, in Saint Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske, vol. 84 of *The Fathers of the Church*, ed. Thomas P. Halton (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 146.
[371] *De moribus Manichaerum* 17.59, 105.
[372] *De moribus Manichaerum* 17.59, 105-106.
[373] *De moribus Manichaerum* 17.54, 102. Matthew 8.32; 21.19.

From this passage Augustine argues that even Christ did not believe that plants and animals are in the same class with us, hence, neither their pain, in the case of animals, nor their death should trouble us, because they have no rights.[374]

To those who would argue that the suffering of animals is a weakness in creation, Augustine reminds us that some creatures are less perfect than others and depending on the place they hold in the hierarchy of creation their life is better or worse only in a relative sense. This seemingly is the price that is paid for there being a harmonious whole of a variety of different things. Thus Augustine reminds us in *De Civitate Dei*, "in the scale of value extending from things earthly to things heavenly, from things visible to things invisible, there are some good things which are better than others."[375] These things were made unequal in this way, "so that they might all exist as distinct individuals."[376]

Comments on the Coherence of Augustine's Solution to Moral Evil

The purpose of this chapter was: (1) to provide an explication of Augustine's solution to moral evil; and, (2) to show how Augustine uses his metaphysical explanation for natural evil as a foundation for his solution to moral evil. Having accomplished these two tasks, the question

---

[374] *De moribus Manichaerum* 17.54, 102. Matt. 8.32; 21.19. John Passmore notes that the source for Augustine's view on animals may have come from the Stoics who thought that, because animals are devoid of reason, they lack rights. See John Passmore, "The Treatment of Animals," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 2 (April-June 1975): 198.

[375] *De civitate Dei* XI.22, 476-478. See also *De civitate Dei* XII.4, 502-503. Here Augustine reminds us: "It is . . . ridiculous to condemn as vices the faults of beasts and trees and other mutable and moral things which entirely lack intellect or sensation or life, even if those faults should corrupt their perishable nature. For these creatures, at their Creator's will, have received a mode of existence which fits them, as they pass away and give place to others, to bring about the lowest form of beauty the beauty of the seasons, which, in its own place, is a harmonious part of this world. For, though earthly things were not intended to be coequal with heavenly things, it would still not be fitting for the universe to lack these things altogether, even though heavenly things are better. Accordingly, in those places where such things properly belong, some arise as others pass away, the less succumb to the greater, and the things that are overcome are transformed into the qualities of those that overcome; and this the appointed order of transitory things. We take no delight in the beauty of this order, because, being ourselves only parts of it, woven into it by virtue of our mortal condition, we cannot perceive that those particular aspects which offend us are blended aptly and fittingly enough into the whole. This is why, in those circumstances where we are less able to perceive it for ourselves, we are most rightly instructed to have faith in the Creator's providence, lest, in the temerity of human rashness, we dare to find any fault with the work of so great a Maker."

[376] *De civitate Dei* XI.22, 477.

remains as to whether the components of Augustine's solution to moral evil provide evidence for a unified metaphysical system, or whether his solution is independent of the rest of his Platonically influenced theology.

As with natural evil, Augustine frames his discussion of moral evil within the context of God and the nature of created beings. God simply *is*. Hence, God possesses the fullness of Being, is the most good, and is immutable. Created beings on the other hand, because they were created out of nothing, possess varying degrees of Being less than God and are mutable. Moral evil, and hence sin, is a result of the misuse of the will by rational beings (angels and human beings) when they voluntarily turn their attention away from the immutable and most high Being, where happiness and Wisdom are to be found, toward something that has less good and less Being. The thing to which the mind turns can be either the body to which the soul is attached, another corporeal object outside the body, or anything else, other than God, that fills the soul with desire. Created beings are sustained by God and receive their Being and goodness by constantly participating in the Forms that exist in God's mind. When the soul clings to God, the soul and the body to which the soul is attached participate in the highest level of Being and goodness that can be achieved as created substances. By fully actualizing the Form that is appropriate to them, rational Beings achieve virtue, wisdom, and happiness. On the other hand, when the soul turns away from God out of desire for other things, an ontological loss is suffered, which in human beings occurs in both the soul and the body. In explaining why a will created good would turn away from God, Augustine states an evil will is the efficient cause of evil action, but nothing is the efficient cause of an evil will. Instead, the cause of the evil will is not efficient, but deficient, because the evil will is not an effect of something, but a defect. The cause of this defect, according to Augustine, is the soul's creation out of nothing, which makes it

possible for a rational being to fall away from God toward the nothingness out of which it was created.

As can be seen from this brief review, Augustine's solution for moral evil is based on metaphysical components derived from his solution to natural evil: the nature of God, the nature of created being, and the susceptibility of created beings, due to their creation out of nothing, to fall away from their intended level of goodness and Being to a lower level. The primary component of Augustine's solution is a distinction between that which truly *is*, God, and that which depends on that which truly *is* for its continued existence, all created beings. Only rational created beings can commit moral evil because only rational beings possess a will that can voluntarily turn away from the source of their Being. In turning away from God and focusing their attention on things possessing less goodness and Being than God, rational beings themselves suffer an ontological loss. In human beings this loss also results in a loss in the Being of the body, due to the symbiotic relationship that the soul has to the body. In this manner, Augustine uses his privative solution to natural evil as a foundation for his solution to moral evil. While moral evil is initiated by the misuse of the will when it turns away from God, the effect of the turn is similar to the effect of natural evil on a created substance, a loss of the intended level of goodness and Being that a created being was intended to possess. The coherence and consistency between the two solutions provides evidence that Augustine is conceiving of the two evils, not as separate solutions for separate problems, but as part of a larger metaphysical system.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The metaphysical investigation of the problem of evil within the philosophically influenced theology of Augustine is a complex and often frustrating endeavor. First, there is the sheer number of treatises, dialogues, letters, and sermons written by Augustine, many of which are dense and difficult works through which to labor. Second, as already discussed, many of the works which Augustine wrote on the topic were written to address specific practical issues that he encountered, rather than an attempt to present a well-organized metaphysical account of his solution to evil. This seemingly disorganized method of expressing his philosophical views gives rise to the claim by several commentators that Augustine is an unsystematic thinker.

It is my supposition, however, as demonstrated in this thesis, that it is possible to identify, through a careful reading of the various works in which Augustine discusses the topic of evil, a well-developed and coherent metaphysical system which serves as the foundation for his philosophically influenced theology. In this way, Augustine's discussion of the problem of evil can be viewed as a sort of enchiridion or handbook to Augustine's metaphysics, as almost all of his metaphysical beliefs are contained within his explanation of evil.

That being said, because Augustine does not provide an exposition of his metaphysics all in one place, I will concede that he was by no means a systematic writer. Indeed, if one approaches Augustine's treatises expecting a meticulously constructed system of philosophy neatly packaged and thoroughly explained in logical order from one treatise to the next, one will be disappointed. However, if one reads Augustine's works with an eye for prominent themes and a consistency of such themes with one another, a metaphysical system does emerge. To paraphrase Peter Keneally in his discussion of another, more contemporary, philosophically

influenced theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, who is also often characterized as having a non-systematic approach to his philosophy, by calling Augustine a systematic *thinker* is meant no more than that his thought is composed of distinct elements that are to a large degree coherently related to one another dialectically, logically, and conceptually. On the other hand, by stating that Augustine is not a systematic *writer* is meant no more than that he fails to provide adequate centrally-organized expositions of many of his foundational concepts.[377] In regards to the latter, it is true that one has to read almost everything that Augustine has to say about a topic in order to extrapolate and identify the metaphysical system Augustine was developing within the context of his Christian beliefs, most of which, in the case of evil, is often buried within the details of a point he is refuting against the doctrines of the Manichees. Such was revealed in Chapter Four, in which it was demonstrated that Augustine does not make known his entire theory of the privation of good, Being, and measure, form, and order all in a single treatise. While space here does not allow for a full discussion of Augustine's metaphysics, enough can be revealed from his discussions of evil in regards to how Augustine characterizes the nature of God, as opposed to the nature of created reality, to provide a sense of the basic elements that frame much of Augustine's theological thought.

Before beginning, however, a few general comments and definitions are in order. First, in order to understand Augustine's approach to philosophy, one must understand what he means when he uses the word "philosophy." Augustine provides us with a definition in *De Civitate Dei* where he tells us "if God, by Whom all things were made, is wisdom, as the divine authority and truth have shown, then the true philosopher is a lover of God."[378] In this way, "to practice

---

[377] Peter Kennealy, "History, Politics and the Sense of Sin: The Case of Reinhold Niebuhr," in *The Promise of History: Essays in Political Philosophy*, Series C, ed. Athanasios Moulakis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 136.
[378] *De civitate Dei* VIII.1, 312.

philosophy is to love God."[379] For Augustine, then, all of philosophy begins and ends with love for and knowledge of God, who is the source of all Truth and Wisdom. Since, as Augustine tells us, no one is happy who does not enjoy what he loves,[380] the goal of the philosopher is to work toward a union with God, in whom happiness will be found. It is for this reason that Augustine was attracted to certain aspects of the philosophy of the Platonists, for as he tells us, these philosophers, "by knowing God, have discovered where to find the cause by which the universe was established, and the light by which truth is to be perceived, and the fount at which we may drink of happiness."[381] To drink from this fount of happiness, for Augustine, is to philosophize.

Second, it would be valuable to define what is meant here by the word "metaphysics," since the word has been used throughout this thesis without offering a formal definition. By way of a *minimal* definition, the word "metaphysics," at least as it applies to Augustine's Platonically influenced theology, denotes the process of using reason to come to an understanding of Being. Having said that, it should be pointed out that, while the process of understanding Being for Augustine is philosophical in nature, by which it is meant that this process of understanding is achieved through a form of dialectic, his philosophy cannot be divorced from his theology nor his religion. First and foremost Augustine is a Christian. Hence, for Augustine, using reason to come to an understanding of Being means using reason to come to an understanding of the nature of God. Whatever exposition Augustine provides of his metaphysical system, then, will entail an explanation of the relationship between God and the rest of created being.

In addition, it should be noted that when philosophy and theology come into conflict, faith and the authority of Scripture will, for the most part, take precedence over any philosophical influence that may have inspired Augustine, such as the Platonism from which he

---

[379] *De civitate Dei* VIII.8., 324.
[380] *De civitate Dei* VIII.8., 324.
[381] *De civitate Dei* VIII.10., 325-326.

derived much of his metaphysical viewpoints. In this way, Augustine beseeches us to "believe in order to understand."[382] So while Augustine's worldview was influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy, he believes and thinks metaphysically as a Christian. Explaining Augustine's Platonically influenced faith, Thomas Aquinas writes in the *Summa Theologica*, "whenever Augustine, who was imbued with the doctrines of the Platonists, found in their teaching anything consistent with faith, he adopted it; and those things which he found contrary to faith he amended."[383] It is to a discussion of that "amended" Platonically influenced Christian theology to which I now turn in order to provide evidence that Augustine was a systematic thinker.

The Nature of God

As mentioned above, to philosophize for Augustine is to know and to love God. The starting point for all of Augustine's metaphysics rests, therefore, in an understanding of the nature of God, which as seen from Chapters Three and Four, is a mixture of Christian and Platonic elements.[384] In addition, as seen in Chapters Two and Three, Augustine's understanding of God's nature was an ongoing movement from his early conceptions of God as a physical body while a Manichee, to his new Christian understanding of God as an immaterial substance.

Fundamental to Augustine's philosophical understanding of God's nature, as opposed to his theological understanding, is a reliance on a conception of Being, which he derived from the

---

[382] Augustine, *Sermon* XLIII.7.9, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill, pt. 3, vol. 2. *Sermons on the Old Testament, 20-50*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), 242.

[383] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica, Question 84, Article 5*, in *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas: The Summa Theologica and The Summa Contra Gentiles*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: The Modern Library, 1948), 390.

[384] This is not to suggest that Augustine's conception of God's nature is limited to only Christian and Platonic sources. As noted by Lewis Ayres and Michel R. Barnes, Augustine grew up in a culture with a diverse range of conceptions of God: "Both polytheist and monotheist traditions persisted in non-Christian (and non-Jewish) religion, and both material and immaterial conceptions of God. Traditional Roman civic religions, various philosophical traditions, and the newer religions emanating from the eastern half of the empire and beyond, were all viable religious options for people of Augustine's age, despite the increasing power and popularity of Christianity within the empire." It is more than likely, then, that a number of these conceptions filtered into Augustine's formation of God's nature. See Lewis Ayres and Michel R. Barnes, "God," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 384-390.

notion of the One from Plotinus, which in turn Plotinus derived from the notion of the Good from Plato. But whereas Plotinus conceives of the One as existing beyond Being, Augustine conceives of God as Being itself, as revealed in Augustine's well-known discussion of Exodus 3:14; a passage in which God addresses Moses by saying "I am Who am."[385] In other words, Augustine conceives of God as pure Being, as "a nature which subsists in itself,"[386] and, therefore, as possessing the most reality within the ontological structure of the universe. As pure Being, God does not derive Being from any other source. God simply *is*. Contrary to the views of the Manichees, then, there can be no existing nature that is contrary to God, for the contrary to Being itself would be not-Being, which has no positive existence within Augustine's metaphysical system.[387] Thus, there cannot be two divine principles, one all-good and one all-evil, as claimed by the Manichees. In addition, in accordance with the views of the Platonists, although admittedly in an amended form, Augustine's conception of God as Pure Being means that God is a Perfect Simple, possessing no other components or parts.[388] Also in accordance with the views of the Platonists, God for Augustine is eternal and immutable, and hence, incapable of being changed or corrupted.[389] Augustine takes this Platonically influenced conception of Being and places it within the Christian conception of God and the created universe, as revealed in Augustine's repeated discussions of the first few Books of Genesis in the *Confessiones* and other treatises. As such, not only is God conceived of as the Supreme Being, but God is also conceived of, in accordance with Scripture, as all good; indeed, as *the* Good. [390]

---

[385] *Conf.* VII.10, 147.
[386] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.1.1, 65.
[387] *De civitate Dei* XII.2, 500-501.
[388] *De civitate Dei* XI.10, 462. Here in discussing the Trinity, Augustine states: "the nature of the Trinity is called simple, because it has not anything that it can lose, and because it is not something different from what it has. . ." Going further, Augustine states that, as a perfect simple, God cannot be deprived of what God has.
[389] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.1.1, 65.
[390] *De civitate Dei* XI.24, 481.

To be good, then, is to exist and to exist is to be good.[391] In this way "Being" and "Good" become correlative terms for Augustine. Of course, Augustine's conception of God would not be wholly Christian unless God is also conceived of as all-powerful[392] and all-knowing.[393] While a discussion of the triune aspect of God's nature is beyond the scope of this thesis, I would be neglecting an important aspect of Augustine's conception of God if I did not mention that Augustine's mature understanding also includes a conception of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[394]

Cosmology: Why Anything Exists Other than God

Augustine discusses his philosophically inspired cosmology in a number of commentaries on Genesis, most notably in: *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, *De Genesi Ad Litteram Libri Duodecim*, and *De Genesi Ad Litteram Imperfectus Liber*, as well as in the last three books of the *Confessiones* and in Books XI and XII of *De Civitate Dei*. Within these works, Augustine provides an exegesis as to why anything exists other than God and how God went about the creative act. Contrary to the emanation account of Plotinus, in which created being is a necessary process of overflow from the One, for Augustine everything that exists was created by a free, generous act of the Divine will.[395] Hence, God created not from any necessity, "but simply from His own goodness."[396] When God created, he did not create out of his own Being, nor did he create from any existing stuff, rather, he created both the spiritual realm (angels and

[391] As Augustine states in the *Conf.* VII.12, 148: "Whatever is, is good."
[392] In *Conf.* I.4, 23, Augustine describes God as "mightiest and all-powerful."
[393] Discussing God's knowledge in *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 17, 45, Augustine states: "Everything past no longer exists, everything future does not yet exist, therefore nothing past and nothing future exists. But in God's sight there is nothing which does not exist. Therefore, in God's sight, nothing exists as past or future, but everything is now."
[394] See *De Trinitate* Book VII for Augustine's description of the triune aspect of God's nature.
[395] Torchia, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, x.
[396] *De civitate Dei* XI.24, 481.

souls) and the visible world (all other things, other than angels and souls), out of nothing.[397] The objects that exist in the sensible world were created by the impression of the Platonic Forms, which exist in God's mind, on formless matter,[398] which Augustine describes as an "almost nothing.[399] God is the only creator of any nature.[400] Created beings cannot create natures out of nothing, although they can generate other beings "by the coming together of male and female."[401] God created time in creating movement and change in the universe.[402] Hence,

> the world was made not *in* time, but simultaneously *with* time. For that which is made in time is made both after and before some time: after that which is past, and before that which is to come. But there could have been no 'past' before the creation, because there was then no creature by whose changing movements time could be enacted. [403]

Such a view is consistent with Plato's discussion of time in the *Timaeus*, where he states that time came into existence together with the universe.[404]

---

[397] *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos* 1.6.10, 57-58; *Conf.* XII.7, 284-285; *De civitate Dei* XII.1, 498.
[398] *Conf.* XII.19, 296: "It is true that anything which is mutable implies for us some formless principle by which it receives form or is changed or converted into another form."
[399] *Conf.* XII.3-8, 282-286. Explaining the creation of the world from the formless matter, Augustine states: "Then on the third day you made the earth and the sea by giving visible form to that formless matter which you had created before the first day. You had made a heaven, too, before the first day, because we are told that 'in the Beginning you made heaven and earth.' But this was the heaven of our heaven. And the earth which you had made before the first day was that formless matter. This must be so, because we are told that it was 'invisible and without form, and darkness reigned over the deep.' It was from this invisible and formless earth, this utter formlessness, this next-to-nothing, that you were to make all the things of which our changing world consists." See also *De civitate Dei* XII.26, 536: "For there is one kind of form which is imposed from without upon every item of corporeal matter whatsoever." See also, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* I.6.10, 58: "God made all things from nothing. For, though all formed things were made from this matter, this matter itself was still made from absolutely nothing."
[400] *De civitate Dei*, XII.26, 536. See also *Conf.* XII.8, 285, where Augustine states: "For you, O Lord made the world from formless matter, which you created out of nothing. This matter was itself almost nothing, but from it you made all the mighty things which are so wonderful to us."
[401] *De civitate Dei* XII.26, 536.
[402] *De civitate Dei XI.6*, 456. See also, *Conf.* XII.8, 285-286: "For time is constituted by the changes which take place in things as a result of variations and alterations in their form, and the matter of all these things is that invisible earth of which we have spoken." Augustine reiterates the point that time is constituted by change in *Conf.* XII.11, 288: ". . .without change of movement there is no time."
[403] *De civitate Dei XI.6*, 456; emphasis mine.
[404] Plato, *Timaeus*, in *Plato Complete Works*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1129. See also *Phaedo* 79a, in *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1241. As Plato states: "Time, then, came to be together with the universe so that just as they were begotten together, they might also be undone together, should there ever be an undoing of them.

The Nature of Created Being

Since God, as Goodness and Being itself, created everything else that exists, everything else is also good,[405] and possesses Being. Created beings are sustained by God and receive their Being and goodness by constantly participating in the Forms that exist in God's mind.[406] Furthermore, all beings possess the qualities of measure, form and order.[407] While God is described by Augustine as being the measure of measure, the form of form, and the order of order, all created beings are created with an intended level of measure, form, and order.[408] As will be recalled from Chapter Four, to be measured is to possess the qualities of extension, unity, and oneness; to possess form, is to be formed by the eternal Forms of God's mind; and to possess order is for a created being to assume its proper place in the order of the universe, based on the type of being that it is. As such, measure, form, and order are essential elements of existence. Because all created beings were created by God out of nothing, however, as opposed to being created out of God's substance, everything else possesses less Being, less good, and less measure, form, and order than does God. In this way, everything created by God is less existent than God.[409] Furthermore, because everything else that exists was created out of nothing, everything else that exists is temporal and hence, susceptible to change. Thus, created beings can experience decreasing and increasing levels of their Being, goodness, and measure, form, and order.[410] In this way, created beings have within them both the possible tendency to fall

---

[405] As Augustine states in *Conf.* XII.7, 284-285: "You are good and all that you make must be good."
[406] See *Conf.* VII.11, 147. Discussing the relationship between God and created beings, Augustine states: "As for me, I know no other content but clinging to God, because unless my being remains in him, it cannot remain in me."
[407] *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.3.7, 108.
[408] *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.3.7, 108.
[409] *De civitate Dei* XII.2, 500. See also *Conf.* VII.11, 147. Here in discussing the relationship between God's Being and the Being of created things, Augustine states: "I considered all the other things that are of a lower order than yourself, and I saw that they have not absolute Being in themselves, nor are they entirely without Being. They are real in so far as they have their Being from you, but unreal in the sense that they are not what you are. For it is only that which remains in Being without change that truly is."
[410] *Enchiridion* 4.12, 377.

back to the nothingness from which they were created and the ability to regain their intended level of Being, goodness, and measure, form, and order.

The Hierarchy of Being

In addition to that which *is* and that which depends on that which truly *is*, Augustine also conceives of reality as a sort of "chain of Being" leading continuously from God, down toward almost nothingness. Within this chain there exists a variety of creatures, from the highest—meaning, possessing the most Being, goodness, measure, form, and order—to the lowest, possessing the least.[411] Augustine maintains that a universe structured in this way is a much richer and, indeed, better universe than one consisting solely of the higher kinds of created beings, such as God and created spirits.[412] As Augustine puts it, all created beings "have their offices and limits laid down so as to ensure the beauty of the universe."[413]

Beings within the chain are divided into a hierarchical structure of three distinct levels. At the top of the hierarchy is God; in the middle are created spirits, such as angels and human souls; and, at the bottom are living and non-living physical objects, such as bodies (both human and animal), plants, and rocks. While things do indeed exist on all three levels, some beings have more Being than other beings. As already mentioned, God possesses full Being, angels and souls possess less Being than God, while physical objects possess less Being than spirits.[414]

In addition to these three layers, each created being holds a specific place in the created order of reality based on the amount of Being bestowed upon it by God.[415] In this way, those beings that have life are placed above those that do not and those that have the power of

---

[411] As Augustine puts it in *De civitate Dei* XII.2, 500: "To some He [God] gave Being more fully, and to others he gave it in a more restricted way; and so he arranged natural entities according to their degrees of being."
[412] *De civitate Dei* XII.2, 500; *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Reply to Question 31, 74; *Conf.* VII.13, Pine-Coffin, 149; *Conf.* VII.15, 150.
[413] *De vera religione* XL.76, 264-265.
[414] At the lowest level of Being is earth, which Augustine in *Conf.* XII.19, 296 describes as being closest to formless matter: "It is true that of all things which have form none is closer to formlessness than earth and the deep."
[415] *De civitate Dei* XI.16, 470.

generation are placed above those which lack this capacity. In addition, sentient beings are placed above non-sentient beings, while sentient beings with intelligence are placed above those without. Among the intelligent beings, immortal beings, such as the angels, are placed above human beings.

Immutability and Mutability

Augustine also distinguishes each level of the hierarchy in relation to the quality of immutability. God, who exists at the top of the hierarchy is eternal and immutable and, hence, not subject to change. Since the Forms, according to Augustine, exist in the mind of God, the Forms are also eternal and immutable. The level below God consists of all created spirits, including angels and human souls. Because angels and souls cannot be said to move or change from one place to another, they are immutable in regards to place. However, angels and spirits do undergo some change: they grow older in time and they experience moral and cognitive changes. At the lowest level of the hierarchy are physical bodies, both living and non-living, which, according to Augustine are all mutable and in no way immutable. As such they are susceptible to change with respect to both place and time.

Augustine's Metaphysical Dualism

In many ways, Augustine's ontological conception of the universe can be reduced to a dualism, in the sense that everything that exists must be either that which truly *is*, or a created being who's Being depends on that which truly *is*. Thus, every existent has Being to some degree: full and perfect Being, if God, and less Being if not God. Those things that are not that which truly *is*, derive their Being and their continued existence by participating in that which truly *is*. In this way Augustine accepts the Platonic division of reality into two distinct realms:

the intelligible realm and the sensible realm.[416] Those natures that exist in the intelligible realm possess pure Being while those that exist in the realm of the sensible possess less than pure Being. Those natures that possess pure Being are eternal, while those that possess less than pure Being are temporal. Those natures that possess pure Being are immutable, while those that possess less than pure Being are mutable, and hence, subject to corruption and a degradation of their Being.

Evil: The Loss of Being

As already pointed out, Augustine's discussion of evil is divided into an exploration of the "what," an explanation of the metaphysical nature of evil, and the "whence," an explanation of the origin of evil.[417] Augustine's discussion of the "what" leads him to a solution for natural evil, while his discussion of the "whence," leads him to a solution for moral evil. Augustine's solutions to both natural and moral evil rely on a similar metaphysical foundation. As discussed in Chapter Four, the falling away of a created being from its intended level of Being, good, and measure, form, and order, to a lower level, is what Augustine characterizes as natural evil. In this way, evil has no Being of its own; it is simply a lack or a privation of Being, goodness, and measure, form, and order in a being created out of nothing. If a being were to lose all Being, good, and measure, form, and order, it would cease to exist. But as long as a created being maintains some degree of these essential elements, it continues to exist. In this way, only something that is good can be evil, for evil is simply a privation of that which is good (i.e, a created nature that is good because it exists).

In a similar manner, moral evil, sin, is described as a loss of the intended level of Being that a spiritual substance should possess toward a lower level. The degradation of Being in the

---

[416] *Conf*. VII.XX.26, 154; *De civitate Dei* VIII.6, 321.
[417] *De moribus Manichaeorum* 2.2.2, 66.

spiritual substance occurs when the being voluntarily misuses its will and turns its attention away from the most perfect, eternal, and immutable Being, God, where happiness and wisdom are to be found, to something mutable, either itself or another created being. Moral evil in this way is a turning away from the most high, eternal, immutable object—God—to an earthly, temporal, mutable object; an object that weights the soul down and causes it to become inferior to what it was, because, as Augustine states, whoever strives after something inferior (i.e., something inferior to God), becomes inferior.[418] The ontological downward turn of the soul does not result in the annihilation of the soul. Souls, within Augustine's philosophically influenced theology, are immortal and hence not susceptible to complete annihilation. But the soul when it commits evil due to the misuse of its free will does experience an ontological loss that brings it closer to nothingness. Consequently, as the soul resides in a position between God and corporeal bodies in the hierarchy of the universe, so does the soul reside in a position between Supreme Being and nothingness. When the will is used appropriately and the soul clings to God, it achieves the greatness of Being that it was intended to possess. But when the soul misuses its free will and turns away from God, it turns toward nothingness. Thus, the soul resides in a precarious position hovering between absolute Being and nothingness, between wisdom and folly, between happiness and misery. The choice to choose one or the other resides in the appropriate use of the will.

Moreover, since in human beings it is the soul that gives life to the body, any loss of Being in the soul results in a loss of Being in the body, and, hence, a degradation of the body. In this way the body suffers the punishment of the sin caused by the misuse of freewill. In addition, Augustine suggests, in at least some of his works, that the sin of the first human beings somehow

[418] *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.3.5, 6.

disrupted the order of the universe.[419] As a result, natural evils, such as floods and earthquakes were unleashed into the world. The purpose of these natural evils is punishment for sin.

Closing Thoughts

Although this brief characterization only begins to scratch the surface of Augustine's more fully developed philosophical beliefs, I believe it is clear from this discussion that he did indeed develop a coherent metaphysical system, conceived of and expounded upon within a Platonically influenced Christian context. While it is true, as stated above, that Augustine did not provide a centrally-organized exposition of his metaphysical system all in one place, I believe the evidence provided in this thesis does offer proof that he did indeed develop such a system and that he returned to it again and again in his treatises, most notably the treatises in which he discusses the problem of evil. This system, above all, is an attempt to understand the nature of Being, from the highest and most supreme Being, down to the lowest, and the complex relationship between the two. This is not to suggest that Augustine's metaphysical system answers every possible question regarding the nature of Being. Augustine admits as much himself in regards to several areas of his philosophically influenced theology, most notably his ongoing struggle to determine the origin of individual human souls.[420] In this, and several other areas of his philosophy, Augustine's thought is an evolving effort to consider several answers to problems that troubled him, sometimes never settling on any one solution. Unanswered questions aside, the fact that Augustine was troubled by his inability to come to grips with certain issues and harmonize them with the rest of his metaphysical worldview is demonstrative of his desire to provide a rational and systematic account of all aspects of the nature of reality.

---

[419] *De libero arbitrio* 3.17.167, Benjamin and Hackstaff, 126; *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus* 1.3, 146.
[420] See *Retractiones* 82, 244.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Aquinas, Thomas. *The Summa Theologica*. In *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas: The Summa Theologica and The Summa Contra Gentiles*. Edited by Anton C. Pegis. New York: The Modern Library, 1948.

Augustine. *De Beata Vita* (*The Happy Life*). In *The Happy Life, Answer to Skeptics, Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil, and Solioquies*. Vol. 1 of *Writings of Saint Augustine*. Translated by Ludwig Schopp, 43-84. New York: Cima Publishing Company, 1948.

___. *De Civitate Dei* (*The City of God against the Pagans*). Translated by R. W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

___. *Confessiones* (*The Confessions*). In *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*. Translated by Albert C. Outler. Vol. VII of *The Library of Christian Classics*. Edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen, 337-412. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955.

___. *Confessiones* (*The Confessions*). Translated by R. S. Pine-Coffin. London: Penguin, 1961.

___. *Contra Academicos* (*Against the Academicians*). In *Against the Academicians and the Teacher*. Translated by Peter King, 1-93. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995.

___. *Contra Epistolam Manichai Quam Vocant Fundament* (*Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental*). In *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*. Translated by R. Stothert. Vol. IV of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff, 129-150. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.

___. *Contra Faustum Manicchaeum* (*Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*). Translated by R. Stothert. In *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*. Translated by R. Stothert. Vol. IV of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff, 155-345. Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.

___. *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII* (*On Eighty-Three Different Questions*). Translated by David L Mosher. Vol. 70 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Hermigild Dressler. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1977.

___. *De Duabus Animabus Contra Manichaeos* (*On Two Souls, Against the Manichaeans*). In *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*. Translated by R. Stothert. Vol. IV of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff, 95-107. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.

___. *Enchiridion* (*Faith, Hope and Charity*). In *Saint Augustine: Christian Instruction, Admonition and Grace, Christian Combat and Enchiridion*. Translated by Bernard M. Peebles. Edited by Ludwig Schopp. Vol. 2 of *The Fathers of the Church*, 369-472. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1966.

___. *Enchiridion* (*Faith Hope and Charity*). In *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*. Translated by Albert C. Outler Vol. VII of *The Library of Christian Classics*. Edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen, 337-412. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955.

___. *Epistle* XVIII. In *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Translated by J. G. Cunningham. Vol. I of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff, 235-236. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.

___. *De Genesi ad Litteram* (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*). Translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor. Vol. I, Books 1-6. Vol. 41 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*. Edited by Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt, and Thomas Comerford Lawler. New York: Newman Press, 1982.

___. *De Genesi Ad Litteram Liber Imperfectus* (*On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*). In *Saint Augustine, On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*. Translated by Roland J. Teske. Vol. 84 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, 145-188. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991.

___. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (*On Genesis Against the Manichees*). In *Saint Augustine*: *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and on the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*. Translated by Roland J. Teske. Vol. 84 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, 47-141. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991.

___. *De Immortalitate Animae* (*The Immortality of the Soul*). Translated by G. C. Leckie. In Vol. 1 of *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*. Edited by Whitney J. Oates, 301-316. New York: Random House.

___. *De Immortalitate Animae* (*The Immortality of the Soul*). Translated by Ludwig Schopp. In Vol. 4 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Ludwig Schopp15-47. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc.

___. *De Libero Arbitrio* (*On Free Choice of the Will*). Translated by Anna S. Benjamin and L.H. Hackstaff with an introduction by L.H. Hackstaff. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1964.

___. *De Libero Arbitrio* (*On Free Choice of the Will*). Translated by Thomas Williams. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.

___. *De Moribus Eclesiae Catholicae* (*Catholic Ways of Life*). In *Saint Augustine: The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life*. Translated by Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher. Vol. 56 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Joseph Deferrari, 3-61. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966.

___. *De Moribus Manichaeorum* (*Manichaean Ways of Life*). In *Saint Augustine: The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life*. Translated by Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher. Vol. 56 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Roy Joseph Deferrari 65-117. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966.

___. *De Musica* (*On Music*). In *Saint Augustine: The Immortality of the Soul, The Magnitude of the Soul, On Music, The Advantage of Believing, On Faith in Things Unseen*. Translated by Ludwig Schopp. Vol. 4 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Roy Joseph Deferrari, 169-379. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1947.

___. *De Natura Boni* (*On the Nature of the Good*). In *Augustine: Earlier Writings*. Translated by John H. S. Burleigh. Vol. 6 of *The Library of Christian Classics*. Edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen, 324-348. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953.

___. *De Ordine* (*On Order: Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*). Translated by Robert P. Russell. In *Saint Augustine: The Happy Life, Answer to Skeptics, Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil, Soliloquies*. Vol. 1 of *The Fathers of the Catholic Church*. Edited by Ludwig Schopp, 239-332. New York: Cima, 1948.

___. *Retractiones* (*The Retractions*). Translated by Mary Inez Bogan. Vol. 60 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Roy Joseph Deferrari. Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1968.

___. *Soliloquia* (*Soliloquies*). In *Augustine: Earlier Writings*. Translated by John H. S. Burleigh. Vol. VI of *The Library of Christian Classics*. Edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen, 23-63. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953.

___. *Soliloquia* (*Soliloquies*). In *The Happy Life, Answer to Skeptics, Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil, and Soliloquies*. Vol. 1 of *Writings of Saint Augustine*. Translated by Ludwig Schopp, 343-426. New York: Cima Publishing Company, 1948.

___. *De Trinitate* (*The Trinity*). Translated by Stephen McKenna. Vol. 45 of *The Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Roy Joseph Deferrari. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963.

___. *De Vera Religione*. In *Augustine: Earlier Writings*. Translated by John H. S. Burleigh. Vol. 6 of *The Library of Christian Classics*. Edited by John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen, 218-283. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953.

Plato. *Complete Works*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube. Revised by C.D.C. Reeve. Edited by John M. Cooper, 972-1223. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Plotinus. *Enneads*. Translated by A. H. Armstrong. *The Loeb Classical Library*. Edited by G. P. Goold. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956.

Plotinus. *The Six Enneads*. Translated by Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page. Vol. 17 of *Great Books of the Western World*. Edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, James F. *St. Augustine and Being: A Metaphysical Essay*. The Hague: Martinus Hijhoff, 1965.

Asiedu, F. B. A. “Augustine’s Christian-Platonist Account of Goodness.” *Heythrop Journal*, XLIII (2002), 328-343.

Ayres, Lewis and Michel R. Barnes. “God.” In *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 384-390. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.

Bourke, Vernon J. *Augustine's Love of Wisdom: An Introspective Philosophy*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1992.

___. *Augustine’s View of Reality*. Villanova University Press, 1964.

Bouwsma, William J. "Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought." In *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History*, 19-73. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Burt, Donald X. *Augustine’s World: An Introduction to His Speculative Philosophy*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1996.

Bussanich, John. "Plotinus: Plotinus's Metaphysics of the One." In *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. Edited by Lloyd P Gerson, 38-65. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Butler, Christopher. *Number Symbolism*. New York Barnes & Noble, 1970.

Chadwick, Henry. *Augustine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Clark, M. T. "The Neoplatonism of Marius Victorinus the Christian." In *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A. H. Armstrong*. Edited by H. J. Blumenthal and R. A. Markus, 153-159. London: Variorum Publications, 1981.

Clark, Mary. *Augustine*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994.

Corrigan, Kevin. *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005.

Crouse, R. D. "Augustinian Platonism in Early Medieval Theology." In *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*. Edited by Joanne McWilliam, 109-120. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992.

Dillon, John, and Lloyd P Gerson, eds. *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004.

Emilsson, Eyjolfur. *"Neo-Platonism." From Aristotle to Augustine*. Edited by David Furley. Vol. 2 of *Routledge History of Philosophy*, 367-387. London: Routledge, 1999.

Evans, G. R. "Evil." *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 340-344. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.

Fitzgerald, Allan D. "Retractiones." In *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 723-724. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Group, 1999.

Gerson, Lloyd. "Plotinus." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plotinus/ (accessed April 7, 2007).

Gilson, Etiene. *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*. Translated by L. E. M. Lynch. New York: Random House, 1960.

Hackstaff, L. H. "Introduction." In *De Libero Arbitrio* (*On Free Choice of the Will*). Translated by Anna S. Benjamin and L.H. Hackstaff with an introduction by L.H. Hackstaff. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1964.

Harmless , William. *Augustine and the Catechumenate*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995.

Harnack, Adolph. *History of Dogma*. Vol. 5. Translated by Neil Buchanan. New York: Russell and Russell, 1958.

Harrison, Carol. *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Harrison, Carol. *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. London: Macmillan, 1966.

Hölscher, Ludger. *The Reality of the Mind: Augustine's Philosophical Arguments for the Human Soul as a Spiritual Substance*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

Hopper, Vincent Foster. *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression*. No. 152 of *Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature*. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969.

Hyland, Drew A. "Against a Platonic 'Theory' of Forms." In *Plato's Forms: Varieties of Interpretation*. Edited by William A. Walton, 257-272. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002

Jackson, A. V. Williams. *Researches in Manichaeism, With Special Reference to the Turfan Fragments*. 3-20. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

Kaye, Sharon M., and Paul Thomson. *On Augustine*. *Wadsworth Philosophers Series*. Edited by Daniel Kolak. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001.

Kennealy, Peter. "History, Politics and the Sense of Sin: The Case of Reinhold Niebuhr." In *The Promise of History: Essays in Political Philosophy*. Series C. Edited by Athanasios Moulakis, 135-171. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986.

Kui, Wong Kwok. "The Concept Of Being And The Ontological Status Of Plato's 'The One', 'The Good' and 'The Ideas.'" *Philosophical Inquiry*. 26, no. 4 (2004): 67- 88.

Luban, David "The Form of the Good in the Republic." *The Journal of Value Inquiry*. 12, no. 3 (1978): 161-168.

Marrou, Henri. *St. Augustine and his Influence Through the Ages*. Translated by Patrick Hepburne-Scott. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962.

Matthews, Gareth B. *The Augustinian Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Moore, Edward. "Origen." In *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. http://www.iep.utm.edu/o/origen.htm (accessed November 10, 2007).

O'Connell, Robert J. *Imagination and Metaphysics in St. Augustine. The Aquinas Lecture, 1986.* Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1986.

O'Donnell, James J. *Augustine: The Confessions*: *Introduction, Text and Commentary*. 3 Vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

___. *Augustine: A New Biography*. New York: Ecco, 2005.

O'Daly, Gerard. *Augustine's City of God: A Readers Guide*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

O'Meara, John J. *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St. Augustine's Mind Up to His Conversion*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954.

___. *The Young Augustine: An Introduction to the Confessions of St. Augustine*. London: Longman, 1980.

Pappas, Nickolas. *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Plato and the Republic*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Passmore, John. "The Treatment of Animals." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 2 (April-June 1975): 195-218.

Quinn, John M. *A Companion to the Confessions of St. Augustine*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.

Roche, W. J. "Measure, Number, and Weight in Saint Augustine." *New Scholasticism*. XV, no. 4 (1941): 350-376.

Rosen, Stanley. *Plato's Republic: A Study*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Schäfer, Christian. "Augustine on Mode, Form, and Natural Order." In *Augustinian Studies*. 31, no. 1 (2000): 59-77.

Scott, T. Kermit. *Augustine: His Thought in Context*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

Slater, Peter. "Goodness as Order and Harmony in Augustine." In *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*. Edited by Joanne McWilliam, 151-60. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992.

Starnes, Colin. *Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of Confessions I-IX*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990.

Taylor, John Hammond. "Introduction." In *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. Translated and annotated by John Hammond Taylor. No. 41 of *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*. Edited by Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt, and Thomas Comerford Lawler. New York: Newman Press, 1982.

TeSelle, Eugene. *Augustine the Theologian.* New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

Tonelli, Giorgio. “Plotinus.” In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Paul Edwards. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1967.

Torchia, N. Joseph. *Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Theology of St. Augustine: The Anti-Manichaean Polemic and Beyond*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

Wedin, Michael V. “Aristotle.” In *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Edited by Robert Audi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Welton, William A. “Introduction.” In *Plato's Forms: Varieties of Interpretation*. Edited by William A. Welton, 1-29. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002.