Augustine Deformed

Love, Sin and Freedom in the Western Moral Tradition

JOHN M. RIST

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Augustine established a moral framework that dominated Western culture for more than a thousand years. His partly flawed presentation of some of its key concepts (love, will and freedom), however, prompted subsequent thinkers to attempt to repair this framework, and their efforts often aggravated the very problems they intended to solve. Over time, dissatisfaction with an imperfect Augustinian theology gave way to increasingly secular and eventually impersonal moral systems. This volume traces the distortion of Augustine's thought from the twelfth century to the present and examines its consequent reconstructions. John M. Rist argues that modern philosophies should be recognized as offering no compelling answers to questions about the human condition and as leading inevitably to conventionalism or nihilism. In order to avoid this end, he proposes a return to an updated Augustinian Christianity. Essential reading for anyone interested in Augustine and his influence, *Augustine Deformed* revitalizes his original conception of love, will and freedom.

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To Kenelm Foster, O.P.: In Memoriam

‘Change and Decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me’
(From ‘Augustinian’ hymn, once sung at English soccer matches)

Contents

List of Abbreviations — *page* ix
Acknowledgements — xi

Introduction: A La Recherche du Temps Perdu — 1
1 'Will' and Freedom, Mind and Love: Some Pre-Augustinian Debates — 17
2 Awe-ful Augustine: Sin, Freedom and Inscrutability — 28
3 Inspirational Augustine: Love, Desire and Knowledge — 62
4 Anselm: Will, Omnipotence, Responsibility — 84
5 'Augustine' and 'Aristotle': The Problem of Thomas Aquinas — 100
6 Separating Morality and Salvation — 136
7 The Rise and Fall of Lopsided Augustinianism — 173
8 Naturalism Revised — 209
9 Love, Will and the Moral Sense — 228
10 Radical Revisionisms: Hume, Kant, Rousseau — 250
11 Atheist 'Freedoms': Liberal, Totalitarian, Nihilist — 276
12 The Age of Deception: Virtual Religion, Virtual Morality — 319
13 Whither Lady Philosophy: Muse, Call Girl, Valkyrie? — 351
14 Reformed Augustine, Genetically Modified Adam — 365

Bibliography — 393
Index — 415

Abbreviations

ACPQ	*American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*
AGP	*Archiv für die Geschichte der Philosophie*
APSR	*American Political Science Review*
AS	*Augustinian Studies*
BJHP	*British Journal of the History of Philosophy*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
HPT	*History of Political Thought*
IJPR	*International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*
IPQ	*International Philosophical Quarterly*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
JHP	*Journal of the History of Philosophy*
JP	*Journal of Philosophy*
JPR	*Journal of Politics and Religion*
JRE	*Journal of Religious Ethics*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MPT	*Medieval Philosophy and Theology*
MS	*Mediaeval Studies*
NRT	*Nouvelle Revue Théologique*
PACPA	*Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*
PR	*Philosophical Review*
REA	*Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes*
RM	*Review of Metaphysics*
RS	*Religious Studies*
RTAM	*Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*
RTPM	*Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales*
SP	*Studia Patristica*

TS	*Theological Studies*
ZThK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Works of Augustine are cited in English in the text and in standard Latin abbreviations in the footnotes.

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Introduction: A La Recherche du Temps Perdu

> I, for one, would no sooner think of consulting your average moral philosopher over a genuine moral problem than of consulting a philosopher of perception about an eye complaint.
>
> C. O. J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (cited by B. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation* 220)

Philosophers usually start out testing the ideas of their teachers and immediate predecessors, wanting to discuss what is 'on the table', 'in the air'. This may lead to a vicious regress, since the teachers have treated their own teachers in the same way. What if the problems my teachers have set me are wrongly framed or depend on dubious or false assumptions inherited from earlier teachers, whose work they may have tried to correct, may have rejected or accepted? Clearly, as each generation passes, the number of false problems and false assumptions will increase exponentially. I argue that this is what has happened in key areas of Western thinking about ethics and meta-ethics since the fifth century of the Christian era.

The cultural – as distinct from the philosophical – origins of those problems in moral philosophy and philosophical psychology that I shall consider are to be found in Augustine, the Catholic bishop of Hippo in present-day Algeria,[1] who dominated intellectual life for hundreds of years and hence bequeathed a variety of unresolved difficulties that his

[1] For a recent restatement of the foundational role of Augustine, and that the nature of his work must be understood if we are to grasp the basic thrust respectively of ancient, medieval and modern thought and the proper relationship between these very different intellectual animals (against the 'narratives' of such as Milbank, De Libera, Hadot and Blumenberg) see Harding (2008: 1–34). Some of the difficulties in assessing Augustine's legacy adequately are set out by Otten (Otten 2012: 201–18). Nevertheless and more particularly, Harding's comments on the influence of Sallust (and indirectly of Thucydides) on Augustine are a good summary of some of the historical-ideological aspects of much of Augustine's work, especially the *City of God* (Harding 2008: 47–73). I would agree with him (for example, against Milbank) that for Augustine pagan thought (and pagan 'virtue') is defeated in its own terms, self-referentially – and that therefore there is a case to be made for beginning with his Christian alternative.

Christian successors[2] – though generally very supportive of his views – tried to defuse. Some of these difficulties are explicable with reference to the unsystematic character of much of Augustine's writing or to an incomplete knowledge of his work: thus his piecemeal presentation of a complex understanding of the relationship between knowing, willing and loving induced in his followers increasingly unrelated explanations of these activities of the person, so that each tended to be set against the others. Hence, while trying to resolve problems both real and imaginary, they often failed to correct genuine weaknesses and introduced further confusion. By the time the incremental effect of this process has reached our own day, we find ourselves – so I argue – in a cul-de-sac from which there appears no way out but to retrace our steps under pain of becoming ever more trivial, banal or downright toxic.

Augustine's role in the developing story of philosophical ideas in the Western tradition is not merely that of passing on a synthesis of traditional themes, of both Christian and pagan origin, to many ensuing generations. He also added new dimensions to philosophical thought, many of which passed virtually unnoticed until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and of which one is of peculiarly contemporary interest. For the first time Augustine (especially, though not only, in the *Confessions*) makes us aware of the problem of how to relate a thinker's unique personal experience (the first-person view) with the objective, scientific, 'view from nowhere' which philosophers have normally attempted to project. But our own experience *is* part of the world and therefore cannot be reduced (despite modern attempts, as we shall see) to a third-person stance. While many of Augustine's philosophical predecessors and successors (not least those who influenced him most, the Platonists) were inclined to think that personal individuality is something to outgrow, or at least is outside the scope of philosophical enquiry, and that philosophers can only talk about human beings as members of a class, Augustine takes seriously the implications of the Christian claim that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and so wants to find space for the unique experiences of the individual, each of whom, he believes, is in this present life a 'mystery to himself'.[3]

[2] When I speak of the 'domination' of Augustine I should not be taken to imply that others (Boethius, Ps-Dionysius, Ambrose, Benedict, Gregory the Great etc.) are to be discounted, but that the intellectual framework, the theology, within which they (and others) were understood was supposedly Augustinian. But one can go too far, as when O'Donnell comes close to suggesting that what we know of Christianity is very largely an Augustinian construction (O'Donnell 2005: 200).

[3] This theme will reappear only in the 'modernity' parts of the present book; for further discussion of Augustine's view – in comparison with that of Hume – see Rist 2000: 95–114.

Once upon a time the moral philosopher, or the moral theologian, offered guidance for the good life, and beyond that for salvation. Later he forgot about salvation or was unwilling to pay the price he apparently had to pay to retain it. Finally he lost sight of 'truth' and had to content himself with ideologies. To have any hope of reversing the process, he must begin not at the end but at the beginning of the chain to see if more authentic progress is possible, and at what price. This book offers no full-scale guide to where we are now and why, only an examination of a set of themes related to 'freedom', love and responsibility, all central for such a wider enquiry.

In seeking to retrace part of the journey Western thinkers have made, I am far from attempting something new: many more learned than I have led the way. Older studies, like Jacques Maritain's *Three Reformers*, for good or ill, recount, even if inadequately, what (unhappily) happened rather than why it happened and why, in light of earlier difficulties, it was almost bound to happen. J. B. Schneewind, in *The Invention of Autonomy*, has tried to trace the 'invention' of autonomy from Aquinas to Kant, while Charles Taylor, in *Sources of the Self*, has gone back to Plato and Augustine. Most recently, Brad Gregory, in *The Unintended Reformation*, has argued that Luther's break with the Catholic Church (aided, as Maritain contended, by fourteenth-century theories of univocity and the reckless use of Ockham's razor) has led in traceable ways to modern secularism and post-Christian societies in which a liberal society maintains research universities with the expectation of justifying a liberal and anti-theological ideology.

There is much to be learned from such works. Yet Schneewind, jumping *in medias res*, has failed to explain how and why Aquinas and his immediate successors found themselves where they did, while Taylor omits the medieval period entirely; presumably finding it irrelevant to his search for 'the modern identity', he is content sitting on the fence between older ways and 'modernity' – and even more so in his later *A Secular Age* – and so fails to tell parts of the tale dispassionately. Lynn Hunt, in *Inventing Human Rights*, though sometimes inaccurate in detail, well summarizes a number of important characteristics of Western thinking since 1789; indeed, in the steps of Schneewind, by the use of the word 'Invention' in her title she draws attention to the ambiguity of much post-Augustinian thought about morality and its foundations; for 'invention' has two very different senses: etymologically it means 'discovering' – thus 'The Invention of the Cross' means the claim of Helena to have discovered the True Cross and not that she made it up! Or it can mean 'newly creating', as in philosophers' talk about inventing right and wrong.

Brad Gregory's book focuses on the Protestant Reformation and the ensuing fragmentation of Christendom as the most basic, albeit unintended, cause of the looming secularism to follow. With much of that I would wholeheartedly agree; there can be no doubt that the Reformation immensely accelerated the process of Christian (and hence cultural) disintegration that was already, if slowly, under way. Gregory, however, shows himself more inclined than I to credit a radical failure of medieval churchmen to practise what they preached as a major cause of the success (such as it was) of the Reformers in uprooting the whole 'Papist' structure centred on 'the Anti-Christ of Rome'. Of course, that there was failure is true enough. Gregory can sound quite 'traditional' (indeed rather like Maritain, not to speak of Milbank) in emphasizing the ill effects for Christendom of aspects of the work of Scotus and Ockham; but he overestimates the success of earlier medieval thinkers in their attempts to construct a Christian philosophical synthesis – in this being like MacIntyre as well as Maritain – and like them pays scant attention to the weaknesses of the more or less Augustinian framework within which that synthesis was originally constructed.

With reference to our contemporary philosophical situation, it has been argued[4] that in the Western world much intellectual debate, especially in ethics and philosophical psychology, is radically flawed in that the language and concepts of the disputants derive from a largely abandoned set of theological and metaphysical axioms; that we find ourselves trying to defend conclusions devoid of the premises once regarded as their necessary foundation. My present account invites us to assess an important and interlocking selection of such assumptions and how certain confusing and confused philosophical and theological axioms from the remoter past have helped generate problems about the human condition for which, in the present post-Christian intellectual culture, no compelling solutions are or could be in sight – and hence intellectual, moral and cultural nihilism must inevitably prevail.[5] I shall, however, also point to the possible recovery

[4] Famously by Anscombe (1958: 1–19).

[5] For a helpful introduction to the radically confused premises of what the author calls the principle of modern liberal autonomy (MLA) – with particular reference to its 'classical' and influential application in the work of H. L. A. Hart – see Laing (2004: 184–216). Laing defines the most important principle as follows: 'If consenting adults want to do something, unless it does specific harm to others *here and now* (my italics), the law has no business intervening.' The words 'here and now' are especially important because they preclude consideration of the good of the wider society (especially of the vulnerable) and of future generations. It is encouraging to see Laing joining the gradually increasing number of those who recognize the extraordinary foresight of Plato in making us aware

of revised and hopefully more defensible, if long discarded, axioms which, taken seriously, would at least alleviate our presently ineluctable fear of being brought up against banality, despair and ultimately despotism.

The more properly historical arguments of the present book are designed to explain significant features of the decline of traditional Western culture (intellectual and hence other) and to contribute to their possible repair. That culture, a derivative of ancient Greece, Rome and Israel, received much of its enduring intellectual framework from the writings of Augustine who stood at the intersection of these; hence the decline, fall and desirable resurrection of what can broadly be dubbed Augustinian Christianity will be the focus of the present explorations. Augustine's imposing structure was assembled from a great array of Christian and non-Christian sources and traditions, but for better or worse it held a unique position at the centre of European cultural life for hundreds of years; no proposed alternative has as yet earned so enduring an influence. A basic part of this structure, with its vast ramifications, was built on a set of axioms and conclusions about the nature of the 'will', human and divine: of its 'freedom' (however understood), its 'responsibilities' and, perhaps fundamentally, its relationship to love.

If current transformations of Western culture cannot be understood without reference to the abandonment – for good or bad reasons – of the Augustinian world-picture, we are left with the question of whether all the babies were thrown out with the bathwater; or, to choose a less drastic metaphor – whether in giving up on the difficulties and paradoxes which Augustinianism seemed to generate, our ancestors, wilfully or unwittingly, undermined the very city from which they had their nurture: the civilized structure of which they were the heirs and which was still basically liveable in. If that is right, we should be asking how repair work might yet be carried out; only restoration requires knowledge of what the original 'city' was like, of its particular strengths and weaknesses. To cash out the metaphor, you cannot think within a tradition unless you have good knowledge as to what the tradition was.

When during the early modern period accepted interpretations of certain key words ('will', 'freedom', 'responsibility', 'duty') began to change – or rather when even earlier movements for change, themselves prompted by serious philosophical difficulties, began to accelerate – the cultural and

of these problems. She also identifies Hart's ideas – themselves a derivative of those of Mill – as self-destructive and potentially totalitarian. I consider the totalitarian aspects of contemporary liberalism in Chapters 11 and 12.

intellectual consequences were huge, albeit unforeseeable. Changing language both reflected and promoted what was to become the systematically anti-Christian, indeed anti-religious, world view which most opinion formers of the Western Establishment now profess: whether because they truly understand its implications, or more probably because they think they understand them though they do not; whether their by now time-bound and ignorant individualism insists that in our exponentially wider and more complex world immediate fancy and convenience – mine – are all that can matter; whether they conclude, or will be found to conclude, that we are not persons but automata fit only to function at best as parts of some larger bureaucratic machine that may be nominally democratic or blatantly totalitarian.

Beneath the surface of the present enquiry lies a subsidiary but still substantive question: Are we to conclude that universities and other intellectual organs in our society which offer philosophical, historical or literary studies – by increasingly promoting, at least by default, an ignorance of all but the very recent past – are setting themselves to damage, at least disparage, perhaps even destroy, an intellectual, moral and spiritual tradition which goes back, via the Christian centuries, to the origins of Western civilization?[6]

The perceptive reader will demand more information about pre-Augustinian discussions of the 'will', its 'freedom' and related topics – not least about the relationship between loving and knowing – and my first chapter, though necessarily limited in scope, considers something of these earlier enquiries. But for better or worse, when in late antiquity much of that substructure disappeared from view – to be rediscovered piecemeal as the centuries passed – it was largely the Augustinian world-picture that remained in the West, and it was on the strengths and weaknesses of that world-picture (often handed down in more or less deformed versions) that subsequent discussion rested. Indeed, even when wider knowledge of the more ancient debates gradually became possible, the principal concern of those thinkers who engaged with it was either how to fit it into the dominant Augustinian framework or to demonstrate how it must undermine that framework. The history of classical philology reveals that even when more of the philosophical texts of antiquity had long been available, it remained difficult to interpret them correctly and so to cut away layers of misinterpretation that had deformed and continued to deform the subtleties of ancient controversies. Only in the past couple of centuries has our

[6] For an introduction to part of this subsidiary problem see MacIntyre (2009).

understanding of antiquity developed to the point where we can recognize what the Augustinian and post-Augustinian world-picture preserved of a by then fragmented earlier tradition and what it ignored or left obscure. In this way has chance – unless it is providence – governed the way Western thought has developed since ancient times.

A major concern of the present book will be with the 'will' and its freedom – though problems about free will arose before anything like our notions of what we call the 'will' and free choice had developed. When philosophers talk of taking action, they may seem to refer to a set of mental phenomena which we can unpack as follows: I act to do or secure X when (a) I believe it is good to do or to secure X; (b) I realize that to do or secure X I must do A; (c) I therefore decide that A is a reasonable thing to want and to do; and finally (d) I choose to do A in order to acquire or to do X. That is, roughly, Aristotle's position. Other philosophers suppose that for X to be secured (or attempted) we need to invoke a further phenomenon, an act of will over and above its 'components': that is, our beliefs, reflections and desires. So they explain 'I did X' (eventually) as 'I did X because I willed to do X'. That is, roughly, the position of Aquinas and of many others before and since, and it usually implies that we have some sort of faculty called the 'will'. It is not, however, the position of Augustine, who thinks, very roughly, that we go for X rather than Y because we *love* X more than Y.[7]

Similar alternatives pertain in theology, where if 'will' is falsely posited, this will generate an analogous and arguably similarly delusory problem of whether God is primarily or exclusively to be viewed as being or possessing absolute will and/or absolute intelligence. Now if a free action is at least to some degree a rational action, then when a man acts randomly or wilfully, it is hard to see how he can be either free or rational. However, whereas it is reasonable to suppose that a man can be both unfree and irrational, there is no rational possibility of God's not being free; yet if God's 'freedom' allows him to act arbitrarily, then he must seem to fail to

[7] Something like Aquinas' position is defended in Anscombe (1957). Lawrence, for example, proposes a defence of something more like Aristotle's version (Lawrence 2004: 265–300). Needless to say, Lawrence's reading of Aristotle is disputed, but – while I cannot enter the debate here – I am in large agreement with it. Byers notes the error of taking Augustine to advocate a 'faculty' of the will (though she wrongly supposes him to suggest such a faculty on one occasion (Byers 2006: 171–89; p. 187 on *DLA* 2.19.50). Before Byers, Chappell had spotted this 'faculty' error (Chappell 1995: 127) (though his immediate comment is misleading inasmuch as it neglects the Platonic aspects of Augustine's position). He writes: 'Augustine's talk about the *voluntas* [should] be understood simply as his way of talking about the voluntary – whether that means voluntary action, or choice, or both – and not, as it has often been, as talk about a reified faculty of will constituting a substantial presence in the theatre of the psyche.'

act rationally, let alone morally. That raises problems if – perhaps to protect God's omnipotence – we suppose him to follow (or even simply to be) the absolute decrees of his 'will'.

Classical Greek philosophers did not have a word that can simply and unproblematically be translated as 'will', though Hellenistic and Imperial Roman Greek came to offer something near it in a secondary sense of the word *prohairesis*.[8] Latin (and its Romance derivatives) offered us the word *voluntas* – from which arises the problem as to whether in the relevant ancient texts – in the present study that means primarily the text of Augustine – we can translate *voluntas* as 'will' without misleadingly generating a series of unnecessary philosophical problems. And if we can, should our interpretation of Augustine be that he was a voluntarist: that is, someone who believes that free actions are to be explained in terms of *willing* rather than of *loving*? Of course, if it turns out that Augustine is not at least consciously a voluntarist, we shall not be justified in saddling him with the belief that all actions – human or divine – are to be explained as functions of more or less successful exercises in pure reasoning or rationalizing.

In any case, what sort of thing might we want to rationalize, and further, what can rationalizing tell us about the nature of freedom? If a free act is also an act of the mind, are we, in the case of God, to think of him as performing precisely and infallibly what he knows he wants to do? Is his 'will' free in the sense of unrestricted, or must it function in accordance with a (more than instrumental) rationality? Put bluntly, are God's decisions arbitrary? As we shall see, it was in part Augustine's apparent failure to answer this question in a clear and convincing way that induced some of his defenders, gradually divorcing God's apparent 'will' from his intelligence – at least as they understood an intelligence – to propose what seemed to many an arbitrary divinity. But does that sort of proposal help us formulate what real freedom might be? And if real freedom is arbitrary freedom – as opposed, that is, to the freedom of an unfettered 'goodness' – are we left with the hope (or fear) that when God is banished from the scene, arbitrary freedom becomes the mark of the genuinely free *man*, until human 'freedom' requires no – or minimum – possible restraint on thought and action?

And we need to clarify that 'minimum possible', for that there could be absolutely free human activity has to be a mirage, since every human action, moral or non-moral, is performed within fixed parameters. My

[8] See recently Pich (2010: 95–127); Dobbin (1991: 111–35).

actions are limited at least in part by my genetic inheritance, my personal history, the world and society and family into which I am born, the fact that I am not immune to illness and death and so on. When I act, I recognize these inhibiting factors, consciously or unconsciously. I may try to act more 'freely' – that is, without some of these constraints – but I can never act without any form of constraint.[9] Yet if for whatever reason (and Augustine can plausibly suggest what that reason would be) the absolutely free act is a mirage, or the dream of certain philosophers or madmen – as perhaps an unconscious desire of all of us – then in our 'willed' actions, if we have our best interests at heart, we might, as the Stoics supposed, need to follow and accept whatever is going in any case to happen to us. In the Stoic world that inevitability is governed by a benevolent providence, but what, we might wonder, would follow from our obedience to necessity if that benevolent providence be absent? At best we might manage to be simply resigned, to attain a certain *apatheia* in the face of whatever may come to pass, for ourselves or for others: as Epictetus puts it: Every time you kiss your child goodnight, [you should] remember to tell yourself that he may die tomorrow. The best we could construct, that is, would be some kind of hard shell, some self-protective defence mechanism – and the best we could do for others would be to advise and teach them to do likewise. We would not advise them to try to be free of their destiny, or a destiny of madness or criminality would catch up with them.

The theological universe, as construed by Augustine, is a universe overseen not by the impersonal God of the Stoics but by the personal God of the Christians. In the hereafter the saints will appreciate the divine control in that they will neither wish to sin nor be capable of sinning. They will willingly accept that state as the best possible, understanding 'freedom' – that is, freedom from impediments to such a life – as a conscious conformity with it. Hence we are at all times free only to the degree to which we approximate to that blessed end-state. But remove Augustine's end-state and, if our desires for personal autonomy overbear Stoic resignation, our only option will be to aim for the highest attainable degree of freedom from any 'inhibitions'. These will include moral factors – among them an obligation to procreate and educate a future generation – and also physical factors: we might, for example wish to be free of the limitation of being male or female, even though escape is in practice impossible (for I must be basically either male or female, even if, like Teiresias, I try – whether contemporaneously or sequentially – to be both). Here I merely

[9] A well-known treatment of some of the social implications of this is to be found in Sandel (1982).

indicate where the rejection of an Augustinian understanding of a good 'will' – albeit for what may seem excellent and humane reasons, and prescinding from whatever a 'will' may be – has led many of the high priests of modern society. The history of evil is often the history of simplistically facile beginnings (as Machiavelli well observed).

The history of 'willing' – not yet viewed as the act of a faculty independent of reason and desire but rather as a shorthand term which we may employ to describe the relationship between them – obviously began before Christian monotheism entered the field and took up from the more or less monotheistic Platonists a baton on which was inscribed the claim that not man but God is the measure of all things. Yet conflict between a monotheistic God and a race of men inclined to will their absolute autonomy could only occur after this God had been firmly established in the zenith of the cultural world view. Nor could the philosophical ramifications of that conflict be perceived before the God of monotheism could be subjected to serious philosophical scrutiny. Once such scrutiny had begun, its conclusions, whether valid or faulty, would begin to prevail among philosophers and preachers, and sooner or later be reflected in the culture itself. Thus in the Christian West, once the supremacy of God had been firmly – if not always intelligibly – established by Augustinian theology, the role of man's 'will' (however understood) in constructing the acceptably good life was diminished; indeed pressure could grow correspondingly (as frequently with the self-abasing devout) to diminish it to the point that man could be presented less as an intelligent creature of God who must rationally, and *therefore* humbly, recognize himself as such, than as *fundamentally* worthless and despicable, possessed of a more or less corrupt 'will' to be 'free' as God is 'free'.

Yet Christians had always held man to be created in God's image, so that the idea that he is simply despicable seemed a contradiction from which he must be rescued; he must be either confirmed as despicable or somehow rehabilitated. The attempt to confirm his portrait as both potentially redeemed and at the same time truly despicable was made by Luther, Calvin and those of the 'Reformers' who were theologically rather than politically or merely personally motivated; it was able to build on weaknesses in the traditional Augustinian theology gradually revealed during the Middle Ages and startlingly, albeit unintentionally, gaining greater prominence from the fourteenth century on. But within the Reformed camp itself there was soon revulsion against so squalid a portrait, as also against its perceived implications for the nature and designs of God. Many resolved the difficulty as follows: mankind, though clearly wicked,

is not as universally and irredeemably so as much of the traditional, not to speak of the Reformed, theology seemed to suggest. Perhaps this view of the evil of the entire human race was the product not only of a misconceived understanding of the relationship between the goodness of God – adequately intelligible as according with his self-revelation – and man, the sinner 'in Adam', but also of the relationship between God's 'will' and his intelligence: in short, a basic, if historically intelligible, misconception of the nature and activity of a supposedly loving deity.

Thus the idea of God might seem to need a reformation short of the Reformation. How could this be achieved? One option was to correct the theological account of the relationship between man and God so that the image of despicable man could be replaced by – or restored as – something less than totally corrupt. But to reach that conclusion the idea of God would also have to be reconsidered, since the despicable and abject portrait had been painted not least to defend an obtruding – and ultimately indefensible – account of God's freedom and omnipotence. It took centuries for the sheer irrationality of important parts of that account to be understood and radically called in question, and when understanding came – accompanied as it was by other apparently attractive and anti-theistic moves (not least the acceptability of ignoring final causation in 'scientific' investigation) – there ensued the inevitable reaction against Christian monotheism itself.

In the meantime, the second option could present itself of pretending that little needed to be done; the cultural paradigm need only be tinkered; the philosophical problems it generated more or less ignored or condemned as mere pretexts for atheism. Unsurprisingly, that response failed to impress more radical critics of the old dispensation, who in effect told themselves that, if this was the only remedy Christian monotheism could offer, the problem clearly lay within Christianity itself.[10] Perhaps, as we had once moved from polytheism to monotheism, so we should now move from a Christian Trinitarian monotheism to the claim of the Unitarians – tartly denoted by Bertrand Russell as belief in 'one God at most'! The logical end of the road, as was increasingly supposed, must be uncompromising atheism (as distinct from the Epicurean model that denied not God or gods but only divine interest and intervention in human affairs).

[10] To comment thus on the attitude of intellectuals is not, of course, to imply any radical change in traditional popular piety – at least for a while. Godzieba has shown that popular devotion (and popular religious art) flourished in Catholic parts of the early modern world, not least as framed by an affective piety guided by 'mystical' understandings of the *Song of Songs* (Godzieba 2009: 147–65). Yet to recognize the continuing tradition while simultaneously looking to its coming debility cannot be dismissed as 'the pessimism of late medieval Augustinianism' (as at 156).

As Augustine (and earlier Plato) had seen clearly, if the 'will' of God does not govern human affairs, then man, 'liberated' from God, is, or seems to be, 'free' to do what he likes; there is no standard by which his actions can be measured. And rather than a correction in theology, a 'secular' option was now becoming available: the abandonment of theism as immoral and unintelligible, therefore as unworthy of man; for had not Socrates proclaimed (and Origen and Augustine confirmed in rejecting Christian fideism) 'the unexamined life is sub-human'? Those who took this 'secular' view were further encouraged by a growing expectation that the will of man would create a better society than any researching of the will of God. All that was required, as Voltaire concluded, was to kick Christian monotheism out, retaining at most an uninspiring and unappealing deism. The French Revolution – in particular the Terror – would provide a first essay in what could ensue, Robespierre being in time succeeded in the proclamation of a non-Christian version of the 'New Man' by Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao and Kim Il Sung – to name but a few outstanding examples of Plato's 'tyrannical man'.

Christian thought depends not only on Christian thinkers but also on Christian texts (or 'Judaeo-Christian' texts in some useful sense of that much-bandied phrase). But no text bears its meaning clearly on its face; texts need to be interpreted. One of the reasons for the Christian failure to grasp the difficulties in accounts of God's omnipotence – which, leading to the pseudo-Christian portrait of man as wholly despicable, greatly encouraged the revulsion of the West against Christianity as such – can be identified in the manner in which Christian texts were interpreted. The problem was particularly severe in the case of texts about the origins of man and of human evil, that 'sin of Adam', behind which loomed the yet more problematic 'fall of the angels'. An attempt to avoid such difficulties by recourse to allegorical interpretations led (and was often recognized to lead) to manifest abuses. How could you tell whether a text was to be read literally or allegorically? Thus in effect allegory proved a licence to interpret your own *Genesis*, *Exodus* and so forth, while literal readings of biblical texts led to a crude insistence on a Christianity in conflict with the accumulating discoveries of historical, biological and physical sciences.

The Galileo case of the seventeenth century eventually demonstrated that the Old Testament cannot be read as a physics textbook. Similarly Darwin's theory of natural selection could help us see that human beings never lived in a Golden Age, that the theory of original sin describes not the temporal fall of an originally happy and admirable Adam (or even Adams), but the difference between what we (still want to) make of ourselves and

what God 'originally' intended us to make of ourselves. To escape the cul-de-sac of the reduction of Christianity to fideism, while at the same time avoiding the moral and physical infernos which the replacement of God's will by man's has generated, we need a principled account of how to read the Jewish and Christian Scriptures – not only the book of *Genesis*. And if the truths propounded by the theory of original sin are to remain useful, we need a new theological, 'scientifically' plausible account of how we became as a species both unable and unwilling to act rightly and for our own good, and how – though the older account of human freedom can work in a revised providential universe – in the universe of 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' the only alternative to mechanical determinism is the 'liberty' of indifference; neither of which options proves intellectually or experientially palatable. Hence and in the first instance, we need a more plausible account of Augustine's thesis that before the fall the human race, or at least Adam and Eve, had the possibility of living rightly, of not doing wrong (*posse non peccare*).

The present study points to some minimum conditions for a reform of parts of the traditional (Augustinian) theology and culture in view of their wavering afterlife. Through examples of historical trial and error, it proposes the development of an account of God's omnipotence (and of its scriptural sources) – and of both divine and human 'wills' – which will avoid the philosophically incoherent and culturally disastrous consequences deduced (not always mistakenly) from earlier versions, without sinking into that denial of the *rational* 'will' which was one of the principal – albeit barely understood – causes of the *débacle* of Augustinian theology in its historical setting. If its conclusions are correct and taken seriously, it can help revive a stagnant but not yet moribund culture, if not in Europe – where the future looks like depending on the outcome of the looming conflict between secularism and militant Islam – more widely in a rationally Christianized world.

A final but important preliminary notice must be posted. The problem of free decisions of the 'will' grew up in a theistic and providential universe. The difficulties over which Augustine, Anselm and others laboured exist within that universe, as do the proposals that I sketch at the end of this essay. But what if there is no God and hence no providence? Then the question of free 'will' must take on a quite different significance. Many of the puzzles that it seems to generate will no longer pertain or will have merely trivial import. If there is no providence, the sufferings of the innocent or the fact of human violence and 'criminality' – what we used to call 'vice' or 'moral turpitude' – no longer demand explanation. They may

generate more or less effective attempts at social engineering but they are no longer metaphysically or theologically challenging; they are brute facts about human beings and the world in which we live. To speculate whether or not causal chains wholly govern us may bring consolation to some, but it will not matter even from the point of view of crime and punishment or the awarding of praise and blame. In a non-providential world it does not matter (unless we or some of us decide to *make* it 'matter') whether we are 'justly' or 'unjustly' held responsible for our actions. If it suits society to punish someone whose actions are wholly determined, there is no radical offence given where there is no morality, morality now being replaced (whether we like it or not) by, say, some Hobbesian prioritizing of our own survival. If we want to find genuinely 'free' acts in bizarre behaviour, there is no metaphysical reason why we should not try, nor is there any moral reason why others should either permit or forbid us so to do, or should accept or deny our conclusions. In a post-providential age, whether professedly 'Darwinian' or other, any concern about the importance or even the intelligibility of 'free will' is but the relic of the pursuit of problems that developed – and could only intelligibly be problems – in a culture ours has cast off. Difficulties about freedom of the 'will' – however that concept is understood – like problems about inalienable human rights, arose when God still lived. If God is dead, they are little more than bits of idle curiosity or wishful thinking: nostalgic echoes of the lost and intellectually non-regrettable capital of the past. And in a non-providential world, they, being non-problems, will never find their solution.

The present book being an essay in the history of ideas, I must at the outset enter some more or less important caveats. Some still think that ideas are only important for those who live in ivory towers. This, though absurd in itself, might arise from a misconstrual of something genuinely important: namely that often it is only when ideas are *launched* from ivory towers that we can observe their effects, whether intended or unintended and unforeseen – albeit implicit and inevitable. For they may in fact originate as court flattery or cocktail party chatter, thus concealing their truly lethal nature.[11]

My second caveat concerns the 'reception' of ideas as they appear in historical sequence. They may be originally designed for a very specific

[11] For recent comment on the hidden conventions of cocktail party chatter and the shock generated when those conventions are disturbed ('How well they will be able to control their shock, indignation and wrath will depend mostly on how many drinks they have consumed') see Smith (2003: 53).

audience, as Anselm's and Bernard's were designed for monks. Yet in this book I have largely ignored such immediacy, being less concerned with (say) what was happening in Anselm's monastery at Bec than with the long-term effects of his work (some of which might have horrified him). In taking what might be represented as a high-handed line, I have, however, tried to avoid giving the impression that I have any time for so-called naked ideas in philosophy (as distinct from formal logic); that is, for ideas in a context-free void. Indeed, in many places I regret having been obliged to say too little about historical contexts: not least when discussing the social and political aspects of applied Calvinism, especially in its English and Scottish Puritan version. The alternative would have been to inflict countless distracting digressions on the reader in a book swollen to twice its present length, so I must leave it to others to pick up the threads as they may feel so impelled.

Problems about reception, however, point to an even more serious difficulty. I have evaded any theoretical examination of how far the specific ideas this book discusses – or indeed any philosophical or theological ideas – were generated by changing economic, social or political conditions and merely serve to justify them, or whether they should rather be viewed as the necessary cause of such changes. My own view is that any 'either-or' approach to this problem is always misleading – ideas both arise in a particular setting and tend either to confirm or to subvert it – but my purpose in the present study is not to assay a solution to any such theoretical question, merely to argue that we cannot understand the mentality of our contemporary culture unless we are aware (among other factors) of its cultural background.

My third clarification relates to the general situation in philosophy, as in all academic disciplines. On almost any topic there exist hundreds of pieces of 'secondary literature', much of it worthless, being published to fatten a *Festschrift*, to secure grants for conferences where the money people demand printed evidence of their beneficence, or because aspiring young scholars can only get employment or promotion if they print weighable material fast enough. (An urban myth claims that the number of readers of the average philosophical article is six, such pieces often telling us more and more about less and less.) Hidden among the ever-accumulating dross, of course, are valuable nuggets as well as pieces of real distinction, but in view of the mass of publishing outlets available in academia – including many that are virtually in-house – these are often hard to find, let alone to evaluate. That means that anyone attempting a larger work of synthesis, as in the present volume, is bound to miss work

of importance among the trivia and the obscurely, even the less obscurely, located – and we have but one life. The only sure way of avoiding this pitfall is to give up wider projects, but with a bit of courage we can still decline that degree of intellectual trivialization.

My fourth caveat has been indicated already: although this book purports to tell a tale which has run on from the time of Augustine (and before) to our own day, its scope is limited. I have no wish to propose a one-size-fits-all account of how Lady Philosophy has journeyed from the fifth century till now; what I offer is but a thread – I believe an important and neglected one – by which we might be helped to find a way out of an historical labyrinth. It is my hope that the present study will afford fresh light on how we arrived at a situation in ethics (and meta-ethics) where what is written is often banal and uninteresting, too often deceptive, at times lethal – and point towards a more substantial (because less compromising) repair job.

My final clarification is that, while ideas are indeed important, a history of ideas is far from being always a history of good ideas. Good ideas may easily be lost sight of, whether wilfully or by lack of publicity. It was as true in the past as it is in the present not only that bad ideas often drive out good, but that the fortune of ideas themselves is apparently often a matter of chance – or of what is now called networking. It is even more true now than it already was in the times of Plato, Augustine, Aquinas or Descartes, that an interesting philosophical idea will probably be denied publication, or anyway readership, if it is datelined from the University of the Outback, while magic words at the end of its introduction – 'Cambridge' or 'Princeton' – will guarantee it wide, even if undeserved, circulation and at least the off chance of more than ephemeral recognition. There is but limited truth in Andy Warhol's claim that *anyone* can be famous for fifteen minutes.

CHAPTER 1

'Will' and Freedom, Mind and Love: Some Pre-Augustinian Debates

> 'If you've got them by the balls, their hearts and minds will surely follow.'
>
> Richard Nixon

Should I want to be free? The answer must depend on what 'free' means. And from what or whom or for what I might wish to be free: whether from sin, from the body, from slavery to a human master, more generally from tyranny secular or ecclesiastical.[1] In the history of philosophy there are – roughly speaking – two senses of 'free', each appearing in varying versions: the first refers to 'freedom' as an ability to do only what is good. According to this view I become 'free' when all constraints on my following the right path – on seeking the Good, as Plato would put it – have been removed and I in fact seek the Good. On this model I would not want to have the 'ability' to act wrongly; I would not want to be 'that kind of person'. I would know that I could (physically) stab my neighbour on the bus, and that if I possessed Plato's ring of Gyges, which conferred invisibility, I should be able to do so without fear of capture and punishment, but I should still not want to do it; I would not 'even think of' doing it. Yet I should be 'free'.

The second sense of 'free' is to have the ability to do exactly what I like, to be 'autonomous'. Clearly, as I have already noted, there will be limits to this autonomy; I cannot live in the past or get my youth back (though I may try and even to a degree succeed in warding off the advent of death); I cannot teach in an institution to which I have not been invited; I cannot be a woman (though with the help of surgeons and drugs I could try to convince myself that I am). Nevertheless, I can strive towards absolute autonomy – absolute 'freedom' in this sense – and make more or less successful attempts to determine what the necessary limits of my autonomy

[1] There are helpful comments about the vacuity of the 'freedom family' of words in contemporary public discourse in Smith (2010: 27–8).

must be, at least for the time being. When thinking about conceptions of freedom and what it is to be 'free' in the ancient world we must be sure to keep these basically different accounts apart before we even begin to think about such questions as whether 'freedom' or some freedoms are compatible with determinism, or whether some version of the 'autonomous' sense must be retained if we are to be held responsible for our actions.

In a monotheistic universe analogous problems arise when we think about the nature and activity of an omnipotent God. Thus for example: Does God's omnipotence have to be understood as the power arbitrarily to change the rules of 'morality' both for himself and for us? Clearly God must have the physical power to wipe out the human race for no 'good' reason, but simply because he wants to, but is he to be understood as able to harbour a wish of that sort? Is he more or less free if he has or has not such an actual 'moral' capacity so to act? Though there is no strict monotheism in classical (as distinct from Imperial Roman) philosophy, foreshadowings of such problems arise there too.

For practical purposes we can assume that ancient philosophical discussions of freedom (as distinct, that is, from portrayals of literary figures as more or less free or more or less determined by destiny) begin with Socrates.[2] Famously, Socrates believed that no one does wrong willingly; hence that immorality depends on a mistake in a calculation or assumption of our best interest. According to him, there is no erratic or 'surd' factor in the human make-up which might induce me to suppose what I would normally consider vicious behaviour is somehow intrinsically 'good' for me – simply because this is what I want to do. Soon Plato was to point out – signally in the story of Leontius in the *Republic* – the man who wanted to gawp at the corpses of executed criminals though he knew that he ought not to indulge such desires – that Socrates' theory is inadequate: that while it may be true – it is true for Plato – that we all have some sort of orientation towards goodness, it is still possible to know the better and do the worse in full 'knowledge' that it is worse. At least in our this-worldly existence we can be induced to do what is not in our best interest, even when we know that it is not in our best interest. And in the moral sphere the question recurs: Are there some acts which the good man has no option but to perform (or not perform)?

[2] The discussions of 'pagan' antiquity in this chapter are necessarily very limited, intended merely to introduce the wider question of how much good philosophy Augustine and other Christian writers were necessarily unable to appropriate.

Plato's answer to this question is clear: the good man, the philosopher-king, is free precisely in that he will always act rightly (later Plato regretfully concluded that while we are in the body such perfection is unattainable, though it remains an ideal); the 'tyrannical' man, on the other hand, given the chance, will always act evilly, in intent, in motive, in actual performance or in all three. But freedom being the ability only to do good, he is thus precisely *un*free, indeed a slave. Nevertheless, Plato will also adopt the common-sense view that those of us who are neither notional philosophers nor notional tyrants have a choice, and that we are responsible for our actions. It is no good, he claims in the last book of the *Republic* (617e), blaming the gods (or anyone else) for our wrongdoing. In each case, though it may be hard to act 'freely' in the best sense of the word, we are able to do so; our native orientation to goodness will ensure that, since it is we who act. In the *Phaedrus* and the *Laws*, Plato is going to argue that the soul is self-moving; that explains why we are responsible and should be held responsible for our acts, whether good or bad.

Plato's account of freedom depends ultimately not on what we will but on what we love. His theory is simple and challenging,[3] and despite inadequate revivals from time to time – with Marsilio Ficino, for example, in Renaissance Italy or the Cambridge Platonists in the seventeenth century, let alone with the Romantics – it was largely and increasingly ignored in its essentials after the end of antiquity[4] when Augustine's awareness of its huge importance was gradually pared away, not least as a result of attempts to make his thought more systematic as well as more prudish. In book seven of the *Republic* Glaucon asks Socrates why he makes the good man return to the Cave to help his fellows, and thus live a worse life when he could live a better. Socrates replies tersely that since he is a just man he will do what is just. That means that if we love goodness and justice we will act justly: there is no possibility of weakness of will; we are not 'the kind of persons' who will act unjustly or viciously.

The Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, the exemplar of a perfect (and decidedly non-Cartesian) mind, behaves in the same way, for it is godlike to do so. Plato explains that his reasons for forming the world, for bringing order out of chaos, are twofold: that he is good and that he wants to. That description also fits the motivation of the Guardians in the *Republic*. That is the way a lover of goodness and beauty will behave because, as the

[3] Fuller discussion would be out of place here, but for a more detailed introduction, see Rist (2012b).

[4] For an original but virtually unique attempt at further development in antiquity (the over-ethereal and too unearthly Plotinian tradition apart) see Rist (2001: 557–75).

Symposium has it, the lover of beauty wants to 'beget in the beautiful', that is, to create what is good and beautiful to the maximum of whatever capacity he has. Plato is laying down as a principle that we 'will', that is rationally choose, what we know and love – which implies that if we do not attend to love we shall be unable to understand what we (but not Plato) may confusingly call the 'will': as it should be, that is, as well as what, in perverse versions, it can become: not least in the accounts of most philosophers after the twelfth century. Even to think about 'willing' without thinking about loving would, for Plato, inevitably lead us to that perverted vision.

To live in accordance with Plato's theory, we might object, is easy enough for God, for the Demiurge, but are human beings capable of it? Plato seems eventually to have concluded with regret that they are not; their motivation, their love, is not strong enough to impel them to be driven by this kind of 'necessity' (to use a less Platonic, more Augustinian word). And there, as we shall see, Christianity comes in – above all in the West in the adapted Pauline language and version of Augustine. Human beings need to be strengthened in love by God, and that moral strengthening needs to be supported (at least originally) by the 'fear of the Lord' – coupled, of course, in Augustine, with the certainty of God's love and goodness, who fulfils the requirements Plato recognizes in his Demiurge: being good and wanting to create; having both the knowledge and the will – the latter seen, as in humans, as a loving will – to act as he 'should'.

As Plato, so Aristotle has neither a word for nor a concept of the 'will'.[5] His account of 'willing' and responsibility in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*N.E.*) is in many respects similar to Plato's, but is unsupported by the metaphysical structure which Plato (and Christian theists later) would regard as essential even if incomplete, and disconnected from Plato's claim that the good man's knowledge cannot be separated from his erotic mania for truth. This claim Aristotle (and many Aristotelians, in the thirteenth century and beyond) either ignored or radically watered down – in theory if not in practice – thus further opening the way to an unhelpful separation of 'will' from 'intellect' and to the generation of often false problems about the relation between the two in a world in which loving and willing also were gradually drifting apart. Apart from a brief late Stoic and anti-

[5] So unambiguously (at last) Frede (2011: 19–30): earlier (in part) Chappell (1995). Frede's note 2 (added by his editor, A. A. Long, on p. 181) reminds us of more recent debate wherein G. Ryle (*The Concept of Mind*) tries to refute the notion of a free *will* and Williams (1993) congratulates Homer on not having one.

Stoic interlude, as we shall see, the problem of 'free will' and indeed of the 'will' itself may be said to have begun with Anselm.

As I have noted, there are many places where Aristotle's account of 'willing' and responsibility overlaps with Plato's. For Aristotle, we must recognize that we are responsible for all our actions unless they arise from wholly unavoidable ignorance or from irresistible force (as, we might suppose, if we are drugged). There are some acts that the good man simply will not do, whatever external pressure is put upon him. It is absurd to suppose that a tragic 'hero' has no option but to murder his mother. The justification for this attitude, according to which external pressure is only rarely an excuse for 'wrongdoing' and subjectively in such cases there is no wrongdoing at all, is similar to that proposed by Plato, namely that the soul is self-moving. Hence the origin of our actions – hence responsibility for them – rests with no one else but ourselves.

An obvious problem with this approach is that it seems to neglect 'internal' psychological compulsions – though Aristotle is capable of recognizing a difference between a kleptomaniac and a common or garden thief. And he is prepared to go as far as to say that there are a few people so bestialized by the treatment they have received in their youth that they have lost the ability to behave as moral agents; in effect they have become as animals. Nevertheless, it is clear that the test of responsibility is whether I, and no-one else, am the source and origin of my wrongdoing. The moral law in this sense is absolute; 'ought' almost always (such sociopaths apart) implies 'can'. And that again is defended by the view of the soul as an independent self-moving cause that can virtually never be wholly deformed. We are capable of doing what we ought to do because we cannot lose the capacity for rational 'desiring' (*boulesis*): for following the command of a basic 'moral' capacity which we possess and which virtually no social situation or ill nurture can destroy. Our actions are ours – that is, caused by us – and hence we are responsible for them.

In accepting to act or not to act, Aristotle tells us – more fatefully than he could have realized – that we are obeying or disobeying the commands our not-inert mind gives about what ought rationally to be done if we want to achieve particular ends (*N.E.* 6.1143a9). As for the ends themselves, they are given by the 'eye of the soul' (*N.E.* 1144a29–31). How then does the 'eye of the soul' discern good ends? To that Aristotle replies that it does so because it is habituated by training in virtue (*N.E.* 1144a8): by doing good deeds (that is, deeds the genuinely good man will recognize as good) you become a good man; or again, that the 'eye of the soul' acquires

its proper state 'not without the aid of virtue' (*N.E.* 1144a29). Action thus brings out the potentialities for virtue that we all possess.

Clearly this is somewhat problematic. In an ideal society the proper training in virtue would be available, but Aristotle assumes we know – rather than telling us – what real virtues are and specifically how to acquire them. And there is further unpacking to be done. We know that practical reasoning will tell us that it makes sense to do X if we want to promote or secure the good end Y. But Aristotle seems to assume that the combination of the 'eye of our soul' and our rational capacity to work out appropriate means to ends will tell us not only what it makes sense to do, but what it makes sense to do to secure what is both rational and right: thus our 'rationality' covers the 'rightness' of both the means and the ends we seek. But that would only be true if rationality is identical to or at least inseparable from moral rightness, and that in turn would only be intelligible if we employ (say) a Platonic rather than a Cartesian account of 'rationality'. However, it is at least uncertain whether Aristotle is entitled to do that: if not, he must fall back on saying that we are aware that some rational actions are morally obligatory but that we do not understand how or why that is the case.

Also problematic is the strength and nature of the intellect's power to command. That such a power exists we have seen, but Aristotle also knows that we can do what we know to be wrong. Presumably that is to be explained as occurring when we simply do not care if we act 'irrationally'. But why should we not care? Presumably because we do not want our target behaviour, with the requisite reasonable means to achieve it, enough; in Platonic terms we do not have a guardian-like love for it. Aristotle might be read as holding that the mind strongly suggests that we act rationally to get what the eye of the soul has identified, and that if we want to act rationally we ought to or must follow its dictates. But if so (and again) what has happened to the idea of *moral* obligation? At least we can recognize in this Aristotelian ambiguity one of the roots of much modern (and question-begging) assumption that moral obligation just is rationality – though Aristotle's position (and not least his non-Cartesian account of reason) is sufficiently uncertain that we are not obliged to saddle him with this contemporary oddity.

It must now already be clear why much of what in later philosophers we call the 'free will problem' – let alone the idea of a faculty of the will – is outside the parameters of classical Greek thought. The situation began to change, however, when accounts of causation more determinist than those accepted by Plato and Aristotle became widely current. Epicurus,

of course, simply assumed the common-sense view that we have the ability to act freely, that is, for him, autonomously within physical limits; his 'indeterminism' is supported by a denial both of providence and of any kind of objective good to which we can aspire. Since, however, he thought, contrary to his predecessor Democritus, that atoms tend to fall downwards in empty space, thus lacking the utterly random movement of those of the original theory, he had to introduce the famous 'swerve' not only to restore indeterminacy, but somehow to allow for the possibility of autonomous action – and many interpretations of how that is supposed to work are on offer.[6] From our present point of view those difficulties do not matter; Epicurus assumes that we are free in the sense of not being wholly governed by external causes, and, like Plato and Aristotle, he thinks that we are able to choose how we live, though unless we are fools, our choices will be directed to pleasure, that is, to the minimizing of pain and discomfort, whether physical or mental: we must and can calculate how we proceed with that project.

Thinking only about the origins of their school, we might expect the Stoics to react similarly, but that was not the case, for although Stoicism grew out of Cynicism, and the early Cynics were much concerned with 'freedom' – Recall Diogenes walking round Athens in broad daylight with a lamp looking for a free man – they understood this as freedom from the conventions of society: a largely negative account, and Zeno, the student of Crates, was dissatisfied with it. He needed positive content and looked for it to an understanding of 'nature' – which entailed not just the by now traditional distinction between nature and convention but an elaborate theory of physical causation.

According to Stoic doctrine as it developed, we learn from our study of the natural world that every event and every action is the product of a chain of antecedent causes. Thus 'freedom' – though this application of the term may not go back to the early days of the school – comes to be understood in a 'compatibilist' sense; we are indeed free in that our actions are our own, but only strictly so when we happily accept the implacable laws of causation which express the designs of a providential if pantheistic deity.[7] True freedom is not the right to obey the police (as Russell

[6] For samples of recent discussion see Sedley (1988: 297–327); Annas (1992); Purinton (1999: 253–99); Wendland and Baltzly (2004: 41–71); O'Keefe (2002: 153–86); Atherton (2007: 192–236).

[7] That means that [*pace* Annas 2007: 52–87] Stoicism can be recognized as proposing a foundationalist basis (however understood) for ethics. While it is true that the parts of Stoic philosophy (logic, physics and ethics) are interdependent, ethics depends on physics while physics does not depend on ethics.

mocked the position of Hegel) but rather the ability to resign oneself to a benevolent cosmic plan. It is to be seen as the willing acceptance of whatever fortune – 'good' or 'bad' – fate deals out to us. Thus at our best we are both truly 'free' and determined, and determination is brought about both by external causes and by our inner states, themselves too the product of previous causal chains.

Difficulties arise when the Stoics try to explain the mechanics of moral (and other) decision-making. The basic principles on which they worked are well known. We experience a sensation and register it as an impression, though at registration, at least for Chrysippus, the nature of the impression will vary with our previous individual experiences. When we are mature enough, such impressions are expressed in propositional form, and – crucial for the developing account of the 'will' and of acts of willing – we can assent, either explicitly or implicitly, to the proposition before us or refuse assent.[8] Thus (in the later example) the guard on the walls of the city of Rome, seeing Hannibal's army approaching, experiences a reaction of shock, and this reaction may take the form of an immoral suggestion ('Death is to be feared'), to which he can assent or not. His assent or non-assent will then be transformed into an impulse (*horme*, *impetus*),[9] which will result in an action. Whether he will run away or remain at his post is determined by the preceding causal chains, producing the sort of person (envisaged, that is, as his *prohairesis* or *voluntas*) he has become, and if he rejects the vicious proposition he will accept his lot, acceptance or rejection indicating his virtue or its lack. As Epictetus seems to have put it, he is like a dog tied to a cart; his choice is either to trot along willingly – in which case he may be virtuous (though to be sure of that he would need to know that all his assents were in the same spirit) – or to resist and be dragged along (cf. Hippolytus 1.21.2 = *SVF* 2.975). Thus his moral condition can be recognized by his assent (or lack of assent), hence his acceptance (or not) of his fate, rather than, as with Plato and Aristotle (and *ceteris paribus* Epicurus), by his choice of action. If he trots along happily behind the cart, he is revealed as wise, and in the language of the Roman Stoics 'free'.

[8] Thus it is appropriate that Epictetus (first century AD) opens his first book (as compiled by his editor) with questions about how we should 'use' the impressions we receive. There is no reason to believe this is an innovation (rather than a different emphasis) within the school. Animals (and immature humans) cannot assent and are therefore not responsible.

[9] The best overall account of the process is still that of Inwood (1985). For helpful comment on the relationship between assent and freedom see Frede (2011).

Yet difficulties persist. On what basis does he assent or not assent to his destiny? If his assent even to his destiny has been determined by previous conditions, he would seem to be free only in a Pickwickian sense. From this problem arose, for the first time in antiquity – and perhaps only in the first or second century of the Christian era – something like our own disputes about free will and the possibility of 'libertarian' choice, though not as yet about a *faculty* of the will. These second-century debates, with their implications for human responsibility, are recorded by the Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, who proposed that 'freedom' (*to eph'hemin*) is to be understood as the real possibility of doing something other than what we decide to do. Such a 'libertarian' and 'indeterminist' account of freedom seems to have been constructed precisely as an attempt to avoid the rigidity of Stoic causal determinism – whether by Platonists or by Aristotelians interpreting the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the light of *On Interpretation* – and to have found full expression in Alexander himself (*De Fato* 180, 26–9; 181, 5).[10]

All such second-century debate, however, being conducted largely in Greek, was apparently unknown to Augustine and had little immediate impact on subsequent Western thinkers. Augustine's reflections on Stoic 'freedom' and determinism were based on what he could glean from earlier (Latin) writers like Cicero, Varro and Seneca; that is, on earlier (and as yet hardly seriously challenged) Stoic accounts of decision-making and assent refracted through his own platonizing lens. He wanted, that is, to combine 'classical' Stoic explanations of action and motivation with Platonic ideas about *eros* as an innate power directing us towards God and the Good as a final cause. But to sound Stoic might raise problems, for from the earliest days of the new religion Christian thinkers needed (they supposed) a robust account of human freedom and hence responsibility if God's justice in rewarding and punishing is to be vindicated. And as antiquity gave way to what are broadly called the Christian 'Middle Ages', the problems of freedom and responsibility as set out by Augustine became ever more urgent.

Despite their philosophical interest, I shall say little more about the second-century debates about assent and the emergent call for a free *will*, since they were no direct part of Augustine's inheritance, for although he knew and made use of Stoic 'assent' (and especially but not only through

[10] For Stoic accounts of 'freedom' and of 'what is in our power' see a series of studies by Bobzien, especially the one from 1998. Certain precursors of Alexander's indeterminism may be found (perhaps unwittingly) in Aspasius' earlier commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*: see Alberti (1999: 107–41).

Seneca of the term *voluntas*), he knew almost nothing of the emerging notion of the 'will'. Thus what we shall have to investigate is not whether Augustine invented or inherited the notion of the 'will' but the sense he attributes to the word *voluntas* and how he explained human action with specific reference to Stoic 'assent' without appealing to a 'will' – and in such a way that his successors, impelled as all Christians had to be to explain responsibility for sin, thought that he *must* have availed himself of it.

The original Stoic account of assent had given its second-century Aristotelian opponents a handle. Though Aristotle himself had made no use of assent, the objection of later Aristotelians was that the Stoic thesis, in terms of rigid causal determinism, left no room for what they took to be Aristotle's own account of a responsible decision to act, since Aristotle held that we are responsible for what we do – that is, for whatever acts derive from our choices – not simply for whether we accept some false proposition about the nature of whatever act we are destined to perform. As a result a number of Aristotelians (and perhaps also some Platonists) apparently thought that Stoic assent might be turned to more Aristotelian purposes, since (they supposed) in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle had left at least an explanatory gap in his account of the relationship between reasoning, desiring and acting.

The 'neo-Aristotelian' account of assent and action might seem to imply not compatibilism based on traditional Stoic determinism but the existence of a capacity to be explained as something like the later 'faculty' of the will. That option was not pursued further by ancient Aristotelians, who unwittingly left possible developments on those lines to Neoplatonists and Christians.[11] But I shall leave Greek thinkers aside because their solutions to the various difficulties about 'willing' remained comparatively uninfluential in the West until the Byzantine times of Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene. With the Latin Christians it was quite otherwise, and though at least in Augustine – the re-founder of the Christian tradition, as Jerome already recognized[12] – we find no *faculty* of the will, his

[11] The phrase *eleuthera prohairesis* (however to be translated) is found as early as Justin (*Apol.* 1.43; 2.7). For comment on the connection in later Greek Christian writers between *autexousion* (cf. *Apol.* 1.43) and *to eph'hemin* with reference to free choice (and not only free decision) see Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom* (1998: 355, note 74).

[12] 'You are known throughout the world: Catholics honour and esteem you as the man who restored the ancient faith; and, what is a mark of greater glory, all heretics detest you' (*Ep.* 141). The huge historical importance of Augustine's Christianity lies behind the exaggerated claim sometimes now heard – as noted previously – that he (rather than St Paul or even Jesus!) invented what we now know of as Christianity.

understanding of Stoicism being derived, as we have seen, from the earlier school via its Latin exponents, yet theological reasons unknown to pagans might seem to have made not only some sort of freedom of moral indeterminacy but also a faculty of the will unavoidable: Was such freedom, for example, the state (now, of course, lost) of Adam before the fall? And is something along those lines needed, as earlier Christians might seem to have implied, to account for God's justice in punishing him – and in him us? Yet such developments derive from problems in Augustine himself, not from any influence of the debates recorded by Alexander. A notional *faculty* of the will is no immediate part of the Christian inheritance from pagan antiquity, though Augustine did indeed adopt much of the 'classical' Stoic theory of impulse and assent, not least in his understanding of *voluntas* (= in part *horme*).[13]

The fact that the partially Stoic origin of all such Augustinian ideas, in their transformed version, was well buried by the end of antiquity was a principal reason for medieval failures to grasp what Augustine was trying to do with 'willing' or the 'will' – whether human, angelic or divine – and more generally about the relationship between willing, loving, knowing and our responsibility for our actions. Lack of substantial sections of the Augustinian *corpus* apart, the other source of error, as already indicated, was the gradual emasculating (and eventually virtual disappearance) – not least because of the coming in the thirteenth century of 'Aristotelian' ideas about decision-making – of a fundamentally Platonic account of love (not merely of friendship or rational willing) and the implications of such an account for theories both of the 'will' and of the mind; not least of the philosophical mind.

[13] See Byers (2012); also Frede (2011). My own account (1994b) is incomplete.

CHAPTER 2

Awe-ful Augustine: Sin, Freedom and Inscrutability

'We like being deceived and we are deceived.'

Pascal, *Pensées* 100

'But I cannot understand how you could spend so long on such a dreadful man.'

From a letter from a considerable scholar received by the present writer after the publication of *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*

Augustine could, I believe, offer a clear account of the relationship between knowing the good, love of the good and deciding to do good. That account, I also believe, would be both Christian and Platonic in that he accepted that in the case of the supreme model for such a relationship, that is, in God (for no autonomous and godlike perfection is fully realizable by human beings, not even the saints in glory), knowledge, love and *voluntas* are fully united in a Trinitarian union of the one God in three persons. God does not 'have' (or 'own') a mind and a 'will', let alone a faculty of mind and 'will'; he indivisibly is both mind and 'will'. To say that God is mind is, quite simply, to say that he thinks (in some way). That he is 'will' is less easy to interpret; to understand the sense of 'God wills', we need to know the meaning of the Latin word *voluntas* as used by Augustine. And to discover that in adequate detail we need to unravel its conceptually distinct Platonic and Stoic antecedents, recognizing (as we have and must) that Augustine deploys powerful Stoic ideas about action to offer an enriched account of ultimately Platonic purposes.

God represents the paradigm to which humans aspire under grace, and to which likeness, again under grace, can be achieved. Without such grace, explained in Pauline terms as adoption, the saints in glory could, and presumably would, 'fall' again; thus a complete account of the union of the three human capacities – knowing, 'willing' and loving – could only be written as part of a discussion of the Trinity. The present chapter, however, treats of only part of that wider picture, being mainly concerned with

'willing' – much of the mechanics of which Augustine owes to the Stoics – but looking forward to its proper relationship with loving, for, as we shall see, Augustinian *voluntas*, though strictly to be viewed as a mode of expressing love, can only too readily be *analyzed* and interpreted in terms of willing alone. That is why, if we lose sight of the Trinitarian model and concentrate on human activity, as so many would-be Augustinians have done, we can also more readily lose sight of the connection between the two phenomena. Nevertheless, in this chapter there is only limited comment on love – and even less on knowledge. For even in the *theoretical* distinction between 'willing' and loving we can recognize the roots of a much more *real* distinction between the two capacities which 'Augustinians' of all kinds – often for reasons originating in concerns of Augustine himself – tended more and more to promote and perpetuate.

Similarly, in the further *conceptual* distinction between 'willing' and knowing, we can recognize the roots of a *second* and apparently more *real* distinction between the *faculties* of willing and knowing; this too was much beloved of many of the scholastics, and not only generated serious problems about the relationship between the two capacities themselves but expanded them into difficulties about relationships within the human person as a whole: between the 'I' – the agent of activity – and its multiple 'faculties'. To what then belong the consequent actions: to me, to my will, or to my mind? But again, to recognize Augustine's answer to this question, we must become aware of the complex of ideas he conceals under the word *voluntas*. For a proper understanding of that word – though alas not the understanding of the overwhelming majority of his successors – is not conveyed by the simple English word 'will' or its equivalents in other modern languages.

Augustine's account of *voluntas* is both Stoic and Platonic,[1] and both sources must be given due weight in any analysis of his account of human and divine nature, of our loves and desires (whether more or less rational); hence of these loves and desires as the springs of action. For Augustine uses *voluntas* to signify a love that has been accepted or consented to, whether for good or ill. A good *voluntas*, a proper love (*caritas*), is the root of all good actions (*On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* 1.20.21);

[1] For love and *voluntas* in a wider Augustinian context see Chapter 2 and Rist (1994b: 173–88; 2000: 205–16). In the past, the Stoic aspects of *voluntas* have been generally minimized; more recently, there is a tendency even to exaggerate them, as in Frede (2011: 153–74). Byers (2012) achieves a just balance. A recent detailed analysis of almost every text of Augustine's treating of *voluntas* is provided by Karfikova (2012): very useful but (traditionally) indeterminate (if not in error) about the relationship between love and will.

an evil *voluntas* is pride (*City of God* 12.6) and some sort of nasty lust (*concupiscentia*). Such lust can only be healed by the Holy Spirit pouring *caritas* into our hearts (*Spirit and Letter* 4.6).

If, then, we translate *voluntas* as 'will', we must be careful to identify 'will' as a term of art by which we indicate a conscious and determined *application* of love in some particular circumstance; we must not assume a faculty called the will which may or may not be 'free'. For Augustine, in the paradigm case, 'love' (*amor*, *caritas*) and 'will' (*voluntas*) are absolutely identical; thus in the *City of God* (14.7) a correct *voluntas* just is a good love. Hence, especially in *On the Trinity*, he can identify the Holy Spirit either as love or as 'will'. In effect, if we translate *voluntas* as 'will', we point to Augustine's Stoicism; hence, when his account of love-will was misunderstood (as it was at least from the time of Anselm), we find the 'will' as an occurrent form of love being gradually transformed into the will as the power (eventually the faculty) in virtue of which we are able to act. So where Augustine wrote a book entitled *On the Free Decision of the Will* (understood as the personal love-will complex), or perhaps more informatively, if less concisely, we might render it as *On the externally uninhibited power to choose which we have as moral agents*, Anselm's related discussion of what he took to be more or less the same theme comes out as *On the Freedom of Judgment* (*De Libertate Arbitrii*). In a later chapter I look at how Anselm understood *voluntas*; for the present I can only state (without argument) that he is concerned less with the expression of our love or loves but often with the exercise by the 'will' of a 'free' (or perhaps 'uninhibited') capacity to decide, often between alternative possibilities. This turned out to be a significantly new and potentially subversive shift of emphasis, but seemingly essential if human responsibility was to be preserved.

How serious a mistake could thus be made – and with what likely ramifications – becomes clearer if we examine Augustine's word *voluntas* in more detail. In doing so we shall recognize that the problem of *voluntas* is an example of the serious philosophical difficulties – not to speak of pseudo-problems – which might be generated when Latin terms were employed to convey the sense of Greek, or largely Greek, philosophical originals. No translation can be exact, and so long as a Latin speaker remains aware of the sense of a word in its Greek original, so that he recognizes Latin terms as more or less tokens of the Greek, little harm is done. But when he is ignorant either of the Greek language or that the Latin word he meets or uses is a term of art representing a Greek concept, the results can be significant and disastrous as he interprets the reality to which the term refers in a new and partly mistaken manner.

Thus as we enquire into Augustine's understanding of *voluntas* we do well, as I have observed elsewhere, to ask how his title *De libero arbitrio voluntatis* would appear in Greek. The answer would be *Peri tes autexousias tes proaireseos*,[2] which serves to locate the philosophical context of the word *voluntas*, for in Stoic texts, especially in Epictetus, the word *prohairesis* signifies man's moral self, man as a moral agent. The Stoic Seneca uses *voluntas* in exactly the same way, so as a reader of the Latin Stoics Augustine knew that the term indicates the moral self both dispositional and occurrent – and very specifically as an equivalent of *horme* in discussions of action.[3] Since, in a Platonic tradition going back to Socrates, he thinks of the human individual as primarily a moral agent, his term *voluntas* is to be understood accordingly: it means not just a 'will', let alone a faculty of willing, but the individual as moral, loving and spiritual being, whether dispositionally or in his performances.

This is philosophically highly significant, for in effect Augustine's *voluntas* thus signifies the whole person, the 'I'. Thus it is not only philologically but also philosophically confusing to translate it – with no gloss – as 'will'. For if we have a will (or similarly a mind) we can be said to do things with our will – or with our mind. But more probably the answer to the question, 'What do we think with?' (Or, 'What do we will with?') is: 'Nothing; we just think and will'. For Augustine the entire medieval dispute between intellectualists and voluntarists about human action must turn out to be based on confusion. When we think or 'will' – or rather do both at the same time (unless drunk or otherwise incapable of responsible action) – we just do it.

The so-called faculties of will and intellect are thus unmasked as reified concepts: not that medieval and later discussion of them should be dismissed as philosophically uninteresting, for despite the reification, much good thinking was still possible. Augustine, however, did not intend them as reified; how sad then that his successors misconstrued him, not least (as noted and to be investigated in more detail) under the influence of

[2] For the Stoic background (in Epictetus) of *prohairesis* see Pich (2010: 111–35); Long (2002: chapter 8); Frede (2011: 44–8). As noted earlier, the term *autexousia* is found in Christian writers as early as Justin, and very influentially by Origen in defending human freedom against (often) astral and Gnostic forms of determinism. But Origen's interpretation of human freedom is not Augustine's: for Origen, to be free entails the option of acting otherwise.

[3] All Stoics, of course, talk about assent, and Augustine would have found confirmation of its apparent importance in Platonist texts as well, not least in Calcidius' commentary on the *Timaeus* (assuming, that is, that he had read it); Calcidius is discussed in Frede (2011: 58). The problem, of course, is who or what does the assenting: Is it the 'will' or the agent? In *CD* 19.4 Augustine equates *horme* with *impetus*. For Augustine's Stoicizing terminology see Byers (2012: especially 89–90, 228–9).

Anselm who tells us more than we needed to know about some funny entity that we somehow 'own', called 'the will'. It is no accident that the phrase 'free will' (*libera voluntas*) is comparatively rare in Augustine but almost universal after Anselm.

We are now in a position to consider features of Augustine's thought that encouraged others to engage in reification in separating willing from loving. In the following chapter we shall look at other parts of the love story that should have pointed to a very different conclusion. As we have already noted, however, Augustine was not a systematic writer, and it has been easy to construct apparently Augustinian theses from different parts of his writings, or from parts that just happen to be available. Thus it is not difficult to select texts so as to produce, for example, both a Calvinist and a Tridentine Augustine; during the sixteenth century many people did that. One of my present aims is to discourage others from continuing the practice. Meanwhile the least we can do to rectify the confusion in thinking about Augustine himself is to discern that by *voluntas* he refers to a *loving* 'will' and then to enquire about the varying objects of such 'love'.

In *On Rebuke and Grace* (AD 426) the aged Augustine offers the clearest introduction to what can be read as his mature understanding of a morally free 'will'. In chapters 11 and 12 he distinguishes two types of desirable freedom – as distinct from 'freedom' to sin – that in different circumstances have been available to mankind. The first, that of Adam before the fall, he calls a 'lesser (or first) freedom' (*libertas minor*);[4] the second, the freedom of God and of the saints in heaven, is the 'greater freedom' (*libertas maior*). If we are to understand his account of 'freedom' in the strict sense – which is still the subject of constant and often ideologically fuelled debate[5] – these two varieties must be sharply distinguished. For although the language of 'greater' and 'lesser' freedom is new in *On Rebuke and Grace*, some form of the distinction is much older, going back to the 390s and linked with Augustine's identification of four stages of human history: before the Law (which reveals sin [*Reply to Simplicianus* 1.6]), under the Law, under Grace, in Peace. These can already be found in Question 66 of the *83 Questions* and in Augustine's comments on some texts of *Romans* (*Propositions on Romans* 13–18) (AD 394).[6] For whereas in Peace – that is, in heaven – we are unable to sin (*non posse peccare*),

[4] Cf. *CD* 14.27; Ench. 28.106 (where we read of true freedom [*vera libertas*]).

[5] See Kirwan (1989); Chappell (1995); Wetzel (1992); Stump (2001: 124–47); Davenport (2002: 437–61; 2007: 67–89); Rogers (2004: 437–61; 2007a; 2008: 30–54); Couenhoven (2007: 279–98).

[6] See especially Babcock (1979: 55–74).

Adam's original condition was inferior: enjoying only the lesser freedom of being able not to sin (*posse non peccare*).[7] Before the Pelagian controversy, however, Augustine had thought that Christians under grace might be wholly freed from evil habits, but he came to believe that this could not be squared with either experience or Scripture (let alone with the first principles of his own theology). Hence from about 411 he claimed more insistently that Paul's account of his struggle with his 'carnal' self must be referred to the post-baptismal life of the Christian still persevering, under Grace, to the end.[8] That change of focus cannot be logically unrelated to his clearer understanding of the difference between God's immediate purpose in creating Adam and his ultimate purposes for Adam's fallen descendants.

In Augustine's later writings, what is Adam's situation before the fall? His lesser freedom entails that he is able not to sin (though he could, and did). He might not always 'want' to persevere; hence he would sin. Even to exercise his 'lesser freedom' and to have the maximum chance of not sinning, he needed and enjoyed a certain assistance of God (*adiutorium sine quo non*: *Rebuke and Grace* 11.31) that, while it did not guarantee that he would not sin, gave him every reasonable chance not to. Although without God's help he could not avoid sinning, since he enjoyed that help, neither his sinning nor his not sinning was inevitable (*Incomplete Work* 5.61); he was in some significant sense 'capable' of not sinning, 'free' not to sin. But why would he not 'want' to persevere in the good life he enjoyed? Why would he not continue to actualize his capacity not to sin? Why did he in fact actualize his capacity to sin?

Augustine consistently held that God could not have bestowed an absolute 'freedom of moral indifference' on creatures he had created rational (cf., e.g. *Incomplete Work* 5.38) and who are designed to find their rest in himself (*Confessions* 1.1) because a wholly undetermined (rather than fatally underdetermined) choice would have to be made – *per impossibile* – for no 'good' reason at all – except, that is, and as we shall see in the unique case of the fallen angels, in some parasitic and wholly godless sense of the word 'good'.[9] Indeed, Augustine came to believe that the autonomy, the more or less libertarian choice advocated by his Pelagian opponents – who were prepared to speak of man as being 'emancipated by God' in a sense very

[7] *ExPropRom* 29.37; Ench. 28.105; *CD* 11.12 and so forth.

[8] Cf. *Co2EpPel.* 1.8.13–1.11.24 with Platz (1938: 148); Dodaro (2004a), correcting the otherwise excellent discussion of Berrouard (1981: 101–96).

[9] For Augustine's insistence on the necessary role of reason in human choices see Chappell (1995: 202ff).

different from that he himself preferred – must collapse into such unintelligible freedom of (moral) indifference.[10] The problem with the Pelagians was that they believed both in a providential God who had created mankind and in what amounts to such a freedom of indifference; the combination, Augustine holds, is impossible. But what would happen if the providential God were to disappear?

As first created, Adam had no understanding of good and evil; hence the 'Pelagian' bishop Julian of Eclanum supposed that, though he could err, he could not sin (*Incomplete Work* 1.102). Indeed, he was *rectus* (*Qo*. 7: 30)[11] – which *Augustine* understands to mean that he was upright, on the right path, with no internal conflicts, innocently so and without understanding. Within his limited world Adam had been given full discretion (*liberum arbitrium*), and as yet was determined neither by right reason nor by wrongful desires. As Augustine notes in *On Free Choice* (3.24.72), though Adam was rational he was neither wise – that is, possessed of understanding – nor foolish. Nevertheless, he made a decision to act, 'prompted' by the devil, which was implicitly between obedience and disobedience: between trusting God and not bothering.[12] Yet (in this differently from Satan) he did not –or could not – understand the malice of disobedience – which in Augustine's view is the mother and guardian of the virtues (*City of God* 14.12; *Good of Marriage* 30), and significantly of love (*Sermon* 359B. 12) – for had he understood it, he surely would not have eaten the forbidden fruit – though Augustine believed that fruit is more attractive, *qua* forbidden (*Spirit and Letter* 4.6): and not least, presumably, for the uncomprehending! Perhaps Adam believed that the

[10] I say 'came to believe' to indicate that Augustine's anti-Pelagian position was largely his own; he inherited little of it from his sources. As noted in the previous chapter, although the possibility of absolute libertarian (indeterminist) free choice had been raised during the second century AD, it had a short philosophical life in pagan antiquity and post-dated Augustine's sources for discussions of freedom (that is, Cicero, Varro, Persius and Seneca). For his part, however, Julian of Eclanum always insisted that man must retain the radical option of being able to choose for or against the good; that capacity is part of his very nature (*OpImp.* 1.96). In that view we may recognize some foreshadowing of the position of Duns Scotus that will be discussed in a later chapter. Whether the text of *OpImp.* 1.78 should more modestly be translated as 'emancipated by (rather than from) God' has been much discussed (see Lamberigts 1993: 349). The more modest translation may well be correct, but Augustine would surely take Julian's understanding of freedom to collapse into the more impudent version.

[11] Cited at *C2EpPel*. 2.2; *OpImp*. 4.44, 5.16, 5.38, 5.60. Augustine always held that rational beings are either (in some sense) free from *iustitia* or (in some sense) free from sin (like unfallen Adam): cf. *GLA* 15.31.

[12] For the capacity in rational creatures for both belief and unbelief, and for a 'pre-moral' choice between them, see *SpirLitt.* 32.58. For an important 'source' note Plotinus, *Ennead* 5.1.1.

fruit would be good for him (which is what the Serpent tells Eve): an idea Anselm was later to develop.

In all this problems are obvious. Does Augustine explain exactly why the apple is not good for Adam? Why can Adam not see that for himself? What is the precise explanation of his disobedience? In what sense does Augustine think it was wicked as well as metaphysically lethal? He never offers unambiguous answers to such questions, and we must ask what that implies for the coherence of his overall stance. Adam is neither wise nor foolish; that would seem to imply not only that he cannot understand the moral law, but *a fortiori* that he cannot understand the relationship between fulfilling the dictates of that law and the command of God that his prohibitions be obeyed. Adam cannot be like a Platonic Guardian, who because he knows what is right will inevitably act accordingly; only in heaven can such a state be attained. Nor, however, is he as he will be when fallen: that is, unable to avoid sinning while fully aware of God's command not to sin. Augustine's account both of Adam's 'moral' situation and of the general relationship between recognition of the claims of the moral law and the accompanying and necessary requirement of obedience to God's commands remains apparently obscure and murky. After Augustine the problem of obedience would lurk beneath the surface of moral debate, to emerge with devastating effect in the mind of Duns Scotus.

Such developments lie far in the future and we must advance towards them with slow and careful steps. It is the largely Stoic aspects of Augustine's understanding of *voluntas* – which pointed later writers towards the separation of deciding and of acting out of love – that must be our immediate concern.[13] Stoicism, as we have seen, can be recognized in Augustine's understanding of *voluntas* as both dispositional and occurrent. When occurrent, it is an (uncompelled) movement of the soul (e.g. *City of God* 5.11; *Reconsiderations* 1.15.3) or an affect (*affectus*: *Life-Style of the Church* 1.15.25). Thus – confusingly perhaps, but in this Augustine is following the Stoics closely – it refers both to the character of an agent and to the actions (and intentions) to which his character disposes him. When it refers to a disposition, it is necessarily our own and 'free' (*Grace and Free Choice* 5.12), whether it be just or perverse. Thus our *voluntas* (our moral character) can be 'prepared' by its habits or by God. When we have 'free choice' – absolute discretion – our intentions and consequent actions will express our moral personality. In effect, and like Plato, Aristotle and

[13] For more detail see Byers (2006, 2012). Byers convincingly applies to Augustine the results of recent investigation of Stoic theories of action and motivation, especially those of Inwood (1985).

the early Stoics, Augustine (when not castigating the Pelagians) is concerned not with whether we are free to do otherwise, but with whether and in what sense we are the primary cause of our own actions, in that sense responsible for them. But here we see the looming difficulty: If all such actions are indeed ours, must we not enjoy the genuine possibility of acting other than as we decide if we are to be held responsible for our decisions? Only under such a condition may we seem both 'free' and responsible, but such freedom is neither Augustine's greater or lesser variety. How then does it relate – if not merely verbally – to such varieties?

Augustine has taken over from the Stoics the idea of 'assent'. For the Stoics we first receive impressions from the senses; we next assent to or dissent from the propositions these impressions suggest to us, and as a result of that assent we act or attempt to act. Augustine's account of assent is not identical with that of the Stoics, which is always to a proposition, and there has been disagreement as to whether for him 'assent' is the name given to what follows upon the meeting of our aroused reason and desires as we act (or try to act), or whether it indicates a further 'deliberate event' – as the Stoics believed – in the theatre of the (rational) soul. Despite his occasional use of the word 'judgement' (*iudicium*) as a synonym for 'assent' (as at *Literal Commentary* 9.14.25), Augustine normally uses 'assent' in the former sense, though later he was widely supposed to have used it in the latter and, as we shall see, was understood as indicating a further and specifically deliberative act after the conjunction of our reason and desire: an act, that is, of the 'will', now seen as a faculty in whose supposedly supervening decisions resides our freedom to choose. Hence arose the confusing medieval dispute to which I have already alluded: not as to whether we will freely, and in what sense of 'free', but whether we have something we can call a free will, independent of our reasons and desires, which might determine, autonomously, how we are to act.[14]

Normally, and particularly in his later writings, when Augustine discusses 'freedom of choice', he is concerned with choices for which the agent can be held responsible. Morally good choices – strictly impossible without God's grace – lead to salvation while vicious behaviour forms a path to future damnation. Augustine is much less concerned with the more general question of causal determinism, that is whether, as the Stoics believed, our actions are 'fated' by a preceding causal chain, though from

[14] As we shall see, Anselm emphasizes and misreads some of Augustine's Stoic material without realizing that it is Stoic and without recognizing that even if understood it would offer him only an *Augustinus dimidiatus.*

time to time he will argue that the Stoics are indeed mistaken if they suppose that such causal chains remove moral 'freedom' and hence individual responsibility.[15] He is less concerned, that is, with whether if I raise my arm I have no option but to do so; he assumes I am free to do so because no moral choice is being made. His problem is whether if I raise my arm to strike the person beside me, I can justly be held responsible for inflicting injury on him. He never wants to deny, of course, that I have *some kind* of *choice* between morally relevant alternatives, and he allows that I may have a second-order want to act rightly, but without the power to enact what I want (as in *Propositions on Romans* 12.12). So (in an extreme case) I might be faced with a choice between theft and adultery, if – for example – I had not the time to commit both (*Spirit and Letter* 32.55; cf. *Confessions* 8.10.24). For pagans and Christians alike, decision between more or less evil options is always at our own discretion, though as we improve, our choice will become more limited; the viler alternatives (and others less vile) coming, by some grace of God, to be antecedently rejected.

Unfallen Adam would have assumed he enjoyed some sort of libertarian choice, albeit limited, between options. His problem apparently lay in that assumption, for in exercising his choice he in effect longed for the specifically autonomous freedom of moral indifference into which libertarian 'choices' – in Augustine's view – must collapse, and which is incompatible with divine providence and our God-given inclination towards the good. Nevertheless, given the right circumstances, he could have chosen the better alternative; he really was capable of not sinning and had been endowed with a native attraction for the good. Augustine's 'lesser freedom' shows how he denies that *Genesis* attributes a 'compatibilist' freedom to unfallen Adam: how unfallen Adam was no Stoic dog trotting happily behind the cart to which he is tied, having freely and with full knowledge *agreed* to follow the right path (*SVF* 3.975). As yet, he has not 'agreed' to anything; he has simply and happily gone along. Seemingly with luck, Adam could have avoided sin, and yet he sinned, and only in sinning became 'moral' – or rather, immoral. Why? Part of the answer, as we shall see, is that the 'wrong place' in which he found himself was an effect of a preceding fall of angels, the nature of whose lapse into evil was both similar and dissimilar to his own.

To understand what Adam was not, we need to be more precise about the difference between 'lesser' and 'greater' freedom (and consequently

[15] Note the comments of Osborne on Augustine's distinction between God's causation and the causal chains in nature (Osborne 2008: 219–32, esp. note 10).

between lesser and greater virtue). The possessor of greater freedom – like God but unlike unfallen Adam – is unable to do wrong. That does not imply that such a being is ignorant of the metaphysics of evil, still less that he lacks the physical power to do evil. It means that he cannot love and hence will evil, that he is not 'that kind of person'. It is not, we might say, that he lacks the power to pull the trigger, but that he would never dream of pulling the trigger.[16] He is a 'New Man' – The phrase will recur in very different secularized contexts from the eighteenth century on – a member of a new conglomerate (*massa*) which, first healed by baptism (*Reconsiderations* 1.36.3; *Against Julian* 3.14.28), has achieved an inability to sin, for grace heals the 'will' and a healthy will fulfils the law (*Spirit and Letter* 30.52).[17]

The saint enjoys the 'to-be-longed-for necessity' (*desideranda necessitas: Unfinished Work* 5.61) that is also his 'longed-for reward' (*City of God* 22.20.3). He is 'free' because he has been 'freed' (*City of God* 13.42) – the need for such freedom is proclaimed in *John's Gospel* (8:34, 36; cf. *Romans* 8:21) – from the tyranny of irrational or immoral desires, and his choices are now compatibilist choices. Because he knows and loves God wholeheartedly, he has neither the wish nor therefore the option to do wrong. That was not the situation of unfallen Adam nor – though for different reasons – is it ours.

My reading of Augustine thus far has turned largely on late texts, partly because of the more explicit vocabulary – about lesser and greater freedoms – to be found there, but there is no reason not to understand the much earlier *On Free Choice* broadly in the same way. That would explain why Augustine thinks he can be held to be in good faith when he rejects the claim of Pelagius that only after *On Free Choice* did he develop an anti-Pelagian position on the 'will' (*Reconsiderations* 1.9.3). His claim would (or should) be that after *On Free Choice* he did indeed propose a new teaching – that fallen man's ability even to turn to God is God's work, not man's; that even the beginnings of faith (*initia fidei*) are God's

[16] I say 'would never dream' both literally and metaphorically, for, as Plato observes, in our present life the 'good' man may dream what the bad man does, though he adds that by living (even) better he can alleviate the problem (*Rep.* 9. 571). Augustine too is much interested in whether we can rightly be said to sin in a dream. He concludes that we can and do, and it is clear why he must think so. His ideas are relevant to the present discussion and I shall return to them; see Matthews (1981: 47–54, 1992, especially 90–106); Mann (1983: 378–85, 1999: 140–65); Haji (1999: 166–82).

[17] Cf. Folliet (1992: 95–109). Normally the healing derives from an inpouring of the sweetness of grace in love (*AdSimp.*1.2.21; *On John's Gospel* 26.4–5: *trahit sua quemque voluptas*; *C2EpPel.*2.9.21); during the struggle with the Donatists, however, Augustine became convinced that at times coercion may concentrate the mind (*CLittPetil.* 2.84.186; *Ep.*93.5.18: *stimulo terroris*) – as a channel of grace.

gift (cf. *On the Gift of Perseverance* 20.53–21.54) – while also insisting that in his account of the true nature of the 'will' there had been no change. Before the fall Adam believed and acted as enjoying a limited libertarian freedom; after the fall he enjoys neither the 'libertarian' freedom of his former state nor the compatibilist freedom of the saints. He now – without further grace – has no kind of choice between obedience and disobedience, let alone between good and evil; he has only the choice of evil (whether direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious). In his fallen state he will 'deliberately' perform a series of objectively evil acts (though, as we shall see, some will be worse than others); his will is permanently free (and liable) to do evil (*liberum arbitrium sufficit ad malum*: *Rebuke and Grace* 11.31; cf. *Spirit and Letter* 3.5). It is generally 'determined' and enslaved to evil – though even slaves are not totally enslaved (*Enchiridion* 9.30)[18] – and it can be led back by grace, not to any 'libertarian' freedom, but eventually to the superior compatibilist outcome. I shall return to the sense in which Augustine understands our present 'compatibility' with evil.

Nevertheless, according to *On Free Choice*, perhaps our fallen selves still enjoy a slightly larger remnant of the apparently libertarian freedom of unfallen Adam. It is sometimes thought that this is because, although our 'first-order' desires are now determined by our sinfulness, we are still able to want to have the right desires though we do not have them. These 'second-order' desires – certainly recognized by Augustine (e.g. *Confessions* 8.5–10) – are still in our power. Thus before his baptism Augustine famously *wanted to want* to be chaste, without actually wanting to be chaste. But the presence of such second-order desires does not indicate that one enjoys libertarian freedom, unless it can be shown – and avoiding an infinite regress of desires – that they derive, if not immediately from God, at least from man's nature as originally created. Clearly after the *Reply to Simplicianus* that is out of the question and neither is there substantial evidence that it was Augustine's position in *On Free Choice*.[19] Nevertheless,

[18] Augustine incautiously (see Rist 1994b: 272, note 43) uses the phrase 'enslaved will' (*servum arbitrium*) on two occasions: *CJul.* 2.8.23 and more apologetically 5.5.19. The idea is that after the fall we are unable to perform a strictly virtuous (and therefore salvific) act without grace because our 'will has been made captive' (*captivatum*, *C2EpPel.* 3.8.24; *captiva voluntas*: *OpImp*.3.112). It should not be read as any kind of more general suggestion of determinism. At *Ench*. 9.30 Augustine is even more incautious while in the later *GLA* 1.1 (426–7), trying to correct misunderstandings, he insists that he wants to defend both grace and 'free' will. As we shall see, Luther's position on a wider determinism is – fatefully – more ambiguous, if not in outright contradiction to Augustine's, and he seems to take advantage of Augustine's lack of caution.

[19] Thus far I would agree with Rogers (2008: 40–3) against Stump (2001). Stump's 'hierarchical' account of first- and second-order wills derives from Frankfurt (especially 1971). See further Stump

so long as Augustine believed that we have the possibility of *turning* to God for help, our fallen condition retains a larger portion than he would later allow of the (God-given, if inadequate and finally ineffective) *active* capacity to escape sin that Adam once had.

We may wonder whether, if Adam had originally persisted in the 'right' course, he would have attained a free and happy compatibilist state. In view of what seems to have been his mere 'going along' in the right direction and his apparent underlying delusion that he enjoyed a libertarian freedom, his persistence seems itself implausible. Augustine is quite specific that he would not have died, but is more reticent about if or how he might have reached the stage of being unable to sin. What he does say, in the philosophically sophisticated *Incomplete Work against Julian* (5.57–8; 6.6), is that if he had persevered he would have deserved his reward: apparently the gift of an *adiutorium* by which he would obtain a permanent condition of 'greater freedom'. In fact, if somehow Adam had been able by perseverance so to develop the habit of virtue that he *needed* no further help, it would seem as though man as originally created, and by his own efforts – as the Pelagians supposed – could have bridged the gulf between original human goodness and the perfection of the saints sealed by their adoption by God. Adam would have achieved by himself what it would require the Incarnation to achieve for his descendants, and what Augustine surely believed only a further injection of grace could have achieved for him: that is, the capacity not to be able to sin. For the Incarnation enables us (or at least some of us) not to re-live the career of Adam before the fall, but to attain a higher state with no possibility of a fall. Without such further grace, of course, there would still be such a possibility in 'heaven', as Augustine says is the case for the good angels (*Incomplete Work* 5.39).

Adam assumes his initial freedom to be a limited libertarian freedom, though it is unclear how his choices within that could be moral and responsible. As we have seen, he must choose in ignorance of good and evil because he has not yet learned the difference between them. What he does know is that he is disobedient, which suggests that he has some awareness of the 'material' nature of his disobedient behaviour without understanding how what he is doing is wrong. Augustine proposes something like this possibility in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (11.41.56): perhaps Adam jumped the gun in wanting understanding before he was

(1993: 211–36). Davenport (2007) defends an account of the *De libero arbitrio* roughly similar to Stump's.

ready for it.[20] For just as a child has to learn what is wrong before he can interiorize why it is wrong, and just as he cannot interiorize what is right unless he has developed a practice of doing right, so Adam would be mistaken in rejecting a childish fideism still necessary in his immaturity if he is to outgrow it.[21] On that scenario the devil took advantage of Adam's childish rebelliousness and his accompanying belief that he was enjoying some sort of libertarian freedom, so Adam suffers punitive correction – or is it merely the consequences – for a self-destructive though non-comprehending disobedience. Yet that disobedience will afford God the opportunity, through the Incarnation, to lead mankind to an eventual state of 'greater freedom', when we shall be equipped to understand the difference between right and wrong as well as why we are happy to have no option to do wrong, and when we are 'truly free where we are not unwillingly delighted [in the good]' (*On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.30.33). In some sort of 'free will defence' of angelic – and hence human – evil doing, Augustine points out, both in the *Literal Commentary* (11.9.12) and in the later book 22 of the *City of God* (22.1.2), that in the case of the fall of the angels – parallel yet importantly different, as we shall see, from the fall of Adam – God foresaw their 'fall' as making way for a greater good than would have been otherwise possible.[22]

Adam's disobedience needs further comment. As I have argued, it cannot be a moral fault because Adam has not yet learned the difference between right and wrong. That indeed is the situation of the very young child, who has to learn to obey before learning what should be obeyed, but he does not understand why he must obey (except in terms of rewards and punishments). So Adam's position can be construed as childish: although he has potentially some sort of libertarian will, he is not yet in a position to use it, whether morally or immorally, because he has not yet undergone

[20] Some sort of jumping the gun, often in the form of anticipating their sexual relationship in marriage, is attributed to Adam and Eve by several earlier Christian writers: Tertullian, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. Augustine's position is different and much more sophisticated, though somehow an *audax curiositas* is involved (*GenLitt*. 11.31.41).

[21] Augustine rejects a crude version of this theme; part of his concern seems to have been that if Adam is portrayed as *merely* childish and immature the door might be open to the (much more interesting and worth developing) Pelagian idea that he had the morality of a 'primitive man' or savage (cf. Lamberigts 1990: 373–410, esp. 376).

[22] For further versions of something like a free will defence cf. *Ench*. 27.8 and (earlier) *DLA* 2.1.1. In *CD* 14.27 Augustine explains that although God could have created people (materially) perfect, he declined to do so in order to display both the power and danger of pride in a created intelligent being and the necessity of grace – that is to bridge the gap between human and divine– if full goodness is to be attained.

the training in obedience which must precede, or at least accompany, moral growth.

Consider the following argument:

> God tells me (in this case Adam) that, if I want to do well, I ought to do X (or not do Y).
> I want to do well.
> Therefore I ought to do X (or not do Y).

In this case 'ought' gives me (Adam) a command, but Adam (and I) can disobey it. There may be two explanations of our disobedience:

1. That we do not see the point of the command and so ignore it;
2. That we just want to (or like to) disobey.

Adam cannot be in situation (2), though his fallen descendants can (and are). So he does not see the point of the command and when some circumstance arises in which his obedience is challenged (as to please his wife), his non-comprehension allows him to disobey.

Let us suppose that this is Adam's situation and that it explains why he is punished – as well as in what sense obedience to God must be a non-negotiable feature of any complete account of morality; Adam just has to learn the hard way. Thus far we might seem to have offered no full explanation of why God created Adam in a condition of apparent perfection but where salutary punishment becomes necessary. Perhaps Augustine ought at this point to have thought more carefully about the position of his Pelagian adversaries when they treat (albeit carelessly) Adam as a moral primitive. If it turns out that Augustine's version of events is fatally flawed in the sense that neither he nor his successors is able to revise it – that is, to give an explanation of the fall of Adam which safeguards not only God's omnipotence but also his goodness and man's responsibility for his actions – perhaps such an alternative route must be followed as some kind of salvage operation.

Be that as it may, the greater good that Adam learns (as only he can learn it) by experience is that the compatibilist freedom of God and the good angels – the condition of being unable to sin – is superior to the more libertarian version he unthinkingly assumed he had been originally granted. It might seem (to us, as to the Pelagians) that the apparently more autonomous condition of unfallen Adam would be superior – indeed it arguably would be superior to a condition of predetermined, unthinking obedience; yet Augustine's claim is that only the saints are truly autonomous because they have been given the wherewithal to choose the right

with full understanding of how it is right. One might say, without wildly misrepresenting Augustine, that he is portraying a saint as similar to a Platonic Guardian in one important particular: since he or she really knows and loves God, he or she will always and necessarily choose to obey the commands proceeding from God's goodness. Such is real autonomy: independence not *from* God (as Julian, according to Augustine, supposed desirable as a virtual freedom of 'indifference' [*Incomplete Work* 1.78] but which Augustine judged impossible), but *in* God. If we look ahead to the afterlife (and eventual near death) of Augustinian ideas, this loving knowledge of the saints is vital; once that is lost sight of, the freedom of indifference returns, sometimes posing as libertarian freedom. For Augustine, the rational disposition of the 'will' of the human agent must be nothing less than a love of the good God above all else. Hence the freedom of indifference would be possible only in a godless, or at least non-providential, universe – if not, as Augustine rightly concludes, in contempt of God.

Augustine thinks that Adam's disobedience derives from a lurking pride activated by the devil. He does not develop, at least explicitly, the idea that it took the form of a premature – hence impossible – desire to *understand* the wrongness of what is wrong; perhaps Satan took advantage of the fact that Adam just did not see the point of the ban on that particular fruit-eating. Nevertheless, one effect of his wrongdoing was that he got the chance to understand its wider significance, both metaphysical and moral. In Augustine's view, Adam's pride and self-love, prompting him to disobedience and perhaps arising from a prior ignorance and immaturity, were actualized by a more 'human' misjudgement. He put his desire to please his wife, Eve, above his obligations to God; his fault was a misguided 'friendly goodwill' (*amicalis benevolentia*: *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 11.42.59). He did not recognize, in seeking happiness and pleasure, that his wife had been given him not as a friend to be preferred to God, but as a gift of God to be recognized as such in his common life. He wanted to 'enjoy' himself (or another) without reference to God, in that sense yielding to pride and self-will (cf. *Sermons on Psalms* 121.3).[23] He did not know that any proper love can only be grounded in love of God; somehow his love is defective. He has not achieved that ordered love which Augustine holds to be the teaching of the *Song of Songs*: *Ordinate in me caritatem*.[24]

[23] For more on enjoying and 'using' (with further references to some recent discussion) see Rist (1994b: 162–4); for the risks of friendship (via cronyism) turning into a futile striving for omnipotence see Rist (1994b: 177–8).

[24] Cf. La Bonnardière (1955: 225–37).

All such yielding to pride and self-will, Augustine argues elsewhere,[25] is ultimately to be explained as a desire for God's omnipotence, read in a libertarian sense as the power to do what one chooses: that is, as a confused desire for the freedom of indifference into which libertarian freedom collapses; that is, for emancipation from God. Adam knew, albeit uncomprehendingly, that he should obey God's command but, as in the standard Augustinian account of sin,[26] he was induced to reflect on an alternative possibility, seemingly for a 'good' reason, where the good is the enemy of the best; he then took pleasure in it and so assented to activate it. In any case, it was Adam's seemingly libertarian freedom which gave the devil his chance, while at the same time, through the fall, opening the way for God to demonstrate that such freedom is a delusion: a honey-trap. Hence, unlike pre-fallen Adam, we now can fully understand the human condition (cf. *Incomplete Work* 5.57–8, 6.6).

Our understanding of the case of Adam is complicated by the intervention of the devil, the weakness of Adam's 'libertarian' will being displayed through the malice of a third party required to set Adam up for his fall. Augustine believes, and will try to explain, that the nature of our original 'freedom' and of Adam's original failure can only be fully understood if we get behind the fate of Adam and reflect on the fall and consequent activity of the tempting ex-angel.[27] And with the fall of the angels there is no tempter to intervene between the creature and his Creator, but we have before us the raw fact of the 'inadequacy' of the 'will' (that is, the moral agent) itself: a more basic given that will demand explanation. Since my discussion thus far has been founded on Augustine's eventually formalized distinction between lesser and greater freedom, it is convenient that his principal discussions of the fall of the angels are found in two comparatively late texts, and that, with only rather minor differences, the same theory is to be found in both, those texts being the *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (11.13. 17 ff.) and the *City of God* (12.7–9).

[25] Augustine believes that his famous pear theft was thus motivated (*Conf.* 2.6.14). The desire for omnipotence is particularly revealed when we do something wrong just because it is wrong (2.4.9, 2.6.12, 2.8.16) – though that was not Adam's situation. See further later in this chapter, and Rist (2005: 259–66).

[26] So *GenMan.* 2.14; *De Sermone Domini in Monte* 1.12.34: *suggestio* – whether through memory or the senses – *delectatio*, *consensio*. Adam might be pardoned, perhaps, if he could have thought of himself as the victim of some kind of 'divine command theory'. Though he did not know why what he did was wrong – having as yet no knowledge of good and evil – he was told that it was wrong.

[27] Long before Augustine Christians believed that the fall of the angels is the core of the problem. Origen, for example, claims that without such knowledge, available only through Revelation, the pagan philosophers necessarily failed to resolve the problem of evil (*CCelsum* 4.62–70).

The experiences of fallen angels and of fallen Adam (and hence fallen men) are less similar than they look, not least because for the fallen angels there is no reprieve. Since Augustine is clear that some angels fell and some did not, he must have assumed that their original freedom was at best a 'lesser freedom'; a fall would have been impossible if they had enjoyed the greater freedom of being *unable* to sin. Nevertheless, the two classes of angels were treated very differently. In the *City of God* Augustine himself observes that either they were originally of different natures – and he rules that option out (12.1) – or they received dissimilar portions of grace (12.9), but fatefully he fails to explain the sense of 'dissimilar'. In any case, those who fell were certain to fall; it merely remains to explain how this could be. Thus the bad angels, but not the good, were in a more parlous condition than unfallen Adam, while the better group was granted the 'higher freedom' by which it avoided Adam's fall.

Among the angels, as we have already noted, there was no 'external' incitement to envy; perhaps thinking of Cyprian, Augustine rejects the view that Satan envied the coming of Adam whom he knew would be created in the image of God (*Literal Commentary on Genesis* 11.16.24), and whom he hated for it. Yet there must, one would suppose, be some explanation for his delinquency. Augustine approaches the problem from two directions. First, there was no efficient (or prior) cause pushing him to evil (*City of God* 12.7–9); rather there was a 'deficient cause' that will explain the *possibility* of a choice of evil.[28] Evil, itself a 'privation of good' (*Confessions* 3.7.12; *Enchiridion* 3.11), is possible for all created agents because they are created 'from nothing'; Augustine explains this further in the *Unfinished Work* (5.27–38; cf. *City of God* 14.13; *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 2.28.48). All things that exist derive either from God (as the Trinitarian persons) or from nothing, and the 'nothing' at the heart of created agents will draw them to revert to non-existence unless they are held in being by God. This 'nothing' is not-a-thing, hence it cannot be described in terms of a thing, nor strictly as a cause; in the *City of God* Augustine compares our trying to grasp it with trying to see darkness or to hear silence. Nevertheless, these comparisons are themselves informative: if I try to describe a dark room, the word 'dark' is not meaningless. It tells me that there is no light in the room and that it is invisible to the eye.

Here is another, perhaps more informative, parallel. If I have a pocket with a hole in it, the pocket exists but is defective, lacking completeness. If I do not recognize that, I may cause myself a deal of trouble. So here

[28] Such deficiency is connected with *creatio ex nihilo* as early as the *De libero arbitrio* (2.20.54).

we see the difference between Adam and Satan, and a partial explanation of why Satan's sin is the more confounding. Satan knows that he has a hole in his nature that derives from his creation from nothing and reveals itself in his necessary dependence on God for his continuing existence. Adam is much less clear on the matter; his problem is simply the ability to yield to temptation. Satan's sin can be labelled as purely 'wilful';[29] he really does understand the reality of his situation, but chooses to ignore it. He deliberately deludes himself to do what he fully understands to be wrong. Nevertheless, it is the possession of only a 'lesser freedom' (or even less than that) that allows this situation. If we are proud of ourselves, we shall be proud of our hollowness and drawn to it, as by a magnet, for if God be neglected, there is nowhere else to turn and we shall love our own hollowness.[30] Only God (and by his grace the saints and good angels) is free from that tendency, thus enjoying the greater – and in a unique sense compatibilist – freedom, since he himself is compatible with his own good will.

The possibility of evil has always to be actualized, and in the case of Satan, again as is normal in Augustine, this is caused by a specifically evil – and in this case manifestly irrational – desire. While Nietzsche said, 'If there are gods, how could I endure not to be one?', Augustine's Satan said, '*Since* there is a God, how can I endure not to be one?'. Here, any close parallel with Adam must be misleading, for with the fallen angels the evil desire is entirely self-generated. Satan has knowledge both of his own soul and of God, and specifically from that knowledge arose his wholly irrational attempt to imitate God by basking in the love of his own power and aiming for omnipotence. Augustine was well aware that it is one thing not to know, another not to want to know (*Grace and Free Choice* 5.12ff.). Certainly such a desire was (and is) *possible* because of the weakness at the heart of any nature created from nothing, but what remains unexplained is why the devil and his angels assented to this perverse desire and thus sinned. Was it just bad luck? What about the *adiutorium sine quo non*, some portion of which they will have received, but, like Adam, abandoned? Even less than for Adam has it sufficed. But in the case of Satan, rather differently from that of Adam, this insufficiency was 'activated' directly by the action – or rather the inaction – of God. As with non-elect humans, when God declines to act, the fall is disastrous; thus the bad angels fall unredeemably. Otherwise God might seem to have changed his mind.

[29] So Chappell (1995: 189–90).

[30] In the case of his theft of pears – significantly – Augustine *loved* his *defectus* (*Conf.* 2.4.9).

According to Augustine, the fate of Satan is not just bad luck;[31] in his case, though not in that of Adam, God is entirely responsible for *conditions* that guarantee he will sin. But Augustine (unlike Luther and Calvin) wants to deny that this amounts to God's *direct* responsibility, being the result of God's predetermined plan, and various contemporary writers have been ready to take him at his word,[32] saying that the fall is necessarily inexplicable and appealing entirely to the 'deficient cause' which, as we have seen, allows for the possibility of a fall, but does not guarantee it. Indeed, some strictly 'Augustinian' theory of the 'inexplicableness' of Satan's fall might be an adequate explanation were it not that Augustine specifically denies it, treating the deficient cause as a condition only and telling us in as many words that the two classes of angels did not have an equal chance. It is not the case that Satan's fall cannot be explained – indeed Augustine himself explains it – but simply that his behaviour, without God's further help, is liable of its nature to be wholly irrational. What seems inexplicable is less the activity of Satan than the dispositional activity of God.

The pear theft recounted in the *Confessions* is there to show us that in Augustine's view the purely wilful aspects of sin (deriving from Satan rather than Adam) often (if not always) persist in his (and our) sins. He obtained a thrill out of stealing precisely because stealing is wrong:[33] that is, against God, and metaphysically pointing himself towards annihilation. True, he probably would not have done it if he had not been with other boys, but the fact remains, as he says, that there was no good to be derived from the theft and the role of his mates was to call out in all of them a stupid, futile (satanic) desire for an impossible omnipotence; to encourage a delusion of power. In giving way to temptation – and unlike Adam who let a lesser good trump the very much greater goodness on which the lesser good's own goodness depended – Augustine did something from which no good could accrue except to make himself pleasing to his complicit cronies. But to say that I am good insofar as I please someone who is up to no good is like saying that in the proposition 'Goering was a good Nazi' the word 'good' has some absolute moral sense.

In the *Literal Commentary* (11.10.13) Augustine observes that only God knows why he allowed the possibility of sin; this, as we have seen, is less

[31] Augustine himself dismisses this possibility in commenting on Julian's libertarian account of the choices of *fallen* man (*OpImp.* 5.41).

[32] So Babcock (1988: 40–56); Brown (1978: 315–29); and slightly differently Chappell (1995: 202–7). The view that Satan is guilty of 'carelessness in practical reasoning' is outside the Augustinian orbit – and may be closer to the views of Anselm and Aquinas – but is proposed as a corrective by MacDonald (1999: 110–31).

[33] *Conf.* 2.4.9; 2.6.12; 2.8.16.

than accurate in the case of human sin, for Augustine thinks that the fall offers the possibility of an even greater elevation for (some of) the sons of Adam. Nevertheless, the case of the angels is different, though a commonly proposed explanation of the sense in which God is responsible for their fall (let alone that of Adam) must be rejected. He is not responsible simply in virtue of the fact that he is ultimately the cause of all things, since he has granted *all* the angels (as well as Adam) a limited freedom, and by so doing he has allowed any 'preference' he might have had for universal salvation to be over-ruled if the angels fall. As we have seen, God's dealings with his creatures are more generally to be explained in precisely this way: God has established that 'it is better to bring good from evil than not to allow evil' (*City of God* 22.1.2), and that it is better to have sinful men than no men at all (*On Free Choice*, 3.5.14). So when Augustine says (as of foreseen sinfulness at *On Free Choice* 3.3.7–8) that God knows things because they will happen and that it is not the case that they will happen because he knows them, he implies that God intends the necessary but not the sufficient condition for things to happen. Augustine does not deny secondary causation; he is no occasionalist. Yet although God never directly compels evil, he is prepared to allow it – as we can regularly observe in our present world.[34] And perhaps he thus causes it indirectly. Certainly he has decreed that some angels must be *allowed* to fall irredeemably, which is the origin of the second of the Two Cities, of God and of the devil (*Literal Commentary* 11.15.20; *City of God* 14.28). What good can we suppose is to be derived from that?

We have noted an important difference between the foreseen doom of the fallen angels and the eventual greater good to be bestowed on fallen Adam. In the case of Adam, God brings a greater good for mankind by the Incarnation and by his adoption of men into himself as inheritors of the 'greater' – compatibilist – freedom. So while in the case of fallen men – or at least of some men – God turns a tragedy into a triumph, nothing of that happy sort befalls (any of) the fallen angels (though perhaps Augustine might argue that their fate helps men – destined to attain a higher level in the image of God – to see sense). Fallen men, it would appear, are not wholly corrupt; fallen angels are. That is at least partly

[34] For God's willingness to allow those trapped in the guilty mass of humanity to remain in this state – rather than acting directly to put them there – see *Ench*. 24.95, with my comments in Rist (1969: 420–47). In Augustine there is no directly willed predestination of the damned, though he sometimes gives Calvin a chance to misread him (as in much of the talk about hardening hearts, for example at *CG* 20.41, and more dangerously in his treatment of the fallen angels). *CG* is a late text, but in general Augustine became more careful with his language in his latest days (see Rist 2008a: 117–18 and note 18 above).

explained by the fact that angels start off with far more 'wisdom' (that is, knowledge about both God and themselves) than unfallen Adam; hence presumably they can become correspondingly guiltier. For fallen men, or at least some of them, even though the 'beginnings of faith' are no longer in their own power but dependent on God's action, God has something to work on. This 'something' has nothing to do with merit or foreseen good deeds, but depends on the fact that human beings are created in God's image and that some spark (*scintilla*) of that image remains after the fall (*City of God* 22.24). God has to prepare (and repair) the souls of those to be saved; he does not have to remake them *ab initio*: Augustine does not believe that human beings are totally depraved. What then is left for them after the fall? He does not say, but a reasonable speculation would be that what remains is something of that innate longing for the good, for God, with which all men, *qua* men, are endowed: that fragment of the love of God which God himself is able to repair so that 'chosen' individuals can be prepared for salvation.

Nevertheless, since we know that Augustine fails to explain the apparent arbitrariness of God in his declining to save a large part of the human race – though he insists that God's actions are governed by an inscrutable wisdom and justice – so despite (or because of) their greater initial advantages, it is plausible to suppose that the plight of the fallen angels must admit of a similar explanation. For whatever their initial condition, God *could* have come to their aid. Hence Augustine's problem might seem to be less with the unintelligibility of the first sin but (again) with the apparent arbitrariness of God's decisions about salvation. For we know that it was precisely because Satan would not accept the obvious fact of his creatureliness from nothing, and consequent impossibility of omnipotence, that he actually fell. His resentment at his situation is played out by his inability to love God; certainly his failure is a failure of his love, of his *voluntas*, not of his knowledge or intelligence. The apparent arbitrariness of God lies precisely in his unwillingness to support not the knowledge but the inadequate love of the fallen angels. So is Augustine's core position that if the power to make an adequately free decision is to be offered, whether to men or to angels, then it is precisely in love – the 'character' of the Holy Spirit – that some are to be allowed, fatally, to fail? Augustine certainly holds that we cannot be compelled to love; is the lack of that possibility what precludes us (or angels) from being mere robots?

Although the fall of both Adam and Satan seems to be the result of a failure in love and a consequent lust (*libido*, *concupiscentia*) for some sort of autonomy, the two cases are different in two important respects: firstly,

as we have seen, Adam – originally Eve – is tempted by a third party; he does not of himself actualize the possibility of evil that lurks within him. So perhaps without the fall of the angels neither Adam's sin nor his rescue would have happened or been possible. Secondly, angels, once lost, are lost forever. God does not choose, from the *massa damnata* of bad angels – who are not, we should remember, created in his image – to save even a few. Origen's opinion that even the devil will eventually be rescued is specifically rejected (*Incomplete Work* 5.47; cf. *City of God* 22.17).

How can Augustine explain that, apart from appealing to 'orthodox' Church teaching? Despite the greater understanding of the angels, it might seem, only by invoking – again – an inscrutable justice, in this case, however, perhaps 'tempered' by God's wish eventually to redeem and elevate the human race. But this may not be the entire explanation: if the angels' fall is a failure in love and love cannot be commanded (except – trivially – in robots), then God *could not* have created a perfect angel. In any case, for men and angels God's justice must be invoked differently: in the case of men the problem is why God chooses to save only some of the guilty (to whom he will grant salvation via baptism – or martyrdom – and final perseverance); in the case of angels the problem is why God refuses and must refuse help to *any* of the fallen (even though they are justly condemned): unless somehow to advance the strange destiny of Adam and his descendants.

That the two problems are substantially distinct can be discerned in the fact that for (some) men there is a second, and better, chance. It seems that what God could (but might not) do for fallen men by the Incarnation he could not do (or did not will) for fallen angels. God apparently could not become an angel, perhaps because angels were not created in his image; perhaps because, not endowed with a physical body, they cannot suffer the punishment of bodily death. Yet although it is clear that angels cannot repent and men can, it is not clear why God made them – and by his own nature had to make them – thus unable.

So the problem with angels is not an uncertainty in Augustine's mind about the kind of freedom they enjoyed before the fall: their original freedom – which was permitted to change – was apparently some sort of libertarian freedom. The problem with angels, as with men, is a version of the apparent (but perhaps unreal) arbitrariness of God's acts. In the case of angels he allows them to be victims of their own weakness; in the case of men he allows some to remain in the *massa damnata* while others, through the Incarnation, are saved. And the two cases are also different in a further significant respect, though this is a matter of God's means

rather than God's purposes. Augustine believes that after Christ men can only be saved if they are baptized (unless martyred), which is the means – unavailable for fallen angels – by which his omnipotent will prevails. The more basic problem – and here the case of fallen man and fallen angels is similar – lies with a thesis which can be represented by the following syllogism: all who are saved are saved (or not saved) by God's omnipotent will; some are not saved (e.g. Judas and Satan); therefore by God's omnipotent will some are not saved – by his permissive will, that is, and not by his direct act. Augustine's unresolved difficulty over salvation lies both in his account – or at least explanation – of our (and angels') original freedom and in his inadequate, even incoherent, understanding of omnipotence.[35] But the apparent arbitrariness of God's judgements comes out more strikingly in the case of fallen angels in that they have no hope of redemption.

A possible way out of the difficulty is available, though, as we have seen, Augustine rejects it, presumably as unworthy of God's goodness. God could have created men and angels with a straightforward freedom of indifference (*Incomplete Work* 5.38). Then there would have been no likelihood that they would all opt for the good. But in denying any innate and providentially given love of good (or knowledge of the difference between right and wrong) that option would stretch God's permissive will further than Augustine is prepared to go in the case of Adam, whom God would then punish for sins committed in a condition in which there is no reason not to sin. Thus from the point of view of God's justice it appeared better for him to give Adam not absolute freedom of indifference but what looked like a limited libertarian freedom. I have argued that part of what Adam has to learn – and the Pelagian has not learned – is that even a 'moderate' libertarian freedom, unless corrected, must collapse into a non-moral, non-rational, therefore sub-human freedom of indifference.

Augustine's problem with omnipotence is serious and should be more clearly defined. It makes good sense for him to say that God's permissive will tolerates human sinfulness so that human beings can learn the weakness of their fallen nature – assuming the requisite degree of autonomy for that lesson to be learned. It is far more difficult to explain why among equally undeserving sinners some are saved and some are not, or why some angels are allowed to fall with no chance of redemption. Augustine appears to fear that if after the fall some are lost against God's will, his omnipotence is seriously compromised, perhaps even in that he

[35] On omnipotence see later in this chapter and Rist (1994b: 280–1, 2008a: 130–1).

might seem to change his mind, but his anxiety seems unreasonable. Not only is God's omnipotence challenged by every sinful human act, but by granting any freedom of choice whatsoever he has committed himself to such challenges. Augustine, however, evades the danger he perceives at the price of making divine omnipotence appear arbitrary, thus making God look more like the Islamist 'Allah'. Certainly he does not want to commit himself to such a deity, but he seems to feel boxed in and we may wonder what moves he would have to make in his account either of God or of the fall, or of both, if he is to escape. In so doing, we must remember that he is not disturbed by human suffering as such, but by human wickedness which the claims of justice cannot allow to go unpunished: the sufferings of the elect are medicinal and those of the rest are thoroughly deserved and are useful *pour encourager les autres*.[36]

That the fallen 'wills' of the elect are to be directed towards a compatibilist freedom can be seen more clearly if we look at the explanation of God's 'choosing' which Augustine began to develop in his *Reply to Simplicianus* (AD 396). Certainly during his anti-Pelagian period – and, I would argue, also previously[37] – there are two aspects to that choosing. 'God changes the will from an evil will to a good will and once it is good [surely "better"] helps it' (*Grace and Free Choice* 20.41). After 411, in reply to what he considers Pelagian misuses of that text, Augustine constantly cites *Proverbs* 8.35,[38] explaining how God first prepares the 'will' (*voluntas*)

[36] Augustine's position is made particularly clear as early as the *Adnotationes in Iob* (composed soon after he became bishop): all of Job's sufferings are the effect of God's plan; no one can complain of suffering unjustly because all are guilty. In view of the fact that empirical evidence might show only that weakness (not guilt) is inherited, it is hard to understand why Augustine feels the need to think that only inherited *guilt*, in a fallen world, can explain suffering. For if God has permitted men to sin, the effects of their sin must be experienced in the miseries of others. In pondering Augustine's explanations of why God permits suffering, we too frequently meet the Stoic comparison of the world to a picture in which the dark side is needed for the beauty of the whole. Parts of his account of predestination may be controlled by the same mentality.

[37] It is sometimes supposed that in the *Reply to Simplicianus* Augustine thinks only of God's arranging the right circumstances, but that during the Pelagian controversy he gradually preferred to talk of God's changing the will. It is probably true that the Pelagian dispute encouraged him to put more emphasis on the latter aspect of God's bestowal of grace – not least because the debate was now less about conversion than about perseverance in the faith – but it is hard to imagine that he would not have noticed earlier that one of the effects of God's arranging a man's circumstances right would be that he would develop better habits, in other words that his 'will' itself would be changed. If this is right, then the internal and external effects of God's action would be simultaneous. See further Wetzel (1992:187ff), commenting on the more exaggeratedly developmental accounts of Lebourlier (1954: 287–300) and Burns (1980).

[38] *Voluntas praeparatur a Deo*: see Sage (1964: 1–20). We should note that here the Latin *voluntas* translates the Septuagint Greek *thelesis*, a word less easily explicated in Stoic terms. But *thelesis* was no part of the debate among the patristic Latins. The theological story might have been very different if it had been.

of those chosen, then calls them in such a way that they cannot refuse what is offered. We ourselves use similar language hyperbolically in such phrases as: 'He offered me a position which I just couldn't turn down.' But Augustine's version is no hyperbole. God's offer is suitably attractive (*congruenter*: *Reply to Simplicianus* 2.13) to each individual chosen and prepared. He thus proposes a grace that is not in any absolute sense 'irresistible' – as Augustine is still often misquoted or misinterpreted as saying – but which in each particular case will be lovingly effective in rekindling our embers of goodness. The weakness of each elect human soul will be moved by a power such as cannot be undermined (*indeclinabiliter et insuperabiliter*: *Rebuke and Grace* 12.38). Apparently only an engrained love of negativity could totally ignore its impact.

Mary is the limit case. Although she was conceived in the normal manner (*Literal Commentary* 10.18.32), she was protected from every kind of sin, whether inherited or personal (*Nature and Grace* 36.42). Augustine holds that Christ cleansed the flesh he assumed from her either before he assumed it or at the moment of doing so (*Merits of Sinners* 2.24.38). In more modern jargon Mary was absolutely protected from all moral effects of her inheritance – and according to Augustine at some point unspecified the taint of original sin was lifted altogether, though obviously without baptism – as well as from any compelling occasion of personal sin: thus her will was so prepared that she would not sin, even though, because her body was damaged by the sin of Adam, she was still subject to physical death (*Sermons on Psalms* 34.2.3). Her case is unique, but she shows how God *can* 'prepare the will' and the person's individual circumstances in such a way as to achieve his purposes. Like the saints, but in the present life, she was already experiencing a compatibilist higher freedom: she simply was the kind of person who could not 'dream' of denying God's good purposes. Conversely, the tyrannical man, according to Augustine, citing Cicero (*City of God* 5.26), is curiously pitiable if he makes himself a tyrant because then he will have no protection against his own wickedness; he becomes the sort of person he longs and loves to be.

The actual process of preparing the will shows that the freedom being developed by God – and not only for Mary – is compatibilist: very different from that of unfallen Adam. The wills of the elect are being trained for that 'longed-for necessity' that is perfection. This tells us – again – that unlike the wills of the fallen angels, the elect are not wholly corrupted; yet that much will also be true of the non-elect – which leaves us with our now familiar problem. Traces (*vestigia*) of our 'former' splendour remain and are visible in the achievements of which the human race is capable,

and the elect, though wounded and lame, are able to respond to what is suitably on offer. And what is on offer, if only for them, is membership of the Church acquired in baptism. The removal of original sin opens for them the door to further grace and thus further preparation, both through their works in the Christian community – providentially tailored to their capacities by God – and through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

Gradually good habits form, with the right kind of *voluntas* that is love. *Caritas* begins to acquire the mastery over *concupiscentia* and *infirmitas*, but lapses and failures are always with us as the struggle goes on, as they were even for Peter and, as we have seen, for Paul.[39] The Christian walks a tightrope; there is always the risk of falling off if we take our eyes off the opportunities for grace on offer. Augustine loves to warn of spectacular falls, as of the old man who had lived in holy continence with his wife for twenty-five years and then bought a lyre girl for sex (*Against Julian* 3.11.22). But though the elect sin, God will offer them the chance to pick themselves up and start again, with due penance, and thus at death they will be ready for the greater 'compatibilist' freedom that awaits them when they will be unable to sin but will be free, like God (though still dependent on God), not to sin. Had the vestiges of God's image not been kept alive in them, God, as we have seen, would have been unable to repair or heal them, but would have had to reproduce psychological (and presumably also physical) 'clones' of what they might have been had they not fallen – with consequent philosophical problems about the loss of personal identity.[40] In their final state of compatibilist happiness, Augustine will insist, they still are not compelled to be free – no-one can be compelled to 'will' (*Incomplete Work* 1.101) – but they have chosen to be free and so, simultaneously and 'appropriately', have been chosen by God.

What does it mean to say that for fallen Adam and his descendants, without support from God's grace, the only choice is of evil? And what about the elect, those who in fact have God's grace to persevere? Does Augustine hold that under grace even their every act is to some degree wicked – or is it merely that they are always liable to perform a wicked act? We must further distinguish, even in this life, between the elect and the non-elect. And the moral state of the non-elect will shed light on that of the elect.

[39] Cf. *IoEv*. 123.5, *s*. 76.3–4, 297.2.3, 299.8–9; *Retr*. 1.2, 1.3.2, 1.7.5 (where earlier suggestions of a possible perfection in this life are corrected); cf. Dodaro (1989).

[40] For a parallel secular problem as currently envisaged see Parfit (1986, part 3).

Augustine is adamant that he does not know who is saved (*Reply to Simplicianus* 2.22; *City of God* 13.40), though he 'knows' that without baptism (or martyrdom) salvation is now impossible. Hence all pagans are non-elect. Does that mean that all their acts are sinful? Certainly it does, but not to the same degree; they may even be capable of 'some good works' (*Spirit and Letter* 27.48). Regulus is a pagan hero, superior in 'pagan virtue' to most others (*City of God* 1.15, 1.24, 5.19; *Letter* 138.2 etc.) but – even granted that some pagan virtues exhibit a certain 'human' love (*Sermon* 349, if genuine) – Regulus is far from grace (*Letter* 125.3).[41] His motive – better than many, but still inadequate (*City of God* 5.20) – was the desire for fame. He was no humble Christian with a character formed by belief in the true God; hence all his acts were, and could only have been, driven by mixed motives; they were therefore to some degree wicked: vices rather than virtues (*City of God* 19.25). Like the Stoics, Augustine believes that the good man not only does the right thing, but does it from entirely proper motives (*Sermon on Psalms* 31.2.4); in his case motives only to be formed by faith in the true God.[42] That is one reason why it is impossible to know who will be saved; no-one can know whether his own or another's motives are and will remain pure. In any case, though pagan 'virtues' are significantly better than more serious pagan 'vices', they will still be punished, albeit less severely (*Against Julian* 4.3.25). The possibility of pagan virtue, in light of Augustine's unclarity about how to designate it, will have a long after-life, not least because, like all patristic writers, Augustine held that Christian virtue is constructed on top of the shaky foundation of pagan 'virtue' – which by special grace may be elevated to the grade of Christian perfection. Augustine's attitude to pagan 'virtue' resembles that of the Stoics to 'preferred' actions: these are not virtuous – indeed they are

[41] How to comprehend (or evade) Augustine's account of pagan 'virtues' is still much debated: among more recent contributions (apart from Frede 2010) are Irwin (1999: 105–27); Wetzel (2004: 271–300); Brett (2009: 23–41).

[42] Surprisingly, both later Augustinians and modern scholars have widely neglected Augustine's association of genuine virtue with true belief. Though Augustine avoids the trap, the temptation lurking in his position is to set up two different kinds of virtue, one for pagans, the other – and superior – for Christians. By denying pagans genuine virtue at all, the Stoicizing Augustine avoids this move, but many of his successors, as we shall see, were induced to make it, neglecting the markedly Augustinian (and Stoic) emphasis on perfect motivation. Thus, as we shall see, the separation of morality from faith and salvation – as it developed during the late medieval period and beyond – can claim the authority of only a seriously misread Augustine. Among modern commentators, one of the few who has correctly grasped Augustine's position is McGrath, who properly cites the revealing comparison of the 'moral' and the 'faithful' man (with proper motivation) discussed at *C2EpPel.* 3.5.14 (McGrath 2005: 49).

strictly vicious – but they may put a man, providentially in Augustine's case, on the road to virtue.

The situation of the baptized Christian is more complex. He has received a share in God's grace in baptism, so it is not true *a priori* that all his actions are sinful, as are those of the pagan, though in fact it can be assumed that they are to some degree, since only the guilt, not the effects, of the sin of Adam has been washed away. Unlike the pagan, the baptized Christian is not wicked as such, but since his character is morally mauled by the fall, he will almost certainly be unable to perform a 'perfect' act from perfect motives. Even if his motives were pure on some particular occasion, it would be by chance (nor would he be able to recognize the perfection of his act). He is likely to be at least minimally sinful in any act he performs, as well as in regard to his mixed motives: for all of this he must do penance, as did Augustine himself on his death-bed. Until he has persevered to the end, no alternative condition is available; he will experience a compatibilist freedom to do evil, from which he will still need to be freed (*Correction and Grace* 12.35).

This is part of what Augustine means when he speaks of 'this darkness of social life' as a penal condition (*City of God* 19.6), for in the present life the baptized Christian enjoys neither the 'greater' nor the 'lesser' version of true freedom: not the same *sort* of 'freedom to sin' as the pagan, but certainly freedom to sin. A harsh view, but (looking around) we may find it hard to deny its experiential material, even if not its theological truth. We must conclude that Augustine believes that in the present life even of the 'chosen' no action can be performed from clearly perfect motives, repeating again only that he failed to make his position as clear as we should like, thus, as we shall see, generating significantly anti-Augustinian effects. In an odd but fateful way, although the Christian has opportunities never available to the pagan, the problem of motivation reveals a curious similarity between Christian virtue and pagan 'virtue'.

Just how deep does the rot go? This we can understand better if we return to Augustine's comments – recently subject to much discussion – on 'immoral' dreams. Augustine tells us – or primarily God – in the *Confessions* (10.30.41) that although he no longer enjoys intercourse with women, he persistently dreams of it; and he returns to the theme in the *Literal Commentary* (12.15.31, also 12.11.3). He also has waking fantasies, though these he can easily dismiss: they also shed light on the present and persisting weaknesses and vices of our 'second nature'. In his dreams, he says, he sometimes even imagines sexual possibilities he had succeeded in excising from the thoughts of his waking life, experiencing what we

have seen him identify as the characteristic phenomenology of sinning. He imagines a sexual act, based on his memories, delights in it, then consents to it, sometimes causing himself to ejaculate.[43] Yet sometimes he is able in the dream to refuse consent, which (I take it) shows that his more reformed self is gaining in the conflict at some deep level with that unreformed self which lives on in his memories or can be dredged back into his memory from his apparently forgotten past.

In these texts Augustine is describing something distinct from, though related to, the physical phenomenon differently interpreted by Stoics and Cynics, and identified by the Stoics as 'preliminary passions' (*propatheiai*):[44] morally neutral experiences for the Stoics, but an indication of deep-seated viciousness for the Cynics. For the Stoics *propatheiai* – as known to Augustine and to other Christians of his time, rendered in Latin as *propassiones* – are natural reactions to pleasurable or painful stimuli that invite us to assent to evil. In the Stoic view, if we make that act of assent, we have acted viciously; for the Cynics even the 'natural' accompaniments of our sense experiences (a shiver of excitement or fear) are vicious and indicate a vicious personality. Such accompaniments may be caused by the sight of something threatening (paradigmatically a soldier seeing Hannibal's victorious army approach the walls of the city of Rome) or – more relevant to our present problem – something alluring (typically, for a man, a woman bathing naked). There are other possibilities but in each case, for the Stoics, the initial reaction – of pleasure or foreboding or whatever – is morally neutral; vice comes in if the viewer assents to the proposition that death is to be feared or pleasure pursued. Perhaps the Cynics first adopted that more rigorist line in part because they lacked the Stoic concept of assent.

Augustine's dream problem is rather different, although, as we shall see, his solution brings him closer, for quite different reasons, to the Cynics. After describing his experiences in the *Confessions*, he raises, to immediately dismiss, the possibility that he is a different person in his dreams. Then he mentions how sometimes, in the dream, he is able, through his reason, to resist the temptation, though at other times he fails to do so. That, as we have noted, is disconcerting because it seems to indicate

[43] Augustine has nothing to say at this point about the related problem – raised by the Stoics and taken up in contemporary discussions (e.g. by Mann 1999: 151) – of fantasizing about the proposed act, perhaps because one does not dream of fantasizing.

[44] For the Stoic background see Inwood (1985: 175–81); Byers (2003: 433–48). Already with Origen Christians had become interested in these ideas in order to account (e.g.) for Christ's 'agony' in the Garden and God's anger. For further discussion see Graver (1999: 300–25) and Boys-Stones (2007: 488–99).

that his 'will' – indeed his soul – is divided. His 'reason' is sometimes, but not reliably, able to enforce his waking moral stance in his sleep. He then notes that when he 'assents', he does not himself perform the act he imagines he performs, but that something is 'done in him'. When he wakes up after the experience, he is able to shake it off as just a dream; he adds that he regrets what has happened and asks God to provide the grace whereby such dreams may cease. But if one regrets something, there is at least a suggestion that one has, after all, *done* something to regret. Or perhaps Augustine is thinking again in terms of second-order choices. He would prefer not to be in the situation where he apparently 'chooses' to act immorally, for as we have seen, he is not another person in his dreams: it really is Augustine who has the dream experiences, Augustine who 'does' the dreams.

Augustine thinks that, though he may regret his dreams, he cannot, by his own will and choice, do anything about them. In the *Literal Commentary* he wonders whether dream temptations – physical reactions aside – are to be assimilated simply to reflecting on sexual phenomena, specifically erection and ejaculation, which in appropriate circumstances one can do clinically, as he says he is now doing himself; that is, he is not thinking libidinously.[45] Such a 'clinical' stance, however, is not what he describes in the *Confessions*; nor does he add what his wider account of our sinful nature might suggest: namely that it is possible (perhaps even necessary) to think clinically and libidinously at the same time. And the strangeness of his position is the greater in that he holds that clinical thinking demands seeing the 'images' of what one thinks. In any case, Augustine's regret over his sexual dreams marks a wider belief: that in human life we are constantly beset by regret when we are confronted, as we regularly are, with a choice between two actions neither of which we would wish to choose. For Augustine, regrets, of all kinds, are one of the tragic marks of the human condition: surely an entirely reasonable view.

To understand Augustine's concerns not only about dreams but more generally, we must recognize two important features of his moral, psychological, indeed metaphysical world. First, he would reject the 'Kantian' (and Aristotelian) axiom that 'ought implies can': that is what Pelagian heretics claim (*Grace and Free Choice* 16.32). Rather, we must learn – not least from reading Paul's letter to the Romans – that we ought to do what

[45] For further comment on how to try to speak clinically about sex – as by avoiding the use of obscene words – see *CD* 14.23. That may not be enough; some say that 'chaste' is the most suggestive word in the English language!

we cannot do: that is, without the help of grace (*Perfection of Justice* 3.6): and that that will make us understand the nature of our fallen state and our dependence – far from any Kantian autonomy – on God. Secondly, in this fallen state we are not only guilty of personal sins, nor do we only feel the effects of these sins. We have a double life, 'personal' and 'common': common in that we are one in Adam. There is solidarity in sin in the entire human race;[46] we are, as it were, genetically flawed by the sins of our predecessors.

We suffer the effects (and share the responsibility) of the sin of Adam. For the Christian the guilt is washed away in baptism, but the effects remain, as we have seen, for Christians as for non-Christians. What even a consecrated bishop will experience in his erotic dreams is one of the effects we have to live with. Augustine's apparently ambivalent attitude to his responsibility for the contents of his dreams derives from the fact that he knows that he is responsible, even though not personally responsible. His regret is for an experience of his 'common' life that baptism cannot erase and from which he can only pray that by God's grace he will eventually be delivered. He ought not to have erotic dreams but cannot by his own efforts be rid of them. Such reflection puts him nearer to the Cynics on preliminary passions than to the Stoics. He thinks that the purified state of the whole man (individual and common) would be free of them. His reason, even in sleep, should always be able to dismiss any tempting image; indeed would not need to dismiss them because they would no longer occur. They are a mark of our second nature and that second nature is fallen. Like the Cynic sage, he should not need to refuse 'assent' to the invitation of seductive sights or images (or, as the Stoic would put it, to immoral propositions); the image would either be absent or non-seductive. In heaven, naked beauty is not seductive (*City of God* 22).

So where does Augustine finish up? I have tried to explain the natures of the different freedoms we variously may enjoy, and have argued that much of the apparent incoherence in Augustine's account of 'greater' and 'lesser' freedom depends not on a necessarily unsatisfactory account of original 'freedom' – though the possibility that Satan's fall is just bad luck lurks in the background – but in the final analysis on an ambiguous

[46] There is also a second and important reason why Augustine insists not only on our individual life but on our common life as members of the human species. When we (or Adam) sin, our decision to do so affects many others (perhaps everyone, as with Adam) in a way which we cannot foresee, though we know that this is how things are: after the fall we all add our personal sins to the original 'pot' (*CEpParm.* 3.2.5). An important implication of such ideas is that they rule out any radical individualism. For further discussion see Rist (1994b: 121–9). I return to 'genetic' flaws in my final chapter.

account of God's omnipotence (compounded by an undeveloped theory of baptism).

If we are to retain something like Augustine's account of the fall and its consequences, we may have to resort not only to his own defence that God's judgements, though just, are unintelligible to us, but to an alternative and harsher 'Islamic' version whereby what matters most about God is his absolute will, even though that will may be not only unintelligible to us, but ultimately arbitrary. People toyed with variations on that move in the fourteenth century and later, thus pointing to a further isolation of 'will' and its exaltation over 'reason' – both among Christians and those tending to 'secularism' – not to speak of a positing of 'will' itself which Augustine, its presumed father, would not have owned. For in the last resort Augustine is neither a divine-command moralist nor an advocate of the thesis that we 'own' a raw (and possibly errant) 'will'. Nor can God's justice be arbitrary or entirely unintelligible to us because through our creation in God's image and likeness our 'participating' justice reflects the justice of God (or God as justice), albeit in a limited way: we are not *wholly* mistaken about justice, as Augustine the Platonist knows very well.

When God disappears from the philosophical scene, as happens among many thinkers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then the 'will' that remains can only be the human will or else the 'general' will: the will, that is, either of individual humans or of humans as a group. Alternatively, with Kant, we are to think of reason, in its categorical imperatives, as itself some sort of absolute and 'holy' will. In all these cases, important features of Augustine's supposed positing of the 'will' have been partly understood, partly retained, partly misconstrued, partly abandoned, not least as the result of a series of historical accidents.

Augustine's so-called will (*voluntas*) is a combination of Platonic and Stoic elements but, as we have always to stress, Augustine is an unsystematic writer: when he thinks of *voluntas* more platonically – above all in the paradigm case of the Holy Spirit who in *The Trinity* is identified with love – there is no risk of seeing such a 'will' as arbitrary, let alone as distinct from goodness. Yet when he writes about our 'freedom' to make decisions, his emphasis is recognizably more Stoic; he presents *voluntas* as a determining impulse, thus emphasizing the act of assenting, hence of a 'willing' itself and of its possible 'rightness' – and at this point the right may seem to have trumped the good, rather than being dependent on it. It is a raw historical fact, as we shall see, that by the time of Anselm, this sort of account of the 'will' predominates in most discussions of the sense in which human beings are 'free'. Augustine's more complex and richer

account of the links between love, willing and the 'will' becomes increasingly oversimplified, or – at best – subjected to inadequate attempts to repair the broken connections.

Prescinding from such impending concerns, we are now in a position to identify something of a further and still largely unrecognized source of philosophical trouble in the Christian tradition about thinking, willing and responsibility: the biblically based – so Augustine supposed – belief that we lived 'in Adam' in a state which, thus far, was admirable and comfortable: that the Garden of Eden was in some sense a Paradise – now lost – in which Adam and Eve enjoyed what they took to be a degree of libertarian freedom. That fundamental axiom of Augustine's Christianity, besides causing serious apparent problems in theology, may appear no longer to stand up to scientific scrutiny, and we may need to ask whether the abandonment of a semi-perfect state in the (pre-) historic past – and its replacement with a paradigm more like that of (Julian's) Adam, seen less as a healthy but naïvely virginal child and more as a pre-moral savage – would turn out not only more historically accurate, but better able to provide the conceptual resources to construct an intelligible account of God, of the 'fall' and its effects and of human nature as we experience it in ourselves and others. Or perhaps the admirable and comfortable state of unfallen Adam and Eve might be only moral rather than also physical. But these are voyages to be ventured on much later, and only after we have recounted something of Augustine's story about love, about the other face of *voluntas*, and then moved to the strictly historical questions we have already adumbrated, the first of which is whether, as some suppose, Anselm was able to pick up the baton where Augustine had perforce left it and proceed to a better account of freedom – whether of angels or of Adam or of God – within the general parameters of Augustinian thought, than had Augustine himself. And if not, why not, and with what consequences?

CHAPTER 3

Inspirational Augustine: Love, Desire and Knowledge

> 'And have the senses of the body their delights, while the soul is abandoned by its own pleasures … ? Give me a man in love: he understands what I mean.… Give me a man who yearns.… But if I talk to a cold man, he does not know what I am talking about.'
>
> Augustine, *On John's Gospel* 26.4

Augustine the bishop was also a monk, and his cathedral clergy lived a monastic life; for them, and for others, both male and female, Augustine composed a *Rule*, in accordance with which the 'religious' community is to be a community of friends, one in soul and 'heart' in God. So friendship is certainly at the heart of Augustine's spirituality.[1] But although Augustine follows Scripture in believing that we are to be God's friends, the language of friendship is not the language in which we must think of the longing for God that marks our restless hearts. For that something more 'manic', more platonically erotic, is required. I preface this chapter thus because one way some of the medievals misappropriated Augustinian ideas was to suppose it more holy either that *love* for God should be understood as a supposedly less egoistic *friendship* or even that friendship should somehow be substituted for human love among serious Christians.

Thus far, treating of Augustine's account of *voluntas*, I have emphasized 'willing' rather than loving-willing, and have tried to show how his analysis of choice and responsibility *could* be read in terms of various acts of the will, however brought about and to whatever degree 'free'. As we have seen, in all this the Stoic influence is strong: we are to be concerned with some kind of assent to impressions or to passions, given or denied. But Augustine's understanding of *voluntas* depends on a special combination of Stoic and Platonic elements, and though ideas of 'pure volition' come to dominate in later tradition and are the ultimate source of much modern

[1] For recent summaries of Augustine's monastic aspect see Kenney (2012: 284–96) and (in the same volume) of his attitude to friendship Rebenich (365–74, though surprisingly Rebenich has nothing to say about friendship with God: a second theme, as we shall see, of great and growing importance).

treatment of the 'will', Augustine's own analysis is much richer and more complex. So far I have largely ignored the more Platonic features of *voluntas* and of the concept of 'love' that Augustine assimilated to his Stoicism and developed into an enriched synthesis. Yet though I have little further to add to current accounts of Augustinian love, this aspect of his position cannot be merely assumed – if only because its eventual emasculation, indeed near disappearance, both from a purportedly 'Augustinian' tradition and from its increasingly secular successor, led to a variety of loveless theories of the 'will' (both sacred and profane) receding ever further from the view of Augustine himself.

Those who first 'corrupted' Augustine's account of *voluntas* were largely unable to recognize the Stoic features of his thought, so their deviations derive in part from unavoidable historical ignorance. To the extent that they were hardly able to understand the roots of the multifaceted thesis Augustine offered, their ignorance committed them, at least in part, to the development of pseudo-problems, or to inadequate solutions to real ones. But that is not the whole story, for within the purely 'Platonic' parts of Augustine's theory, Plato's original understanding of *eros* and of the nature of erotic desire, whether carnal or 'sublimated' wholly or in part, had been toned down by Plotinus, Augustine's principal Platonic 'source', and had long provoked a Christian – later to continue as non-Christian – unease which invited suppression or bowdlerization such that the perceptive thrust of the theory – and of its possible development – could easily be blunted, rejected or simply ignored. Since Augustine was a sainted figure, the last option was that most commonly adopted by his too heavenly minded successors, except perhaps in less 'philosophical', more 'mystical' minds.[2]

[2] The bowdlerization often took the form (as in the first-century Jewish thinker Philo) of attempting to separate carnal from spiritual desires and objectives as radically opposed, thus destroying (rather than leaving behind as wholly insufficient) the first steps of the Platonic ladder set up by Diotima in the *Symposium* (as well as the apparent character and outlook of Socrates himself). Analogously, when trying to adapt Platonic eroticism to their own purposes in interpreting the eroticism of the *Song of Songs* as a guide to the spiritual ascent of the individual soul to God, Christian interpreters after Origen found it safer – in a manner wholly different from the straightforward outspokenness of Diotima and the drunken frankness of Alcibiades – to distinguish carnal love as normally of Satan, while continuing to use its vividly carnal *language* for 'mystical' purposes. And Saak has observed that among fourteenth-century Augustinians Augustine's own sexual history has been similarly bowdlerized in the interests of the fight against carnal desires: scant mention even of his son Adeodatus; his spiritual and celibate sons are (hopefully) members of the Order of Augustinian Hermits (Saak 2002: 286–305). Thus Augustine is now presented as a 'desexed' holy man, all of a piece: perhaps ironically because, as Nightingale (2011) observes, he himself tends to 'transhumanize' the saints. For a post-Christian approach in the continuing anti-Platonic vein see a recent

Eroticism apart, Augustine's account of the relationship between love and knowledge – Platonic in origin, Christian in spirit – often went unnoticed, thanks in part to the unsystematic form of his writings. Perhaps the inevitably unhistorical reading of his book on the Trinity, with a lack of reflective attention to its Platonic insights – as certainly of an ability to contextualize them in the views of Plato himself – helped conceal what might seem the blindingly obvious. Another factor also contributed to the confusion: the arrival in the West in the thirteenth century of Aristotle's *De Anima*, a text which could too easily suggest that the powers of the soul (vegetative-reproductive, sense-perceiving, thinking) are piled one on top of the other, and leaves it to the reader to explain how, for example, human activities (such as eating) differ from apparently similar achievements by pigs; for we, as possessors of a higher faculty, don't normally eat like pigs – or at least think we should not so eat. This explanatory gap left by Aristotle probably helped further to canonize the expanding error of reading Augustine's 'faculties' of willing, loving and thinking as distinct.

As is well known, Augustine was rescued from Manichaean dualism and 'materialism' by a combination of the Origenist and spiritualizing Christianity of Ambrose with his reading of the famous 'books of the Platonists'.[3] These books were in large part the writings of Plotinus (or some of them) as translated into Latin by Marius Victorinus, and it is a mark of the Platonism of Plotinus to put great emphasis – in this he is genuinely Platonic – on the importance of the love of the beautiful (*eros tou kalou*) as the driving force which enables, indeed compels, the philosopher, in the footsteps of the 'erotic' Socrates, to endure the struggle to live a philosophical life. Porphyry tells us in his *Life of Plotinus* (23) that his master, following the *eros*-theory of Plato's *Symposium*, achieved ecstatic union with the One, the first principle of the universe, on four occasions.

Plotinus' treatment of love (*eros*) as the force behind an upward motion of the soul towards Beauty and the Good (or One) – albeit, as noted, somewhat 'cleaned up' – is in many respects Platonic, and in this at least Augustine was largely right to think that in Plotinus Plato lived again.[4]

comment on Mill: 'Throughout his writings Mill displayed a tendency to dismiss or deprecate the erotic dimension of life' (so Shanley 1998: 421, note 17, with further references). We shall notice Augustine's notably more Platonic approach.

[3] For the attention of Augustine to an important aspect of Origen's work, see Bammel (Hammond) (1992: 341–68).

[4] Because I am not at all certain that Augustine had read *Ennead* 6.8 (which treats *inter alia* of the 'will' and love (*eros*) of the One) I do not discuss it here. If he had indeed read it, he would have found much to applaud: first that the One is constrained by no external necessity; second that he/it is 'constrained' by the 'necessity' of his own perfect nature; third that its/his love is in the first instance directed towards himself, not to his 'products': here Augustine might recognize Trinitarian

Plotinus' metaphysical differences from his master can often be explained as his carrying Plato's ideas to their logical conclusion: developing Plato's psychological account of love and its effects into a metaphysical explanation of the forces that generate everything worthy in the entire universe. It is, of course, possible to argue that this 'extension' of Platonic ideas is authentically Platonic, but that is another story. For our present purposes we need only outline the spirit of Platonic love which informs the writings of Plotinus (as of all genuine Platonists) and which in its turn partly informed Augustine's franker treatment of love and therefore, to no small extent, of the ' loving will' also.

Diotima, in Plato's *Symposium*, tells Socrates that when the soul reaches the highest rung of her 'ladder of love', it will see the Beautiful itself – normally understood by later Platonists to refer here also to the Good itself, and Augustine follows this interpretation. Hence it will desire to generate and give birth 'in the beautiful' (210d–212a). Plato's language is of seeing and touching Beauty, not of being 'oned' with it, but his 'love' is both appetitive and creative. Just as physical love between the sexes generates new life in an embrace which unites them without total merger – and note that Diotima uses both male and female imagery – so 'spiritual' love generates fine ideas, fine behaviour – in a (Greek) word, virtue – without identifying the loving soul with the object of its love: we become good but not Goodness. Nevertheless, love is not only inspirational but works out its inspiration in creativity. Beauty is the philosopher's 'muse'; *Aglaia* (a word for the splendour of beauty rediscovered by Plotinus) is the name of one of the Graces.

Such love is not 'possessive' in any pejorative sense; amid its creativity we understand that the lover does not want to keep his treasure to himself. That attitude is, for Plato, a mark of the 'divine': in the *Phaedrus* (247a) we read that grudging, envy of others' good, is no part of the 'divine chorus', and in the *Timaeus* (29e1–2) when the 'Pythagorean' speaker discusses why God the Demiurge fashioned the world, we are told that he lacks selfish possessiveness; hence the answer to the question about his motive for acting is twofold: because he is good and because he wants to. Not of course that his wanting is arbitrary; it is because he is good, and goodness simply implies the desire to fashion what is good: so the Demiurge is a figure after the pattern Diotima proposed for our admiration. And finally,

parallels. Of course, even if Augustine had not read the treatise, he might have had some awareness of the general tenor of its contents.

as we noted earlier, turning back from gods to men – to the Guardians of the *Republic* – we read (7.540b ff.) that returning to the Cave is a just demand and the Guardians are just: no possibility for them of knowing the better and doing the worse; they know and love what is good and just and *therefore* necessarily act well and justly – and the motives which oblige them are unmixed, a vision of goodness, once again, generating practical goodness and justice in the human sphere. The Guardians are both lovers of the Good and knowers of the Good, neither capacity being possible without the other.

Before leaving Plato, we need to consider two further and related features of his story, one of which may separate him from Plotinus, while the other separates Augustine from both of them – albeit there are certain foreshadowings of Augustine's centrally Christian theme on this matter to be found in both his distinguished non-Christian predecessors. The first of these topics concerns Plato's major contribution to philosophical psychology, the 'tripartite soul' (though he never calls it that); this is mentioned but given insufficient attention by Plotinus, not least because of his (typical) failure to recognize that Plato's psychological thinking changed radically after the *Phaedo* and *Symposium*, and more broadly that Plato was an intensely self-critical philosopher. Augustine, as we shall see, was aware of Plato's difficulties about soul division and tried to solve them somewhat – but only somewhat – differently.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato saw the problems of morality, of the possibility of the good life, in terms of struggle between the desires of the soul and the desires of the body. If only we could be rid of the body, we should not be troubled by pleasure and pain, those basic enemies of the good life. We shall, of course, be rid of the body at death, but by then our souls – ourselves – will normally have been corrupted and so submerged in bodily concerns as to be unable to benefit from their newly acquired freedom from the body. Souls being immortal, the only remedy would seem to be reincarnation, with the hope that things will go better next time! But there is an obvious problem, though Plato – typically – does not tell us, leaving us to do a little philosophical work for ourselves. The problem revolves round the question of *why* the soul surrenders to the body so easily: it must have some sort of inbuilt weakness, must, in fact, be divided. Thus Plato, in the fourth book of the *Republic*, begins to talk of three 'kinds' of character, which I take to mean three aspects of soul which can take over the totality; thus we become different sorts of people as one or the other aspect comes to dominate, and most of us also, revealing our divided selves, exhibit different kinds of souls within our individual lives,

wearing, perhaps, different 'hats' for different circumstances: the concentration camp commandant can appear to live a bourgeois life at home, and strangely seems able to persuade himself that that really is his character. In the ninth book of the *Republic* Plato tells us that each kind of soul has its own 'love': thus the philosopher-king will love the Good; the honest soldier will love honour, glory and self-respect; the 'consumer' will love material objects, and treat non-material objects as further consumables, as, for example, using sex slaves if he gets the chance.

For Plato, to know a moral quality in the strict sense entails to love it: I cannot know the Good without loving it – or if I think I do, I am deceived. Nor can I know the Good, as we have already seen, without wanting to *do* good, to be beautifully creative. So that we are immediately on non-Platonic ground if we separate knowing from loving, and not least when loving is more or less reduced to willing. The Platonic knowing-loving soul is wholly distinct from its eventual modern, more or less Cartesian, replacement as a cognition machine. But historically, before the Cartesian version emerges to steal the scene, there are a number of seductive non-Platonic compromises bidding for attention.

For Plato we are born with an innate love of beauty, which, however, we can use or abuse to 'love' anything we come to hold is good. Thus I learn to love the Good itself perfectly by loving it imperfectly and learning to do so better, and I can allow myself more or less to forget the true good in favour of lesser goods, some of which may be outright evils – though few of us seem to lose sight of the good altogether (posing a problem for the lawgiver as to how to proceed with those who do). In brief, although we (normally) retain something of our innate love of the Good, we can develop other loves when seduced by other 'goods'. In less than perfect societies that would be the fate of almost everyone. So now we have stumbled on something of a corollary to Plato's account of moral and spiritual struggle: Plato not only offers his theory of the 'tripartite soul' to explain our present weakness of will; he also recognizes that though we (normally) retain a dim vision of the Good itself – it would be odd to say that I have forgotten that there is difference between right and wrong – we are able to *construct* or *exaggerate* other 'goods' and develop corresponding desires for them, some of which may be evil because we are desiring what is neither good in itself nor good for us.

So much for the foundations of the philosophical tradition on which Augustine drew in his account of love. But Augustine's immediate source for this tradition, as we have seen, was not Plato himself, of whom he had

read little, and certainly not the *Symposium*. He knew from Cicero and Varro something of the contents of the *Republic*, and in translation rather more of the *Timaeus*. His primary philosophical source for the Platonic theory of *eros* was Plotinus, and what he would have found there certainly seemed like Plato, but also exhibited what he came to see as two weaknesses of the entire tradition as well as its more important strength.

Like most Platonists, Christian as well as pagan, Plotinus was bewitched by the *Phaedo*: not only by its account of Socrates' heroic death, but by its soon to be outmoded psychology. This led him to conflate the psychology of the *Phaedo* with that of the *Republic* (and the *Phaedrus*), and though he knew of the tripartite soul he made little use of it. That the subtleties of Plato's treatment of the divided soul are often lacking in Plotinus is a disappointing fact partly to be explained by his comparative lack of interest in the radically practical and political aspects of Plato's work. What he retains, however – indeed what he develops – is Plato's interest in what we may now call the 'unconscious', that condition of human existence which in Plato is revealed in the content of our dreams, in particular in Oedipal dreams. As book nine of the *Republic* has it, what the good man dreams, the bad man does. So in Plotinus (see especially *Ennead* 4.8) we live at three psychological levels: we retain a link with the divine Forms by a certain memory of them (this forms part of the basis for Augustine's theory of *memoria*, indeed of *memoria Dei*, when purged of residual traces of the old belief in a pre-existence of the soul), but we also live not only at the level of our present consciousness, but at the lower level of those thoughts and ideas we have repressed below its surface. These we can retrieve, as it were, when we turn to vice.

Why do we so turn and so engage with these suppressed desires? In a famous passage at the beginning of *Ennead* 5.1 – where surely Augustine must have found philosophical confirmation of biblical themes – Plotinus describes how, impelled by pride and a pleasure fuelled by a craving of the soul to be self-made, it comes to forget 'itself' and its 'father', that is, the One. But this longed-for self-deception – we shall notice modern parallels – is not only morally vicious but metaphysically absurd and unrealistic since we are not wholly fallen: a part of our soul remains 'above', pure and unfallen, retaining, as already noted, present and adequate contact with, and not merely remembrance of, the spiritual and intelligible world (*Ennead* 4.8.8.1–4; cf. 5.1.10.17ff.). In Plotinus' view, without such present contact, we could not return to reality, pulling ourselves up, as it were, by our own bootstraps: a task certainly difficult, but not impossible, as examples such as that of Socrates were taken to make plain. Thus

we are able to revert to the Forms and the Good without resort to divine assistance, which in any case only the morally lazy delude themselves into thinking is forthcoming. That leaves for Augustine the problem of showing that we do indeed need such divine assistance – namely grace – but that via revealed Christianity we can avoid what for Plotinus should be the existential abyss: need for 'salvation' but inability to save ourselves. And when we revert to Augustine, we shall see that in his account of moral weakness he has retained – for very Christian reasons – more of Plato's original version of soul division than Plotinus normally allows.

Before so reverting there is a further – and philosophically serious – problem in Plato's account of love (*eros*) itself: the problem of impersonality of which both Plato and (at times to a greater degree) Plotinus have a certain awareness, but which neither has tools necessary for an adequate correction. It is notorious that in the *Symposium*, when we reach the higher 'rungs' of the ladder, it seems that the original motivation to ascend, namely the recognition of the beauty in an original body, and thence, transcending the coarseness of carnality, also in an original soul, will disappear, and we move from personal to impersonal objects of 'love'. The notion of creativity is expressed in both 'male' and 'female' language, but it is probably true that Plato's thinking is here largely affected by the conventions of homosexual love within which his theory of *eros* was originally developed. For according to the 'canons' of 'Greek love' – the dominant tradition which is given clear voice, in a Socratic context, by Xenophon (*Symposium* 8.21) – the object of desire is receptive, not responsive; the lover is aroused and heated while the partner is (and should be) cool and complacent. This model is then transformed to the higher reaches of love: thus the philosopher loves and is affected by Beauty, but Beauty is a final and formal, not an efficient cause. Beauty is inactive, impersonal but impressive (like the beauty of sea and sky), while the lover is personal. Which raises the question whether love of what is impersonal, however sublimated, is of the same kind as love of the personal.

In the *Phaedrus* Plato shows an awareness of the human and psychological problem – does the devotion of Alcibiades to his beloved Socrates in the *Symposium* alert him to it? – developing the idea of a counter-love (*anteros*) which is stimulated in the beloved though remaining a response; the beloved was originally calm and inactive, as nice boys (and girls) are supposed to be. But in the *Phaedrus* there is still no indication that a form, Beauty itself, could ever be active, so the problem of the impersonal love object remains unresolved. At the level of the Demiurge-God

of the *Timaeus*, however, we seem to meet something a little different. The Demiurge too is presumably a lover of the Good and the Beautiful, and he is called the Maker of the cosmos. But unless – as is possible, but that is another story – Plato eventually moved towards an identification of God and the Good, then the Good itself, Beauty itself – though *sine quo non* if there is to be a cosmos – cannot be an efficient, let alone a loving cause. Plato might, but does not, invite us to love the Demiurge who is the 'maker and father of our universe', and so – if we take the personal language at all seriously, and not just as a metaphysical metaphor – must somehow be a lover of Beauty, but Beauty itself can be no such thing, thus remaining impersonal. But what if the gap between God and Form were to disappear; which is at times what tends to happen at the highest level in Plotinus' supposedly 'Platonic' universe?

Plotinus makes no use of Plato's concept of 'counter-love', but in the remarkable (and virtually unique) central chapters of *Ennead* 6.8, especially chapter 15, he claims that the One, the first principle of all – the universe now being unambiguously and unplatonically monistic – is love (*eros*); indeed is love *of itself*. That, though strange to many Platonic ears, is an inevitable and correct inference from his view that there is a single cause of the entire universe, physical and non-physical, namely the One – which indicates that the personal as well as the impersonal aspects of the universe must flow from that single source. Indeed were the One not identified with *eros*, it is hard to see how there could be any kind of plurality, for the One would be self-enclosed.

Nor should we entirely pass over a further strange feature of Plotinus' One in 6.8, this time in chapter 13. For in this chapter, shortly before Plotinus is going to tell us in chapter 15 that the One loves itself, he explains that it also 'wills' itself. The connection of love and 'willing' cannot but make Plotinus sound like Augustine – and perhaps these chapters were to influence the 'willing' language about God that, as we shall see later, is in its turn to influence Aquinas through Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene. Be that as it may, were it to be the case that Augustine knew this *Ennead*, we would have further evidence of his treatment of the relationship between loving and 'willing'. Plotinus might seem to Augustine to have already made the combination of Stoic and Platonic ideas that he himself professed. But, it must be repeated, it is by no means certain that Augustine had read *Ennead* 6.8. As for Plotinus, creativity being the driving idea of his account of 'emanation', it is inevitable that the One itself would have to be in some sense erotic, in some sense both lover and beloved. But in what sense?

In Plato's universe *eros*, the love of beauty, is driven by a desire to satisfy an unfilled need; we desire beauty because we are not beautiful enough. So Plato can say both in the *Lysis* and in the *Symposium* that the gods cannot be lovers of wisdom because they are wise already. But without love there is no creation, so if in any sense the gods do create (or rather fashion) the better from the worse, they must be lovers, must – though Plato does not say so – retain the creative aspects of love even though they have no needs. Put differently he could say – and indeed implies in the *Symposium* – that they must continue to love: not, that is, love to acquire what they do not possess, but love to retain what they already possess: to love, for example, the beauty and wisdom which characterize them as divine beings.

Turning again to Plotinus, we should not be surprised to find that 'emanation' demands that the One be in some sense erotic because creative; but if it is also without needs and the source of all, its 'love' must be self-directed. That could seem somewhat Christian – and some have supposed that *Ennead* 6.8 is influenced by a Christian source, arguing that nowhere else in the *Enneads* does Plotinus speak at length about the will or love of the One. But outside influence need not be invoked, even if it cannot be ruled out; the internal logic of Plato's position alone could have brought Plotinus to the point he has reached, though no further – and here is an argument *against* any particular Christian influence: Plotinus never speaks of the One's love for his creation, of anything resembling the 'love of humanity' (*philanthropia*) which according to Origen, his somewhat earlier Christian contemporary, is the expression of the love of God, through Christ, for man created in his own image and likeness. It is left to Proclus to initiate a cautious move in that direction. Yet to identify the One with love is a significant advance, and if Augustine read *Ennead* 6.8 – which, I repeat, is uncertain – he would have recognized another of those happy coincidences between Neoplatonic thinking and his restored account of Christianity. In any case, he had no need of Plotinian help to recognize God as love – but what sort of love, and if there are many sorts, what could be the relationship between them? Augustine will also have to think about Plato's claim, reiterated by Plotinus and Porphyry, that *eros* is the power that can raise the soul to the divine, bringing about the 'unification' (*henosis*) which Plotinus and his followers thought to be the high point of the ladder of ascent Diotima envisioned in the *Symposium*.

Before we take leave of the pagan Platonists to return to our main narrative, we must look again at the problem of impersonality which Augustine must try to resolve, though the motives behind his attempts to do so – as well as the immediate difficulties they themselves would seem

to generate – must be very different from those which can be shown not to have escaped Plato's eagle eye. As we have already observed, sympathetic interpreters of the *Symposium* have been regularly disturbed that in the ascent of the soul the desire for a personal relationship seems to be transformed into a desire for an impersonal, ultimately for Beauty itself. So what has happened to the beloved who inspired the ascent? In the *Phaedrus*, as we have noticed, Plato shows himself more aware of the problem when he introduces the concept of *anteros*, an idea not wholly alien to the *Symposium*, where it would seem to describe the returned affection of Alcestis, mentioned both by Phaedrus in the opening speech and by Diotima in her lengthy metaphysical exposition. But uneasiness remains: the beloved somehow disappears (even if he remains as a silent partner) in the overwhelming madness that accompanies the quest for and vision of the Form. Eventually, though not without difficulty, Augustine will come to recognize such an outcome as intolerably unchristian, suggesting that love of one's neighbour is a mere means towards love of God rather than an intrinsic feature of loving God's perfection.

Plato's own concerns may have been earthier, perhaps linking up with his (and our) difficulties about the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. The (regretted) banishment of the poets in the final book of the *Republic* makes it clear that, if aesthetic attractions impede moral improvement, they must always be subordinated, for the good life is the moral (better, the spiritual) life. And the problem with the beloved is his (or for us, if male,[5] more easily her) original physical attractiveness, or even spiritual attractiveness, for a certain disharmony between the original more or less carnal love and the love for Beauty itself and the ensuing 'higher' creativity may persist. Thus if an artist's 'muse' poses nude or, as happens, becomes his mistress, Plato might want to argue that his/her bodily charms will ultimately distract the artist from his higher calling; indeed his motives in asking her to take her clothes off may already be composed

[5] Sexual difference here is important because (for whatever cultural reasons or unavoidable scientific inaccuracy – and despite her using concepts from both male and female sexual and generative experience) Diotima speaks of the ascent in male terms: the seeker, at least, is first viewed as male with a 'muse' – though in this case the 'muse' is also male. That means that Plato does not supply us with an adequate model for female ascent (presumably relying on the notion that all minds are male, or at least not-female, and that sexual distinctions are only bodily). Hence to complete his story in our different psychological environment, some further account of the ascent of the female soul would be required. That would be easier in Christian than in strictly Platonic theory because in accordance with Christian mysticism since Origen, all souls are female with reference to God (or Christ). That would imply – doubtless to Augustine's satisfaction – that receptivity/humility (*Fiat mihi …)* would be a necessary part of all theistic, as distinct from Platonic impersonal-seeking, ascent.

both of a love of Beauty itself and the love of her particular body – and as Augustine knew from personal experience and explains in the *Confessions* (3.1.1), the love of her body can be (idolatrously from the Christian point of view) mistaken for love of Beauty itself.

Plato knows that being tempted (wittingly or unwittingly) by a 'muse' can be resisted; that is part of the point of his story of Alcibiades' attempted seduction of Socrates – a seduction in which, in Athenian terms, the beautiful (and adult) Alcibiades is prepared even to adopt the 'inferior' and 'dominated' role (as understood in ancient Athens) in his attempted seduction. But Plato also wants to emphasize the exemplariness of Socrates' ability to decline 'bronze armour for gold' – that is, sexual victory for wisdom – when Alcibiades thus 'throws himself' at him. Analogously – like Alcibiades, and challenging Plato in appropriating divine beauty to herself – Paolina Borghese, posing as Venus Victrix, was vaunting her abilities as a distracting seductress not only over her husband – envisaged as Mars – but also (hopefully?) over Canova who sculpted her as in some sense his 'muse'.[6] If such events – regular enough – are what worried Plato, perhaps we can see at least one reason why the immediate beloved has normally (unless we are like Socrates) to be left behind. There is at least a genuine problem among human beings as we know them, though Socrates himself continued to teach and provoke attractive young men.

We have identified some of the strengths (inspiration, the longing for perfection, the unlimited generosity of the love of beauty and its creativity) and weaknesses (impersonalism, the lack of 'love' returned downwards from the metaphysical summit) that characterized 'Platonism' and Platonic accounts of love as Augustine came to know them in Milan. In looking into what he made of them, we must remain aware of the connection in his thought between loving/desiring and willing – and especially of the roots – the motivations – of acts of the will and of the assent which we make to them: as also how Augustine identifies and tries to correct those weaknesses which mar the Platonic tradition. We shall want to ask whether he retains the language of Plato's more 'carnal' account of *eros* or

[6] In light of the previous note, the concept of a 'muse' for females would require adaptation. Lynn Hunt observes that during the seventeenth century, as portrait painters 'increasingly sought forthrightness and psychological intimacy in their portraits', sexual tension rose, not least if (as now had become more frequent) men were painted by women (Hunt 2007: 89). She cites Boswell: '[Johnson] thought portrait painting an improper employment for a woman', indeed he held that 'public practice of any art, and staring in men's faces, is very indelicate in a female', adding that Diderot, who was painted by a woman, defended himself against the charge that he had slept with her (by claiming she was not pretty).

whether he falls back on Plotinus' more sanitized version. And beyond that will loom the morally and metaphysically fundamental question of the strength of the erotic desire for the good: Is it powerful enough, as Plato and Plotinus thought, to enable us to overcome the pull of evil that, for Augustine as for Christians of any age, is a reality that Christianity must make us uniquely concerned to understand?

There is no better place to start than with Augustine's early work *On the Life-Style of the Catholic Church and of the Manichaeans*. Here, correcting a presumably Stoic account of the nature of virtue whereby the virtues are modes of right reason, Augustine claims that they are modes of love (1.15.25): which does not entail that they are not also and less basically modes of a (non-Stoic) 'reason', nor that they are irrational, let alone that they cannot be rationally evaluated or that they are not known as well as loved – indeed they are known precisely by a loving kind of knowledge – nor that their distinctive individual characteristics have got lost, as Aquinas worries (*ST* 1aIIae, q.62, a.3, c.3) in a text that sets the stage for debate. Augustine insists, platonically, that to understand the virtues we have to understand their proper motivation – and that, for him, is ultimately love of God. In thinking that virtue consists in accepting ('assenting to') rational propositions, the Stoics confused what Newman would later label 'notional assent' with 'real assent'. Real assent, in the Augustinian terms to which Newman too was drawn, is an affair of the 'heart', being a matter of assenting to the right kind of loving and of knowing that one is loving the right object: a theme to which we shall return, noting in the meantime that Augustine says of himself (*Confessions* 8.1.1) that he recognized the truth of Christianity before he became a Christian. Only real assent can claim to be more, emotionally and intellectually, than true belief.

But *On the Life-Style of the Catholic Church* is not the first place where we find what sounds like Platonizing language about love. In *On the Happy Life*, his earliest work as a Catholic, Augustine speaks, as Socrates might have spoken, of the good man as driven by 'blazing love' (*flagrante caritate*: 4.35). Of course, Christians, not least Origen in his allegorical reading of the *Song of Songs*, had used such language long before Augustine, but there is no reason to suppose Augustine intentionally echoes his illustrious Christian predecessor; rather this is Plotinian – or perhaps more than Plotinian – language, and Augustine knew that, having but recently read and – to judge by a letter of this period to Nebridius (*Letter* 6.1) – probably still reading the 'books of the Platonists'.

The high point of Augustine's use of strongly erotic language to describe the good Christian's love for God is to be found in *On Free Choice*, but he

retracted none of it and continued to use it throughout his life. The following texts reveal the character of his thought, not least in indicating his Platonic, as opposed to Plotinian, frankness:

(1) 'Men cry out that they are blessed (*beati*: a rather slangy usage) when they embrace with great yearning the beautiful and longed-for bodies of their wives, or even of prostitutes, and shall we doubt that we are blessed in the arms of truth?' (*On Free Choice* 2.13.35).[7]
(2) 'Perhaps this is what Scripture means when it describes how Wisdom deals with her lovers when they come in search of her. For it was said: she shall show herself graciously to them in the ways' (*Wisdom* 6:17; *On Free Choice* 2.16.41).
(3) 'We have that which we can all enjoy equally and in common. In her [Beauty] there is no straitness, no deficiency. All the lovers she receives are altogether free of jealousy of one another; she is shared by all in common and chaste to each. None says to another: "Stand back that I too may approach" or "take your hands off that I may embrace her too". All cleave to the same thing. Her food is not divided individually and you do not drink anything that I cannot drink too. From that common store you can convert nothing to your private possession' (*On Free Choice* 2.14.37).

The first of these passages indicates the 'sublimation' of a specifically sexual desire, Platonic in its idea of canalizing that desire towards different and 'higher' objects; the second and third point to the non-grudging nature of well-ordered (and therefore divine) love: there is enough for all. The third – more daringly – seems to move from the world of the brothel to the sacrament of the altar, written by a man with likely knowledge of both. All three passages, however, tacitly correct the Platonic original, not only in their use of clearly *heterosexual* imagery – language more explicitly relevant to physical procreation as well as spiritual creation – but in the fact that the object of desire is personal. The third passage uses the language of 'cleaving', which indeed becomes standard, as well as castigating the sin of possessiveness: this last a particular concern of a public-spirited Augustine consistently critical of the human desire, motivated by a perverse form of self-love, to divert what should be public to private purposes.

The 'excited' language of *On Free Choice* recurs in much later texts. Thus, in the late *Sermon* 34 (2.4), probably of 418, we read as follows, noting

[7] For further discussion see Rist (1994b: 157) and note the arguably embarrassed comment of Verheijen: 'étonnement érotique' (Verheijen 1983: 97).

now the desire for a mutuality which seemed deficient in Plato, especially in the *Symposium*: 'The lascivious lover of the limbs of a beautiful woman is aroused by the beauty of her body, but inwardly (*intus*) he wants more: a mutuality of love.' Such physical experiences, for Augustine, show that it is a mark of human longing not only to love but to be loved – which leads us directly to ask who is lovable because Augustine had adopted the Platonic axiom that 'we cannot love anything unless it is beautiful' (*On Music* 6.13.38). Yet that in turn implies that the only perfect love is for God because God alone is wholly beautiful: 'Love, who are always ablaze … enkindle me. Give what you command and command what you will' (*Confessions* 10.29.40). In his 'unreformed' days, as he later recalled, Augustine was already in love with love, but took that 'love' (which he later came to recognize as the Holy Spirit) to be instantiated in (or as) the body of his Carthaginian mistress (*Confessions* 3.1.1). He wanted to 'enjoy' her, though enjoyment is only possible and only appropriate if the object of love itself is God or 'in God'. Augustine tells us in one of his sermons on the *Psalms* (134.6) that in seeking a platonizing ecstasy he yet failed to see the Good without which nothing is good.

But human beings as we know them are fallen; they cannot now be beautiful in and of themselves. Before the fall, Augustine tells us, Eve was made beautiful by the love of Adam (*On Psalms* 132.10), but now we humans are spiritually disabled; that is why in Carthage Augustine himself did not even know what Beauty is, seeing only its corporeal shadow. Yet despite the fall, we have not *entirely* lost the capacity to love; the problem is not only that our love is weak but that we regularly – habitually – love the wrong things. We should hope to enjoy only God and all else in God, but regularly we indulge and become accustomed to more perverse desires, our behaviour now resembling that of the Platonic 'consumer' whose love is primarily only for himself and for what he can get for himself, and seeing everything, even, as we have noted, personal relations, in material and consumerist terms. Yet corrupted as we are, Augustine still finds the power of our loves impressive: even the love of the hunter for the chase is somehow admirable (*Sermon* 68.12; 70.2), but especially the loyalty of the brigand who under torture will not reveal the names of his fellows: 'He could not have done this', says Augustine, 'without a great capacity for love' (*Sermon* 169.14).

Something – but not enough – of the power of *eros* remains, though our ability to use that power aright has been fatally damaged and contrary to the opinion of Plato and Plotinus (but not of most post-Plotinian Platonists) we need the help of God the physician, for we are lamed and

limping (or diseased), victims not only of ignorance but of a radical weakness of purpose, itself the result of a failure in love for God, a kind of spiritual heart failure. An example: we may have a moral weakness in that we are attracted to violence and so we are unable to resist when the chance to indulge that weakness arises. So Augustine tells us of his friend (and later fellow bishop) Alypius, that if he went to the amphitheatre, 'When he saw the blood, it was as though he had drunk a draught of savagery … he revelled in the wickedness of the combat and was intoxicated with the joys of bloodshed' (*Confessions* 6.8.13). In that description Augustine is not telling us that in his calmer moments Alypius would have approved of such behaviour, but rather that he knew the better and did the worse. As Plato would have said, he had a divided soul – and Augustine could have known that Christians had identified such 'doubleness' (Greek: *dipsuchia*) as a characteristic of fallen man since the time of the Shepherd of Hermas and Justin in the second century. Where Augustine would diverge from Plato (at least from the Plato of the *Republic* and from most of the ensuing tradition) was in his conviction that we cannot overcome such habits by any sort of ascetic training without the help of God, and that we shall revert to our evil ways unless that help is provided.

In his later writings no theme is more typically Augustinian than that we must pray for 'perseverance to the end': a capacity that turned out to be lacking not least in Adam before the fall (*Rebuke and Grace* 11.31–2). And a much earlier Augustine was already clear that because love is of the beautiful, and humans in their fallen condition are hardly beautiful, our only hope is that God, through grace, will 'inspire love in us' (*Against Fortunatus* 22), for 'Grace is the inspiration of love, enabling us to do what is known by holy love' (*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 4.5.11); or again, elsewhere, that grace is the enabler of a good [that is, a loving] will (*Reply to Simplicianus* 1.2.13).

Without grace no Platonic love of the good and the beautiful will attain its goal; in particular we shall not be able adequately to recognize the residual, but restorable, beauty in others. Plato had seen that love must start with interpersonal attractions; his inability to conceive of God as personal prevented him from seeing that the 'personal' is not outgrown as we rise up the ascetic ladder. True union with God is not, as Augustine seems still to have thought when hoping for a platonizing 'ecstasy' in Milan, a matter of the alone to the Alone, a one-on-One experience. A very different kind of 'mystical' union will be seen as a high point in the cultivation of love if 'the whole Christian life is a holy desire' (*On John's Epistle* 4.6) is properly understood. Augustine in effect repudiated his Milanese

fumblings in his account of the later 'ecstasy' at Ostia, where not only did he experience a vision in company with another person, his mother Monnica, but its background was the communion of the saints: of those, that is, made beautiful – and hence holy – by God's grace.

Nevertheless, even in the *City of God*, a work in which he is frequently and openly critical of the 'errors' of Platonism, Augustine recognizes his indebtedness to Plato's treatment of love, however inadequate it may have been in its details: 'In Plato's view God alone is … the inspirer of the love which is the condition of a good and happy life.' He omits to say – probably because he misunderstood Plato's position, but perhaps because he gave him benefit of the doubt – that the inspiration of which Plato spoke was the *effect* of 'seeing' a passive and impersonal Form, not the result of the activity of a personal Healer. From God's point of view, it was event, not action.

Misled by the Platonists, Augustine took longer to understand the second commandment, to love one's neighbour as oneself, than the first[8] – and his view of the 'personal' character of the love we owe to God and neighbour needs further elucidation. In the spirit of Plato's hostility to the 'consumer' who wants to reduce human beings to commodities he can 'enjoy' – and reinforced (if not originally established) in that hostility by his belief in the Christian God – Augustine regularly points to the appropriately different attitudes to be adopted to the human and to the non-human and so the radically different 'loves' we should display in each case. Certainly he understood many of the implications of the first commandment before he was able fully to come to terms with the second, such ambiguity being recognizable (for example) in a formulation of *The Life-Style of the Catholic Church* (1.26.48): 'We can find no surer step towards the love of God than the love of man for man.'

That, indeed, left open the possibility of seeing such human love as merely a means to a very different end – as the Platonists were inclined to suggest was the appropriate way to go. Augustine, however, was soon to discover that enjoying humans (and much else) 'in' or through God in no way implied such instrumentalization: only the recognition that loving in any other way (romantically or with some other false priority) could easily – and often would – degenerate into idolatry. Underlying this recognition is the insistent principle that whatever is of value depends for its value on the existence of God. As we shall see, Augustine distinguishes between a natural and true self-love, whereby we want the best

[8] For love of neighbour see further Rist (1994b: 159–68), and for the two visions 85, note 81.

for ourselves – that is, what God wants for us – and a perversion of that psychologically healthy desire into a very different kind of love of self: in the words of the *City of God*, to the point of contempt for God. Without the healthy self-love we are self-haters only able to hate our neighbour as ourselves (*Sermon* 128.3–5).

Earlier in his Christian career, Augustine had advanced a considerable distance towards recognizing that we must value persons above the rest of God's creation: that 'personality' is not to be transcended, as Plato seemed to suggest, and not least because God himself is personal. We are, after all, created in God's image and likeness, and that image has not been destroyed by the fall: it can still be found in the men and women around us. Consider the following passages: 'If a man were to love another not as himself but as a beast of burden, or as the public baths, or as a gaudy and garrulous bird, that is, to get some temporal pleasure or advantage from him' – that is to manipulate him, to 'use' him in the pejorative sense of the word – 'he is necessarily a slave not to a man, but what is worse, to that foul and detestable vice of not loving a man as a man ought to be loved' (*True Religion* 46.87). That might have demanded of Augustine a less complacent attitude to slavery (which did indeed imply treating human beings – both males, and even in 'respectable' households perhaps especially females – in just such ways). That it did not is a sadly eloquent example of the morally debilitating power of convention that generally Augustine was the first to acknowledge. In this case it was propped up by the theory that slavery, even if not divinely promoted, is inevitable after the fall. Here, like other ancient Christians, Augustine contents himself with castigating the ill treatment of slaves rather than slavery itself as a 'structure of sin'.

Or again, if less pointedly: 'We ought not to love human beings in the sense in which one hears gourmets say "I love thrushes". Why not? Because the gourmet loves to kill and consume. When he says that he loves thrushes, he loves them so that they may not exist, so that he may destroy them.… We ought not love human beings as things to be consumed. Friendship is a kind of benevolence, leading us [Platonically] to do things for the benefit of those we love' (*On John's Epistle* 8.5).

Love, then, is of the beautiful and at both the level of sense and the level of the desire to 'cleave' to God, the beautiful is a source of delight. When God infuses a stronger love in us we are able to see beauty in fallen humanity – in some sort restoring its beauty and so finding it lovable 'in God' – precisely because in being persons men and women resemble God, indeed are created in his image. We obtain spiritual delight from God's call and

God's presence, but we do not seek him in order to find delight, rather we find accompanying delight in 'knowing' and 'finding' and 'enjoying' him. Yet who knows, Augustine wonders, when and in what form will come some specific instance of that delight that may move our 'loving will' (our *voluntas*) (*Reply to Simplicianus* 1.2.21). He herein affords us more than a glimpse of that essentially affective aspect of our 'will' which is our immediate concern. We 'will' to see, to know and ultimately (we hope) to enjoy what we love. Loving is the source of willing, the motive for that which we will to do. Willing is no 'raw' act, or cognitive performance, but an expression of what we love and hate: that is to say, for Augustine, of what we are.

I have argued in the previous chapter (and elsewhere) that the most accurate, though not the most concise, translation of the title of Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio*, his three-volume book on the 'free decision' of the 'will', would be *On the externally uninhibited power to choose which we have as moral agents*: thus seeing our *voluntas* as the moral character displayed in what we choose (will) to do and itself formed by what we habitually love and hate. For our 'Platonic' loves are expressed as the cause of our decisions, of the assents we make; the delight they bring as a weight on the soul pulling us – for good if not for ill – in one direction or the other (*On Music* 6.11.25; *Confessions* 7.17.23, 13.9.10: *pondus meum amor meus*); either way we cleave or are glued to what motivates them. And from such cleaving come our habits, our mindset, our 'acknowledged' loves, in short our *voluntas*. This *voluntas* is plainly Stoic in that it incorporates the Stoic 'impulse' as well as assent, but it is radically Platonic in that it is both the enduring state of our loves and the way we express them at given times. Only the Holy Spirit is unchanging in love and so in will; thus in his work *On the Trinity* (15.20.38; 15.21.41; cf. *On Psalms* 122 (121). 1) Augustine is able to claim that in this, the perfect example, God's will and God's love are identical: neither aspect can be understood without reference to the other, but logically love is prior, the will of the Spirit being the expression of what he loves and is. Both the Spirit and the grace – hence faith – that flow from him are 'formed' by love: *fides* **is** *caritate formata*.

This idea of assent is, as we have noted, originally 'Stoic', but in Augustine's view we assent to 'Platonic' desires of the heart, which may or may not be expressed in (Stoic) propositional form, but which in any case express our interior nature. In the case of good and 'holy' assents, our love is necessarily honest, based on a clear understanding both of our sinfulness and of our dependence on God: that is, in Augustine's language, on that humility – the specific virtue of the incarnate Christ whom

Augustine recognized as Truth (*On Free Choice* 2.9.26) – which will always accompany the highest love of which we are capable (*Holy Virginity* 53.54). Humility is at the root of the human search for truth, and our model is the humility of Christ, who is Truth, while love is the impulse to truth, seen in its highest manifestation as the Holy Spirit. Humility is thus typically and properly human; it was the humility of a Canaanite woman, according to Augustine, which impressed Jesus to declare she is human, no mere animal (*Sermon* 60A.3; 70A.11). We are to love all, Jews included, and even pagans, precisely because of this humanity (*Sermon* 359.9).

Humility might seem unproblematic, but the idea of loving one's neighbour as oneself, with which Augustine connects it, proved more troublesome. From medieval times – and well before its coming to a head in the Lutheran tradition – people worried about the notion of loving oneself: Should not love, for a Christian, be 'disinterested'? As we have already noted, mistaken responses to this question in the Middle Ages encouraged an anti-Augustinian view: that we should think not of love for God, which might suggest something acquisitive, but of 'friendship with God', which, especially if interpreted in rather Aristotelian fashion, might seem more disinterested. It is therefore necessary to indicate here that proper self-love on which the love of neighbour could be founded was proposed in a psychologically more adequate fashion by Augustine himself.

His first step, as we have seen, was to invoke humility. We must recognize that we depend on God: as Plotinus already knew, we are not self-created. But as the Stoics had taught, we are formed by God with a built-in, quite natural impulse for self-preservation: How could we not be since, for Augustine, we have been called into and maintained in existence by God? Thus there is a natural and proper self-love in the form of the desire – in some circumstances to be overridden in the case of our 'mortal' life – to continue to exist. And we are to continue to exist because we are valued and valuable, and we are valuable because, like it or not, we cannot but live 'in God'. On this basis, Augustine constructs an account of the correct form of self-love (correct because it depends on our recognition of God's gifts, not least of his gift of life), whereby we grow into a recognition that, in loving ourselves, we can see it as the will of God that we love our fellow humans: not of course – like the 'love' of thrushes – to exploit them, but to value them, to help them live as we too should hope to live, pointed towards heaven. And thus we learn to love our neighbour as ourselves (*Christian Doctrine* 1.23.22; 1.26.27; *On the Trinity* 14.14.18; *City of God* 10.3.2).

Nevertheless, the phrase *amor sui* is normally pejorative in Augustine, being applied, not least in the *City of God*, to the perversion of proper self-concern into the perverse love, the futile craving, which can drive us to seek independence from God, thus forming the psychological basis for that other allegiance that is to the city of the devil, which seeks to function 'in contempt of God' (*City of God* 14.28). This perversity of self-creation can be found in Plotinus, as we have seen, but Augustine adds a social dimension: wishing to be one's own master is inseparable from wishing to have power over others, and not only over their bodies. As love of God entails love of neighbour *in* God, so independence of God entails hatred of other human beings: a desire to dominate them, to have others' souls under our control, as Augustine puts it elsewhere (*On Music* 6.13.41).

Though going over some more familiar ground, I have thought this chapter a necessary complement to its predecessor. Augustine's account of *voluntas*, of the 'loving will', has two aspects, and the omission or downplaying of either will generate something non-Augustinian and more fragile than Augustine's original position. Under *voluntas* must be recognized both love, of men and of God, and the acts of willing which the habituation of our loves will produce. To emphasize 'love alone' will fail to do justice to the need for a non-romantic account of human motivation in a fallen world in which Plato's understanding of the power and integrity of *eros* – as of its necessarily personal application – has been found inadequate. On the other hand, to emphasize acts of will alone, however understood as 'free', is to leave us with a divine command ethic or perhaps – as can be perceived if the collapse of theism in the West has at least in part resulted from the emergence of such a moral theology – with a morality to be established at best on the basis of some unintelligible account of the 'duty' of our somehow sanctified 'holy will'. Augustine proposed a precarious balance and as we proceed down the centuries we shall see how – even with the 'best will in the world' – that balance was lost, with disastrous consequences, and not only for ethics.

Nor was it only in the case of his account of love that Augustine's nuanced position was dismantled. As we have seen, love is represented in *On the Trinity* (especially in book fifteen) as the very nature of the Holy Spirit, but as there is only one God, to know the Spirit is to know the other Persons of the Trinity, from which He 'proceeds'. In his Trinitarian theology Augustine particularly associates knowing with Christ, the Second Person, thus indicating that there can be no separation in God of love and knowledge. And so, as Plato had predicted philosophically, it must be in

the case of man, in whom here again true love and true knowledge cannot be radically separated. So much, in advance, for much of the endless medieval debate about whether weakness of the 'will' or a determination of the 'intellect' could explain moral failure: such merely conceptual distinctions between two pseudo-'faculties' could generate pseudo-problems about how 'we' as human agents act badly. Yet if our 'will' and our love of God (and of neighbour) are inadequate, says Augustine (following in the steps of Plato), then our knowledge too is inadequate – and vice versa. To separate love and knowledge is to point to some aridly Cartesian account of cognition, leading to the degradation of *eros* as romanticism, and to a radical glorification of the will, however raw or otherwise.

CHAPTER 4

Anselm: Will, Omnipotence, Responsibility

> 'If I were to guess who will be saved, God would laugh me to scorn.'
>
> Augustine (to Simplicianus)

> 'Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute.'
>
> Milton, *Paradise Lost*

A modern scholar has written that Augustine was unknown during the Middle Ages,[1] that 'he was used and abused, cited and excerpted, copied and created, but never really known': hyperbole of course, but concealing an underlying truth that although so many medieval writers cite Augustine and assume themselves to be Augustinians, it is often very difficult, if not impossible, to know how many works of Augustine they had read in their entirety, how much they had read in famous quotations often taken out of context, how much they 'just knew', from the intellectual air they breathed, to be Augustinian. One cannot but recognize that there are as many more or less diverse medieval Augustines as there are apparent Augustinians, that for each generation Augustine had to be recreated – and that that situation more or less persisted even after the appearance of printed texts of most of 'our' Augustine.

That no doubt is one of the reasons why we find it difficult to understand the attitude of medieval 'Augustinians' to Augustine, why we are puzzled by their strange, often apparently misguided attempts in effect to rescue Augustine from what in their limited panorama he appears to be. But for our present purposes that does not matter; here we are thinking about how Augustine was read and how what appeared to be his view – rather than his views – was passed on from one generation to the next. And we have to allow that sometimes – at least basically – they got him right!

[1] Saak 2012a: 465 and 1997: 367–404.

As we have seen, there is a certain coherence in Augustine's account of the 'nature' and origin of moral evil, but he has left us with a serious problem as to the nature and so the activity of God. So I shall leave aside those monks, found particularly in Gaul and later dubbed 'semi-Pelagians',[2] who largely accepted Augustine's account of God but remained anxious about the apparent total absence of human cooperation in the initial stage of the soul's salvation, and I merely note the proto-Calvinist claims of Godescalc of Orbais (a Benedictine monk whom Scotus Eriugena signally failed to refute and whose condemnation at Quiercy in 849 was engineered by Hincmar of Rheims), according to whom, relying on claims about God's immutability, God predestined some to salvation and the rest to damnation. Godescalc probably also taught that free 'will' perished altogether after the fall; that would constitute an early and radical attempt to resolve some of Augustine's apparent problems, but one that Augustine would not have accepted and for which the times were as yet unripe.

From the point of view of the 'future' of the Augustinian problems that we have been examining thus far, the figure of Boethius cannot be passed over in silence. Had his project to translate into Latin the entire works of Plato and Aristotle been completed – it had hardly begun when he was clubbed to death in 524 – the history of Catholic thought during the Middle Ages would have been very different. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that in his last work, *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, he sets out a programme for a discipline of philosophy radically different from Augustine's (3.12), but which began to come more plainly into view during the thirteenth century when the major works of Aristotle arrived in the West.

It is often supposed that the challenge 'Aristotelians' posed was less that Augustine had no notion of philosophy as distinct from 'theology' than whether Augustine's implicit methodology should still be accepted. For especially in the *City of God*, Augustine requires the wise philosopher to proceed as far as he can by the use of reason, prescinding from the Scriptures and the traditions of the Church: to proceed, that is, as the Platonists had done, but then to have the humility to recognize the limits of philosophy and accept to graft revelation on to natural knowledge. Only by so proceeding could we account for the fact that we are not only recognizable metaphysical entities (able to be investigated as members of

[2] See generally Weaver (1996). Historically important is the fact that 'semi-Pelagianism' – as well as extreme predestinationism – was eventually condemned at the Council of Orange (529), but that the canons of this council were unknown between the tenth and the sixteenth centuries.

abstract classes), but also significant individuals whose personal character and destiny can only be understood in their specific historical context and with reference to the unfolding in historical time of the Judaeo-Christian revelation.[3]

Just as Godescalc – and all the more because of his 'proto-Calvinism' – like other thinkers of his day considered himself an Augustinian, so in the eleventh century did Anselm of Aosta and of Bec (1033–1109), the second Norman archbishop of Canterbury. For us he stands at the boundary between the patristic age and the high medieval world. Like Augustine he was both monk and bishop, but in a developing feudal world very different from the decaying Western Roman Empire. Though writing primarily for monks and thus monastic rather than scholastic, his influence was much wider; indeed he was to become in many respects the fountainhead of later medieval thought – and he too aligned himself as an Augustinian.

Anselm accepted without question that we are one in Adam; hence that when Adam fell the whole human race fell with him. Yet the thrust of his discussion of *voluntas* – especially insofar as it emphasizes our individual responsibility for our acts, whether good or bad, and despite his obvious concern better to understand the fall of Satan and its problem of the choice of an evil act by an apparently perfect will – seems to point away from the angelic origins of sinfulness and from the choices of unfallen Adam to those of our fallen selves. In thinking about human sinfulness and the justice of God's punishments, Anselm's emphasis on personal responsibility tends to direct our attention – as would continue among his successors – to an analysis of our 'wills' in our present human condition. That in turn might point towards bracketing out the fall of Adam (not to speak of that of Satan) and concentrating on a purely philosophical (as distinct from theological) account of action and responsibility, and in the process neglect a major tension in Augustine's thought: between the 'greater' freedom of God and the saints and any apparent need to prioritize a radical choice – a freedom to choose – between alternative moral options.

Anselm seems to have believed that Augustine's account of the 'will' and of its various freedoms leaves several serious problems in need of 'clarification'. His difficulties were certainly due in part to unfamiliarity with the full range of Augustine's writings or of the contexts in which well-known citations of the master originally appeared: and that full range was largely

[3] For an account of Augustine's distinction between different 'levels' of 'philosophy' see Rist (2012a: 205–24).

unavailable for centuries to come. Thus he appears significantly ignorant of *Rebuke and Grace* where the clearest distinction between 'greater' and 'lesser' freedom is to be found. Given his view of Augustine as a systematic thinker, however, such lacunae would have seemed of less concern to him than we might assume. In any case, when he turned his attention to apparent obscurities needing clarification he supposed that he was elucidating Augustine rather than correcting him; but in so doing he altered his master's vision, actually adding further confusion.

Pace those who hold that on balance Anselm's re-drawn picture is philosophically superior, there can be no denying that he moved in the direction of an un-Augustinian *faculty* of 'will' and a significantly un-Augustinian account of freedom: facts to be explained not only by his comparatively limited knowledge of Augustine himself but even more, perhaps, by his almost total ignorance of Augustine's wide-ranging and variegated sources. Taking Augustine to be a systematic thinker like his own 'analytic' self, Anselm produced a systemization which further exposed Augustine's difficulties but also promoted a very different and fateful view of the workings of 'will', both human and divine: we may start by recalling that Augustine wrote a treatise on the free decision of the human agent, whereas Anselm wrote on the freedom of something called the 'will' and hence his more detailed analysis of what he thinks of as our two wills depends on this basic misinterpretation. Thus in his account of the divided will we can recognize the origin of the medieval and modern notion of a 'will', which if we are to be held responsible for our actions needs to be 'free' in the libertarian sense of genuinely instantiating the principle of alternative possibilities – and further is set in opposition to an 'intellect'.

Anselm treats of the freedom of the will substantially in four works: *On Truth* (*DV*), *On the Freedom of Judgment* (*DLA*), *On the Fall of the Devil* (*DCD*) as well as the late text *On the Harmony of Foreknowledge and Predestination and the Grace of God with Free Judgment* (*DCPP*). These all rely on those works of Augustine – such as *On Free Choice* and selections from various anti-Pelagian writings – in which *voluntas* reveals more of 'Stoic intentionalism' (what I decide to do) than 'Platonic *eros*' (what I love and therefore what I love to do) with consequent emphasis on intrinsic teleology.[4] That Anselm was all unaware of the Stoic background to this aspect of Augustine's thought may help us understand how, if we read

[4] The diminished teleological concern is rightly noted (and connected with a non-Augustinian account of justice) by Trego (2010: 31). Trego, however, further argues that Anselm has broken with Augustine's eudaimonism, which claim is much exaggerated (see note 7 below).

these Augustinian 'freedom' texts without reference to their wider intellectual and cultural context, we too may seriously underestimate Augustine's recognition of the supremacy of love in his account of human nature and action. For, as I have noted in the previous chapter, to find Augustine's broader vision we must look far beyond his more formal treatments of free choice and his anti-Pelagian tracts, and especially at his treatment of *St. John's Gospel* and *Epistle* and at parts of *On the Trinity*: indeed to his more general accounts of the nature of God and of virtue. Yet though Anselm has a wide, albeit very incomplete knowledge of Augustine and though love is certainly at the centre of his spiritual meditations, in the treatises with which we are here concerned, not love but justice seems to be God's primary attribute. And we have seen that a similar dichotomy can be read back into Augustine himself.

Like Augustine, Anselm is concerned with freedom only insofar as it relates to moral responsibility and hence salvation (*DCPP* 1.6). His basic question is: Can men, or can angels, be justly held responsible by God for their actions? But although, like Augustine, Anselm is a eudaimonist – that is, he believes that all spiritual creatures desire 'happiness', being conformed by God to a specific goal (*DCD* 14) – he approaches the question of the freedom of the 'will' via important distinctions of which Augustine makes little or no use. And though still distinguishing the 'freedom' of Satan and Adam before the fall from the superior version of God and the blessed in heaven, he seems – as noted earlier – not to know the almost technical Augustinian terminology of a 'greater' and 'lesser' freedom. Fallen creatures are, of course, even less 'free', hence less godlike, because they have a substantial tendency to sin, but are still free enough to be accountable for their actions. For Anselm *no* definition of freedom *qua* freedom can allow for the possibility of sinning (*DLA* 1). God is free but does not, cannot sin.[5]

More significant than his lack of Augustinian terminology are two methodological devices Anselm introduced to provide a framework for his discussion of freedom. First (*DCD* 4), he identifies two types of willing (called *affectiones*, note, not *amores*) granted to all spiritual beings (both men and angels) and indicative of their difference from all other creatures as distinguishing their 'rightness' (which can be equated with justice) from the rightness whereby non-spiritual creatures do what they have

[5] See Visser and Williams (2004: 180). Visser and Williams note later that 'what is central to Anselm's definition [of freedom] is that the action be self-initiated and consciously chosen, not that it be one of at least two possibilities'. Here we are still clearly in the ancient world (Visser and Williams 2004: 197).

been designed to do: as horses are 'rightly' given to grazing and stones to falling from a higher to a lower level (*DV* 12).[6] For spiritual beings, freedom is the ability to maintain rightness of will (i.e. justice) for its own sake (*DV* 12, *DLA* 3 and 13); however, as already noted, it does not necessarily require choice between alternative possibilities (*DLA* 1 and 13). Thus although the first of Anselm's two 'wills' is directed to rightness (as justice) and the second (*DCD* 12) to benefit (*commoditas*), and from these inclinations come all human merit or demerit (*DCPP* 3.12), their goals *need not* be alternatives, Anselm holding that a desire for 'rightness' (*rectitudo*) cannot exclude a desire for benefit; indeed rightness itself, in accordance with the principle of eudaimonism, must entail the greatest ultimate benefit. However, the converse does not pertain, desire for benefit not entailing desire for rightness; indeed this defective desire is a mark of the first sin of both Satan and Adam (*DCD* 4). Overall, however, Anselm holds the functioning of the two wills to be essential to an intelligible understanding of freedom itself, at least in created beings.

Anselm's two 'wills' must be pursued further, not least because of their influence – which might have troubled Anselm himself – on later medieval thought, and especially on that of Duns Scotus. It has sometimes been suggested that Anselm's distinction implies that he wishes to introduce a novel deontology – that is, an overriding concern for what is right simply because it is right – rather in Kantian fashion.[7] In fact there is nothing thus far particularly untraditional in his position.[8] Thinkers before Anselm had regularly recognized that we both pursue what is good for us in the sense of what enables us – in Aristotelian language – to flourish, and at the same time try to pursue what is morally good, the problem being how the two can be necessarily reconciled. To understand Anselm's view of the matter, we need to leave his treatments of 'will' and look elsewhere at what he says about the love of God. For according to Anselm, rational

[6] One of the roots of Anselm's two *affectiones* may be Augustine's distinction between the two loves which have promoted the 'two cities' (in the *City of God*), but if so, he has developed the theme in a way which defeats Augustine's original intention.

[7] Brower makes a similar case for a Kantian deontological flavour in Anselm (Brower 2004: 222–56); something similar, as we have seen, is argued by Trego, who speaks of a 'rupture avec l'eudémonisme antique' (Trego 2010: 18). Rogers, noting that the 'Kantian' reading can be traced back at least to Scotus, rightly rejects it (Rogers 2008: 66–7). It is not clear, however, that she avoids a different anachronism when in this context she invokes the distinction (dependent on claims of Harry Frankfurt) between a first-order desire for benefit and a second-order desire for justice; Augustine's tenet that everything 'used' should be 'used *in Deo*' would serve Anselm's purpose. Perhaps Frankfurt's proposal is intended to do the same work as Augustine's, though lacking Augustine's 'problematic' theological context.

[8] For a possible Augustinian source, see Sweeney (2012: 225).

nature was created for the purpose of loving and choosing the supreme good (that is, God) above all else (*Cur Deus Homo* 2.1). That would imply that although we are created with a will to secure benefits, which is ultimately for the happiness of enjoying God, yet will to benefit must function indirectly (cf. *DCD* 14), for if we love benefit directly, putting it ahead of justice, we shall not obtain it; we shall obtain it only if we love God for himself and above all else, thus maintaining in our actions (*DCD* 14 and 23) the priority of the will to justice: that rightness of will which Adam and Satan so signally failed to maintain. Thus we need to love God for his own sake, and only by so doing will we fulfil the also God-given desire for and will to happiness. There is no 'Kantian' separation of duty from happiness here, no contrast between desire for what we ought to desire and desire to be happy: no suggestion that morality, as duty, has nothing to do with happiness; there is merely a setting out of the conditions whereby, and whereby only, we shall be happy as we were designed to be.

Augustine (not to mention Plato) could have said the same thing. You make yourself happy by doing what you ought, that is, by loving the Good for its own sake; you do not do what you ought simply to acquire happiness; any such 'love' of the Good, Anselm would claim, is not love at all. A more Kantian interpretation would require further downplaying of the element of love Augustine inscribed into his account of willing which Anselm inherited. Despite his tendency (in the works with which we are now primarily concerned) to think of willing more 'stoically' as a rational impulse, and to neglect the more complex picture that Augustine offers, Anselm is not prepared to compromise his eudaimonism thus far. As we shall see, others were to be less inhibited, often motivated by a genuinely Augustinian concern to protect an integral account of God's omnipotence. Nevertheless, Anselm's emphasis on justice in discussions of the will and elsewhere – not least in *Proslogion* 5 where justice is listed first among the divine perfections – helps explain both why Kantian interpretations of his work can seem attractive and why Anselm's version of Augustine's complex account of the 'will' can look seriously incomplete. In Augustine all forms of virtue are modes not of justice, but of love; justice is 'love serving only that which is loved' (*On the Life-style of the Catholic Church* 1.15.25).

The second non-Augustinian (here indeed substantially counter-Augustinian) distinction Anselm developed is between three senses of the word *voluntas* (*DLA* 7): not least in that the first of these – only fully developed in the late *DCPP* (3.11 ff.) – designates *voluntas* as 'instrument'. Thus the word *voluntas* may refer 1) to the neutral capability of a faculty as an 'instrument' or 'tool', 2) to our character or disposition as the effect of

achieved inclinations, 3) to the actual, occurrent 'use of the instrument', that is, to the decision to act in a particular way. This notion of the 'will' as a particular neutral instrument – with which, Anselm claims, spiritual creatures are endowed at creation – being a capacity for non-necessitated, indeed purely self-caused and autonomous acts, as those of self-movers[9] – clearly differentiates his position from Augustine's view that 'willing' is the name given to a particular state or activity of the soul viewed in terms of loving impulses. As we have seen, Augustine's account of a loving will describes non-necessitated, unconstrained but not purely self-driven states and actions, being thus both dispositional (I have a weakness for beer) and occurrent (I want a beer right now), and allowing for whatever moral sense may be attributed to the ever-present concept of 'loving': whether it refers, that is, to love of God (which will include a proper love of self) or to love of self ('to the point of contempt for God'). For the moment, however, we may leave aside Anselm's fateful development of an instrumental 'free' will – tending towards a liberty of indifference at the beginning of man's spiritual journey – in favour of pursuing his account of the falls of Satan and of Adam, and of the ensuing prospects for humanity. Nevertheless, we should also recognize the non-Augustinian characteristics in Anselm's account of the fall of Satan – more prominent there than in their consequences for the children of Adam. And we should recognize that the distinction between will as instrument and will as inclination is a sure step towards the approaching 'Aristotelian' faculty psychology alien to Augustine.

It is clear that Anselm's starting point in his discussion of Satan – the principal theme of *DLA* and (obviously) *DCD* – is an apparent weakness in Augustine's position because in the *DCD* Anselm's 'student' begins with what looks like Augustine's explanation in the *City of God*. The student claims (with Augustine) that Satan fell because he did not accept the grace of perseverance, and Anselm accepts that merely to claim that he did not persevere in persevering would invite a vicious regress. Yet though Anselm and his student agree that Satan did not persevere – did not will what he ought to have willed, indeed willed what he ought not to have willed – nonetheless according to Anselm he was *offered* perseverance. So the problem becomes: Why did he refuse it and so fail? (2–3). On the answer to that question would depend whether, in Anselm's account of justice, Satan was justly condemned for his failure to persevere.

[9] See especially Sweeney (2012: 196) for further references.

For Anselm there are only external constraints on our freedom (*DCPP* 1.5). Nevertheless, though we have been designed by God to act without external compulsion – thus to act 'of ourselves' (*sponte*) – we never act as God does. Following Augustine, Anselm holds that we cannot be compelled to will (*DLA* 5), but from that we should not infer that we enjoy, or could enjoy, some strong libertarian form of freedom. Even in heaven we shall never attain the 'aseity' of God, as some suggest. Even though our actions, then as ever, are self-originated (*ex se*), and even though then they are in fact, like God's, unvaryingly good (cf. *Cur Deus Homo* 2.10), they are not self-caused as are God's, for they require a goal beyond the agent himself. In heaven that goal cannot be abandoned: a condition Augustine had identified as the grace-driven inability to sin. It remains grace-driven for Anselm.

Both Adam and the fallen angels must have sinned either 'by necessity' or else 'of themselves' (*sponte* [*DLA* 2, *DCD* 3]). So if Adam and Satan before him sinned 'of themselves', they sinned of their free will; thus that will signifies what they are and what they want to be. Which means that, because they are 'compelled' (as it were) by their nature, their actions still are free actions. A free action – here for sinful creatures, but the term is used elsewhere for God – is an action that unambiguously *indicates the nature of the agent*. To put it even more directly: Adam and Satan sinned because they were and willed to be sinful. Thus our original question returns: Why were they (or why did they become) sinful? That Anselm can insist that although they sinned freely they did not do so in virtue of their capacity not to sin, is because, by mistakenly identifying *voluntas* as a *faculty* – an ontological item – he has separated that 'faculty', which is and remains free, from any possible 'consequent' enslaved-to-sin disposition.

Here we discern the first stage of the growth of the un-Augustinian 'abstract' faculty of will, in and of itself always 'free' to sin or not to sin; in *DCPP*, as we have noted, that faculty is even specified as an 'instrument' and thus would seem to enjoy some strong version of libertarian freedom, thus already also pointing towards a freedom of indifference. The problem with all this is that a faculty apart from its disposition or activity looks like the mere reification of a concept, indeed a piece of unnecessary metaphysical baggage, as Augustine, on my reading, would (or should) have recognized it to be. Then for what supposed philosophical or theological benefit has Anselm introduced it?

Except in *On Harmony*, Anselm has rather little to say about the reasons for the fall of Adam; we seem left to infer that although the 'mechanics' of that fall may be somewhat different from those pertaining to Satan, their

ultimate explanation is more or less the same. Anselm seems to find the more informative fall to be that of Satan, and in this he is right – as similarly is Augustine – in that no further agent intervenes between Satan's will and his knowledge of God's commands. In *On the Fall of the Devil* it is clear that the student interlocutor is keen from the outset – reasonably so – to understand why Satan took the wrong decision. But though the Augustinian position that angels are created from nothing is adduced – evil being, as usual, a *privatio boni* – it plays little part in the ensuing discussion. Rather what Anselm emphasizes in replying to the student is that Satan sinned because he wanted to, and when the student wonders why he wanted to and wanted to want to (and so *ad infinitum*, 3–4,[10] as we have noted) – and thus did not want to persist in perseverance – the teacher secures too ready an agreement that he just wanted to. There then follow various chapters in which, after explaining that Satan thought to anticipate his upcoming happiness by ignoring, indeed 'expelling', his 'appetite' for justice (*DCD* 3), Anselm takes interesting time out to explain that if Satan had been granted only a desire for justice or only a desire for happiness, his decision would have been not free but necessitated, and therefore neither meritorious nor damnable. The student, however (apparently recognizing that he is being railroaded), eventually comes back to the question as to why Satan, unlike the good angels, wants to make the false move he wants to make. And again he is told that he just made it because he wanted to.[11] Anselm is clear enough, and Augustinian enough, about Satan's objective: he wanted to be somehow like God (*DCD* 4), but on why in the circumstances he wanted unjustly to secure this he has nothing to say.

In arguing in this way Anselm has declined (wittingly or not) to follow Augustine in concluding that the grace to persevere was not given to Satan – or rather he evades the difficulty by a distinction (Chapter 3) according to which God gave but Satan did not receive. What this would seem to mean – though Anselm does not say so explicitly – is that God tried to give but that his offer was rejected: hardly Augustine's position. Anselm's move not only implies that God's direct act and will is thwarted and therefore that his omnipotence might seem to be impugned; it also

[10] Wolf advances a similar argument (Wolf 1990: 14), cited by Rogers (2007b: 283). Significantly, Wolf advocates the 'old-fashioned' (Augustinian) position that to be free is to be able to choose in accordance with truth and goodness.

[11] Sweeney comments that 'the teacher gives what still feels like a non-answer', but then glosses the difficulty: 'Anselm is struggling for a language in which to express two aspects of Satan's act which are resistant to explanation' (Sweeney 2012: 238).

still fails to explain Satan's choice of rejection. Augustine, as we have seen, insists that when God offers a call, he does so *congruenter*, that is, in a manner attractive to the particular recipient of his offer. Anselm avoids further analysis of God's apparent failure (or of *congruenter*) by placing the entire blame on Satan's unexplained evil choice.

Anselm can follow this erroneous path because of his distinction between different senses of the word 'will'. For although Satan (by his occurrent and hence dispositional will) chooses evil, he is still possessed of a free, if now neutralized, faculty of will, a capacity metaphysically prior to any kind of exercise or determination: a will capable of 'libertarian' indifference before it actually makes any choice, and remaining free (and still indifferent) after the choice, whether right or wrong, has been made. This becomes more explicit in *On Harmony* (especially in 3.4–5) where it seems that the radical freedom of the faculty reveals itself in the eyes of the sinner as some sort of numbed condition: Anselm compares such a 'numbed' will to a naked individual who receives all his clothes from another; before he receives the clothes, he has the ability to put them on or not put them on if and when he receives them. The analogy enables Anselm to retain something of Augustine's belief that after the fall the soul cannot of itself return to justice; indeed it may make Augustine's point even more forcefully. It also prevents Augustine's position from being explained Calvinistically in terms of the *total* depravity of a fallen will. The faculty, though inert, is still able to receive *if it wants to*.

Unfortunately, however, though offering an account of willing very different from that of Augustine, Anselm still fails to solve his immediate problem, namely why did Satan make the wrong choice of refusing to receive; if there was a struggle between alternative inclinations why did he resolve his struggle in favour of the unjust and ultimately non-beneficial course? Indeed Anselm's solution reinforces the very conclusion that he himself denies: that Satan is held responsible for a decision that he *just happened* to make, as if by bad luck.[12] For because, unlike Augustine, Anselm avoids the bold suggestion that a grace given to the good angels is unaccountably withheld from the bad, he is apparently left with only two possibilities: either Satan was created bad (or at least not good enough) – which he must reject – or his willing seems totally unintelligible in that he has no *reason* to make the wrong choice:[13] distinct, that is, from some

[12] For 'luck' as a problem for all libertarians see Mele (2006).

[13] Rogers recognizes that conclusion as threatening (Rogers 2007b: 282). Rogers, however, believes – wrongly as I argue – that Anselm both recognizes the difficulty and is able to avoid it. She allows that when Anselm eventually confronts the student's challenge, he reaches 'an uncomfortable

passing fantasy – but then why was he created stupid enough to give way to that? And all that probably entails that the more propitious choice of the good angels is similarly fortuitous. Neither group of angels, Anselm conveniently insists, knows that their disobedience will be punished, only that it ought to be (*DCD* 2–3). Fear is not involved in either group's decision.

Thus God is no more exonerated in Anselm than he is on Augustine's apparently cavalier account of his decision not to give adequate grace. To suggest, as does Rogers,[14] that Adam's (or more specifically Satan's) unintelligible action is plausible behaviour in an image of God – as a perverse and mysterious reflection of God's inscrutability – looks like a desperate attempt to sacrifice the intelligibility of Adam's (or Satan's) behaviour to a desire to attribute to Anselm an account of spiritual beings as necessarily possessed of a strongly libertarian freedom in a providential universe. What is certainly clear is that Anselm's introduction of the two distinct inclinations, to justice and to benefit, has failed to get him out of trouble, seeming indeed to provoke new difficulties by generating 'Kantian' problems about the relationship between 'happiness' and 'duty'. For whereas Augustine could always rely on the classical notion that the good man *loves* and so *seeks* the good (thus *indirectly* securing happiness/salvation), Anselm has been cut off from that sort of approach, and is left with the problem of why one group of angels, knowing that the pursuit of justice will lead to a sure happiness, yet tries foolishly to jump the gun in a knowingly futile gesture (*DCD* 4).

For Anselm's defence of what looks like Satan's bad luck rests not on some explicit account of his inadequate love, but on a distinction between different senses of 'will', and thus lays him open not only to the charge of making inexplicable Satan's decision to 'jump the gun' – to will 'inordinately' to be like God in total non-dependence (*DCD* 4 and 13) – but also of giving the greater weight to a notional non-rational will in some predispositional state of indifference. Anselm's Satan is given some sort of libertarian will whereby he really does will to choose evil and for a reason that he knows to be inadequate. His libertarian willing – this Augustine could have told Anselm as he told Julian of Eclanum – has in effect collapsed into a freedom of indifference now possessed by an instrument, or faculty, called the 'will'. Perhaps Satan is merely acratic: he knows the

stopping-point', but thinks that he has the resources to advance further. She cites *DCD* 3 where Satan 'expels' the desire for justice because of his desire for happiness; yet the question remains: 'Why did he – even how could he – do what other angels in similar circumstances did not?'

[14] Rogers comes close to defending inexplicability as mystery (Rogers 2008: 104–5).

better and does the worse. But if so, we still have advanced no further: *Why* is he acratic when his good companions, apparently in exactly the same situation as himself, are not?

That Anselm conceives of the will of the angels (and presumably, even though differently, of Adam) before the fall as strongly libertarian seems to be confirmed by the fact that he is prepared to speak (*DCD* 5) of the possibility of *meriting* grace. That sort of 'Pelagian' language seems a necessary accompaniment of any kind of libertarian freedom. And the 'Pelagianism' seems evident in the same chapter when the good angels are said to merit grace by their perseverance, though again no reason is offered as to why they persevere while their evil counterparts do not. The good angels are apparently able to achieve, by their created capacity, exactly what Pelagius (for whom we are not vitiated by Adam's sin) supposed to be true of the entire human race, or at least of all the baptized. Anselm specifically says that their perseverance is not of necessity, for if so they would not be just – which implies that they chose of themselves and by their own will. Admittedly this is not Pelagius' version of 'Pelagianism', but rather an apparently unintelligible 'Pelagianism of luck', philosophically 'guaranteed' by the neutral and 'free' instrument of 'will' with which spiritual creatures are endowed. I conclude therefore by agreeing with Rogers that in the decision of the angels there is an element of 'libertarian' freedom, although still within that teleological orientation towards what is good in accordance with which they were created.[15] Since the good angels have no further risk of falling, that freedom has presumably been converted into an angelic version of the 'greater (compatibilist) liberty' of God, as Augustine himself argued.

What about the fallen descendants of Adam? Anselm has less to say of them, but in general he follows Augustine more closely. Like Augustine he denies that 'ought' implies 'can' (*On the Virginal Conception* 8);[16] like

[15] Though Visser and Williams observe that this sort of freedom is in its teleological formation very different from that many contemporary libertarians offer, we should recall that it is the view of Augustine that *any* genuinely libertarian freedom will collapse into a freedom of indifference, not least because the good, even if teleological, is 'pre-moral' (Visser and Williams 2004: 185).

[16] *Memorials of St Anselm* (ed. Southern/Schmitt) 168: 'No one comes to perfection unless he strives to arrive at more than he can reach.' It was apparently a feature of Anselm's character to long and not to be satisfied, to reason about God but to recognize an inability to match his success as a rational theologian with an experience of the love of God for which he yearned. See the refreshing comments of Sweeney (2012: 325, 373–8): 'Anselm has not aimed at comfort but recommends and hopes to produce in his readers, as Augustine did, restlessness, the opposite of smug self-satisfaction, keeping the mind and heart ever in motion toward an ever more desired but still distant goal' (Sweeney 2012: 378). In all this we can recognize that Anselm's world was still the world of Augustine in which philosophy and theology were not formally separate – and the ensuing philosophical temptation to define (and hence to diminish) the spiritual world was not yet given rein.

Augustine he 'knows' that God does not will all to be saved (*Proslogion* 11; *DCPP* 3.3); because all could have been saved, God plainly has declined to save them. Thus whereas Anselm has tried to make God's activity '*before*' the fall intelligible – thereby generating an intelligibility problem in his account of the behaviour of Satan and of Adam – he has failed to 'exonerate' God in regard to his behaviour after the fall. Presumably the scriptural evidence in favour of Augustine's account of those who are not saved seemed overwhelming (as it may be unless his theory of God's omnipotence, as well as of the theology of baptism, can be radically overhauled), whereas in the matter of the cause of the fall Anselm felt able to lean rather on reason alone. The result is that his final position, both on God and spiritual beings, has become even more perplexed than that of Augustine, plus he has introduced a new problem with the 'will'.

Perhaps it should be added that Anselm probably believed that the only alternative to Augustine's account of redemption must collapse into 'universalism':[17] that Origenist belief, long condemned in the Church and by Augustine himself, that all, even Satan, are eventually to be saved. For if God 'should' have willed to save more, why should he, being omnipotent, not have willed to save all? A libertarian account of the unfallen 'will', if viable, would at least alleviate that difficulty, since Satan and Adam would then, with full powers granted them, have deliberately decided against God. In that case it might seem unreasonable to suppose that God would negate his gift of absolute free choice by bailing them out!

There is a further curious point with which I will conclude. Augustine, as we have seen, appears to hold that the answer to the question why human beings were not originally created with God's own higher freedom – that is, with the inability to sin (*non posse peccare*) – is that they need to learn what it is to enjoy that higher freedom; they need to learn humbly to recognize that though created in the image of God, they are still creatures. In Augustine that seems to explain, at least in part, why some of Adam's fallen descendants are given a second chance: they have the opportunity to learn the hard way what is required of them. In Augustine (as in Anselm), however, the fallen angels have no second chance; thus presumably Augustine does not want to teach that some of them, at least,

Yet in the latest writings of Anselm himself (not to speak of his contemporaries) one can recognize the older world coming to an end.

[17] Sweeney wonders why Anselm 'could not assent to the claim that God does not give grace to all … because he does not give to those who do not accept or receive', but rightly concludes that 'it likely [would represent] a bigger break with Augustine and tradition than he was prepared to make at the time' (Sweeney 2012: 360–1).

could or should 'learn the hard way'. Indeed there seems to be no sense in Augustine that the angels could have any option to learn more than that with which they were created; it appears to have been, for them, an 'instantaneous' matter of take it or leave it.

Yet with Anselm, though the fate of the fallen angels is the same, the emphasis is different. Anselm specifically says (*DCD* 6) that the angels were created so as to grow – but what could that mean because they seem already all equally perfect, unlike Adam, at least in their essential understanding of their situation? – and hence to receive what they did not secure at their creation: presumably a compatibilist freedom not to sin. Yet unlike (some) men, they still have one and one only chance for such growth. Thus Anselm appears to make Augustine's view of God's decisions even more arbitrary: not only over God's action in failing to assist the damned but with respect more broadly to the fate of the angels he fails to relieve God of the taint of arbitrary action.

And yet it seems that Anselm could have found a way at least to diminish the problem of Satan if he had been more rather than less Augustinian; even perhaps more Augustinian than Augustine supposed himself to be. For although he tells us that the knowledge of the pre-fallen angels is equal, Anselm says nothing about the quality of their love. If he had understood Augustine's understanding of *voluntas* as a *loving* will, emphasizing thereby not just the raw volition but the love (of whatever sort) that for Augustine must underpin all volition, he could have made progress: Augustine's account of God's non-offering of adequate grace once tacitly abandoned, Satan could, it seems, have been deficient only in love. If that is a possible solution, then it might seem strange that Augustine himself did not propose it explicitly, thus making compelling use of his own concept of *voluntas*. The fact remains that he did not, and neither did Anselm. In Anselm's case the explanation must depend in part on his historical situation, having no access to Augustine's philosophical sources, hence no means of capturing the full possibilities of Augustine's stance.

For Augustine himself, the situation seems even stranger and we can only conclude that, in his unsystematic way, he failed to grasp the underlying riches and ramifications of his own position, thereby laying on his successors an impossible philosophical burden to which, unsurprisingly, they proved unequal. Yet it is clear that Augustine's Satan sinned through pride, and pride reflects lack of humility, hence lack of love. If Satan was not to be originally granted the higher freedom of an inability to sin and yet is possessed of all the knowledge he needs to live well, then his love must have been defective and – granting that love cannot

be compelled – Augustine had no need to appeal to God's inaction. Presumably only his overriding concern to vindicate God's power, as he understood it, prevented him from reaching for this solution. This apparent explanation of his failure might have been duly excogitated by his successors, beginning with Anselm, but, as we shall see, it was not. Yet for Augustine it seems that as Adam's fall was bound up with a wrongful, insufficiently grounded, 'love' for Eve, so must Satan's have been by a surely more perverse 'love' for himself. I shall return to the matter in my final chapter.

To conclude: Anselm recognized (at least implicitly) a number of problems Augustine had bequeathed and attempted to solve them, but in so attempting introduced new philosophical difficulties: about the significance of love; about the intelligibility of the action of unfallen spiritual creatures; about the nature of willing, human and consequently *ab inferiori* also divine; about our understanding of our present human freedom and responsibility. We continue by investigating how after Anselm things could only get worse; only so may we find ourselves in the position of being able to do better!

CHAPTER 5

'Augustine' and 'Aristotle': The Problem of Thomas Aquinas

'If it is true, Aquinas would have said it.'

(Overheard from) Étienne Gilson

From antiquity to the thirteenth century a variety of forms of Platonism dominated Christian thinking; indeed stout Platonizing building blocks always remained beneath the newly Aristotelian façade that might easily be supposed then to have eschewed them. A Platonizing mentality had been established by Augustine, whose authority remained supreme throughout the Middle Ages, while the writings of the sixth-century Christian Platonist now known as Pseudo-Dionysius – as well as those of Boethius – served further to strengthen the wider consensus: a consensus which could become comparatively flexible, even admitting further borrowings from Stoicism – either directly from Seneca or mediated through Jerome and Ambrose – within the overall parameters set by Scripture and theological tradition.

As we have seen, Augustine's influence was dominant in the mind of Anselm, and it was further strengthened, and in effect built into the curriculum of the later medieval period, by the composition between 1155 and 1158 of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (briefly bishop of Paris): a compilation of biblical and patristic texts on which the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) advised all students of theology to write comments. Lombard's work is markedly Augustinian, being especially replete with quotations, if frequently out of context, from the anti-Pelagian writings. But between Anselm and Lombard had come the immensely influential figure of Bernard of Clairvaux, a spiritual writer for whom even Luther and Calvin had more than a little respect, not least because they recognized him as some sort of voluntarist. Bernard's work, like that of Anselm, was primarily intended for the edification of monks, but its influence, direct or indirect, again extended far beyond monastic communities.

Bernard wrote his influential *On Grace and Free Decision* (*De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*) somewhere about 1128 and, while the title sounds Augustinian in that it refers to free decision rather than to a free 'will', appearances are informatively deceptive. *On Grace* is an early work, and in this text Bernard is perhaps more tied to a partial Augustine than he was later to become, remaining close to the Augustine described in my first Augustine chapter: the soon to be misunderstood Augustine of *voluntas* as 'will'. Twenty years later, Bernard composed his latest sermons on the *Song of Songs* – on which Augustine wrote no formal commentary, though his reflections on love so affected the Cistercian as to make him often sound more like Augustine the preacher of love.[1] If so, perhaps we can already recognize something more of the origin of an Augustine of 'will' and an Augustine of love in separate (so un-Augustinian) compartments.

In *On Grace*, like Anselm, Bernard speaks of the will virtually as an entity in itself. Although it can only act in response to the proposals of the mind, it can (and does) reject rational proposals and act against them. The 'will' (*voluntas*) is thus set over against the reason, and where the will is, there is human freedom (however understood). Reason, in effect, is made the servant of the will. Were that not the case, in Bernard's view, we could not be held responsible for our actions.[2]

Thus, in spite of the Augustinian title of his book, Bernard seems to be travelling in a more Anselmian orbit, indeed to have gone some way beyond Anselm in a 'voluntarist' direction: though when (elsewhere) he

[1] Bernard's stress on *Song of Songs* 2.4 (*ordinate in me caritatem*) is revealing; see McGinn (1990: 91–114). For Augustine's use of this text see La Bonnardière (1955). Perhaps it is also significant that (like Anselm) Bernard seems to prefer to speak of love as an *affectio*. Augustine certainly used the word, but it may provoke a more watered-down language of love as spiritual than the franker expressions we have seen Augustine normally use. Bernard, as we shall see, seems to have encouraged reducing the language of 'love' to that of a calmer 'friendship'. His attitude to 'carnal' love would point in the same direction: he holds that there is *nothing wrong* with 'embracing' one's wife, and that carnal *affectio* is 'nasty but nice' (*dulcis sed turpis*: *Super Cantica* 50, 4).

[2] *DGLA* II, 3–5. Note the apt comments of Kent (1995: 112–13). Bernard was widely quoted throughout the thirteenth century and was regularly invoked after 1270 by more extreme voluntarists as favouring the view that freedom must reside more or less exclusively in the will rather than in the intellect. So Walter of Bruges (*Quaest. Disp.*, q.4 [*PB* X, 38–9]) and Walter de la Mare (*Correctorium fr. Thomae*, a.55–6 [ed. Glorieux, 232–4]). Bernard's emphasis on reason as servant (later developed into the idea of a servant carrying a lamp to light the way for his lord) doubtless helps to explain how we can (and do) act contrary to reason, even if we 'realize' that reason is right (as 'I know I shouldn't be doing this', he said, draining the bottle of vodka), but also, unless handled carefully, looks like a distant forerunner of Hume's view that reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions – where 'will' or love is read as a passion and God has disappeared from the analysis.

moves beyond such a narrow concept of the 'will' to speak of love, he retains a strong emphasis on our natural striving and thirst for God.

Yet for Bernard the reason is inert, its role being to explain, for example, whether an act is just or unjust, while the role of the will is to assent – though not necessarily to a proposition and hopefully to the gift of grace: which assent, however, is, 'of itself', a *nutus spontaneus*. Yet Bernard assumes that a libertarian will, given the encouragement of grace, is more than a liberty of indifference; it distinguishes between genuinely alternative possibilities provided by reason, not least in that, ultimately, it can accept or reject grace itself. Indeed, it is precisely by the possession of a fragmented yet not wholly corrupted 'will' that man is in the image of God; thus even fallen man, who cannot not-will, can accept or reject what is offered, leaving – as Augustine would approve – the initial decision whether to give or withhold grace to God. Still, a problem facing Augustine (and Anselm) remains unsolved. Why do some accept (freely) and some reject that grace? On that Bernard has no new proposal – any more than on the apparently inexplicable behaviour of Satan.

Bernard's move (in *On Grace*) away from Augustine's view of the human agent towards Anselm's developed concept of a 'will' was masked for a while by the impact of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* on the theological curriculum. According to Lombard, a free decision is to be understood in terms of a combined power of will and reason, with the relation between the two (or is it still one?) left indistinct. This ambiguity stirred disputes first about whether the term 'power' (potential) is correct, then about whether a free decision is the result of the activity of the *two* 'powers', then, whether it is a third factor able to control the other two; then, and more significantly, whether though the two 'faculties' must still be recognized as more or less identical, one of them, namely the 'will', has a more important part to play. And the problem of will versus intellect became still more central during the early thirteenth century through the influence of the faculty psychology of Avicenna; it can be found, for example in the last two chapters of John Blund's *Treaty on the Soul*.[3] Yet there is correspondingly little resort to Anselm's language about freedom of the will as distinct from the nature of free decision-making.

As is well known, something often dubbed a 'Copernican Revolution' occurred in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries when Latin

[3] For the text see the edition of D. Callus and R. W. Hunt; for comment see Dales (1945: 16–20). For Avicenna's 'faculty psychology' see Hasse (2010: 306–10).

versions of the works of Aristotle as they are known today reached the West, coupled with commentaries and various developments of Aristotelianism from the Islamic and Jewish worlds.[4] So while simultaneously Christian thought began to migrate from the Benedictine abbeys and the cathedral schools to the new universities (or *studia*) of Paris and Oxford where many of the teachers were friar-professors rather than monastic bishops or abbots, and although the continuing influence of Augustine – and of the 'Platonism' he represented – should never be discounted, rediscovered approaches, of a very different stripe, to the 'will' and its questioned freedom, as well as to many related questions both of metaphysics and of psychology, had now to be affirmed, adapted or rejected. Unsurprisingly, many of the affirmations were far from pleasing to 'old-fashioned' and (in their view) 'purer' Augustinians, some of whom, as we shall see, reacted to the unwelcome novelties they perceived by offering distorted or exaggerated versions (or seeming corollaries) of what they took to be the threatened Augustinian theology, sometimes making use of ambiguous features of the Aristotelian novelties themselves to construct new novelties of their own.

So we may turn to the treatment during the central Middle Ages of a set of interlocking topics: the intelligibility of accounts of the 'primal sins' of Adam and of Satan, and the understanding of 'willing', of its role in responsible decision-making and of its relationship to love and 'intellect'. Beneath these more specific themes, of course, lies the basic question: Is an Aristotelian account of human action incompatible with Augustine's treatment of our postlapsarian condition? If it is *radically* incompatible, how far was that recognized by thirteenth-century thinkers, especially – because most influentially – by Aquinas? If less fundamentally so, which version of the human story would have to be modified, and how substantially? Thus the problems we face in telling the story are both historical (What did they think in the thirteenth century?) – and philosophical (Just how irreconcilable are the 'Aristotelian' and 'Augustinian' positions?).

In approaching these complex questions, we must take note of related changes in the social setting in which 'academic' theologizing was carried

[4] An introduction to the problem of 'Augustine' versus 'Aristotle' on grace and weakness of the will is now available from Cross (2010: 441–53). Cross notes the importance of both Avicenna and John Damascene (for whom see more later in this chapter), as well as Anselm and Bernard. Hopefully the time has now passed in which the differences between Augustine and Aquinas about human nature (deriving in part from the influence of Aristotle as well as Augustine on Aquinas) can be rhetorically and unhelpfully summed up as between Augustinian pessimism and Thomist optimism, a distinction that merely serves to obscure Augustine's views. For comment see Bauerschmidt (2013: esp. 128–9).

on: changes both in the status of those engaged in philosophical enquiry and in the institutional situations within which they worked. For in the patristic age, and even down to the twelfth century, as in the case of Anselm and others, almost all disputants were bishops. Thereafter that ceased to be the case until most active thinkers were professional academics, whether or not formally members of a faculty of theology. Though, of course, it is too early to speak of a 'second magisterium' – let alone of a laicizing of more properly philosophical activity – the groundwork for such developments were being laid, not least as the new teachers in the University of Paris and elsewhere were themselves divided institutionally on a guild basis into 'arts' people and theologians. One of the most enduring effects of that institutional change was a shift in the meaning of the word 'philosophy' itself. While up to the twelfth century it referred to any general intellectual enquiry, soon its scope was to be narrowed: it was to be a discipline not only separable from what could now be identified as 'theology' but, along with theology itself, eventually to become merely one discipline among others. And while theology must remain close to religious belief, philosophy, once separated, need endure no such restriction.

We start with the fact, therefore, that as with the writings of many others of the period, those of Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–74) – and not least his account of freedom – look not only to Augustine as well as to lesser Christian authorities, but also to Aristotle; indeed in many important if unacknowledged respects through Aristotle to Plato himself and not merely to the Christianized Platonism of Augustine and Dionysius or to the alternative theistic combination of Platonism and Aristotelianism offered by Avicenna. Aquinas' (unacknowledged) aim was coherently to appropriate Aristotle for the Augustinian tradition, clarifying and developing Augustine where it seemed appropriate, and modifying Aristotle – frequently, that is, Aristotle read in a tradition deriving via the Islamic commentators from the commentators of late antiquity – where Christian theology and philosophical truth apparently demanded such modification.

Like most of his learned contemporaries, Aquinas should be viewed less as an Aristotelian than as a Christian thinker who found Aristotle's ideas peculiarly useful for resolving apparent difficulties and incompletenesses in the inherited Augustinian tradition. Yet just as the philosophers of antiquity speak of virtue with no reference to anything like Christian theories of original sin and God's grace – thus (for example) theoretically allowing for political activity in any human society, not merely in our

present sin-distorted version – so in accounts of the 'will', and of justifications of moral responsibility and its enforcement by God, we notice at key points in Aquinas and others comparative disregard of the 'unfree' yet guilty condition of the Augustinian sinner. We also notice – with the metaphysical backing of a thesis that the powers of the human soul must be separated from its essence (as at *ST* 1a, 77) – the growing possibility of a 'separate' faculty of the autonomous will: separate, that is, from any mere possible interaction of intellect and desire, and – even more significantly – separate from love, Christian or other. As we have seen in Anselm, Bernard and their followers, such developments were well under way before Aquinas began to write.

Aquinas' comparative disregard of important features of 'Augustinianism' – however to be explained – points, or so I argue, to a wider failure fully to integrate the purely philosophical traditions of Aristotelian antiquity with the special blend of 'theology and philosophy' to be found in Augustine himself. Nevertheless, as we have noticed – and inviting further reflection – there already existed by Aquinas' time a number of features of that Augustinian blend – we have been concerned here with only a selection – in serious need of repair: quite apart from the question of whatever assistance might be available from all the new ideas deriving from Aristotle. Indeed, difficulties with Aquinas' neo-Augustinianism run deeper than his failure adequately to reconcile the new philosophy with the older world in specific philosophical and theological particulars. There is the much wider problem – though hardly yet on the immediate philosophical table – that in attempting to force Augustine into a more professorial and systematic mode, his wider characterization of man in his fallen condition tends to be narrowed in the search for a set of rules by reference to which that fallen condition can be restored to health. That prescription – at worst, one might argue, pointing us to a world controlled by canon law – could seduce us into losing sight of the more 'tragic', but more humane, Augustinian account of our existential condition.

It is a mistake to think that Aquinas simply 'completes' Augustine and that the 'tradition' to which they both belong has merely been improved philosophically by Aquinas' use of Aristotle to correct Augustine's weaknesses, not least about the metaphysics of the human person. In that case there would be no present need to retrieve disappearing features of the Augustinian universe in order to re-vivify the 'Thomist' understanding of the philosophical tradition. Yet to carry that tradition further, we must not merely accept Aquinas' corrections of Augustine where they *are* corrections, but restore many features of Augustine's account of the human

condition that Aquinas, constrained by the 'scholastic' exigencies of his day, has in effect deleted. That is a line that, if fully pursued, would take us far beyond the limits of the present discussion.

It is sometimes argued – and with good reason – that Aquinas' greatest achievement was his securing the final acceptance of Boethius' dream that within Christianity philosophy and theology (now distinguished in a manner very different from Augustine's approach) can be friends rather than rivals: that two intellectual disciplines, theological and philosophical, can be fearlessly blended without compromising the apparent integrity of either. One of the conclusions of this chapter, however, will be that in regard to freedom, sinfulness and the will, even Aquinas will tend to keep the two disciplines in separate compartments; thus his aim to harmonize the demands of Aristotelian philosophy with those of theology is still unattained – and perhaps is not completable: hence that their later separation is already foreshadowed. In thirteenth-century Paris it was not only the Arts Faculty that was striking out on its own.

For all Aquinas' concern to maintain and explicate free decision-making, we find in his writings that 'Anselmian' tendencies towards establishing the will as an independent and dominant faculty are held in check by theories more broadly conceived in pre-Christian antiquity.[5] Nevertheless, Thomas retains the all-important, originally Stoic emphasis on the notion of assent: a notion which in and of itself points forward, as we have seen, to more contemporary-seeming problems of the will and its freedom, and tends to direct thinkers away from the ancient idea that we are free only when we love and pursue the good – a thesis strongly maintained in its Christian version by Augustine and (more casually) by Anselm – towards an alternative emphasis – required, it was assumed, if human responsibility is to be defended – that human freedom should be understood in more 'libertarian' fashion and is hence recognizable *only* in situations where there are genuinely alternative choices and where even arbitrary or otherwise unintelligible decisions may be taken – as ultimately by God.

Aquinas became acquainted with Aristotle during his earliest period of study in Naples, beginning in 1239, and it cannot be overemphasized that such familiarity, at the very start of his philosophical and theological

[5] In my discussion of freedom and the will in Aquinas I largely ignore his early commentary on the *Sentences* where, anxious to reject the view that man sins necessarily, he seems at times to adopt a near-Pelagian position; note his misinterpretation of the Augustinian *non posse non peccare* at II *Sent.*, d.28, a.2 and contrast *ST* I-IIae, 109, 8 ad 3. For a helpful introduction to Aquinas' original and eventually discarded semi-Pelagianism see Janz (1983: 48–59) and the more recent comments of Bauerschmidt (2013: 115–16).

career, enfolded him in an intellectual world very different from that of the 'monkish' Anselm or Bernard or of the twelfth-century cathedral schools. Those who in Paris in 1215 condemned the study of Aristotle in the Arts Faculty were prescient; his arrival would indeed change the theological curriculum and thereby – as always – the activities and mentality of those who worked within that curriculum. Admittedly as Aquinas progressed to Paris he had to comment on Lombard's *Sentences*, and Lombard, without competition, might have kept the students, at least in ecclesiastical institutions (which Naples was not), largely within the older ways. But with Aristotle now firmly in their minds, aspiring theologians were learning to look at the human condition from a pagan rather than a Christian perspective, or rather, in the case of many, and not least of Aquinas, they were being trained to try to amalgamate the rediscovered 'pagan' ideas with the Augustinian tradition – not least with Augustine's theology of the fall and redemption of man.

In ethics and philosophical psychology such an amalgamation was to prove exceptionally difficult: essentially it was to be the task of Aquinas to blend a theory of man innocent of original sin or of need of the grace of God with one which had for centuries placed those ideas at the centre of theological endeavour. The eventual failure of Aquinas and others, friends as well as foes, to convince, would, as we shall see, play no small part not only in the collapse of traditional philosophical piety but in the growth of new theories of God and man, eventually pointing not only to a rejection of the Christian tradition itself but towards ever proliferating atheist alternatives based on accounts of first the divine, then the human will, the unresolved dilemmas of which haunt us today. For to claim that Aquinas, Scotus and the rest failed is not to suppose that others less religious eventually did any better; it may even be that they failed more radically and fatally.

For Aquinas as for Anselm, 'will' (*voluntas*) must be at its clearest and most perfect in God. That is because the God of the Christians, unlike the God of Aristotle, acts freely, 'voluntarily', as an efficient cause. Creation and redemption are not the result of any external constraint; they are voluntary actions, only necessary in the sense that they flow by choice, not emanation, from God's nature. This is particularly important – and in its historical context provocative – in the case of creation, for Aquinas always wants to distance himself from what he may have seen as the 'Platonizing' notion of Avicenna, derived ultimately from a debased reading of Plotinus, that the world is the product of necessary, automatic emanation from the Good, the One, or God. It is true that Plotinus offers an important caveat:

the One is what it has to be – and therefore does what it has to do – not of necessity (which must derive from something 'outside') but because it wills to be so (*Ennead* 6.8). Nevertheless, in the understanding of 'Platonism' with which Aquinas was familiar through the Arabic tradition, especially in the writings of Avicenna, emanation is viewed as an automatic outcome of God's nature.[6] According to Aquinas, however, goodness is what God must know and will; that is because, being perfect, he wills the good that he knows as his own nature (*SCG* 1.72.2).[7]

It is axiomatic for Aquinas that being and goodness are identical;[8] that explains why what God knows must be good, for God's existence and essence are identical. God *qua* mind grasps being *qua* good, and since goodness is 'diffusive of itself' (*SCG* 1.37.5), he must (logically) be creative himself. Yet that 'diffusivity' was precisely what made Avicenna and many others resort to emanation and some sort of necessity of creation – impossible for Christians in Aquinas' time precisely because, although Aquinas allowed that the temporal beginning of the world cannot be established by philosophy, yet creation, whether temporally or otherwise, must only be seen as an act of God's deliberate choice. Although, according to Aquinas, God did not have to make the present universe – he could have made a better one – and although he is creative by nature, the choice of his creation – including the option of not creating the best possible world – is a matter for his inscrutable decision. That decision is free precisely inasmuch as it is good.

Since God 'has' (or is) mind, he must also 'have' 'will' (*ST* I 19.1). There is a distinctly Augustinian, even a Platonic echo here: a Platonic Guardian, in similar fashion, cannot but act in accordance with the perfect Good he knows and loves; he wills, that is, to act accordingly; hence his action is by definition perfect and free. And in Plato's *Timaeus*, which was indirectly known during the Middle Ages, the Demiurge organizes the universe,

[6] Cf. Wippel (2007: 218–39).

[7] For more detailed discussion see Stump and Kretzmann (2002: 295–323). Stump and Kretzmann note that Aquinas' position (very similar in this to that of most of his predecessors) allows for the possibility of a metaphysical and foundationalist defence of ethics which many varieties of 'virtue ethics' (including, be it noted, to some extent, Aristotle's) lack. For the ambiguities in Aristotle's position (and his tacit reliance on Platonic 'meta-ethics' see Rist (2004: 84–7).

[8] This formulation seems to originate with Aristotle who at *Rhet*. 2.1380b35 speaks of 'wishing what someone thinks of as good for someone'. Greek 'wishing' in Aristotle has become *velle* (with obvious connections with *voluntas*) in Aquinas. White points out that 'it is not clear that Aristotle or Aquinas could so easily express the difference', *scil*. between 'I wish to take a walk' (= my wish is to take a walk) and the peremptory 'I will to take a walk' (= my will is to take a walk) (White 2011: 482). That difficulty may be more serious for Aquinas than for Aristotle if he is to be tempted in philosophical psychology to read wishing as willing.

as we have noted earlier, because he so desires and because he is good. But recognize in Aquinas the more Aristotelian, less Platonic, indeed less Augustinian language. Whereas in their theories of human action Plato (always) and Augustine (often) speak of knowing and loving the Good or God, Aquinas regularly speaks of knowing and *willing* the good. Perhaps we can assume him prepared to substitute 'loving' (platonically an active, creative force) for 'willing'. Yet to be sure as to that, we must understand the relationship in his thought between willing and loving.

According to Aquinas love is the 'first motion of the will' (*ST* I 20. 1), which means that where there is willing there must be some kind of loving, some love of something or someone, love apparently being the expression of what we call our will. Love, Aquinas continues, is willing good to someone (*ST* I 20.2, cf. *ST* II–IIae 27.2). With God, of course, that good is really good, goodness itself; with human beings it may be merely what we suppose good, or what we think good for ourselves.

For Aquinas, God grasps being, his own existence, as lovable; hence his intellect and 'will' are ontologically indistinguishable, though Aquinas normally speaks of 'will' as 'within' intellect (and as rational desire, in Aristotelian language) rather than of intellect as 'within' will (*ST* I 59, a.1, c.1). Sometimes, however, he will sound more immediately Augustinian: 'Good apprehended is necessarily loved and love operates through the will' (*Compendium Theologiae* 32) – though Augustine would prefer to say not that love operates through the will, but rather that 'will' refers to dispositional and occurrent love. Does Aquinas then want to say that we have a faculty of willing *separate* from that of loving? That would be to proceed further in an Anselmian and ultimately more voluntarist direction than he would want to go. Yet since he wants to explain creation as a deliberate act of God's will, as he understands 'will', this supreme act might seem to require expression in Aristotelian terms simply as the achievement of rational desire. So the problem of the relationship of Aristotelian rational desire and Augustinian love is already upon us.

Thinking about Aquinas' treatment of that problem, we must bear in mind that well before Aquinas the full-blooded Augustinian account of love and will had been considerably corrupted and watered down (or tamed – if that is how some might want to view it): a development which could even promote the replacement of an uninhibited account of God's (and our) love by a more clinical – even eventually more harsh and unrelenting – emphasis on his (and our) will. Perhaps surprisingly, as we shall see, it was not least a growing concern during the twelfth century about the relationship between love and friendship – amid fears of an egoistic

reading of the Augustinian notion of 'enjoying God' – that encouraged this fateful development. The shadow of Bernard again looms on the screen.

When examining the views of Augustine and Anselm about the freedom of creatures and their possibilities for sinlessness, we considered the fall of Satan and the other rebel angels. In accordance with his view that perseverance, even for the unfallen, requires a special grace, Augustine had concluded that God must have withheld that grace from Satan and his confrères; Anselm left that aside, thus presenting the fall of the angels as a matter of their own freedom, though ultimately unintelligible. In this matter, the medievals generally, and Aquinas in particular, followed the more Anselmian line: hence, and in the interest of preserving his omnipotence, absolving God of (even indirect) responsibility for angelic sin – at the risk, however, of a highly problematic account of human decision-making.[9] In most other respects – though I have indicated something of the new metaphysical context of his position – Aquinas' account of *God's* freedom – his higher freedom in being unable to sin – differs little in substance from that of Augustine.

Turning then to Aquinas' explanation of the behaviour of Adam and the angels before the fall, we find (as more generally in his mature account of the dynamics of action) that 'will' plays a dual role. First, it acts as some sort of efficient cause of the intellect (as in *On Truth* q.14, a.3, ad 2 and 10), in that it establishes what the intellect is and is not to think about; secondly and 'later' it is directed towards what the intellect judges to be good, and thence enacts the intellect's decrees. Any human act, therefore, is an act of a deliberated will (*ex voluntate deliberata*, *ST* I–IIae 1.1).

The 'freedom' of the will is rooted (traditionally enough) in the fact that it moves itself (*On Truth* 22.12); its first motion is not caused by the intellect but instilled by nature (*ST* I–IIae 17.5), that is by God, as a kind of instinct for goodness. This 'instinct' is not simply for one's own good, but for good (and goods) as such; indeed Aquinas believes that we are naturally oriented to love ourselves only via a love for God whose goodness

[9] *QDM* q.16.4, a.4. See later in this chapter and for a more detailed account of Aquinas on the fall of the angels see Hoffmann (2007: 122–56). Hoffmann's account is largely based on Aquinas' later writings (*ST* and *QDM*), but although he recognizes a certain development in Aquinas' views, he tends to understate the importance of the changes wrought. Perhaps Aquinas, fearing the condemnation which was indeed forthcoming, and which in his view would wrongly ascribe to him some form of intellectual determinism (whether for angels or humans), became eager to express himself more unambiguously in a contrary sense. If so, he seems to have convinced neither his ancient critics nor all of his modern interpreters.

we can and should love more than ourselves. He accepts the Augustinian notion that our *proper* self-love, the psychological basis for our love of others, derives indirectly – and therefore should only be pursued indirectly – from our love of God.

Action is the result of the blended performance, at various levels, of our two capacities of knowing and willing. The dual role of the 'will', however, has substantially contributed to a wide-ranging disagreement among modern interpreters about how in Aquinas we are to understand the relationship between will and intellect, even in God where they are inseparable and harmonious. In these contemporary debates disagreement still takes the form of the question, 'Is Aquinas' interpretation of freedom "intellectualist": even intellectual-determinist, since the intellect is determined by its objects? Or is he some sort of voluntarist or "libertarian" – which might leave him open to the charge of relativism?'[10] Until recently, some form of the 'intellectualist' reading has tended to prevail, in view of texts locating the 'will' within the intellect: that, we note, appearing ideologically, if not philosophically, attractive, for it ensured that our freedom – not to speak of God's – cannot be construed as arbitrary. Overall, however, Aquinas' final and fixed position is well summed up by Sherwin, who shows how, although in his earlier writings Thomas was chiefly concerned to avoid the moral relativism that seemed to follow upon an overestimate of the role of the will, he tried later to correct the balance, avoiding intellectual determinism – as also any sort of liberty of indifference – by insisting more forcefully that the 'will's own action is rooted in and flows from the natural inclinations instilled in it by God'.[11] We should note, however – and for future reference – that a strictly theological claim about the divine origin and direction of this initial inclination is indispensable, for what would remain if the theology were to be suspended or abandoned as mere assertion, as 'philosophically' unacceptable?

Aquinas' mature account of the fall of the angels, most clearly set out in the late *On Evil*, is roughly based on the following principles: firstly that it was not due to external constraint: – thus in that sense of 'necessary' it was not necessary (cf. *ST* I–IIae 21.2; *On Evil* q.2.2); secondly that all the angels originally had similar dispositions, lacking passions and evil habits and possessed of whatever grace was needful (*On Evil* q.16.4); thirdly that all had the same perfect natural knowledge, while lacking knowledge – but

[10] Sherwin (2007: 59).
[11] Hoffmann (2007: 138, 153).

not desire – of whatever transcended the limits of natural knowledge (*ST* I–IIae 58.5; *On Evil* q.16.6); fourthly that all their wills (as the wills of human beings) were created with an inclination towards God and the good. And here is where Aquinas' account of the difference between the good and the bad among them shows up. For whatever reason – Aquinas suggests pride in neglecting the wisdom and will of God (*ST* I 63.2; *On Evil* q.16.3) – Satan not merely aimed for supernatural happiness but did so 'inordinately and immoderately' (*On Evil* q.16.2, ad 4; cf. *SCG* 3.110) and by use of the power of his own nature. That sounds Augustinian enough, but whereas Augustine points to lack of the grace to persevere, Aquinas, like Anselm, offers no such explanation for Satan's decision not to adhere to God's will (*ST* 1 q.63.4), though he has already observed that *any* avoidance of sin requires God's grace (*ST* 1 q.63.1c).

Apparently Satan just did not bother; he just ignored the knowledge he had – an explanation that leaves us to ask again why the two groups of angels behaved differently. What is certain is that that decision must be referred to their 'wills', since no relevant knowledge was lacking. Unlike unfallen Adam, the angels, being identically disposed and with an identical history, could not have grasped 'under different descriptions' – but only in the one uniform way – the ultimate goodness for which they were destined. Thus they could not have, as it were, played one description off against the other. And the mere fact of their perfectly adequate knowledge shows that neither group of angels was 'intellectually' determined, since had they been so determined their acts would have been similar. The implication seems to be that if the choice of the evil angels is not arbitrary, it is unintelligible – and clashes with their basic inclination to the good – since no 'good' reason actually compelled them. Of course, if it be in the nature of the 'raw' will as such to act arbitrarily, we might conclude that God's behaviour must also be arbitrary. But that too is as yet not merely denied but ruled out.

Referring to what he had previously called the 'puzzling question' of Satan's motivation, Hoffmann observes that the 'contingent' choice of Satan has been described [by Aquinas] but not fully explained. It might be preferable to say that it has scarcely been explained at all, and if there is indeed no explanation, then Augustine's 'theological' solution to the problem as it has been posed – namely that angels and Adam fell from some naturally perfect state – might look preferable. For if philosophical answers are inadequate, then the whole thesis of inherited sinfulness may be in trouble unless we resort to some such (still incomprehensible) theological claim as Augustine's. It will be easier to defend the incomprehensible – in

this case the inaction of God in withholding the grace to persevere – in theology than in philosophy.

Let us return to the broad underpinnings of Aquinas' position, with reference now not to angelic but to human action. Here Aquinas has the opportunity to use Aristotle more straightforwardly, for Aristotle, though having little to say relevant to the 'will' of God – and nothing of angels – expatiated on decisions made by men. Yet in looking at Aquinas' treatment of that more limited theme, we may both shed indirect light on the fallen angels and also identify an area where traditional theology and Aristotelian 'learning' come into conflict, generating problems over which, in the end, has to yield.

We have already noticed that Aquinas distinguishes 'freedom' – in the sense of having a free choice[12] – from one variety of necessity. Although human beings may be 'necessitated', say by illness or madness (*ST* I–II 10, a.3), as in the case of a kleptomaniac, they are naturally 'free' in that they are rational. Non-rational creatures, whether animate or inanimate, are *always* subject to necessity because they can never consider options and merely follow their instincts. Hence it is sometimes supposed that (after all) Aquinas thinks that human beings are 'free' precisely in the sense that we do things for reasons, being able to consider our possible goods under different descriptions[13] before deciding which to pursue – possible and imperfect as these goods are because all are partial approximations to our true good of eternal bliss (cf. *ST* I 82, a.2). Hence a number of 'free' actions – though by no means necessarily all – would involve some sort of choice between alternative possibilities (*ST* I 83.1, c), and in any case human freedom would depend on rational judgements about what is presented to the intellect by the will which the will would subsequently carry out; for, as we have seen, Aquinas holds that the will is 'within' the intellect (*ST* I 59, a.1, c.1, cf. *ST* I–IIae 17, a.1, ad 2).

Yet though the idea that fallen human beings have to choose between various apparent goods may help to explain the possibility of our own moral errors, it affords no help in understanding the choices, for good or ill, of the fallen angels, whose previous knowledge and previous 'historical' condition should preclude any possibility of their losing sight of

[12] *Liberum arbitrium* (*ST* I 83; *QDM* q.6; *QDV* q.24) and also *electio* denote choice, where necessary between alternatives – or in any case assent (*ST* I 83, a.4; *QDV* q.24, a.6). It would appear that Aquinas wants to say that 'choice' is free, not that the 'will' is free, determined as it partially is by its character as rational appetite (*ST* I–IIae 6 prol. etc).

[13] So, for example, Davies (2002: 21).

the good they know. Aquinas never views angels as considering possible situations under different descriptions; they recognize truths one at a time and infallibly (*On Truth* q.8.14) – which leaves us puzzled as to how they could shift from grasping infallible truths about God to deciding to neglect them. Indeed in thinking about their fall, Aquinas pushes cognitive problems aside in favour of the inordinate *desire* of Satan which led him to neglect God's will, for Satan neither accepts nor rejects that will; he simply decides, by act of his own will, to ignore it. Which leaves his motivation obscure – for such a choice is hardly rational, even if it could be rationalized. It looks more like a straight overruling of the intellect in a smash-and-grab job by the will (compare again the Aristotelian 'acratic' who says 'I should not be doing this' while downing the bottle of vodka.) Is this the situation that Aquinas, in this rather like Anselm, thinks we too are in if (individually rather than as ill-equipped descendants of Adam) we are to be held responsible for our personal as well as for our inherited sin? If so, it seems to entail that we ourselves – in this like the unlucky angels – pay a price for being in a condition from which we are unable to save ourselves. Augustine would agree that this is indeed our situation; that is why we need grace and, like Satan, are in trouble if – or when – it is somehow unavailable.

Aquinas sounds more or less Aristotelian in regularly identifying the 'will' neither as 'love' nor, more Stoically, as 'impulse' – the two 'Augustinian' possibilities – but as a 'rational appetite' directed towards what is or appears to be good.[14] He differs from Aristotle – for apparently theistic reasons – in holding that not the 'eye of the soul' but the intellect recognizes and presents all available goods, including the ultimate end or ends towards which we are and should be directed, on the basis of which presentation the will assents and acts. Aristotle holds that the deliberations in which our minds engage are concerned with means, not with ends, while Aquinas – somehow amalgamating Aristotle's various cognitive capacities – suggests that the mind also identifies (though not by deliberating) the ultimate end: that is, God. We shall return to the question of that ultimate end.

Aquinas often refers to the 'will' as a 'passive potency' (*On Truth* q.25.1, *ST* I 80.2 etc.), but occasionally – and more regularly in his later writings – as an 'active potency' (*ST* I–IIae 10.4, *On Evil* 6.1). The shift is of great importance, preserving the 'will' as an at least partial source of the 'freedom' for which we can be held responsible, while at the same time

[14] *ST* I-IIae 50, a.22; 109, a.2; III, a.2 etc.

emphasizing its role as a separate faculty with its own specific and identifying function. In the late *On Evil* he moves much closer to a voluntarist explanation of the first sin of the angels, and therefore the origin of moral evil more broadly – and for reasons with important similarities to those of Anselm. Yet already in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (III 10) he had argued that in the human case too, although the will *acts* on some good determined by the intellect, the intellect's actual choice among the goods it is to present to the will has already been partially determined by the will which may urge it to cease considering or reconsidering various possibilities.

But in later works he goes much further. Since we have options among the practical goods available to us – our final desire for beatitude being unsatisfiable in this life – we may will not to think about final beatitude at all when we evaluate other more immediate prospects (*On Evil* q.6, cf. *ST* I–IIae 6, a.3). Our own behaviour in making choices will then bear some relationship to the wrongful choosing of Satan, for although Satan does not suffer from any inability such as we have in evaluating *immediate* goods, he too can ignore final beatitude. The difference, of course, is that our choice, unlike Satan's, is driven by the weakness of our unsupported wills, as also by a comparative ignorance of what, for whatever reason, we prefer to ignore.

Thus we have an outline of Aquinas' position, but the mystery about the angels with which we started persists, albeit in a slightly different form. For the question can now be formulated as: Why do some angels will their neglect of God while others do not? And the answer seems to be that they just do – which again seems to risk making the choice for heaven or hell a matter of chance or just inscrutable. In creating the angels God has, as it were, gambled on how they will choose, even knowing that some just will choose to act irrationally. But why should they do that? In the end Aquinas is left in a position about angels very similar to that of Anselm. We may begin to wonder whether (after all) the problem of the angelic fall from grace, *as set up*, is simply insoluble and therefore of little use in explaining human error.

If we finally leave aside angels before the fall in favour of humans in their present situation, the influence of Aristotle on Aquinas' position – inevitably limited in thinking about angels because of the special theological aspects of the case – is more apparent and potent. We recall that Augustine (and Anselm) approached the question of our present ability to act 'freely' in terms of those actions where, in our fallen state, we try to act rightly – or as otherwise stated, in such a way as to avoid sinning. And they agree that so to act is only possible for us in our weakened or

deformed condition by the grace of God. Aquinas would agree with that – he makes frequent references in his writings to the need for grace in our fallen state – and he retains the un-Aristotelian premise that we are given at creation an inclination to the supreme good that is God. Nevertheless, his modern readers find so much discussion of human action where grace remains unmentioned that, in the words of one of them: 'According to Aquinas himself, then, his account of grace should not alter the conclusions we reach about his theory of the will, independently considered. This essay will therefore consider Aquinas's account of the [human] will apart from his views of grace.'[15]

A number of others have adopted a very similar approach, and although MacIntyre is not alone in rightly continuing to emphasize that Aquinas breaks with the ethics of Aristotle on important questions – and because of the persistent influence of Augustine whom he uses as a corrective[16] – there are good reasons to suppose that in the present instance the corrective is not entirely integrated; the twin rails on which Aquinas runs remain rather separate. Perhaps, as with Anselm, a greater emphasis on love would have suggested the greater need to invoke grace.

If such emphasis on *love* is often lacking, however, then the claim that we can reconstruct Aquinas' account of human action without much, or any, reference to *grace* becomes more understandable. What is more, the contemporary notion that we can safely present Aquinas more or less in the guise of a contemporary secular philosopher of analytic stripe – at least when discussing his 'theory of action' – acquires a greater degree of plausibility: albeit those who make it, implicitly or explicitly, may cover themselves by adding that he is also a theologian. Furthermore, what makes the case for a 'secular' Thomas in this case particularly plausible is that in discussions of human responsibility, theological claims about our unity in Adam (as in *ST* I–IIae 81,1) are sidelined; sin and responsibility are discussed with scant comment on the effects of Adam's sin on our personal freedom. That neglect, necessary for the construction of a 'pure'

[15] Stump (2002: 276). Apparently on similar lines Davies (1992), though discussing grace at length, makes no attempt to connect it with the possibility of free action; indeed he attributes to Aquinas the wholly un-Augustinian position that 'For Aquinas … the human race has been restored to its pristine state [that of Adam], and that state has been added to'. This may be carelessness; perhaps Davies means that Christ is in that happy condition and that we *will* be so restored as a result of his saving work. And a third contemporary interpreter of Aquinas moves along rather similar lines. As I have noted elsewhere (Rist 2007: 88–93), Pasnau comments on Augustine in the *Confessions* as follows: 'Aquinas resists the Augustinian suggestion that he never could have overcome his weakness on his own. Augustine, in giving all the credit to God, implies that we are helpless in the face of our weakness. This is quite alien to Aquinas' approach' (Pasnau 2002: 252).

[16] MacIntyre (1988: 181, 205).

Aristotelianism, is another substantial move towards the 'de-theologization' that is in part an effect of the new 'academic' tendency to separate philosophy and theology.

Aquinas cannot be convicted of holding a 'double truth' theory: that is, claiming that what is true in philosophy is false in theology. Yet a case can be made that philosophical truths teased out of a theistic version of Aristotle's theory of action have not been wholly reconciled with the theological truths dependent on the traditional ideas of Augustine about the events surrounding Adam's fall. In the end, we shall have to ask once again which ideas – or whether both sets of ideas – have to be drastically rewritten, for if they are not, then the host of serious difficulties already present in Augustine and seemingly augmented by Anselm may be further increased.

Aquinas' acceptance of a distinction (however understood) between man's natural and supernatural ends gives further impetus to eventually 'secularizing' interpretations of his account of human action.[17] Thus he writes: 'Our happiness or felicity is twofold.… One is proportionate to human nature, and this we can reach through our own resources. The other, a happiness surpassing our nature, we can obtain only by the power of god.… To be advanced to this supernatural happiness, we have to be divinely endowed with some additional sources of activity; their role is like that of our native capacities which direct us, *not*, *of course*, *without God's help*, to our connatural end. Such sources of action are called theological virtues' (*ST* I–II 62, a.1).

One of the difficulties in interpreting such a passage lies in determining whether (or when) Aquinas is thinking of problems of determinism in general, or whether, with Augustine, he is only interested in human action involving moral responsibility, and hence, in Christian terms, possible salvation: the difference – to repeat a distinction made earlier – between whether I have no option when I 'decide' to sit here rather than there on a bus and whether I have no option whether or not to stab a nearby passenger. From Augustine's standpoint, the cases might be different, the latter being the more certainly determined, after the fall, by the presence

[17] I write 'however understood' to avoid being misread as encouraging the view (primarily due to the influence of Cajetan and Suarez) that Aquinas wanted to get substantial philosophical mileage from a 'pure (and ungraced) nature'. My concern is solely with his methodology and – eventually – with how his use of an Aristotelian natural end – and of Aristotelian ideas to explain our actions related to that end – could be misread as the acceptance of the possibility of a purely natural account of the human condition without grace, coupled with an 'extrinsic' account of grace itself.

or absence of God's grace. But for Aquinas wearing his Aristotelian hat, decorated only by the Christian trimming that even after the fall we retain a basic inclination towards God, there seems no possibility of further difference in the explanation of ordinary moral choices, whether directed to natural or to final ends. And if that is so, then Aristotle and Augustine are here too inadequately integrated. We shall later notice that such inadequate integration also shows up in Aquinas' account of the 'infused' theological virtues, especially in the case of Christian 'charity'.

One of the root causes of the exegetical difficulty is that Aristotle, Aquinas' principal philosophical source, is concerned to argue that the individual is free and his actions voluntary when they originate from himself – except when they derive from excusable ignorance or irresistible external compulsion. Thus all acts where we are neither ignorant nor compelled are our own free acts; they are non-necessitated. But approaching the problem in this way says nothing – or else assumes much – about psychological determinism, which Aquinas wants to deny as ruling out a certain freedom of the 'moral will' which he believes necessary if we are to be held responsible for our actions. Indeed Aristotle himself, as we have seen, is insistent that there are a number of actions which we cannot under any circumstances be compelled to perform and that if we act wrongly in such cases, we are responsible; there is no possible excuse. With much of that Augustine would agree, but whereas Aristotle would hold that 'ought implies can', Augustine, as we have noted, does not – at least in the case of humans after the fall. We are thus for him unable to do what we ought in such a case: unable not to do what, in Aristotelian language, we can find no excuse for doing. As individuals we are not free in the relevant sense, but being 'one in Adam', we are still responsible. After Aquinas the tension here visible will take on great significance.

For all his regular use of a rather Aristotelian account of our freedom, based perhaps – because of our history and consequent mentality – on our recognizing goods under different descriptions and hence making right or wrong decisions, Aquinas is willing to accept much of Augustine's view of our postlapsarian state. Yet just as in the case of the angels he cannot show why the two groups chose oppositely, so now in the case of fallen human beings he cannot explain why the choice we make between goods viewed under different descriptions is not determined by the conditions in which we find ourselves. Those conditions include the effects of the fall of Adam, and so the 'angelic' question remains, though in different form: Why are we responsible and in what sense can we be called free? In recognizing that Aristotle's account of free action has not faced the problem

of psychological determinism, Aquinas has become embroiled in a new version of a specifically Christian problem that perhaps he could not solve in Aristotelian terms.[18]

Thus Aquinas' Aristotelian account of free action, however modified, fails to settle the theological problem that Augustine and those who succeeded him raised. For whereas Aquinas, following Aristotle, holds that in our day-to-day choices, or at least the more urgent of them, we are capable of recognizing the rational course and hence of acting freely in accordance with our rational appetites, that is precisely what Augustine denies in the case of moral action, citing both ignorance and endemic (not just occasional) moral weakness and inadequacy. We may be able to recognize different courses of action, but we cannot always do what we recognize to be right, and even if we can, we cannot do it for the right reasons; our motives (without God's grace) cannot be pure.

That is why pagan virtues are not real virtues[19] – an Augustinian thesis that is to become a touchstone whereby the integration of Aristotelianism into the earlier tradition can be measured. At this point, of course, the theological virtues might be invoked; perhaps the Christian can do what on no Aristotelian theory of action the pagan could achieve – even though for Augustine the possibility of right action will depend on a special grace given only to a few even among Christians.

For Augustine any straightforward, basically Aristotelian analysis of our behaviour – even if it recognizes the problems of psychological determinism – must be naïve; it could describe at best Adam's situation before the fall, rarely if ever our present circumstances. Indeed any purely philosophical account of 'freedom', whether libertarian or compatibilist, will necessarily lack reality. Augustine might add that the reason there is so much disagreement about the nature of Aquinas' account of freedom is precisely that, like Aristotle's, it fails to acknowledge our actual moral condition, empirically observed and biblically narrated. Certainly Luther and other Reformers (as well as some of their Catholic predecessors) were to argue that neither 'intellectualist' nor 'voluntarist' approaches to moral failure plumbs the depth of the problem.

Yet theological virtues exist. Perhaps Augustine could be satisfied with Aquinas' account at least in those cases where the theological virtues, in

[18] Contrary to frequent assertion, it is not necessarily irrational to hold someone responsible even if he is not free to do otherwise. In many possible human codes it may make sense to do precisely that, for example to protect society.

[19] Cf. Rist (1994b: 168–70); Dodaro (2004b: 184).

particular charity, reinforce the supposedly Aristotelian evocation of willing and more generally of human agency. That, however, raises further questions: What is the relationship between the infused virtue of charity and Aquinas' account of the act of willing, understood in 'Aristotelian' terms? Would Augustine even be satisfied with Aquinas' account of charity: that is, of love? What Augustinian problem is the notion of infusion able to resolve? An answer to the last question may provide the best approach to the other two.

But before moving to a necessarily limited discussion of these questions and an attempt to resolve the problem of how far Aquinas' ethical Aristotelianism points towards a separation of theological from philosophical questions and towards an attempt, forthcoming after Aquinas, to eliminate some of the difficulties by emphasizing a more and more arbitrary power of the will – first of God then of man – let us make some sort of summary of the situation so far. Thus, our basic acts of 'will', involving that we may decline to notice God's will – as did Satan, though less intelligibly – seem to have a certain libertarian, voluntarist aspect; that at least avoids any Augustinian claim that God has declined to give the grace of perseverance by pointing to some sort of inadequately accounted for act of 'free' will. Our eventual decisions and actions are determined by a combination of the (inadequately) rational options made available to our intellect with our previously ill-habituated disposition. This explanation of human behaviour, of course, does not exactly reflect that of Satan's evil choice.

We have also noticed that, when it acts 'freely', our combination of intellect and will must always indicate or generate an assent, but that that assent is not always a choice. In the case of God there can be no choice of an evil, but only always assent to the good, while with humans (whether fallen or prelapsarian) there is always assent and sometimes choice, including choice between goods and evils (though the latter will be falsely presented by the intellect to the will as goods, and accepted as goods). As we have seen, God and the goodness he is, says Aquinas – here speaking in the spirit of Augustine – will be necessitated not by coercion but by his good nature and good will (*On Truth* q.22, a.5, cf. *ST* 1a 19.3). Yet in the case of humans Aquinas is again closer to Aristotle than to Augustine, in apparently allowing real, however limited, alternative possibilities of good in some cases, including those involving moral responsibility. In those texts of Aquinas where grace is left unspecified, God allows us some sort of 'free' choice, in that our acts are our own. Yet what ensures that Aquinas can favour no more radical version of libertarianism, whereby the will is

wholly independent of the intellect, is that will is tied 'within' the intellect, and therefore to a degree circumscribed by it. So despite Thomas' regular ignoring of Augustine's demand for constant grace, his Aristotelianism itself holds him back from any further 'unleashing' of the will.

Yet even the degree of libertarianism he allows to both us and to the unfallen angels is sufficiently prior to any intellectual action as to remain unsustainable, for the root problem is whether every form of libertarianism that grants a degree of independence of the will from the intellect is unsustainable. We are left wondering whether, if we continue to accept the theological premises of Aquinas' account of our fallen state, as of the fallen situation of Satan and his cohorts, we are obliged to choose between a limited but unintelligible libertarianism and the intellectual determinism which Aquinas certainly would reject. Or should the degree of liberty be increased – and has Aquinas inadvertently unbolted the stable and watched the horse slip out?

There is a further puzzle about rejected intellectual determinism that cannot be entirely passed over in silence. When Aristotle developed his account of human action, he was not thinking simply of obedience to laws, as can be seen not least in his account of the difference between justice and 'equity' (*N.E.* 5.1137b11): equity being the rectification by a rational agent of a just law, which being a law cannot take account of individual circumstance and must therefore be applied equitably by the rational agent. Similarly at *N.E.* 2.1107a1–2, when defining virtue, Aristotle leaves room for the decision of the wise practical agent in determining how the mean 'in relation to us' is to be calculated. Clearly this means that not all decisions about virtuous action can be identified by following a fully elaborated set of rules.

Aquinas significantly alters this piece of Aristotelian wisdom, apparently thinking that the rational agent (as perfectly rational) could discern not just what is right action in every case, but the right law that is to be applied in every case because right actions reflect the natural law (*ST* I–IIae 65.3; I–IIae 94.3).[20] There will be no 'grey' areas left to the discernment of the wise: a position not only un-Aristotelian but also very un-Augustinian and which makes the charge of 'intellectual determinism' against Aquinas the more serious.[21] It would also seem to indicate a risk that obedience

[20] See Aquinas' observations on the two passages from the *Ethics* in his *Commentary* (the first on book 5 at lectio 16. 1089–90, the second on book 2 at *lectio* 7.323). The first is particularly striking in that Aquinas ignores the notion of 'rectification' and takes Aristotle to be referring only to discretion in the awarding of punishments.

[21] For Augustine's position (and his uncertainty how to proceed) see Rist (1994b: 196–8).

could be presented not merely as part of the ground of morality (as in Augustine's account of Adam's fall) but – without too much difficulty – as morality itself.

Be that as it may, we must now turn to Aquinas' account of the infused virtues, especially of charity or love, asking first what relevant traditional problems it is intended to solve. Only then can we move to the relationship in Aquinas between willing and loving, for if loving is an infused virtue necessary for adequate moral activity, we need to know its precise relationship to that willing – as rational desire – which forms part of Aquinas' Aristotelianized account of human behaviour. And finally we can ask whether any perceived tendency to separate willing from loving, in the strong Augustinian sense of that latter word, makes an explanation of human behaviour (not least with respect to a love for God) satisfactory to Augustine even more difficult to secure – and if so, which route did thinkers feel compelled to take after Aquinas and do we not (again) begin to recognize a parting of the ways foreshadowing more radical developments than could have been foreseen in their time?

Aquinas is clear about the difference between acquired and infused (or theological) virtues: the former point us to our limited natural end, to living by the rule of right reason: the latter – depending as they do entirely on God's grace – point directly to God and our ultimate and supernatural perfection.[22] Aquinas uses the distinction, as we shall see, to 'explicate'

[22] It is uncertain when 'infusion' began to be introduced; perhaps it derives from *Romans* 5:5. One of the earliest references is to be found in William of Auxerre (*Summa Aurea* 3.11.1). Interestingly, Albert had already used it (by misreading Augustine) to defuse objections that Aristotelianism contradicted Augustine on the virtues; Augustine, according to Albert, was only thinking of the infused virtues and that has nothing to do with moral philosophy (*Super Ethica* I, lect. 10, note 55; cf. Putallaz 1995: 11). But the distinction between non-infused and infused virtues is not Augustinian. It probably arose at least in part from an attempt to explain why Augustine, who thought that all virtues are modes of love, denied real virtues to pagans. Certainly it was soon to be applied to that question.

In Augustine's overall account of man's nature, all were created for a 'supernatural' goal. Much debate has ensued, of course, as to how Aquinas distinguished between natural love of the good and supernatural love of God: but even to formulate the question in that way is non-Augustinian, indicating once again how many medievals were beginning – more or less unwittingly – to be led gradually further away from Augustinian modes of thought. The attempt to assimilate Aristotle's 'natural' goal to traditional Augustinianism helped to bring matters to a head.

For the problem of how to interpret Aquinas on natural and supernatural ends the seminal work in recent times has been H. de Lubac's *Surnaturel: Etudes historiques* (1946), though De Lubac's account of Aquinas has required considerable modification, for example by Gagnebet (1948: 394–446). For a clear rejection of the view that there is more than one end for man according to Aquinas see especially Laporta (1965). More recently the debate has been renewed, some wishing to attribute to Aquinas the view that our innate desire for goodness is only directed towards an (Aristotelian) natural end; any higher desire is an 'extra': so (among others) Feingold (2001);

Augustine's insistence that pagan virtues are not real virtues, that they are vices rather than virtues, although some are more vicious than others, but since for Augustine any 'infusion' of virtues could only occur with baptism – indeed effectively for very few even of the baptized – he must limit any discussion of genuine virtue to those few. Only these, profiting from and returning God's love, can act with direct reference to the proper end of man and – to a degree – from the necessary pure and unmixed motives.

Once we recognize how Augustine and his pre-scholastic successors understood such questions of virtue, we can look at what happens to love – in reference, as in Augustine himself, to the 'will' – when 'Aristotle's' account of the 'will' reaches Aquinas. Before Aquinas, it had, of course, reached his teacher Albert, but for present purposes there is no need to pursue that part of the history. What is at stake is the reading of Augustine's account of love as the primary theological virtue as it passes into the hands of Aquinas, then through those hands to his philosophical and theological successors. But first to pagan virtues; where we shall find seemingly essential features of Augustinian theology being corrected or explained away as Aquinas again seeks both to accommodate Aristotle and, as he hopes, better to express Augustine's intent – and thereby opens up the path to unintended serious consequences for moral theology and moral philosophy.

Startlingly enough from an Augustinian point of view, Aquinas accepts that pagan virtues are real but 'imperfect' (*vera virtus sed imperfecta*, *ST* II–IIae, q.23, a.7). Specifically, apart from perfect virtue, he identifies two further varieties: first there are 'altogether imperfect virtues', that is virtuous habits without the direction of right reason; then there are 'somehow' perfect virtues (*aliqualiter* [*non simpliciter*] *perfectae*: *On Cardinal Virtues* a.2; *secundum quid*, *ST* I–IIae, q.65, a.2): these, albeit lacking *caritas*, can be displayed (though after the fall incompletely: *ST* I–II, q.63, a.2 ad 2) 'through human acts' (*per opera humana*). Their goal is 'political', the

Long (2007: 81–131); Hütter (2009: 523–91). Were that correct, Aquinas would be even more un-Augustinian. Support for De Lubac has come from Milbank (2005) and Healy (2008: 535–64), among others. If the opponents of De Lubac were correct, Aquinas might seem to be saddled with the view that a desire for God was not present in unfallen Adam; in any case too little is said about Adam in the continuing debate.

In evaluating this debate, however, it is essential to keep two questions quite distinct – which often fails to happen: first, what is Aquinas' view (if, that is, he has a clear view); second, what (regardless of Aquinas' position) is the right answer to the question? A recent attempt to summarize the debate and (at least in part) to pronounce against De Lubac is Osborne (2013: 265–79) – but I confess to being still at sea as to whether (for Aquinas) 'pure nature' is supposed to be (or to have been) a theoretical possibility or an identifiable reality. There is much to be learned from the discussion of De Lubac's friends and foes in Pecknold and Wood (2013: especially 215–22), who helpfully set De Lubac in a tradition deriving from Giles of Rome.

good of civil society (*ST* I–IIae, q.61, a.5), not man's ultimate end (*ST* I–IIae, q.63, a.4). Pagan virtues fall into this group[23] – Aquinas allows that, though good, they are not meritorious (*ST* II–IIae, q.23, a.7, ad 1), precisely because they lack *caritas* and depend on man's only residual goodness and rationality after the fall.

Like Augustine, Aquinas recognizes different kinds of pagan acts, some of which, for Augustine, are 'humanly speaking' good and others bad: more strictly Nero is 'worse' than Trajan. As for those virtues directed to man's ultimate end, for Aquinas they cannot exist without grace and love. Among all these distinctions, however, Aquinas fails to consider the precise implications, for Augustine, of the inadequacy of 'virtues' without Christian *caritas*; it is not just that they are not directed to the best end, but that precisely in being godless they can only be performed from mixed motives wholly inadequate for real virtue. The question of purity of motives is a Stoic theme, as we have noticed, which Augustine has turned to what he sees as a vitally Christian use: a Stoic theme of which Aquinas is pardonably unaware but the use of which in Augustine he disregards or fails to notice. Rather, following Aristotle and apparently employing a philosophical tool unavailable to Augustine, he treats perfect virtue as the focal point of reference (as giving focal meaning) to other real but incomplete forms of virtue.

Augustine holds that genuine virtues are only possible for the baptized. It is the consistent position of Scripture, he believes, that it is only by virtue of baptism that meritorious acts are possible, and strictly speaking only meritorious acts are virtuous. Genuine moral improvement and sanctification, that is, go hand in hand – a thesis the Reformers later rejected – even though perfection is not attainable in the present life. Aquinas, on the other hand, suspects that the virtuous acts of pagans – as possible precursors of more perfect virtue – are themselves dependent on grace (which is not, therefore, restricted to the sacraments); thus he can give a seemingly less harsh account of pagan virtue.[24] That might appear to infringe on

[23] For the background see Shanley (1999: 553–77, especially 560). Shanley comments that 'It is apparent how Aquinas differs from Augustine. Whereas Augustine could only see the dichotomy of perfect virtue and sham virtue, Aquinas recognizes a third kind of virtue – true but imperfect' (Shanley 1999: 563). As we shall see, this summary (not least the word 'sham') neglects ideas about perfect motivation that form part of Augustine's position. Kent's analysis of the difference between Augustine and Aquinas depends on wrongly attributing 'Calvinism' to Augustine: so she writes, 'for Aquinas, unlike Augustine, believed that the goodness of human nature has not been totally corrupted by original sin' (Kent 1995: 30). Among recent helpful discussions (apart from Shanley's) are two by Knobel (2005: 535–55 [replying to Osborne 2003: 279–305] and 2011: 339–54).

[24] Shanley follows O'Meara (1997: 235–41) when writing: 'The virtuous pagan … may have been implicitly moving under the influence of grace' (Shanley 1999: 576); that is, even when conversion

those scriptural texts which apparently insist on the necessity of baptism for salvation, yet it is not unscriptural to hold that grace as such does not depend on baptism: otherwise Paul would not have been given the grace to ask for baptism – thus showing an already improved character (and neither would Augustine)! Nevertheless, the separation in Aquinas of virtue from explicitly Christian practice might point beyond his immediate exegetical and philosophical intentions to the development of a thesis that sacramental Christianity is but one approach to the construction of morality – or point to a possible reform of sacramental theology, more especially of baptism.

When, later on, the Reformers wanted to separate morality (and sanctification) radically from justification and salvation in a way which Augustine did not intend but which could be extracted from his writings, further moves in that direction would help generate an anti-Christian backlash which many, and ever less secretly, desired. Obviously Aquinas did not foresee, and could not have approved, such a development. Indeed, he might plausibly claim that the use of focal reference would clarify – without distorting – what Augustine meant about virtue, even if he could not have brought himself to add that Augustine's account of baptism, deriving from a literalist reading of parts of *John's Gospel*, gets him into unnecessary difficulties about the restrictive dispensing of divine grace.

Already in the twelfth century a key feature of Augustine's account of love had been called in question. The unknown author of a text entitled *On Love* (*De Caritate*) aroused the fury of many contemporaries by implying that in Augustine's *Christian Doctrine* the notions of 'enjoying (*frui*) God for his own sake' and of 'using' (*uti*) ourselves and our neighbours (1.3.3) – the latter glossed by Augustine as enjoying one another in God (1.32.35)[25] – are incompatible, and that Augustine's position is driven by what we would call his eudaimonism and so is wholly or partially self-serving.[26] (Peter Abelard (1070–1142) argued similarly that love must be entirely without thought of reward.)[27] According to the anonymous author

is not a possibility. Aquinas, he thinks, avoids semi-Pelagianism while allowing that the acts of virtuous pagans 'do not always involve an explicit assent to Christ through baptism'. *ST* I–IIae q.136, a.3 ad 2 seems to support this view when it says that though pagan virtue lacks the grace that makes a man acceptable to God (*gratum*), it operates *non absque auxilio Dei*. For interesting (though not entirely relevant) discussion see also MacDonald (1991: 31–65).

[25] My comments on the *De Caritate* and its immediate sequels (in Laon and elsewhere) depend largely on Sherwin (2007: 181–204). Sherwin himself acknowledges dependence on Wielockx (1981).

[26] For further comment on love in Augustine see Rist (1994b: 148–68) and for friendship (and cronyism) Rist (1994b: 177–8); for greater detail see Dideberg (1975) and Canning (1993).

[27] Carmichael (2004: 231, note 8); also Osborne (2005a: 23, 25).

we should explain love of self *and* of neighbour as follows: 'As we love ourselves that God may be served, so we should love our neighbour that God may be served' (*De Caritate* 8–9). Seeking enjoyment, he continues, is the behaviour of a 'mercenary': 'Some serve God out of some sort of fear; these are called slaves. Others serve him for pay; these are called mercenaries. Others serve him for love; these are called sons' (*De Caritate*: *Tria sunt genera*, 1–4). My present concern is not to examine the controversy that ensued, but merely to adduce it as part of the intellectual background against which Aquinas wrote. Suffice it to say that the problem of how to erase self-seeking from the 'desire to enjoy God' preoccupied a number of Aquinas' predecessors, not least Bernard of Clairvaux, who developed an elaborate 'scale' of love to show how simple self-love can be transformed into pure love of God. The 'Platonic' ideal of ascent to the vision of God as further developed by Bernard in his writings on the *Song of Songs* and from then on considered a high point in the new Cistercian spirituality must be purified of any taint of self-love.

The relationship between love and friendship thus became a sensitive topic, not least because it seemed to some that love should be supplemented – if not replaced – by friendship, as being less self-seeking and in classical antiquity an important virtue much prized by philosophers: Aristotle in particular wrote on it extensively, though he kept it largely separate from love, at least from that passionate desiring love of the Good and the Beautiful extolled by Plato, of which (at least in his surviving writings) he says nothing. For Aristotle love is merely an intense form of friendship that involves treating the friend as a second self, whereas for Plato and the Platonists love in its highest form, driven by our 'need' of perfection or completion, provides the necessary emotional drive for our return to the Good or the One.

In speaking of the ascent of the soul to God, Augustine largely followed the Platonists. Though he was himself always surrounded by friends and valued friendship highly, his account of our desire for God is, as we have noted, steeped in the language of Platonic ascent. That text that particularly incensed Pelagius illustrates this well: 'Love, who are always ablaze … enkindle me. Give what you command and command what you will' (*Confessions* 10.29.40). The word *amare* indicates a desire to enjoy God, to retain that enjoyment in peace, and so to act towards one's neighbour 'in the Lord', for 'the whole Christian life is a holy desire' (*On John's Epistle* 4.6). Aware that the Platonists held that only the beautiful could be loved, Augustine prayed to God that by his grace we be made beautiful as he himself is beautiful.

Although Augustine says enough about friendship to provide material for those who want to develop that side of his thought, even at the expense of his basic dedication to spiritual passion, he holds that the bittersweet nature of human friendship, overvaluing as it does mere temporal things, is a poor and unreliable substitute[28] for the unswerving love of God (*Confessions* 2.5.10, *City of God* 19.8). Because, however, in the spirit of *John's Gospel* (15:15), he describes saints and Old Testament heroes as 'friends of God', a Christian friendship combining love (*amor*) with affection (*dilectio*) and goodwill (*benevolentia*), becomes in him a worthy facet of the Christian life (*Letter* 130.6.13; *On the Sermon on the Mount* 11.31). Friendship, influentially lauded also by Cicero, Augustine's first source of philosophical inspiration, is yet another area where Augustine saw that a purified paganism could be compatible with Christian truth.[29]

We should perhaps see the development of views of Christian friendship from the eleventh century on as driven in part by the desire to blend Augustine's ideal of the passionate love of God with his more 'human', more reciprocal, view of friendship, reinforced as this was by a continuing reading of Cicero. The ensuing mix is already startling in Anselm, who combines an extreme hostility to heterosexual relationships in general – including the physicality of marriage – with the language of passionate affection for those within his own monastic orbit. Some have suspected a homosexual orientation; others have noted how, with reference to passionate friendship among monks, Anselm addresses individuals in the most exuberant terms, suggesting an intense longing for their physical presence, while seeming simultaneously to claim that his feelings would extend to all those embarked on the monastic pilgrimage towards the transformation of earthly into spiritual relationships.[30]

Whatever the implications of these views and ideals of Anselm, reflection on reciprocity and friendship became urgent within new and reformed monastic communities, not least among Bernard's Cistercians. Passionate love for God might be one thing, anything passionate among monks quite another; thus it is no accident that it was at the request of Bernard himself that Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–67), later to become abbot there, began to develop the theme of 'spiritual friendship' – though, as we have seen, the idea was familiar to Anselm; indeed the phrase itself had

[28] For rather Augustinian-sounding recent comment on human friendship see Lynch (2011: 164–76).

[29] For Cicero's influence (however derived) on Aquinas' treatment of friendship see White (2011: especially 481).

[30] For further comment on Anselm, see McGuire (1974: 111–52), Olsen (1988: 93–141), (more philosophically) Rakus (2002: 237–54) and Sweeney (2012: 43–73).

already been used, perhaps for the first time, by Paulinus of Nola in the fourth century (*Letter* 13. 2) and was known to Bede in the eighth (*H.E.* 4.29). Passionate love, it was suggested, should be directed solely to God, and spiritual friendship be viewed as its 'incarnate' approximation: perhaps the best representation at the earthly level of love of one's neighbour 'in the Lord'. Yet, as we have noted, any passionate love was by now being regularly challenged as egocentric, though Aelred's contemporary Richard of St Victor (ca. 1110–73) argued that, directed towards God, it may reflect the inner life of the Trinity.[31]

Nor, indeed, did the age neglect love's dreaded carnal aspects: which may have encouraged suspicion of the erotic language of the Platonizing tradition as developed by Augustine, especially among those sympathetic to the extreme anti-carnalism of Anselm. At the very origin of the Platonic tradition, in the *Symposium* itself, love of beauty starts from the carnal and moves to the spiritual. But there were by now also strong 'anti-Anselmian' influences in medieval society; Eleanor of Aquitaine, sequentially wife to Louis VII of France and Henry II of England, did much to spread the influence of the ambiguous poetry of courtly love beyond its origin in the Midi[32] – and perhaps the philosophical élites should have taken more notice of Eleanor. One of the advantages of not forgetting the carnal is that it prevents the spiritual from becoming too abstract, too dreary, too uninspiring: that is indeed one reason why the Platonists, not least Augustine – however hostile to carnal misdemeanour – retained, as we have noticed, the earthy language.

For the passion of *eros*, in the Platonic understanding – and whether carnal or spiritual – almost flaunted a rejection of the decent normalities of mere friendship. In the case of the Augustinian passion for God the lover is raised above the quieter joys of a merely human and 'natural friendship' to a more 'divine' life, transcending finite and definable goodness. It is here, it seems, that Augustine would have found Aquinas downplaying – or failing to understand – something of supreme importance in the spiritual life. For just as practical reasoning suffices for the exigencies of day-by-day moral demands but is inadequate to account for the ways and means of a love of God, so friendship – based on rational desire distinct from a passionate love of Goodness and pointed to earthly (and away from 'earthy') obligations – may serve in our search for our 'natural' end but hardly for its

[31] See recently Peroli (2006: 55–77).
[32] See Bull and Léglu (eds.) (2005).

'supernatural' analogue.[33] It might be supposed that the apparent difference between Augustine and Aquinas at this point is to be explained as merely reflecting differences of presentation: perhaps Aquinas' more austere style serves to conceal a basic similarity of structure in his 'Augustinian' account of spiritual passion. But the difference is not so easily explained away, for Aquinas' account of friendship is intended to be compatible with Aristotle's more restrained portrayal: a move which Augustine, for all his valuing of friendship, would reject as an inadequate approach to love.

In treating of 'spiritual friendship', Aelred's principal 'source', apart from the Bible and the Fathers, was again Cicero's treatise *On Friendship*. His principal 'opponents' were those who, not unreasonably, were concerned as to where 'special friendships' between religious might lead; it is not entirely surprising that Aelred, like Anselm, has recently, though erroneously, been hailed as the patron saint of so-called gays. On the other hand, 'non-special' friendships might seem hardly friendships at all, but merely bland benevolence.[34] In any case, Aelred was urged by Bernard to write his *Mirror of Love* (*Speculum Caritatis*) as a broad manifesto for the Cistercian way of life, and he later followed this with a second text, *On Spiritual Friendship*, in which he argued that special friendships, based on love – the model is Jesus and the Beloved Disciple, the language that of the *Song of Songs* – are some earthly approximation to the joys of heaven (*On Spiritual Friendship* 2.18ff.), and even committed himself – albeit with some hesitation – to the proposition 'God is Friendship' (*On Spiritual Friendship* 1.69). Aelred's views, by the standards of his day, were eccentric, but whether or not Aquinas (or his master Albert) knew them directly, they could not have been unaware of their Cistercian thrust, as that they were intended as a contribution to what was in effect an ongoing debate about the relationship between friendship – easily represented as disinterested – and love, which, as we have seen, had in some quarters come to be increasingly portrayed as only too carnally 'interested'.

By about 1248 this problem (like others) acquired a new and definitive impulse with the arrival at the Dominican studium in Cologne of the first complete Latin translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: the text which, as we have seen, was to provide the philosophical base for Aquinas' account of willing and action. Albertus Magnus, Aquinas' teacher, and

[33] At times Aquinas is on the verge of identifying the problem: as in *ST* II IIae, with the comments of Sherwin (2005: 159); earlier in his book Sherwin seems to recognize Aquinas' unacknowledged desire to accommodate Aristotle as the underlying difficulty (Sherwin 2005: 148).

[34] For a summary of the problem before Aelred see Carmichael (2004: 70–3).

later Aquinas himself, faced up to the novel-seeming approach to love and friendship, fortified by a distinction which was partly Augustinian in intent but decidedly and confusingly non-Augustinian in formulation and already proposed (or at least accepted) in about 1215 by William of Auxerre (*Summa Aurea* 1.2.4): namely separating *amor concupiscentiae* (lustful love) from *amor amicitiae* (friendly love). For Augustine, neither of these phrases could have captured the passionate 'love of God or for God', useful though they would be in analyzing human behaviour more generally;[35] indeed Aquinas uses them to distinguish love as desire for material goods to be used and enjoyed – which is ultimately reducible to self-love – and love as personal, as friendship, defined as 'wishing good to someone else' (*ST* I–IIae 26, a.1; 28, a.2): a definition clearly in the spirit not only of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* but also – properly contextualized – of Augustine.[36]

In making his distinction, Aquinas' immediate spiritual background – consciously or not – seems to be Cistercian, especially the proposal of Bernard that there are four grades of love and that self-centred love is gradually to be transformed into love of others solely for their own sake.[37]

[35] See *De Vera Religione* 46.87 and *IoEp* 8.5. Friendship, the latter text concludes, is a 'kind of benevolence, leading us to do things for the benefit of those we love'. For more see van Bavel (1967: 69–80, esp. 79). On love and friendship (and the relevant terminology) in Augustine see further Rist (1994b: 178 and note 68). Inevitably there have been attempts to water down Augustine's position, arguably in a more 'Thomist' direction; so Hubbard (2012: 203). Of Aquinas on friendship there is much recent discussion: for example Schwarz (2007). It might be argued that human 'benevolence' is less appropriate for descriptions of our love for God, more for understanding human friendship as an analogue for intra-Trinitarian relationships; see the interesting comment – with citations of Aquinas – of Sokolowski (2010: 45 and note 14).

[36] For Aquinas see Mansini (1995: 137–96) and Gallagher (1996: 1–47). (Surprisingly, Augustine gets no mention in Gallagher's discussion.) For more on William of Auxerre see Osborne (2005a: 32–41). One important effect of William's activity was to raise the possibility that a 'natural' ability to love God more than the self was possible for the angels and for Adam before the fall. Augustine's view (spelled out in *De Corr.et Gratia* 11.31–2) was that the capacity to *win* (as distinct from desire) salvation *always* required special grace (*CD* 12.9). Aquinas, rather differently, admits the possibility of an ungraced capacity but denies that it ever existed (*Quodl.* I, a.8); others, both before – Alexander of Hales and Philip the Chancellor – and later took a less 'theological' line. Albert's account of 'concupiscence' and 'friendship' was reinforced by his interpretation of a distinction in John Damascene (some of whose writings had recently been translated into Latin by Burgundio of Pisa) between *thelesis – voluntas ut natura* – (which Albert read 'egocentrically') and *boulesis* (*voluntas ut ratio*). So at last *thelesis* has come into the debate, not least with 'the *voluntas-thelesis* is prepared by God'. The use of these terms further encouraged the tendency to think of the 'will' as an entity other than love (though of course love does not – yet – disappear). Damascene's distinction can itself be traced back to Maximus the Confessor. Gauthier and Jolif recognize the influence of Maximus but wrongly suppose that he originated rather than subsequently helped confirm the medieval account of the 'will' (Gauthier and Jolif 1970: 255–67).

[37] For this aspect of Bernard, see P. Delfgauw, 'La nature et les degrés de l'amour selon s. Bernard', in *Saint Bernard Théologien: Actes du Congrès de Dijon, 15–19 septembre 1953, Analecta Cisterciensia* 9 (1953) 234–52.

Broadly speaking, the drift of the debate indicates an un-Augustinian (and *a fortiori* un-Platonic) tendency to remove the passionate, even what I might term the supra-rational 'desire' (viewed as self-centred) from love: a safety play which in effect ignores the ancient tradition which Augustine inherited of making our desire for happiness (as for pleasure) indirect, and to be directed to love of God for his own sake. Yet all such 'anti-passionate' affection can only be vindicated if willing is no longer to be, as it was for Augustine, the revelation and operation of loving, but to be sanitized as a (merely) rational desire. We might reasonably suspect that Augustine (as Plotinus before him) would object that such calculated passion could not be created by God to point us beyond our present finite and sin-bound condition towards his own transcendence.

In Aquinas the distinction between *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae* is critical, at least *pointing* towards the idea that 'love' is lust and hence that friendship is the needful virtue. *Amor amicitiae* is more than mere benevolence (*ST* II–IIae, 23, a.1), while *amor concupiscentiae* is shared by humans with animals who are incapable of a love (*dilectio*, *ST* I–IIae, 26, a.3) based on rational choice: the distinction enables Aquinas to separate love as possessive desire from what he calls *complacentia*: a form of desire for another's good with all trace of 'possessiveness' removed; a certain rest in the good marked by joy and delight (*delectatio*, *ST* I–IIae 25, a.2). Yet to rely on this distinction might have serious consequences because, although Augustine would agree that the word *concupiscentia* is normally to be understood as pejorative, by him it is opposed not to *amicitia* but to *caritas*. So Aquinas – it may be influenced by his age's concern for 'altruism' – *might* seem to regard love and desire for the good as a 'higher' self-seeking – and thus to imply a radical separation of 'altruism' not only from selfishness and possessiveness but even from self-respect and an authentically Augustinian love for God.

And although that would be a misleading account of Aquinas' outlook, he can hardly have been unaware of problems raised by the quest for 'altruism'. His solution is to connect the desire for God with the infused virtue of hope, treating *complacentia* – desire oriented towards the beloved but strictly for the beloved's good (*ST* I–IIae 28.2) – as the newly identified characteristic of a soul in the more perfect love:[38] perhaps, one might infer, in love authentically moved by God's prior 'communication' of himself (*ST* II–IIae 23, a.1, where *John* 15:15 is cited). Yet even so, we are confronted

[38] *Complacentia* has been much discussed: influentially by Crowe (1959: 1–39, 198–230, 345–82). For correction, see Sherwin (2005: 71–8) and Mansini (1995).

not with Augustine's passionate, if sublimated, desire to 'enjoy' God, and, in God, ourselves and our neighbour, but (as in Aristotle and Cicero) with a more bloodless emotion: love as altruistic friendship – albeit with the raw 'altruism' tempered by hope. Aquinas himself remarks that hope 'directly concerns one's own good, not that of another' (*ST* II–IIae 17, a.3).[39]

Sherwin argues (rightly) that Aquinas's position serves to bring out an important underlying theme in Augustine himself, namely that in this life enjoyment of God must remain a hope impossible of complete fulfilment. Nevertheless, where he analyzes the distinction between the love of 'concupiscence' and the love of friendship, Aquinas disregards the sort of account Augustine (as also Gregory of Nyssa) would probably have preferred and certainly would not have wished to downplay: namely that even for the perfect, the enjoyment of God, though tranquil, is ever expansive; that the aspect of passionate desire, – without, however, any earthly implication of frustrated longing – will never be erased.[40] For that is what love, as distinct from friendship, *is* – and contrasts between 'altruism' and a desire for God and heaven are irrelevant at best and at worst are psychologically harmful precursors of Lutheranism. To love God above all else need not entail the kind of tunnel vision whereby the loving self (and even the beloved) is in effect annihilated. For Augustine, love and friendship are not rivals but partners.

Precisely because of his concepts of *complacentia* and *amor amicitiae*, Aquinas has produced a certain 'non-Augustinian' language that suggests that *caritas*, as Aelred had implied, but Aquinas is explicit, is no more than 'a certain friendship of man to God' (*ST* II–IIae 23, a.1); that in turn would suggest not only that there is confusion between the love which aims at God and the friendship which God enables us to 'enjoy', but that this 'friendship' itself is less passionate, less 'ecstatic', more 'Aristotelian' than Augustine, Gregory, Richard of Saint Victor and even Maximus are happy to propose. The influence of Aristotle's neglect of *eros* is patent: since God is *caritas* and *caritas* is friendship,[41] therefore God is friendship.

[39] See Sherwin (2007: 202).

[40] It is possible that Aquinas' account of *complacentia* was also influenced by Maximus who tried to 'quieten down' Gregory's description of *epektasis* in a manner similar to that in which Aquinas might seem to have treated Augustine. But Maximus was thinking of the beatific vision itself, not of the approach to it. Note that Augustine retained passionate language (as in *ardentiore affectu*) in his account of the specifically Christian (rather than 'Neoplatonic') experience with his mother at Ostia (*Confessions* 9.10.23–5). The more Augustinian option is still deployed by Bonaventure (*In III Sent*. d.27, a.1, q.2, ad 6).

[41] Aquinas implies that *caritas* is to be identified as friendship as early as his commentary on the *Sentences* (*Sent.* III, d.27, q.2, a.1).

The passionate Augustinian view of union with God has thus been overlaid by an Aristotelianizing account of the highest form of love much more easily identifiable as that 'rational appetite' which for Aquinas is the 'will'.[42] And if nothing can be added to rational desire than *caritas* recognized as altruistic and culminating in a sort of infused friendship with God (*ST* Ia–IIae 23, q.1), then this reduction of Augustine's *voluntas*-love could not but bring on the eventual disappearance of love from accounts of willing altogether. That does not entail that Christ's teaching that would make us friends not servants of God (*John* 15:15) should be disregarded; rather it is to say (again) that there was no compelling reason even to suggest the displacement of one account of the role and nature of love by another apparently less egocentric and 'friendlier'. For we have by now reached a position from where the identification of love as Augustinian *voluntas* can eventually be entirely replaced by love defined simply as 'the principle of motion towards the loved end or good' (*ST* I–II 26, a. 2) – or be submerged in a faculty of the will (still nominally 'operating through love') invoked to explain human activity and rational (or irrational) choice.

In effect, Aristotle has been the instrument whereby an earlier account of love, misunderstood as egocentric, can be drastically modified – and historically would be modified further. Under another aspect, one can say that philosophy (as understood in the thirteenth century) has begun to trump traditional theology. Or that traditional Platonism has been replaced by traditional Aristotelianism, for Augustine's position, in which friendship would flow from an uninhibited love of God, a 'holy desire' (*On John's Letter* 4.6) stimulated, granted and fortified by God himself, ultimately depends on ideas first proposed in Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium* where the 'priestess' speaks of 'begetting in the beautiful': a creativity which will be present in the soul of the lover when he recognizes Beauty itself – as only he *can* recognize it – for what it IS.

In that Platonic tradition of which Augustine offers a Christian reconstruction, love was 'originally' understood as a non-reciprocal relationship; the soul, as being incomplete and human, longs for God, and (for Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine) God lovingly gives it grace eventually to satisfy that longing. In Aquinas' more Aristotelian world the reverse is the case. Love is initially proposed as a rational inclination, and *thus* as the principal motor of the 'will'; in concrete cases (at least according to the *Summa*) its character depends on choices (cf. *On Sentences* III, q. 27, a.2, 4), but as we have seen, a problem which Aquinas has inherited is that

[42] See again Gallagher (1991: 559–84).

although this natural and rational inclination is directed ultimately to the good, it can be misrepresented as always possessive.

Thus Aristotle has proposed, and Aquinas has followed, a 'bottom-up' approach. Augustine wants to understand love for humans – as that of the Second Commandment – in terms of an effect of the love for God; following Aristotle, Aquinas rather understands love of God as 'modelled on' the friendship between human beings. That both points towards a less theological account of love and enables Aquinas to think of 'love' less as a God-given drive for perfection than as a term by which rational impulse (that is, the 'will') can be designated. That, I have already argued, could (and did) point the way to 'love's' eventual disappearance from descriptions of human action – we have already noticed its comparative absence from Aquinas' formal account – with 'willing' (rational or not) taking its place.

In Aquinas, love (like willing) is specified by knowledge, and therefore the problem of intellectual determinism which we have already identified in connection with the 'will' still lurks; but although it may be true that we can only 'love' what we know and consider 'good', the notion of willing is less subject to such constraints, intellectually and even more morally. Whereas we always love what is or seems good, there will interpose a 'willing' (as Anselm clearly seems to have supposed) whereby we may will anything at all – unless, that is, we commit ourselves with Aquinas to the proposition that willing is necessarily a rational activity. That said, it may be easier, if more inaccurate and misleading, to believe that seeing God as will does more justice to his omnipotence than seeing him as love.

I have argued that in his analysis of the relationship between love, will and human action Aquinas tends to substitute an Aristotelian account of moral capacity for the older, more theological alternative – though the Christian notion that our (and the angels') initial inclination towards the good is specifically an inclination towards God remains and so inhibits the emergence of a more arbitrary will. But if that is so, and a philosophical account of our behaviour is beginning to divest itself of its theological underpinnings, we can expect to see the effects elsewhere – not least in the separation from accounts of human behaviour of beliefs (empirical or biblical) about the 'brute' fact of Adam's fall.

Nor was this separation a novelty in Aquinas' time; even before 1248 the new Aristotelianism had generated it. In his *Summa de Bono*, Philip the Chancellor (of the University of Paris) had already removed free decision from its traditional association with the fall of Adam and established it as part of a less immediately theological theory of action. From the standpoint

of Albert and Aquinas, that might look pleasingly Aristotelian – though the Aristotelianism of Philip derives not only from Aristotle, but, as with Albert, also from John of Damascus (a further newly arrived exponent in the twelfth century, along with Avicenna, of a 'faculty' psychology).[43] During the thirteenth century, Aristotelianism was flooding in from more than one quarter and always pointing in the same direction: that implying the disappearance of love as understood by Augustine and its replacement by a – still more or less benevolent – account of 'will'. Add this tendency to an abiding lack of clarity about the psychology of angelic misbehaviour – with consequent misgivings about the goodness of God and the explicability of Satan's fall – and many traditional assumptions about human nature and morals will soon seem to demand radical reassessment. If Augustine's moral psychology and account of the human condition seem to entail difficulties that are insoluble or more tragic than is easy to endure, perhaps the Christian bishop must give way to the pagan Aristotle.

Hence the question: What was to be done about old Augustinian preoccupations and the mentality they generated? If the reaction even of Aquinas and his followers entailed keeping parts of the older and newer approaches on parallel lines – though one can detect a tendency to assume the former into the latter – a new theology of the will, falsely claiming Augustine as its patron, would soon appear – and with a vengeance.

[43] John's *De Fide Orthodoxa* was translated into Latin in 1153.

CHAPTER 6

Separating Morality and Salvation

> 'Our theology, that of St. Augustine, is flourishing.'
>
> Martin Luther (1517)

> 'Augustine is entirely with us.'
>
> John Calvin, *Institutes* 3.22.8

This is not the place to pursue in great detail the growing tendency to 'voluntarist' accounts of human action which preceded and followed the denunciation in 1277 by Stephen Tempier, bishop of Paris (article 173 = 162 Mandonnet), of those who held that knowledge of contraries is the sole explanation of why the rational soul is capable of opposites: of those, that is, who offered an 'intellectualist' explanation of human action and hence an apparent denial of the freedom of the will. As we have seen, Aquinas himself – tainted in the eyes of some as an 'intellectualist' – had already in his late and rather more voluntarist *On Evil* tried to modify that type of position. More significant is to recognize how the terms of the entire debate about freedom were gradually changing, even though the degree to which Tempier's condemnation encouraged such change remains unclear. If we look back to Augustine, we recall not only the constant association of the 'will' with love and of genuine virtue with salvation, but – both in discussion of the fall of the angels and of the situation of humanity after the fall of Adam – a strong emphasis on the omnipotence of God and his determining role in questions of our ultimate destiny. But as time passed, new fears had arisen. Anselm worried whether Augustine's account might seem to leave God with a certain responsibility for evil and tried to save the situation by reinterpreting the 'freedom' of the choices made first by Satan, then by Adam. Hence arose a stronger 'libertarianism', and with it an enhanced risk of unintelligibility. That in its turn led to further efforts to explain the mechanics of 'free' choice.

Anselm always worked within a broadly Augustinian framework in which considerations of grace and of God remained central. That situation

lasted throughout the twelfth century, despite the un-Augustinian treatment of the 'will' and of the relationship between love and friendship that had by then begun to develop. But with the coming of the 'new' Aristotle, not only was further material about friendship available, but a very different theory of the 'will' itself, seen not as love but as related to the 'deliberated desire' of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, had to be accommodated. It is here that we can see the emphasis begin to shift in what, with hindsight, can be recognized as a modern direction, with reflection on the nature and freedom of the *will* – in Anselm's terminology – beginning to replace study of the simple mechanics of 'free' decision-making. Within this revised framework, it became more urgent not only to explain that responsibility for their actions which the punishment of Satan and of Adam seemed to imply, but soon to leave original sin aside and expound the nature of human responsibility in strictly philosophical rather than theological terms.

Thus, although new versions of Augustine's concern with the omnipotence of God became theologically important, even central, we also – paradoxically – find developed within this theocentric frame an increasingly 'secular' debate about the mechanics of moral action. That might in the longer run leave Augustine's concerns about God's omnipotence – let alone about the effects of 'original' sin – unresolved or sidelined, but it certainly indicated – if human beings (and angels) really are to be held responsible for their actions – a need for further examination of where that responsibility lies: Is it in the 'will', as the older 'Augustinians' understood it? Is it in a new version of the 'will'? Is it in the intellect or in some still incompletely explained combination of the two, as Aquinas had tried to argue?[1]

Whatever the solution to these problems, we can safely observe that the institutional relationship between the Arts Faculty and the theologians began to be matched by the development – not necessarily always along institutional lines – of parallel programmes of what we would now call

[1] As we have noticed, some (e.g. recently MacIntyre 1991: 152–5) are too complacent about Aquinas' solution, and then accuse Scotus both of ignoring the strength of that perceived solution [understood in the singular], and thence of deforming moral thinking by the introduction of 'the distinctive "ought" of moral obligation, unknown to Aristotle and to the ancient world generally'. In this chapter I suggest that – whatever the strengths of Scotus' worries about knowledge of singulars (indeed about other metaphysical questions which cannot be discussed here) – his concerns about Aquinas' account of will and knowledge derive to no mean degree from the incoherence of the account itself – and of its presuppositions – and that though MacIntyre has much right on his side in claiming that the effects of Scotus' position on the will were subversive of an earlier medieval synthesis and promoted a radically new account of the moral 'ought', yet Scotus' reasons for doing that were more philosophically serious – and a more serious attempt to do justice to the whole Augustine – than he and others allow.

'philosophy' – where potentially 'secular' explanations of dilemmas became more and more prominent, sometimes despite the clear intentions of their authors – and of 'theology', which might seem ever in search of some new version of a now lost, forgotten or misunderstood Augustinianism and, in the more distant future, destined to be viewed as a discipline in search of an intellectual subject matter. In the Reformation the metaphysical aspects of theology would be widely replaced by a radical Biblicism, becoming vulnerable to attack in the nineteenth century and later by more or less intelligent historical research, especially on the Old Testament as an historical document, while among the Catholics a crude Biblicism would widely come to be rejected for a crude 'traditionism' which only theories of the development of Christian doctrine were eventually to alleviate.

'Voluntarism' had existed well before Aquinas, but the incomplete nature of his solution to the problem of human (and angelic) responsibility could only encourage its more extreme avatars. The problem, again, was that if the root of freedom lies in the intellect, and the intellect is determined by its objects, as some of the more extreme 'Aristotelians' held, then there is no genuine freedom; hence with intellectual determinism – as with other varieties of determinism concurrently condemned during the thirteenth century – there seems no adequate basis for allotting moral responsibility. In the next generation we find Aquinas' *via media* challenged from both directions: roughly speaking, while Godfrey of Fontaines wanted to push the intellectualist account to its limits, the 'secular' master Henry of Ghent asserted the necessity of some sort of extreme voluntarism if responsibility is to be defended, while Giles of Rome (of the Augustinian Hermits) tried without much success to find a way between them. It is far beyond my present purpose to review the details of these controverted questions; there is growing consensus as to the force of the arguments and much good published work is available.[2] Nevertheless, one rather recently reinstated figure deserves brief comment, not least for his prescience about the basic issues involved: the 'Spiritual' Franciscan Peter of John Olivi.[3] Indeed, we should not neglect the fact that after the 1277 condemnations (if not before) the Franciscans in general, as Walter de la Mere's *Correctorium fratris Thomae*

[2] Lottin (1942–60); Wippel (1981); Kent (1995); Macken (1975: 5–21); Eardley (2003, 2006); Putallaz (1995); Schmutz (2002: 169–98). For discussion – inter alia – of the policies of the various religious orders in promoting the thought of their own members, see Courtenay (1987). In the present study I have often followed Courtenay in avoiding discussion of 'schools' of thought, preferring to view the complex debates as between individuals, at least in the first instance, but with less emphasis than Courtenay on their institutional settings.

[3] See Burr (1976: 1–98); Kent (1995); Putallaz (1995: 127–62); Dumont (1995: 149–67).

(1279) leaves us in no doubt, took upon themselves as a duty the tarring of Aquinas with the 'Averroist' brush.

Certainly those now becoming more self-consciously 'Augustinian' had long recognized the challenge of several aspects of 'Aristotelianism' – and not only over the relationship between knowledge and the will[4] – but a particular concern of Olivi (as of Bonaventure before him) was that Aristotle's account of that relationship seemed to render the freedom of the will impossible. As a Christian he held the freedom of the will to be a matter of self-evident truth (*In II Sent.*, q.58) without which there is no moral responsibility; the faculty of the will must, therefore, be active and self-determining. This, as we would expect, is an argument deriving from a specifically theological project: to explain the justice of God in holding sinners responsible for their actions. Determinism, intellectual or other, must imply either God's exclusion or his injustice, and for Olivi the very dignity of the human race depends on the capacity of the will (*In II Sent.* q.1), which must be deemed absolutely free to choose 'as it wills' between options – and so the spectre of choices of original wrong-doing being matters of mere luck hangs over Olivi's claims as over those of others before him.

If we compare Olivi's stance with Bonaventure's, we find the younger man concerned to attack not merely the 'Averroists' in the Arts Faculty but Aristotle himself, on the grounds that the pagan had become the master,[5] not the servant, of Christian truth: there is real threat of idolatry;[6] it is

[4] I use the term 'self-consciously' deliberately because before the arrival of Aristotle you did not need to think about 'real' Augustinianism; you just were Augustinian. But such innocence could not last: thus Bonaventure became concerned (in 1267–8) not only about determinism in general and an intellectual determinism he saw in 'Averroist' readings of Aristotle in particular, but more widely about the creeping influence of Aristotelian physics in theology as a whole (*Coll. De X Praeceptis, coll. II, n.28*; *Coll. De VII Donis Sancti Spiritus, coll. IX, n.18),* as also of the gradual marginalizing – this time due to Aristotelian epistemology – of divine illumination (*Coll. De VII donis Sancti Spiritus*, *coll. VIII, n.16*), hence both of God's epistemological necessity and of his radical separation from his creatures. For further challenges to illumination see Pasnau (1995: 49–75, 369–83); for Bonaventure on the will see Quinn (1974: 39–70); for a strong argument that Bonaventure was more concerned to use Augustine in support of Franciscan accounts of the theological significance of the life of St Francis than directly to defend Augustine himself see Schumacher (2012: 201–29); for Bonaventure's constant (qualified) recourse to Augustine see Benson (2013: 131–50, with statistics (142) on his citations).

[5] Perhaps in some cases the real problem was that the wrong pagan had become the master; as I have argued in the previous chapter, on certain key issues it was not Aristotle's paganism that was the problem, but the fact that he was not Plato (as read through Augustine).

[6] Olivi, *In Sent.* II, q.6, 16, 27, 31, 58; see also Olivi's *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 17 (ed. D. Flood [Saint Bonaventure, NY, 2001]), cited by Noone (2007b: 244–5). Cf. Putallaz (1995: 140); Ingham (2001: 182). Kent examines Bonaventure's attitude to Aristotle in light of serious problems in the text of his *Sermons on the Hexaemeron* that inhibit a definitive account of his treatment of the *Ethics* (Kent 1995: 46–59).

astonishing that members of religious orders should treat an unbelieving Greek virtually as a god! Behind Olivi's polemic is an almost open – and substantially legitimate – fear that theology as a whole is being compromised by what we would now call a 'secularist' mentality that claims that the world can be explained in strictly naturalist terms; soon there will be no room for God or for the contemplative life to which Olivi is called as a Spiritual Franciscan and to which he expresses his loyalty and devotion: 'I am astonished to see that Aristotle the pagan and the Arab Averroes, as well as other unbelieving philosophers, are held by some in so great esteem and veneration and allowed so great an authority, especially in discussions or writings about sacred theology' (*Responsio* II [ed. Laberge]). For Olivi, Aristotelian and *a fortiori* Thomistic philosophy deals in worldly, not spiritual matters: in opinions rather than truths.

We hear in all this echoes of complaints in Abelard's time that dialectic is being inappropriately introduced into theology; but Olivi – and he is not the only doubter – is asking a very specific question: whether Christian themes central in Augustine can be clarified by Aristotle's 'naturalistic' philosophy, as found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*; implying too that, in trying to harmonize traditional theological philosophy with new ideas, Aquinas and many others have conceded too much and are logically committed to conceding more. Olivi was prepared to attack basic and widely accepted Aristotelian positions in logic itself: Aristotle was wrong to think that present acts are necessary; for Olivi (*In II Sent*. q.42) – to be influentially followed by Duns Scotus – that would entail a denial of 'freedom' not only to human beings, who would forfeit their dignity without it, but also to the angels before the fall. As we have regularly noted, angels often provide the best case study of medieval understandings of the will.

Beneath the surface of Olivi's complaints about the influence of Aristotelianism lie deeper worries, the ramifications of which were probably not apparent to Olivi himself, but became more obvious as time passed. Augustine had argued that Christianity provides the intellectual data required to complete philosophical enquiry – which in ethics implies not only that pagans cannot attain true virtue – possible only after a life of Christian perseverance – but that all pagan moral schemes are necessarily incomplete approximations of Christian truth and only intelligible with reference to it. With the coming of Aristotle to medieval Europe new possibilities had arisen, his writings (especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*) seeming to suggest that if we look at human life without theological spectacles – and in particular if we adopt a (non-Augustinian) distinction between philosophy and theology – we can construct a moral code

without reference to what might be required for salvation. The underlying anxiety of those like Olivi is that this 'impious' separation will eventually develop into full-scale theories of the good life separated from theology, even entirely eliminating the role of God. The other side of the new coin being minted will prove to be that salvation itself will look to depend less and less on the moral and spiritual state we attain and solely on the decision (even the random decision) of God. That might be presented as a restored 'Augustinianism'; on the other hand, it might suggest not only ethics without God and a radical separation of morality and salvation, but even an ethical argument *against* God's very existence.

Leaving Olivi and those who shared his fears – though bearing in mind their warnings and influence – we move to Duns Scotus (1265/6–1308), who has been recognized as playing a particularly important, indeed pivotal role in the history of our present concerns. In general accounts of Scotus' position in the development of medieval thought, the greatest emphasis is usually placed on his understanding – largely in the spirit of the Muslim Avicenna (ca. 980–1037) – of the univocity of 'being': that is, why at least the word 'being' must be predicated in the same way of God as of his creatures, for, if not, then our unaided reason can say nothing correct about God at all. Perhaps Scotus as a good Franciscan, and with Bonaventure's concern to explain the special spiritual success of St Francis as *alter Christus* in mind, also thought that univocity might make the cognitive oddity of claims about Francis more plausible.

Be that as it may, before Scotus most philosophers had preferred to explain our ability to speak of God's attributes either with reference to our *participation* in them (as for Augustine justice participates in God as Justice itself) or by some sort of theory of analogy.[7] But Scotus, anxious to preserve the intelligibility of rational speech about God (as to protect the orthodoxy of Francis), had dangerously restricted the gap between God and his creatures, thus laying the groundwork for a theory of the universe *including* God instead of a universe created by God, though that was far from his intent. Yet if we eventually find we can explain all the apparent contents of the universe without reference to God, there seems no reason to suppose that God is there in the first place: except perhaps to start the whole thing off, and then not even for that. And so it was to turn out.

Important though univocity is – and we shall find its effects being played out as our story continues – we must emphasize more immediately

[7] See Dumont (1998) and King (2003: 18–21). For Aquinas' view (with fierce but fair comment on variant interpretations) see Long (2011).

related but different Scotist claims (plus what were erroneously believed to be such). For in offering a boldly original metaphysical account of the 'will' – to match his original account of being – Scotus paved the way for the widespread triumph of voluntarist accounts of action, both human and divine, Christian and later secular, in the ensuing centuries. And with voluntarism morality was to appear more and more as rule obedience, again in both religious and secular versions.

Like Olivi and Bonaventure, Scotus was a Franciscan, so it is hardly surprising that what could be construed as directly challenging basic features of Augustine's theology would be of concern to him. Yet Scotus – a more complex figure than Olivi – was in many respects a convinced Aristotelian, with an 'Aristotelian' hostility to Augustinian 'illumination' that was to prove decisive[8] – though also, not least on the idea of nature, able to read Aristotle in a very Augustinian spirit. More immediately relevant, as we shall see, is that he brought Anselmian innovations on Augustine's account of willing back to centre stage, especially those originally devised the better to explain the fall of the angels, thus apparently proposing new ways of protecting that omnipotence of God so dear to Augustine while simultaneously developing an ultra-Anselmian (non-Augustinian) account of the 'will' itself.

We start with Scotus' treatment of the seeming distinction between nature and will in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (9.2).[9] Aristotle wanted to distinguish between rational and non-rational powers, the non-rational being directed towards a single goal – thus stones naturally fall downwards – while their rational counterparts can decide between opposite possibilities. In Scotus' interpretation, however – which he believes Aristotelian in spirit if not in letter – a more radical, and Augustinian, distinction can be discerned between nature and will.[10] The will, in humans and angels, is 'free', that is self-determining, by nature, and can determine any consequent activity in one direction or the other – or free not to will at all: a position somewhat similar to, though more extreme than, that of Aquinas (in *On Evil*) and of Anselm. Though Scotus' freedom is not an absolute freedom of indeterminacy, he opens the door to that option while agreeing with Augustine that our basic choice is between a perverse self-love

[8] For a recent survey see Noone (2010: 369–83): 'By the second decade of the fourteenth [century] illumination was no longer considered a viable option' (382).

[9] *Quaest. In Met.*, IX, q.15. For recent discussion see Gonzalez-Ayesta (2007: 217–30); also Hoffmann (1999: 189–224). For an overall accounts of Scotus' ethics see Ingham (1989) and Cross (1999); earlier Wolter (1986).

[10] For nature, *Ord.*, Prologue, I, q.1, n.73; IV, d.43, q.4, n.2; *In Met. VII*, q.12, n.62.

and love of God for his own sake; that is, we choose between differing sorts of 'goods' as they appear to us. Thus Scotus retains the thesis that 'willing' is basically revealed as loving – which Ockham will largely neglect in favour of mere determining – while developing, as we shall see, an extreme form of Anselm's view that the fall of the angels is due to their 'inordinate' desire, driven by lust (*luxuria*), for instant beatitude (*Ord.* II, d.6, q.2 n. 49–62).[11]

For Scotus, at least in his most mature thought, the will, not being determined, is a self-moving rational potency; that is, it determines itself in accordance with its rational nature,[12] and hence its determinations will be made not arbitrarily, but for reasons. To explain this self-determination while attempting to maintain a certain unity in the process of human decision-making, Scotus develops Anselm's distinction between the two 'affections' of the will: towards what is advantageous (*commodum*) and good for the self, and towards what is just or good in itself.[13] But for Scotus the quality of the affection towards the advantageous is itself determined by its object (*Op.Ox.* IV, d. 49, qq. 9–10) – though it can be overruled, as in the case of the martyrs – while that towards the just is 'free'. This vindicates the absolute freedom of the will as a whole, separating it from 'nature' and permitting it to will the good of others, and more generally to act morally (*Ord.* III, d.26, q.1, n.110). And in human beings that absolute freedom embraces both the will's capacity to order its own volitions and an ability to act against the practical judgements of the intellect.[14]

Scotus proposes a further – and related – shift from traditional teachings which was again to reveal itself as seriously damaging to theological ethics as understood since Augustine: breaking with Aquinas' reading of Aristotle, and pointing emphatically in the direction of a freedom of indeterminacy, he denies any necessary teleological inclination of the will

[11] Cf. *Rep.* II A d.6, q.2. What is printed as *Reportatio Parisiensis* I and II in the Wadding-Vivès edition is a compilation by William of Alnwick also referred to as *Additiones Magnae*.

[12] I limit myself to what seems to be Scotus' final position (in *Rep.* II A, d.25), a modification of the extreme voluntarism of Henry of Ghent. For the development of Scotus' thought see Dumont (2000: 719–94), as modified by Ingham (2004: 409–23). For Scotus' early rejection of what he saw as the extreme (and blind) voluntarism of Henry of Ghent see *Lectura* II, 25 with the comments of Ingham (2001: 179). It seems to be the case, however, that, as Hoffmann puts it, 'Scotus' theory of the will is an early example of a growing tendency in the fourteenth century to ascribe to the will abilities traditionally reserved to the intellect' (Hoffman 2013: 1088). We may permit ourselves to wonder whether this 'tendency' represents a certain awareness that the will-intellect distinction is itself philosophically suspect.

[13] See especially *Ord.* II, d. 6; cf. further Boler (1993: 109–26); Cervellon (2004: 425–68). For some of the wider modern discussion see Boler (1990: 31–56), Williams (1995: 425–46) and Osborne (2005a: 178–80).

[14] So Hoffmann (2013: especially 1086–8).

towards justice; the inclination of our wills is only towards the good of our species. The effects of that change – pointing first to a denial, common during the early modern period, that we can have any natural knowledge of final causes – were to endure, constituting the rejection of an important feature of the earlier, platonically influenced, Augustinian account of humanity. For Scotus, when we act against justice, preferring our own 'advantage', we still are acting freely. Such action, like all action, depends on the free choice of the will, the independently acting status of which characterizes human nature as such. So important for him is freedom of choice that Scotus is prepared to say – wholly in opposition to Augustine's account of the higher freedom of the saints – that even in heaven the blessed have the possibility of declining goodness, being still 'free' to sin and only prevented from so doing as sustained by grace. In such foreshadowing, Luther (though the mature Luther, of course, differs in holding that justification is merely imputed) is readily discernible. Such a thesis can only be understood in light of Scotus' insistence that near-absolute freedom of choice is an essential feature of humanity, specifically as created in God's image.

Scotus' more limited view of the teleology of our natural inclinations, to the good of our species rather than to justice – on which Ockham largely follows him – can be seen by hindsight as a 'secularization' of more traditional descriptions of human nature. Aquinas had used such inclinations to fill the perceived gap in the Aristotelian account of the interplay of reason and desire. Our God-given inclinations point us to our natural end and goal as human beings – which includes the grace-given possibility of a 'supernatural' end – whereas Aristotle had vaguely assumed that we acquire the ends of moral action (as distinct from the means to those ends) by 'the eye of the soul' – which might be dismissed as mere intuitionism or, worse, a de facto conventionalism whereby every decent person, or at least every decent Greek, knows what the ends of virtue are. Scotus, though, ends up with a will naturally directed only at our good as members of a species, fed data by the intellect and free to determine any wider good, as any lesser good, as a goal towards which we may direct ourselves. Yet though the will, *qua* efficient cause, determines the eventual course of each ensuing action (*In Met*. IX, q.14, nn.47, 122–4),[15] its underlying choices are not wholly unlimited, for Scotus holds not that we

[15] See Möhle (2003: 312–31, especially 323–6). Möhle rightly speaks of 'an element of reflexivity that is unique to the will as distinct from mere appetite', thereby further emphasizing the growing metaphysical – indeed ontological – status of the will as such (Möhle 2003: 326). Cf. again Hoffmann (2013).

can choose to accept or reject a good proposed to the will by the intellect, but that we can will it or not-will it – hence willing another good instead (*Rep*. II, d. 42, qq.1–4). In that he remains close to Anselm, indeed in some ways to Aquinas.

Yet what Scotus proposes – going far beyond Anselm – is a metaphysical account of the autonomous will whereby freedom just is what the will is, which is why the blessed retain the option of declining goodness even in heaven. Precisely in virtue of the will's rational nature we are able, when necessary, to choose freely between the advantageous and the just, and that capacity – here again Scotus departs from Anselm – is not lost after the fall; the good man can still overrule the goods of advantage in favour of the goods of justice. Good actions will thus at times involve freely choosing one kind of moral course over another, even though such choosing *between* alternatives is not a necessary prerequisite for freedom. Of course, when we love God for his own sake, the two *affectiones* are not in conflict,[16] the desire for justice being fulfilled directly, the desire for one's own happiness indirectly. That conclusion is certainly Augustinian in spirit and, according to Scotus, it – and much more – is also what Aristotle would have said had he got round to it (*In Met*. IX, q.15).

As I observed earlier, some have wrongly seen Anselm's position as consciously proto-Kantian. Scotus, in proposing a self-determining will as the fulcrum of moral action, points more clearly in that direction. Where he parts company with Kant – and, from a more modern point of view, leaves himself open to serious objection – is that he retains most of the theological structure within which willing and the objects of willing are to be understood.

Scotus always rejected 'intellectual determinism'. He holds that the activities of all beings subsumed under 'nature' – which includes animals and inanimate objects – are determined, or, if you will, heteronomous, and here the influence of Avicenna seems to be strong. What is important for present purposes is that, for Scotus, since the intellect is determined by the intelligible object, it too comes under the rubric of nature. Hence if anyone holds that our 'freedom' lies in the intellect – note again the radical separation of intellect from will – he is an intellectual determinist: that is, at best, some kind of compatibilist – though of no Augustinian sort – who must deny any remotely libertarian account of the freedom of the will and who indeed, in Scotus' view, must deny freedom and therefore responsibility altogether.

[16] See Ingham (2001: 208).

Texts like the following reveal Scotus' position: 'Intellect and will can be compared either with the proper act each elicits or with the acts of other subordinate powers over which they exercise a kind of causality – the intellect, by showing and directing, the will by inclining and commanding' (*In Met*. IX, q.15, n.6). This must be interpreted in light of Scotus' rejection of Aquinas' view – already noted – that we have a natural inclination to justice and to the good itself, distinct, that is, from the good of the individual species to which we belong.

That rejection can now be seen to make sense within Scotus' wider metaphysical vision, since Aquinas' account of natural inclination would diminish the will's freedom to accept or reject what is immediately beneficial for ourselves, and hence, in Scotus' view, again tend to limit our responsibility for our actions. As Scotus himself puts it: 'The will assents freely to any given good, and it assents as freely to a greater good as to a lesser' (*Ord*. I, d.1, pars 2, q. 2, n. 147). So for Scotus it is possible to know the right – perhaps even to incline to it – but by a raw, if intelligible, decision of the will to neglect to act accordingly – a position which discloses no mere recognition that weakness of the will (*acrasia*) is possible, but a metaphysical claim about the nature of the will itself, whereby ultimately the will is superior to the intellect because it can be seen as love (of whatever sort) – and love at its best is superior to knowledge.

Why has Scotus developed this substantially untraditional account of the will: an account that certainly avoids the extreme libertarian version of Henry of Ghent but which abandons long cherished Augustinian tenets about the state of the saved in heaven, not to speak of the even more ancient contention of our natural inclination towards the good as such? Not least – and as Augustine would have wished – to preserve the omnipotence of God, which Anselm might seem to preserve only at the cost of an inadequately developed and consequentially unintelligible account of the fall of the angels. For Scotus' radical account of the 'will' in man reflects his view of the absolute, though not arbitrary, freedom of God which he developed as a riposte to any suggestion of 'Arabian' determinism. Perhaps it would not be too much to say that for Scotus absolute freedom – autonomy – is God's most important attribute. And although it would be wrong to argue that he proposes an account of God that makes morality arbitrary and unintelligible – because irrational – to human beings, yet his resulting tendency to deploy the soon-to-be-notorious distinction between God's absolute and 'ordained' power certainly emphasizes the possibly ambiguous moral significance of the will in God and, by implication, in man – since Scotus, like Anselm and unlike Aquinas, thinks of 'free' as a univocal

term. As we shall see, God's freedom to decree – as man's to choose and determine – implies substantial revisionism in Scotus' account of the basis of morality. That, in turn, sheds light on his 'voluntarism' more generally.

We are now in a position to evaluate the effects of Scotus' account of the autonomous will on his analysis of the fall of Adam and of Satan.[17] As we have seen, Scotus presents himself as seeking an understanding of the faith as he had been taught it by Augustine and Anselm (*Ord*. II, d.1. n.138), and his account of the will might seem to enable him to offer an improvement on Anselm's ultimately unintelligible account of the fall. With regard to Adam, Scotus remains close to the Augustine of *The Literal Commentary on Genesis* insofar as he holds that Adam preferred to please his wife rather than obey God – a misguided 'friendship' that undid him (*Rep*. II, d.22, q.1, n.2) – but that being a comparatively lesser error may have encouraged Scotus to give a generally 'weak' account of the effects of original sin. More significant, however, but pointing in a similar direction, is the fact that since, as with us, Adam's inclination to goodness was only to the good of the species, not to the good itself, the chances of his moral failure were necessarily increased. Adam's fall looks far more plausible and predictable if Scotus' account of the 'will' is correct than under the traditional account. So in effect Scotus has cast doubt on both the radical effects of original sin and on the malice of Adam's fateful behaviour.

Scotus' account of the fall of the *angels* is far less Augustinian, and it too is closely related to his emphasis on freedom and responsibility. The angels were able to love God above all else 'by their purely natural powers', without the aid of grace (*Rep*. II, d.7, q.3, n.29). Yet this ability was always contingent; from the moment of creation they had the power both to sin and not to sin. That idea is supported by a rejection – in the wake of Olivi – of Aristotle's view that free choice only refers to the future and that present acts are necessary;[18] for Scotus all *present* acts are also contingent. Out of pride, lust (*luxuria*: *Lect*., d.6, n.48) and sheer malignity of will, by their deliberate choice, the bad angels determined to pursue their own happiness inordinately (*Rep*. II, d.6, q.2, n.6; *Ord*. II, d.6, q.2, n.9): a futile decision for which they are fully responsible; they could have done otherwise, for contrary to the view of Augustine Scotus holds that

[17] For the angels see especially Cervellon (2004); Hoffmann (2013: 1080–3).

[18] For Aristotle see *De Int*.9, 19a22–5: *omne quod est, quando est, necessarium est*. Following Olivi (*In II Sent*., q.42) Scotus argued – and secured almost total agreement for many centuries – that present acts must also be contingent, hence that the angels – to be 'free' – must have possessed the power to choose between alternatives at the very moment of creation. See Dumont (1995: 149–67) and Schmutz (2002: 176–86).

even *after* the fall (let alone before) 'ought implies can' (*Rep*. II, d.28, q.1, n.3). Indeed, he goes so far in that 'pelagianizing' direction as to insist that the theological, infused virtues act purely extrinsically. Thus and *pace* Augustine, outside the domain of grace prudence is the common mark and root of all the virtues; charity only plays that role in regard not to virtue (which contrary to Augustine is thus possible for pagans), but to salvation:[19] a wholly different matter of God's acceptance of sinners. A fissure already hinted at in Aquinas has widened and reveals more clearly the radical possibility that morality might still be established if (or when) God has been removed from the scene.

Thus is responsibility defended, though still at the price of considerable difficulty in understanding why angels freely decided to sin, why pride led them to disaster. Presumably Scotus held that for God to give them such power marks no divine miscalculation or heedlessness but his extreme generosity in handing them absolute authority, absolute freedom to make their own destiny, to choose his way or the other. As they do, but for Scotus in a way which brings down on himself an obvious charge of theological perversity, generated by an un-Aristotelian account of the contingency of present acts. For on this account, as the angels' decision to sin occurs at the first moment of creation, it appears that God made them simultaneously able to be perfect and to be sinning! Yet we should notice a curiously Augustinian echo in a doctrine of humanity in many ways far from Augustine's: Scotus' account of our inalienable possibility of choosing justice allows that good actions must not only be done but must be done from wholly pure motives: a concern that certainly underwrote – albeit the question is approached in very different ways – the whole medieval concern with loving God entirely for his own sake.

We have already noticed Scotus' limitation of the effects of the fall; Adam does not lose all power to act well, Scotus never accepting the extreme language of Bernard, supposedly derived from Augustine, that man has become inevitably self-centred, his will being 'curved' back on itself (*Ord*. II, d.29, q.1., n.1.6). For Scotus, man's ability – visible even among unbaptized pagans (*Rep*. II, d.28, q.1, n.7) – to act well and responsibly, though necessarily in their case without grace, remains comparatively undamaged. And there is a reverse side to the coin: however virtuous we may be, we can always act badly, however out of character such action may be; otherwise we would not be free. Since freedom to choose (in Scotus' view) is a *natural* property of the will, it cannot be lost or destroyed, even

[19] For discussion see Kent (2003: 352–76, especially 373ff.).

by original sin (*affectio iustitiae est libertas innata voluntati*, *Ord*. II, d.6, q.2, n.49). Contrary to the view of Augustine, as we have seen, for Scotus 'ought' always implies 'can' (*Rep*. II, d.28, q. 1, n.3). Yet on account of the fall we need grace to *merit* salvation, which is quite another matter – and whereas Augustine seems to have supposed that salvation is associated with the ability, possessed only by elect Christians, to act well from perfect motives, Scotus' position depends on a more formalist reading of God's conditions for his *accepting* right actions, such as being baptized. The separation between cardinal and theological virtues seems complete, with 'charity' as the key to salvation, but unnecessary for the avoidance of sin and for genuine pagan virtues.[20] Indeed and contrary to the spirit of Augustine, Scotus holds that charity is characteristic only of infused virtues; in the case of natural virtues – which are real virtues – its place, as we have seen, is taken by prudence. Thus while Augustine contrasts 'real' virtues with 'pagan virtues which are rather vices than virtues', for Scotus there are two kinds of virtue, natural and Christian, while Aquinas has proposed a *via media*.

If we turn from Scotus' account of the fall of the angels to his comments on a number of familiar Old Testament passages already highly problematic long before the fourteenth century – especially the intended sacrifice of Isaac – we can see how, applied to God, his new account of the will can suggest intelligible, convenient but by implication terrifying conclusions. We should therefore pause to recall that an important aim of the present study is to show how traditional Christian assumptions about an earlier and more or less perfect state of humanity in the Garden of Eden have generated all sorts of near insoluble problems. Ultimately, it now seems, such problems largely arise from a curiously literal way of reading the Old Testament. Before we leave Scotus, therefore, it will be helpful to see how (Eden aside) he attempted to resolve another (but related) set of problems also generated by literalism, by a manner of interpretation necessary prior to the formulation of the historical-critical method.

Before the time of Scotus, it was normally axiomatic that all the Ten Commandments belonged to the natural law and were therefore fixed, no variations on the rules being permitted. But notorious exceptions had apparently been made in Holy Scripture itself, causing great anxiety among commentators both patristic and medieval: Hosea had been told to marry a prostitute, the Israelites on leaving Egypt had indulged in large-scale robbery, but most particularly God had ordered Abraham

[20] For further discussion see Osborne (2005a: 191–206).

to sacrifice Isaac, his innocent son of the Promise. Scotus came up with a novel solution to such difficulties. He makes no attempt to derive the natural law from eternal law, and he claims that only those commandments relating to God himself – that is, the first table – are absolute, the first two being self-evident practical principles, depending on the fact that God is the highest good and that the highest good is to be loved above all things (*Ord.* III, d.37).[21] Commandments of the first table cannot be abrogated even by God since to do so would be to contradict his own nature (*Ord.* III, d.37, q.1, nn.16–17; *Rep.* IV, d.17, q.1, nn.3–4). The commandments of the second table (four to ten) are 'compatible' with, though not to be deduced from, those of the first, and importantly can be overridden by the absolute power of God who ordained them. When thus overridden, they are replaced by an alternative, again given by him who has the proper authority so to do. Thus God can substitute commandments of the second table – all proposed in virtue of his *ordained* power – by a decision made in virtue of his legitimate and more fundamental *absolute* power (*Ord.* I, d.44, n.8).

Of course, if an agent has no such final authority and still disobeys the rule 'ordained', that is an act of *hubris*, or of 'inordinate' behaviour, as Scotus puts it, while in the case of God the only check on legitimate absolute power issues from the law of contradiction. God's setting aside his prohibition on killing the innocent is not making an exception to a rule, but replacing one rule by another and hence, for Scotus, avoiding contradiction in accounts of God's rulings understood as effects of his 'ordained' power. More radically, Scotus' view entails that the commandments of the second table are to be enforced only because they indicate determinations of God's *will*. All enforceable moral schemata must be internally coherent – and are therefore intelligible to us in virtue of right reason – but, though they must be obeyed, they have no validity 'in and of themselves'. As for God, so for man: all human acts are acts of will (*Ord. prol.*, *pars* 5, n.353), by the intellect we merely recognize whether they are 'moral', that is, in accordance with God's will and ordaining power.

The human will, as we have seen, is driven by no 'inclination' towards any final end or good; if it were, its 'freedom' would be damaged or destroyed. From that premise we can understand the fall both of angels and humans, for there is no reason why spiritual creatures should not fall; whether or not they do is a matter of the will and a necessary corollary of their possession of such a 'will'. God must have created them (and us)

[21] For further discussion see Möhle (2003: 312–23).

in the hope (if not the expectation!) that none would fall. Thus God's goodness is exonerated, with no appeal to an Augustinian denial of grace, but apparently at the price of an unintelligible account of the will itself. Freedom to choose – ultimately, as Augustine held but explained differently, between inordinate love of self and love of God – is the characteristic of will *qua* will. In that metaphysical claim we are treating of will as such, and in such an analysis – now that even a necessary 'inclination' to overall good has been removed – Augustine's basic identification of the will as love is simply sidelined. God's justice has been exonerated – he did his best – but love has disappeared from any explanation of everyday action. Will is to be seen not as loving but purely as willing what to love, while human responsibility for action is preserved in that it is our largely undetermined will which causes our behaviour to be good or bad.

With an eye to what lies ahead – and leaving the univocity of being on one side – it is worth summarizing those views of Duns Scotus on the will and related topics that were to be highly significant – even revolutionary – long after their author's premature death:

1. The will is exalted above the intellect as a self-moving rational potency, in man as in God. Augustine's (and Plato's) identification of love and intellect is now receding – not to speak of Aristotle's apparent account of the 'will' as deliberated desire; either will or intellect provides the explanation of human acts. If 'freedom' is to be preserved, will has to be decisive.
2. It is possible to live well – though not to be saved – without grace. That entails both that we have not fallen as 'far' as Augustine held and that to call an act 'meritorious' is simply to indicate the way God judges it, the infusion of grace indicating less the quality of the act than God's acceptation.
3. This latter proposal will prove highly significant (and was more or less also approved by Ockham and other later Franciscans). It enabled an 'Aristotelian' (or other) account of perfect 'pagan' virtue to be further developed, in defiance of Augustine. And it might leave God open to further charges of being arbitrary in his choices and rejections, even to claims that virtuous 'pagans' *deserve* salvation (and indeed might be recipients of grace – though in the form of a baptism of desire which Augustine could not have recognized).
4. Thus in default or neglect of further theological innovation, Scotus both opens the door for the development of secular moralities, while

from a specifically Augustinian point of view perhaps suggesting some 'Pelagian' necessity to be laid on God to grant salvation, for he thinks that a certain perfect contrition may *merit* grace *de congruo*, in virtue, that is, of our doing the best that in us lies.

5. The fall of the angels is explicable in terms of the characteristic nature of the will itself; it has nothing to do with God's acting or failing to act. For the will to be 'free' there must be no God-given 'inclination' towards a final Good, only towards the perfection of the species to which each individual rational being – man or angel – belongs. This limitation on natural inclination is to become highly significant, for it not only implies immediately that Adam had far less chance of choosing aright than the traditional account of him would suggest, but it also points towards a world in which the authenticity of human nature is to be found less in the choices (for goodness) that we make – that is, with reference to Augustine's 'greater freedom' – than in the brute fact of the power to choose itself. And that in its turn contributes to the contemporary vision of the universe as value free.
6. God's commandments (other than those relating directly to his own nature) are acts of will, replaceable by their giver, though since they exist in an ordered structure they can be claimed to constitute a rational 'morality', though their obligatory force depends solely on God's will.
7. God's willing is not arbitrary though in some cases it must seem so to us. Thus Augustine's problem about the impossibility of (for example) understanding who is to be saved has not been resolved. Yet Scotus (as also and especially in his account of God) is not a full-blown libertarian.[22]
8. Scotus' new understanding of freedom and the consequent contingency of human acts must be accompanied by a restriction on the importance of final causation in accounting for them[23] – which in a universe apparently to be regarded theologically weakens the evidence for God, indeed even for the need to posit his existence. In effect, right

[22] Here I have largely followed the guidance of Ingham against the even more libertarian Scotus proposed in a number of papers by Williams (1995: 425–46, 1997: 73–94, 1998a: 193–215, 1998b: 162–81).

[23] It is somewhat misleading of Osborne to conclude that 'Scotus' approach remains squarely teleological' (Osborne 2005a: 206). More precisely, we can conclude that (at least compared with Ockham) he retains – in addition to our directedness toward the good of the species – a limited teleology in that the ultimate choices of the rational will are in effect restricted to the Augustinian alternatives of God or self; and in that, although we can will or not will, we will always (intend to) will happiness, never wretchedness (*Ord.* IV, supp.49).

reason tends to displace objective finality as the measure of goodness, leaving the difficulty of how to determine whose reason is right – not to speak of how to distinguish perseverance from mere pertinacity. In any case, Augustine's view of a 'higher' freedom as the ability only to act well is disqualified.

9. From the point of view of Augustine's original theology, perhaps the most significant of Scotus' innovations is that the effects of the fall are mitigated – man is still free to achieve genuine 'pagan' virtue – and that the blessed in heaven are still 'free' (unless extrinsically modified by God) to choose lesser goods. Both these variations depend on his new metaphysic of freedom.

We shall need to remember these established positions (especially item 5) when we find ourselves asking: If there is no God, or if he is uninvolved in day-to-by human affairs, what difference does it make to ethics? Inter alia we may also wonder whether, God removed, there is any problem of the freedom of the will at all, or whether things just are as they are. And we might further wonder how many other contemporary problems will seem not to be dissolved, but to be irresolvable – or, rather, not requiring solution – in a framework which has become non-theistic.

In Augustine there is no clear distinction between the pursuit of right action – together with a consequent happiness – and the search for Christian sanctity, leaving ethical enquiry inseparable from an account of actions leading to eternal salvation or damnation. The coming of the 'new' Aristotle in the thirteenth century, as we have seen, began to change all that, foreshadowing a new ethics or moral philosophy, itself promoted in part by the non-Augustinian distinction between natural and infused virtue. In Aquinas the same trend can also be discerned beneath the distinction (however interpreted) between a natural and a supernatural end, while in Scotus it becomes more visible in the tendency to separate virtue as an ethical goal from the attainment of eternal bliss, with such separated virtue (in parallel with the virtues of pagans) beginning to detach itself from religious practice. Albeit for reasons presumed religious, an autonomous and godless ethics is being born, though no purely non-religious account of it has yet been produced. For Augustine, the possibility of such a separation would have been sharply inhibited by fears of what later ages would call semi-Pelagianism, the possibility that some purely human and virtuous initiative (such as calling spontaneously on God) is a moral possibility. It might seem as though any non-Augustinian development of

ethics would fall under such a description, not least if based, as in Scotus, on the axiom that 'ought implies can'.

Nevertheless, Augustine's care to defend God's omnipotence (however beyond our comprehension) was vigorously maintained: we have seen it in Anselm, in Aquinas and in Scotus' positing of a strong faculty of the rational will whereby our personal human responsibility for sins is vindicated. Thus God himself could – it was hoped – be exonerated while an (in effect) independent account of 'secular' ethics was being further developed. After Scotus, his fellow Franciscan, William of Ockham (ca. 1288–1347), made a final heroic effort to satisfy Augustine and protect God's justice and omnipotence while at the same time accounting for human freedom without looking (at least) semi-Pelagian. His failure (and those of his followers) contributed in no small measure to the eventual, if long drawn out, decline of scholasticism, ushering in on the one hand an ultra-Augustinian fundamentalism and on the other the gradual banishment of theology – as later of all metaphysics – from accounts of moral philosophy and moral responsibility. It is part of our present task to show not only that the attempts of Ockham to 'save' Augustine were ultimately doomed, but also to ask whether the whole Augustinian project, as originally proposed, was likewise doomed, and if so, what changes – whether in accounts of the will, of the condition of Adam before the fall or of the theology underpinning those accounts – might enable an effective salvage operation.

Before proceeding further, however, we must glance at the developing meaning of the word 'Pelagian', a term which has come up many times at key points in the present study.[24] In Augustine it signifies anyone who can be shown to compromise the role of grace in the process of salvation, not least if he supposes that man actively and per se cooperates with God in the original acquisition of his faith. For according to Pelagius, man is so created that he is able to attain salvation by using the God-given powers received at baptism. His strength has not been fatally diminished by the fall of Adam: he can be saved by an 'ascetic' life, and since he can be, he ought to be. Put differently, once again 'ought implies can'.

Augustine, as we know, disagreed: we are gravely injured, even though not totally depraved; able to get up on our spiritual feet only with God's

[24] Wood rightly draws attention to reckless charges of Pelagianism both in medieval times and since: the recklessness is in part a reaction to the seemingly facile idea that we can 'solve' traditional problems about grace and predestination by limiting God's absolute 'right' (according to the New Testament) to 'accept' or 'reject' (Wood 1999: 350–73). Of course, how he exercises that 'right' is precisely the question at issue.

assistance, for the whole human race has sinned (*Reconsiderations* 1.36.3). That thesis, with its context of predestination, worried many who had entered the religious life: if not only our initial faith but the gift of grace to persevere to the end is entirely in God's hands, what is the point of monasticism? Surely a minimum of human cooperation is required. Yet that objection might suggest something like what the Stoics called the 'Lazy Argument': if I am sick, there is no point in going to a doctor: either I shall recover or I shall not. That argument is defeated if we admit secondary causation: God has decreed that unless I take the appropriate action, I shall not be healed, and by grace I can know the appropriate action to take. That is the way predestination works.

From the thirteenth century on one of the effects of the 'new Aristotelianism' was that 'non-theological' virtue again seemed possible, though it cannot lead to salvation; that is superadded by God under conditions he has ordained. In the then current jargon, however, it became a live question what man *can* achieve *ex puris naturalibus*: hence the thought persisted, at least for theorists, that adequate and real virtue might be possible wholly apart from salvation, perhaps ultimately from religion. Augustine, of course, never asked such a question, having no 'Aristotle' to prompt him to it, nor did he ask whether those who think in this way are 'Pelagians', though there are grounds for supposing he would have held them to be such, since they are willing to admit 'pagan virtues' while he himself had defined such 'virtues' rather as vices, precisely because of their lack of a specifically graced and theistic motivation. Indeed, to concentrate on examining our powers *ex puris naturalibus*, or even to raise the theoretical possibility of virtue without faith, might seem de facto Pelagianism – which is precisely what many pre-Reformation Catholics, not to speak of Reformers and modern scholars, supposed it to be, as, for example, in the case of William of Ockham. For although if Pelagianism is to be defined strictly as Augustine himself defined it, Ockham is not a Pelagian – indeed he would and did deny such categorization – yet he certainly desired to recognize the importance of Aristotle, and that, combined with his traditionally Franciscan determination to give God his due – hence his emphasis on the distinction between God's absolute and ordained power (in which he followed in the footsteps of Scotus) – produced on the one hand a theocentric voluntarism more extreme than that of Scotus, and on the other – and for related reasons – an interest in a theory of the will, both human and divine, which brought charges of a new variant of 'Pelagianism' down on his head, notably from his contemporary Thomas Bradwardine.

I shall consider those views of Ockham relevant to our present concerns in their logical sequence: first, his account of the will; second his account of God's absolute power; then his account of the virtues; finally – a challenge whose time was to come later rather than sooner, but no less significantly – his real or supposed treatment of Aristotle's categories of being. On the will (though he rejects Scotus' account of the contingency of present acts) Ockham extends Scotus' position to its logical extreme.[25] His reasons for so doing are basically similar to those which impelled Scotus, namely to allow human beings responsibility for their moral actions and thus to justify God's rewarding of virtue and castigation of vice. For Ockham, all actions – apart from loving God above all and for his own sake (*Quodl.* I.20; III.14) – are in themselves 'neither morally good nor evil but neutral and indifferent' (*Sent.* III.11),[26] though as activities chosen by a human agent (*Sent.* I. *Prol.*11) their goodness is to be referred to the act of loving God for his own sake. Their moral quality depends on the nature of the will of the agent, which enjoys a liberty of indifference (*Sent.* I.1.6), being able, that is, to obey or disobey right reason, and thus allowing for our responsibility for our own acts. Such freedom, according to Ockham, is simply recognizable by experience (*Quodl.* I.16).

Going beyond Scotus (and continuing to deny overriding teleology and natural inclination to the good), Ockham believes that we are capable of choosing evil for its own sake.[27] And if we intend evils (such as those proscribed in the Decalogue), we are as guilty as if we perform them. Without such a capacity we should neither be able to disobey right reason nor to go beyond it in acts of faith and love. The first of these possibilities then is invoked to justify 'secular' virtue and vice, the second to defend the freedom of God to separate actions meriting salvation (themselves entirely dependent on grace) from similar acts of merely human virtue. Thus, as we shall see, God's power is defended (as Augustine would have wished) at the price of further extending Scotus' defence of 'pagan' virtues: which extension – not to speak of Ockham's account of 'extrinsic' salvation – Augustine would have rejected. These novelties lead us on to our second topic: the absolute and ordained powers of God. So first we must connect that basic Ockhamist theme with his strengthened version of Scotus' account of the univocity of being.

[25] On Ockham's more extreme view see Normore (2007: 283–96, especially 292).

[26] Ockham argues that loving something for its own sake is a freer act than loving it for the sake of advantage: see Osborne (2005b); also King (1999: 232).

[27] Cf. *Connex* 3.521–48; cf. *Sent.* I.38. For discussion see Adams (1999: 245–72, esp. 255–61).

The distinction between God's absolute power, limited only by his inability to contradict himself (*Sent.* II.15),[28] and his ordained power is, as we have already noticed, far from original with Scotus, let alone with Ockham, but the doctrine of univocity demands that we recognize its fundamental importance. According to Ockham God is a Thing among things, but to ensure that his superiority is secure we need to emphasize that within the universe of beings there is a radical distinction between God's absolute power and our limited capacities. Ockham's revealed world is intelligible only because that has been so ordained by God's absolute and inscrutable power. The metaphysics of univocity and the theory of absolute sovereignty go hand in hand, the former requiring the latter, while even more radically than with Scotus, morality is ultimately a matter of obedience, evil being 'nothing other than to do something when one is under an obligation to do the opposite' (*Sent.* II.5).

As with the human will, so is Ockham's account of the freedom of God's absolute will to be seen as a logical extension of the position of Scotus, buttressed by the claim that freedom is to be found not in actions but in the will, intention and character of the agent. But whatever we make of Ockham's speculations about what God might have done or could have done (let alone about whether he may have done *what* he could have done), his account of God's ordained power is still linked to his view that morality, the revelation of God's will, is intelligible and its discernment the task of right reason. Whatever the explanation of what God has ordained, it can be interpreted by the human mind and thus cannot be seen by us as arbitrary. The Scriptures provide the positive content of morality; the mind reveals its structure and implications. But we now are concerned with morality, of the Aristotelian good life, accessible also to pagans, and not of the possibility of grace, merit and salvation; of these Ockham, in strict Augustinian fashion and again in the spirit of Scotus, insists, against Pelagians or semi-Pelagians, that God is the absolute and sole determinant (*Sent.* I.17.1).

To see how Ockham works this out, still following in the footsteps of Scotus, we should look in more detail at his account of the stages of virtue, understood as the habit of making right choices.[29] The progression is

[28] In a manner similar to that of Scotus, Ockham explains that God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac may look like a command to murder but in fact is not. God's intention is not murderous (*Sent.* I.46.1); he 'neither commands nor advises sin'. As McGrade puts it, Ockham's God (as the God of Scotus) cancels out one divine command by another (McGrade 1999: 284).

[29] The clearest overall account is to be found in *Connex.*2 and is well laid out by King (1999: 227–44, especially 233–5).

as follows: in stage one the agent wills to perform a just act in accord with right reason; in stage two he recognizes that the moral motive is overriding and will continue on his chosen course and be distracted by nothing that is opposed to right reason; in stage three he recognizes that he acts exclusively because his action has been dictated by right reason: that is, his motives must be pure; in stage four he not only acts from pure motives but for the sake of the love of God. In identifying the fifth and final stage, which seems to imply acts of supererogation, Ockham states that this stage may follow either stage three or stage four, thus showing that he holds that a strictly moral action can be performed whether or not one recognizes the need to love the true God.

On this basis Ockham is again able to follow Scotus in recognizing a distinction between morally good acts performed by anyone and acts only apparently similar and possible only for Christians. Like Scotus (and unlike Augustine) he regards both kinds of act as virtuous (*Sent*. III.11). It is important to note, however, that although such a view identifies pagan virtue – which Ockham is prepared to say may be 'worthy' of eternal life (*Sent*. I.17.11) – as virtue, it could not justify such virtue outside a universe understood in Christian terms, for the highest moral act is one performed for the love of God for his own sake, and that entails subordinating one's own will to the will of God. The moral framework in which pagans perform their virtuous acts is still part of a universe created in accordance with God's ordained power. In other words, although the naturalism in morality which stage three of Ockham's account of the virtues allows for seems to vindicate pagan morality, it only does so within an overall theistic, indeed Christian framework.

Thus, contrary to the views of later moralists (perhaps first of all Hobbes, as we shall see), Ockham cannot be taken to propose that morality (as he presents it in stage three) would be intelligible or defensible in a non-theistic world. Nevertheless, his work – doubtless unwittingly – marks a further step away from the original Augustinian project since the separation of morality from salvation has been further emphasized while the strongly reiterated distinction between God's absolute and ordained power increases the possibility of developing a moral philosophy without reference to God. If morality is separated from predestination, divine acceptance and grace, then God's salvific acts (however free of 'Pelagianism' Ockham's account of them may be,[30] come to seem less and less relevant

[30] Ockham's commentary on the *Sentences* (as at 1.17.1) offers some sharply anti-Pelagian remarks. For a defence of Ockham against charges of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism (with regard to

to 'ordinary life'. And in developing Scotus' account of the 'will' as the locus of ultimate free choice, even of the freedom to choose evil for its own sake, and in arguing that reason can never determine the will's acts, Ockham has both offered justification for God's rewarding of virtue and punishing vice – since freedom is essential for morally virtuous behaviour (*Connex.* 3.499–501) – and tied the possibility of morality unambiguously to an account of freedom not only viewed metaphysically (as in Scotus) as the very nature of the will itself, but recognizable as a simple fact of ordinary experience.

Ockham's radicalism did not, of course, put an immediate end to scholasticism, which during the fourteenth century fragmented into ever more numerous versions we need not pursue here. Indeed especially in the Spanish school of Vitoria, Suarez and the rest it persisted in some sort of seemingly Thomistic form[31] well into the seventeenth century and beyond. Nevertheless, at least with hindsight, we can already see in Ockham's position something of two likely and more radical developments: on the one hand a 'secular' naturalism and on the other an extreme 'Augustinian' reaction. That reaction was foreshadowed, long before Luther and the Reform, in the attacks at Avignon on Ockham as a Pelagian –'There is nothing about grace in the schools', says Bradwardine; hence 'it is in our power to do good and bad' (*De Causa Dei* B 1.35) – and more influentially by the *Doctor authenticus* and General of the Augustinian Order, Gregory of Rimini,[32] whose knowledge of Augustinian texts was far wider than that

predestination) see Wood (1999). Of course, he cannot be directly faulted for the more obvious (semi-) Pelagianism of some of his later followers such as Gabriel Biel, whose theology was first accepted, then especially targeted by Luther – as will appear in the next chapter.

[31] In fact Suarez' substantive departures from Aquinas were profound, not least in his rereading of the doctrine of the analogy of being to accommodate the now fashionable univocity of Scotus. Not that Aquinas' own position does complete justice to the problem of the difference between Creator and creatures, but that is a story which cannot be pursued here – nor can that of the *replacement* of patristic and post-patristic illumination theory (plus participation in God) by abstraction as a way of understanding our knowledge of created beings.

[32] Despite his nominalism, Gregory claimed to be in line with Aquinas in his anti-Pelagianism (so Janz 1983: 72). As we shall see, this anti-Pelagianism (cf. Trapp 1956: 146–274) was (wrongly) hailed by Luther, his erstwhile Augustinian confrère, as exceptional. On Luther's discovery of Gregory in 1519 see Grane (1968: 29–49). Trapp's work was continued by Zumkeller (1964: 167–262). Of course, 'Augustinianism' was not limited to the Augustinian order itself; in such as Bradwardine it also existed more widely: see Saak (2002: 690). For a recent, if often flawed summary of the situation see Ocker (1987: 81–106). Later, in his *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis* the Dominican John Capreolus (1380–1444) – a Thomist unusually capable of recognizing development in Aquinas – largely followed Gregory of Rimini in upholding the mature Thomas' anti-Pelagianism and insisting on his Augustinianism on grace, albeit remaining a powerful critic of

of his predecessors.[33] Gregory, though a nominalist follower of Ockham in metaphysics, clearly wants to reassert a purely theological ethics and anthropology – nothing willed or done without grace is pleasing to God – at the expense of the 'alternative' morality visibly rising to the surface in Ockham and Scotus, but of which the advent goes back to the reappearance of Aristotelian (and non-Augustinian) ethics in general and not least of an 'Aristotelian' account (however interpreted) of the relation between will and reason.

Yet among the 'religious' philosophers and theologians, even those who claimed to be 'Augustinians' – apart from the interlude of Renaissance Neoplatonism, the impact of which turned out to be largely cultural rather than immediately philosophical – love, central in Augustine himself, was in serious accounts of morality now increasingly seen as a sentimental adjunct to willing, or as a divine *deus ex machina*. Eventually, with Descartes' rewriting of the Platonic-Augustinian account of the mind as little more than a desiccated calculator, the demise of the older world might in this regard – 'mystical' writers and occasional bits of anachronistic revivalism apart – seem more or less complete.

Though thus far in treating of Ockham I have said nothing of his nominalism in general as having little bearing on the subjects I have discussed, yet a specific aspect of that nominalism, namely his treatment of the Aristotelian categories, might seem to demand attention. For whatever effect Ockham's treatment (or supposed treatment) of the reality of relations may have had on the development of theories of subjective rights – a matter which cannot be pursued here[34] – it certainly might have affected accounts of the human agent and his moral responsibility. But Ockham's account of relations is less parsimonious than is often supposed. Though the matter is disputed,[35] it seems fair to say not that Ockham denied the

Gregory's imputed nominalism. According to Capreolus, when interpreting Thomas on grace we should always prefer his positions in the *Summa* (*Defensiones* 4.315).

[33] An influential (if now somewhat dated) introduction to Bradwardine is that of Leff (1957); and for Gregory see Leff (1961). For later developments see Schulze (1981: 1–126). It is worth noticing that the new Pelagians, according to Bradwardine and Gregory, are judged such with reference to specifically 'Augustinian' ideas about grace and works, and that the original Pauline context of the debate – Mosaic Law and the New Covenant – is not recovered; nor will it be later by Luther. And one should add that the motivation of the varying 'Augustinianisms' of Bradwardine and Gregory is different, Bradwardine writing in the spirit of what later was dubbed the *via antiqua*, Gregory in that of the *via moderna*; see also the controversial account of McGrath (1987: 90–2).

[34] For recent comment on the origins of a philosophical defence of subjective rights – and of Villey who attributed such a defence primarily to Ockham – see Lamont (2011: 177–98).

[35] For a sensible introduction see Spade (1999: 100–17). Ockham (with many others) may have failed to recognize that arguments about the ontological status of value terms ('good', 'just' etc.) should be separated from those dealing with non-value predicates ('fat', 'father' etc.).

reality of relations but that just as he denied separate wills and intellects in the person who wills and thinks, so he also denied that relations are real 'things' independent of the objects related: that is, with the exception of relations of theological import as between the persons of the Trinity, between the divine and human natures of Christ, and in accounts of transubstantiation.

That sort of parsimony might seem genuinely Aristotelian, being a protest not against the existence of relationships but against improper reification. And if that is Ockham's view, his problem would lie not in his eliminating relations from his ontology but rather in his retaining qualities, for his concern would seem to be with the distinction between essential and inessential properties and with the transposing of mere predicates into substances, so that – and as was often assumed both earlier and later – Aristotle could be falsely saddled with the notion that qualities, relations and so forth are piled on top of some sort of prime matter (or 'substance') like packages on the back of a camel.

Whatever the truth about Ockham's position on relations, many have taken it (and still take it) much more radically than seems to be the case, as a precursor of the atomic individualism of later times and, if combined with the dissolution of the self which Hume and Feuerbach promoted, as adumbrating the modern self seen not only as a heap of qualities but as an isolated heap, incapable therefore of – for example – loving any other, including God for his own sake, since functioning in a more or less solipsistic universe. But the real Ockham, at least in respect to his nominalism, seems to have been a much less radical and modern figure.

For our present purposes there is little need to dwell further on Ockham's nominalism (or that of his successors). It is a rather different matter with his concern to protect God's absolute power and his consequent emphasis on the fact that morality, accessible by reason, tells us little of God's nature but only what he has willed for us. For if the nature of God is almost wholly beyond our reach, his importance for our moral behaviour might seem almost coincidental. Perhaps by observing the world around us – assuming only that it is providentially arranged – we can understand from nature what obligations are apparently binding on humanity. It is not surprising that in the centuries after Ockham a neo-Stoic naturalism (with its long-forgotten problems about the nature of willing but having nothing to do with Christian love) emerged. For Stoic ethics is a providentialist ethics without transcendentalism. Nevertheless, in regard to willing, a neo-Stoic might find it harder to be a Stoic compatibilist, since now, holding that human beings are 'free', most saw freedom (as did Ockham) as a liberty of

indifference to decide (without determining pressures whether from the stars or the intellect) between good and evil. Without such capacity, it was opined, we could not be held responsible for our acts, and *pace* Hobbes, some such responsibility was still felt to be desirable, indeed necessary.

Before turning to the dominant trends in the post-fourteenth century world – that is, to the last gasp of various brands of 'Augustinianism' whether in their Catholic or later Lutheran and Reformed varieties[36] – and to the coming new world of moral 'naturalism' (originally backed by a remnant of 'Augustinianism' in the form of theistic voluntarism), of contract theory and egoism – we should look at the impact during the fifteenth century of two very different sorts of new material from antiquity, this time not (as in the thirteenth century) the arrival of Aristotle (together with the 'Aristotelianisms' of Avicenna and Averroes) but of more Plato and all Plotinus, and – from a very different tradition – of Lucretius' poem *On the Nature of Things*. Plato and Plotinus, of course, were reinforced by the ever-popular Proclus and the theosophical writings of Hermes Trismegistos.[37] Yet in attending first to this Platonic material we should not forget that though medieval scholasticism was much despised among the humanists, Aristotle himself still dominated most of the universities[38] – nor that this helps to explain why much of the more radical thought of early modern times was developed elsewhere.

In the early fifteenth century Ambrogio Traversari brought the first manuscript of Plotinus from Byzantium to the West.[39] Then, during the lengthy but futile attempts of the Council of Florence (1438–45) to end the schism between the Eastern and Western churches in the face of the Turkish threat to Byzantium, there arrived in Florence a number of Byzantine Platonists, not least George Gemistos Plethon – according to some a worshipper of the old gods of classical Greece – whose lectures

[36] One of the successes of recent scholarship has been the recognition of the diversity of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century 'Augustinianism', but it would be too much of a digression to pursue this diversity here. It hardly affects our main themes but should be remembered when we come briefly to inspect the background of Luther.

[37] In the ensuing discussion I shall pass over the transitional figure (as he is often called) of Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64). The Platonism of Cusanus looks back to the older Platonizing world (and certainly with much attention to the negative theology of Ps-Dionysius) of Eriugena, Eckhart and so forth. Though he also looks forward to certain more general features of philosophical 'modernity', his Platonism lacks the radically humanistic tone of Ficino and Pico – not to speak of the theosophy – and in that remains medieval. For recent comment see Moran (2008: 9–29).

[38] In Oxford the predominance of Aristotle, especially the *Ethics*, persisted until the nineteenth-century régime of Benjamin Jowett, a man much devoted to some sort of Platonism. For Renaissance universities see Schmitt (1983, 1984).

[39] For Traversari see Lackner (2002: 15–44).

on reconciling Plato and Aristotle aroused huge interest.[40] As an eventual result, the Florentine Academy was established under the patronage of the Medici, to be headed by Marsilio Ficino who, having studied Greek with John Argyropoulos, translated the whole of Plato into Latin for the first time in 1484 and ten years later completed his Latin version of Plotinus' *Enneads*. Among other 'Neoplatonic' publications, he also wrote a major treatise on *Platonic Theology*, subtitled *On the Immortality of Souls* – thus echoing both Proclus and Augustine – and a commentary (*On Love: De Amore*) on Plato's *Symposium*, as well as drawing attention yet again to the long-popular writings of that 'Dionysius' who throughout the Western Middle Ages had passed as the disciple of St Paul mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles* (17:34): little matter that Lorenzo Valla – foe also of Aristotle, Stoics and the contemplative life – had already published in his commentaries on the New Testament what amounted to an exposé of 'Dionysius' on largely philological grounds.[41]

In the eyes of Ficino and his collaborators (especially Pico della Mirandola), a Platonic-Christian synthesis could be established as a new and more humane Christian philosophy – or is it a Christianized Neoplatonism? – based neither on traditional Augustinianism – though as in all 'Renaissance' movements from Petrarch to Erasmus, Augustine was by no means forgotten, being now an important, if recycled, component of the required anti-scholasticism[42] – nor on the Aristotle of the Schools, but on Plato, Plotinus, 'Hermes Trismegistos', Proclus, Dionysius and other Neoplatonic luminaries. In reverting to the Platonic tradition, and thus believing themselves closer to the Christianity of Augustine and the early Church, Ficino and his associates were eager to re-emphasize, against the Aristotelianism of the High Middle Ages, the importance of love and of beauty; indeed their movement was one of the more influential attempts to integrate love into a philosophically grounded presentation

[40] For Plethon see in particular Woodhouse (1986) and Monfasani (1995).

[41] For more on the effects of Valla see recently Panizza (1985: 181–223) and Camporeale (1988: 191–293). More generally on Renaissance Platonism: Allen (1984), Hankins (1990), Copenhaver (1992) and Monfasani (1994). And for the impact of the new Plotinus, see Saffrey (1996: 488–508).

[42] One of the attractive features of Augustine for the Renaissance was his emphasis on the human heart; that was regarded as a corrective to the aridity of scholastics taken to be concerned with the cognitive mind, the person being now supposedly and significantly identified as his 'will'. It is curious that 'voluntarism' – viewed as doing more justice to the whole person – was a feature of the Augustinian reaction against supposed 'intellectualists' like Aquinas, even though Augustine himself, as a Platonist, had had difficulty in giving a metaphysical account of the unity of the human person demanded by the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the resurrection of the body. For comment on his difficulties see Rist (2008: 282) and more generally Burnell (2005). For Petrarch see now Lee (2012).

of Christianity before the nineteenth century. Yet without a Platonizing account of human love as a tool by which God can lead man to the divine, Christianity – as the humanists realized – is liable to degenerate into legalism or a morality of obedient duty.

The Platonizing texts (including those of Plato) read in the Florentine Academy were interpreted in the spirit less of Plato himself than of Proclus, but no matter: on offer was a new Christian philosophy attractive to those who had come to hate the rigidity and formalism of the schools, but soon to become even less popular among those who saw Christianity as already deeply corrupted by paganisms – not least because Ficino and his associates regarded philosophy not as the handmaid but as the sister of theology. To his distaste for the older influence of Aristotle, Luther could soon add hostility to those who wished to combine an apparently all too humanistic Neoplatonism with a defence of 'monkish' practices deriving from the 'fraudulent' Dionysius whose influence during the Middle Ages, though strong, had been moderated by 'tamer' Platonizing authorities like Augustine and Boethius. Now, in the view of the Reformers, the Platonic beast had been let out of its cage. Dionysius, as Luther put it, is more Platonist than Christian (*plus platonizans quam christianizans*),[43] adding for good measure that he had been driven almost mad by one of the most Platonizing Christian texts of the Middle Ages, Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* (*WA* T 1.644).

Yet the Platonism of Ficino and his associates was in many ways different from the Platonism of Proclus, let alone of Plotinus or Plato himself, the principal difference lying in its exalted account of man – 'know yourself, divine race dressed in mortal clothing'[44] – or at least of the human soul, whose immortality Ficino defended by purely philosophical arguments (drawn especially from Plato's *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*) and whose love for the Good (without much benefit of Augustinian divine assistance) could restore a man to divinity.[45] Ficino, a priest and a convinced Catholic, was certain that traditional theology (perhaps best summarized in this particular by Pope Innocent III's *De Contemptu Mundi*) failed to do justice to the notion that man (or at least his soul) is created in the image of God. Yet his account of the nature and aspirations of man is far in excess of ancient Neoplatonism, whether pagan or Christian. For Ficino, man naturally tends to worship himself as divine; his aspiration

[43] Cf. *The Babylonian Captivity* (1520), (*WA* 6.562).
[44] From Ficino's letter to the human race, *Epist. 1.1.642a*.
[45] Cf. Rist (1994a); more widely Trinkhaus (1970).

is not simply to become like God but to be God (*Theol. Plat*. 14. 298–9). Man, at the centre of the cosmos is, indeed, 'a god on earth' (16.369a) and his capacity is godlike: indeed, anyone who rejects the idea that man is a 'rival of God' is crazy (13.291b).

Such ideas were not entirely original with Ficino, nor indeed with Pico who, fortified by the new Platonic learning, wrote an essay destined to become the rallying point of an expanded 'humanism'. Entitled *An Oration on the Dignity of Man*, it was intended to introduce nine hundred theses on philosophy and theology that its author claimed he would defend in Rome against all comers (though in the event he was prevented from doing so). The essay, founded on Ficino's philological activity, summed up the principles of Florentine Neoplatonism, and the theses it introduced are often revolutionary. Thus, Pico might seem to question the traditional Christian teaching whereby salvation depends on the specific grace of baptism (or martyrdom): pagan virtues might seem to be back in the ascendant. In highly untraditional language he urged that all human creative activity – literary, philosophical, artistic – is an expression of the divine nature of that soul which, as Ficino had argued, is naturally immortal.

Such a position may be termed 'humanist', but in its ambitions it far exceeded the earlier stirrings of 'humanism' (associated especially with Petrarch and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century) that centred primarily on the revival of classical language and style and whose model was Cicero.

The philological activity of Ficino and his predecessors (such as Lorenzo Valla) surpassed such earlier projects – not least in its high evaluation of rhetoric as appealing to the whole person and his 'heart' rather than just to his mind. The rediscovery of the entire Platonic corpus (most of it entirely unknown in the West) and much of its Neoplatonic avatar, especially the *Enneads* of Plotinus, plus Pico's eclectic concern with Jewish, Arabic and even Aramaic and 'Chaldean' sources, enabled Ficino and his associates to develop genuinely Neoplatonic ideas about the essential creativity of goodness into the more specific and prophetic claim that the stupendous creativity of man reflects in microcosm the creativity of the Christian God. Plotinus had accused the Gnostics (among whom Pico must surely be numbered) and by implication also 'orthodox' Christians, of over-exalting the role and dignity of man in the cosmos; his Renaissance successors were now attributing to Platonism itself a similarly exalted view of humanity even after the fall.

Neither Pico nor Ficino rank highly as philosophers, but as simultaneously constructive and corrosive cultural agents they were of utmost

importance. If only in the high Renaissance have we come to understand the full greatness of (fallen) man, and the Middle Ages are in effect to be dismissed as an era of even greater cultural darkness than Petrarch had supposed, what becomes of the Augustinian moral paradigm of the necessity of God if we are to live a moral life, let alone if we are to 'merit' salvation? More broadly, is aesthetic creativity to replace moral excellence as constituting (via the absolute freedom of the will) the image of God? If the Renaissance Neoplatonists were not unambiguously intending to destroy the medieval view of our moral situation, let alone of Christianity – and they were certainly not so intending; indeed Pico's admiration for the moralist and anti-humanist Savonarola seems to have provoked his own assassination while, as we noted, the wider appreciation of Augustine formed part of the 'humanist' alternative to scholastic Aristotelianism[46] – they certainly offered a fresh and less than Christian vision of human life. In recognizing that, both later Reformers and Counter-Reformers were hardly wide of the mark.[47]

Yet they too, as Pico himself, inherited a thesis of huge importance from late medieval scholasticism. Like Pico, Luther and Calvin were committed to a freedom of indifference for the will of God, though unlike them Pico supposed that a similar freedom is shared by 'fallen' but creative humanity. As for the replacement of morality by aesthetics and the cult of the artist, it could be foreseen, though its time had not yet come, the world being still too Christian for the implications of that kind of move. Nonetheless, other de facto reversals of Christian morality might, though still execrated, take more immediate effect in a rapidly dissolving and expanding world – in the realm of politics, for example, and tinged with a certain aesthetic of the elegant crime.

Such an 'aesthetic' – far outside the frontiers of any revived Neoplatonism – became notorious in the writings of another Florentine, though one with very different interests and a very different *fortuna*: Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), who, it is important to recall, was writing before Luther's

[46] Kristeller (1944: 339–58); Spitz (1974: 89–116, especially 95). Pico's admiration for Savanorola may have been partly developed in view of his opposition, as a Platonist, to the Epicurean currents sweeping through Florence – which Savanorola must have detested, probably seeing them as part inspiration for the 'libertines' against whom he preached and who eventually helped compass his execution. I shall consider the 'Epicureanism' of Machiavelli later.

[47] Of course, the influence of Platonism did not end with the Florentine Academy, and, as we shall see, not least with the Cambridge Platonists; it was often put to use to restrain Calvinist 'excesses'. For a (perhaps over-zealous) introduction to its continuing influence during the early modern period, see Hedley and Hutton (2008).

Reformation, though only just. Machiavelli's 'secular' account of human nature is bleak, one might say ultra-Augustinian: anyone who assumes human beings will be good is likely to be ruined (*Prince* 15). That is far indeed from the optimistic horizons of Ficino or Pico, and in his two major works, *The Prince* (completed by 1513 but published posthumously in 1532) and the *Discourses on the Ten Books of Livy* (1514–18, published posthumously in 1531), as well as in various essays – not least that in which he extols the skills of Cesare Borgia in the 'beautiful' art of political assassination – Machiavelli offers his interested readers a clear choice between incompatibles: either to be a Christian or a politician: perhaps a prince, an artist of power. 'Our religion', he observes, 'has shown us truth and the true path' but 'treats humility, abjection and contempt of worldly things as the greatest good'. Hence it teaches us to neglect that love of honour and greatness of soul that are absolutely necessary in public life, leaving us open 'to be plundered by wicked men' (*Discourses* 2.2).

Machiavelli's is certainly a new and very different voice in political thought; to see him as a more up-to-date version of earlier critics of the medieval political consensus such as Marsilius of Padua is seriously misleading. What, we should therefore ask, is the explanation, or at least part of the explanation, of the Machiavellian phenomenon? Why did 'Old Nick' anticipate Hobbes as the terrifying villain on the political and ethical scene? Why did he so radically separate political philosophy from its traditional ethical and religious foundations, whether Aristotelian or Augustinian?[48] Many attempts have been made to explain his apparently strange mentality, but only recent studies have properly evaluated one of the major influences on his subversive thinking.

In 1417 Poggio Bracciolini discovered in a German monastic library the text of Lucretius' poem *De Rerum Natura*; it aroused great interest, not least in Florence, and Machiavelli himself transcribed it (with annotations) some time in the late 1490s. It might seem as though the writings of an Epicurean, member of a school which advocated keeping away from public life wherever possible, would be of little interest to a politician and political theorist like Machiavelli, but what seems to have influenced him is less any *political* doctrine of Lucretius, but more generally the indeterminacy of his 'metaphysics' and especially its implications for human nature and for the unpredictability of the situations in which we find ourselves.

[48] According to Pocock, 'Machiavelli may be read as consciously reversing the morality of Augustine' (Pocock 2010: 152).

For Lucretius, human beings are accidents of the fortuitous combination of atoms, and from that Epicurean axiom we may conclude – with several recent writers[49] – that Machiavelli could develop political and social theories very different from those of Epicurus himself. Above all, he could entertain the possibility that chance – *Fortuna* – governs human affairs, and that human beings, chance accidents of atoms in empty space, have no metaphysical or religious significance. Therefore all they should intelligently desire is to be 'free' – and 'freedom' might be available (in a value-free universe) only through the ruthless pursuit of self-interest. According to Machiavelli most ordinary people (the *popolo*) understand it in terms of a desire not to be dominated, but others, especially among the nobles, understand it as the desire for glory and domination. Thus there will be a tension between the people and the nobles, and the ability to understand and manipulate that desirable tension is the mark of the successful politician, tension itself being the very fount of freedom in an admirable society such as republican Rome in its earlier days (*Discourses* 1.4).

Thus Augustine's *libido dominandi* is no longer a vice but a virtual necessity. Such an appropriation of Epicurean theory would explain why Machiavelli can think of his heroes – above all Cesare Borgia – as implicitly anti-Christian. It is not that he *tells* us to be anti-Christian – as the Epicureans of antiquity told us, for different reasons, not to believe in the pagan gods – only that it might make sense to pretend to be Christian when convenient but otherwise to adopt a very different political approach. The choice is ours, but Machiavelli certainly seems to find 'contempt for God' – hidden if necessary – a more sensible, not to say more virile, option. Lucretius hails Epicurus as the man who saves us from fear of divine vengeance, while Machiavelli seems to suppose it his own Epicurean role to free us from the crippling Christian doctrines that leave us at the mercy of 'wicked men'. Thus for wholly different reasons Machiavelli anticipates Luther's rejection of the moral politics of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and with them so much earlier political thinking.

In this like Grotius and Hobbes after him, Machiavelli saw the task of the political theorist not to construct a model of an ideal society but to explain how best to survive in the tension-filled and unpredictable world we are given. Men never change: their desires are insatiable, while economic resources are limited; driven by love or fear, preferring vengeance

[49] For further discussion of Florentine interest in Lucretius see Rahe (2007), Brown (2001, 2010a, 2010b) and Roecklein (2012). For an interesting but ultimately unconvincing argument that Machiavelli promotes a pluralism in political philosophy rather than a more radical political alternative, see Berlin (1999).

to gratitude, they are more prone to evil than to good (*Discourses* 1.9); indeed they get bored with goodness (*Discourses* 1.37, 3.21) and we must assume that all are evil, either openly or in secret (*Discourses* 1.3). Hence strife and fierce competition are the natural conditions in a human society composed of men driven to hate by fear and envy, not least of the glory of others. We all crave 'freedom' and for strong individuals the temptation or challenge is to be a prince. Yet the more ordinary freedom to survive unscathed is most likely to be generated by some form of republican government (*Discourses* 1.16). In brief, Machiavelli's account of human nature may be rather traditional, but the use to which he puts it is not, and his references to religion are frequently hostile. 'Our religion', though useful as social glue, has often been a bad thing, 'especially for Italy' (*Discourses* 1.11–12).

How important is public life?[50] For Machiavelli, it seems, of supreme importance, though in offering us the choice between piety and politics – with a dream of freeing Italy from the foreign 'barbarians' and (perhaps) of helping to construct a new all-Italian state defended by its own citizens – he is well aware of what this implies for the priorities of traditional, that is, still largely Augustinian, Christianity. The need to overthrow tyrannies (such as that of the Medici in his native Florence) or to expel foreign invaders is so pressing that we may have to accept very 'dirty hands' in our works of glory. Of course, a certain toleration of 'dirty hands' can already be found in Augustine, but Machiavelli's willingness – at least at times (so *Discourses* 1.9 where Romulus' murder of his brother is condoned) – to accept any method which might promote what he saw as *political* freedom goes far beyond anything remotely acceptable to the bishop of Hippo. Similarly, though there are remarkable procedural parallels between Machiavelli's account of the origins of political régimes and Augustine's (Sallustian) account of the origin of the Roman state – both expressing views very different from those of classical political theorists such as Plato and Aristotle in that they emphasize that evil means usually lie at the origins of even tolerable political structures – the use Machiavelli made of such claims is quite distinct, even 'modern'. For according to

[50] See De Grazia (1989). Note however that Machiavelli's prioritizing of republicanism over traditional moral concerns was rather the beginning than the end of a new road. As a result of the Wars of Religion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the aims of 'moral-free' politics were still further reduced, the goal now being neither the good classical society nor republican honour and glory, but solely the avoidance of conflict in the more 'Tacitean' world of Grotius and more particularly Hobbes. Tuck notes the post-Machiavellian influence of the 'realist' Tacitus (rather than Cicero) (Tuck 1993: 31–64). For an introduction to the constant reappearance of variants of 'Machiavellianism' see the essays of Kahn and Barthas (2010).

Machiavelli political communities are normally formed not in the hope of some teleologically conceived good society, nor to produce the shadow-peace of the Augustinian earthly city, nor even to instantiate the Roman 'republicanism' Machiavelli himself admired and promoted, but primarily to allay the more universal fear of oppression.

For Machiavelli, the ruthlessness of the 'strong man' may be found acceptable by (for example) those oppressed by a local nobility; he may even be admired by a populace easy to manipulate, and his rule tolerated for fear of worse. Here again the world of Hobbes is already in sight, and though no rights theorist, Machiavelli is certainly also a precursor of such theorists insofar as his political purpose is no longer the production of a good society but to 'free' the citizens from particularly fearful aspects – that is the random threat to life and limb – of the bad one. Thus unchristian methods are necessary in politics to defend what might easily come to be considered as absolute rights, whether against state or church.[51] Dirt must be fought by the necessary amount of dirt, and in times of great stress (as during the Second World War) Machiavelli's approach will be widely adopted. Romantic ideas of 'humanism' based on a mindless admiration of antiquity must be replaced by an application of the principles – so denounced by Augustine – on which Roman greatness depended in the 'real' world. Politics is an empirical science, no longer to be covered by the fig leaves of religion or of idealizing ethical theorists. The older Italian humanists wanted us to return to the world of Cicero; Machiavelli told them what that pre-Christian world they and he admired and to which they longed to return was really like. Rome owed its greatness not to any 'natural' law but to the successful deployment of raw power.

There is no need for lengthy comment on Machiavelli's ultimate attitude to politically motivated lying, defaming, cruelty and killing.[52] It is certainly clear that he is telling the would-be ruler (whether an honourable man in pursuit of honourable ends or the reverse) that he will be unsuccessful unless he is prepared to deceive, to defame, to be cruel and to kill (*Prince* 15). Often it may pay him to be 'virtuous' or (like Virgil's Aeneas[53]) 'pious' in the traditional sense, and certainly it is desirable to *seem*

[51] For good discussion see Manent (1994: esp. 15–19).

[52] For a sample of the discussion see Cassirer (1946), Pocock (1975), Skinner (1978), Deitz (1986: 770–99), Parel (1992), Mansfield (1996) and Viroli (1998). Machiavelli is certainly not unique in his day in recognizing the 'immoral' nature of political power and that to pursue it must normally be incompatible with what would have traditionally been considered the demands of conscience; see Bouwsma (1974: 138). But Machiavelli's 'Epicureanism' could erase the philosophical difficulties of such opinions.

[53] For a comparison between Virgil's hero and Machiavelli's 'princes' see Rebhorn (2010: 84–7).

virtuous whenever possible, though such 'virtue' will have to be regularly suspended when the times demand it (*Prince* 17; *Discourses* 1.51). Overall it is better – because, that is, safer – to be feared than to be loved.

In writing thus the learned Machiavelli can hardly have been unaware of a tag from the ancient Roman playwright Accius (adopted as a motto by the emperor Caligula): *Oderint dum metuant* ('let them hate so long as they fear'). Indeed reflections along those lines (together with due attention to Machiavelli's 'republicanism') have induced some commentators hopefully to believe that the more 'immoral' sections of *The Prince* are less recommendations of the author than 'realistic' descriptions of how a tyrant can survive, modelled, as they probably are, on apparently similar 'neutral' comments by Aristotle in his *Politics*. It is less that Machiavelli is urging all politicians to become 'princely' tyrants than that would-be 'princes' are part of the world in which we live and that 'princely' behaviour is at times exemplary even for those not necessarily in search of absolute power.

Nevertheless, we should not forget that Machiavelli's audience is Christian whereas Aristotle's was not, so that there can be no doubt that he is arguing for the incompatibility of specifically Christian morality with survival in political life. That might indicate both an ultra-Augustinian view of politics, hence a belief that politicians (among whom he himself must be counted) must treat any allegiance to the 'truths' of Christianity as largely conventional, though also often as socially useful. That course was doubtless adopted by many, then as now: the question for Machiavelli being how far he thinks not that this is what they need to do but also what, if sensible and hence 'Epicurean', they ought to do. The fact that such a question can reasonably be put to him indicates that 'religious' morality is in trouble outside the traditional schools as well as within them.

Two of Machiavelli's key terms are *virtù* and *fortuna* (as in *Discourses* 1 21; *Prince* 25). The former indicates the amoral skills in handling unpredictable situations displayed by such successful politicians as Cesare Borgia – and we may compare the Greek *arete* (virtue) Thucydides used in the last book of his *History of the Peloponnesian War* to label the talents of Antiphon, a skilled insurrectionist (for, as Plato had observed, *arete* may or may not have a moral sense). As for Lady *Fortuna*, if seen in an 'Epicurean' light, her very fickleness indicates the unpredictability of human affairs personified – and points to the triviality of high-flown and idealistic political philosophizing. The Lady needs to be treated roughly because she will succumb to *machismo*, to the direct boldness of the importunate young

man – or even to force or blackmail, as Livy portrays the techniques of Prince Tarquin in getting to 'enjoy' Lucretia.[54]

In Machiavelli's use of the words *virtù* and *fortuna* we recognize once again the challenge to traditional Christian virtue and the invitation to the politician to make his choice: concrete worldly rewards for manliness (*virtù*) or effeminate piety with an eye to the next life rather than this one.[55] Even had Reform never come, it is hard not to see in Machiavelli, as in very different ways in the Florentine Academy, a sense that the earlier moral world, and its religious and metaphysical underpinnings, had begun to totter badly. To the new world as a whole, as to Machiavelli's Prince, there seemed to be extended a choice between the old longing for salvation and the new 'ethics' which could get on very well without religion, or at least – as with the Neoplatonists – without either Augustinian Christianity or some version of the still theistic virtue ethic which a developed Aristotelianism was offering in the schools.

[54] Roecklein appropriately cites Livy here (Roecklein 2012: 160, note 33); more generally for Machiavelli's attitude to Fortune – that is to human situations as they happen to occur – and his advice on how to treat her as a woman who needs to be manhandled, see the perceptive discussions of Pitkin (1999), while Spackman (2010) gives a persuasive account of Machiavelli's appropriation of the rape of Lucretia in recounting the adventures of 'Lucrezia' in his comedy *Mandragola*.

[55] For an interesting comparison between Machiavelli's manhandling of *Fortuna* and Descartes' project for the subjugation of nature – and of the anti-Augustinian and essentially pre-Christian 'virtue' of both – see Harding (2008: 160–1).

CHAPTER 7

The Rise and Fall of Lopsided Augustinianism

> 'For barbarism is not some primitive technology and naïve cosmologies, but a sophisticated cutting off of the inhibiting authority of the past.'
>
> P. Rieff, *Charisma* 239

In the writings especially of Scotus and Ockham we noticed various themes in the later Middle Ages that, with hindsight, can be recognized as foreshadowing a purely secular morality. Indeed even earlier, with the coming of the 'new' Aristotle, had also arrived the possibility of an ethical system to be developed without reference to salvation or original sin. Yet even armed with such historical information, we may still be surprised to recognize Martin Luther as the next major forerunner of an ethics without God and devoid of theological underpinnings. To see the father of Protestantism in this succession is to identify a particularly striking example of a wider phenomenon: that only biblical literalism and ignorance of the history of the Church can keep Protestantism from developing – first among its intelligentsia – into modern secularism, nor from finding therein the culmination of its original anti-authoritarian élan. For there is no doubt that Luther too was in search of an explicitly 'Augustinian' reaction against 'secular philosophy' in general and the *Nicomachean Ethics* in particular already recognizable, in varying versions, not only in Bonaventure, Peter of John Olivi and Thomas Bradwardine – not to speak of Gregory of Rimini, General of the Augustinian Order – but also, if differently, in Scotus, Ockham and their nominalist successors. It is no novelty to perceive that the seeds of theoretical secularism were sown during the High Middle Ages, not least by those most strongly opposed to it, who (like Luther) had no idea of the eventual crop of their sowing.

The theology of Luther did not arise in a vacuum; indeed he can, not implausibly, be viewed in his earlier 'evangelical' days as a particularly insistent and intransigent preacher of one of the multifarious versions of 'scholastic' theology purveyed by rival schools all claiming to be more

or less Augustinian. Yet the core doctrine of his Reform, which entailed all the rest, his developing account of justification separated, contrary to all earlier traditions, from sanctification, and formulated, it seems, in 1515, pointed him towards his special understanding of the 'theology of the cross'. Soon he came also to differ strikingly from medieval critics of 'pagan philosophy', having at least from the time of his *Theses against Scholastic Theology* (1517) determined that the old theology must be not just corrected but uprooted as Pelagian. In his role as professor of Bible at Wittenberg, he had come to the conclusion (made easier by the work of Erasmus and others on scriptural texts and by Valla's discrediting of both the authenticity of the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite and the historicity of the Donation of Constantine) that St Paul's ideas about the justice of God (more or less as he took them to be understood by Augustine) were utterly incompatible not only with the *Aristotelianism* of the schools but with the theological *mindset* of almost every scholastic theologian. But the implication of that is that what needed to be changed was a whole culture, not merely the ivory tower ideas of a few closeted theologians – and circumstances favoured the Reformers in that project: a project whose immediate aims, partially already set in train, were comparatively transparent but whose long-term effects could as yet not be foreseen, as division of Christendom rapidly became fragmentation and fragmentation pointed to eventual irrelevance.

It was not just the methodology – the techniques, whether pedantic or serious – of the schoolmen that were problematic (only at the new university of Wittenberg was a proper 'Augustinianism' taught), but Luther claimed that a wholly new type of biblically based, exegetical theology was required.[1] Biblical theologians should no longer spend their time, as

[1] See Grane (1983: 231–53, esp. 236) for an account of how Luther came to this conclusion. We should recognize, however, that in itself Luther's slogan – *sola Scriptura* – was theoretically accepted as somehow the basis of theology by every medieval theologian. What made the Lutheran difference was the way Scripture was to be interpreted: with little respect for the 'authorities' (and soon the papacy itself) who had been satisfied with inaccurate – and therefore theologically misleading – texts, and without recourse to the 'distorting' lens of pagan philosophy. In what follows I make no attempt to comment on the full range of 'sources' of Luther's 'revolution', only discussing some of what is immediately relevant to the origins of secular ethics. For a good introduction to the wider problems see Oberman (1974: 40–88). If we wonder why Luther's 'heresy' was successful, whereas those of predecessors like Wycliffe and Huss were not, we should ignore neither the power of the now-printed word nor the intervention of anti-papal secular powers able to prevent the enforcement of traditional penalties, for the 'Babylonian Captivity' at Avignon and its Conciliarist sequel had done much to lower the often grudging respect for the papacy in secular society, whether in monarchies or in burgeoning city communities like Zurich and Geneva. For that secular protection, of course, the Reformers were to pay a high price, most notably in England where the monarchs (and later Cromwell) were not only to organize the Church at their good pleasure but to determine

Luther himself had done in 1508–9, lecturing on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Theological language too needs reformation, so as to be less obscure to ordinary people. In his counterblast to Leo X's bull *Exsurge Domine* (1520) Luther wishes that the non-biblical term 'free will' had not been invented, as it is only properly applicable to those who are saved. Elsewhere 'free will' means 'self-will' (*WA* 7, 447–9): a will enslaved to the devil. Indeed, even earlier Luther had made the ambiguous comment that after the fall free will only exists in name (*Heidelberg Disputation* (1518); *WA* 1 354). We shall need to pursue further the implications of such observations, as of the ironical comment (in his reply to the papal bull) that fallen man's will is free in the sense that he is potentially free, as a beggar is potentially rich.

For Luther, 'philosophy' meant primarily the philosophy of Aristotle, and he came to blame Aquinas, in particular, for what he held to be the predominance of Aristotelian ideas in theology.[2] As we have seen, his desire to restrain the growing influence of the 'pagan' Aristotle (and the Arab Averroes) – with the Pelagianism they seemed to encourage – was hardly new. Yet the underlying thrust of his challenge quickly became fundamental, resembling that of Ghazali in the Islamic world in its conviction of the radical *opposition* of true religion to any merely human thinking and to any 'secular' morality. Such ideas existed in embryo in Olivi and Scotus, as also in Ockham – who while Luther's authority in dialectic, was also, along with his successor Gabriel Biel, his *bête noire* in theology – but when they were framed in Luther's radically new distinction between the 'two kingdoms' – of God and faith, of the devil and works – they not merely distinguished true Christianity from Aristotelian – indeed from any secular – ethics, but rendered the gap between them unbridgeable.

Aristotle, 'the pagan beast', 'that fool who misled the Church', 'that damned, arrogant, roguish heathen' whose *Nicomachean Ethics* is 'worse than any other book, completely opposed to the grace of God and Christian virtues'[3] is to be condemned on two counts: firstly simply in

its teachings. But although there is a clear connection between that political reality and the intellectual changes with which I am immediately concerned, it must now be left aside with only this briefest of comment.

[2] See *WA* 7.737; and for further references Gerrish (1962: 128–9). For similar (but immediately distinct) reasons – and despite his Augustinianism – Luther (perhaps unlike Peter of John Olivi) would not have found (and did not find) Platonism, as represented by Ps-Dionysius and Bonaventure, any better.

[3] For other unprofessional language used by Luther of the 'stinking philosopher' see Gerrish (1962: 1–2); cf. Gregory (2012: 207). Gerrish examines Luther's basic and largely traditional criticisms of Aristotle: reason (acceptable in its own domain) should not intrude on theology (which is essentially scriptural exegesis) (Gerrish 1962: 32–42). Interfering in theology it becomes the 'Devil's Whore',

his own right in that he taught (especially moral) folly when judged by 'Christian' standards; secondly because that folly has warped the Christian faith itself, giving rise to a neo-Pelagianism, a new breed of deniers of irresistible grace and its necessity for salvation. This 'new Pelagianism' can be identified not only in theological tracts but in Romish (and especially monkish) devotions, the disastrous effects of which are a weakening of belief in the absolute authority of God, since pious and 'meritorious' practices – especially of a penitential sort – have been substituted for the reception of God's gratuitous grace by the individual believer.

Luther's two kingdoms are an obvious derivative from Augustine's two loves which produce the two cities of the *City of God*, but there are very significant differences between Augustine's original and Luther's developed version. Where Augustine posits two loves, Luther is concerned with the kingdom of faith in contrast to the potentially devilish kingdom of works. Although Luther might seem largely to follow the mature Augustine in his account of the origins of faith – which depend entirely on God – his account of what precedes and accompanies faith is quite distinct. Augustine knew, from his own experience, how God could lead him without his realizing it. Even before he became a Christian, before he was baptized, God had established his faith, as he recognized, as the fulfilment of the aspirations of his preceding Neoplatonism. Not that he supposed that he had consciously prepared himself for faith; *Voluntas praeparatur a Deo*: the preparation is entirely God's work, and the faith implanted by God acts upon the (more or less pagan) sinner's previous love of some sort of goodness, unregarding of the true God though that has been.

While Luther, approaching a Bible-based Christianity not in terms of conversion from paganism but as correcting the errors of a pervertedly Christian world, deploys the idea of 'grace alone' in a roughly Augustinian sense (albeit with a very different view of predestination), his emerging understanding of 'faith alone' is distinctly un-Augustinian (though not entirely alien to the world of late medieval theology). True, Augustine uses the phrase more than thirty times, but most frequently to explain how faith cannot be separated 'extrinsically' from the other 'theological

for example at *WA* 51, 123–34, Luther's last sermon at Wittenberg. One of the more interesting charges is that Aristotle is an Epicurean in his denial of providence, Cicero in this regard being much superior: a patristic rather than a medieval accusation because the medievals normally read Aristotle through providential (i.e. Neoplatonic) eyes. For further comment see Gerrish (1962: 41). It should not escape notice that Luther's view of the role of reason in theology – hence more broadly the relationship between faith and reason – is radically different from Augustine's. For Augustine see Rist (2012a: 205–24). For Luther medieval 'voluntarists' and 'intellectualists' are both neo-Pelagians.

virtues', especially from love, since God-given faith entrains an incipient love of God.

Although God's love is central for Luther, in man he emphasizes our faith rather than our love and thus radically changes Augustine's account of the relationship between love and faith, whereby love is the form of all the virtues. For Augustine 'pagan virtues' (seen as 'rather vices than virtues') are turned into genuine virtues when they are based on faith in the true God; yet the condition of the sinner after accepting the gift of faith is quite distinct from in Luther's version. Thus while Luther agrees with Augustine that salvation is entirely in God's gift, Augustine associates the coming of that gift with a simultaneous informing of the moral character, the Christian on the road to salvation becoming increasingly able to act from pure motives and ultimately from love of God above all things: in this purity of motive thus achieving one of the requirements of Stoic and indeed of all – and not only – Christian morality. In such an Augustinian world there is no possibility of a parallel secular ethics; rather Christian ethics fulfils the aspirations of its pagan forerunner, while in more technical Christian language, sanctification goes hand in hand with justification.

Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter* is a particularly important text for the early Reformers, but for Luther the contrast between 'flesh' and 'spirit' is not to be judged anthropologically as a distinction between worldliness and a putting on of the Spirit. Luther teaches that we are slaves to God and sin at the same time – *simul iustus et peccator* – because righteousness has thus far merely been imputed to us so that our justification can begin. We remain wholly sinners, and for Luther (contrary to Augustine) all sin is mortal since we are totally corrupt. Thus although both Luther and Augustine are concerned with pure motivation, where Augustine, as we have seen, follows the Stoicizing view that we cannot perform a perfect act, Luther goes much further: he follows one strand in the thought of Bernard of Clairvaux, namely that we are totally selfish even in our love of God – 'curved in' on ourselves as he describes us – and deduces from this that, all our acts being downright wicked, our incipient justification thus far is perceptible only as hope; yet thinking of *On the Perfection of Justice* 3.8, he looks forward to eventual union with Christ (*WA* 56.343).[4]

[4] The account of Lutheran justification as pointed to eventual union with Christ is especially emphasized by the so-called Finnish school of theologians. One should add that although in his earlier days Luther speaks of the hope of justification, he later came to suppose that the elect will recognize themselves as justified. For more detail see Cary (2013: 151–73, especially 153–64).

In a letter of May 1517 Luther the Augustinian friar could still write in good faith to Johannes Lang: 'Our theology, that of Saint Augustine, is flourishing; Aristotle and Lombard are disappearing' (*WA Briefwechsel* 1.99). But and succinctly, Luther eventually parts company not only with Aquinas and the 'scholastics', but also with Augustine. Whereas Augustine (and many others among the Fathers) thought of revelation as supplying new data able to refuel the dying engine of ancient thought and resolve many of its apparently insoluble non-starters (such as the problem of evil) – and whereas a number of members of the Arts Faculty in Paris had supposed that theology could be protected from allegedly corroding dialectic by being restricted to a separate compartment and they thus could get on with teaching what they took to be Aristotelian thought in peace – Luther gradually convinced himself that the truer Augustine (soon the improved Augustine) would entirely evict philosophy from theology, which could then be reformulated on the basis of an enriched biblical exegesis. The Gospel itself (in contrast to the old Law) has a sacramental efficacy, able to achieve for us what no 'Aristotelian' practice of the virtues could effect.

In two of Luther's contemporaries, Reuchlin (who demanded Hebrew for serious study of the Old Testament) and Erasmus (who demanded Greek in the case of the New), could be seen – at least in this respect – latter-day avatars of Jerome the scholar (though not of Jerome the Catholic believer), himself symbolizing a return to the original Hebrew and Greek texts of Christianity and curt dismissal of the 'Pelagian' schoolmen: those metaphysically posturing advocates of an intruding rationalism in theology to be personalized and anathematized as the Devil's Whore. And, as we have seen, though Jerome's scholarship still commanded much respect, there can be no doubt that the Reformers' insistence on using the best Greek and Latin texts of the Scriptures, plus the new skills of printing to disseminate them, gave them an advantage of which their medieval predecessors, Wycliffe and Huss, could never have dreamed.

Despite their agreement on *sola Scriptura*, almost from the start the Reformers found it as hard (or harder, since each was in effect his own pope) to agree among themselves on the exegetically correct readings of the Bible as had the bad old logic-choppers of the schools. Luther himself became an (ultimately ineffectual) enforcer of theological 'orthodoxy' when in 1528 he realized the seriousness of the problem.[5] The more

[5] For details see Peter Newman Brooks (1983: 147–63). For a good summary of Protestant divisions after 1522 (when Karlstadt challenged Luther on a variety of key issues) see Gregory (2012: 86–92). The most serious disagreements were about Christ's presence in the Eucharist, which the Marburg

radical wing of the Reform movement, led by Karlstadt, the 'Zwickau Prophets', Thomas Münzer and others, had produced not only religious chaos but, in the form of the Peasants' Revolt (1524–5), the likelihood that the Lutherans would lose the princely support on which they relied for personal as well as theological survival. Because those who so obviously misinterpreted Scripture could only be diabolically inspired, Luther concluded that the devil – already hugely more present in his writings than in those of Augustine – was in this instance too working from within to overthrow the kingdom of the godly.[6]

Still more 'diabolical', however, were John of Leyden and the other Anabaptist leaders of the commune established in Munster in 1534–5. Apart from their abolition of commerce and private property, their establishment of communal meals and eventually of polygamy, more important theologically was their denial of infant baptism: precisely the move which had prompted Augustine's first attack on the 'Pelagian' Caelestius in Carthage in 411. For to deny infant baptism, as Augustine saw it, was to deny our *vita communis* in Adam, and with it the guilt and effects of Adam's original sin. As we shall see, original sin was fading fast among those whose work pointed to secularism during the seventeenth century; it is important to recognize a similar trend – signalling what is to come – among religious fanatics a hundred years earlier.

It had become obvious to Luther that not only such 'Ockhamist' followers of the 'modern way' as Gabriel Biel should be indicted as Pelagian (at least in their accounts of the power – however limited – of the human will to merit salvation *ex puris naturalibus*[7]) but that the whole medieval tradition had become tainted, not least those 'intellectualists' about human action like Aquinas against whose claimed errors extreme voluntarism had been largely developed.[8] According to Luther – a nominalist in

Colloquy failed to resolve, thus setting the seal on permanent Protestant division. In Luther's view, those (such as Zwingli) who denied the Real Presence were guilty on an old Augustinian charge: that they improperly restricted God's omnipotence to what is rationally intelligible to us.

[6] A Press reader pointed out to me that the outbreak and character of the Revolt converted Melanchthon to Luther's view that the devil was behind the opposition to the new theology.

[7] Biel claimed that fallen man's *voluntas*, *ex suis naturalibus,* can love God above all things (*Collectorium*, III Sent., d.27, q.1, a.3, dub.2, Q (p. 58 Feckes). Luther already denies this in his early scholion on *Romans* (1515–16) (*WA* 56, 355, 3ff.); cf. *WA* 56, 502, 14 ff. where Pelagianism is specifically invoked. More interesting, of course, is the question whether man can 'by his natural powers' (by *inclinatio*) love God *at all*, even if not enough to merit grace.

[8] By the time of his comments on the Leipzig disputations (1519) Luther was clear in his own mind that not only Biel (and the *moderni*) but also the Scotists and Thomists were infected by Pelagianism. Only Gregory of Rimini was free of it. The rest held that man can follow the dictates of right reason to which the will can naturally conform (*WA* 2, 384ff.). On Luther's ignorance of Aquinas' work see Janz (1983: 32) and (with very substantial bibliography) McSorley (1969: 139–43). Janz identifies the

dialectic, anti-nominalist in theology – extreme voluntarism, while wholly appropriate in accounts of the hidden God, had spawned blasphemous accounts of man's fallen nature and moral capacities.

Ockham's liberty of indifference – the radical ability to choose between good and evil – had originally been proposed not least in part to establish man's responsibility for such actions as will be duly rewarded – and more importantly punished – by a just God. Luther, however, is prepared to offer a substantially different and, in his view, Augustinian solution to that difficulty, therein once again pointing, if among different audiences, toward the oncoming crisis not only of the now commonplace voluntarist theology itself but of traditional accounts of the necessity of human freedom, and hence of the role of ethics. We may begin to envisage not merely the possibility of a purely secular ethics but of a strict determinism envisaging our eschatological fate. The apparent failure of Aquinas' attempt to assimilate Aristotelian ethics had unwittingly encouraged a 'voluntarist' theology and now eventually the explicit construction – perhaps a 'first' for Hobbes, with Machiavelli as its forerunner – of an entirely secular (though normally non-Aristotelian) ethics based on a determinist philosophical psychology. For as we shall see, Luther, unlike his medieval predecessors, reveals himself – perhaps confusedly – as a strict determinist such as Augustine and his heirs could never have envisaged.

As for Aristotle's subversive *Nicomachean Ethics*, though theologically – in company with all secular ethics – to be classed as an enemy of grace (*TR* 1.178.10; *WA* 1.226), it remained for Luther a valuable guide for the 'earthly kingdom'. His developing theology still allowed, with many of the scholastics, for a certain natural virtue, though not enough to acquire 'merit' or to permit the pagan 'virtuous' to go unscathed at the Last Judgement. Yet some of the damned could be seen to do less evil than others and so would be punished less, as Augustine had already taught, though for rather different reasons.[9] In their own kingdom such could be assisted by Aristotle to live better than they otherwise might.

Going beyond Duns Scotus and Ockham, Luther's voluntarism is apparently confused and certainly extreme. He claimed that 'what God

source of much of Luther's confusion in the ex-Thomist Karlstadt's misrepresentations, in his *151* (Augustinian) *Theses*, both of Aquinas himself and of his own former 'master' Capreolus. These theses were published in 1517, only four months before Luther's *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*. Janz cites as evidence for Karlstadt's willingness to lie about his opponents a passage of *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (*WA* 18, 190) where Luther is even prepared to defend the pope against Karlstadt's 'lies' (Janz 1983: 120–2). Unfortunately, he seems never to have asked himself whether Karlstadt might also have lied about Aquinas and Capreolus.

[9] Cf. Janz (1983: 23).

wills is not right because he ought or was bound to will it; on the contrary, what takes place must be right because he so wills' (from *DSA* [*WA* 18, 707]). One of Luther's legacies has been that in taking over this version of divine commands, theologians and philosophers have been deceived into neglecting the perfectly sound (and once widely held) alternative that the reason God wills what is right is because his will is in accordance with his loving nature. On that scenario what is right is right not because God 'just' wills it but because his nature is such that he could 'do no other' without self-contradiction. One of the corollaries of Luther's position – we shall see it, for example, in Locke – is that such arbitrary 'rightness' can only be adhered to under threat of divine punishment. It just makes sense to obey and that 'sense' is moral obligation, as Hobbes and even at times such Catholic moderns as Peter Geach and Elizabeth Anscombe seem to have supposed.[10]

As with Scotus and Ockham, Luther's version of voluntarism is driven by desire to maintain the omnipotence of the 'hidden God'.[11] Like Augustine he was greatly exercised over the near certainty that few would be saved, since few even of the baptized were living godly lives. Particularly in his early days, as we should expect, he thought of himself as an Augustinian, but it was always to be a wholly consistent and systematic Augustine. Thus, whereas Augustine normally applies the term 'predestination' only to God's concern for those he wills to save, normally remaining silent as to 'predestination' to damnation, Luther moves closer to an explicitly double predestination, presumably supposing that only so can he preserve God's will unthwarted, and seemingly forgetful not only that God's will is thwarted every time sins are committed but also that God had himself limited its notional supremacy by the original gift of a genuine freedom to Adam.[12] Thus where Augustine seems uncertain, and even to contradict himself, Luther, looking for consistency, inclines to plump. Augustine's problem, as we have seen, is rooted in wanting to emphasize the incomprehensibility of God's justice, at least in deciding whom to save, while at the same time offering a 'Platonizing' account of justice whereby human justice 'partakes' of divine justice, and thereby becomes intelligible.

[10] Geach (1969: 117–29); for comment on Anscombe see Pink (2004: 159–85, especially 164). But it is not clear whether Anscombe holds that moral obligation depends *only* on divine *will* or whether its operation implies a divine will (with perhaps also a particular kind of divine nature necessitating such a will).

[11] For an introduction to the *Deus absconditus* see Dillenberger (1953).

[12] For Augustine's less careful period in his remarks about predestination and his eventual 'clarification' of his position see Rist (1994b: 269–72, 2008a: 117–18); for his view of the *servum arbitrium* see Rist (1994b: 272).

The incomprehensibility might seem to point towards a 'divine command' morality, which Augustine's account of participated justice would seem to deny. Luther, for his part, has no truck with participation and always exalts God's incomprehensibility: 'It is not for us to enquire about these mysteries but to adore them.… If God's justice were such as could be adjudged just by human seeking, it would not be divine … since he is the one true God, wholly incomprehensible and inaccessible to human understanding, it is reasonable, indeed inevitable, that his justice also should be incomprehensible' (*WA* 18, 707).

A still more fatal decision between two 'Augustinian' alternatives can be seen in the mature Luther's account of justification (*simul iustus et peccator*): when justified, we are both sinful and justified. Whereas, as we have seen, Augustine holds that in the process of salvation we are simultaneously improved (though still sinners), Luther denies any essential improvement – we are merely obedient: thus untying 'salvation' from moral excellence. It is here, in his doctrine of imputed righteousness, that we recognize the culmination of that separation of ethics from salvation towards which Scotus and others had pointed the road. Religion and ethics are at the parting of their ways and that parting, presumed to be Augustinian, is wholly in conflict with Augustine's 'eudaimonism', depending as it does for Luther (partly indebted, as we have seen, to Bernard of Clairvaux) on the non-Augustinian premise that after the fall man is '*wholly* turned to himself'.[13] As for theological freedom, whether of Augustine's 'greater' or 'lesser' variety, it is equally irrelevant. We are either slaves of God or slaves of the devil: that is how predestination is to be explained. None of us is free nor ever has been, unless in the sense that we are 'free' to follow whatever course God has assigned to us. In this way not only has freedom virtually disappeared, but all medieval concerns about whether we (or Adam) should be held responsible for our acts have to be reformulated. We are to be held responsible for what we have been preordained to enact. The 'original sin' of Adam produced the 'truly total fall' (*vere totus lapsus*) of human nature (*Commentary on Genesis, WA* 42.86). Such an extreme version of the theory of original sin was to prove the precursor of its demise.

In his account of freedom, Luther makes a peculiarly unfortunate and fatal departure from what is assumed in Augustine and spelled out during the central Middle Ages, not least by Aquinas who, like many others, distinguished a 'necessity *de re*' or *necessitas consequentis* (an absolute necessity)

[13] Cf. *Commentary on Galatians*, *WA* 26.117.

from a 'necessity *de dicto*' or *necessitas consequentiae* (a conditional – and in the case of God self-imposed – necessity). The former, applied to God's knowledge, would entail that because God foreknows the future, the future is pre-ordained, with no room left for any kind of human choice; the latter, while affirming that God knows what will be the case, including how men will choose, has no such 'fatalist' implications.[14] From the time of his *Lectures on Romans* (1515–16) Luther confounds these different types of necessity (*WA* 56, 382–3), thus showing that he understands the 'necessity' of the future in precisely the manner Augustine condemned in rejecting the fatalist tendency he found in Cicero. This confusion remains as Luther's consistent position, repeated particularly influentially in his rebuttal of Erasmus' treatise *On Free Choice*,[15] and it is clear that his 'shattering' of free will depends on his confused grasp of God's foreknowledge rather than on biblical or traditional considerations (e.g. *John's Gospel* 8:35). And just as his account of God's foreknowledge depends on a poor understanding of necessity, so his account of predestination depends on confusion about God's permissive will, so that by using expressions such as 'God also works evil deeds in the ungodly' (*Assertio Omnium Articulorum*, *WA* 7, 145), he gives more than an impression that God is the cause of evil (in that he has ordained and provided for reprobation from before the foundation of the world).

In all this theologizing, ethics has become irrelevant, whatever its role in our purely earthly existence. We are 'saved' by faith alone – a phrase Augustine used, as we have seen, but not in the Lutheran sense – and only by such faith come love and loving behaviour. That still points to *something* genuinely Augustinian – and already problematic among the

[14] For a wide-ranging discussion of the different types of necessity (with vast bibliography) see McSorley (1969: 229–38, 305–27). McSorley wants to claim (especially on pp. 313ff.) that Luther's argument looks determinist but was not intended to be. As far as the concerns of my present study go, what matters historically is what Luther's position looked like. I am nevertheless of the opinion that although his purpose was simply to preserve God's grace and to exclude any preceding human merit from salvation, the method he repeatedly chose to do this (against the earlier tradition) probably indicates that he was willing to pay the determinist price of his logical confusion. It is true, however, that he also regularly notes that the will is 'free' – apparently again with a freedom of indifference – in earthly matters: in the absence of God-given faith it can choose greater or lesser sins. That Luther neglected God's permissive will becomes clear in his account of the treacherous behaviour of Judas (*WA* 18, 720–1).

[15] Despite the similarity of title in the works of Erasmus and Augustine, Erasmus' own position is – surprisingly like the popular preaching of its time – radically un-Augustinian. Where Augustine thinks of true freedom, as we have seen, as the inability to sin, Erasmus defines 'free will' as an (Ockhamist) freedom of indifference: 'the power of the human will by which man can apply himself toward or turn himself away from the very things which lead to eternal salvation': Erasmus, *DLA* (ed. J. von Walter, Leipzig[2] 1935) 1 b 10, p. 19.

schoolmen: namely the denial of all real virtue to non-Christians; however, that claim is developed by Augustine to demonstrate how without belief in the Christian God our motives cannot be pure, whereas Luther is concerned solely with the lack in pagans of the exterior gift of faith – whether or not morally interiorized is irrelevant – for which the Gospel has given us the chance to hope. Luther agrees with Augustine and Paul both that grace is wholly gratuitous and that 'law serves to make us aware of our sinfulness', but differs in his account of God's mode of operation, holding, as we have seen, that faith does not change our character; indeed how could it since it is imposed from 'outside' without the simultaneous infusion of properly directed love? Such are the effects of the abandonment of eudaimonism.

Nevertheless, Luther retains something of the medieval variation on Augustine's attitude to pagan virtue since he believes that in social and political activities (*in inferioribus*) – irrelevant as these are to justification – man does retain 'free will' and is capable of choosing between good and evil (*WA* 18, 636; 56. 385 etc.). That this coheres with his account of necessity is highly doubtful. The problem, however, is not only about necessity: Luther further fails to distinguish different senses of 'free': 'free', as theologically free – hence he can say in O*n Enslaved Choice* that those who affirm free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) deny Christ (*WA* 18, 773) – from 'free' when affirming a liberty of indifference in civic life.

Luther is a divine command moralist for whom salvation depends on obedience alone: obedience, moreover, to a God whose actions are incomprehensible and to be worshipped as such. The Augustinianism is obvious, as is the non-Augustinian resolution of inherent tensions. In 'saving' Augustine so ineptly, Luther's long-term effect was to weaken Christianity as such. The question which must remain with us here is whether it is possible, without 'flattening' Augustine's uncertainties into an 'Augustinian' system – which in the end both destroys Augustine and generates an intolerable gap between salvation and ethics – to discover where and why Augustine went wrong. And it must be already apparent, from our discussion of earlier post-Augustinian figures, that at least part of the problem (unrecognized by Luther) lies in Augustine's conclusions or assumptions about the fall, first of the angels and then and more immediately, of Adam: not about an empirically recognizable human depravity – on which Luther exaggerated Augustine's position – but about the condition of man in his *unfallen* state. The nature of that state was, we recall, one of the concerns of Augustine's *bête noire* Julian of Eclanum.

At least in his earlier 'reformed' days, as we have seen, Luther claimed to be genuinely Augustinian. It would be well beyond the scope of the present discussion to enquire how far that claim is correct, but a few further characteristics of his thought relevant to our current concerns should be noted. The first is that Luther's Augustine was always the Augustine of Paul, especially the Paul of *Romans* and *Galatians*; the second is that another Augustine, the Augustine who emphasizes the role of love in the Christian life – the Augustine of *John's Gospel* and *Epistle* – is less in evidence: it is thus that in Reformation and post-Reformation debates about Augustine Catholics and Protestants often seem to talk past one another, neither giving much indication that Augustine's thought – let alone their appropriation of it – might be incomplete and anyway far from systematic.

Fundamental for Augustine, as we have seen, is that his God of grace works on the motivation and nature of the repentant sinner so that he becomes, or rather will become in the next life, perfect, indeed divinized, God not only working through him but transforming him so that he becomes a holy man. In Luther's world view God has nothing to do with 'holy' men (*WA* 40.2, 347): the products of a spuriously Christian upward path, for which Dionysius above all others was responsible – and we must avoid Dionysius and his mystical theology 'like a plague' (*WA* 39.1. 390).[16]

Again, while Luther agrees with Augustine that after the fall all our acts are driven by *concupiscentia*, his account of the workings of this *concupiscentia* is very different, in that since we are totally corrupted we cannot love God and ourselves at the same time. Luther, that is, has reflected inadequately on the notion of the divided self that Augustine so emphasized. The corollary of his position is the contradictory and psychologically implausible claim that to love God is to hate oneself.

And his practice began to follow his theory. Augustine held that the sacraments (as he understood them), above all the Eucharist, were the most basic means of grace that God has made available on an ongoing basis. Luther rejected or modified the traditional sacramental theology, and in particular the belief that the Mass is a sacrifice, fearing that it reflected salvation by works. He (and more strikingly his 'reformed' contemporaries and successors from Zwingli to Calvin) thus further 'externalized' the account of God's saving work, by a combination of historical discontinuity

[16] For further attacks on Dionysius see Nygren (1953: 706). Luther claimed to know from first-hand experience that Dionysius could not have been a disciple of Paul.

with a more or less rationalist (demythologized) account of salvation: an important step towards later Protestant attempts to construct a rational religion in forms often deist and Christ-less (and love-less) which, paradoxically, would have been anathema to Luther himself.

For Luther, virtue is the product of faith – in becoming faithful we do not simultaneously grow more virtuous – and consists in obedience to whatever the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, reveals, which faith will enable us to obey 'gladly and willingly'.[17] The Christian simply obeys God's rules, however incomprehensible they may be, and if he does so, he is of the kingdom of God – and thus at the same time both an enemy of God and a child of God, for, as Luther already explained in his early *Commentary on Romans* (*WA* 56.19), man's being 'accounted' righteous means not that he *is* righteous but that he is *held* to be righteous by God. In such a system there is ultimately no room for any rational ethics, though Luther (in this particular at least sounding like Augustine) still admits reason as useful in devising how to restrict the human excesses that threaten civil society. His combination of Biblicism and voluntarism – the latter intended, as in many of the scholastics, to preserve God's omnipotence as apparently taught in the Scriptures – thus leaves us with an anti-philosophical fideism not only in theology but even in accounting for the spiritual life. In the long run it could never satisfy an enquiring mind; hence such a mind must be denounced as seeking truth by blasphemous enquiry.

Scripture Alone (*sola Scriptura),* the third of Luther's principles, could now be preached – given that the role of the early Church in the formation of the New Testament canon was still unknown – as justification for his non-Augustinian reading of faith alone (*sola fides*) and in defiance of popish tradition.[18] For whereas Augustine had argued that the virtues are modes of love and the gift of faith a gift of God's love in the Holy Spirit, Luther, commenting on *Galatians* 5.6 in 1535 (*WA* 40^2.34.16), and *contrasting* faith – of which love is a product – with love, has to claim that for Paul justification is by faith *rather than* by love – in this rejecting not only Aquinas' *fides caritate formata* but Augustine's emphasis on the Pauline priority of love – now to be relegated, along with the virtues, to an effect of faith. With hindsight that is less surprising and novel than it might seem; we have already noted in earlier thinkers the fading of the

[17] Cf. *Sermon on Three Kinds of Good Life*, *WA* 44.240.

[18] Oberman reminds us that Melanchthon argued, against Luther, that *sola fides* does not determine Augustine's theory of justification (Oberman 1974: 77).

Augustinian emphasis on love in accounts of the 'will'. But Luther has gone much further, for however much the schoolmen dwelt on the squalidness of man's fallen condition, they still accepted Augustine's view that since after the fall we are not totally depraved, the impoverished love of God which remains within us can be strengthened by the gift of faith so as to form not only the root of the virtues but *the* necessary condition of salvation.[19] That, however, is not to deny that for Luther 'love' has its place in the Christian life, but to argue that Lutheran 'love' is not our repaired capacity for *eros* but God's love being channelled through us like water through a straw.[20]

As for the basic problem which Augustine bequeathed to his successors, as to how to find a psychologically coherent explanation of the fall, first of Satan, then of Adam, which would preserve human responsibility and hence an intelligible account of God's justice, Luther's neglect of the implications of the fall implies an unambiguous return to the original difficulties about its effects. God decided – inexplicably at least to us – that some would be saved and others would not: in this way all the difficulties generated from Anselm on were resolved not a jot, and this time no new Anselm would be forthcoming: rather theological morality was to be first gradually sidelined, then widely abandoned. Among the principal casualties were Augustine's own account of the primacy of love and its relation to 'will'.

In comparison with many of his contemporaries and successors Luther – notwithstanding his reckless language and defiant temper – still must count as a comparatively moderate Reformer; this is especially evident in his account of the Eucharist and the Real Presence. However from the earliest days of Reform, not least in the person of Huldrych Zwingli, there ran a very different current through two precursors of Calvin. Zwingli and Bucer were not only more theologically radical, but also far more affected by non-theological, 'humanist' dissatisfactions than were the theology professors of Wittenberg. Thus the goal of their activity was a curious combination of a theocratic blending of church and state with a creeping demythologizing – with hindsight some would say secularizing – of the Christian tradition. Their concerns were less with the theological specifics of salvation than with living a moral life in imitation of Christ that soon

[19] Nygren is right to point out that the mature Luther's analysis of self-love is very different from Augustine's (Nygren 1953: 709–16). One difference is that it is psychologically implausible, indeed destructive, and therefore (it is to be hoped!) less Christian.

[20] So again, rightly, Nygren (1953).

dispensed with sacraments as traditionally conceived and tended to dwell less on justification in Christ crucified than on the present workings of the Spirit in the community. Nor should we forget that the more 'radical' Reformation, the Reformation in which the true believer is guided by the (Holy) Spirit, was present almost from the outset: if, given *Sola Scriptura*, we do not know how to interpret Scripture, the Spirit will give us true guidance. But the problem of disagreement was not so easily settled: Who could tell whether someone else's 'Spirit' was (or is) holy or diabolical? Not only was popish authority abandoned but the Bible itself had become a text to be interpreted by religious feelings: eighteenth-century secular moral-sense theories had been preceded by their religious analogues.

Calvin's first published writing (in 1532) was on Seneca's *On Clemency* and a very humanist text. But hidden secularist tendencies apart – as in his call for the 'laicization' of the clergy – and despite a comparative lack of interest in justification by faith alone, as regards many of our more immediate concerns he seems largely to agree with Luther, despite at times giving different accounts of similar innovations. Thus where Luther taught two kingdoms, Calvin contrasted those who worship the true God with those who in defiance of the first commandment idolize saints (*Institutes* I.11.8): a new (and Old Testament) emphasis that encouraged an already well-established iconoclasm. Yet although not substantially later, the presuppositions of Calvin's mature writing already look like the work of a second generation. Some sort of 'Reformation' and breach with Rome is more or less taken for granted, so that – though there is certainly much heated and often bad-tempered rhetoric where judged appropriate – there is less passion spent on the 'evils' of the old dispensation, whether intellectual or ecclesiastical, and more on how to organize the new society, with a new emphasis on the rules and patterns of the Old Testament, especially the Ten Commandments, as a guide to doing so.[21] Like Luther, Calvin claims to follow Augustine closely, but unlike Luther he has little interest in the detailed fortunes or misfortunes of medieval theology. He rather ignores the scholastics, with the exception of Bernard of Clairvaux whom he finds highly congenial[22] – though, according to Calvin, Bernard

[21] Calvin's emphasis on law – including natural law – comes out strongly in his treatment of the Old Testament, with which he is far more concerned than is Luther; Luther, notoriously, is anti-Jewish (one may say virtually anti-Semitic), while it is less surprising that those more influenced by Calvin, not least the Dutch Republic and Cromwell in England, were far more prepared to be tolerant.

[22] According to Gerrish Calvin cites Bernard forty-one times (Gerrish 2004: 294). I have noted earlier Bernard's tendency to exaggerate Augustine's account of the depth of man's fall: a tendency welcome also to Luther. More generally for Bernard in Calvin see Lane (1996).

erred in retaining the misleading expression 'free choice' (*arbitrium*), and should have emphasized that our choice of evils is necessary, though unconstrained (*Institutes* II.2.7).

In his attitude to the organization of society Calvin resembles Melanchthon rather than Luther, and in 1527 Melanchthon had decided to re-introduce the despised *Nicomachean Ethics* into the course of studies to be pursued at Wittenberg, because it would prove useful for the lawgiver and his subjects in the new society. In effect he wanted to arrange for a more godly life, determined by theocratic rules and cultivated by obedience, for the *massa damnata*.[23] Obedience to such rules, as we should expect, had in itself nothing to do with salvation, which was entirely in God's hands, but it at least would bring more order to the Satanic 'kingdom' as identified by Luther himself. A morality of obedience to the divine commands of an inscrutable voluntarist God was to replace the more open-ended traditions of virtue ethics as still prescribed by the Roman Church; and in such matters of governance, law-making, discipline and obedience Calvin largely followed Melanchthon, similarly pressing Aristotle into the new Reformed project.

Yet for all the difference of historical context, Calvin – when compared with Luther – offers surprisingly little substantially original in basic theology, except on the Eucharist where he seems – in emphasizing the presence of the Holy Spirit – to try to find a way between Luther and Zwingli. True, there is now an unambiguous insistence on double predestination[24] – though later Reformed theologians made this more central to their mission than did Calvin himself – and again there is unhappiness with – and at times outright rejection of – the notion of God's permissive will;[25] again there is an unabashedly voluntarist account of God's nature (*Institutes* III.22.2), though in attempting to absolve God from the charge of acting on a merely arbitrary will, Calvin is more careful about

[23] For Melanchthon and virtue ethics see Kusukawa (1995: 62–74).

[24] Apart from the question of 'double predestination', we should note two further important deviations of Calvin from Augustine. Augustine denied the assurance of salvation; Calvin urged it – which strengthened those who believed their safety assured – though discouraging people from engaging in the depressing exercise of speculating on who is to be saved. Augustine believed that it is the clear teaching of Scripture that baptism (or martyrdom) is a necessary condition for salvation; hence – after Christ – all unbaptized are condemned. Calvin denies this – God can and does call otherwise, not least in the case of infants: God's election trumps the necessity of baptism (*Inst.* IV.15.20; cf. IV.16.26).

[25] 'Absurd chatter' (*Inst.* I 18.1); see Helm (2004: 125) and Trueman (2004: 237). For Calvin's philosophical sources see Partee (1977), Lange van Ravenswaay (1990) and Lane (1999).

the distinction between God's absolute and ordained power and prefers to think in terms of his hidden and revealed nature.[26]

Calvin hates what he considers pointless theological speculation, not least about what God might have done or could have done; we should content ourselves with what he has done (as some of the medievals had also observed). This attitude depends on his view not only of God's inscrutability but also of the weakness of the human mind after the fall, where he thinks that the schoolmen underplayed specifically intellectual 'depravity'. He is certainly anxious to deny any suggestion that God is a tyrant, but in matters of predestination where his will is 'the highest rule of righteousness' (*Institutes* III.23.2) he would have us assume that God's decrees, though just, are totally mysterious: not least in that he does not love all men equally. Indeed while Calvin says much about God's will, he has rather little to say about his love or indeed about love generally, which he largely reduces to obedience and piety. In this tendency to separate will and love he is in line with the trend we have noticed developing over the medieval centuries.[27]

It is sometimes argued that Calvin is aware that if God's 'absolute power' is arbitrary, we should have no reason for confidence in any 'covenant' with men that he has made by his 'ordained power'. The point is well taken, but it is not clear that Calvin would have accepted it.[28] Overall, the situation seems to be that Calvin is not a straightforward divine command theorist about morality, but that his great (and by his time traditional) emphasis on God's will and man's (dis) obedience very easily gives the impression that he is – and historically the impression was more important than the fact.

As for human beings, we possess a liberty of indifference, but of course not to choose between good and evil in the way Calvin believes most people assume.[29] Fallen human beings, though still possessed of a certain *sense* of good and evil, simply cannot choose to be good. The evil that they do is theirs and no-one else's, so that 'free' is counted as 'what derives from the agent' (in the Aristotelian manner); hence we are only free (Calvin, as

[26] Steinmetz (1997) argues that Calvin abandoned the distinction altogether. That seems incorrect; he merely used it more carefully – while worrying that it caused pointless speculation – and expressed doubts about the terminology.

[27] In Helm's generally excellent book on Calvin 'love' does not appear in the index. Haas remarks that 'Calvin understands the love of God as piety, which is essentially faith in God manifested by reverence and worship. The love of neighbour is understood by Calvin in terms of the concept of equity' (Haas 2004: 102).

[28] So Helm (2004: 321–2).

[29] *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* 69; *Institutes* II.2.7.

a good 'compatibilist' would prefer 'necessitated') to do evil. In his debate with the Catholic Pighi, he appeals to an originally Anselmian distinction – though he cites Bernard as his immediate source[30] – between the faculty of the will and its operation; we still have the faculty but it is defective. Yet whereas Anselm wants to use the distinction in an Augustinian manner to indicate that we are unable to use such a faculty to merit salvation, Calvin wants to use it to support the claim that we cannot do any kind of good, implying total depravity. Pighi was therefore right to argue that Calvin's position entails that God cannot repair the depraved soul but must replace it with a new and better version.

Whereas Augustine and the scholastics who follow him speak of the repairing or healing of the soul, Calvin prefers 'vivification' (*Institutes* III.3.3), since man is not injured but dead, though for the elect some sort of 'resurrection' of the soul will precede the resurrection of the body, which can occur only at the Last Judgement. In that case, as Pighi argued, God has not repaired the soul but after its death created another exactly similar. For though a dead body may be brought back to life, how can *this* life itself be brought back to life? (In the last book of his *Republic* Plato had long ago argued that if vice cannot kill the soul then nothing can.) Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Calvin's account of the soul after God has worked on it is genuinely Augustinian. As Helm puts it, 'We are free when our will is renewed by the Spirit to the point where it is effective in producing properly motivated choices or decisions which conform to the commands of God' (Helm 2004: 180). Of course, Augustine thinks that such a state is possible only after our present life.

As for Adam and Eve, Calvin replies to the question we put to Augustine – why did not God create the first pair incapable of sinning? – by simply appealing to our inability to understand God's nature and purposes (*Institutes* I.15.8). As for the puzzle of the fallen angels, he has an unambiguous answer; they are simply reprobate (III.23.4): all problems solved, though at a price! In the strictly voluntarist tradition we can assume any problem about the fate of the angels has dropped out of sight, as would angels themselves soon enough.

Despite his views on our fallen state, but appropriately for a man who began his literary career with a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*, Calvin is more interested than Luther in 'pagan' virtue and in civic virtue more generally. Even after the fall God mercifully maintains some

[30] *Bondage* 209. For discussion see Helm (2004: 163), though Helm thinks that Calvin's move against Pighi is successful.

unstable vestige of natural law in human hearts – without which help men would always turn to evil and idol worship – but this apparently remaining trace of unfallen rationality and goodness should be deployed only in ordering civil society, not in idle theological speculation (II.2.13). To this end and, as we have seen, following Melanchthon rather than Luther, Calvin also finds a new use for the law in that it informs the elect on their duties in society (III.19.15).[31] Such concern with civic duties, and hence with the construction of a 'reformed' state and society, goes far to explain the spread of a 'Calvinist' politico-theological Reformation, proactive and always tending to theocracy. Luther who, unlike Calvin, had no legal training, short-sightedly called in the secular powers to preserve his revolution (and outside Germany too rulers such as Henry VIII and, more effectively, Elizabeth I were happy to oblige, on their own terms); Calvin, together with many of the 'sectaries', preferred the theocratic alternative of uniting spiritual and political power in the hands of the godly. Indeed for Calvin, good works, while they have nothing to do with justification, have become a clear mark of the justified individual. In Augustine, works – and the beginning of sanctification – accompany justification; in Calvin's brand of Augustinianism they follow upon it.

A number of later Protestant reformers in the Calvinist tradition – such as the Arminians (or Remonstrants) condemned in 1618 at the Synod of Dort – attempted to salvage human responsibility by rejecting Calvin's (double) predestination and proposing a strong account of the freedom of the will. That they were so immediately an unsuccessful minority demonstrates how far double predestination – with its denial of any human activity in works of salvation and willingness to pay the price for maintaining God's omnipotence (as then understood) by disavowing an intelligible explanation of his saving acts – was an essential mark of the ultra-Augustinian reaction to the 'new Pelagians' of the Roman Church and its 'Aristotelian' theologians. Time would show that if God's justice could not be better protected, God himself could be discarded – rather as long before the pagan gods had paid a similar price for their immoralities.

Calvin's high valuation of the 'morality' of civic duty in a theocratic universe easily developed into a mere morality of civic duties, without theological or metaphysical underpinnings. The splitting off of the Protestant states of Western Christendom into Catholic and Protestant regions, and the fissiparous nature of Protestantism, pointed towards an ethic which forgot about 'external' salvation and began to develop inexorably into the

[31] See Haas (2004: 83–105, esp. 97).

marginalizing of God or the dispensing with him altogether. Catholics, as we shall see, clung longer to an inexplicable voluntarism (in so doing evolving forms of papal 'Calvinism'), and thus lagged well behind the Protestants in developing a more godless morality. However for them, a rather different theistic alternative became more widespread: a new variety of fideism which was neither a literal Biblicism nor a blind predestinarianism, but a 'sceptical' acceptance of the status quo within the Catholic country one happened to inhabit.

Aristotle was new to the thirteenth century, Plato to the fifteenth, and there were other philosophies from antiquity still to be retrieved or more widely taken seriously: with the translation of Sextus Empiricus in 1562, the Scepticism of Pyrrho (and not merely the 'academic' version of Cicero) reappears in the sixteenth century in the thought of Montaigne (as perhaps through him to a degree in Shakespeare). Epicureanism – already important for Machiavelli – will soon help form the outlook of Gassendi, while Stoicism plays a similar role for Justus Lipsius and, to a degree, Grotius.[32] Both Montaigne and Gassendi have been read as Christian fideists,[33] but when Montaigne adopted Scepticism his aim was very different from that of the ancient Sceptics. These supposed that by recognizing that philosophers ever disagreed and that knowledge could be found neither through the mind nor through the senses, they could obtain serenity of mind by suspension of judgement, but Montaigne's primary concern was to find a solution to problems in religion without taking part in the religious violence become endemic in Europe since Luther fractured the unity of Western Christendom. *Cuius regio eius religio* was the pragmatic solution in a post-Reformation age that thus stood in need of philosophical suggestions for relieving the social tension. The adopting of a sceptical stance was one answer, for the ancient Sceptics held that in the absence of

[32] Already in 1431 Lorenzo Valla had written *De Voluptate* in which he tried to present Epicureanism (rather than Aristotelianism or Stoicism) as a stepping stone to Christianity, but Gassendi's anti-Aristotelian theories in physics provided a strong personal motivation for a renewed attempt to make a sanitized Epicureanism acceptable to Christians. The sanitizing included a rejection of Epicurus' denial of providence: one of the reasons for hostility to him among the Christian Fathers who regarded such denial as a common form of 'atheism'. But Gassendi remained a voluntarist, constantly falling back on God's incomprehensibility, not least in harmonizing free will with predestination. For more detail see Osler (1991: 155–74).

[33] Pascal (and others) thought otherwise, taking Montaigne's views, especially on death, to be thoroughly pagan (*Pensées* 680). Pascal seems to have supposed Montaigne to be 'tribally' Catholic, born into a Catholic society and remaining a nominal, even practising member of the community: something not to be thought surprising or unusual.

philosophical certainty one did best to follow the customs of the country (or of its rulers).

Many of those who, after the Council of Trent, hoped to return to more ancient ways still inclined to accept such pragmatic advice. Those who did not might compound a Scotist univocity of being with a defence of certainty that Scepticism seemed to demand. Thus were laid the foundation stones for a Cartesian account of being which first relegated God to a necessary but abstract first principle, then explained the 'rest' of the universe as a mathematical construction allowing for a quasi-mathematical certain knowledge and a strictly mechanical explanation of a material world within which God was no more than an epistemological guarantee.

Yet the Fathers of Trent, however unthinkingly, were neither fideists, nor pragmatists, nor determinists, and by the fourth canon of the sixth session of the Council decreed that man is free to accept or reject the grace of God. That was not only a rebuff to theological determinism but, at least by implication, to any form of determinism. As we have seen, Augustine's original proposals about free will were limited to theological questions: he held that in our present life we have lost the freedom of the angels and of Adam before the fall. We are free only in the sense that our unworthy actions are genuinely ours, and cannot be disowned as due to another or to anything beyond ourselves – and that in heaven the saints enjoy a compatibilist freedom; like God they are unable to sin. True freedom, thus, does not entail any absolute liberty of choice.

Nevertheless, Augustine held that in our fallen state we are free in the sense of free to do various kinds of wrongs; we are not, that is, determined *tota mente*. Now, Trent is saying (but without doing the metaphysics) that we are free to reject that grace directed to salvation that is, of course, wholly 'unmerited' – hence confirming that our actions in general cannot be wholly determined. Thus Trent spelled out what Augustine assumed but largely declined to discuss and Anselm tried to clarify. Nevertheless, making anti-determinism more or less explicit is to allow, in the spirit of Scotus and Ockham, that some sort of wider than Augustinian freedom is to be understood as a condition of earthly existence. 'Freedom' thus becomes *both* the capacity simply to follow what is good and (in a much more limited version) to say yes or no or not interested to grace, and hence yes or no to a wide range of 'non-theological' options within, of course, certain necessary parameters imposed by human life in general and individual circumstances.

As we have seen, the leading Protestant reformers rejected such an interpretation of 'fallen' freedom as implying, if not explicitly teaching, a

new Pelagianism – even though Trent accepts that the beginnings of faith (however understood) are entirely God's work. But Trent, largely avoiding wider philosophical issues, concentrated more on what was to be rejected (not least about justification) than about how disputes between the medieval schools should finally be resolved and tended to avoid the technical language of scholasticism in the aim of concentrating on essentials without being bogged down.[34]

Yet Luther's and Calvin's claims were not least based on their reading of Augustine and, Trent notwithstanding, similar readings persisted also among Catholics. For Trent seemed to have taught that without a certain libertarian freedom – though not a freedom of complete indifference since we retain something of a natural love for God and goodness – we cannot be justly rewarded or punished. Historically that might seem problematic, given that an important part of Augustine's original position – and one which no-one yet wanted to repudiate – was a version of the doctrine of original sin according to which we are *all* liable to a *just* punishment (unless baptized), regardless of whatever personal sins we may commit. Perhaps the Fathers of Trent insisted on a certain, if limited, libertarian freedom not least as a result of concern not only for virtuous pagans (perhaps benefitting from a baptism of desire), but also over the traditionally assumed damnation of many baptized Christians. For in light of their sacramentally reinforced natural inclination to goodness and now freed from the guilt of original sin they could only be guilty of specific and reprehensible *personal* sins.

The immediate impact of the Tridentine decree can be recognized in the definition of freedom proposed by Luis de Molina (1536–1600), the Spanish Jesuit who developed a more free-wheeling and 'contemporary' account of much of the work of Aquinas – including concessions to voluntarism – than the Dominicans could accept. According to Molina, 'an agent is said to act freely when … he can at the same time act and not-act, or when, acting in a certain way, he can equally act in the opposite sense' (*Concordia*, q.14, a. 13, disp.2, Rabeneck). Such definitions were widely glossed with reference to Scotus' account of contingencies; according to Gabriel Vasquez, for example, freedom must entail an ability to act otherwise at the very moment when one is acting; thus not only the future but the present is contingent (*Comm. in* S. *Th.* 1, q.8–23, a. 5). Suarez too (1548–1617), Molina's leading supporter among the Jesuits, confirms that

[34] Cf. Ruckert (1971: 162–94).

Scotus' views on contingency had become widely accepted in his Order, and those views, as we have seen, were intended to safeguard the free will of the angels, ourselves and above all of God (*Disp. Met.* 19, a.9, 3).[35]

But for our present purposes their significance is much wider, for now we have in effect a claim – foreshadowed by Scotus – that God, in creating the angels, knew that such a state of near indifference, with its fearful option of a radical decision for good or evil, is – at least this side of heaven – the greatest gift he could give. Ockham's liberty of indifference – open to maximizing the value of autonomy and interpreted in accordance with Scotus' account of the contingency even of present acts – is on its way to being established as the greatest good within the universe. From our contemporary standpoint the potential 'secular' implications of such a position are obvious.

On natural law too it is reasonable to think of Suarez as an intermediary figure between the older Catholic orthodoxy of Scotus and Aquinas and versions of natural law theory that were to supersede it, especially in the Protestant world. For although Suarez agreed with the older natural lawyers that natural law depends on the eternal law, he agreed with Scotus that of itself such law could not generate an obligation such as would intelligibly motivate fallen man. For that, he assumed (and attributed to Aquinas) the idea that obligation can only be understood in terms of the commands of a superior figure, ultimately of God (*De Legibus* 1.1.7; 1.3.3; 1, 5, 12 etc.). Given the dependence on eternal law, however, such 'natural' obligations are no external *imposition* on human nature, since they and it are in accord with God's rational plan. Suarez proposed this account of obligation as mediating between what he saw as the erroneous view of Gregory of Rimini (2.6.3) that, even if God did not exist, rational moral rules would be (or should be) binding, and the extreme alternative of Ockham that it is God's command alone which makes them so (2.6.4).[36]

[35] For detailed discussion see Schmutz (2002: 180–6). Trent itself apparently wanted to teach a more or less Augustinian account of freedom after the fall: free will is not destroyed but fatally weakened (Cap. 1, D 1521).

[36] For details see especially Schneewind (1998: 59–62). This sort of account of the relationship between obligation and rationality among Spanish Thomists (Vitoria and Vazquez as well as Suarez) is duly noted by Finnis (1980: 45–7). My comments on Suarez as an intermediate figure between an old and a newer ('modern') philosophical world prescind from the wider question of whether, in passing the primacy in philosophy from metaphysics to epistemology, Suarez has radically widened the gap between the two worlds and should thus be seen as a precursor of (and perhaps a substantive source for) the primacy accorded to epistemology by Descartes. For wide-ranging and recent discussion of Descartes' attitude to his philosophical past, see Biard and Rashed (eds. 1997).

But those Jesuits who, promoting something approaching a liberty of indifference, claimed to be followers of Aquinas,[37] did not command the Catholic field, even in their own order. More widely, many Catholics took a more Augustinian, even 'Calvinist' approach, holding that anything like a liberty of indifference is an illusion, and that at least in matters of salvation, we are not free but bound. Here then we can identify the final version of the theological, as distinct from the coming secular, account of the 'determined' (at least morally determined) will. Yet from that prospective secular viewpoint we are also to see freedom of indifference condemned by Hobbes (and by Spinoza), this time as introducing an unwarranted and unintelligible breach in the chains of causation. And we should remember that it was Scotus, ironically the origin of post-Tridentine 'libertarian' thinking, who also – and coherently – denied that in our natural state (whether before or after the fall) we have any inborn inclination to the good as such, as distinct from the good of our individual species.

That sort of Scotism, however, was far from the mind of the Tridentine fathers, but to understand the problem further we must return to another feature of Scotus' original position: that freedom (as he understands it) is metaphysically part of the very essence of the will, such that without it we should not 'have' a will. And since the effect of prevenient grace is not to destroy the will but to reform it, some sort of cooperation by the 'indifferent' will is essential. That conclusion was accepted by Molina, Vasquez and Suarez but misunderstood and denied by the Dominicans who, in the notorious controversy *De auxiliis* at the beginning of the seventeenth century, branded it Pelagian.[38] The papal resolution of that dispute was in effect an evasion of resolution, taking the view that the issue was philosophical rather than theological. That it was in fact both the Jesuits recognized when they accused their opponents of determinism (or more precisely, as they supposed, of Calvinism).

[37] In one important respect the Jesuits showed themselves more 'Thomist' than the older-fashioned Dominicans and, following the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria, responded to critiques of the influence of the 'pagan' Aristotle by commenting not on Aristotle directly but on Aquinas.

[38] That neither the Jesuits nor the Dominicans could fully comprehend Augustine's position (or rather positions) on prevenient grace – in no small part because they could not recognize his use of Stoic theories of motivation – is well explained by Byers (2012: 188–214). In the event the pope was right to suspend what was – for historical reasons unknown to him – bound to be an ultimately futile controversy.

This is not the place to investigate the continuing debates, not least in the Sorbonne, which the papal ruling failed to end.[39] More important for what was to come was that Descartes, a philosopher who in many ways can sound Augustinian[40] – as in his emphasis on the need to start thinking with the 'I' (though his abstract rationalism is quite remote from Augustinian interiority) and in his desire to overcome Scepticism rather than find ways of accommodating it. Yet he reveals himself as radically un-Augustinian – indeed as precursor and symbol of an ever less Augustinian world – in advancing the thesis that all serious metaphysical theorizing should be based on epistemological claims about the power of an abstract rationality by which he claimed not only to find his own self but to be able to form clear and distinct ideas of God as necessary existent and undeceiving source of goodness.

Descartes' proposed new direction resulted not least from his acceptance of the view – by now popularly associated with Bernard of Clairvaux – that possession of some sort of 'free will' especially distinguishes humankind as in the image of God.[41] With the question as to what kind of freedom Descartes thinks we now possess, the similarity with Bernard seems to end; nevertheless, at least some sort of 'freedom' of the human will best indicates our likeness to God. That human minds and wills are *inferior* versions of the divine is supposed to explain why we can have no idea of God's plans (I 248) and why final causes cannot be invoked, whether in physics (III 341) or in ethics. But if we can have no idea of God's plans, not least because parts of the universe, and more especially human beings, show themselves so imperfect, how can we know what Descartes thinks we know about God's will? Descartes falls back on saying that what we *can* do is imitate God's consistency of purpose.

[39] But see Boulnois (2002: 199–237, esp. 208–19). One of Descartes' immediate sources, on his own admission, was Guillaume Gibieuf: see Boulnois (2002: 208–19). In what follows references to Descartes are to the three-volume edition of J. Cottingham and others (Cambridge 1984, 1985, 1991).

[40] The seeming Augustinianism was noticed by several of his contemporary correspondents who pointed out apparent similarities between the *cogito* and the Augustine of *CD* 11.26. Descartes replied that he had not read this text and that the argument is so obvious that it could occur to virtually anyone. But there are other relevant texts of Augustine, and Descartes always wanted to appear theologically acceptable. For documentation see Janowski (2004). (Descartes always also wanted to appear anti-Aristotelian, and according to Menn (1998) found help in this regard (but of course omitting the teleology) in Plato's *Timaeus*. For Menn (1998: 15) Descartes hoped to base physical mechanism on Augustinian theology.)

[41] Bernard was peculiarly respected during this period; I have already noted the favourable press he received from Luther and Calvin. For more on Descartes see Raglund (2006: 377–94). Descartes regarded the freedom of the human will (like the *cogito*) as self-evident.

Whatever the truth about his plans, Descartes holds that God possesses some sort of liberty of indifference, not least because his will must be wholly unrestricted; thus he could – *more* Ockham – have commanded us to hate him (*Writings* III.343, a letter to Burman). The situation must be different for human beings, not least because the nature and degree of human freedom is affected by our knowledge or lack of it. God's indifference safeguards his omnipotence; ours, insofar as it exists, is of the 'lowest' kind, since it can be trumped or diminished by growth in understanding or by God's grace. That seems to leave Descartes – who claims to want to limit himself to philosophy and avoid the dangerous pitfalls of theology – with an extreme voluntarism in his account of God and a rather original position in his account of human beings. For he thinks that, as in metaphysics so in ethics, we must start all over again, and in the meantime have little option but to accept the laws and traditions of the societies to which we belong: in this seeming to recall Montaigne. Yet though we thus appear ethical ignoramuses, Descartes supposes he can set us on the path to what would eventually be a significant moral theory.

Descartes' ideas about freedom are thus ambiguous; however, some of the ambiguity may be explained by developments in his thought and the ongoing wars, whether Jansenist or secularist, about determinism into which, to his regret, he found himself drawn. As we have seen, he holds that we enjoy a freedom of indifference bounded by a developing capacity to form clear and distinct ideas about morality. As we learn, so we move towards a very different concept of freedom, more like Augustine's original 'greater' freedom at least in that our greater understanding generates a disposition to act rationally, and so we move gradually into a more 'compatibilist' condition.

Nevertheless, it is not hard to see why the Holy Office suspected Descartes of a determinism that denied the freedom of the will. From one standpoint he, like Aquinas, could be damned as an 'intellectualist'; from another, influenced by the underlying Scotism of current accounts of the freedom of indifference, he tried to maintain a more libertarian balance. As he puts it himself, 'understanding is the passivity of the mind, and willing is the activity' (III 182). He certainly believed that God has endowed us with a capacity to think out the best moral option and to persevere in it. But as to how our 'freedom' is compatible with God's determinations he cannot know (I 206). If it were not, however, we could not be praised or blamed (I 205) for actions assuredly our own.

Despite his continuing voluntarism, Descartes' ethical writings, driven by the rationalism so patent in his metaphysics, contain much that

indicates a new – and to many uncomfortably Pelagian – revisionism in the Catholic moral world.[42] They fell well short of winning acceptance even in France, but they reveal a certain parallel with some of the ideas of those revisionist Protestants in England who developed the preaching of Benjamin Whichcote (1609–83) and became known as the Cambridge Platonists: a group united not only in its rejection of Calvinism but in its recognition of the by now growing threat of atheism,[43] not only in its Epicurean form as a rejection of providence or as some sort of Stoicizing pantheism, but as a denial decreasingly less implicit of God's existence.

Although the 'Platonists' had no more time for Cartesian mechanism than for the materialist determinism of Hobbes or the theological predestinarianism of the Calvinists, they shared with Descartes a renewed emphasis on love: primarily human love in Descartes but also divine love among the Cambridge group.[44] Yet this apparent similarity masks a more fundamental difference: Descartes proposes a yet more radical distinction between reason and the passions than those medievals who invoked 'will' or 'love' in their rival accounts of human virtue and vice; rather his reason is of the arid 'rationalist' sort, with no necessary connection with the power of love, whether Christian or other: a strange position for one who is often claimed, and as we have noted not entirely unjustly, to be much influenced by Augustine. And he nevertheless maintained that love, when guided by reason, is able to modify the other passions, opening up the eventuality of our loving God above all things.

Here we might suppose some account of grace to be invoked, but Descartes avoids that. As we do not know God's plans, whether (with or without grace) we earn merit by such love is better left aside: an agnostic position very different from that of the Cambridge Platonists, though

[42] The Holy Office censured the *Meditations*, published in 1641, for its apparent determinism, too close to that of Jansen whose *Augustinus* had appeared slightly earlier (1640). Yet in *Meditations* IV Descartes' remarks about human perfectibility look all too Pelagian! It is not difficult to see why he claimed to wish to avoid theology!

[43] Henry More's *Antidote against Atheism* was published in 1662 (very few years after the end of the rule of the godly); Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* (where we are told in the subtitle that *the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted*) in 1678. Later we see the reign of Charles II similarly targeted by Bishop Berkeley. By way of a repudiation of atheism Lord Herbert of Cherbury (*De Veritate*, third edition, 1645, p. 126) holds that God has planted an innate notion (*notitia communis*) of religion in all human beings (cf. p. 295), though evil men (such as priests) may pervert this natural capacity and we all can make mistakes in deploying our innate knowledge. The Platonists – perhaps influenced by Origen – held a similar view. Whichcote defines man as an *animal religiosum* – and he generally regards Islam as a rather gross example of such perversion. See further Pailin (2008: 94–7).

[44] For recent discussion see Armour (2008: 113–29).

once again provoking comparison in its potential for secularism. For the Platonists, who reject voluntarism, offer a robust account of free will (On this Cudworth wrote a treatise in which both determinism and indifferentism are denied.[45]) and hold that goodness depends on God's nature not on his 'meer' (or 'arbitrary') Will. Hence in his *True Intellectual System* (1.2.3) Cudworth reinstated Plato's original insistence that knowing the Good is inseparable from loving the Good, thereby denying a separate 'will', let alone a separate faculty of the will.[46] Indeed the very possibility of morality depends on our possessing what Henry More, in his *Encheiridion Ethicum* (1666), called (in Plotinian language) the 'boniform faculty': that is, the still God-given capacity for an intellectual love of goodness entailing the free, autonomous capacity to *make* (moral) judgements. Such a unified capacity, of course, excludes any freedom of indifference, and without such an intellectual love of goodness – this Cudworth noted in a sermon preached before the House of Commons – mere duty generates a 'dead law of outward works'.[47]

For Cudworth, goodness itself derives not from God's will but from his nature (*True Intellectual System* 1. 2.3). Hence without God there would be no morality. But the account of the 'will' in the Platonists advances much further in a Plotinian, not to say a Pelagian, direction, Cudworth at least, as both Platonist and anti-voluntarist, having no time for any freedom of indifference, nor, of course, for the determinism of Hobbes; indeed there is good reason to believe that he held, as Darwall puts it, that 'morality obligates only because self-determining agents can bring moral motives to bear in their own practical reasoning'.[48] We can choose – even after deliberation – not to be 'free' to do right; indeed if not, we should

[45] Armour notes that in Cudworth's view Hobbes' rejection of free will entails atheism (Armour 2008: 117).

[46] Armour comments that Cudworth rejects what he calls the 'pool cue theory of the will … the will is not a thing which pushes other things around', and (following Hutton) that it is 'the goodness of God, not the will of God that animates the world … That good, I am sure, turns out to be love' (Armour 2008: 119). See further Breteau (2008: 142–4). For Cudworth Descartes' account of the creation of 'eternal truths' by the divine will is as obnoxious as any Calvinist version.

[47] Cf. Patrides (1969: 123). Cudworth too cites Plotinus as seeing God as a 'boniform light' – so Armour (2008: 122) – but despite Cudworth's admiration for him, he cannot be the model for a Christian (albeit anti-Calvinist) philosopher. Perhaps Origen – respected as both Christian and non-determinist (and more) by Cudworth and More – might better fill that role: see Breteau (1996: 127–48).

[48] Cudworth speaks of practical reasoning because he thinks that though we are able with our theoretical intellect to think about morality, that aspect of intellect is inert; it is the practical intellect that is the combination of love and motivating reason. For a ground-breaking account of Cudworth see Darwall (1995: 109–48). Breteau (without reference to Darwall) recognizes in Cudworth a similar notion of autonomy (2008: 145). Of earlier works Passmore's full-length study (1951) is still of great value, but see the critical comments of Attfield (2008: 147–58).

not be capable of acting in a godlike way by always *in fact* choosing the right. That means that we must be self-legislating in the sense that we can reason to moral behaviour exactly as God can and without the need for divine assistance (though thereby winning divine approval, not least for our recognition of reality). So while in the Augustinian tradition from medieval times on, 'ought' implies 'cannot' for man in his fallen state, for the Cambridge Platonists 'ought' more or less explicitly implies 'can', as otherwise we cannot justly be called to account by God (nor indeed by man).[49]

The presence in Descartes of voluntarism and its absence in the Platonists indicates a further substantial difference. In contrast to Descartes' God, hidden in an incomprehensibility resembling that taught by Luther and Calvin, the Cambridge group, for all its Platonist exterior – and in deliberate reaction against English Calvinism whether inside or outside the established Church – followed the 'proto-deist' Lord Herbert of Cherbury (d. 1648) in seeing morality as the core of rational religion and (for all its appealing to the Scriptures) espoused a natural theology intelligible without revelation. Yet though natural religion can be harmonized with Christianity, it is not specifically Christian. Since it is from traditional Christianity that problems about the fall and predestination derive which worried the Cambridge Platonists and helped generate the confessional wars of their times, this emphasis on religion as morality could only have the effect of moving their residual Christianity further away from the peculiarly troublesome 'religious' aspects of the Christian Scriptures they so regularly invoked. Any hard-core Reformer could argue that even their account of love was 'more Platonist than Christian', reiterating the charge brought by Luther against the writings of Ps-Dionysius, a favourite among the Cambridge group.

First the proto-deist Lord Herbert; then the Cambridge Platonists: it was beginning to look as though the reaction against Calvinist (and supposedly Augustinian) excesses was leading many Protestants – far from a turn to Catholicism – away from religion and to metaphysics, or agnosticism, or even, with Hobbes, to de facto atheism. Perhaps not religion but metaphysics could save moral obligation, indeed morality itself; perhaps some interpretation of love could return victorious: so the Platonists, in the spirit of Ficino, hoped.

[49] See especially Darwall (1995: 130–44), not least his comments on Cudworth's Stoicizing – but also Augustinian – vocabulary: '*autexousy*', *sui potestas* etc. Indeed Cudworth attributes a view of God's *autexousia* to Plato himself.

Though Descartes was wrongly suspected of denying free will, his ambiguous account of our liberty of indifference makes the charge intelligible. It is not clear how far his hesitations are due to a conflict between a more 'Tridentine', semi-Scotist account of free will, and the revived 'Augustinianism' of Bishop Jansen. When we turn to Pascal, Nicole and Arnauld, the Jansenism is more obvious. All of them reject Descartes' 'rationalism' and universalism in theology. Pascal, though devoted to Augustine, is no friend to philosophy, regarding it, at least in its contemporary form, as liable to point towards scepticism and so subversive of Christian truth, not least about morality – as is hardly surprising since arguments for God's very existence are urged at one moment and doubted the next (*Pensées* 5).[50] Furthermore philosophers are always talking about a God of natural religion – understood through some theory of univocity – not about 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' (*Pensées* 417): thus treating not of Christianity but in effect of something else.

For Pascal, of Christian truths none is more important than the uniquely Christian doctrine of original sin, as expounded by Augustine, and pointing up the perversion of love as self-love (*Pensées* 434). Christian truth also tells us that few are saved (*Pensées* 179) – and only by the inscrutable workings of God's grace which alone can grant the love necessary for salvation. Submission to Christ and his Church is the only recourse, and Pascal is inclined to dismiss even the Jesuit-Jansenist disputes of his day – in which he had become deeply involved – as a sideshow in which the Jesuits are clearly the 'bad guys'. His position is curiously illuminating in that he tries to reconcile the Augustine of love and the Augustine of unresolved problems about grace and free decision – though overlooking the crucial significance of the fall of the angels – in a world which has little time for high-minded nostalgia and wants its problems resolved by the newly fashionable rationalism one way or another.

Pascal's attitude is revealing in a second and perhaps more important respect. In turning his back on the rationalists he could only contribute to the increasing intellectual isolation of Catholic philosophers, Augustinian or not. In the post-Tridentine world of the Index of Prohibited Books and the Roman Inquisition, *intellectual* dealing in – even understanding

[50] For the development of moral 'probabilism' during this period see Kantola (1994). Notice that Kantola rejects the extreme view of Hacking (1975) that before the early modern period uncertainty was virtually always resolved by weighing of authorities rather than by rational investigation. Note too that Pascal developed 'probabilist' arguments for theism, preferring rationally acceptable probability accompanied by faith to the Cartesian search for certainty in metaphysics.

of – the new science and the new theologies – withered on the vine. While Calvinism tended to collapse into deism, Catholicism simply stagnated, only beginning to come to intellectual life once more in the nineteenth century: hence then (and now) forced to play 'catch-up' in a game of which it had lost awareness of the conventions and practices. This defensive stance had a further result in a Catholic obscurantism comparable to that of the hated Calvinists, when after Trent Catholics too developed a more ruled-based, obedience-driven account of the moral life, resulting in an elaborate casuistry that lasted more or less until the Second Vatican Council.

Pascal's friends were even less clear-headed than he about how to proceed. His one-time assistant, Pierre Nicole (1625–95), developed an idea of his master into a curious account of the 'morality' possible for the non-elect that, with a little mental gymnastics, could be adopted as the morality of the ordinary man. As the doctrine of predestination, and the concomitant apparent injustice of God, began to lose appeal or was condemned, it might seem as though this 'morality for the ordinary man' could be adapted as an alternative to *any* traditional moral theology. Finally, the Port-Royal revival of a form of Catholic 'Calvinism' (some supposed it Augustinianism) could thus (again) point to a moral code with little religious content at all.[51] Despite appearances, it might seem as though the 'laxist' Jesuits and the rigorist supporters of Port-Royal were pulling in the same direction, towards a morality which must remain either unintelligibly based – though supposedly Augustinian in retaining the link between morality and salvation – or able to do without God altogether.

Nicole is concerned to find a basis for an ethics of the ordinary man such as will encourage him to become more religious. His surprising suggestion – developed from Pascal's tenet that everyone seeks personal contentment – is that such an ethics – all that is possible for the vast majority of mankind – can be constructed on the basis of an enlightened self-love (*amour propre*). This curious, quasi-Hobbesian move is possible, according to Nicole, because the social effects of such self-love are exteriorly hardly distinguishable from those of charity. Because an enlightened self-love wishes above all to secure the love of other people, it has to conceal its nature and act as though it were an altruistic charity. God's

[51] Jansenism, though the most powerfully expressed, and in Pascal's emphasis on love the most Augustinian, was not the first attempt at a 'Catholic' Calvinism in Augustine's name. An earlier version, that of Michael Baius – in effect a bizarre mixture of 'Calvinism' and Pelagianism – had already been condemned. For helpful discussion of Baius see De Lubac (1965: 1–339, esp. 1–48); also McGrath (2005: 349–50).

judgements are inscrutable, but following this 'shadow' morality may bring some sort of happiness and social order. And if that is the goal, and God unknowable, what other option do we have? If salvation is for the elect, at least 'morality' can be for the rest – and if election has become discredited, then (once again) only 'morality' is left. But can morality be built on the basis of self-interest? Is it then anything more than a device to secure what is convenient – a convenience that can and presumably can only – be based on human nature viewed without reference to God and God's will?

The 'Jansenism' of Nicole resembles Calvinism in its emphasis on predestination and associated problems, but differs markedly in its social and political implications, even apart from its retained sacramentalism. Calvinism, as we have seen, demanded a Calvinist society, and bred social and sectarian divisiveness to a degree many found terrifying. But perhaps something of its Protestant essence could be preserved without too many of its political, theocratic and eventually even theological imperatives. Making a start in that direction was the programme of Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), a professor of theology at Leiden, and his followers (often known as Remonstrants).

After a shaky start, Arminianism became hugely influential, and while retaining a modified account of predestination, rejected the double predestination of Calvin, placing great emphasis on the freedom of the will to accept or reject 'sufficient' prevenient grace. Those affected by the movement during the seventeenth century included Grotius and the Cambridge Platonists (as well as the Anglican and Erastian 'Laudians', reacting similarly to Puritan excesses). A powerful – not to say exotic – version of it is to be found in the writings of John Milton.

Milton is also both symbolic of a wider disintegration of Christianity – fuelled from the beginning of the Reform by the fatally fissiparous emphasis on spirit-guided individual judgement – and prophetic of what was to come: the succession from deism, via Unitarianism and 'rational' Christianity, to atheism. But Milton is also unusual as a learned man among the extreme 'Reformers', many of whom were from the lower and minimally educated classes. Yet what he shared with them was the belief that the new Christian society was to be purged of all social structures defended merely as traditional or in accordance with long-standing and unexamined legal practice. For the future society was to be built not on such shibboleths but on *principles*, as they were now being revealed: a truly revolutionary claim which while failing in its religious form was to

be revived in the following century by such as Voltaire and Rousseau, and put into practice in the French Revolution.

In seventeenth-century England, however, not only the radical Levellers and Diggers but also the more mainstream Presbyterians – Calvinist predestinarians – were suppressed by Cromwell's Independents (themselves a mixed bag of Protestant sectaries) while Milton, at one time Cromwell's Latin secretary, proposed in his *De Doctrina Christiana* – and even in his Dantesque epic *Paradise Lost* – an idiosyncratic revision of the old 'Augustinian' theology. He eschewed Presbyterian politics as well as Calvin's version of predestination (e.g. *Paradise Lost* 3.177, 5.520–235, 11.770) and in effect challenged the Council of Nicaea, a bastion of faith for mainstream Protestants and Catholics alike.

In opposition to both Catholics and Calvinists, Milton urged a strong (Arminian) theory of the absolute freedom of the will in Adam to obey or not obey the dictates of reason (*Paradise Lost* 9.350ff.), and in characteristically Protestant manner he viewed such freedom as the following of one's 'conscience' (12.520–4). Indeed, though hostile to voluntarism, he so stressed the supreme importance of such freedom (5.235–7, 525–9, cf. *De Doctrina* 1.4) – but without reference to any Augustinian account of higher freedom as the ability only to do the good – as at times to sound not merely like a precursor of Rousseau but even a modern choice theorist, holding as he does that the ability to choose between good and evil is the 'highest' possible human attribute and that what matters for 'salvation' is perseverance in right choices and free obedience to conscience (*Paradise Lost* 3.96ff.). Man's humble submission to God in Christ, as urged by his near contemporary Pascal, has virtually disappeared in favour of Milton's vision of the heroic Christ. Now Nietzsche too can be descried lurking in the wings. The theological dykes have burst and the search for 'primitive' Christianity proceeds apace.

Milton, accompanied by many before and after him, and now happily 'free' to modify the Christian message in fundamental ways, advocates not only an Arminian account of salvation and an anti-Calvinist thesis that on the death of the body the soul 'sleeps' until the General Resurrection, but rejects creation *ex nihilo* (*De Doctrina* 1.7). He subordinates Christ to the Father in a unique attempt to rewrite theology in light of a supposed scriptural purity seeming now to point to modalism (as at *Paradise Lost* 7.208–9), now to what almost amounts to two Gods, one subordinate to the other, while the Holy Spirit seems to become either identical with God the Father or simply his power (*De Doctrina* 1.6, cf. *Paradise Lost* 12.487).

Although *Paradise Lost* recounts, faithfully enough to the text of *Genesis*, Satan's envious corruption of Eve and through her Adam and the coming of original sin (9.1003–4), Milton offers much that is novel but little that is plausible about the reasons for Satan's fall and disobedience; he indeed offers an extraordinary variant on the angelic sin of pride, which in his Satan takes the form of envy, not of Adam, as some of the Fathers held, but of the Son and Messiah (5.662ff). Satan's bizarre desire to be divine here is made to reveal itself as a claim to be self-begotten (5.860): a proposal hardly likely to resolve old and puzzling Augustinian paradoxes about the fall of the angels or to revive theological interest in them. All in all, such idiosyncratic Christianity must be recognized as pointing to the continuing disintegration of traditional religion, however much Milton (and his radical theological predecessors) believed themselves to be reviving biblical Christianity after centuries of neglect.[52]

Indeed in the face of official persecution 'radical' Christians began to develop the theory that all Christian groups (except Catholics, now dismissed merely as 'Romans') should be tolerated, since their variations in doctrine had to be assumed to be derived from Spirit-guided readings of Scripture, but happily involved nothing essential for salvation.[53]

[52] For details see especially Patrides (1966): for God and Trinity 7–25, for creation *ex deo* 26–53, for the fall 91–120, for eschatology 264–84. The extent of Milton's 'heresies' only became unambiguously clear on the recovery in 1823 of *De Doctrina Christiana* (composed about 1660 and thus roughly contemporary with *Paradise Lost*). Further valuable comment can be found in MacCallum: especially his treatment of Milton's indebtedness to Socinian anti-Trinitarianism (MacCallum 1986: 50–8), though his defence of Milton's 'uncompromising monotheism' (MacCallum 1986: 35) is unconvincing against Patrides' charge that Milton is in effect a tritheist: see Patrides (1973: 72–4).

From time to time revisionist accounts of Milton's Christology appear, but do little to dent the standard charges of 'heterodoxy': typical is Hillier's bibliographically learned, exegetically perceptive but theologically undiscerning *Milton's Messiah* (2011). Thus (for example) Hillier may reasonably object that, as far as we can tell, Milton's subordinationism cannot be identified with that of Arius, so that he should not be called an Arian; yet the subordinationism remains. Hillier does not help his case (10–11) by undue reliance on the partisan and substantially implausible account of the Council of Nicaea proposed by Wiles (1996).

For more on mortalism see especially Burns (1972), Hill (1977) and Ball (2008). A particular merit of Burns' discussion lies in his placing Milton within the 'radical reformation', most of whose advocates, as we have seen, were from the ignorant and uneducated classes but to which Milton is linked by his insistence on his (and anyone's) right to interpret the Bible and the early history of Christianity. The prime mover of Milton's mortalism, however, was Luther himself who found it a useful weapon against the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, but a number of Christian mortalists went further, denying any eschatological resurrection: resurrection is the life of the saints here on earth; at death the soul is annihilated. Presbyterians, following Calvin, rejected all such views, preferring to believe that at death the soul went to hell or heaven: a view that many sectarians claimed devalued the Last Judgement.

[53] The beginnings of the call for toleration may be found in Castellian's *De Haereticis* (1554), written in protest at the execution of Michael Servetus in Calvin's Geneva. In England the 'General Baptists' took a similar view during the following century, as later did Locke. But Protestant-on-Protestant

After the seventeenth century, both voluntarism and predestination began to fade from debate, even among those who still subscribed to them. Voluntarism, as we shall see, succumbed in no small part because of its apparent implication of predestination and predestination was abandoned or downplayed because it seemed to present God as so incomprehensible as to be at best unbelievable, at worst downright immoral. Surviving predestinarians, whether Augustinian or ultra-Augustinian, and both Protestant and Catholic, left the problems unresolved or conveniently forgotten, while debates about determinism and free will (though only rarely about love) continued within more secular parameters.

But when part of a tradition is forgotten rather than reformed, the tradition as a whole is discredited, and meanwhile the 'alternative' morality – separated, that is, from salvation – was filling the void. The question remained whether its various versions – whether rationalist, and based on a psychological claim to a moral sense, or utilitarian – would be able to do so. We shall look at what happened to love and the 'will' in these revisionist theories, but first we must go back in time a little to consider attempts at the revised version of natural law, whether or not with some account of God to back them up. Because if these too prove inadequate, the only alternative to some merely conventional morality (or moral 'code') – or to non-morality – might seem, however implausible, to be a revision of that original Augustinian schema to which we have watched objections and corrections pile up like sandcastles, only themselves to collapse into the shifting sands.

killings go back much earlier – even leaving aside Luther's call on the German nobility (in a curious echo of Constantinian Christianity) to keep the peasantry in line – the first case being the murder of Felix Mantz in 1527 for advocating the necessity of re-baptism for those baptized as infants (see Williams 1957: 42).

CHAPTER 8

Naturalism Revised

> 'When we have the course of nature alone in view, "ought" has no meaning whatsoever.'
>
> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A547/B575

Scepticism of Montaigne's variety might look cynical rather than philosophical, while Descartes' attempt to disconnect philosophy and theology was unsatisfactory even to himself. However, the religious fragmentation of post-Reformation Europe called forth an apparently more promising response to the developing crisis in the form of the construction of a new version of natural law: not the theistic model beloved of the scholastics but a more secularized account which, first proposed by Hugo Grotius (1563–1645), was only finally given (or should have been given) its *coup de grace* by Hume more than a century later. For Hume recognized that in eventually abandoning a long outmoded voluntarism the new version of natural law lost all chance of justifying moral obligation. And indeed in the present study we have reached the beginning of a radically new attitude in European thought towards the relationship of reason and the Christian faith. During the seventeenth century the intention of many thinkers was increasingly less to show the reasonableness of Christianity than that something to be roughly identified as Christianity could be constructed by rational processes alone. Only later was the pretence that this was Christianity largely dropped.

Grotius was a convinced Protestant, albeit of Arminian stripe, thus remaining a moderate voluntarist while rejecting double predestination.[1] In his younger days he had inherited the Aristotelian approach to political questions characteristic of many Protestant 'scholastics' of his time. Though the charge of trying to eliminate God from moral philosophy was

[1] An extensive discussion of Grotius' sources and an argument that in many respects his position resembles that of Suarez and that (despite the 'impious hypothesis') he thinks primarily of man as an image of God created with reason and the power of free choice with rather little concern about the resolution of the voluntarist-intellectualist dispute is available in Besselink (1988: 3–63).

brought against him, he cannot reasonably be convicted of it; nevertheless, one of the effects of his work was to make the possibility of godless ethics more plausible. His famous phrase 'even if we should grant that God does not exist … or that the affairs of men are of no concern to him' (*On the Law of War and Peace*, *preface*) was not original – indeed it can be traced back to Duns Scotus and had recently been attributed by Suarez to Gregory of Rimini (*De Legibus* II.6.3) – yet Grotius deployed it in a quite different context, recalling thereby some of the questions raised by Montaigne. Grotius' final version of natural law recalls the origins of all such theories – in Stoicism and Roman law – since he intended it as an updated *ius gentium*. For reasons analogous to those of the ancient Stoics – who were much in favour during these Renaissance times[2] – as of the Roman lawyers, he was seeking a 'natural' law that would transcend the now endemic divisions of Christianity and equally could be applied to dealings with those outside the Christian orbit.

In formulating such a law, Grotius appeals to theistic but not specifically Christian principles: there is one inscrutable God who is providential and has created the universe, but Grotius, though assuming man has the power of free choice (*De fid*. III, p. 302, a.34), has no interest in the fall either of Adam or the angels, nor indeed in sin and redemption: no mention, that is, of those patently, if now controverted, Christian principles on which the Augustinian account of man, his will, his 'second' nature and his destiny depend. That amounts, at the very least – as both Thomasius and Barbeyrac were later to observe[3] – to a substantially revised version of the medieval picture, and it is clear that if Grotius thought that natural law could be rewritten without specifically Christian features, he has lost (or rejected) all continuity with the philosophical context of the scholastic version of the theory.

Nevertheless, just as Grotius had no intention of writing a godless account of natural law, so we must recognize that his original aim was less to construct a radically new theory of any kind than to expand what he

[2] Whether Grotius was directly influenced by Stoicizers such as Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) is disputed. Schneewind denies it (1998: 175) on the ground that we find no Stoic metaphysics in Grotius while (e.g.) Brooke takes it for granted (2001: 97–100), arguing that Grotius was especially interested in the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis* which enables us (against the Sceptics) to derive the concepts of self-interest and sociability from the same root. Schneewind's argument from the absence of Stoic metaphysics is implausible, not least because of the eclectic handling of Stoic material even in Lipsius (instantiated in a refusal to adopt Stoic pantheism – and hence a particular variation of naturalism – and a preference for more traditional Christian ideas of divine transcendence). As Schneewind himself readily acknowledges, the attraction of Stoicism was that it offered peace of mind in a radically confusing age.

[3] See Schneewind (1998: 66).

took to be the *principles* of natural law, with a mildly voluntarist grounding, to apply to international and inter-cultural dealings. His most significant book (*On the Law of War and Peace*, dated to 1625) sets out various seemingly empirical proposals about human nature in general. Simply put, his problem is this: we must find a way to reconcile man's natural sociability (*Preface* 6) with his natural egoism and aggressiveness. As Grotius posed it, however, the problem is in no way metaphysical: he is less concerned with whether we need to be social in order to be virtuous – or complete as human beings – but with the brute fact that we *are* at the same time both sociable – which provides a certain social glue – and self-concerned. His ideas accord with those of the medieval natural lawyers about sociability, except that he fails to attribute the origin of the problems with which he is engaged to sin or to the fall. For him the problem (which is parallel to that of God's voluntarism) lies in the will, and being within a now more or less established tradition, he understands freedom of the will as a freedom of indifference. We can (and do) simply choose whether to act socially or aggressively. Hence the function of law – the natural law – is to teach us that it is both profitable and necessary to reconcile our impulses.

Grotius assumes that, although we are in this divided state, our condition is the will of God, but in attempting to justify the goodness, as well as the social usefulness of natural law, he emphasizes – not for the first time, though in a significantly original way – the concept of *subjective* and universal rights: that is, not merely the right to act in our own interest – which late medieval thinkers such as Jean Gerson had long emphasized – but 'passive' rights against being treated in 'unjust' ways.[4] Sociability is natural and provides us with a grounding for justice, for controlling our aggressiveness, but that aggressiveness is itself an indication that we can justly claim 'rights' for ourselves, albeit there can be unfair and often unjust appeals to such rights. For according to Grotius' new natural law theory, our subjective rights (both active and passive) are part of our nature, granted presumably by God, and thus human beings can be viewed as social and aggressive animals possessed of natural rights. For

[4] For discussion of the origins of variants of rights talk see (e.g.) Tuck (1979), corrected in part by Tierney (1989). See now also Tierney (1997) and the riposte of Lamont (2011: 177–98). One of the factors driving the revived interest of Grotius and others (such as Vitoria) was the problem of natural slaves, as perhaps to be found in the New World. But more domestic needs, such as the desire to be free from the interference of church or state, soon reached centre stage. Whatever the complete truth about the origin of modern accounts of natural rights, a new emphasis is certainly clear with Grotius, for whereas the medievals will discuss rights against each other of various sections of their largely feudal world – as of kings against bishops, guilds against kings and so forth, later theories depended on arguments for equal rights for all human beings as (originally) equal in God's eyes.

Grotius unjust aggression is an attack on the *rights* of others (*Law of War and Peace* 1.2.1). Such placing of rights at the centre of political thought is, of course, far from the Aristotelianism with which Grotius began. Furthermore, although we may claim to recognize natural rights in our dealings with one another, that recognition cannot be explained empirically; we simply exist as possessors of rights, so long as we believe that God has so formed our nature.

Rights for Grotius come in two kinds, perfect and imperfect. A perfect right – above all the right to self-preservation – is the basis for the obligations of strict justice, while an imperfect right appeals to the law of love: however, the latter, unlike the former, does not impose strict obligations, but is rather the working out of our natural sociability in terms of generosity and compassion. What is important about such a theory is that the virtues in general, and the virtue of justice in particular, are founded not on traditional claims about the necessity of acting rightly and responsibly on pain of damaging our own virtue (though it is not necessarily incompatible with such claims), but on the fact that our own subjective rights entail similar subjective (to us objective) rights in other people, to be presumed all of equal weight. Such 'native' rights, for Grotius, can only be some sort of gift of God to human nature – a thesis later natural lawyers such as Pufendorf and Locke would uphold.

Once established in the popular mind, rights have proved hard to erase and perhaps can be shown to persist – albeit on some new argument and as a metaphysical anomaly – long after God's apparent demise. However, though various reasons can be invoked to support them, it remains questionable that they can legitimately survive without their original source. And if, in Bentham's phrase, they are nonsense on stilts in a godless world, what happens to rights-based morality? On any assessment, Grotius' claim that justice depends not on the objective worth of certain behaviours but on rendering each person his due (even regardless of motive) is a revolutionary step away from earlier moral theories.

According to traditional teaching there were no rights (neither needed nor possessed) before the fall, since such could only and absurdly be rights against God. But already during the early seventeenth century Puritan divines, such as John Preston, were evading some of the consequences of Calvin's seemingly arbitrary God by emphasizing that he himself had limited that arbitrariness by making a covenant with the elect: a doctrine with a long future before it in England and New England.[5] On that view,

[5] For Preston see Hill (1958: 234–66).

of course, rights could only be defended as a divine gift; without God they should disappear or, as Hobbes understood, be reduced to mere 'liberties' in the state of nature. But what is this state of nature? Hobbes thought of it as barbarous and it was commonly assumed during the Renaissance that rights of any sort could pertain only in a civilized society. But if so, should we assume – contrary to earlier mainstream Christianity though with some approximation to the views of Pelagius – that before the fall Adam was essentially a savage? Certainly in Grotius, we see the doctrine of original sin beginning to fade, savages (as Hobbes perceived) being unable to sin!

And what too becomes of the freedom of the will – that now traditional freedom of indifference – during the new 'scientific' age when divine causation of anything, and not least of human nature, is on the way to elimination? Seemingly it too must go the same way as the now 'scientifically' discredited final causes, and *pace* Grotius we must reject any remainder of a natural impulse to a final goodness that Scotus and Ockham had already challenged. Again Hobbes would provide disturbing ways to settle such a question.

Grotius' attempt to retain morality 'even if God does not exist' was not the only way in which a number of seventeenth-century Protestants supposed that Calvinism could be defeated. Grotius, as we noted, was an Arminian, and a form of Arminianism combined with a substantially pre-Christian version of Platonism was to be proposed, as we have also noted, by Whichcote, More, Cudworth and others of the Cambridge group. Nor was 'Platonist' Christianity the only alternative 'Protestant' response. Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1582–1648), in his *De Veritate* and *De Religione Laici*, had already moved so much further from 'traditional' dogma as to be often regarded as a precursor of the deists: those who thought that all religions, duly minimized and stripped of revelation, told the same story and were similarly useful in their respective cultures. According to the demythologized, 'scientific' Stoicism of Herbert, we – or rather our minds – are 'the best image and specimen of divinity',[6] and for perfection we have only to bring our minds into harmony with the cosmos as a whole. But Herbert is also a precursor in another sense: though dying before the revulsion to sectarian strife became nearly universal, he anticipated those who, fearing such strife, insisted that it can only be avoided if theology is theist (or deist) rather than any variety of disputed Christian 'truth'. An up-to-date

[6] For further discussion see Schneewind (1998: 176–83) and Pailin (2000: 113–49).

future theology must be rational, scientific, 'natural'; with the Christian God sidelined and final causes abandoned as of no scientific interest, reason alone can tell us not only what (if anything) to believe, but how it is logically (and epistemologically) possible to believe anything.

In the thought of both the Cambridge Platonists and Lord Herbert (as largely in Grotius), the eclipse of the doctrine of original sin – a basic teaching hitherto of Christianity whether Catholic or Protestant – is peculiarly significant and can only presage an increasingly different account of morality. Original sin is, of course, wholly alien both to the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and to the Stoicism underlying the thought of Lord Herbert. Its disappearance – *pace* Milton – helped pave the seventeenth-century way back to the pre-Christian belief that moral perfection is possible through our own efforts in the present life; hence that man has no need of divine assistance. That his full autonomy is just around the corner is implicit in the Platonist Cudworth and soon constructors of morality came to assume it.

Grotius finds religion – Christianity in particular – useful as social glue, but as we have seen, also argues that justice satisfies the subjective rights of individuals which are part of man's natural endowment as created by God. Such a claim depends not only on the belief that God exists but more specifically on our knowing something more about his actions: that is, that he has deliberately created human beings as possessors of rights. Unfortunately for Grotius, this is not an empirical claim, and can only be upheld on the basis of a residual belief that, even in a world largely understood empirically, some further justification of morality is available. And since (despite the implications of univocity) it is not to be discovered (or yet even sought) within the universe, it can only depend on beliefs or assumptions about a transcendent God. At this point God, even the traditional God, still has his uses.

The weakness of this sort of position, then as now, becomes apparent if we compare Grotius' ideas with the mature theories of Hobbes. Hobbes too was concerned with limiting natural human aggressiveness and finding norms whereby not the violence of international relations (as with Grotius) but the evils of civil strife in seventeenth-century England (more like the concern of Machiavelli[7]) could be abated. But unlike Grotius, he was unwilling to avail himself of a moral divinity as the *deus ex machina*

[7] Hobbes thus shares Machiavelli's view that the establishment of the right kind of political régime grows from a concern to diminish the risk of death at the hands of one's fellow men. In both cases we can recognize a shadow of Augustine's view that the earthly city longs to assuage the fear of death and thus highly values the pursuit of a forgetful glory. But Hobbes, going beyond

who could 'save' morality. Like Grotius, he thought religion essential as social glue, and not least that belief in God – faith in Christ plus obedience to law will suffice for salvation (*Leviathan* 43.3)[8] – if properly regulated, would encourage us to obey the sort of sovereign power necessary for our personal security. But Hobbes could find no empirical justification for any understanding of God's nature, let alone of his justice, which if it exists must be wholly different from ours (*English Works* 4.249, trans. Molesworth); only his power is in evidence. Indeed, although he devotes long stretches of *Leviathan* to biblical exegesis, debate has long raged over whether Hobbes was in fact a Christian or a closet atheist – albeit to ask that is very different from asking whether the logic of his position entails that he ought to have been an atheist. At the very least, Hobbes' God has no purposes (*Leviathan* 31.13), and nor indeed have we (11.1). But in Hobbes' time and place it is almost anachronistic to speak of avowed atheism, though 'hellish verses' supposedly composed by Sir Walter Raleigh (or emanating from his circle)[9] had already suggested (in the manner of Plato's uncle Critias) that some clever man invented gods who could see into a man's inner heart and thus know and punish his anti-governmental activities.

Apparently unimpressed by any Thomistic-style questioning as to why there is something rather than nothing, Hobbes *appears* content to assume that, since there is a universe (*Leviathan* 12.6), it must have been brought about by God. So we know this God has immense power – and apparently he understands that it makes sense for us all to seek to preserve ourselves, and hence and for whatever reason he is unwilling to command us not to do so. But that is all we know, and in this God's inscrutability is taken to such a pitch that to accept his existence in any sense would seem to be either a mere hangover from the past or a short-hand way of explaining (and in terms of raw power only) why things (including the sufferings of the 'just'[10]) are as they are,[11] or that such a belief, though false, should be to some degree – fanaticism apart – encouraged, or simply that 'stuff happens': any or all of that is what an inscrutable God has either decreed

Machiavelli, is certain that an anti-Christian self-interest is not only an option but for the sensible a necessity.

[8] *Leviathan* is cited by the paragraphs of E. Curley's edition (Indianapolis 1994).

[9] Cited by Hill (1958: 60). Raleigh, one should add (along with Bacon and Lipsius), was an eager reader of Machiavelli; see Kahn (2010: 248–9).

[10] Cf. Hobbes' comments on the sufferings of Job who suffered not because he sinned but as a result of God's power (*Leviathan* 31.6).

[11] 'The rain it raineth on the just/ and on the unjust fella/ but chiefly on the just because/ the unjust stole the just's umbrella.'

or accepted. On God's inscrutability, Hobbes can sound surprisingly but significantly like Descartes.

If then we revert to the comparison between Grotius and Hobbes, we sense that part of the disagreement between them is about the nature of God's voluntarism, for in emphasizing rights Grotius has found a new way to keep God moral, whereas Hobbes, seeing them as mere 'liberties', is not so sentimental. Thus the dispute is essentially about whether God has decided to create us as endowed with rights – so able to appeal to justice to protect them – or has simply allowed us to find our own way, guided by our inveterate egoism and ability to effect our 'liberties', to personal survival in a society so constructed as to ensure it.[12] And that society will flourish best, if another Christian 'taboo', that against usury, is abandoned. For now avarice, still vigorously condemned by Luther and Calvin, as by their Catholic opponents, is often a useful characteristic of the art of survival, since the 'Worth of a man is, as of all other things, his Price' (*Leviathan* 1.15). All of which would lead us to suppose that if there were no non-moral reasons to suppose that God exists – such as that he were the creator of the universe – he could and would logically disappear from public morality even though the social glue would then become less sticky – and that, as we shall see, looks worrying.

One of the effects of Hobbes' strict empiricism is that he supposes that if God exists he must be material; another that the soul too is material;[13] another that right reason only dictates means: that is, that it is purely instrumental, ends being given not by reason but by our desires (*De Cive* 2.1; *Leviathan* 5.2, cf. 8.16); a fourth is that all our actions are rigidly determined by material causes, so there is no sense in the claim that we have responsibility for our actions, nor have we any reason to think that God holds us responsible. Predictably, Hobbes has little interest in 'sin', original or actual; perhaps we should better say that he is only interested in sin in that belief in it has disastrous social effects; nor indeed, as we have seen, has he anything but contempt for 'rights' as understood by Grotius, about which all that should be said is that we may or may not have 'liberty' (that is, the opportunity and capacity) to secure goods we desire. For our actions will be determined by whatever we happen to desire either regularly or

[12] It is easy to see why contemporary Hobbesians use game theory to update Hobbes' position; so, for example, Gauthier (1969, 1990), Hampton (1986), Kavka (1986) and more generally Curley (1990: 169–250).

[13] Hence Hobbes argues that the soul cannot survive the death of the body; it is brought back to life at the General Resurrection. For discussion of Hobbes' mortalism, especially in *Leviathan* 38 and 44, see Burns (1972: 184–91).

from time to time, since what is good is – and here the Greco-Christian is blatantly cast aside – what we just happen to have been predetermined to want (*Leviathan* 14.8; *De Cive* 2.8), and ultimately that comes down to the one thing: self-preservation. Thus, where selfishness seemed to the Calvinists a mark of our formal depravity, Hobbes hails it not, certainly, as a virtue, but as normal and natural. By contracting with our fellows to save our skins, we shore up our basically egoistic natures. The state of nature, far from being a Paradise (or a Garden of Eden), is a zoo.

Add this to the fact that Hobbes offers neither a traditional nor a Grotian account of justice, and we can see why his ideas were found dangerously immoral, and even 'wicked'. At the purely factual and empirical level his portrait of man in the state of nature resembles the old Augustinian picture of *fallen* Adam, with fallen man free only to sin, and sin identified with pursuing one's own interests in contempt of God. Hobbes has abandoned the sin and the contempt, but his 'natural' man certainly does what he understands to be self-loving – and what the material self loves above all is its own material preservation. What for Augustinians is the mark of fallen man's '*second* nature' has now become the mark of his original condition (and whether or not God was involved in the construction of that condition has become irrelevant). Only empirically can we be induced to change it – by contract (*De Cive* 7.3, *Leviathan* 21.10) and in hope of personal gain or at least safety. The effect of agreeing to the contract is that a man obligates himself to abate certain liberties; though since Hobbes holds that 'nothing is more easily broken than a man's word, but from fear of some evil consequence upon the rupture' (*Leviathan* 14.7), such obligation might seem only provisional.[14]

'Platonism' and deism aside, there seemed in Hobbes' day to be two further ways empiricism and voluntarism could be preserved without admitting Hobbesian conclusions. The first was to argue that Hobbes' empiricist account of humanity is inaccurate or incomplete; the second to agree that (without recourse to biblical theology – on which no agreement now seemed possible – or to other religious truths) the voluntarism of God must be more traditionally robust than Hobbes would allow. The first of these options was adopted by Richard Cumberland, bishop of Peterborough (1631–1718), in his *De Legibus Naturae* (1672), the second

[14] Darwall argues that Hobbes holds contracted obligations binding if they are in accordance with natural law (Darwall 1995: 71–9). It may in fact benefit an agent to break a contract but it cannot be shown to be rational to do so.

by Pufendorf and his English successor John Locke. Neither route was to prove successful in undermining Hobbes' basic structure, and Pufendorf's attempts to do so made the voluntarist account of the connection between religion and morality even more implausible, showing it to rest, to a degree hitherto unrecognized, on the assumption of metaphysical claims long abandoned and indeed unsustainable in a universe to be explained only empirically.

Hobbes, as we have seen, inferred – not least from the 'nasty, brutish and short' condition of 'natural' human life – that we can know nothing about God's moral nature, only about his power. Cumberland denied Hobbes' premise, thus reverting to a view more like that of Grotius. Yes, we are aggressive, but we are also social, even benevolent (*DLN* 2.3, p. 101[15]), and that being the case, must have been created benevolent by God; thus we know more about God's will than that it is a mere reflection of his power. But Cumberland, though holding that morality derives from God's rationality and love, will not admit, any more than could the voluntarists he challenged, that we can understand God's nature. God's love (and/or justice) must be very different from ours, even if we can recognize empirically that his rationality must have characteristics referable to ours, or at least to what ours might be.

Cumberland's problem is at least as old as Augustine himself, who wanted to uphold both God's inscrutability in his dealings with individual men *and* our notions of the virtues, defined (as Cumberland would approve) – for all its incompatibility with the inscrutability thesis – in accordance with a Platonic theory of 'participation'; we can speak intelligibly of justice as a virtue because our understanding of justice depends on recognizing true justice as a divine attribute. We have already seen moves of that sort proposed by the Cambridge Platonists, especially by Henry More and Ralph Cudworth who were happy to reject not only voluntarism but also the radical (and Protestant) account of the distinction between human and divine natures – not to speak of any defence of predestination as preserving the omnipotence of God.

Cumberland's reply to Hobbes requires judging inadequate the latter's account of human motivation, but also a metaphysical claim (not justifiable empirically) about the intelligibility of moral language, by Hobbes viewed as merely a code by which we can usefully promote our self-preservation. But we need to notice that while attempting to reaffirm human love and benevolence against Hobbesian 'realism', Cumberland

[15] Page references to Cumberland are to Maxwell's translation (1727, facsimile 1978).

manages to eliminate a further feature of traditional accounts of the common good to which God, as he thinks, directs us. Such accounts were originally tied to the old Augustinian view of the solidarity of the human race in Adam, whether in good times or in bad; Cumberland, however, regards the common good as a mere aggregate of the goods of individuals or groups of individuals (1.33, p. 87; 5.19, p. 220), and as such susceptible of quantitative reckoning (7.13, p. 345), thus – as is widely recognized – becoming an ancestor of later utilitarians who claim that we should (though only if we so choose) seek to promote the greatest good of the greatest number, to be computed (at least for Bentham) in terms of the largest collection of units of pleasure rather than by any solidarity among the moral personalities of the human race.[16]

What is less commonly recognized about Cumberland's position is that, in his desire for a more individualist account of happiness – and despite his wish, shared with the Cambridge Platonists, to restore the centrality of the Christian love ethic – he points towards a more secularized version of the Protestant interpretation of salvation, making it essentially a 'private' matter between the individual and God. Just as Protestant voluntarism reared itself from among the unresolved perplexities within the older Catholic tradition, and in failing tended to drag religion into a vague religiosity which pointed to a coming atheism, so in its own way Cumberland's anti-voluntarism points us directly towards the apotheosis of the free-standing 'atomic' individual. According to Cumberland, for the making of rationally moral judgements our mind is adequately modelled to God's for 'God will determine the same End and Means to be best, which the Reason of any Man truly judges to be so' (5.19, p. 220). That best, as we have seen, is the common good identified as the best for all rational beings, since according to Cumberland (in this opposed to Locke as well as to Hobbes), in seeking the common good any agent has the same reason to seek the good of others as to seek his own (p. 173). Of course, whether we exercise our will correctly is up to us (p. 90).

In an odd way Cumberland still thinks that God is necessary not only as the source of love but as the source of obligation, since for him, as for voluntarists like Suarez and Culverwell, it is insofar as God's command is necessarily rational that it transforms moral facts and necessities into moral obligations (5.27, p. 233). Yet perhaps here God has become little more than the fifth wheel on the coach, for moral obligation seems to be

[16] For Cumberland and utilitarianism see originally Albee (1901) and more generally Forsyth (1982: 23–42), Kirk (1987), Darwall (1995: 80–108) and Schneewind (1998: 101–17).

a function of rationality as such, whether human or divine, which looks to ends (what Cumberland calls 'effects'), while the 'will', whereby a man 'may determine to act which way he pleases' (1.33, p. 90), merely acts on the means to these effects. Thus Cumberland's position differs significantly from that of the Cambridge group who maintained the genuinely Platonic stance that obligations spring from love, so that although God's commands may reinforce such obligations, their origin lies in the properly loving individual, fortified with whatever grace he may require for his love to be perfected.

In developing an extreme version of Grotius' account of natural law Hobbes has moved still further away from any kind of theological ethics, indeed from ethics at all if that science is to include an account of moral obligation. God is now so remote that we do not even know whether he is just (at least as we understand the term) or not. Neither he nor we can have any 'natural' goals or purposes – and here again we see a parallel with Descartes, for whom the ways of God are unknown to us, and while for Scotus we retained an inclination to the good of our own species, for Hobbes that inclination has shrunk to a concern with our own survival.

In Hobbes' schema there is no moral good, only an observable desire to keep ourselves alive, the good simply being what we are predetermined to want; thus free will (and therefore human responsibility) has gone too. Grotius' attempt to salvage morality by turning it into a theory of rights, supposedly sustained by an objective justice supported in turn by God's will, has also disappeared. No wonder there was panic sown among Christians in general and voluntarists in particular when they read those 'wicked doctrines of Mr Hobbes', not least because behind Protestant voluntarism was always perceived to lurk the threat of the wholly amoral antinomianism of some of the 'enthusiasts'. The best hope seemed to be that Grotius' theory could still be salvaged, but the attempt at salvage of Samuel Pufendorf (1632–94), though more effective than others, left the earlier version of natural law (as expounded by Aquinas) still further behind by eliminating some of its few remaining metaphysical principles.

Pufendorf tries to reconstruct much of Grotius' account of rights and duties. In his representation of the universe everything is divided into physical and moral domains – which in itself is scarcely original – but very untraditionally the physical domain cannot be described as good, and thus Pufendorf, almost casually, abandons the centuries-old equation

of being and goodness (*De Jure Naturae* I.4.4).[17] Accepting Grotius' distinction between perfect and imperfect rights, though preferring in the first instance to speak of perfect and imperfect duties, he rejects Grotius' explanation that perfect rights reflect laws of justice in the world, from which it would follow that some acts are intrinsically just and recognized as such by God himself. Pufendorf replaced this by the notion that rights and duties derive from the imposition by God of moral qualities ('entities') that give their possessors moral standing and a moral nature, though with no necessary capacity to act. (*De Officio Hominis*, *pref.* 1).[18] His motive was to protect duties, rights and justice while strengthening Grotius' more half-hearted version of voluntarism (thus restoring God's omnipotence), and apparently going beyond Grotius (and repudiating Hobbes) in making rights and duties reciprocal.[19]

None of this, however, would justify moral obligation, and for that Pufendorf has to revert to the older view (again as in Suarez) that obligations can only depend on the will and command of a superior, but that too is now 'secularized': the theory that such commands *must* aim at a natural good has disappeared, as with Hobbes; the mere command remains. As for the 'Ockhamist' objection that God could even revise the rules of morality, Pufendorf in Calvinist mode was content to dismiss it: we need not bother about what God might have done; we need only concentrate on what he did (*DJN* II.3.4), since he will not contradict himself. With the possibility of human goodness limited to the 'impositions' of God, even more baldly than with Grotius is morality dependent on the activities of a Supreme Being whose nature is inscrutable – and by no means necessarily Christian. We cannot discover God's aims (II.3.12), but we are able to do what he commands; thus we more or less enjoy the traditional liberty of indifference (I.4.3; I.5.5), though Pufendorf – playing for safety – will allow that in fact we are created with a certain inclination to pursue what seems naturally good (I.4.4). So much from the Lutheran Pufendorf for Luther on the will in bondage, not to speak of Augustine. A slightly modified liberty of indifference in an increasingly secular framework is now seen as the only alternative to determinism.

Since no 'metaphysical' basis for such theorizing remained, all that was left was a residual post-Christian theism. Pufendorf thinks that we are under obligation to obey not only because God, as lawgiver, necessarily

[17] For a history of the equation see MacDonald (ed. 1991).
[18] Human beings can add additional 'entities' (*DJN* I.1.7).
[19] This is controversial; for discussion see Mautner (1989: 37–57).

can impose sanctions, but also because we should show him gratitude for creating us (I.6.9) – with no explanation of where that 'should' comes from, unless from fear of the said sanctions, or from Protestant and conventional practice. It is hardly surprising that, rejecting the opinion of such voluntarist predecessors as Suarez, Pufendorf excluded theologians from any expertise in natural law; for him all difficulties are to be determined by philosophers and lawyers.

Among other subscribers to the conventionalism on which Pufendorf seems to rely we may list John Locke, albeit his conventionalism varied over time under the influence not only of Hobbes but probably also of the Christian hedonism of Gassendi.[20] Locke's moral philosophy is overall ambiguous, at times looking back to older versions of voluntarist naturalism in the manner of Grotius and Pufendorf, but in his later writings showing strong pointers to the coming world of human moral autonomy, where man pretends to the place of the God he has rejected: a world already foreshadowed by Cudworth, not to speak of Ficino.

In one important sense the more 'modern' Locke was far from conventional. Whereas more traditional natural lawyers, down to and including Suarez and Culverwell, derive natural law from God's eternal law of purpose for the universe as a whole, eternal law (together with final causes) has almost disappeared in Locke, determined in morality, as elsewhere in philosophy, to deny not only the traditional teleology that survived in the 'Suarezian' Culverwell[21] but also Cartesian innate ideas. And he also wanted to distance himself from the apparently godless Hobbes, though he accepted with Hobbes – against Cumberland's benevolence – that we naturally seek only our own good; and indeed in practice his theism differs less than might appear from that of his notorious predecessor. He wants to construct an empirical science of morality supported by a voluntarist God, but whereas Hobbes cared little that God appear even dubiously just, Locke claimed, though without adequate argument, that he must be both just and benevolent (cf. *Essays on the Law of Nature* 151–7). From this it could be plainly seen that voluntarism, in the version then available, must point either to the quasi-atheism of Hobbes or fall back on an optimistic fideism which in his later *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke tried to combine with hedonism to produce a Calvinism without tears!

[20] See Driscoll (1972: 87–110).
[21] For Culverwell see especially Darwall (1995: 23–33). His epistemology is radically empiricist.

Hobbes had denied any moral obligation, while Locke (with Cumberland) held that it could only be recognized in the fact of our created status in the universe, asserting, that is, as Culverwell and Suarez before him, that obligation – indeed morality in general (*Essay* 351) and hence accountability – can finally depend only on the command of a superior possessed of the right to demand our obedience (*Essay* 111, 183) and on God's consequent (and not necessarily Christian) power to reward and punish. Indeed, without such sanctions moral obligations might run counter to our true interests, and this would also be the case with altruistic behaviour.

But Locke's extreme voluntarism was looking increasingly out of date: earlier, with the Arminians and contemporaneously with the Cambridge Platonists, we have already found a 'moral' reaction among Protestants against the apparently arbitrary divinity of Calvinism and the apparent subservience it seemed to entail even in the watered-down version – predestination subtracted – which less 'Christian' theists such as Locke felt compelled by their presuppositions to propose.[22] Nevertheless, in his attitude towards God's power to impose and will sanctions, Locke remained close to the Protestantism of Luther and Calvin in holding that moral obligation depends exclusively on God's will.

In another significant *theological* area, Locke's concern, however limited, with the 'morality' of God's activities again brought him closer to Hobbes and to non-theistic naturalisms – as also to the 'deism' of Lord Herbert – than he might have wished. While the more radical Hobbes neglects 'sin' altogether, Locke, together with many of his contemporaries, is satisfied by the claim that the traditional (whether Catholic or Protestant) account of *original* sin is *morally* impossible and thus unworthy of God. At the very beginning of his treatise on *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and revealing that (like Cumberland) he either did not know or did not respect the Augustinian claim that we are all in some sense 'one in Adam', he denies outright that Adam's guilt could be handed on to his descendents, most of

[22] After Locke, and bringing to an end the constructive period of 'modern' natural law voluntarism, even the pillar of divine vengeance was struck away from 'Lockean' positions by the ex-voluntarist Christian Thomasius. According to Thomasius God no longer imposes obligations but gives us good advice which we are free to accept or reject. Thomasius is also scornful of superstitious servility before God – a reaction especially interesting in view of the original Protestant insistence on the freedom of the Christian man. And as with others we have noticed, his abandonment of voluntarism coincides with a fresh emphasis on God's love – or at least a declining fear of God's vengeance; perhaps a consequence of those who urged it having overplayed their hand. For more on Thomasius see Schneewind (1998: especially 161–3).

whom had never heard of him and none of whom had commissioned him to act on their behalf.

Replacing the traditional Christian doctrine, Locke argues that even young children have a *natural* (Hobbesian) tendency to egoism, which needs to be corrected by divine sanctions.[23] This move is far more important than might be supposed – quite apart from its apparent Hobbesianism – since it implies that *any* traditional version of theological ethics is impossible for the new breed of Christians. With the loss of a theological explanation of the fallen state of man and the consequent effects on his freedom, we are left solely with naturalistic possibilities to explain our moral condition. The rules of morality, although intelligible to us, still are determined by God, but identification of our obligations and responsibilities is entirely a matter for psychology and natural religion.

Locke's difficulties with Hobbes were not limited to God's justice. Hobbes, as we know, was an unblushing determinist, but Locke thought it essential, if God's justice in distributing rewards and punishments is to be maintained, that we have enough 'freedom' of the will to be held responsible for our actions. Yet although (like Descartes) he held free will to be the ability to suspend judgement, his empiricism provided him with scant base to deny Hobbesian determinism and he agrees with Hobbes that we can give no helpful account of a common good (*Essay on Human Understanding* II.303). We are free rationally to construct morality from the available empirical data, without recourse either to innate ideas or to anything approaching what was later to be 'discovered' as a moral sense.[24] Yet Locke offers no justification for the claim that we are free in the requisite manner,[25] nor that our gratitude to God for our existence (*Essay* 352) is – in the absence of any traditional natural teleology – adequate to

[23] *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, paragraphs 104, 105; for comment see Taylor (1989: 240) and recently Harrison (2007: 228–9). Locke's view (common enough during the period) is that we are like Adam, but did not inherit sinfulness from him. We should remember that during this period there was a tendency, not least among Puritans, to argue that Adam had entered into a covenant with God on behalf of the human race; representing a non-biological explanation of our separation from God after the fall. All agreed, however, that that separation was intellectual as well as moral: Kepler (typically) believed that before the fall Adam had a perfect knowledge of nature: cf. Harrison (2007: 103).

[24] Rogers draws attention to the interesting discussions between Locke (who professed respect for Cudworth, as for Whichcote) and Cudworth's daughter Damaris (later Lady Masham) on innate ideas (Rogers 2008: 193–205). Damaris tried to persuade Locke that they could be held as dispositional, but failed to dent his empiricism, though sharing many of his ideas about the nature and power of reason and (in part) about the unphilosophical nature of some forms of 'Enthusiasm' – to which Locke inclined to reduce much 'Cambridge' Platonism (or rather Neoplatonism). For Lady Masham's position more generally see Hutton (1993).

[25] For Locke's account of the will see especially Darwall (1989: 133–50, 1995: 149 ff.).

account for moral *obligation* rather than for a mere recognition of moral truths. Indeed such truths are themselves no more than constructions of the mind in accordance with God's supposed intentions for the human race, ultimately depending for their authority on God's exercise of raw power.

Thus the ultra-Augustinianism of Luther and Calvin, whereby salvation is separated from any humanistic (i.e. Pelagian) search for moral improvement, left continuing voluntarists like Locke linking a moral psychology, empirically based and shorn of much Protestant dogma, with a modified version of the very theology their successors were soon to declare immoral. Indeed in his later days, Locke himself, apparently under the influence of Cudworth, struck a further blow for 'modernity', thus making his continuing voluntarism look the more anachronistic and pointing *malgré soi* towards the coming godless ethic. For we are motivated by uneasiness at our present situation and must determine which actions will be in our best long-term interests; hence in the second edition of the *Essay* (263) Locke argues that liberty (freedom) is neither a mere (Hobbesian) lack of obstacle nor a liberty of indifference but a positive power of self-determination deployed in our deliberations – and that it is such deliberations that will enable us to make reasoned choice of action in accordance with what has been recently dubbed 'moral liberty'.[26]

Locke's confusion about the nature of morality is heightened – though he may not have realized it – by his account of personal identity. In an increasingly godless universe it presumably seemed increasingly necessary to look closely at another piece of Christianity (rather underemphasized during the Middle Ages, but highlighted by the Platonists of Florence and their successors): namely the idea that each individual is created in the image of God. But if there is no God or if we know very little about his nature and plans (as Descartes and Hobbes held), then perhaps – without as yet abandoning 'image of God' language – we might begin to separate our account of persons – images of God and individual members of the human species – from earlier theological associations. Be that as it may, Locke offered to explain personal identity – there is no need for present purposes to go into details of the controversy his views provoked – in terms of the retention of memories. That is, where there is no memory there is no human being (person) in the strict sense. We are, in effect, bundles of experiences and qualities held together by our memory and in the apparently

[26] Yolton (1970: 147–8); Darwall (1995: 160–75).

problematic nature of such a claim we can already predict Hume's coming attack on it. Indeed Locke's position might seem more open to assault precisely in that (contrary to Descartes) he believes that at birth we are no container of innate ideas but a mental blank sheet. But how blank must a sheet be to cease to be a sheet? Or a substantial 'person'?

Despite Locke's problematic account of the self, we should not leave him without touching on his development of theories of subjective rights (perhaps hardly compatible with his account of a person), which he still proposes in a directly theistic setting. For Locke not only claimed, in the footsteps of Culverwell (and ultimately of Calvin), that God has a 'right of creation' to our gratitude and obedience (*Essay on Human Understanding* II.28.8) – this being an attempt to ground more securely the position of Pufendorf – but that (analogously) we too have a God-given and preconventional right to our own property which, as at least implied by Pufendorf, includes our own bodies. Whether or not he has a *philosophical* right to such claims, Locke, in defending property, sees himself as the *political* defender of the new and now firmly established possessing class in England after the (suppressed) challenges of radical Levellers and Diggers during the early stages of the Commonwealth.

In Locke's attitude to property, however, we also recognize a further correction of Hobbes' account of the state of nature, for while Locke agrees with Hobbes that in that unhappy state we are under threat from our fellow men, we are also (he thinks), and more basically, under threat from starvation. Thus the asserted right of ownership depends on the natural desire to survive not only human malice and aggressiveness but a challenge from raw nature itself. Hence the ownership of the fruits of our labour, as well as our safety from the hostility of others also struggling to survive, must be protected by political society – and Hobbes is further in error in claiming that in such society there is no option but a radical autocracy: our natural rights (not merely Hobbesian liberties) are not protected by substituting one fear for another.[27]

[27] This is not the place to discuss Locke's move from defending property as a necessary requisite for survival to his claim that political society must also protect property rights when they are not merely the means of personal survival but of individual profitable advancement – or to treat of post-Lockean developments where rights claims are based not on needs (real or apparent) but on preferences. Suffice it to say that Locke well reflects the post-Commonwealth, post-Puritan mentality (confirmed by the 'Glorious' Revolution of 1688) that human rights are to be viewed – Leveller and Digger arguments to the contrary now out of favour – as the legitimate linkage between ownership of property and the political authority of the propertied classes: a situation which, though challenged again by revolutionaries such as Tom Paine (in the spirit of the French Revolution) only began substantially to break down in England with the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832.

Locke defends the (untraditional and confused) notion that we own our own bodies in the dualist language of Descartes: our bodies are in no sense our mental selves but our basic material instruments; hence we 'own' them.[28] Nevertheless, our rights to our bodies, as to our other property, still depend on a theistic, indeed specifically Christian, premise and Locke leaves us uncertain as to how or whether his unfolding 'modernism' in moral psychology, if developed further, could justify them, for if God disappears – and the new psychology tends to make him morally irrelevant – what happens to the remaining aspects of a moral universe which are held to depend on him? Locke himself appears to have found it necessary to persist with the belief that moral obligations in general and rights claims in particular demand God's continuing existence.

Protestant voluntarism, whether in the avowedly Christian and ultra-Augustinian version of Luther and Calvin, or in its more generally 'theistic' avatar in the neo-naturalism of Grotius, Pufendorf and Locke, had thus run into the sands by the beginning of the eighteenth century when already a new moral world was being constructed: first – and perhaps involuntarily – by those continuing Protestant voluntarists of empirical bent whom we have already considered; then by their still effectively Protestant or post-Protestant successors, whether Continental rationalists like Spinoza and Leibniz or British moral sense theorists from Shaftesbury to Hume and beyond: these last, while maintaining empiricism, abandoning voluntarism and eventually God. Catholics too were losing sight of their medieval traditions without seriously considering either what to put in their place or appreciating the thrust of the ever 'advancing' post-Protestant – soon to be post-Christian – modern ethics thought suited to the needs of the ever more godless, 'scientific' world where the search for final causes was deemed a mere impediment to progress – but in which, by a strange turn of fate, voluntarism would soon reappear in a variety of more sinister 'humanistic' guises.

[28] For some of the wider implications of this MacPherson (1962) is still invaluable.

CHAPTER 9

Love, Will and the Moral Sense

> 'All valid arguments in favour of virtue presuppose that we already desire virtue, or desire some of its ends and objects.'
>
> J. S. Mill

In looking at the voluntarist successors to ultra-Augustinianism, of both Protestant and Catholic stripe, we have noticed a tendency to determinism, originally religious but later more or less secular in form, and simultaneously a recurrent tendency, as in Cumberland – in parallel in this with the non-voluntarist Cambridge Platonists – for love, as the force behind obligation, to re-emerge from the shadow of will as the basis of 'Christian' morality. Yet albeit that love itself looks increasingly secular in a world where morality rather than worship is considered the essence of religion, it may still be presented as *antidote* to determinism without resort to a freedom of indifference long associated with a voluntarism now becoming unacceptable as inscrutable or irrational or both, and hence immoral. A renewed emphasis on love might also perform something of the role of that *inclinatio* towards God that had rescued created freedom from the threat of indifference before the advent of Scotus and Ockham. Yet without that variety of freedom how – as Scotus and Ockham would have argued – could God's omnipotence and man's postlapsarian state be reconciled? But these doctrines too – especially the latter – are now falling by the wayside, and if God's role as guarantee of 'free' will through man's *inclinatio* to goodness (let alone through an infused goodness) is to be superseded, how could more than a 'compatibilist' freedom survive?

Thus, one of the questions on the philosophical table during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was whether a freedom of indifference could exist outside a theological frame without looking like an amoral capacity in a value-free universe in which determinism does not matter philosophically. The Fathers of the Council of Trent were only logical in accepting that (leaving problems of election aside) without some sort of freedom of the will it matters little whether there are moral values or

not, since we would have no other option than to accept whatever moral behaviour is assigned to us. Yet aware of the approaching threat of nihilism insofar as they wanted determinism condemned, they still showed only limited comprehension of how ultra-Augustinianism, originally invoked not least to protect the Gospel from vain philosophy, so far from promoting Christianity and rejecting Pelagianism, was becoming a pretext for an alternative religion of rationality and morality that excluded anything specifically Christian – and would end by jettisoning God as a parochial tyrant of Hebrew origin. In the course of which we pass from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century.

Some of these dangers to the traditional moral universe were recognized by Leibniz (1646–1716) whose *Theodicy* is modern in its immediate concerns and – though strangely old-fashioned, indeed Augustinian, in many of its preferences – seems to breathe the atmosphere of the Cambridge Platonists in looking for a perhaps 'Plotinian' Platonism rather than the Augustinian version, tarred as the latter now was with the brush of determinist Calvinism. Indeed, as one might expect from a man who, though a Lutheran, strove to reconcile at least the mainstream Protestant churches and hoped, like so many of his philosophical contemporaries, to see an end to wars of religion,[1] Leibniz's responses to difficulties old and new were often generically theistic rather than specifically Christian, with sometimes a hankering for a return to the ancient pagans. He complains that Pufendorf in particular has separated morality too much from religion and himself has constant resort to the Scriptures, which he knows in great detail, yet which he often seems to treat as mere icing on the metaphysical cake: we need no revelation, he claims, to know that there is a 'sole Principle of all things, entirely good and wise'[2] (*Theodicy* 98). Among Christian thinkers he often esteemed the medievals above his nearer contemporaries, and in moral *philosophy* (as distinct from theology) often seems close to the Platonizing side of Augustine, while theologically he worries continually at contemporary problems, especially the pros and cons of voluntarism.

Nevertheless, at times he is prepared to adopt Augustine's 'system', 'save for these points', which he notes, 'and some few others, where St. Augustine appears obscure or even repellent' (300). He accepts much of Descartes' rationalism but rejects the voluntarism with which Descartes had tried to combine it, arguing, as did the Cambridge Platonists – he

[1] See Antognazza (2009); Backus (2012: 179–99).

[2] References to the *Theodicy* (published in 1710) are to pages of Austin Farrar's edition (London 1952).

respected Cudworth and exchanged philosophical letters with his daughter Damaris – that it points to man as desirably servile and (in Hobbes) even as vicious before a tyrannical God (402–3). He also rejects freedom of indifference, voluntarism's by now regular partner (74, 112 [against Descartes], 251, 406–7), and is particularly outraged by extreme Calvinists who claim that God established good and evil by arbitrary decree (236). His respect for ancient and medieval predecessors indicates a sense that philosophy, despite its many advances, has been deformed and needs to return to roots adequately revitalized by himself.[3] His reading and sympathies are surprisingly wide, covering a range of Catholic, Lutheran and 'Reformed' writings, as well as much from Greek and Roman antiquity.

Included in Leibniz's rehabilitation of a past not dissimilar to Augustine's, and even in its metaphysical aspects recalling Plato's *Timaeus*, are the following principles, deployed throughout the *Theodicy*: Being is to be again equated with goodness (*pace* Pufendorf); final causes are to be reinstated in morality as in physics (*pace* the mechanism of Descartes and the atomism of Hobbes); a voluntarist account of God is unintelligible, since it precludes our ability even to recognize that he is good, and hence lovable (236–7) – and equally unintelligible is the freedom of indifference.

Only God is free because he unfailingly chooses what is best, while our freedom is limited to the degree that we fail to choose what is good (327, 386). God's freedom is Augustinian, his nature being such that he cannot do wrong, the highest freedom being an inability to sin. Yet only God possesses that kind of 'greater freedom' (to use Augustine's language), while the freedom we humans possess would only be a freedom of indifference if we had no sense of morality; we are, in fact, free insofar as we approximate to God's nature. Finally, evil is to be viewed (with Augustine and the whole subsequent medieval tradition) as privation (219), though sin – and Leibniz does not shrink from the word – is to be seen less as disobedience to God than as moral error: a rather Socratic stance. Thus for Leibniz, as for Augustine in the case of God and the saints, freedom is to be viewed in a compatibilist sense. God, being free, cannot do other than follow the good that his reason grasps and which our reason must try to grasp if we are to be accounted free.

Augustine, we recall, wanted both to maintain some intelligible similarity between our justice and God's, so that the word 'just' might be (but

[3] Cf. Wilson (1990: 138–46). For a full account of Leibniz's philosophical education see Mercer (2001) and Antognazza (2009).

'platonically' cannot be) univocal, but at the same time to insist on the inscrutability of God's justice – which seems further to forbid univocity. Leibniz, facing a similar problem, comes down firmly against the voluntarists in holding that in a moral realm shared by man with God, moral language must always be understood (as Anselm had argued earlier) univocally (95). For honest voluntarists, in whose view justice implies obedience to the decree of a superior, argues Leibniz, God cannot be thought of as just at all, since he has no superior. Properly understood, God's justice – though inscrutable as are the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation (103) – is the justice we ourselves strive for; otherwise we could not understand how we are justly rewarded and punished.

In keeping with his strong objections to voluntarism, Leibniz agrees with Augustine in having no truck with a separate faculty of the will; the whole soul reasons and decides (*Theodicy* 421) – and in that he again draws close to the Cambridge Platonists. Yet one of the conclusions from his understanding of God – separating himself from a literal rendering of a passage of *Genesis* which contributed much to the views of all his Christian predecessors – is that the present universe is not only good but the best possible. God in his wisdom could not have done otherwise (*Theodicy* 128).

As in Augustine, and reminding us both of the voluntarist Cumberland and (again) of the anti-voluntarist Cambridge Platonists, love, aroused by God and for God, is enthroned by Leibniz at the very centre of ethics (99). In the theological working out of this, however, the resemblance to Augustine fades, Leibniz holding that our increasing understanding, without the aid of divine grace, transforms a rather Hobbesian self-love into a genuine concern for others and a love of God which, however, can never be disinterested (*Papers* 219 Loemker; Textes II.575 Grua).[4] Thus we have an orderly benevolence, largely within human capacity: a love of friendship rather than the full-blooded and grace-inspired Augustinian version but appropriate for what really amounts to a theistic, not necessarily Christian theodicy.

Leibniz sees love (so understood) – and ultimately love (accompanied by knowledge) for God himself – as the centre of morality and source of moral obligation – for it is impossible (as Plato held) not to act in accordance with what we love insofar as our love is well grounded and genuine. Such ideas, based on an elaborate metaphysics, influenced many, and not least Kant's predecessor and eventual *bête noire* Christian Wolff, against

[4] For discussion see Schneewind (1998: 245–7).

whom Kant tried to construct a non-metaphysical morality of duty and will in direct contrast to the Leibnizian morality of love.

Love, then, in Leibniz – at least in a watered down version – is central to ethics, and backed by a metaphysical account of human capabilities, whereas in Kant's contradiction love (even as friendship) has disappeared, along with the metaphysics that once sustained it. Indeed we may wonder whether an ethics of love in any form can be shown sustainable without metaphysics, and whether a morality of Augustinian love can operate without a (reconstructed) *Platonic* metaphysics, be it in Christian or non-Christian guise. More specifically, we may ask whether Leibniz's account of our capacity for knowledge and love is strong enough to ground absolute obligations. In Augustinian Christianity our natural capacity for love is only so adequate when reinforced, indeed impelled, by God's grace. Leibniz tries to retain a rather rationalized, less theological version of that position; he presumably suspected that otherwise our obligations would be merely aspirations.

Within the wider historical context in which the present enquiry is located, we should notice that many difficulties apparent in Augustine remain unresolved by the 'counter-revolutionary' Leibniz – and were probably unresolvable in the religious situation then obtaining. Thus, extremely uneasy with traditional accounts of predestination, Leibniz is well aware that disagreements about the nature of the soul and its origin are still a source of confusion among theists anxious to retain what they can of traditional Christianity (173ff.). He recoils in horror from the views of Luther's favourite scholastic, Gregory of Rimini, which the Jansenists had recently revived, that those unbaptized, especially but not only infants, are damned. He knows that, Jansenists apart, many still hold to those views, but prefers – citing Aquinas, Bradwardine, Francis Xavier and Francois de Sales among Catholics – to believe that those who enjoy the light of nature will have received sufficient grace for salvation (176, cf. 300). He worries too – as Christian thinkers always had – about the near sacrifice of Isaac, though declining the sort of omnipotence-guided explanations Scotus and Ockham had proposed. Rather he thinks that God never willed Isaac's death even though he commanded it, but only wanted Abraham's obedience (401); so Abraham was tricked into supposing he was invited to kill.

On the origin of the soul Leibniz does little more than rehearse the various options canvassed by Augustine. *Either* souls pre-exist the body – a view he knows still finds adherents but with which he has little sympathy – *or* original sin is somehow handed down (but without recourse

to Augustine's axiom that we are one in Adam), *or* a new soul is generated by each individual pair of parents, as, he notes, is the most widely held view among Protestants (as it was in antiquity among Pelagians). But that, as Augustine had famously pointed out to Jerome (again not mentioned by Leibniz), raises grave difficulties for the doctrine of original sin, and that doctrine's impossibility – apparently assumed by Grotius and actively urged by Lord Herbert, Cudworth and Locke – might point to the collapse of any specifically metaphysical account of traditional Christianity.

If we revert to the questions about free will with which our present enquiry began, the work of Leibniz provides a good lookout post from which to review the still changing relationship of moral philosophy to its theological past. We started with Augustine's view that freedom, at its best, is the uninhibited ability to pursue the good. That implies that God himself, and his saints in heaven, are unable to sin, the latter no longer having the practical option of sinning and enjoying what Augustine called a 'longed-for necessity'. However, various difficulties with Augustine's account of the fall and the consequent activity of God in rewarding and punishing, plus those about his omnipotence, fomented the reconstruction of an alternative and potentially contradictory aspect of the Augustinian picture: if human beings are to be held responsible for their acts, they must somehow be more radically 'free' to accept or reject God and goodness.

In Augustine's world view, human guilt was already established by the 'original' sin, but as that concept was edged aside, a pattern of purely this-worldly morality began to develop. Yet men must still be punished and rewarded by God; hence the conclusion that man (if not also God) enjoys a freedom of indifference. Even the Council of Trent seemed to suggest that for fallen mankind some such freedom – though modified by a remnant of our original *inclinatio* to goodness – is necessary if – without resort to double predestination – responsibility and the justice of God in rewarding and punishing are to be retained. But now even for those grown less religious things were becoming more complex and confusing: the seventeenth century had not only sealed the splintering of Western Christendom but also – doubtless largely on account of the new 'science' – generated non-theological versions of 'hard' determinism, as we have found in Hobbes.

Despite all that, Leibniz wanted to expound a theistic morality, retaining as much of traditional Christian theology as might be uncontroversial. Yet he supposed that he could not accept a freedom of indifference whether for God – who thus would become a despot – or consequently

(since moral terms are univocal) for man. In thus rejecting the freedom of indifference in an attempt both to preserve responsibility and save God's moral reputation, he is driven back to Augustine's view of freedom as properly the uninhibited ability – at least in God – to be good and to do well. That, of course, as he recognizes, depends on God's existence and would be unintelligible without it. But what if God were to be discarded rather than merely to some degree de-Christianized? Then – with Augustinian freedom, original sin and its antidote in God's grace unavailable – if we are to have moral obligations, our only hope might seem to lie in claiming (following the Cambridge Platonists and [at times] Locke) whatever degree of autonomy could be found resistant to the encroaching physical determinism which the 'scientists' were beginning to propose. Perhaps some new version of libertarian freedom, however restricted by new metaphysical or psychological light, might provide – though ever less plausibly – an alternative to the determinism Leibniz damns in Spinoza (whom I shall not discuss) as well as in Hobbes. And could God be replaced by a more naturalistic, more-than-human, as also more impersonal, alternative?

For all his emphasis on love, Leibniz's ethics depends on our rational capacity to perfect ourselves, to be friends with God in a moral universe we share with him. Like many of his immediate predecessors he tends to de-Christianize ethics, but unlike them still requires a God with roughly the attributes medieval Christians had assigned to him, albeit presented in terms of natural religion rather than of revelation and increasingly less an active figure in the moral life than a guarantee that morality is possible.

It is not just morality that is at stake, for, says Leibniz, 'it is, in my judgment, the divine understanding which gives realities to the eternal verities, albeit God's will have no part therein. All reality must be founded on something existent' (243). But already, with salvation, requiring a mediator, now easily forgotten, the sophisticated might seem back in the ancient world asking what the good life is and how it can be achieved by man's own efforts. Yet still, as then, the existence of some sort of 'other' world, of God (or gods), might be necessary to provide a setting and stage for moral behaviour – rather as in physics he is still necessary to start the whole process and guarantee the reliability and rationality of the laws of nature. God was still to play that kind of restricted moral role in Kant, though other options – *Etsi deus non daretur* – had long since begun to develop, and less hypothetically than in Grotius.

Many, though not all, neglected Leibniz's attempt at counter-revolution. Already available in his own lifetime was a significantly less

theistic, yet also non-determinist option: an early version of the 'moral sense' theory proposed by Locke's former pupil and later critic, the third Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury was a moral sense theorist of a very different stripe from his successors Hutcheson and Hume, being no empiricist with a passive theory of the mind but a descendent of the Cambridge Platonists and an ancestor of Kant in his emphasis on man's power of self-determination, through his 'natural' moral sense (*Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit* 1.262), as on the necessity of free and deliberate agency for the justification of moral obligation.[5] As we shall see, Shaftesbury was thus entirely hostile to any notion of morality as obedience to an outside authority – authority must be internal to the self (*Inquiry* 1.112) – and he appeals (*Life* 130) to the notion of a 'superior' or 'governing' part of the soul: the ruling principle (*hegemonikon*) of the Stoic Epictetus, whose work he valued highly. Two questions can be raised about this, as about similar ideas among his successors including Kant: How far does the theory depend on an erroneous psychology and, at the moral level, why – to what end – should we obey (or even want to obey) any such ruling part?

Moral sense theories are a new development in that their defence of morality depends little on either religion or metaphysics but almost entirely on psychology – in the claim that we just have a special capacity by which we can recognize moral truths. In a way this may look like Platonism, for which our desire to know and love the good generates moral obligations and, theoretically, eliminates weakness of will. But there is a fundamental difference. For the Platonists objective moral truths are to be found in a transcendent world – and for voluntarists of various shades there are God's commands, as indicated by the Scriptures. So with Shaftesbury's 'moral sense' we meet the problem – essentially new to the Christian world, though in ancient thought it goes back at least to Protagoras in the fifth century BC – of how to ground moral beliefs and obligations. It was not a problem for the quasi-atheist Hobbes, who denies moral obligation altogether and concerns himself with deal-making to promote individual survival, but it was certainly a problem for moral sense theorists, and indeed for all 'decent' people wanting to maintain moral obligations and searching for a non-conventionalist way to justify them.

Kant, reacting to the challenges of Hume, would eventually think he had found the solution. The failure of his attempt – which simultaneously required God to set the parameters for ethics while maintaining that

[5] Shaftesbury resorted to the Platonists for ammunition against Hobbes, not least when publishing a preface to Whichcote's *Select Sermons* (1698); for discussion see Jaffro (2008: 255).

morality could only be upheld if man is morally autonomous[6] – was to point directly to the more modern dilemma of whether there are moral, as distinct from ideological or conventional obligations at all; though if there are none, it could still be argued that some conventions are more sensible than others in light of psychological truths about human nature. In any case, the origins of such problems, still with us in our secular world, can be identified in Shaftesbury, then in Hutcheson and finally – and in highly provocative style – in Hume. And between Shaftesbury and Hume, Bishop Berkeley observed and explained the way the world was wagging.

The 'republican' and anti-clerical Shaftesbury's championing of a moral sense derived not only from his hostility to voluntarism but in no small part from his opposition to Hobbes, whose view that goods are simply what we happen to desire had eventually won the support of Locke. Between the first and second editions of his *Essay*, Locke had not only come to agree with Hobbes on that, but had added that we can neglect goods thus identified in the interest of abating present discomfort (*Essay* 2.21.29ff.).[7] Yet he also held, as a good voluntarist, that it is obedience to God's laws, backed as they are by sanctions, which produces order in the desires of the individual and hence in society. That Shaftesbury denied, being convinced as a republican – and in this fortified by an admiration for Cudworth[8] – that man is self-determining; otherwise morality would be an impossible concept. That entailed rejecting the claims of the voluntarists in religion, in philosophy those of Hobbes, hence in this matter those of his erstwhile teacher Locke. For Locke, as we have seen, had come to accept that the passions create their goods and that only divine sanctions can generate moral obligations. In an important sense, as Shaftesbury recognized, the views of Hobbes and Locke had become strikingly similar, both supposing that moral obligation has to be imposed on human inclinations, Hobbes emphasizing the felt need for survival, Locke the divine power – which might induce in us more than a little 'uneasiness' – as able to salvage 'morality'.

Shaftesbury rejected Hobbes' claim that all our desires are ultimately self-serving. Though (with Locke) he denied that we have any innate concern for a supreme good, he held that we are impelled by love not merely of ourselves but of the human race: by a generosity that springs from what

6 See Allison (1986: 393–425).

7 See Schneewind (1998: 299). For a detailed discussion of Shaftesbury see Darwall (1995: 176–206), who rightly emphasizes the moral sense.

8 Noted by Passmore (1951: 100).

he calls the moral faculty or, from time to time, the moral sense.[9] That moral sense is a reflective capacity of the practical reason that can determine whether or not our passions are harmonious – above all those that are self-serving with those that are benevolent – while, in judging whether they are harmonious or the reverse, it engenders feelings – in Shaftesbury's language 'affections' – of moral approval and disapproval. If our feelings are harmonious, we shall be happy, for good affections, he says, are natural to us in that they promote the 'public interest'.

The problem, of course, is to know whether our second-order affections – those that judge our passions – are reliable. It is one thing to be able to recognize a difference between right and wrong, quite another to 'feel' correctly about what is right and wrong in particular circumstances, and another again to know that one's feelings are appropriate even if they are. A harmonious set of feelings might generate a merely subjective experience, even if that experience can be recognized as coherent. Shaftesbury's primary concern is to construct a morality that is all of a piece and rational, rather than submit to what he takes to be the arbitrary ethic of the Calvinists' God, and from this anti-voluntarist stance he seems to derive the belief that one's feelings, if harmonious and known to be harmonious, will also be morally objective.

Shaftesbury is as hostile to Locke's appeal to divine sanctions as he is to the unmitigated egoism of Hobbes. An animal tamed through fear of the consequences, he observes, is not truly gentle (*Inquiry* 1.250). Indeed he eventually came to identify Locke, his former tutor, as promoting an essentially Hobbesian vision of a brutish state of nature that 'threw all order and virtue out of the world'.[10] Hence the optimist's 'Christianity' that Shaftesbury wants to maintain, and which he largely sees as benevolence, has much in common with the reconstructed religion of John Toland, a fellow member of the circle of Viscount Molesworth and responsible for the publication of the first edition (1699) of the Earl's *Inquiry*.

Ten years earlier Toland had himself published a work entitled *Christianity not Mysterious* in which he argued that only those 'revelations' which can be regarded as reasonable are genuine, for 'Reason is the only

[9] According to Schneewind Shaftesbury was not the first to use the phrase, which occurs earlier in Thomas Burnet's *Remarks on Locke* (1697) (Schneewind 1998: 301, note 28). Schneewind, in the same note, wants to connect the moral sense with the Platonist More's 'boniform faculty', but in emphasizing the genuinely Platonic roots of that idea, I have also indicated that although it may perform the same function as Shaftesbury's moral sense, it is in fact very different. Schneewind points with more precision to Whichcote's 'sense of good and evil upon moral account'; again I would argue that the metaphysics is very different.

[10] Letter to Ainsworth (1709) in Rand (1900: 403).

Foundation of all Certitude'; all else are the 'impostures and traditions of men'.[11] That was going too far; Toland's book was condemned to be burnt by the public hangman. As for Shaftesbury himself, he held that the Calvinists cannot defend the justice of God, not least because justice must exist independently of any decree or act of the will. Such strictures, reminding us of Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists, were presumably intended to justify his belief that, without any divine command to proclaim and enforce moral obligations, the moral faculty itself will identify justice. We have such universal moral notions within us, and as agents we are capable of the objective harmony of moral feeling that the moral faculty demands.

Shaftesbury is far from supposing that such moral affections come readily to all; like aesthetic feelings, of which they are a subset, they seem to be matters of good taste, and good and harmonious taste will ever require the education of the *homme moyen* by the élite (*Inquiry* 1.125). But although virtue has the same 'fixed standard' as music and architecture, Shaftesbury still seems uneasy, as well he might, about the objective status of his moral feelings and hopes that the hypothesis of a benevolent, if non-transcendent, deity like that of Epictetus will keep the objectivity of morality in fuller view. For such objectivity seems ultimately to reside in the harmony that our reflective control of our passions is supposed both to reveal and to guarantee. Or to create? A plain weakness in Shaftesbury's position is the lack of serious consideration of the relationship between the discerning mind and its harmonious objects. Despite talk of 'a real feeling of the Divine Presence' (*Inquiry* 1.37), he seems not only to have effectively abandoned the transcendent – in that respect moving from 'Neoplatonism' to 'Stoicism' – but while so doing to have tried to retain the Neoplatonic view that the divine mind, the knower of Beauty, is somehow superior to its products. Yet he nowhere proposes an ontological analysis of these 'products', which need to be realities, and is inclined to reduce them to agreeable or disagreeable 'notions' or concepts.

It is hard to see that the residual Christianity to which Shaftesbury appeals has any other role than to justify behaviour he has come to think necessary for maintaining a decent 'liberal' society. And insofar as his deity is 'natural', within a rather Stoic-seeming universe, he has moved a stage beyond the Cambridge Platonists whose 'divine mind' (and its

[11] Perhaps surprisingly Toland was an early biographer of Milton, whose account of the 'mysterious' at best overlapped with his own; for comment see Hillier (2011: 74). My more immediate attention to Toland was aroused by Jonathan Robinson's comments (2005: 69–70; see also Taylor (1989: 245) and Gregory (2012: 107–8).

human analogue) is closer to Plotinus than to Epictetus. More generally, earlier debates about whether morality is necessarily tied to salvation, and hence to divine transcendence, have resolved themselves more and more into purely secular discussion of the relationship within morality between love (Cumberland, Leibniz and now – with benevolence – Shaftesbury) and law (Hobbes and the voluntarists). Shaftesbury still wants to retain enough 'Christianity', in however Stoic a form, to support his account of human and divine benevolence, without which it is unclear whether his moral sense theory can support an adequate defence of moral obligation. Yet *revealed* religion has now almost disappeared from him as from other more 'advanced' thinkers and the immediately succeeding question has to be whether deism could be an adequate substitute. Perhaps our moral sense might have to be separated from any and every religious claim. But if so, could it provide any better account of obligation?

According to Shaftesbury the only moral role left to the benevolent deity is to guarantee some sort of security that the deliverances of the moral sense about our potentially harmonious nature are more than mere aspirations: that they are indications of the objective nature of the moral truths accessible to us. To many, not least to Samuel Clarke and Bishop Berkeley, to advocate so limited a theism seemed a step too far, and as Berkeley was to object, the next stage could only be unvarnished atheism. Indeed, in the writings of Bernard Mandeville, that prediction had already been shown little wide of the mark, though Mandeville's moral nihilism was ahead of its time and incurred the same sort of hostility as had been visited earlier on the 'crypto-atheist' Hobbes.

Mandeville's theory – expounded especially in a revised version of *The Fable of the Bees* which he entitled *An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue* (1723) – was intended to show that private vices, especially avarice, were the greatest of public benefits, and that private corruption was of great benefit to the public purse.[12] Without it we should be forced back on an austerity which no-one – unless hypocritically – desires. Underneath this 'moralizing' claim lies a version of the position of Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic* that morality arises because the strong, clear-headed and

[12] For more on Mandeville's 'Thrasymachean' nihilism, see Rist (2004: 158–63), Hundert (1994), and for his influence, Hundert (1995: 577–94). Hobbes had held that greed might help personal survival, Mandeville that it aided the public purse; we can already look forward to Adam Smith's view that the free market – now, strictly speaking, removed from the moral sphere – will through its 'hidden hand' at least indirectly aid even the disadvantaged: thus to insulate economic activity and (in effect) relegate it to the latter-day version of Luther's godless (originally Satanic) kingdom will be beneficial all round! Especially for those 'elect' immediately positioned to profit from it.

'dishonest' manipulate a public both gullible and prone to hypocrisy so that they believe they should detest what is conventionally held to be 'vice' – while the manipulators themselves know that morality is a fiction: 'Moral virtues', says Mandeville, 'are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride' (1.51).

Unlike Thrasymachus, however, Mandeville is a satirist, and alongside the nihilist claim is another and incompatible proposition: that virtue is a good thing, though no-one really wants it since it conflicts with our desires. Thus the cynical politician who invents it for self-interested purposes is a beneficiary of society, or would be in an ideal world. However, this is not an ideal world but a world generated by Hobbesian self-interest in which God cannot be invoked to make things right in the end. That amounts to a claim that unfortunately there is no God and so much the worse for all of us; the possibility of a governed society, therefore, resides only in hypocrisy and the exploitation of hypocrisy.

Unsurprisingly, in his reflections on the emasculation of Christianity Bishop Berkeley, as we shall see, had no doubt that Mandeville's satire is perceptive as well as noxious. As for Mandeville himself, he insisted in his reply to Berkeley (1732) that he was no cynical amoralist; he was merely stating facts. That we might contrast with the claims of Machiavelli, for, says Mandeville, 'Tho' I have shewn the way to worldly greatness, I have, without hesitation, preferr'd the road that leads to virtue' (*Letter to Dion*, ed. Viner 1953). But in Mandeville's own terms such comments could be merely disingenuous.

Where Mandeville might seem to sweep away the remnants of a Christianity-according-to-Shaftesbury, Samuel Clarke, despite his notorious anti-Trinitarianism, tried in other respects to put the religious clock back – not to the voluntarism of Locke but behind that to something more like the Thomistic intellectualism advocated by Hooker, his Elizabethan ecclesiastical predecessor. God is free not as an arbitrary tyrant but as able only to create and preserve what is appropriate for him to create and preserve: an attempt to revert to the Catholic position – though Clarke is obviously no Catholic – that it is God's nature, rather than either his intelligence or his will, which determines what he does.

In similar vein Clarke argues that the weak account of free will proposed by Locke, allowing only for a suspension of judgement, is an inadequate response to the determinism of Hobbes; rather we must distinguish moral motives from what he calls 'Physical Efficients' (*Boyle Lecture* 1, 9, p. 553, ed. Jacob 1738, reprinted 1978). That is an important distinction, often made by earlier writers but insufficiently labelled and now given precise

formulation: for it had often been realized that to say I am not the kind of person who could commit murder has no reference to any mere lack of physical strength. Clarke's distinction, however, is only an appeal to the philosophy of language; involving no theological claims about the human condition other than that we cannot be punished by a just God unless we are responsible for our actions: endowed, that is, with a liberty of indifference, the principal variety now on the secular or religious table. A man, says Clarke, has 'a continual Power of choosing, whether he shall Act, or whether he shall forbear Acting' (1.10, p. 566).

Clarke believes he has discovered a riposte to predestination, thus relieving unnecessary fears. His obvious target is Calvinism, but he also touches an exposed nerve in Augustine's original position. According to Clarke, God must always act fairly; that means that any idea of apparently random predestination, choosing, say, between Jacob and Esau – to revert to one of Augustine's star examples – is out of the question. Calvinists and others might have replied that God's decision to save one and not another is not unfair, for human ideas of fairness are irrelevant; the point is simply that we cannot understand the divine equity. Clarke will have none of it – which might have invited him to offer some new account of apparently intransigent biblical texts; but no such attempt is forthcoming. In England we are witnessing an age – revealed not only in the writings of Clarke – where it seems the Christian God must be convicted of immorality and there is no alternative but to replace Christianity by deism. For something more radical we have to wait a few decades more; as yet we can only wonder why Christianity, etiolated as it had become, and increasingly on the defensive on moral as well as scientific issues, was still deemed necessary at all.

To that at least Clarke's answer is clear. Christian morality is based on eternal moral truths, accessible to the wise. But the majority of the human race is far from wise, and revelation is needed to proclaim these truths to the ignorant masses who can only be led by authoritative teaching. The ignorant or stupid may not listen to mere humans like Clarke or other wise men; perhaps they will listen to the word of God, whose attenuated truth can still be mediated through God's (Anglican) clergy. If not, reason being weak, little more can be done (1.10, pp. 655–6). Such being the case, however, we may still wonder whether, now that revelation is to be read as natural religion dressed up for the masses, the Church and its populist sacraments can survive; indeed, whether they are already merely comfortable, not to say profitable, conventions.

Bishop Berkeley at least saw the problems clearly: those of the less deistic Christianity of Clarke as well as of the progressively less Christian versions of Locke and more specifically Shaftesbury (whom he takes at times to be outright anti-Christian) – not to speak of the paradoxical if logically extreme claims of Mandeville, whom he also challenges directly.[13] His description of the existing state of England is Hogarthian, but his *analysis* of the religious problem is woefully incomplete. His defence of the Anglican Church is standard. There is little discussion of basic theological questions such as grace, and Berkeley sticks to 'no Popery', popery being viewed as superstition together with 'Mariology', bogus miracles and so forth. That precludes any perception that the religious crisis in England predates the Puritan version of Reform.[14] Nevertheless, in an essay on the disastrous state of civil society, Berkeley goes beyond the failures in current theology so far as to look scathingly at the effects of the religious confusion visible in the collapse of the work ethic and the growth of worldliness and wild speculation fuelled by greed now that Christianity is subverted by 'free thinkers' and deists – Mandeville and Shaftesbury doubtless included – with whom he deals in considerable detail in the *Alciphron*. Hence it is worth looking at his account of the effects of the change in religious sentiments before proceeding to his revealing, albeit incomplete, analysis of its philosophical and theological causes.

Berkeley's discussion begins with a claim both historical and philosophical: 'Religion hath in former days been cherished and reverenced by wise patriots … as knowing it to be impossible that a nation should thrive and flourish without virtue, or that virtue should subsist without conscience, or conscience without religion; insomuch that an atheist or infidel was looked on with abhorrence, and treated as an enemy to his country.'[15] He proceeds to chronicle how change has come about now that 'it is even

[13] Berkeley attacks Mandeville in dialogue 2 of *Alciphron*, Shaftesbury in dialogue 3 (vol. 3 in *The Works of George Berkeley*, eds. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop [London 1956]).

[14] For Berkeley's concern when a friend considered turning papist and his defence of the claim that before the Reformation there was a spiritual and invisible church underground during the Catholic centuries, see especially *On the Roman Controversy to Sir John James, Bart.* (1741) in Luce and Jessop vol. 7; for his gloomy reflections on the state of England after the South Sea Bubble see *An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* (1721) in vol. 6. Berkeley recognizes that the papacy developed over time and assumes that this implies that it is illegitimate. For an alternative viewpoint, see Rist (2008a: 201–32).

[15] Luce and Jessop (6.69) note a similar comment in Locke (*First Letter concerning Toleration*): 'Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought [Grotius beware!] dissolves all.' This is not merely to assume the necessity of religion for morality but to feel the need to affirm it against deniers: a very significant change in emphasis.

fashionable to decry religion'. The root cause of the trouble is a misconceived search for a form of liberty that collapses into libertinism. Now, he tells us, we have an obsession with gaming and other forms of 'quick-buck' artistry fuelled by greed and, in the case of the South Sea Bubble, promoted by government and court:[16] an outlook inevitably accompanied by contempt for honest labour. What is required is a higher birth rate (to be encouraged by high taxes on those who die unmarried), an improvement in the quality of manufacturing and the encouragement of a frugal lifestyle: no more gaming, no more extravagant dressing for women in styles (introduced from the by now also decadent French) that encourage immodesty (cf. *Alciphron* 2.24). Those who so trick themselves out are damned in terms cited from *Isaiah* (3.16–24), for what we need is a 'hardy, temperate, religious sort of men'. And away with 'that most infamous practice of bribery and its companion, perjury, as also operas and masquerades, for God will not be mocked: That general corruption of manners never faileth to draw after it some heavy judgment of war, famine, or pestilence'. And whereas 'other nations have been wicked … we are the first who have been wicked upon principle': the principle being 'Epicurean' notions that have led us to discard the 'awful respect' due to an Almighty God.

How is it that such changes have occurred less than a century after the rule of the godly in the Commonwealth? As to that, Berkeley is in no doubt, referring specifically to the 'luxurious reign of King Charles the Second' when we began to do 'violence to our natures'. Thus the problem is not simply religious, but psychological. Shaftesbury, as we saw, held a similar view of the role of psychology, though his account of nature is far more optimistic than Berkeley's. Like Hobbes, he has no interest in original sin, and underplays sin of any stripe; good taste can prevail over our more ignorant clownishness. But Mandeville and Shaftesbury are fashionable leaders; how has the Church Established allowed them that pre-eminence?

In *Alciphron* Berkeley spells out the explanation. It is not only the libertines and ordinary people who have abandoned Christianity; the Church itself is full of deists, and Berkeley expounds the rake's progress by which this decline came about, though shedding little light beyond the dictates of fashion and luxury on why it has happened. Which is in no small

[16] As non-confessional Holland preceded increasingly deist England in developing as a (de facto) godless economic powerhouse, so the South Sea Bubble was preceded by the 'tulip bubble' of 1637 (for details see Goldgar 2007).

measure because he sees the phenomenon solely and insularly in terms of the decline of the Church of England – taken to represent the superior form of Christianity – without consideration of the wider world (even in his strictures on French fashions) on which that Church had obtruded. Nor, of course, was he in any position to evaluate why the separation of economic life from religion (first developed in Holland as an effect of the development of a war-weary religious toleration) enabled avarice to become almost a virtue while traditional Christianity's hostility to it now lacked any power of enforcement.[17]

Alciphron pits a pro-Berkeley speaker against two opponents: Lysicles, roughly representing Mandeville, and Alciphron representing Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury is Berkeley's principal target because he sees in the thought of the Earl a more subtle challenge to Christianity than the cynical 'realism' and de facto nihilism of the doctor.[18] And in the shorter run he was right; few in the early eighteenth-century could have supposed that anything like Mandeville's nihilism would have a wide following long after deism had faded from the scene to be replaced by less wholesome and 'civilized' alternatives.

Alciphron's attack runs roughly as follows: we have now become Broad Church (*Alciphron* 1.7), that is, we are still Christians but have little regard for revelation; then we realize that all religions are basically the same when demythologized, so deism is the next stage: no need for any particular church or sacramental system. Finally we realize that we have little need for deism either; we can live better and more reasonably as atheists. For atheism 'that bugbear of women and fools' is the perfection of free thinking (1.8), and 'the free-thinker alone is truly free' (1.9).

Lysicles-Mandeville pushes the point further, arguing that the Reformation itself has wholly missed the point, leaving the root absurdities untouched. It is not now a matter, as Milton claimed, that 'new presbyter is but old priest writ large', but that 'As to what is commonly called the Reformation, I could never see how or wherein the world was the better for it. It is much the same as Popery, with this difference, that it is the more prude-like and disagreeable thing of the two. A noted writer of ours (viz. Mandeville) makes it too great a compliment, when he computes the benefit of hooped petticoats to be nearly equal to that of the Reformation' (2.9). And it is not only religion that is to be dismissed; virtue has gone

[17] For details see Valeri (2010) and more summarily Gregory (2012: 274–82).

[18] Berkeley sees Shaftesbury as hostile to what he views as the unholy alliance of 'priestcraft' and state power (*Alciphron* 1.3).

with it (in Berkeley's view a necessary consequence), so that Lysicles can claim that 'You still talk of order and virtue, as of real things, as if our philosophers had never demonstrated that they have no foundation in nature, and are only the effects of education' (2.15). Even human dignity has to go, depending as it does on worn out notions about the spirit and 'the Divinity'. All that matters is 'liberty'. In contrast to which Berkeley wants to argue that libertinism is not only false but contrary to the common good, and has one of his characters claim that he is no libertine but a 'sincere lover of liberty, legal English liberty' (2.26), adding that if the libertines destroy the Protestant church, then Rome will return; perhaps the 'libertines' are 'dupes of the Jesuits'!

Alciphron-Shaftesbury apparently takes a more moderate line, but Berkeley, at the end of his exposition of Shaftesbury's view (3.3), has him come out strongly for atheism – which was too far for the Earl himself – in which we can recognize Berkeley's not unfounded belief that atheism is the logical last stage of Shaftesbury's position. It is in this new world where salvation is entirely irrelevant and religion useful, at best, as social glue, that Christians (and apparent Christians) as well as ex-Christians must defend morality. Yet for all the pretentious and confused deist talk about the harmonies of the universe (3.8), Christians can still argue that if there is beauty and harmony (not to speak of morality) in our world, all these must somehow indicate divine providence (3.10–11).

Lysicles/Mandeville has a further and prophetic trick up his sleeve: 'It was always my opinion … that nothing could be sillier than to think of destroying Christianity by crying up natural religion [as Shaftesbury had supposedly done]. Whoever thinks highly of the one can never, with any consistency, think meanly of the other' (5.29). In other words, some of those who think that the reduction of Christianity to natural religion will save Christianity are deluded; natural religion itself stands or falls with Christianity. Abandon one and the honest will abandon the other. It is a remarkable measure of how in so short a period of time – since, that is, the time of Cromwell and his 'bigots' – we have moved not only from sectarian disputes to natural religion but even to arguing that natural religion is itself nothing more than the last attempt to prop up 'Christianity' against atheism. The old order which the Reformers had tried in their way to save has collapsed, lingering, Berkeley fears, merely in inert and moribund institutions. The size of the repair required is now very evident. Another speaker in the *Alciphron* is reduced to saying that he has heard foreigners saying of the English that they are 'very good Protestants, but no Christians', adding that 'the Protestant religion [is] a main part of

our legal constitution' (5.35): hardly a defence for a more than civic religion and the replacement of morality by positive law. And that civic religion can be rewritten, and all that can follow, the French Revolution was before long to make very plain.

Shaftesbury, the first advocate of moral sense theories, was inclined to think of the morality thus generated as the replacement for any form of the traditional Christian version, in particular of forms dependent on Calvinism. Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) was his 'moral sense' successor: a Church of Scotland presbyter though regarded as heretical by his more conservative Presbyterian colleagues,[19] who thought that the primacy of 'Christian' love could be upheld with the help of the new empirical tools, backed by natural religion, but with no appeal either to religious voluntarism or to the metaphysical framework and moral autonomy of the Cambridge Platonists and Shaftesbury. Theories of 'moral sense' seemed to him and to many the better, indeed the only, way forward. The future in the shape of Hume was to show that they could only prevail (or seem to prevail) in a non-religious universe.

Hutcheson, agreeing with Shaftesbury's strict association of morality with motive, but as an empiricist disagreeing not only with the Earl's Platonic-seeming 'harmonies' but also with his view of the relationship between morality and self-interest, urged a specifically moral sense of obligation: this may reflect a vestigial remnant of Calvin's original rigid distinction between 'pagan' morality and predestined salvation. Be that as it may, Hutcheson's compound of Christianity and moral theory, urged against Shaftesbury as well as against Mandeville's apparent nihilism – and put forward as in accord with a good Newtonian view of the cosmos – defined justice, rights and duties as acts of love, or rather, in his language, of calm and disinterested benevolence. Such benevolence, approved by the moral sense, will generate happiness, since the greatest pleasure, Hutcheson asserts, is making other people happy (*Inquiry* II, VI).[20]

[19] For the background see MacIntyre (1988: 244).

[20] Citations from Hutcheson (following Schneewind) are from *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (4th edition, 1738). Hutcheson's 'sentimentalism' found its echo (or part of its source?) in the sentimental novelists of the period, most notably Richardson – and Richardson's novels. *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–8) were widely esteemed in France, where they were to find a more sinister rival in Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloise* (1761): see Taylor (1989: 294–6); Hunt (2007: 38–58). Hunt argues that one of the effects of such novels about ordinary folk was to develop a wider 'empathy' for those socially disadvantaged but possessed of similar feelings – Diderot spoke of our 'interior feeling' – which formed no small part of the motivation for the demand for better treatment of women and especially for reform of the brutalities of the criminal law: that is for substantial attention to be given to extending human rights. (Hutcheson,

But in what, he asks, does approval by the moral sense consist? We are born with the capacity to feel moral approval and disapproval of our desires and motives, and our approval and disapproval depend on whether and how far such desires and motives are calculated to promote benevolence: it is the quality of our motives that is measured, not their consequences. Hutcheson's notion of the moral sense differs from that of Shaftesbury in that he conceives of the mind as inert, as governed by the experiences it undergoes, as of itself unable to motivate us, even – disastrously – unable to arbitrate between the claims of benevolence and self-love. For there is no autonomy in Hutcheson's schema; in that he remains a Calvinist. He holds that in acting virtuously we are happily and providentially following God's laws for mankind, and that these laws reveal God's benevolence, thus guaranteeing our own.[21] Acting morally generates approbation, not merely pleasure. It all seems very optimistic, but Hutcheson allows that when our moral sense is weak and we resort to self-serving behaviour, we need positive laws, with rewards and penalties, to remind us of our obligations and keep us up to the mark (*Inquiry* II, VII.I).

Nevertheless – and far from the Augustinian original, let alone from its Calvinist developments – Hutcheson thinks that we are simply born able to enact our benevolence. Our moral sense is a kind of spectator-conscience viewed as correct feeling and deriving (*pace* Shaftesbury) from the passive reception of external moral challenges: perhaps a remote and unattributed recollection of the spark of goodness left, according to earlier traditions, after the fall. It serves as a guide towards virtuous living, though being inert it gives no commands. Pelagius would have loved much of this, although he would have considered Hutcheson's account of the moral struggle rather undemanding. For a Presbyterian this is a remarkably genial account of human nature whereby we seem 'predestined' less directly by God than by our perceived experiences.

How more precisely does Hutcheson understand the moral sense? Differing from Shaftesbury, he sees it as implementing a single moral characteristic, namely benevolence, and his purpose is to show, against Mandeville – and more remotely Hobbes – that 'virtue' is of itself quite distinct from self-interest, even though it is in our interest to be virtuous. We all have feelings about vicious behaviour, and our dislike of it is not simply self-interested; on the contrary, benevolent feelings are natural to

presumably, could only have been delighted.) Hunt also notes that critics of the novels, both Catholic and Protestant, in both England and France – especially of Richardson's – held them to be morally subversive and dangerous to the body politic, if not already sinister.

[21] See especially Darwall (1995: 210).

us (*Inquiry* II, II.II).[22] As to whether our sense of the benevolence of others or ourselves could be misguided – and if so, how such mistaken feelings arise and by what means or measure they can be scrutinized – Hutcheson is largely silent. He holds that God has given us this sense (perhaps also providing a certain faith in its efficacy) and that suffices. The result seems to be that he has shown that we exist in some sort of moral space but has given us little sure guidance as to which judgements we should reasonably trust within it; thus he says little about the possibly confusing effects on children of the environment in which they happen to grow up. In any case the moral sense (as he understands it) is entirely dependent on its being God's gift, and so its intelligibility and usefulness is supported only by God's existence: a benevolent God, for sure, but not necessarily a Christian one.

In this way, Hutcheson has gone far beyond the reasonable anti-Hobbesian claim that we do indeed have benevolent feelings, that we certainly appear not to be entirely governed by feelings or calculations of self-interest. According to Hutcheson (as to Culverwell and others before him) we feel gratitude for the benevolence of God and (in the absence of natural or revealed theological claims about whether our feelings are justifiable) there is no more to be said. Yet, and foreshadowing Hume, Hutcheson also believes that feelings (not reason) must be the key to morality, because reason alone (at least as understood by many post-Cartesians) has no power to stimulate action. So much for Leibniz, Clarke and other rationalists, as also for the moral sense as understood by Shaftesbury.

Hutcheson thinks he has answered Mandeville, but he has not. His structure still depends on the existence of God as a guarantor of the value and inevitability of benevolence, for if God were to be removed from Hutcheson's scene, he would find it difficult to explain why benevolence should trump self-interest: at least if he wants to argue, as he does, that benevolence is the core of moral behaviour. Hume, as we shall see, was well aware of the difficulty, and having removed God as unnecessary and indeed dangerous, knows he has to fall back on the conventions of his society to defend any obligation to benevolent activity and the traditional virtues.

[22] In 1747 Hutcheson's near contemporary, the Swiss natural lawyer Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, tried (in *The Principles of Natural Law*) to adapt such claims about natural benevolence (and by implication a degree of autonomy) as a philosophically updated argument in support of Grotius' and Pufendorf's thesis about the universality of natural rights. For comment see Haakonssen (1996: 6). For knowledge of Burlamaqui among 'enlightened' Americans see Harvey (1937); Lundberg and May (1976: 262–93).

Bishop Butler (1692–1752) tried to improve on Hutcheson, his near contemporary, by beefing up the notion of conscience, given to us as a guide by God, and allocating to it some of the autonomy Shaftesbury attributed to the moral sense.[23] Yet there is a sense in which Hutcheson already feels himself making a last desperate attempt to revive morality in a theistic – and specifically Protestant – universe. But what might be preserved could not be the Christian universe of the original Augustinian tradition, not least because one of its key elements, the doctrine of original sin (strongly maintained by all ultra-Augustinians), has been replaced by a cosy optimism about human nature and capability. For Hutcheson we have a universe where the God of the deists, by his mere existence, enables a moral sense theorist to claim that we have substantive reason – *pace* the likes of Mandeville – to respect and follow our benevolent feelings (however generated).

But the end was not (quite) yet. Even when Christianity – and deism too – seemed not implausibly to have lost all intellectual respectability, some were still to be found hoping to establish a robust grounding for moral obligation. Cudworth, Locke and Shaftesbury had understood something of the impending challenge and the radical claims – occasionally the radical recollections – about human nature and human autonomy that might enable us to overcome it. Kant, combining such ideas with now unwarranted beliefs about God and traditional Christian 'values', would predictably fail to settle the matter.

[23] For Butler conscience is a guide that gives us access to the domain of the moral law: so Cottingham (2004: 18). Butler, however, was something of a dinosaur in his own day (despite his more recent return to comparative favour), being essentially a revisionist natural lawyer (though not a voluntarist). An advantage of his (and earlier) accounts of conscience is that it purports to provide man with a normative faculty that cannot be dismissed as merely subjective; a major difficulty is that Butler seems too optimistic about its formation and the possibility of its perversion. And of course his position depends on the existence of God who bestows conscience on us: a difficulty for modern naturalists, which we shall see at least enables him to give a genuine account of obligation (and hence of morality as more than convention), for in Butler's traditionally ordered universe a sense of moral obligation is a condition of mankind as created by God which makes moral sense of 'ought' without eliding it as rationality or 'sentiment'. For to say that X is rational is not necessarily to say that I ought to do X. For further discussion see (e.g.) Sturgeon (1976: 316–56), Penelhum (1985), Schneewind (1998: 342–53) and Darwall (1995: 244–83).

CHAPTER 10

Radical Revisionisms: Hume, Kant, Rousseau

> 'Enlightenment is no more than autonomy in thinking and in acting.'
>
> Onora O'Neill, *Cambridge Companion to Kant* 299

> 'If … we should uncover our nakedness by throwing off the Christian religion which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us … we are apprehensive that some uncouth, pernicious, and degrading superstition, might take place of it.'
>
> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (ed. Mitchell) 91

> 'The Jacobins destroyed the transcendence of a personal god, but replaced it by the transcendence of principles.'
>
> Albert Camus (trans. Bower), *The Rebel* 167

Presumably Burke was unaware of how much Christian religion had already been thrown off before the French Revolution, yet from the time of Augustine down to the eighteenth century few denied God's existence, though disputes raged about whether the universe, certainly dependent on God, was created with or in time or was eternal. Aquinas allowed that only with the help of revelation could such disputes be settled in favour of temporal creation. On one point at least theology prevailed: there must be a reason – and hence a God – to explain why there is something rather than nothing; even the deists allowed that a 'divine watchmaker' was needed to set the universe in motion, and even with the abandonment of the final causes of Aristotelian metaphysics, it was widely believed or assumed that God's purposes – otherwise indiscernible – could be discovered through investigation of the 'laws' of nature. Indeed this attitude has persisted, and in recent times atheists have taken over the language in which it was expressed: thus Stephen Hawking has claimed that as soon as physicists have constructed an adequate 'overarching' account of the mechanics of the universe, we shall be able to 'understand the mind of God'.

During the eighteenth century many new and radical ideas became widely accepted among the more or less educated: such as explicit atheism and *a fortiori* a total separation of religion (and not merely salvation) from morality. Many of the learned had come to hold that the Christian religion actually promoted immorality in the form of violence fuelled by bigotry and intellectual dishonesty. The most unambiguous steps in this direction were taken in France. In England while the poet Christopher Marlowe was, among others, suspected of atheism in the sixteenth century and Hobbes in the seventeenth, the immediate successor to Protestant Christianity among many intellectuals was deism. While Christian theology was fast disappearing (as Bishop Berkeley realized in part), many of those who sought to retain its moral legacy continued looking for support to reason alone. Yet it is not until we reach the mid eighteenth century and the Scot David Hume (1711–76) that in Britain we meet a deep-seated and powerfully argued hostility not only to traditional Christianity but to its deist supplanter. For Hume religion, natural or revealed, is immoral and dangerous.

In France things had gone further, generally in the direction of social and political rather than merely moral reconstruction. Where Hume's concerns were primarily personal and individualist, in France the *philosophes* moved rapidly and easily from hostility to the old morals and superstitions to demanding not only the annihilation of the old church and state but the construction of a new, rational and 'virtuous' political régime, to be staffed, it was soon hoped, by a New Humanity: not sinners regenerated by Christian baptism but purified products of rational, perhaps state-organized, renovation. Initially, of course, the workings out of such a future could hardly be foreseen and the approach was largely negative and destructive. In a series of attacks on Christianity, Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709–51) – hardly a virtuous descendent of ancient Spartan austerity but notorious as a lecher and flatterer of the king of Prussia – urged that without the poison of religion the human race would flourish or at least be able to pursue the pleasures it craved. In something of the spirit of Mandeville, he claimed that morality is simply the name by which we dub those behaviours that make social and political life easier; nevertheless, vice is as natural as virtue and as likely to make us happy. There are many happy criminals.

De la Mettrie's successors were more consciously social engineers, even if less exotic. The most influential was Rousseau, who was no atheist and will require much more detailed treatment. But there were others: Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715–71) and Baron d'Holbach (1723–89) both saw

self-love – generating pleasure which they thought necessarily entails various duties and obligations – as the only hope for humanity now that theism, which corrupts rulers and subjects alike in subjecting them to priestly authority, has become impossible for the enlightened.

It was a mark of such thinkers to suppose differences among human beings are due exclusively to nurture, and Helvétius produced a road map to perfection, according to which we can all be ideal human specimens; given the right educational circumstances, adequate social and empirical reforms can bring about that desirable result. For the materialist d'Holbach, associated with a radical demand for an ideal society comes an insistence that in thinking about securing justice we must start from abstract principles and apply them to recast human nature, understood exclusively in terms of reason and self-love. Where Calvin had once taught that God will recreate the elect at the General Resurrection, the *philosophe* would create them here and now in an ideal society. Yet his attitude was governed more by a knowledge of what was unacceptable and needed to be destroyed than by a vision of what guiding reason could put in its place.

We are born – so Locke the foreign hero of the *philosophes* taught them – as a blank sheet, to be inscribed after birth, or at least with our basic human characteristics to be fashioned into socially useful form, when the New Man will emerge; only then can we be made free. Justice, virtue and good order are needed, accompanied by a general benevolence to be developed from self-love. With hindsight the dangers in such beliefs are obvious – and were to be revealed in the horrendous atrocities of the coming French Revolution – not least if combined with the theory that a virtuous understanding of the principles of morals and their social applications can readily be brought about by education; despite the naïvely gentle methods the *philosophes* (and often initially the revolutionaries) seem to advocate, we may reasonably ask what kind of 'education' was implicit.[1] How can a new humanity, in a godless world, be developed? If there are no divine sanctions, can sanctions disappear altogether? If not,

[1] My comments on the totalitarian aspects of such thinking are much influenced by Talmon (1952). Burke, of course, was already predicting revolutionary terror by 1790 and in his *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791) he focussed (in the course of a fierce attack on Rousseau and his educational schemes) on some of the features of the coming New Man recognizable in the 'vain' Rousseau himself as in many of his fictional heroes and heroines: especially on the theme that advocates of the New Man exude 'benevolence to the whole species, and want of feeling for every individual with whom the professors come in contact … He [Rousseau] melts with tenderness for those only who touch him by the remotest relation, and then, without one natural pang, casts away, as a sort of offal and excrement, the spawn of his disgustful amours, and sends his children to the hospital of fondlings' (ed. Mitchell 271). Such theoretical kindness, as we shall see, was to mark other

then perhaps a civic religion with divine sanctions will be required after all. If the truth can be encapsulated in a theoretical programme, its actualization must mean the end of moral and political dispute and certainly no need for the checks and balances which Montesquieu in *L'Esprit des Lois* (1748) had advocated and which were soon to be enshrined as principles of the new American Constitution, established precisely to prevent accumulations of power, however 'righteous', in such government as the *philosophes* seemed to envisage.

For many of the enlightened (including Voltaire (1694–1778) and Diderot (1713–84), neither of whom survived to watch their theories applied and tested in the raw politics of 1789), revolutionary radicalism would have seemed parochial, divisive and fanatic. Christianity certainly should be eliminated, but some sort of deism (as had been mooted in Britain) might be helpful, even necessary. Voltaire indeed seems to have been something of a natural law voluntarist; certainly he relied on the psychology of Locke to refute Pascal's call for what he held to be an impossible self-knowledge.[2] In *Le neveu de Rameau*, however, the atheist Diderot, less a social engineer than a moralist, and generally concerned to distance himself from the hedonism of de la Mettrie, has to admit (and represent in the person of the 'nephew') a serious and disturbing fact to which the nephew's frank hedonism had pointed: some people just find no pleasure in virtuous behaviour. Which sets Diderot, whose moral views were largely conventional, a problem: religion can provide no basis for morality, but there are moral and immoral behaviours, and the distinction is defensible, Rameau's nephew notwithstanding. Yet Diderot offers no serious defence of secular morality – only a half-hearted claim that virtue normally brings happiness and that it is merely his good fortune that in addition to being an atheist he does not happen also to be a criminal; he thus – perhaps for the first time, more or less explicitly and not as a strictly 'academic' puzzle – bequeaths to his successors the problem of whether 'morality' and 'virtue' can be honestly defended without some kind of transcendental framework – or only by political fraud and violence.[3]

Most of the *philosophes* were chiefly concerned with radical change in the role in France of both monarchy and Church; hence their political and social programmes were accompanied by a lower level of philosophical

advocates of the New Humanity, including the utilitarians, and was later justified by the claim that we have traditionally made ourselves (and therefore other individuals) too important 'in the (scientifically impersonal) scheme of things'.

[2] Cf. Hulliung (2001: 62–4).

[3] For helpful comment on Diderot see MacIntyre (1981: 47–9) and Schneewind (1998: 466–70).

sophistication than among their deist or still Christian contemporaries in Britain, where raw assertions about self-love as a uniquely desirable motive could never have passed unchallenged. They were a group wavering as a whole between deism and atheism, united in hostility to Christianity in any form and to the doctrine of original sin (invented, according to Voltaire, by Augustine) in particular, but lacking the ability – as we have noted in Diderot – to supply more than feeble arguments for the secular morality they presumed to construct. In Britain, David Hume was to attempt just such a construction on a grand scale, but, as we shall see, the theoretical results of his labours compelled him to fall back on a conventional morality reminiscent of Diderot's. In Britain there arose no Rousseau to complement Hume's work at the political level, but only a Bentham to follow Diderot (rather than Rameau's nephew) in just happening to like being virtuous.

David Hume, like Hutcheson a 'sentimentalist', was far from finding Hutcheson's sentimentalism – ultimately supported by divine providence – an acceptable revision of Christian morality, holding it rather to be a more persuasive and less dangerous alternative to theism and deism alike. Like Diderot, Helvétius and d'Holbach, Hume was an atheist, but in his defence of atheism and of an ethics liberated from all religion, he was far more philosophically sophisticated – he would say 'scientific' – and his work lacked the immediately totalitarian implications that supervened among the French. At the beginning of the *Treatise of Human Nature*,[4] Hume hopes to use the 'experimental Method of Reasoning' in his discussion of ethics, and unlike many of his predecessors he has no interest in promoting civic religion as social glue or to keep people happy. If Diderot, Helvétius and above all Rousseau are among the direct ancestors of Robespierre and totalitarian 'freedom' more generally, Hume, though sharing a high estimate of man's capability for the 'moral' life, is rather the ancestor of much contemporary liberal ethics – whether conventional, emotivist or libertarian – and *qua* catalyst also of Kantian and neo-Kantian attempts to base morality on theories of individual human autonomy and the rational will.

Like Hutcheson, Hume believes that reason speaks only about what is true and what is false, being morally merely instrumental. It is, and 'ought only to be' (415) the slave of the passions (as Hobbes had suggested). Our

[4] References to the *Treatise* will be to L. A. Selby-Bigge's second edition (revised by P. H. Nidditch, Oxford 1978).

moral goals are given by the passions and desires, which alone can motivate us; ethics, therefore, is by and large the science of how our motives arise. Since moral claims are neither true nor false, they cannot be determined as reasonable or unreasonable: which, for Hume, leaves something like a Hutchesonian moral sense in control of the field, for it is the nature of the moral sense not to indicate facts about the world but to arouse us to action. Nor does Hume have much to say about the will: since it is not what we will but what we happen to feel instinctively (whether approving or not) which normally determines how we act (439), he supposes the 'will' to be a simple impression felt 'when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind' (399). In a sense, for Hume, there is no such thing as a moral agent, only a moral experience or a moral observer in a Newtonian mechanistic world (477).

Thus in an especially influential respect Hume advances further than Hutcheson, insisting on absolute distinction between facts, recognized by reason, and values, generated by the moral sense (469–70). We can recognize facts about people's actions, motives and intentions, but moral judgements about them are a matter not of facts but of evaluation, and evaluations of our motives are the source of obligations. About human behaviour we discover feelings of blame or approval, though mere knowledge of behaviour – and hence inferences about human nature – tell us nothing about its value. Hume accepts that we value generosity, friendship and justice but, self-interest apart, has too little to say about why we do so, and indeed whether we all do so, regardless of the circumstances of our individual lives. We 'know' what decent people like, dislike, approve, disapprove, love or hate (*Treatise* 614). More positively, our moral sense generates (contrary to Hobbes) feelings of sympathy, which in turn generate virtuous activity.

Hutcheson had argued that benevolence is the sole virtue detected and evaluated by the moral sense; Hume disagrees, accepting Grotius' concern for moral behaviour inextricably tied to the resolution of conflicts, especially such as will arise over property.[5] To resolve these he develops the distinction of virtues into natural and artificial, adapting Grotius' notion of imperfect and perfect duties; justice, importantly, is artificial while benevolence is (to a degree) natural and instinctual (*Treatise* 417).[6] Justice is artificial in that it arises not instinctively (*Treatise* 439) but out of a realization that in general it is in our interest to be just and to sympathize with

[5] For Hume's debt to Grotius and the natural law tradition more generally see Forbes (1975: 18–20).
[6] For more detailed discussion see Schneewind (1998: 365–9).

the advantages justice enables others to enjoy, at least in normative societies where everyone is roughly of equal strength (*Treatise* 490).[7] Do we hear in that caveat an echo of Thucydides' *Melian Dialogue* where the historian has the Athenians comment that justice is necessary among those more or less equally powerful but irrelevant when the powerful confront the impotent? Whether or no, Hume holds that it is the artificial virtues that enable a society – as distinct from simpler social institutions like the family – to flourish.

We accept an action as just – and that our feelings about it are reliable – when we find general agreement that it is, and we convert our sentiments into laws – though not, of course, 'natural laws' in any traditionally theistic sense. Humean laws are positive laws reflecting agreed and apparently beneficial conventions. Whereas the natural lawyers supposed that our moral attitudes are derivative of the laws of nature, Hume holds that we construct moral laws in accordance with our moral sentiments. As with the rest of his ideas, those about morality derive from what he considers (as did Hobbes and Thucydides) to be scientific scrutiny as to how humans behave – and have nothing to do with universal laws about how they ought to behave such as Grotius still held to be divinely established. Yet there is a sense in which Hume's ideas about nobility, for example – not to speak of obligation itself – conflict with his principles about the separation of facts from values. When he tells us in the *Treatise* (619) that our moral ideas spring 'from a noble source', we may legitimately wonder where the evaluative *concept* of the 'noble' has come from and ask ourselves whether Hume's reasoning is here not both circular and self-defeating when he seems to assume that, like the God of tradition, we just know 'instinctively' what moral nobility is.[8] Put otherwise, we may wonder why our moral sense approves what it approves. Hume certainly tends to think that it approves what is in our best interest, but as with justice so with nobility, he seems to imply something more objective, outside the mere domain of our own desires. In these cases we wonder whether the virtues

[7] A lengthy discussion of Hume's view of justice is to be found in Darwall (1995: 288–96). In the later *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals* (1751) 282 (Selby-Bigge), Hume admits that the 'sensible knave' may hold that he can from time to time get away with injustice even in a society where it is normally in his interest to obey conventional rules. See Gauthier (1992: 401–28). It is clear that in diverging from Hutcheson's account of justice Hume comes to be tempted by the non-empiricist claim that justice derives from a (dutiful) semi-autonomous decision of the agent to accept a set of conventional norms. Consequently he finds it hard to square the sense of duty that we apparently possess with the self-interest that ultimately governs our approvals and disapprovals.

[8] Perhaps a related difficulty arises over the famous saying that reason *ought* to be the slave of the passions. Hume certainly argues that it is such a slave, but why ought it to be? Does not that suggest that sometimes it is not?

in question are approved *simply* because they are or are supposed to be in our best interests. And who, for Hume, are the 'we'?

Thus far we have looked at Hume within the tradition of sentimentalism, or as the developer and corrector of Hutcheson. Certainly this is important, but a further aspect of his wider metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical) concerns, not immediately linked to his account of the moral life, was destined to make even greater impact on later – and current – accounts of morality. That aspect, pointing us to a more impersonal (and hence 'scientific') account of human beings is to be recognized in his dissolution of the Cartesian self – and by implication of its Augustinian and generally theological predecessor created in the image of God and vaunted by Platonists in Renaissance Florence and Arminian Cambridge. Augustine himself, of course, had always been aware of the mysterious nature of the self (or soul, or person), but Humean scepticism challenged not only any presumed Augustinian capacity for an inner life (and for introspection, albeit in moral matters that is always open to self-deception) but any religious account of the introspecting soul itself.[9]

We have already noted that some of the preliminary work of destruction – though Descartes might even be cited as himself a potentially 'suicidal' figure – had been wrought by Locke, who thought of the human individual as a mere vehicle of qualities: a position, it may be noted, exactly the opposite of what some say Ockham had advocated long before – though it might be advanced as *complementary* to Ockham – who, on this reading, had manhandled Aristotle in denying the reality of relations, pushing his account of the human being towards viewing him as an isolated individual. Locke's equally un-Aristotelian position, as we have seen, moved in rather the opposite direction: we are a collection of qualities, for which we are substantially little more than placeholders.

This view, in different versions, had a long pedigree, going back in some respects to Plato (being suggested in both the *Symposium* and the *Timaeus*), but during the Aristotelianized centuries of the Middle Ages it was largely sidelined. Locke revived it, the more fatally in a world where Aristotle's hylemorphic account of the human person (hence of his unity) was largely discredited in advanced circles. A well-known passage from his *Essay* (2.23.2) runs as follows: 'The *Idea* then that we have, to which we give the general name Substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown support of those Qualities we find existing, which we imagine

[9] For a comparison between Augustine and Hume on the mysterious self see Rist (2000: 95–114).

cannot subsist, *sine re substante*, without something to support them, we call that support *Substantia*.'

That given, Hume had only to draw what seemed to many the inevitable conclusion: 'For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble upon some particular perception or other … I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never observe anything but the perception' (*Treatise* 1.4.6). If that observation is read as Hume intends, we are *nothing* but a bundle of qualities, from which can be inferred that no emotional relationships (including those deriving from the moral sense) can be 'directed' at individuals as a whole or 'for themselves', since there is no self to be targeted. It is unclear whether Hume realized the annihilating effect of this claim on his own account of moral activity, but his more recent successors have taken full advantage of it: thus, for example, if I am an identifiable or estimated set of qualities and lose (or have not yet acquired) some of them (as when I am an infant or – as an adult – in a coma) I may easily be counted as not yet or no longer a person or a possessor of rights.[10] Of course, if one adds Hume's claim to that widely attributed to Ockham (that there are no relations), the depersonalized self is not only a heap of qualities but an isolated and incoherent heap.

Before leaving Hume, we should turn to the relationship – normally assumed to exist in some form or other, however attenuated, by his predecessors – between religion and morality, and to which Hume himself dedicates a treatise: *The Natural History of Religion*. Religion, he believes, derives from ignorance, and the 'monkish virtues', such as humility, asceticism and celibacy, will be recognized as vices as human understanding increases. For Hume, brought up as a Presbyterian, religion entails a voluntarism he recognizes as philosophically confused and morally disreputable and dangerous. But, we should note again, his attitude to religion and his immediate legacy was very different from that of the French *philosophes*, desperate to destroy Christianity and thus promote a better, 'freer' society. Hume, very differently, was primarily concerned to show that religion's claims are false. While his successors were often to put his theories to work in the project of constructing a 'liberal' society, in that regard they were applying Humean ideas rather than Humean intentions, for as we have implied, politically and socially Hume (logically enough) was rather

[10] For some of the implications, not least as drawn by contemporary Humeans such as Parfit, see the admirably clear discussion by Chappell (2004: 95–117). For a comparison between non-knowledge of the self as examined by Hume and Augustine, see Rist (2000).

conventional, and from his own point of view what else could he be? Like Montaigne he apparently supposed that it is best to follow the moral customs of the country (and assume their basic decency). Yet already in his time a more radical alternative to conventionalism (if sentiment was not to reveal itself as sentimentality) was becoming more available. It is worth noting that although Hume attempted to defuse the nihilism lurking in the writings of Mandeville (whom he dismissed too easily), his attempt was unsuccessful, yet his sense that in a non-theistic world the choice was between conventionalism and nihilism was sound.

There are many Humeans among contemporary moral philosophers, and, especially in the Anglo-American world, even those who radically disagree with his conclusions never neglect his work. But in ethics his most immediate impact was on the mature thought of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Undoubtedly the most influential moral philosopher of the modern period, Kant is still especially valued by many 'decent' people who, fearing what they see as the incoherencies and inhuman potentialities of utilitarianism and its successors, wish to maintain many traditional virtues – above all the notion of moral obligation – without the need to rely on theistic premises. Kant himself tells us that he was aroused from his dogmatic slumbers by Hume – slumbers, that is, induced by Leibniz, Wolff and Crusius[11] – but the emotive catalyst for his progressive casting off of his earlier masters, and ultimately for a defiance of Hume himself, was the Rousseau of the *Contrat Social* and *Emile* – so it might seem that we too should now turn to Rousseau. If we look at philosophical history more broadly, however, it is better to stay first with Kant, since most of Rousseau's important 'ideological' successors developed his ideas along very different paths from the Konigsberg rationalist. For Rousseau was also the primary inspiration of a second – more totalitarian – post-Enlightenment tradition,[12] and only after Kant had been modified in a subjectivist direction could he be read as reinforcing it.

Kant was inspired by Rousseau to develop radical solutions to problems raised by an earlier variety of essentially post-Christian thought, found at least in embryo in Shaftesbury, Cudworth, Locke, Hutcheson, Butler and Hume. These problems revolve around the traditional notion that to

[11] The importance of Crusius, who helped wean Kant from the 'Leibniz-Wolff' philosophy, is that he regarded moral necessity as wholly separate from prudence; his weakness, from a Kantian point of view, is that he relied on obedience to moral laws prescribed by God, and was thus a heteronomist. For discussion see especially Schneewind (1998: 445–56).

[12] The sense in which I use the term 'ideological' will become clear in the next chapter.

be liable to moral judgement one has to be accountable (and therefore somehow free to act). Kant, however, came to believe that the 'sentimentalist' solutions to problems of autonomy and obligation proposed by Hutcheson and Hume are inadequate, and that the alternatives developed by Cudworth and Butler are vitiated by what he came to call 'heteronomy'; the view, that is, that morality can only be fully explained with reference either to self-serving desires (whether for pleasure or perfection) or to something outside the human sphere altogether, that is, to God: which might seem to reduce it to mere obedience to command. Morality must be both self-willed and self-imposed – only then will it afford each and every one of us a duly human dignity, in making each individual play the role of the Christian God; for we must repudiate the idea that only the intellectual élite know the laws and details of morality while the rest must accept what they are taught.

Kant's final position demands an absolute moral autonomy radically opposed not only to any kind of 'Platonic' transcendentalism and perfectionism but also to the developed Augustinian insistence that man and morality are intelligible only with reference to (inter alia) God and God's commands. A key sentence of Rousseau's *Social Contract* (I.VIII) which drives this approach runs as follows: 'We might, over and above all this, add to what man acquires in the civil state, moral liberty, which alone makes him truly master of himself; for the mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we ascribe to ourselves, is liberty.' Thus a particularly informative reflection of Kant's runs: 'There was a time when I thought that this alone [*scil.* knowledge] could constitute the honour of mankind, and I despised the common man who knows nothing. Rousseau set me right' (*Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* 20.44).[13] But although Rousseau persuaded Kant that the ability to prescribe the moral law is part of the nature of every human being, Kant's account of the law in question is very different from that of his instructor and his more 'ideological' successors.

Above all else, Kant insisted that moral goods are good intrinsically and should be sought entirely for their own sake, thus denying any sort of 'eudaimonism' that is, associating the pursuit of virtue with some direct or even indirect pursuit of happiness. Hence, after Kant many philosophers thought themselves obliged to reconcile duty – the sense of moral obligation – with happiness. It was precisely this reconciliation, for

[13] Cf. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4.404, but here the ordinary man needs the 'compass' of the categorical imperative.

example, that Sidgwick, at the end of his *Methods of Ethics*, allowed that he had failed to achieve. Yet perhaps if duty is to be understood as Kant understood it, such reconciliation is impossible. Kant himself was eventually and implausibly forced to invoke God to achieve it,[14] but if God is relevant to morality, some form of (at least indirect) eudaimonism looks more plausible again. But what form?

According to Kant we impose moral law on all, including ourselves, and that law is to be understood in a formalist way, that is, as an action of the 'holy' will (i.e. the perfect will, but note the emotivist and secular use of religious terms) identified as the power of practical reasoning. Kant expresses this law in the form of what he calls the categorical imperative: 'Act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law' (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4.421). One difficulty with this is how we – being neither 'holy' nor potentially so to an adequate degree – know what the right maxim is. Thus a Jewish follower of Hitler – SS leader Heydrich almost qualified – might prescribe a law that all Jews or part-Jews (including *himself*) should be eliminated. To which Kant would reply that that is irrational.

But what is fully rational? And indeed why is the Nazi claim irrational? Only, it would seem, because it is irrational to argue that I myself should be eliminated. Hume could point out that such a proposition cannot be irrational because it is no statement of fact but a judgement of value. To which Kant might reply that we must assume that all human beings have worth – at which point I (or Hume) might claim that we are all of equal value in having no value at all (unless we decide we should have). And even if we do have worth, why again should I decide that we have equal worth? Apparently Kant has accepted (from the Christian tradition, moderated in an egalitarian direction by Rousseau) that human beings have value, indeed equal value, and wants to explain that in terms of our all possessing a rational will – which he tries to vindicate against materialist determinism. Facts about material objects are governed by determinist laws of cause and effect; values belong to a different 'noumenal' realm, the 'kingdom of ends', which, being non-material, is not determined materially. Thus far we might have an argument for moral values and obligations – for the construction, that is, of moral 'space' – but it tells us nothing about the contents of that space.

[14] 'Implausibly' because God cannot be a merely convenient *deus ex machina*. Once he is admitted, he makes further demands on our attention. His role cannot intelligibly, as Kant wishes, be reduced to that of a mere supplier of an eventual fairness; we must examine what other role he must play, if he is to exist.

The space's law-like contents, Kant seems to suppose, follow from the activity of the holy will in the same way as the laws of nature follow inductively from our perceptions of facts in the physical world. Just as we infer physical laws from physical facts, so we infer moral obligations from moral facts. But what moral facts do we infer in a world in which 'the concept of good and evil must be defined after and by means of the law' (*Critique of Practical Reason* 5.62–3)? For the contents of the moral space that we are supposed to generate inductively – propositions such as that human beings should always be treated as ends and not as means (*Groundwork* 4.429) – Kant, apparently unwittingly, relies on the Christian past, though he claims to find them by appealing to the dictates of the holy and rational will. And why should we believe that (in the real world) such dictates are just?

The only alternative to supposing that the relevant 'rightness' is an inheritance from Christianity that Kant (and to a degree also Rousseau) has accepted would be an argument that since I, perhaps as a Hobbesian, have a manifest desire for self-preservation, and therefore want to preserve myself as something of value, I must attribute a similar value to others. But, as Hobbes could have objected, I need attribute no such thing; rather I need to make deals with others in which (merely for the sake of argument) I accept their claims to have value as the best way of securing my own safety.

Kant himself, indeed, recognizes that we do not easily possess a holy will; we must struggle to attain it: thus if we have toothache but are afraid to go to the dentist we must overcome the fear that is pulling us irrationally.[15] Although such a parallel will work in cases when we recognize that we are (at least plausibly) acting irrationally in not doing what we 'ought' to do, it fails completely if we are confronted by dilemmas in which we are faced with alternatives neither of which we want to adopt and neither of which seems the more rational course: situations, that is, in which whatever we do we know we shall have good cause to regret.

Thus the content of Kantian law is important but also problematic, and even more so is the concept of autonomy itself. Certainly Kant has no wish to pursue it to the absurd degree to which it has been pushed later, but he still wants to claim that since we all have a sense of duty – viewed in some respects as Butler viewed conscience – we are outside the determinist patterns which govern our physical life – so much for the materialists, Hobbesian or other – and thus in possession (as we 'know' by experience)

[15] The example is from Schneewind (1992: 317).

of a free and rational will. But how can we know that this is the nature of the will that the possibility of moral space opens up? Only, it would seem, because without it we should have no authority to prescribe moral rules for ourselves and simultaneously for all others: that is, to be able to be the kind of moral agents Kant asserts that morality demands. How then does he defeat the nihilist who simply denies that we have any such duties, but merely a freedom to prescribe what we like – perhaps adding the rational claim that it is up to others to prescribe something similar, even something dutiful and virtuous if that is what they happen to want, and which, being imperfect like the rest of us, they happen to believe rational?

According to Kant, moral acts, strictly so-called, are performed simply because they are right, out of a sense of duty and of respect for the moral law (*Groundwork* 4.440). Contrary to Hutcheson and Hume, he holds that in this way practical reason does indeed motivate action, thus performing a role analogous to that played by love in Cumberland and the Cambridge Platonists, and by the loving will in Augustine. Yet the comparison shows up a serious difficulty in Kant's position, for the 'arid' quality of his approach – viewed solely through respect and duty – is brought out if we compare it in ordinary life with the common-or-garden role of love and friendship, both of which have loomed large in our story thus far. Kant, of course, is not against these; he simply excludes them from the realm of morality – and indeed largely banished discussions of friendship from ethical writing for more than a century.

Perhaps a contemporary 'Kantian' could restore love and friendship to something of their earlier importance, but Kant's intellectual reason (as distinct perhaps from his affective reason) for abandoning them lies in his strange account of our relationship to the 'noumenal' realm. Ideally (and morally) we simply are our rational wills as inhabitants of that world; since we are fundamentally rational beings, we act freely and hence morally, if we act rationally. Our emotions, on the other hand, being governed by 'outside' influences, are heteronomous. Love is not a moral motive (*Groundwork* 4.399) and any rational human would wish to be without desire (4.428).

But this approach involves an error not dissimilar to that often made by Christians, especially but by no means exclusively in the ancient world: the error, that is, of 'angelism', of defining human beings without reference to our proper nature as at the very least, in the language of Alasdair Macintyre, dependent rational animals. If we were simply the noumenal beings Kant wishes us to be, his account of our perfection in moral virtue might be plausible, but we are not. And the faultiness of his desiccated

account of human excellence can be recognized in the question, not irrelevant in our present crisis of health care: Which nurse would you prefer to look after you (technical skills being equal), the one who acts out of Kantian duty or the one who works with a loving attentiveness? In trying to give us the autonomy only possible for a god, Kant has concluded by ascribing to us a version of moral duty unfitted and unworthy for a man.

So the question remains: If there is no God (and Kant still supposes that there is – at least to reconcile duty and happiness), is there any better non-Kantian alternative? Certainly Kant's conclusions rest on a patently false, nay reductionist, account of human nature, but the alternatives we have so far canvassed seem to be conventional or nihilist. Kant is at least clear about the necessary importance of the will (though not about love) and if morality is to be (even de facto) godless, a strong account of the freedom of the autonomous will remains essential for moral accountability or even for any kind of apparently free action.

Rousseau pushed Kant towards the idea that self-determining morality is by nature possible for all, externally imposed laws, whether of God or man, being unnecessary.[16] But Kant developed Rousseau in a direction governed by Leibniz, Wolff, Crusius, Hutcheson and Hume. Rousseau, for his part, not only helped Kant advance much of the work of his early modern predecessors to a point hitherto unscaled, but also established a largely novel, very different and in many ways quite incompatible turn to the tradition. This new deviation, though certainly with roots in the more distant past, was to take on an ideological form characteristically the purview of an intelligentsia not merely anti-religious (as was Hume) but actively crusading to construct an entirely new post-Christian humanity: for Rousseau, apparently, the 'real world' with which he supposed that 'underneath' we have always been in touch. This, being revolutionary, had to have implications that were political as well as ethical, and key to the ensuing turn of tradition was the debate, revived in a powerfully new

[16] In what follows I have made Rousseau appear more consistent than he was during the long course of his philosophical career; that is because I am concerned only with features of his thought directly connected with the 'will' and with the gradual replacement of Augustinian Christianity by varying, but all resolutely secular, attempts at ethical theory. Yet I should at least note one important shift of emphasis: whereas in his *Discourse on Inequality* he emphasizes a primitive Golden Age, in the *Social Contract* his concern is with the new man and the new society to be made in the future. Among modern commentators, references to Rousseau's work as a whole are normally to the collected French edition in five volumes, edited by B. Gagnébin, M. Raymond and others (Paris 1959–95), cited as *OC*. Needless to say the modern 'literature' on Rousseau is immense. Of older studies that of Cassirer (1954) has been particularly and rightly influential. See also Shklar (1969) and Starobinski (1988).

version by Rousseau, about 'natural' man and the corruption imposed on him by civilization.

Since many of Rousseau's predecessors held that a 'higher' selfishness among natural men will generate social responsibility – while he himself concluded that it is precisely 'post-natural' society which generates insincerity and the banal *bourgeois* virtues – it is hardly surprising that Rousseau's natural man is radically and deliberately different from the versions proposed by Grotius and Pufendorf, not to speak of Hobbes and Locke. Rousseau departs more substantially than they from the settled wisdom of the Renaissance that it is precisely by civilization and social life that we are rescued from primitive savagery. For him – in this reviving the revolutionary ideas of the Levellers though without the theology – some sort of Paradise existed in an idealized past, before the arrival of property and hence inequality. Natural man is happy, albeit – indeed because – amoral (or better pre-moral), not distinguishing between good and evil (not even in the pre-moral way in which Augustine's Adam understands he needs to be obedient to God). Rousseau feels – conveniently, but why is he so sure about its moral status and limits? – a pre-rational pity for his fellows which, happily, being inarticulate, does not interfere with their sense for self-preservation which he names *amour de soi*.

It is this *amour* that is corrupted, becoming 'Augustinian' self-love (*amour propre*) when primitive men form societies, constructed by contracts based on the drive for self-preservation, in which we learn competitiveness, possessiveness and jealousy, and develop the need to be respected by others and to dominate them.[17] Such *bourgeois* attitudes are especially seen in the resulting desire for money – Locke's account of property rights is thus ipso facto stigmatized – and with such vitiated cravings comes a desire to conceal them: hence hypocrisy and deceit, causing the self to become isolated until even when a man speaks the truth he is no longer believed. Primitive 'natural' man is not reflective, and Rousseau usually argues – paradoxically enough for a writer and theorist – that reflection (at least as induced in the educated) destroys spontaneity and so is to be discouraged. In his concern to unmask hypocrisy, Rousseau should be recognized as a forerunner of Nietzsche. As for pity, after the onset of

[17] Manent captures this aspect of Rousseau's diagnosis of the bourgeois individual well: 'His life will be a permanent lie. Moreover, comparing oneself with others is paradoxical. For the man who lives by comparison is the one who, in his relationships with others, thinks only of himself, and in his relations with himself, thinks only of others. He is the *divided* man' (Manent 1994: 66). One could suppose this to be a not inaccurate description of Rousseau himself.

social life it will need to be guided along rational paths; then it will be less felt but more suitably effective.

Thus human vices are not natural, but a virtually unavoidable product of social life – within which, if all agree to the contract by which it is formed, will also arise concepts of justice and duty. These, however, will only be authentic if a new kind of 'natural' man can be generated to live in accordance with what Rousseau dubbed the 'General Will'. The social contract enables the authentic individual (Rousseau himself or his fictional representative Emile) to be writ large on the civic stage, somewhat as in Plato's *Republic* the heroic Socrates is transmuted by education into the Guardian class. The General Will envisions the supremacy of the common good over the narrow desires of the individual and identifies overriding obligations on each participating citizen. One difficulty arising is that Rousseau fails to explain precisely in what the common good consists – other than the will of an authentically natural citizen-leader. That problem is, of course, not limited to Rousseau, and we shall more generally find that it is of little practical use talking about maximizing the good if one does not know what is good and how various individual goods are to be measured, evaluated and compared.[18] In the absence of a clear account of natural good and the virtues, Rousseau will proffer sincerity and a reformed and sentimentalized compassion.

In this Rousseau's ideas have much in common with those of the British 'sentimentalists', especially Hutcheson. His instantly famous novel of feeling, *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, was neither the first nor the only such work to become popular in France where, as we have noticed, translations of Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* had delighted their readers. Predictably, a basis in common among the 'sentimentalists' (and others of the age), in both England and France, is (again) to be found in the denial of original sin. For Rousseau, we do not choose vice, as did Adam in the old Augustinian tradition – revived, as Rousseau well knew, not least by Pascal, Pierre Nicole and others associated with Port-Royal – nor do we inherit it; but we are corrupted by situations and circumstances not of our making, and which we can neither control nor foresee. It is the task of the wise man – not least of Rousseau who regards himself as one of the few (even the unique) surviving examples of natural goodness – to deliver us from such slavery: not by the rational learning of the *philosophes* but by

[18] Richardson argues with some acerbity that the nature and status of basic goods – especially their being supposed incommensurable – is difficult to comprehend in a God-deprived world (Richardson 2004: 70–101).

the proper training of our emotions, and thus by learning to *feel* in touch with our real selves.

It is important to recognize how much Rousseau's treatment of desire – as in the case of Saint-Preux and his lover Julie – 'la Nouvelle Héloïse' – differs from the original Platonic account of *eros* as adapted for Christian use by Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa and their followers. In the earlier theory, love between the sexes, and certainly of the Good itself, is no mere exaltation of noble sentiments, but a desire which, enacted, is creative. In Plotinus' version – that which immediately influenced Augustine – this creativity is the cause of the entire universe. In Rousseau and his successors this creative love is transformed first into a self-regarding and self-indulgent egoism – at best into an *égoisme à deux* – and in *Julie* that so noble egoism is again transformed into renunciation of sexual fulfilment: to be confirmed by Julie's eventual death, now as a convert to Christianity – with, as added bonus, the endurance of an unfulfillable and melancholy sexual longing.[19] With Julie's death the idyllic society around her dissolves; Rousseau can never decide whether he should give priority to the individual's 'salvation' in self-understanding and solitude or rather to the happiness of the group which such self-understanding can, at least for a while, engender. That uncertainty reflects a wider uncertainty as to whether we are to find goodness in our restored natural selves or in Nature seen as the basis for moral objectivity: so Rousseau hesitates between making his moral ideal purely subjective or referring it to a vision of Nature no Stoic could have recognized.

For Rousseau, it is the function of a proper education to shield the child (or the adult) from the devastating influences of society: thus is Saint-Preux sheltered and re-educated by the atheist De Wolmar.[20] Saint-Preux seems to represent the victimized external Rousseau, corrupted by the social world, while De Wolmar is the 'real' Rousseau, a quasi-divine, self-comprehending individual who points the way to a society where Rousseau the victim can be replaced by Rousseau the self-determining human male – and male is important – whose will, now made capable of morality, is wholly and freely in accord with the 'General Will'. In contrast to Augustine's higher freedom attained only in heaven, we, if unified in the General Will, can attain in the present life a self-knowledge otherwise beyond our reach; and shall then be capable only of goodness.

[19] For apt comment see De Rougemont (1939: 205–9).
[20] For a fascinating discussion see Shklar (2001: 154–92).

Would such a state *be* self-knowledge? Submission to the General Will is often symbolized in Rousseau (as later *ceteris paribus* by Heidegger) by the image of the rustic feast, at which all, at least nostalgically, are equal. But we are left wondering whether such idyllic depictions are the reality of life subordinated to the General Will or rather the productions of their author's *imagination créatrice*. Some might see Rousseau's willingness to identify symbol with reality as a precursor not only of Romantic dreaming but of the vision of more recent 'virtual' moralists (to whom we shall duly come),[21] happy to confuse wishful thinking with reality, if less on nostalgic grounds – though nostalgia is not lacking – than on grounds of ideology.

By the submission, then, of our individual wills and parochial desires to the General Will, the austere, 'Stoicizing' citizen of ancient Sparta or early Rome is to be recreated in contemporary France.[22] Given our social situation, however, such a citizen will have to be compelled to be free: yet Rousseau – who professes to be no revolutionary and warns that the attempt to construct his utopia by revolutionary means is liable to produce ills worse than those it purports to cure – insists that the transformation of our slavery to individual passions into 'authentic' freedom must be generated not by physical coercion but by psychological correction. It is all too easy, post twentieth century, to see how such a process, viewed as a political as well as an ethical act, can develop into the tyrannical 're-education' by which all learn to love the Orwellian 'Big Brother'.[23] Emile, after his education, allows that he wants to be what 'you' made me, having learned to obey his reconstructed self and so be free: the 'you' does not refer to God, nor is there much resemblance between Emile's new freedom and the virtue of the same name extolled by Locke. The Jacobins, in their search for purity and strict justice – and accompanying intolerance of deviation from the duties and thoughts of a 'good' citizen – were only the first to develop a more sinister interpretation of what in Rousseau

[21] I have touched on virtual morality earlier (Rist 2011 and 2012b: 242–70).

[22] Like many of his predecessors, Rousseau talks the language of Stoicism – and his account of sociability owes much to the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis* – but his reliance on feeling puts him far from the spirit of the ancient Stoics. On his 'Stoicism' more generally, see Brooke (2001: 94–123).

[23] As Walzer puts it: Rousseau's ideal legislator has 'the right to deceive the people' (Walzer 1981: 384–5). Deceit is an important weapon in Rousseau's personal, political and social armoury: in this he is not only the successor of Machiavelli (and his Italian and Tudor followers) but, as we shall see, an important precursor of the coming ideological and 'post-ideological' ages. While it is useful for his own noble purposes, it is, of course, to be reprimanded in corrupt others. Rousseau's claim is that by revealing his own vices he is both honest and self-justifying. In reflecting on the relationship between the views of Rousseau and those of his Jacobin admirers, however, we must remember that for Rousseau, the tension between the general will and individual desires is never (and can never be) entirely overcome.

may seem a naïvely patronizing programme. And since Rousseau cannot tell us more about the nature of the common good than that it involves subordination to the General Will, his disciples could claim to be but acting out his 'authentic' intentions.

Rousseau makes no attempt to distinguish his philosophical ideas from his lived experience; indeed he makes especially clear in the *Confessions* that they must always be seen in tandem, for good philosophy is precisely a renewed contact with one's inner self, and therefore both a possibility for all and a unique experience for each individual. Unlike Voltaire, Rousseau showed little interest in correcting the crimes and abuses specific to his society, not least in its criminal law, concentrating rather on exposing the true nature of his own inner and ultimately perfectible self: a process which is to be a model for others and the source of a deserved 'immortality'.

Habituated as Rousseau became to challenging and envying the distinguished among his predecessors and contemporaries, he shows by the very title of his *Confessions* – on which he spent much of his declining years – that he is writing a riposte to the *Confessions* of Augustine;[24] yet whereas 'confession' for Augustine entails both confessing one's sinful life and professing faith in God's grace and mercy, Rousseau's *Confessions* is a work of self-exculpation for a man who sees himself as the victim of society.

Rousseau's general aim appears to be to refute Augustine's account of human nature and of the human 'will'. He knows that both himself and Augustine are treating of self-knowledge and the interior man, but he sees himself as concerned with nature, whereas Augustine's view revolves around God's providence. Whereas Augustine claims that his inner self is a mystery to himself, Rousseau believes that he alone can write, with knowledge and feeling, all that matters about the uniqueness of one's own nature. While Augustine thinks that – certainly without grace – introspection cannot reveal the mystery of our inner life (since in moral matters we are always inclined to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt), Rousseau claims to be the man who understands his own authentic self as a paragon of sincerity.

More immediate reasons for Rousseau's challenge to the Christian bishop of Hippo are clear enough. He was well aware that French Augustinians such as Pascal had promoted an account of man's evil practices radically incompatible with his own, and that his account of the General Will to which we must submit points to a secularized version of Augustine's

[24] See especially Hartle (1983).

(and Paul's) thesis that as all are 'one in Adam' in sinning, so we can only be saved, not by submitting to a naturalistic General Will, but by being incorporated as 'one in Christ'. Where for Augustine and his latter-day followers we are saved by grace, for Rousseau we are saved by a return to nature, but a nature now turned self-conscious. Whereas for Augustine even men 'under grace' like Paul and himself find themselves an incomprehensible mystery, Rousseau claims that he alone, in touch with nature, has acquired an understanding of his essential self. In *Emile*, in the person of the Savoyard vicar, he explains that such understanding derives not from reason but from *conscience*, a 'divine instinct and a heavenly voice, an infallible judge of good and evil which makes man like God'. The origins of the modern cult of 'sincerity' are here apparent.[25]

As a social contract theorist it is easy to lump Rousseau with earlier purveyors of the genre, especially Hobbes. But his conscious challenge to Augustine points the way to a very different part of his theorizing that finds important more modern reverberations. Rousseau's original natural man, though pre-corruption, lives a primitive life; then, with socialization, corruption arrives and it is the task of the sage to show the way back, not to the original naturalness but to a newly learned self-conscious version. Dispensing with the idea of original sin means that Rousseau can believe that the process of socialization and renewal which we must all now undergo if we are to be virtuous is repeated in each of us as we grow from childhood. The child, indeed, is a natural primitive, who instead of inheriting Adam's sinfulness acquires it in the same way as 'Adam' (standing for Rousseau) will have acquired it, through the demands of social life. Thus what Rousseau describes as the history of humanity as such is also the history of each of us.

Before looking further at the General Will, it is helpful to attend to a particular incident in Rousseau's life which he has said himself was a major factor in his decision to write his 'confessions'. He relates it at length in book two in intentional recollection and contradiction of Augustine's somewhat comparable behaviour and the message he drew from it. Augustine, in his *Confessions* (2.4.9–2.9.17), had described how as a boy he and his mates stole pears from a neighbour's tree and threw them to pigs, and he explains that he sinned in this way for the sheer love of sinning (immediately provoked by peer pressure). He makes no attempt to excuse

[25] See Melzer (1997: 274–95). Virtue is no longer built on the foundation of a confession of vice, but honest and sincere confession is itself virtue, as the *Confessions* often makes clear. Is hypocrisy now the only remaining deadly 'sin' and empathy, understood as Rousseau understands it, the only redeeming virtue?

himself: he alone is responsible, and his motive is an ungodly and futile desire for omnipotence, for autonomy, for being his own master.

Rousseau's account in book two of his own *Confessions* of a far more despicable theft is in fact very different, and, in keeping with much else in his autobiography, self-serving, indeed a plea for excuses. He admits that as a youth, after stealing a ribbon belonging to a chambermaid of his recently deceased employer, he had tried to put the blame on a certain Marion, a servant girl who had aroused his sexual interest but who was, as he knew, entirely innocent of the theft. Rousseau, however, deliberately accused her to her face, an action which led to the sacking of both of them and, as he admits, to the likelihood of her being driven into prostitution. He claims that he regretted this action for the rest of his life, but that this 'peccadillo' (along with many others) was committed not out of malice but out of weakness, and in this particular case because he loved Marion and did not want to be put to public shame.[26] If only his accusers had behaved differently, he would, he protests, have told the truth.

The contrast to the 'pigs and pears' affair in Augustine is salient and instructive. Augustine wants to show that human nature is vicious by deliberate choice and that we inherit such 'weakness' in our characters from the failure of Adam, the original natural man. Rousseau, himself still largely, so he tells us, an innocent natural man, has been betrayed by social conventions, above all by a false sense of shame and desire to win public approval. His sin (if that is the right word) is thus no deliberate choice but the suffering of grief inflicted by society. If we can recognize that – as does Rousseau, more especially in his own case – then to avoid it we must develop a new society based on our *originally honest* – not originally sinful – sentiments, now adapted to the needs of citizenship. Such a new society, as Rousseau argued especially in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* and the *Social Contract*, will lead to the generation of a new man, and more particularly a new citizen, able to live a life of revived Spartan Virtue.

But Rousseau does more than stand the original sin of Augustine (and of more contemporary Augustinians) on its head when he develops the notion of the General Will, to which our individual and parochial desires are to be subordinated, as replacement for our solidarity with both the Old and the New Adams as preached by Augustine, and beyond him by Paul – whom Rousseau elsewhere castigates for preaching an unjust God.[27] That

[26] The theft, in its context, has been examined in detail by Starobinski (2001: 270–381).

[27] *La Nouvelle Héloïse* 561–2 (Dartmouth edition), cited by Brooke (2001: 109).

is an interesting further development, for although many of the traditions we have been discussing in the present book derive from Augustine's formulations (and Augustine's incompletenesses), Augustine himself would have been the first to admit that he is in many matters a Pauline exegete. Rousseau's move behind Augustine to Paul is thus a recognition that it is not merely Christian practices (whether or not corrected by Protestant Reformers) that are to be revised, but Christianity itself. Rousseau is certainly no atheist and at times claims to be a Gospel Christian of some sort, but his Christianity is neither the Catholic nor any of the Protestant versions – nor certainly is it the deism of the *philosophes*. Though his God is providential, he is not omnipotent, for that would infringe the sort of autonomy Rousseau craves, nor can his existence be proved, as Rousseau admits in his *Letter to Voltaire*. Nor can the soul's immortality be proved, though on that Rousseau's position varies.[28]

The origins of Rousseau's General Will – not with him an entirely novel concept – can be documented, but that is not our immediate concern.[29] We need only note that it forms a civic replacement for theological accounts of the will of God. What is our concern is that for Rousseau it is not part of the equipment of natural man but can only be discerned after a proper (non-violent) system of education. He views the positing of it as having advantages for both ethical and political life: at the moral level it enables us to overcome the very weakness that in the *Confessions* and elsewhere he attributes to even the best of humanity (and strikingly to himself), but its greater role is in the public domain, since if we can learn to identify ourselves with the General Will we shall always be prepared to subordinate our *amour propre* not, of course, to the para-Augustinian *amour de soi* of our natural state, but to the rightness of intent and feeling of which we are even in our corrupted state always dimly aware and of which as citizens we must all be similarly and equally partakers.

Yet who is to determine what that General Will is, which enables us both to be free and autonomous and conscious of our manifest duties and destiny? Although Rousseau distinguishes between the General Will – which is to the common good – and the 'will of all' – a mere assemblage of individual desires – and insists that the General Will will never harm

[28] Sometimes, as in his letter to Voltaire, Rousseau seems to opt for an afterlife in which he will receive recompense for the ills he has suffered in the present one (*OC* IV, 1075); elsewhere he thinks only of the immortality his writings will secure for him. His default position (not least in the anti-Augustinian *Confessions*) is denial of personal immortality.

[29] For full discussion see Riley (1986). The idea in some form is already present in Montesquieu (1689–1755).

any of the citizens, he fails to illustrate cases in which by submitting to the decrees of the General Will we can be forced to be free, or to show how such forcing does no harm to the individual – or, for that matter, what type and degree of 'force' is licit. What he does say near the end of the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* is that a despot can only be overthrown by natural self-legitimizing force – though no state of innocence can thus be re-established.

Lest, relying on an unanalyzed notion of autonomy, we overestimate the similarity between Rousseau and Kant, we should recall that Rousseau's emphasis on moral feelings condemns him to the very subjectivism that the dictates of Kant's 'rational will' are intended to avoid. Indeed his very emphasis on feelings deprives Rousseau of any chance of offering us a General Will devoid of sentimental (and therefore wilful) attributes. It is true that the General Will is supposed to relieve us of particular and parochial desires, but a case can be made that Rousseau has in effect substituted the dehumanized 'feelings' of a mob for the emotions of each of its individual members. And the feelings of a mob will tend to deprive its individual members of that sense of responsibility for their actions which Rousseau would certainly see as an important part of his vaunted autonomy but which he himself so manifestly both lacked and craved. Perhaps, however, mob feelings can be directed by the aptitudes of a group of superiorly enlightened individuals – of a vanguard – or of one special individual. Post-Rousseau political history was to show how difficult it could be to avoid such outcomes, even should we want to avoid them. Though Rousseau falls between the stools, he is as likely to attribute 'naturally' good society to a great man – a Lycurgus, a Moses or a Numa who will instantiate the General Will – as he is to invoke a social contract.

Hume, Kant, Rousseau: all in their own way were radicals, deeply opposed to much of the Christian past. But the effects of their radicalism were to be played out in very different traditions, and we shall be investigating something of those traditions in the later chapters of the present study. Hume is in many respects old-fashioned: acceptance of his determined atheism would only immediately subvert the moral theories and change the behaviours of those private individuals directly or indirectly affected by it. In the short run, to become a Humean was to abandon Christianity but to preserve – with the inadequate defence of his theory of moral sentiments – much of the Christian ethic – without, of course, Roman egregious monkishness. In the longer run, we shall find such an inadequately defended

morality leading to a modern conventionalism – and indeed pointing to a virtual morality whereby we pretend that morality, in its more or less conventional form, is defensible, while knowing (those of us, that is, who are enlightened) that it is not. Although Hume's influence in moral philosophy was to a degree eclipsed during the nineteenth century – while his atheism retained its appeal – he has come back into much favour since the Second World War, and on the contemporary scene his anti-Christian impact is immense.

Kant, himself greatly affected by Hume, has produced effects both like and unlike those of the teacher of his latter years. Rejecting Hume's conventionalism and non-cognitivist approach to ethics, he has proved a mainstay for those anxious to replace the Christian tradition with a hugely seductive secular alternative, in particular – and in this following Rousseau – to one of the principal dogmas of earlier Christianity: that which taught that we are not autonomous beings, but morally as well as existentially dependent, and that any moral theory which implies our ability to construct by the dictates of our own reason an 'objective' kingdom of ends finishes up in overweening assertiveness. If Hume appeals to the radical sceptics and atheists who yet want to survive in a value-free universe, Kant appears to offer a substantive attempt to put man in God's place as the source of morality.

In the latter respect Rousseau resembles Kant, as he does in his antideterminism: God cannot be omnipotent, not because his omnipotence is hard to explain, but because man's autonomy would be threatened by God's. Nevertheless, his providence must be real enough because we feel we need it if the just are to be rewarded and because our feelings (so we protest) are basically, even if feebly, good: we, like Rousseau, are surely incapable of real wickedness, evidence to the contrary notwithstanding! In Rousseau, as we have seen, the will is not rational (and thus not Kantian), nor of course is it to be understood in any Augustinian (or Platonic) way as a love of God or of 'the good'. Yet unlike Hume and Kant, Rousseau has a definite if confused political project: to generate New Man, not in God's image but as an improved version of himself, not as a socialized and historical animal so much as what he 'knows' he could be if only he were 'free'. Here something of pure nature or a secular version of the wounded capacities of Augustine's fallen man lives on. But, as we have seen, Rousseau has no desire to preach either a return to the Garden before the fall or a state of 'higher freedom' such as Augustine envisaged as a possibility for those 'predestined' for heaven. On the contrary, such freedom and autonomy – seen as the inability to do wrong as Rousseau

understands it – can, he argues, by the manipulation of an education, be achieved here on earth.

In Rousseau's conscious rejection of the Christian Augustine he repudiates the old ways as a matter of principle. Yet another aspect of his radicalism is brought out if we compare him with Plato. For while the Platonic Guardian loves and knows a Good wholly independent of his own mind, Rousseau (in this reminding us of Hume – whom in life he came to think of as one of his many persecutors) prioritizes the evidence of his senses and feelings. He *knows* that he can rely on his own inner instincts or on a *conscience* (French) that is certainly no version of the God-given English (and so Puritan) conscience proposed by Butler, though the language he uses may at times look similar. For obedience to Rousseau's *conscience* will lead him to excuse any evil he may be, as he sees it, compelled by a corrupted society to commit and to have an apparently exact sense of the goals for which others should be manipulated. Those others, as unreformed and thus without true virtue, are more or less a new variety of heretic, doomed to live in a secular version of the medieval and early modern world, and needing to be 'compelled to come in', as in a notorious travesty of the Gospel.[30] Only now the compulsion is not to conform to some version of Christian practice but to be 'free'.

[30] As noted earlier, Rousseau's ideally free citizen is normally assumed to be male; certainly females will have to be educated in very different ways – to develop their very different and sexually conditioned natures. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse* the regenerated Julie needs religion, though not Christianity; De Wolmar does not. And despite Rousseau's insistence on sincerity, he breaches his principles over female sexual modesty which he believes to be both necessary and insincere; see Melzer (1997) for this and other inconsistencies in Rousseau's position. For detailed discussion of Rousseau's account of women see recently – with ample reference to earlier 'literature' – Shell (2001: 272–301).

CHAPTER 11

Atheist 'Freedoms': Liberal, Totalitarian, Nihilist

> 'The spirit of Munich has by no means retreated into the past; it was no short-lived episode. I would even dare to claim that the spirit of Munich dominates the twentieth century. A timorous civilized world, faced with the onslaught of a suddenly revived and snarling barbarism, has found nothing to oppose it with except concessions and smiles.'
>
> Solzhenitsyn, on receiving a Nobel Prize (1970)

> 'We must be prepared for a long succession of demolitions, devastations and upheavals.… Europe will soon be enveloped in darkness.'
>
> Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science* 343

> 'Power is my fist on your throat.'
>
> Hermann Goering

After the philosophical upheavals caused by Hume, Rousseau and Kant, and the more carnal upheavals of the French Revolution with its culmination in the dictatorship of Napoleon, we might seem to enter on a more benevolent age, philosophically if not immediately politically. In the United Kingdom, the long history of utilitarianism had begun its measured unfolding from the pleasure principle of Bentham and via John Stuart Mill's attempt to reintroduce virtue and distinguish between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures, to Sidgwick's titanic struggle – as he tells it – to reconcile happiness and duty. Thus we watch a large part of the British philosophical tradition reflecting the pragmatism of an increasingly commercial and imperialist society under the watchword 'seek the greatest good of the greatest number' – and purged of any metaphysical or theistic nonsense.

Yet a major problem emerging from Bentham's crudely coherent plea for the maximization of pleasure – a goal which echoed the eighteenth century as much as it introduced the nineteenth – was how to reach agreement on what is the greatest good, or on how, among the plethora of goods, we can identify this greatest – or even decide how any good can

be recognized as greater than any other. Still, after Rousseau one thing seemed clear, and not only to utilitarians: 'nature' may allow us (or even teach us) to be benevolent, and it is also democratic, even perhaps at some level egalitarian. Rousseau, not originally, but certainly most influentially, trumpeted the 'rights of man', albeit in his latter days seeming to fear that the phrase had become a fashionable cliché, while Bentham rejected any such 'metaphysical' fraud.

Utilitarians apart, Rousseau's surface concern for humanity (and beyond the inhabitants of any particular country) seemed to confirm and broaden the rights theories developed among his seventeenth-century predecessors, and was taken very seriously by the original French revolutionaries of 1789. English dissenters too – we have looked at the radicalism of Milton – had challenged not only the behaviour of tyrannical individuals but also institutions – monarchy, the Church Established and its bishops – presumed to nourish them. Many victims of systemic injustice had fled from the Old Continent to North America, and with the foundation of the United States hoped to begin again with well-balanced, enlightened institutions. Yet newly established, their humanity remained – or became – significantly selective, despite Rousseau's broader canvas. For while in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence (1776) we read that 'all men are created equal … endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights', the American Constitution (1787) and the Bill of Rights (1791) concern themselves rather with rights *within* the new republic, in effect with positive law. The unexpressed aim seemed to be the establishment of a minimally Christian – or deist – society. Among others, Catholic colonists for long fitted uneasily into that project.

Those who rebelled against George III in the name of liberty permitted themselves black slaves in their thousands – supposedly subhuman but still found suitable not only for forced labour but also for sex. Sometimes the Founders, not least Jefferson himself, would salve their selective consciences by attacking slavery while scarce freeing a single one of their own slaves. Yet elsewhere slavery had already come under attack, as had judicial torture, abolished in Prussia by 1754 and influentially condemned (along with capital punishment) by Cesare Beccaria in *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* ten years later. Some, like Tom Paine, professional revolutionary and reviver of a secular version of the dreams of the Levellers – and by 1790 the French radical Condorcet, already an anti-slaver – even wanted equality for women, though Paine's attitude was rather casual and the idea was far too radical for the Founding Fathers, as by 1793 it was to become for the French revolutionary deputies who preferred to regard

the citizenship of women as 'passive'. A certain fear was rising again that rights claims would get out of hand, John Adams in 1776 already revealing anxiety (however expressed as irony) that even women would claim the right to vote and minors that their rights were infringed![1]

Nonetheless, we were beginning to learn, not least from Rousseau, to feel benevolent to humanity as a whole – and eventually, perhaps, to all sentient beings – though by the beginning of the nineteenth century the working out of such ideas still awaited a society in which *individual* humans, so far from being liberated by the attack on (selective) systemic injustices, were to be 'corrected', at first for impeding the advance of 'humanity' in general and then, during the late twentieth century – as we shall see – for overestimating their own place and subjectivity in a cosmos viewed 'scientifically' as ever more impersonal: hence, of course, ever less Christian, for the condition of a member of some collective is very different from his ancestors' assumptions as to unity in Adam – though perhaps identifiable as its bastard descendant.

Far from defying the growing sense of impersonality, philosophers, with few exceptions, were pressing ahead with it. The self, characterized as subjective and as such promoted by Descartes as a tool for the subordination of metaphysics to epistemology, pointed (again) to values as being but constructions of the will; hence to a secular re-evaluation of the old theological claim that man's worth exists objectively inasmuch as he has been created in the image of God. And although disputes about personal identity stirred up by Locke might revive personalist claims in the developing world of secularism, yet both the Cartesian self and the Lockean person could fall victim to Hume's inability to see a substance beneath the individual's qualities and experiences. And though Kant's concern for the person as an end in itself might seem to erect a barrier against impersonalism, his diminished account of human nature pointed once again – if less directly – in that same direction.

So now we have two tendencies: to benevolence towards an abstract humanity (however restrictively defined) and to a gradual devaluation of the individuals of whom 'humanity' is composed. The former tendency will generate problems about justice, especially if the difficulty of determining how much harm individual misdemeanours do to society as a whole is not to be evaded. For no human being should be deliberately hurt and the distinction between being hurt and being harmed is easily eroded. Yet without hurt and grief there can be no punishment (just

[1] In a letter to James Sullivan cited by Hunt (2007: 147).

or otherwise). Or should concern for the individual yield to the general good? But even those who (for whatever reason) favour administering punishment may want to excuse themselves, as Dickens would put it, by claiming that 'this hurts me more than it hurts you'. Hence here and elsewhere, with love of humanity hypocrisy will be enhanced; we have abandoned original sin and are basically benevolent, but officially we accept to submerge our individual preferences in a more general will for a more general goodness. Nor in such a world can love or even friendship easily survive among individuals whose individuality is put in question. Before Kant, as noted earlier, treatises on friendship formed a regular part of a philosopher's moral agenda; now, with friendship largely excluded from morality as self-serving and parochial, they become rare.

Utilitarianism, as well as other forms of consequentialism, as they developed, were always challenged by those still concerned with individual human beings and hence with justice. For apparently rejecting Kant's view that persons should never be treated as means but always as ends, utilitarians seemed to imply that a greater good for the majority should be promoted at the expense of a lesser good for a minority whose concerns can be dismissed as unfortunate side effects. We, the all-seeing righteous, are to draw up a balance sheet, setting out the overall credits and debits, and to act accordingly. Success will presumably be measured by a general satisfaction: a welcome doctrine to politicians, for whom consequentialism is prevailingly the appropriate language – especially but not exclusively during a democratic age when re-election must remain for most the overriding concern.

Thus, nineteenth-century Britain had to set Kant over against Bentham, or in less personal terms, the rational individual will (or just the will) against a general and 'natural' benevolence (backed by echoes of an earlier 'sentimentalism' of Rousseau) in which love of humanity will tend to override concern for individual human beings. In this we may recognize part of the story of the origins of the present (now diminishing) divide between 'Anglo-American' and 'Continental' philosophy, though already during the eighteenth century, as we have seen, moods on either side of the Channel, despite continual cross-fertilization, looked very different: in eighteenth-century France a violent reaction to Christianity in general, and to the Port-Royal Augustinianism of Pascal and his friends in particular; in Britain (and derivatively in the United States) Calvin's triumph – now in a substantially more secular form – proving morally and socially, if not theologically, more enduring than might have been foreseen while Christianity gradually mutated first into deism, then via

the Broad Church (as Bishop Berkeley had warned) into a growing religious indifference.

The expanding vacuum might be punctured at the more popular level by evangelical revivals – the most influential being that of John Wesley – but among intellectuals by a growing desire not so much to replace Christianity by a rabid anti-Christianity as on the Continent – the intellectual battle against Protestantism had been largely won, and the Catholic revival, for what it might eventually be worth, had hardly begun – than by a moralism seeming suited to a quieter, more reasonable age purged not only of religion but increasingly (after Hume and Kant) of metaphysics – and not yet confronted with Rousseau-style ideological and political substitutes of which Jacobinism had been the forerunner. Morality, shorn of metaphysics and theology, could seem useful to an increasingly technological and scientific age convinced (usually mindlessly) of the rationality of its surface proprieties.

Writing in 1838 John Stuart Mill surprisingly proclaimed not Kant but, together with Bentham, Coleridge as the other 'great seminal mind' of his youth.[2] For Coleridge, unlike Kant whom he studied, was no heir to a rationalist, even deist, understanding of the human spirit, but a puzzled, hesitant, even Augustinian, revivalist – however much influenced by German idealism, anti-Enlightenment romanticism and even, indirectly, a more pagan Neoplatonism. Benevolence, yes, but of a 'spiritual', not utilitarian stamp; idealist and post-Kantian metaphysics, yes, but with an accompanying teleology to temper the subjectivist tendencies of the Romantics. Coleridge apart, however, for much of the earlier part of the nineteenth century, moral philosophy in Britain largely separated itself from contemporary movements across the Channel. None of the post-Kantians – neither Fichte, nor Feuerbach, nor Hegel (nor Hegel's nemesis, Kierkegaard) – as yet attracted much attention; the only significant exception, at least in utilitarian circles, was Auguste Comte, who supposed that his newly discovered 'science' of sociology could play the role of master discipline analogous to that of theology during the Middle Ages. Comte's influence on the younger Mill's scientism was considerable, even though the earnest and largely humourless Mill drew the line at the rituals of the

[2] For Coleridge's enduring influence on Mill see Wilson (1998: 220–1). Mill's essay on Coleridge is to be found in volume X of (John M. Robson, ed.) *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (33 volumes, Toronto 1963–91), henceforward *CW*. For helpful comment on Coleridge's revitalized Platonism – doubtless in part the source of Mill's ambiguities on the Platonic score – and on his emphasis on the creative imagination see Hedley (2008: 276–82). On page 269 Hedley notes that 'the post-modern attack upon metaphysics is at heart a critique of Plato': Augustine having long been dumped, attacks on theology can be filled out by attacks on the Platonizing metaphysics that often sustained it.

Religion of Humanity which, he concluded, 'could have been written by no man who had ever laughed' (*CW* X: 343).

Yet laughable as Comtean rituals might seem – indeed as the whole project of a Religion of Humanity might be – it is not difficult to understand why Mill felt its attraction, as in earlier life he also felt the attraction of Comte's schematic account of the development of civilizations through religious to metaphysical to empirical stages.[3] In Mill's ambivalent attitude to Comte – sympathizing with him as God-hater but increasingly aware that for Comte and many others God-hating entails crude manipulation of the mass of humanity (especially 'the slaves of God') by élites – one can recognize a foreshadowing of the abiding ambivalence of Mill's successors who, wanting to combine liberalism with some form of consequentialism, wonder: Are we to become active or passive enemies of Christianity? Must we be illiberal towards traditional religion in the name of liberal, scientistic progress? Are we to let Christianity die out or to work vigorously to stamp it out? The inherent temptation to the latter option shows Comte's affinity (and that of his positivist successors) with the ruthless contempt for the human herd shown by Nietzscheans and Marxists.

Comte's Religion of Humanity might fill the gap left by what in *On Dover Beach* (perhaps composed in 1851) Matthew Arnold was to image as 'the melancholy, withdrawing tide of faith'. Though Mill considered himself unusual in England in never having had to renounce religion [since he had never been religious (*CW* I: 45)], religion might contribute to utility, impressing moral precepts as the requisite social glue: some sort of religion substitute may be worth adopting, even though its claims are ultimately both fanciful and ludicrous. After all, for utilitarians lying can be defended in the interest of social harmony; perhaps a Religion of Humanity could be useful in influencing the non-utilitarian masses until they can be brought to the state where they no longer need it.[4] That amounts to promoting the utility of belief in a 'virtual religion'; as we shall see, Mill is also tempted by something of a 'virtual virtue' (of a rather Platonic sort). We shall return to such virtualities in the next chapter.[5]

[3] For discussion see Addis (1975).

[4] For discussion of the importance of self-development in Mill's account of utility see Donner (1991).

[5] For further comment see also Rist (2011). Arnold's poem (to be discussed further in the next chapter) speaks of a world that 'hath really neither joy nor love nor light'; in it he offers his bride a false consolation: a device satirically exposed by Anthony Hecht in *The Dover Bitch: A Criticism of Life*, where the 'bitch' resents being 'addressed/ as sort of a mournful cosmic last resort'. For more on Comte's Religion of Humanity see Wright (1986). For its attraction to Mill see Millar (1998: 196–200).

Mill, however, developed more serious objections to Comte than those prompted by the absurdities of the Religion of Humanity. By 1854, writing *On Liberty* (*CW* X), he is damning Comte as a 'liberticide', a false prophet willing to sacrifice our 'right' to liberty whose organic society can only be the enemy of that distinctive and unfettered development of the individual that ought to contribute so much to human richness and happiness. Mill had learned from Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* that the suppression of individual distinction which was to become a prominent feature of the ideology of Marx (as in its way already in the General Will of Rousseau and soon in the inevitable advent of the Spirit in the world-historical vision of Hegel) could (as in America) take on the form of the dictatorship of a dreary majority, of an undistinguished and undistinguishable egalitarianism.[6] In England Mill also feared the tyranny of 'respectable' conventions, which fears were duly confirmed after 1869 by the widely incredulous reaction (even among liberals) to his book *The Subjection of Women*.[7] His repeated claims in that work – to which we shall shortly turn – that because of the force of conventions mistaken for eternal truths we have no knowledge of whether women are capable of operating effectively in the public square, were widely dismissed out of hand. The same mindless objections, he would claim, were regularly raised about other possible 'experiments in living'.

As a 'classical liberal', Mill lived ever in dread of what he saw as the banality threatened by an approaching socialism to which he eventually tried to accommodate himself; his liberalism was far from ideologically egalitarian.[8] As he points out in chapter two of *Utilitarianism*, we need 'competent judges' to identify the nature of the better, the more useful, life. Pericles, as read in the German Romantic tradition, is the ideal of Mill's *Liberty* (1859): 'It may be better to be a John Knox than an Alcibiades, but it is better to be a Pericles than either' (*CW* XVIII: 265): a comment

[6] Tocqueville, however, observing the radical pioneering individualism – especially of the Western parts of the United States – recognized the 'American Dream' that we are born equal instead of becoming so, but hence allowed himself to ignore the newly developing varieties of radical inequality within American society: in that aggressively competitive world some were born equal but soon became unequal. Perhaps Hobbes was on the right track after all! In America a utopian 'democracy' might survive where free society might not, or only apparently. What Tocqueville did realize is that democracy – in its own insidious way – might stifle freedom of *thought*: so 'I know of no country in which, speaking generally, there is less independence of mind and true freedom of discussion than in America' (*Democracy in America* [eds. J. P. Mayer and M. Lerner] 235, cited by Manent (1994: 110).

[7] For the initial reception of *The Subjection of Women* see Nicholson (1998: 466–83).

[8] See Kahan (1992). For Mill's attempt to see socialism as a variety of liberalism in 'Chapters on Socialism' (published posthumously), see *CW* V.

which reveals not only Mill's devotion to the aristocratic Pericles, but that he views Calvinism (as did many of his British predecessors and contemporaries) as the most threatening version of a clearly defective Christian religion. Nothing by now remains of the pre-Reformation world-picture: Newman's *Apologia* (1865) had yet to appear, its author to seem an undesirable, un-English upstart and bounder, if not traitor.[9]

Mill's concern with development of wider human capacities brought him into conflict not only with Comte but with his rather more Comtean father and with Bentham himself, which conflict generated a radical ambiguity in his utilitarianism. For although the naturalism and objectivism of their utilitarianisms links the Mills, father and son, and Bentham rather with their eighteenth-century predecessors than with twentieth-century liberal and 'democratic' successors such as Rawls and Nozick, Mill (not least in reflecting on the causes of his own nervous breakdown as a young man) came sharply to reject Bentham's account of the pleasure which all agreed should be maximized, thereby making the nature of the maximizing even more incomprehensible than in Bentham's original theory. A further effect of Mill's revisionism was to reintroduce something looking suspiciously like those natural and imprescriptible rights Bentham had rejected as 'nonsense upon stilts'.[10]

For Bentham the objective good is physical pleasure, measurable in units in terms of duration and intensity, though why that should be the *only* or *ultimate* good would seem to need further defence (as Mill apparently realized). Be that as it may, the basic claim about maximizing leads to obvious problems about how different sorts of physical pleasures – of apples, as it were, versus oranges – can be compared and prioritized. Some have tried to defend both Mill and Bentham on this point by saying that although we cannot explain how we choose an apple rather than an orange, we, unlike Buridan's ass, do in fact decide which one to eat, and the very fact of our decision shows that somehow calculation is possible: unless, that is, there is an unavoidable plumping depending on the beliefs and habitual practices of our past life – at least in such limited cases of decision-making as hardly affect the good of humanity.[11]

[9] Interestingly, Mill's image of the 'glory that was Greece' in ancient Athens is precisely what Nietzsche (with good reason) wanted to reject, and which the academic defenders of the glamorized picture tried to sustain when they rejected Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (1872): 'Anyone who has written a thing like that is finished as a scholar' (Usener); '*Zukunftsphilologie*' (Wilamowitz). For comment see MacIntyre (1991: 34) citing O'Flaherty, Sellner and Helm (1976).

[10] See Schofield, Pease-Watkin and Blamires (eds.) (2002: 330).

[11] So, for example, Donner, though she admits that Mill at least was sufficiently aware of 'the fallibility of human judgment' as to recognize that even well-qualified judges can make mistakes even

Beyond such specific concerns lie at least two serious and related difficulties in Bentham's account of pleasure as an immediate goal. Firstly, linguistically, in most cases of enjoyment, as Aristotle had noted long before, we speak of getting pleasure from doing something: if we are asked why we are running, we would normally answer that we have a purpose in doing so (as to get somewhere faster than by walking or to race competitively or to keep fit) and add that in any case we enjoy it – though if the going is hard we may not – and not that we are just seeking pleasure. Only rarely would we say that we are engaged in a direct search for pleasure and find that running fills the bill. That may be the reason why people masturbate,[12] but the example of running shows that Bentham's error is not merely linguistic but that the linguistic facts reflect the situation 'on the ground' when we account for our engaging in the activity of running.

The crude materialism of the account of pleasure (and hence happiness) proposed by Bentham was gradually recognized by Mill (*CW* X: 95) – influenced both by Wordsworth and by the moral sense theorists of the previous century[13] – as radically incomplete. He blamed his original acceptance of it on the minimally affective education to which his father's philistine intellectualism had subjected him and which had led to his breakdown. Hence he questions: Are there only such 'physical' pleasures? What about the pleasures or satisfactions of the mind and of the moral and aesthetic senses? Are there, in effect, noble and ignoble pleasures? How do such further possibilities affect the problems of maximizing?

Mill would agree with his utilitarian mentors that if there are higher pleasures they must be explained in terms of an associationist and empiricist psychology; that is, that if quantitative utilitarianism is to be supplemented by qualitative utilitarianism, our appreciation of moral and aesthetic pleasures must be learned: there is nothing innate about it, apart, that is, from our capacity for education. Nevertheless, to defend utilitarianism against the charge that it is a creed fit only for pigs (*Utilitarianism*;

about important judgement – which admission may be sufficient to eliminate her defence of Mill's position as a whole (Donner 1998: 269).

[12] The mistake involved in the idea that the rational pleasure seeker would normally pursue it directly, rather than through some activity, is well brought out by a thought experiment proposed by Smart (1973). At least on reflection few would choose to be hooked up to a pleasure machine that would guarantee the passive reception of pleasures without activity. Of course they might fall into a similar passivity if they became addicted (and thus hooked as well as hooked up) – just as they might become addicted to television (or drugs).

[13] For the influence of Wordsworth who seems to have helped persuade Mill that certain experiences generate an 'aesthetic' response in the human agent, see Wilson (1989: 322–92) and Green (1989: 259–77). In Mill's position we can perhaps recognize something of more recent claims that moral feelings are to be explained with reference to Lockean secondary qualities.

CW X: 210) and to retort that it is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied (*CW* X: 212), we need to introduce qualitative distinctions among our various satisfactions. Hence Mill, as we have noted, concluded that the utilitarian must promote the 'higher' capacities of the human race, learning to develop moral and aesthetic sensibilities (including a concern for caring for others and for forming friendships) and thus become qualified to sit in judgement on the sort of pleasure in which happiness in its fullest form consists. To achieve the enrichment he seeks Mill understands that he must think socially as well as individually; his has been rightly dubbed a social and socially conscious individualism.

Comte and others, Mill believed, were certainly right in supposing that any desired sensibilities must be developed in public institutions, and especially by the improvement of education to encourage a child's individuality, sense of the worth (however conceived) of self and of others, and loyalty to the community to which he belongs (*CW* X: 133–5). Comte had erred, however, in thinking that the *immediate* intent of every member of an ideal society should be the good of the whole, for it is not by a narrowing of the mind but by its expansion that social goals are to be attained, society being no overblown individual but the sum of the characters, whether good or bad, of its members. If you learn, publicly or privately, to be both moral and cultured in an improving society, you both generate more personal satisfaction and contribute in an enhanced way to the good of the whole (*CW* VIII: 869).

Mill seems to have retained a hope that eventually all can be raised not merely to a high but to an equally high level of culture. Progress towards this goal would demand not only a gradual increase in the recognition of individual 'rights' by society, since possession of such rights – not least the right to security and to liberty – is essential if we are to advance towards that personal development which is a necessary constituent of the good to be maximized. And it would also demand a more egalitarian distribution of wealth. Those aims attained, all will be qualified as judges of the social good, though Mill warns that our judgements are not to be taken as mere 'preference rankings' of competent agents,[14] but at least in intention, objective judgements of worth. Nevertheless, the fact that they may *look like* mere preferences (perhaps are only *established* as mere preferences) points to the twentieth-century future of much utilitarianism. And leaves us with the question: What other option was there?

[14] As they are taken, for example, by Donner (1998: 273).

Nor did Mill forget the more earthy concern of Bentham the social reformer that the alleviation of poverty is a basic precondition for improving the sum of good (*CW* V: 712), though he was always a reformer, never a revolutionary, holding that revolutions do more harm than good: and indeed we find utilitarianism (and more generally liberalism of a Millian variety) operating as an ideology not by violence but by salami tactics, gradually accustoming a society to accept the sort of changes the cultured élite judges to increase the overall happiness: an observation to which we shall return in a later chapter. Yet despite the fact that Mill slides towards the idea that the means to happiness – that is, the educating of an élite – is to be viewed as no mere means but as an end in itself, he never became a virtue ethicist nor even an agent relativist: that is, a moralist who holds (like Socrates) that what matters in the last analysis are not the consequences of an act but the virtues of the agent who performs it. Indeed, precisely in this regard Mill found himself in a quandary: he both dismissed Bentham's contempt for Plato's attempt to justify virtue for its own sake and laid himself open to a serious charge of self-contradiction, if not of hypocrisy, and even of compassing outright deception, in admiring Plato's pursuit of virtue while simultaneously rejecting the kind of metaphysical defence Plato thought essential if his project was to be philosophically grounded.[15]

To establish a necessary foundation for his attack on Bentham's restricted understanding of pleasure, Mill had also to reject Bentham's (and his father's) more or less Hobbesian view of motivation, which he replaces with ideas influenced not only by Coleridge, Wordsworth and the 'sentimentalists' but also (whether or not consciously) by Rousseau. We are not entirely selfish beings (*CW* X: 14); if we have to learn sympathy for others, such learning is not against nature; we are an emotionally mixed bag, and if we are enabled to develop our kindlier potentialities, we shall not only widen our moral, aesthetic and generally cultural sensibilities, but we shall want to set up – both as outcomes of our developing habits and by legislation[16] – institutions which will promote the general good.

[15] For an excellent discussion of Mill's ambivalence about Socrates and Plato (and his rejection of the cruder utilitarianism of his father and of his learned friend George Grote see Irwin (1998: 449–56). As Irwin notes, the ambivalence frightened the more brusquely utilitarian Henry Sidgwick who realized that Mill might have had to choose between utilitarianism and a liberalism preaching self-development as a good in itself (Irwin 1998: 449–56). As we shall see, however, when advocating more self-development for women, Mill used strictly utilitarian arguments alongside those dependent on claims about justice and – hence – 'rights'.

[16] Mill's concern with enlarging our cultural horizon by a process of self-development is emphasized especially by Donner (1991). As we have already noticed, it generated more serious problems than Donner will allow.

Mill's widening of the concept of pleasurable (and therefore good) experiences points not only to emphasizing individual self-development, which is promoted by such liberties as freedom of speech, but to the identification of an educated class capable of weighing up the competing pleasures and deducing social and political policies to be pursued. By Bentham's standards, this is manifestly élitist and certainly pushes Mill towards claiming that not only pleasure but the enrichment of our terrestrial life is a good in itself – though, strictly speaking,[17] as we have seen, he evades confronting such a radical break with a singular utilitarian good (which evasion Sidgwick and others found unacceptable), since the enrichment ultimately is subordinate to the achievement of the highest good for humanity as a whole. Nevertheless, it is clear that in seeing such a 'good' maximized precisely with reference to the number of highly 'developed' individuals we can produce, Mill not only comes nearer to what we now call a virtue ethic but is protected from falling back on a Comtean-style earthly paradise in which the individual good is subordinated to the good of the organic whole.

Nevertheless, Mill's substitution of 'qualitative' utilitarianism for the 'quantitative' version of Bentham certainly increases difficulties with evaluation: Precisely how much more weight, for example, should be given to the noble pleasure of saving someone's life than to that of being on the receiving end of a homoerotic act?[18] And Mill's apparently more high-minded approach involved him in a further, if related, difficulty: which difficulty is not limited to utilitarians, but echoes the problem of purely altruistic and egalitarian benevolence we discussed in an earlier chapter in connection with the perceived need among the medievals for a purified version of friendship.

In Mill's own lifetime his confused concern for the well-being of humanity as a whole – and its egalitarian implications, designated 'transcendental utilitarianism' – was sharply criticized by F. J. Stephen,[19] who argued that when maximizing the pleasure of the greatest number, it is absurd to treat potential recipients of our benevolence as having equal claims on us. To take a common example (obviously not available to Stephen, but similar scenarios could be sketched for him), it is absurd to suppose I would have been in any way morally insensitive or at fault if, being wrecked and in a

[17] Ryan's comment is balanced: 'Mill's concern with self-development and moral progress is a strand in his philosophy to which almost everything else is subordinated' (Ryan 1998: 255).

[18] This is the argument that defeats the pleasure-seeking Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*; Callicles was shamed into inconsistency.

[19] For the importance of Stephen's critique in this particular see Mackie (1977: 171).

boat capable of holding one more person at most and seeing two more survivors in the water, one of whom was my wife and the other Adolf Hitler, I just ignored Adolf (even without regret) and rescued my wife.[20] Beneath Stephen's rather crudely expressed concerns lies a deeper problem that I have already noted and with which we shall be increasingly concerned. The implication of Mill's position seems to be not simply that every human being possesses equal rights but that therefore each makes equal demands on each of us, thus rendering our individual lives and consequent personal responsibilities irrelevant. If human rights and human value are to be viewed thus impersonally, the conclusion looms that the equal value that we possess is reduced to zero.

As a result of such challenges as that of Stephen, latter-day utilitarians are inclined to claim that we should maximize the greatest good *whatever that happens to be or, obviously, can be assumed to be*. That has led, in practice, to an apotheosis of choice – we saw forerunners of that notion, derived from very different premises, as far back as Scotus – and to the development of so-called preference-satisfaction consequentalism; we are to maximize whatever we prefer to promote for ourselves or others, usually adding the proviso that we should only do so as long as our activities do no (normally immediate) harm (or comparatively less harm) to others. Indeed preference satisfaction should at least have satisfied Bentham, who preferred – that is, personally – to work for the maximization of good for humanity, allowing other preferences to others.

On this scenario our 'moral' decisions may be governed either by personal or by group preferences – and it will be disputed whether, or how far, they should be constrained by the damage they do, early or late, to others: those who belong to the libertarian wing of the successor state to traditional utilitarianism argue for maximizing individual advantages (with programmes often looking surprisingly Hobbesian); others prefer to be altruistic (as Bentham originally claimed to be): that too is a matter of choice.

Preference theorists generally assume that such choices are the prerogative of free agents, that is, those possessed of a freedom of indifference.[21]

[20] A well-known discussion of this sort of point is provided by Bernard Williams (1981: 18). Frequently the examples chosen are bizarre, if not ludicrous. Thus Brook introduces the case of the lion's den. In anger a visitor to a zoo throws two children into the lion's cage. Instantly repenting, he wonders whether he should throw a third in at the other end of the cage to distract the lion so that the first two (rather than just one) should be saved (Brook 1991: 197–212).

[21] In most modern discussions a free act is *either* one where only necessary causal conditions are outside the self, and the agent himself is the cause, freedom (of indifference: summarized as the Principle of Alternative Possibilities – PAP) thus being the liberty to do otherwise than one does

Such freedom can be exercised without any of the restraints of traditional 'morality', though most choice theorists (even those of libertarian stripe) will concede that restraints are desirable, which may be on Hobbesian grounds or because they have simply 'chosen to be moral'. Thus absolute choice will (again) often lead to the positing of a 'virtual morality' based on claims about freedom: a decision to promote some at least of the traditional virtues: being in bad faith since no religious or metaphysical basis for virtues can be established. For those drawn to this option the key scripture will be the Mill not of *Utilitarianism*, but of *On Liberty*.

F. J. Stephen, an admirer of Mill in his younger days, based his objection to 'transcendental utilitarianism' on Mill's over-optimistic estimate of human nature. In reacting against Bentham's more or less Hobbesian account of motivation Mill had slipped into wishful thinking; hence his defence of liberty and equality is too absolute, or so Stephen argued in *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873). The same mistake, according to Stephen, can be recognized in Mill's attitude to coercion. For although Mill wanted to promote freedom of speech and a freer society, he was opposed to almost any kind of state interference to promote these goals. The state's part was to repeal hindrances to the freedom which self-development requires: thus Parliament should pass a married woman's property act to allow women greater self-determination, hence a greater opportunity for betterment.

Nor was Stephen the only critic to hold that Mill's concept of freedom was too negative, too tied to removing barriers, in the expectation that those 'freed' would take full advantage of their opportunities, rather than requiring the state actively to promote a society in which individuals are impelled to better themselves, whether or not they explicitly give consent. After Mill's death similar concerns were voiced by T. H. Green and other 'British Idealists' who supposed that his fear of illiberal social pressure had carried him too far, and that in his (Benthamite) emphasis on man as a free individual he had underestimated the importance of man as a social animal. Indeed Green went further, arguing against Mill (in a re-emergent Augustinian vein) that freedom 'rightly understood' is 'a positive power or

in precisely the same circumstances; *or* it is consistent with determinism because it is necessary and sufficient for an act to be free that the person did it and wanted to do it, even though there exists in principle a causally sufficient explanation of what was done. The latter position looks rather like a secular version of Augustine's account of man as a moral agent after the fall: he does evil and wants to do it, but does it freely. Of course, for Augustine such 'freedom' is delusory, being neither the freedom of the saints nor even that of unfallen Adam.

capacity of doing something worth doing or enjoying, and … something which we do or enjoy in common with others'.[22]

Although in modern jargon Mill should be viewed as a perfectionist, in that we should be brought by the removal of social and political constraints to perfect ourselves, this self-improvement (contrary to the view of more revolutionary contemporaries like Marx) should be undertaken by the freed individual himself; hence Stephen's accusation of an excessive optimism about human nature. Mill's view was that – self-defence apart – coercion should normally be applied only to prevent others being harmed, though he certainly held that 'harm' is not be understood with reference to the accepted customs of an individual society, but rather that it is the duty of the liberal utilitarian to reduce it wherever found, cultural considerations being largely irrelevant: propriety was stifling in England and America, but also more obvious harms (such as widow burning) should be challenged by a paternalist government elsewhere. Mill was no cultural relativist, and over such extreme abuses his aversion to force at times gives way.[23]

Virtues, with their built-in responsibilities and rights, are virtues of individuals – of individual persons – but who should count as a person, and to what extent? That question –one of the most controverted in contemporary ethics – had already been posed in some or other religious variant in the Augustinian, indeed the pre-Augustinian vision of human nature under the Christian God. Are slaves, for example – or women – persons in the required sense – or in any sense? Among early Christians – I leave Muslims aside whose answer to similar questions was, and is, less uncertain – there was lively dispute, for example, as to whether women were, or to what degree were, created in the image of God, though it was universally allowed that they could obtain the required status in the course of a good life and might not even need to be resurrected as males.[24] As for slaves, we need only recall once more that though the Founding Fathers of the United States (almost all Christians of whatever stripe) talked much of the rights of man – to liberty or to happiness – they were slave-owners to a man, as were most of those Spanish *conquistadores* whose un-Christian vision of an uncommon humanity had earlier been castigated – largely in vain – by Las Casas and Vitoria. During the nineteenth century such disputes came to a head, with obvious repercussions about whose rights,

[22] Green (1897: 199).
[23] For good discussion see Ryan (1998: 497–540, esp. 522–4).
[24] For detailed discussion see Rist (2008a: chapter 1).

goods or preferences should be maximized and, more generally, whose *will* should be viewed either as that of a person with individual dignity and a certain autonomy – whether or not owed to God – or as an organic part of a General Will or some other ideological and totalitarian whole governed by the laws of sociopolitical, economic, psychological or biological determinism.

That being the case, we can understand why when Mill – already notorious for promoting women's rights, above all the right to vote – published *The Subjection of Women* (1869), his reputation began to disintegrate.[25] We can, however, recognize that in *The Subjection of Women* the tension between his utilitarianism and his 'liberalism' is – to an extent – relieved. For there only *appear* to be two very different approaches in the book: that through utility and that through justice and hence rights. Mill challenges the notion that marriage should be considered a private matter without reference to the 'male' world of politics; on the contrary, he insists, it is precisely because the political and social world and its conventions dominate the world of private relations that seriously corrupt practices survive: thus the injustices women experienced in the stifling conventionalism of Victorian Britain are in no small measure caused by the laws regulating marriage. In Mill's understanding, women were always at the mercy of some man; physical abuse was frequent; they were kept out of the public square so far as possible, often because they were said to be weaker vessels or simply unfitted for activities outside the home. As an empiricist Mill repeatedly urged that speculation about what women could or could not do in public life, in the arts and the professions, was idle, since they had never been given the opportunity to show their capabilities (*CW* XXI: 314). Even in their then deformed condition they might – and in some cases did – surprise us.

In Mill's view contemporary arrangements were not only demeaning to women, keeping them in a state little short of chattel slavery (*CW* XXI: 284) – and as all too often 'the personal body-servant of a despot' (*CW* XXI: 285) – but the institution of marriage as a structure based on domination and unavoidable submission not only abused the women but

[25] Shanley (1998) provides a useful summary of Mill's views and a good introduction to the voluminous modern discussion. Critics roughly fall into two groups: those who applaud Mill's efforts to improve the position of women and those who attack him (with varying degrees of anger) for failing to condemn the basic division of labour between men and women (as traditionally understood) which Mill more or less left unchallenged. A few (perhaps more perceptively) notice his blindness to the obviously major consideration of intimate sexual relations and what he called the 'animal instinct'.

corrupted the men, who thus became wilful, arrogant self-worshippers unable to grow as individuals since accustomed to living as masters rather than free persons in a free society (*CW* 21: 293; cf. XIX: 455).[26] To prevent which damage Mill recommends that marriage be reconstructed as a contract between equals through whose friendship the parties themselves and the wider society (beginning with their wider families and children) can develop and flourish (*CW* XXI: 334). Thus he had two basic arguments for ending the subjection of women: first that it is unjust in that it inhibits, indeed regularly prevents, half the human race from developing their native capacities. Like the men also perverted by the institution of Victorian marriage, women have in justice the 'right' to a better deal, such a right being understood as referring to a capacity demanded not only by justice but by utility, since the injustice to which they (and indirectly their men) are subject reduces the sum of social flourishing and therefore must be condemned by any project aimed at maximizing overall human good (*CW* XXI: 336). In this case considerations of *prima facie* justice and the maximizing of human good coincide, though the former is ultimately to be defended as promoting the latter.

Clearly these, in Mill's day, were radical ideas, and even many 'liberals' thought he had gone too far. Stephen considered some of the implications (such as the possibility of female military service: *CW* XXI: 270) so absurd that argument against such folly was pointless.[27] Many today think Mill did not go far enough, being still uncertain about divorce and failing to tackle the assumptions of gender roles.[28] More interesting, perhaps, are the targets of Mill's attack. We have already identified his hostility to the stuffy conventionalism of his day, and in the case of marriage regulations he clearly thought that such unexamined conventions were reinforced by traditional Christianity, not least in its Calvinist form. Hence his reckless and over-generalized remarks in which he contrasts Christian 'self-abnegation' with 'pagan' self-assertion (*On Liberty CW* 18: 254): which Nietzsche-like stance might cause us to wonder which pagans he had in mind – not only more generally but also in his attitude to the subjection of women. While clearly Aristotle's hostility to 'humility' in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (and his commendation of the great-souled man) were ever in his mind, yet noting as we have his sympathy with Plato, we may wonder whether in thinking

[26] Shanley interestingly compares Mill's comments on the husband-as-master with Hegel's account of the false consciousness acquired by a master in relating to his slaves (Shanley 1998: 411).

[27] *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* 194.

[28] See the evidence cited by Shanley (1988: 414). For gender roles see *CW* XXI: 298 and for objections especially Annas (1977: 179–94).

of the disutility of Victorian conventions about women, he remembered the grounds of Plato's similarly based approach (How absurd to waste all that female talent!) in the *Republic* and elsewhere. Indeed the reader of the *Laws* can recognize Plato's complaint about how hard it is to overcome convention (respectable women are even unwilling to dine with men) in Mill's similar frustration about the hostility his views on female subjection had aroused. He was not, however, surprised.

Nineteenth-century and more contemporary complaints about Mill's proposals seem to indicate a concern similar to that voiced against Plato's position. Margaret Oliphant thought that Mill was trying to assimilate women to men, ignoring what she saw as radical psychological differences. For Oliphant (writing anonymously) women are different from men but that difference should not be misinterpreted as indicating inferiority.[29] In a curiously similar vein more recently Christine di Stefano has argued (among other objections) that: 'In Mill's hands, women are dealt with in the terms of exceptional and masculine individualism.… Women must be disembodied, desexed, degendered, and made over into the image of middle-class and upper-class men if they are to benefit from the promises of rational liberalism.'[30] Certainly they might seem to be desexed (as well as degendered) since Mill, as we have noted, has little understanding of ordinary (not to say Platonic) eroticism. Sexual activity, consensual and non-consensual, he tends to dismiss as an unfortunate animal instinct or function (*CW* XXI: 285; cf. III: 766 from *The Principles of Political Economy*) and the marital friendship that he envisaged – novel indeed though the concept was – would appear to be largely free of it: precisely part of the objection raised by Margaret Oliphant. Yet both Oliphant and Di Stefano point to a similar and more radical difficulty with Mill's position insofar as he tends towards sympathy with those who since Rousseau have wanted to 'create' a New Humanity. For while Mill's castigation of the ill effects of his society seems entirely justified, he easily slips into undefended assumptions about human – male and female – biological and therefore psychological nature.

Where Mill and Plato concur, surprisingly perhaps, is in the argument about utility: both argue not only that women are not allowed to develop

[29] Oliphant (1969). I owe this reference to Nicholson (1998: 474). According to Oliphant, Mill's views are only applicable to 'the class of highly cultivated, able, mature, unmarried women who have never themselves undergone the natural experiences of their sex … They are, without doubt, intellectually superior to the ordinary mass of women, and still more certainly are much more like men'. Plato would have understood this observation.

[30] Di Stefano (1991: 176).

their mental (and, for Plato, physical) capacities as they should, but that this wastage is also socially deleterious. The conventional view of women, that is, whether in the Athens of Plato or in Victorian Britain, leads to silly and avoidable consequences at both the public and private levels. If Oliphant and Di Stefano are right, however, Mill, perhaps by design, is paying the same kind of price as Plato is happy to pay as a result of biological ignorance. For it seems that Mill's ideal couple is androgynous, that perfect women and perfect men are more or less identical – except of course in the way they carry out their 'animal function', which in any case Mill tries to play down. As he put it in a letter to Carlyle, 'the highest masculine and the highest feminine' characters can hardly be distinguished.[31]

Plato's position is in this way comparable to Mill's but also very significantly different. He certainly agrees that in their intelligence philosopher-queens are more or less a match for the kings; that is because he holds that sexual differences are strictly bodily (for which Aristotle properly reproved him). If reproductive activities can be, as it were, hived off, then men and women can both engage in all duties of public life. But the philosopher-queens (not to speak of the philosopher-kings) are not androgynous; they are attracted to their male associates sexually – they practise athletics naked – and they will retain their sexual desires, quite properly, long after they have retired from public duties. There is nothing improper about the 'animal function' and its suppression (as distinct from its disciplining) is no part of the training of the governing class. Their friendship for one another is compatible with erotic desires and neither is it an alternative to the erotic love of the Good.

Mill's account of marital friendship would appear to tell against his ideal human being too much of an individualist, though a certain tension between personal and public goods remains unresolved. What is clear is that friendship for Mill – a distant secular descendant of friendship as lauded by Aelred of Rievaulx – is to be viewed as a replacement for a sublimated erotic love, not as its partner. And Mill's version, being secular, has of necessity become further emasculated, inasmuch as it is removed from all contact with that tradition of erotic love for the divine that goes back to Plato and received its most convincing presentation in Augustine. To conclude, then, Mill offers us a 'free' individual, able to choose how best he may flourish and from whom the 'surd-factor' has been erased. His hoped-for New Man (and New Woman) is neither totalitarian nor

[31] The letter (*CW* XII: 184) is cited by Shanley (1998: 413) who discusses Mill's notion of the androgynous personality, citing Urbinati (1991: 626–48).

practically amoral (whether or not unjustifiably claimed as 'virtuous'). He and she can choose between moral and immoral alternatives, thus securing in their autonomous persons what advocates of the General Will, or other revolutionary theorists, claim can only be achieved through a radical (and usually forcible) remodelling of human nature and the moral and social world in which we live. Their only problem is whether they are any more than theoretical realities, though part of their future was to be remodelled into the self-absorbed – and banal – universe of G. E. Moore, as of the private, middle-class friendships of the Bloomsbury group and their self-worshipping literary successors.

For present purposes there is no need to linger over Hegel (or the various Hegels), though in at least two respects he is a significant factor in the development of many more recently secularized accounts of freedom; indeed he may be viewed as one of the variegated heirs of the deists and thus as one of the players in the final act of the drama of Reformation (as distinct from contemporary revivalist) Protestantism.

Hegel both resembles and differs from Kant, whom he resembles in supposing that morality and moral obligation can be found and justified within an ultimately immanent world of practical reasoning, while in redefining it he harks back to the older 'metaphysical' mode of Leibniz and Spinoza. Hegel's 'idealism' (as opposed to that of successors such as Fichte) attempts to blend Kant's subjectivist turn with something of a more traditional metaphysics, reconciling 'spirit' and matter. He proposes Absolute Spirit, yet that Spirit is read (as with the ancient Stoics and Spinoza) pantheistically insofar as it is actualized in the material universe: a resolution radically un-Kantian. Indeed for Hegel, as for the Stoics, it is difficult to understand whether his seeming pantheism is to be thought of as a materialism (assuredly not the materialism of post-Cartesian science) or better as a variety of 'vitalism' wherein the distinction between mind and matter is elided. Whatever the case, the subjective tendencies which Kant tried vainly to defuse (but in which Fichte rejoiced) are renewed and strengthened in Hegel *malgré soi* – and they later helped generate work on the nature of consciousness by which they themselves might have been 'overcome' by those of his phenomenological descendants who, investigating appearances, insisted that appearance itself is a part of reality. And Hegel's inadequate treatment of the 'objective' was to remain part of the source material of more contemporary moral constructivists, not only insofar as the Hegelian vision substitutes the community for the transcendental, but in the impetus to push the lurking subjectivism to a more

logical conclusion: especially in Feuerbach's account of religion, to be examined in the next chapter.

It is, however, the 'communitarian' and historicist aspects of Hegel's thought which bear immediately on our present moral and hence political situation: in particular his account of 'society' – as distinct from either individuals or governments viewed as 'states', and *a fortiori* detached from any traditionally transcendental 'beyond'. Hegel viewed his 'system' as summing up and transcending the entire history of philosophy, especially the period from Descartes to Kant: a summary he himself summarized at the end of his *History of Philosophy* in the claim that 'the latest philosophy is the outcome of all those which went before it; nothing is lost, all the principles are preserved. This concrete idea is the result of the efforts of the human mind through nearly 2500 years … of its most serious effort to objectify and recognize itself'. This megalomaniac declaration is rammed home with a lame hexameter aping a well-known line of a great poet: *Tantae molis erat seipsam cognoscere mentem*. A more immediate concern is that Hegel's 'system' took the remarkable and pregnant form of seeing the pantheist spirit enshrined in actual historical societies, above all in contemporary Prussia. In this regard he is a precursor of the more toxic views of Heidegger.

The kind of society Hegel envisaged was certainly different from that later desiderated by Marx or – by implication – by Nietzsche. Indeed these later thinkers – as well as Feuerbach and others – were products of a revolt not only against the Christian God and all his works which broke out in the Germany of the 1840s, but also against the Hegelian synthesis of Christianity and post-Cartesian rationalism, viewed as excessively 'abstract' and devoid of genuinely social, political or economic foundations. For after an early flirtation in the Jena writings with love (despite Kant) as the basis on which society could be built, Hegel's eventual 'metapolitics' – an account of the logical preconditions of political philosophy – moved almost exclusively in the abstract world of individual, society and state. Already in the third part of an unpublished text (*The Third Jena System, Philosophy of Spirit*, apparently composed in 1805–6), Hegel derives an individual's personal consciousness of his existence (*Dasein*) not from any being for another as in love but from knowing the universal will as his own particular will in a way which cannot but appear as a more abstract version of Rousseau's account of the required harmonization of our own will to the General Will, though the purposes to which Hegel was to put his universal will were to prove very different from those of Rousseau's more earth-bound project. And Hegel is now – predictably – thinking not about love but about willing as such.

Hegel's historicism and especially his historicist account of freedom (mocked by Russell as the right to obey the police) point us directly or by clear implication towards four major figures of the post-Hegelian world very relevant in comparable but radically different ways to our general reflections on the varieties of 'freedom', or to its disappearance, in our own society: Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud will be discussed here in a sequence not chronological but perhaps more informative for understanding the way 'we' have come. Heidegger, to whom I have already alluded as a latter-day devotee of Hegel's concretization of Spirit in a particular society, we must leave aside until we have treated of problems of philosophical deception.

In contrast to Heidegger's political theses, Darwin, Marx and Freud are supposed at least to have given converging reasons for the claim that all our freedoms – particularly our social and political freedoms – are illusory. Needless to say, the proposals they made may or may not be compatible with one another; nor may the conclusions they drew necessarily follow from the facts and arguments they adduced. But, as we shall see, whatever their intentions, and irrespective of the truth or falsity of their claims, the effect of their work has been further to diminish the status of man and his 'freedom', thus paving the way for Nietzsche (and updated Nietzscheans among postmodernists) finally to erase any objective ideas of human value and human dignity under God as understood since the time of Augustine (or before), and to repackage them as the subjection of man to blind forces which (as Nietzsche himself saw clearly) can – and perhaps should – lead to the worship of the raw power of the will: brazen and blatant in the superman; despicably concealed under a resentful hypocrisy and morality of the herd in the rest of us.

It is not difficult to understand why Nietzsche thought that the Callicles of Plato's *Gorgias* was in the right and Socrates pathetically wrong. If not in the freedom of libertarian choice, then with the worship of raw power (with or without the 'dissolution' of the self in some form of determinism, physical, biological or other), we have almost reached the end of the road from Augustine we have been following. In their subordination of the individual will to prior determining forces, Darwin, Marx and Freud, in their different ways, can thus be read as building on Hegel's subordination of the individual's freedom to that of the Spirit working through society, as also as reviving Rousseau's earlier account of the desirable surrender to the General Will. In such a revival we shall also recognize more of the moral and sometimes political consequences, immediate or threatened, of the assumed lordship of the general over the particular that we noted in

the sequence from Rousseau to the Jacobins of late eighteenth-century France. We shall also discover the impersonal (indeed increasingly anti-personal) alternative our post-Christian society now offers to individualist preference satisfaction.

As is notorious, Darwin's claim, both in the *Origin of Species* (1859) and the *Descent of Man* (1871), is that man has evolved through the process he called 'natural selection'. Writing before the development of modern genetics, his theorizing should in the first instance be kept separate from that of neo-Darwinians, who hold (probably correctly) that more recent scientific developments have borne out the fundamental rightness of his original claims. Even so, those claims have been grossly over-extended: the theory of natural selection purports to explain developments *among* living and reproducing organisms and can logically have nothing to say about the origin of life itself (let alone of conscious life).[32] It should further be remembered that whether or not Darwin was right in supposing that various human characteristics have arisen as a result of natural selection, he has advanced no argument – nor indeed could he have – that *all* human characteristics arose in this way.[33] Rather, he treats of the urge in the individual members of a species to survive and reproduce, so that the survival or elimination of species (or races) are side effects of the behaviour of the individual members of the group: thus strong individuals promote the survival of the species not only (of course) by eliminating rivals, but also by contributing to the species' remaining biologically sound. Darwin also tended to identify evolution with improvement, which may seem reasonable if referred to lower and higher life forms in subhuman species (bacteria ending up as lions) but raises obvious problems in relation to human beings if it is supposed that we too, as individuals at least, should continue to act (but by now consciously) in accordance with the principle that the stronger survives and the weaker goes to the wall: the very principle approved in Darwinism, as we shall see, by Nietzsche, and, in a different way, by Marx.

There are good reasons to think that the process of evolution in its pre-human stages may have come to an end with mankind as we now know

[32] See the comments of Haldane (2013b: 9). Haldane draws attention to a notorious recent work of Nagel (2012). He generously omits to observe that the consternation among the theophobic community over Nagel's 'treason' has been fascinating, refreshing and even delightful.

[33] For criticism see O'Hear (1997), Dupré (2001) and Smith (2003: 33–43). O'Hear focuses his criticism on human self-consciousness, Smith both on the extension of altruism beyond the family circle and on the fact that in any case claims about morality are not limited to claims about altruism.

ourselves. Not only is the history of mankind in our present evolved state so relatively brief that it would be hard to identify the nature of changes in individual cases over such a tiny fragment of time, but of more importance, the arrival in humans of reason, and especially of self-awareness, means that somehow or other we have attained the possibility of evolving or not as we decide. Many of our actions, such as support for weak and handicapped members, would seem to fly in the face of the Darwinian principle that the strong survive. From a strictly Darwinian perspective it would seem that we have decided, in many cases, to act against the biological determinism which, in his view, governed our pre-history.

Darwin normally implies that all our characteristics, including morality, can be explained in terms of biological necessity – that is, according to populist neo-Darwinians, by our 'selfish' genes – but in this he is not entirely consistent, sometimes drawing attention to the to him self-evident requirement that our instincts themselves develop 'by the aid of reason, instruction, and the love or fear of God'[34] – though perhaps more especially through what can appear to be 'biologically' inhibiting feelings of shame. Nevertheless, the overall effect of his writings has been to encourage those in the nature-nurture debate to come down heavily on the side of nature, seen as determinator of instincts.

Leaving that aside, Darwin's and Darwinians' attempts to derive morality in general and moral *obligation* in particular from the processes of natural (later genetic) selection run into seemingly insuperable logical difficulties, even apart from the fact that any biological determinism apparently relieves us of responsibility for our actions – unless, that is, we can control it. If natural selection is to be read as a theory about individuals, and only indirectly about species, we may wonder how – biologically – anything like genuine (as distinct from de facto) altruism could have developed in any predetermined or predeterminable fashion from prehuman life forms. The same sort of point can be made about aesthetics and other human activities: for just as animals from which we may in some way derive have no ability to make universal moral judgements, neither can they make aesthetic ones, based as these are on a degree of reflection and not merely on instinctual reactions. And a similar point can be made about truth-seeking: knowing the truth might be far from helpful

[34] *Descent of Man* (2nd edition 1888) 113. Darwin himself in later life was neither a believer nor an unbeliever, preferring to call himself, by T. H. Huxley's newly coined word, an 'agnostic'. Nevertheless, one of the immediate effects of his work (and that of others) was to elicit during the Victorian age (often among ex-clergy) the idea that atheism is the necessary conclusion, indeed the moral obligation, of the brave and honest man; for comment see Taylor (1989: 404).

(either for the individual or for the human race) if survival is what it is all about; it might indeed subvert the whole process, since – even if not in earlier ages – in the present world our survival looks more likely if we lacked much of the 'hard' knowledge we now possess.

Darwin attended especially to our instincts for sexual love and to maternal love of the newborn – and in his view the near universal ruling out of incestuous relations may indicate an 'instinctual' recognition that children born of such relationships are more likely to be biologically weak. He also discussed 'kin-selection', and it may be the case that our instincts can account for something of our love of family and clan, who, in modern parlance, share our gene pool. Yet while such 'biological' theories might explain loyalty and concern for others within a small society in which all may be more or less related, they would not support a wider benevolence, but rather, as with the weak and handicapped, ought to militate against it. Altruists should tend to die out, especially if willing to sacrifice their lives or remain celibate for a 'higher' purpose. And contrary to the 'desires' of our genes, we should notice a tendency among humans to seek *unlike* partners (at least where society permits); we are fascinated with the 'other'.

More fundamentally, perhaps, 'pure' Darwinism might seem to destroy any assumption that man has a fixed nature – as it certainly does if 'no fixed nature' implies that we are constantly and irresistibly altered by factors entirely *outside* our control: that is, if we have nothing recognizable as free will whatsoever. In that case, as we have no morality, so we have no 'self' (not even a potential self): we are simply animals – and uniquely deluded animals at that – of no more 'worth' than any other animal. But the advent of reason and self-awareness (to such degree as we possess it) implies that what is fixed is an apparent at least limited ability to determine – not merely to accept – parts of our own future: and specifically that will involve rejecting some of our biological instincts in favour of a less 'selfish', more 'moral' existence in which the advent of reason allows us to share. For Darwinism in its 'pure' form would seem to demand that (as Hume put it) reason is the slave of the passions: yet the mere ability to reflect on those passions shows at the very least that such a slavish existence is no necessity. We are still apparently capable of a certain (though no absolute) measure of Kantian autonomy.

Granted, however, the initial plausibility of natural selection (as since carried forward in genetics), it would appear that Darwinians (and at times Darwin himself) have allowed themselves to be led both into even menacing conclusions about the inevitability – and indeed the rightness – of what Herbert Spencer denoted the 'survival of the fittest' – whether

individually or as species or races, and – more sadly – into misusing genuine discoveries about the development and attainment of the human species to support a simplistic account of our human condition and its discontents. As we shall see, similar objections can be made to the claims of both Marx and Freud, while – not least because of his over-estimate of the moral significance of Darwinian discoveries (accompanied by the 'logic' of his anti-Christianity) – Nietzsche proclaimed what he held to be the 'real' freedom of heroic man, as opposed to the various forms of Platonic, Christian and Kantian freedoms I have discussed.

For there is a potentially unedifying aspect of Darwin's undeveloped ideas, the nastiness of which Darwin himself – as a man of his own time and place – probably underestimated but which Nietzsche – though no commonplace racist – could approve insofar as it might enable us to distinguish between inferior and superior specimens within the human race as a whole. I have already noted problems that arise when Darwin's survival of species by the processes of natural selection is applied to the survival or development of the *human* species. As I have also noted, he fails to explain the phenomenon of altruism: indeed at times appears to think that what is promoted as 'social Darwinism' would be no more than the use by human beings of their intelligence to accelerate what is in any case an inevitable purification of the human species.

In one of his letters Darwin writes as follows:[35] 'Looking at the world at no very distant date … An endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the higher civilized races throughout the world'. This might be read as merely sad prophecy, as an observation that such 'lower races' would not be able to survive – as with the decimation of native peoples in Australia or the United States. But in a Darwinian context the language of 'lower' and 'more civilized' suggests more: that the more 'civilized' have some sort of assured future which the 'lower' lack. That might point if not to genocide, at least to a co-operation of the 'higher' and more rational members of society with the evolutionary process by the eugenic breeding of human beings: as was indeed envisaged and promoted by Darwinians such as Marie Stopes (and Bernard Shaw) in the early twentieth century.[36] For if the weeding out of the inferior is in any event inevitable, and we ourselves are part of the evolutionary process, then it can seem appropriate to use our mental capacities to harmonize ourselves

[35] *Darwin's Letters*, ed. F. Darwin (London 1870), cited by Trigg (1988: 119).

[36] My attention was drawn to Shaw's concern with the possible need for death chambers for the 'mentally or physically challenged' by Young (2013: 228): liberal totalitarianism is already in sight; for political Darwinism see further Sewell (2009).

with our patent destiny and with the destiny of the human race: so more thoughtful Nazis might have concluded. Of course, if such inconvenient fatalism is precisely *avoidable* within an evolutionary schema, the process of natural selection can be accepted without our having to admit the kind of moral imperative to which such as Marie Stopes appealed – not least in their attitude towards 'negroes'. Indeed if fatalism is *avoidable*, there is no logical reason not to avoid it.

But Marie Stopes has found successors, for evolutionary biology by now can encourage not only the weeding out of inadequate specimens, but in so doing aim at a 'transhumanity', as is now not infrequently urged: by taking upon ourselves the control of the evolutionary engine and aspiring to replace *homo sapiens* by a more 'advanced' version of ourselves. Genetic manipulation thus appears to open up the possibility of leaving our present humanity as a fossil from the past as we 'embrace the Will to Evolve beyond our human-all-too-human condition'.[37] The concept is recognizably Nietzschean: a will to advance or rather to destroy the human race in favour of something 'all-too-human' writ larger? Does it point to a higher humanity or to a holocaust of humanity beyond the instrumental holocausts it envisages in its pathway?

Similar sentiments – at least pointing in a similar direction – are emanating from other scientistic sources: thus, building on the 'results' of the New Biology and projecting those results in a theoretically cosmic frame, physicist Steven Weinberg tells us that 'living creatures just are very complicated physico-chemical mechanisms', while Stephen Hawking refers to the human race as 'just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet' and Daniel Dennett, predicting coming advances in artificial intelligence, insists that 'we must give up our awe of living things'. Were such reductionist sentiments – often flagged by 'just are' – true, they could only condone and encourage atrocities: If that's what we are, why not – especially if you like that sort of thing or perhaps secretly hate yourself and your condition? And though wholly unjustified, they can be attractive to the half educated and the philistine.[38]

[37] So Young (2006: 45), cited by Gregory (2012: 231).

[38] For details (and citations) see Smith (2010: 187–207). Smith draws attention to the dire and serious warnings against such dogmatic and irresponsible anti-personalism enunciated by J. Vining (especially in *The Song Sparrow and the Child*); cf. my earlier remarks (2008a: 299–302). Hawking seems peculiarly adept at scientistic illogicality: perhaps my favourite example (from *The Grand Design*, also cited by Haldane, is 'because there is a law of gravity, the Universe can and will create itself from nothing' (Haldane 2013b: 17). It is hard to find better proof that a major cultural project of the liberal university is to develop – remember Plato's *Gorgias* – the knack of a rationalizing self-justification.

Darwinism is of itself a scientific hypothesis, like all such hypotheses susceptible of being well or ill used, and the temptation to use it ill has often proved irresistible: Hitler's genocidal sub-Darwinian 'social Darwinism' evinces a disturbing likeness to Marie Stopes' less immediate breeding projects. Though attracting different kinds of unthinking individuals, all such attempts to follow or speed up the inevitable course of historical evolution in order to generate new and perfect human (or superhuman) specimens share a certain ground: we are now not only the masters but long to be the creators – of ourselves and of others. As J. Addington Symonds put it in a hymn – often favoured in 'Christian' schools as proposing an heroic challenge: 'These things shall be: a loftier race/ than ere the world hath known shall rise.' God is mentioned twice in the poem but rather as a decorative addition to a hymn to man: Nietzsche (or Darwin) might as well be invoked.

I learned that a century ago a professor of medicine in Aberdeen had inscribed on his tombstone the boast that he 'had changed the genetic patterns of the North-East of Scotland' – by aborting the indigent; it is now the proud claim of the government of Denmark that it has rid its country of Down's syndrome children[39] – in nature an appreciable proportion of humankind; as I write, a bill is before the Belgian Parliament to eliminate defective children (obviously without their consent) well after birth.

If Darwin appeared to have discredited man's fixed nature or essence, Karl Marx was offering a variant: it is not that we have no nature, but that our nature has been produced by determinisms of the past and will be radically changed by determinisms of the future. And as with Darwinism, we can cooperate with those determinisms to produce the impending New Man. Thus where Darwin saw the key to our nature (or 'nature') in biology, Marx rejected the absolute power of the biological and saw it in economic determinism, while claiming that Darwin's account of natural selection provided scientific backup for his theory of class conflict as the engine of the development of the human race from capitalism towards communism.[40] With him, then, we have an apparent over-estimate of 'nurture', that is of the effects of the economic situations in which we find ourselves. Like the Jacobins, Marx insisted on the necessity of revolution to secure what he considered an honourable end – thus dissolving

[39] A more sanitized account of Darwin and Darwinism, at least insofar as his work affects the relationship between science and religion, is to be found in a number of essays by McMullin: see in particular 2011: 291–316; for discussion Deltete (2012: 321–30) and Allen (2012: 331–42).

[40] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (London 1934) 125.

the pusillanimity of Rousseau and carrying the spirit of Jacobinism further than Robespierre and St-Just, insofar as while these still held to the necessity of private property, Marx and Engels held abolition (probably ultimately to include the family viewed as private property) to be a moral essential if the ideal (communist) state is to be achieved. Even Plato's Thrasymachus had not asserted that for the power of the rulers – read the communist 'vanguard' – to be complete, the distinction between public and private has to be erased.[41]

Marx certainly knew what he hated: the oppression and 'alienation' of the poor – especially of the rootless proletariat generated by the Industrial Revolution. Hence he supposed not only that a communist revolution was inevitable by the laws of history – his historicism, however radically adapted, was still hugely indebted to Hegel – but that it would come to pass in heavily industrial states like Britain, Germany or France. 'Alienation' – another Hegelian idea – had warped the character of both the oppressed and the oppressors – we have already noted the parallel with Mill on the effects of the subjection of women – which latter, though guilty, were themselves social products. If the present unjust society could be destroyed and a communist state established, then all left alive would be free. The caveat is essential because, though themselves victims, the bosses are irredeemable, indeed deserve to be hated. The 'muck of ages' can only be cleansed by force; mere reformers merely prolong the evil they claim to reform: hence Marx hoped that the Indian Mutiny would be brutally suppressed because in an ensuing mass reaction would reside hope for the successful overthrow of the oppressors.

In light of my more general concerns, the notion of alienation needs further scrutiny. Alienation how and – since the word implies it – from what, we might ask. Certainly not in conscious loss of a happy state: the victims of capitalism are the heirs of the victims of feudalism, and like the latter do not know from what they are alienated since, never having been in any other condition, they have had no opportunity to understand that some future condition could be better. They have 'nothing to lose but their chains'; but what have they to gain? Their attitudes, that is, are purely negative; they are simply unhappy with what they have. Neither is it a matter of the deprivation of rights, for like Bentham Marx has no time for them. Rights talk encourages delusions about politics as such being the agent of history, while history in fact runs collectively along strictly economic lines.

[41] For comment on the nature and incompleteness of Thrasymachus' position see Rist (2004*:* 110–18 and now more contextually 2012b: 110–19).

In an early essay on the Jewish question (1843) Marx observed that 'None of the supposed rights of man go beyond the egoistic man'.

In Marx's notion of alienation, there is – perhaps surprisingly – a certain parallel with the later Heideggerian concept of *angst*, though that has a very different, even possibly metaphysical resonance. It is sometimes said that Marxist 'alienation' is a secular version of what Christians regard as the effect of original sin – and there may be some truth in that, at least genealogically. But original sin is more specific than a mere dissatisfaction, deriving as it does from disobedience and being worked out in immorality. Alienation carries no necessary value judgement, beyond that it is repudiated: Marx knows what he hates and concludes that the building up of resentment is the path to human progress.

Marx knew what must go, and how it must go; what is much less clear is what he could expect for the future. In anticipating the overthrow of capitalism – indeed of virtually all the culture of past societies – he expected to find a 'freedom' that looks purely negative. He certainly hoped that violent upheaval would encourage in the revolutionary a spirit of self-sacrifice (as later instantiated by the Soviet ideal of the Stakhanovite), but he offers no reason why such an outcome is at all likely. Apart from the all-consuming élan of revolutionary violence – as the French Revolution had shown – Marx appears to have overlooked (inter alia) the nature of those who were to run the new society: the 'New Men', or rather the new state bureaucrats. He appears to have been shielded from suspecting that new bureaucrats might look like the old exploiters writ large by his belief that his revolution would radically change human nature for the better – and here a Darwinian would object that he was trying to downplay observable facts about the nature of human beings, or at least of human practices, as they had evolved thus far: or at least that he was grossly underestimating the difficulty of the task ahead of him.

This much at least was understood by Chairman Mao: communist officials (apart, of course, from himself) could never be adequately purified from bourgeois habits, so the only solution must be perpetual revolution and perpetual purge. But that is to defeat Marx's original aim of a happy (as well as a 'free') society where no-one would need (or could be allowed) to protest, because protest against perfection would be a mark of degeneracy: only in comic songs could one call angels out on strike![42] Indeed for Mao the happy society might seem to tail off as an infinite regress.

[42] The reference is to a student song of my youth: 'Harry [Pollitt] was a bolshie/ he was one of Lenin's lads/ until he was a-murdered by/ reactionary cads// … They put him in the choir/ The hymns he

Even if we can compel people to be 'free', they will apparently always tend to re-assume those very chains which in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) Marx and Engels had so vigorously urged be cast off.

Yet although Marx and Marxists failed to demonstrate their economic theory with its massive reductionism in the account of human nature, yet Marx was right to emphasize economic factors in the development of human societies: thus rearranging some of the more influential ideas of Adam Smith, founder of modern economic theory, whose account of the 'hidden hand' of market forces and their influence on social well-being shares many of Marx's oversimplifications. It seems we must conclude that all ideological accounts of human nature are necessarily reductionist; at least it would seem that neither (neo)-Darwinian biology nor any variety of economic theory yet devised can by itself either explain or generate any possible freedom or any intelligible route to the general happiness it claims to promote. In their failure to conclude that individual freedom must reasonably give way to acceptance of biological or economic determinism – in their reduction of freedom to an alignment of the self with such processes – they can be seen to demonstrate that impersonal solutions to the problem of freedom are no more viable than their religious or 'enlightened' precursors and (at least in Marx's case) are disastrously committed to the unleashing of those deliberately random brutalities judged necessary for the reconstruction of the old bourgeois sinner as the New Man. But if after Christianity there are no one-size-fits-all keys to paradise to be found, what are we to conclude? Perhaps that the one remaining solution to the crisis born of the Enlightenment – a solution predictable from within Enlightenment thinking itself – is the return to barbarism.

That Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was the son and grandson of Lutheran pastors appears to have encouraged his later extreme hostility to Christianity. While still very young he was much impressed (not uncritically, and the criticism grew ever stronger with time) by the theological writings of David Strauss, especially *Das Leben Jesu* (1835) – later (1846) translated into English by Marian Evans = George Eliot, and to bring a torrent of abuse on both author and translator.[43] Nietzsche's determined

did not like/ so he organized the angels/ and brought them out on strike. //They brought him up for trial/ before the Holy Ghost/ for spreading disaffection/ among the heavenly host' etc.

[43] In discussing Nietzsche I am less concerned with the details of his thought, still less with its development; my aim is to see him as part of a movement of his time and in particular to think of him less in terms of his intentions than of his effects. For a chronological account of the development of his thought see Kaufmann (1974).

distinction between Christ and Christianity (which he thinks largely due to Paul who – *more Luterano* – had substituted justification by faith for the precept to live a Christ-like life) may also have been encouraged by attention to the stories (and arguably lies) of the early Church about their Founder, as well as about themselves and their beliefs. Even late in life Nietzsche was prepared to write that there was only one Christian and he had died on the cross (*Anti-Christ* 39); the life of Jesus, he implied, had little connection with contemporary, superficially bourgeois Christianity. Indeed, his account of Jesus may owe as much to Dostoievski's novels – especially the *Idiot* – as to historical-critical research, and he thinks of the Reformation of Luther and Calvin as 'the peasants' revolt of the spirit' (*Gay Science* 358). The end of Christian morality is to be awaited with a mixture of dread and exaltation: 'That great spectacle in a hundred acts which is reserved for the next two centuries in Europe, the most terrible, most questionable and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles' (*Genealogy of Morals* 3.27).

Nietzsche's family Christianity, being Lutheran, would have been fiercely biblical, for Protestantism relied exclusively on the Bible, to the exclusion of Church tradition, for its beliefs and its authority. Strauss' version, by which Jesus was 'humanized' and most traditional theology written off as mythology, if not as outright fiction, must have produced a strong impact on him, as on many others, now that the sole source of faith – Luther's *sola scriptura* – was being called in question. It is hard not to conclude that Nietzsche's visceral hatred of Christianity (even when compared with the tone of the assaults of such as Voltaire and the *philosophes*, or of Hume, of whose scepticism Nietzschean perspectivism can be seen to be a bastard descendant) derived in part from a sense that he had been gulled: certainly in his later thought one of the more basic themes is that moralists – and not only Christian moralists – must be unmasked as hypocritical power seekers; for it should not be forgotten that Nietzsche wanted to target all religion, not only Christianity, though dealing with that was the most pressing challenge for Europe. His wider position, however, is clear in such aphorisms as 'I fear that we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar' (*Twilight of the Idols* [see chapters 3,4,6]): a powerful anti-foundationalist remark spat out to pre-empt the argument that if we admit intelligibility we must – if we think at all – admit God.[44]

[44] The position Nietzsche attacks is defended by Steiner (1989).

If Strauss and others encouraged Nietzsche to reject his childhood's version of Christianity, a second influence both developed that rejection and became itself the hated object of a rejection – almost as of a heretic – in its turn: in Arthur Schopenhauer's universe, as presented in his *World as Will and Representation* (1818), all depends on the Will, but that Will is violent, chaotic and never satisfied; our only remedy is to escape from its tyranny into something like a Buddhist nirvana. Reversing both the metaphysics of Christian love and the then fashionable Romantic vision of the harmony of nature, Schopenhauer holds that the Will, the driver of the cosmos which ever attempts to enslave us, is basically evil.

Nietzsche, for his part, agreed with much of what Schopenhauer said about the Will, at least the will in human beings, but adopted a radically different strategy for handling the grim situation in which we presently find ourselves. Christianity had urged us to submit our wills to God, Schopenhauer to escape the chaos of Will in the world; for Nietzsche (not in his earliest writings, but ordained by *Zarathrustra*), the eventual alternative, for those capable of grasping it, is to identify our morality-tempted individual will with an impersonal Will to Power which is strong, contemptuous of the state and its conventions, morality free. Then, instead of Schopenhauer's pessimistic despair, we, as heroic individuals, shall assume and assert an authentic freedom: a lordship over all we survey. This Will to Power, is not, of course, Rousseau's General Will; though by definition impersonal, it cannot be shared promiscuously. In fact Nietzsche came to see Rousseau as opening the door to mere barbarism, as denying the role of the heroic individual and effectually promoting revolutionary bloodletting.[45] For Nietzsche the inadequate individual will is invited to identify not with what is natural but what is supernatural.

Obviously enough, we see here something of the inheritance of Kant: Nietzsche wants Kant's autonomy – his escape from heteronomy – but despises his 'degrading' moralism as the worst possible way of attaining it. The half-truths of Kant have to be purged from the soul – along with those of Christian 'agitators' such as Augustine and other preachers of degeneracy, especially Socrates and Plato: the latter is condemned as a 'viaduct of corruption' (*Will to Power* 202). Plato's universe is too static, too orderly, too syntactical; much to be preferred – he was also a favourite with Hegel – is the constant flux of Heraclitus whereby nothing ever remains what it is, and truth is revealed as a myth; for as Nietzsche puts

[45] For Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau see Kaufmann (1974: 169–75).

it: 'There are no facts, only interpretations.' And those interpretations can be unmasked.

The reason there are no facts is that everything is 'true' only from some perspective or other: never (at least as far as we could know) absolutely. The only reason we deny this is that 'truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live' (*Will to Power* 493); this, without the self-defeating proposition of truth's being itself an error, might be true. Nietzsche's denial of truth – an apparently necessary inference from his insistence that all truths (as we identify them) are perspectival – seems to derive from the same kind of false move as that by which Hume denies the existence of the self. Just as the only self we can find within us is a qualified self, so the only truth we can find in philosophical and other discourse is perspectival; *ergo* there is no self (Hume), no truth (Nietzsche).

Many have been misled by the false logic in one or both of these inferences; indeed if we accept the one, there can be no reason to deny the other. Of course, the denial of truth implies a rejection of metaphysics in general (though to deny metaphysics might seem a metaphysical proposition) and of God's existence in particular: 'God is dead … and we have killed him' (*The Gay Science* 125) is the effect of the Enlightenment, as Nietzsche summed it up, albeit Nietzsche is as scornful of 'enlightened' claims as of the religion they purport to displace. As for man, Darwin has shown us that we are in our origins not spiritual beings as yet unfallen but apes (*Daybreak* 49) – though that animality can be transcended. At times Nietzsche preferred Lamarck to Darwin, especially his claim that secondary (or acquired) traits can be inherited; such traits may be part of the 'spiritual' man (*Twilight* 9.14).

We might expect that Nietzsche would follow Schopenhauer in seeking an escape into pessimism, or espouse a nihilism derived from a contempt for metaphysics (as many of his postmodern followers have done); he adopts neither of these options, specifically rejecting nihilism and embracing rather than rejecting the power of the will, thus seizing the opportunity (perhaps *malgré soi*) to create a certain meaning out of meaninglessness: 'Will a self and thou shalt become a self' (*Beyond Good and Evil* 36; cf. *Gay Science* 270). The price for rejecting the nihilist option, however, is high; with the death of God and the elevation of the will to power everything is permitted, since morality and truth are condemned as despicable delusions. In later life Nietzsche evinced an admiration for the honesty of Dostoievski's conclusions about the fate of morality after the death of God, but found his remedy in the unbridled creativity of the Superman who rejects all concern for the weak and condemns those who

pity them – many of them incomprehensibly being recent philosophers[46] – as 'despisers of life' (*Thus Spake Zarathrustra* 42). In fact Dostoievski's conclusions predate Nietzsche, perhaps rather echoing a similar comment of Feuerbach's (to be considered in the next chapter): 'The turning point of history will be the moment when man becomes aware that the only God of man is man himself.'[47]

That is indeed autonomy – and the contempt for Christianity is apparent in the title of one of Nietzsche's books: *Ecce Homo* – but it is only for a few; in the 'transvaluation of all values' the 'herd' do not matter because they cannot understand. In this stance Nietzsche makes a passing thrust – but all too effectively – at those who would combine 'liberal' autonomy with concern for others; their position is incoherent, their desire for pity is a means of controlling others: a mere survival of Christian, Platonic or Kantian prejudice. For Nietzsche, as we have seen, to be concerned about social evils such as disease, distress or prostitution is to condemn Life itself (*Will to Power* 25). Superhuman freedom – the freedom of an unloving human god – is the 'remedy' for despair, the 'redemption' of an existence which is otherwise meaningless, though few are fit to embrace it.

Nietzsche repudiated attempts to identify 'supermen' with any class or race, or the weak or degenerate with any socially identifiable groups of individuals: he is not anti-Semitic; Judaism merely resembles Christianity in being a perversion of the heroic spirit and all such perversions can be unmasked as lies, based, paradoxically enough, on a fear-driven refusal to admit the truth of meaninglessness. But too much need not be made of this: the implication of Nietzsche's position is that Jews are not to be persecuted as Jews, but inasmuch as widely infected by the very degeneracy the superman must overcome, they are likely to be among those to be left in misery, or, where necessary, eliminated.

[46] 'The modern philosophers' predilection for, and overestimation of, pity is really something new: it was precisely on the unworthiness of pity that the philosophers had agreed until now' (*Genealogy of Morals* 5.5). The comment is part of an attack on altruism, as distinct from self-perfectionism.

[47] Cited by De Lubac (1949: 10). Dostoievski (especially in *The Devils*) offers many clues to the nature of the New Man to be promoted by the revolutionaries: 'Man is not yet what he will be. A new man will come, happy and proud.… He who conquers pain and fear will himself be a god. And that other God will not be.… Then history will be divided into two parts: from the gorilla to the annihilation of God, and from the annihilation of God' [From *The Devils* (trans. Magarshack) 126]; and again, 'Since there is neither God nor immortality, anyway, the new man has a right to become a man-god, though he may be the only one in the whole world, and having attained that new rank, he may lightheartedly jump over every barrier of the old moral code of the former man-slave, if he deems it necessary', from *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 764. N. Berdyaev's *Dostoievsky* (1932) affords a good account, comparing the analyses of the New Man and his prospects in Nietzsche and Dostoievski.

Be the degeneracy of the Jews and Christians as it may, the 'truth' about it (and about much else) can only be expressed enigmatically, again in the manner of Heraclitus, and by a 'virtual' messenger of the inexorable flux of things. We are all tempted to fall back into reading meaning into the universe, just as for Chairman Mao communists are always liable to fall back into the habits of bourgeois bureaucracy. For Nietzsche the literary-philosophical remedy is the gnomic saying, the practical assertion of the raw self at all times and at whatever cost in consistency. Yet his thought attains as curious a consistency as can be found, given the disappearance of truth and of the Christian God whose power was always to be associated with his love, and even to some degree – at least through revelation – with his intelligibility and the intelligibility of his universe.

For Nietzsche any rejection of God that fails to accept the conclusions he draws is the worst kind of cowardly and humiliating compromise. His attack is more powerful than is often allowed, but if he is right about the problems of 'compromises', we may prefer to wonder whether a reformed Augustinian universe might not be restored. To make good on such a challenge must entail confronting Nietzsche the genealogist with a genealogical investigation of Nietzscheanism itself. Can Nietzsche's unmasking of the moralizers and the religious itself be unmasked as a star instance of that unrealistic and arrogant assertiveness and contempt for humility that Augustine always insisted is the mark of those desperate to pretend they are more than mortals? Freud may here enter as we attempt to see whether such an approach is plausible.

Nietzsche represents a total reversal of the Christian tradition; Freud, who was certainly influenced by him, as well as by Darwin, is in many ways comparable with Darwin and Marx as a great discoverer who overestimated his discoveries, rather than with Nietzsche, whose destructive synthesis could easily appropriate and simultaneously unmask Freud's work. Whereas Darwin is concerned with the importance of natural selection, and hopes to derive morality from its processes, and Marx finds that economic factors and class struggle are the key to human nature, Freud – to whom, for present purposes, I make only limited reference – looks to what he calls the 'unconscious', thus coming down on the side of nurture rather than nature in his version of human development. Many of our woes, psychological and moral, he believes, derive from experiences that have been repressed, particularly those by which we were affected in our early childhood and cannot recall, unless perhaps with the help of his analyses. 'It is

easy for a barbarian', he claims[48] – in a curious echo of Rousseau – 'to be healthy; for a civilized man the task is hard': thereby revealing his ambivalence towards the key concept of repression as both the motor of civilization and the root of the neuroses of civilized man.

If what Freud says about the workings of the unconscious is even broadly true, one of the conclusions to be drawn is that it is almost impossible to know ourselves in detail: a goal of moral philosophy from the time of Socrates, the likelihood of which, however, had been strongly challenged by Augustine and – for wholly different reasons – by Hume. But the ill effects of our repressions can be recognized in those otherwise inexplicable feelings of guilt which Christians had traditionally assigned to the effects of original sin. And Freud – like some early Christians, though not Augustine – seems to suppose that the 'original sin' is sexual, at least in male individuals with whom his theories – even though certainly not his practice – were largely concerned, at least until near the end of his life: as a result of 'Oedipal' desires in childhood we develop what he came to call the 'super-ego' which subjects our conscious self (or 'ego') to 'moral' pressures contrary to those exerted by the 'id': a driving force not dissimilar to the will of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The resulting painful conflict, Freud believed, had been partially identified by Plato in the myth of the *Phaedrus* about the soul as a charioteer driving two horses, one honourable and normally law abiding, much influenced by shame, the other lustful and only to be repressed, never converted to goodness. In that situation the freedom from guilt that can result from analysis is liberating. The aggressive instincts that originally produced it remain underneath.

Much of the truth in such a theory – not least the at that time highly original emphasis on early childhood experiences – can be easily harmonized with that proposed by Darwin – as, in a different way, with that recognized by Marx; however Freud's account of heredity differs from Darwin's in one important respect: he followed the biology of Lamarck rather than that of Darwin (and, in the more developed 'genetic' form, that of neo-Darwinians) in supposing that not merely 'instinctual' characteristics deriving from a non-human past can be inherited but also such acquired social tendencies as are more readily called 'moral'. That entails a more plausible account of moral (or aesthetic) traits than can be derived from 'Darwinian' genes whose 'intention' is solely to survive and replicate. Whether socially 'acquired' characteristics can have genetic effects and thus be heritable is something to which I shall return.

[48] Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, in the *Complete Psychological Works* 23 (1940: 185).

It can be argued that natural selection in the Darwinian or neo-Darwinian sense is irrelevant to morality, not least, as we have noted, because it cannot account for altruism,[49] and more generally because however we may have reached our present condition – whether by natural selection or otherwise – we are now in a state, it would seem, where we can at least partly take our future into our own hands. The self-sacrificing individual, as we have observed, may deliberately choose not to 'indulge' his 'genetic' instincts for survival and reproduction: as by sacrificing his life, for example, or by a conscious decision to remain celibate. And indeed the majority of our contemporaries are able effectively to separate sexual activity from reproduction. Like some early Christians, such as especially Gregory of Nyssa – albeit for wholly different and more immediately self-serving reasons – they no longer feel the need to defeat the endless cycle of births and deaths by begetting children. And a Freudian can calculate to similar effect: we can understand something of our repressed experiences and thus defeat or at least modify 'nurture determinism', just as Darwinians can defeat 'nature determinism'.

Yet Nietzsche and Nietzschean postmodernists can claim to defeat Freud with the same weapons they use against Darwin and Marx, admitting that we discover, through Freudian techniques, how we came to be in our present state, for that does nothing to defuse the ultimate meaninglessness of human life and the artificiality of morality. Human life may not appear meaningless in the short run insofar as we can construct more or less intelligible, satisfying and deluding conventions to make our little lives more cosy, more self-indulgent and, if we so wish, more conventionally benevolent, but in the obvious absence of God – so the argument runs – anything would-be high-minded about 'moral claims' remains mere preference if not mere hogwash.

Nietzsche can claim to show that the analyst, in setting his patient on the path which might lead to his being able to 'cure' himself, is exercising power over him – Freud himself became aware of the power problem of 'transference' – in much the same way as the run-of-the-mill moralists, while the 'normality' he is perhaps able to recover is itself a figment of the rationalizing imagination. Indeed, whether or not Freud or Marx or Darwin is a determinist makes little difference to Nietzsche to whom it is irrelevant whether we opt for a consoling morality because we so choose, or whether we are 'determined' to choose or prefer 'morality' by our biological (Darwin) or social (Freud, Marx) circumstances.

[49] See further (for example) O'Hear (1997: 218).

Hegel, as we noted, represents the last stage of post-Cartesian rationalism, and claims to subsume all his predecessors' work – and the 'best' of Christianity – in his own system. His successors and rivals – Mill, Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud and many others – are in hot pursuit of goals that imply replacing Christianity not in part but as a whole. Augustine's loving will has by now been transformed into some version of a General Will, or Will to power, or a will of indifference determining itself according to our immediate preferences. After Kant, friendship, not to speak of Platonic and Augustinian warmth of passion, has largely disappeared from mainstream Western moral thinking. Cartesian reason, plus the raw human will, plus the liberal autonomy of Kant or – rather differently – of Mill and the utilitarians: all these (even the 'liberalisms') add up to a growing tendency to a more or less scientistic impersonality, and it is hardly surprising that in an impersonal world, love (or a loving will) is more or less absent: last visible in the old times of Cumberland, the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz and Hutcheson and in a very brief and youthful revival by Hegel. Then Hume had set in motion the process whereby the elimination of the divine was leading on to the disintegration of the self, thus proffering a more impersonal alternative to the autonomy of a human God. But before we continue to more contemporary stages of this progress, or decline as it may be, we should not forget that in the immediately post-Hegelian period there was one more or less eccentric voice raised *against* the disappearance of love, personalism and Christianity itself in any serious sense: the lone voice of Søren Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard made little impact during his lifetime, being ignored and widely disliked even within his native Denmark.[50] Parts of his work have influenced more contemporary philosophical movements, sometimes invoked to support a Christian revisionism, sometimes as a supposed source, not least through the concept of 'the absurd', of an anti-Christian existentialism. His lack of influence on 'mainstream' Western thinking until the twentieth century is due not only to the unpalatableness of his apparent conclusions, but on the more fundamental difficulty of determining what precisely these were. For in addition to composing in his own name Kierkegaard wrote under a variety of pseudonyms and that – coupled with his preference for a more or less 'Socratic' irony – makes it difficult to be sure how we are to read him, encouraging those who prefer

[50] For a helpful survey of Kierkegaard's life, personal and theological controversies and of his eventual break with the Lutheran Church of Denmark, see Kirmsse (1998: 15–47). More generally this volume offers a rich survey of the present state of Kierkegaard studies.

him to have no position of his own but, in the postmodern idiom, to wish only to let a thousand philosophical flowers bloom.

That difficulty is linked to another, which invites the attention of the genealogist. For Kierkegaard's philosophical thinking is inextricably connected with significant events in his private life, above all his changing attitude to his father and his brother Peter, and the reasons for his breaking off with Regine Olsen, his one-time fiancée. Nevertheless, I believe it possible to present some of his basic and counter-revolutionary ideas with a fair degree of confidence that one is not seriously misrepresenting him. From the point of view of the development of Western thought, how Kierkegaard was viewed is probably more important than how he may have wished to be viewed.

Kierkegaard saw Christianity, once the religion of the martyrs, as lapsed into bourgeois complacency and, among the intellectual and cultural élites, into a bloodless rule-driven philosophical deism dependent in its differing versions on Kant or Hegel. Even love, he believes, as evoked by modern thinkers, has been deformed by reflective abstraction, as in particular by Hegel, who has promoted an ungodly and debased neo-Christianity and whose 'scientific' religious system is to be utterly rejected, as Kierkegaard urges especially in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Hegel's project, as Kierkegaard saw it, was to reduce the infinite God to the finitudes of a man-made logic, to nothing more than 'impious, pantheistic self-worship', as he not unreasonably remarks (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 124), for the God of the philosophers could not forgive. All these learned deformations, he held, had permeated the Lutheran Church in Denmark, the theology and mentality of which needed radical reform, where the clergy were merely civil servants, while the bishops had substituted a fake, respectable religiousness for the genuine and raw original. Christianity should always give offence to the worldly (*Works of Love* 146), not backslide into complacent mediocrity.

Kierkegaard was thus deeply concerned with many of the traditional problems we have been considering in the present study: the sacrifice of Isaac (the main theme of *Fear and Trembling*), Lutheran and Calvinist difficulties about predestination, and Augustine's account of a higher freedom (*libertas*) and its relationship to freedom of choice (*liberum arbitrium*), though he rejected Augustine's original concept of *libertas* in supposing that the 'higher freedom' is possible in our present life.

In some of these areas Kierkegaard looked to solutions not dissimilar to those of the dissident Reformed preacher Arminius whose earlier influence,

especially in England, we have observed.[51] But like Bishop Berkeley (and to some degree Leibniz), though recognizing that the Christianity he knew had become emasculated and tamed, and though using early figures, such as 'John Climacus', as pseudonyms, Kierkegaard never seems to have realized that to correct the manifest weaknesses he observed, he would need to go back behind the Protestant Reformation – and in philosophical religion not merely to Kant and Hegel but to the intellectual journey of which they themselves mark the final stage.

With Augustine, Kierkegaard can be said to have a love-hate relationship: harshly condemning him as a supposedly Calvinist predestinarian, but impressed by his emphasis on love, the central theme, of course, of *Works of Love*, albeit in non-Augustinian mode. As a post-Kantian, Kierkegaard both interprets 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour' as a duty'[52] – How else but by divine command could we be induced so to act? – and despite his emphasis on Christian particularity (as against Hegelian abstraction) follows a course similar to many an early medieval monk (and contemporary utilitarian) in demanding a love without distinction of persons: virtually love of humanity rather than of individual souls.

When Kierkegaard expounds his distinction between the 'aesthetic', the 'ethical' and the 'religious', his solidly Lutheran background emerges clearly in his account of the leap of faith from the 'ethical' (of, for example, Judge William in *Either/Or*), or in the 'absurdity' of treating religion as mere ethics (in the steps of Kant, Hegel and many another): the uniqueness of that leap of freedom – 'absurd' by ordinary moral standards – is what demarcates true religion and religious ethics, and is represented by Abraham, the Knight of Faith, who in 'ethical' terms must be a murderer. Kierkegaard has a curiously personal account of the old Augustinian and medieval dilemma of the sacrifice of the innocent Isaac. The saving of Isaac is a gratuitous reward for faith, while the leap is no mere act of the will nor of the Will; it is the leap of acceptance of the radical otherness of God and his grace: even driven by anxiety and despair, it is anxiety and despair's only remedy.[53] Yet the Lutheran rather than Augustinian character of Kierkegaard's thought is visible in the radical 'two world' distinction between the 'religious' and the 'ethical', for in Augustine participation

[51] See especially Jackson (1998: 235–56).
[52] See Quinn (1998: 366–8).
[53] See Ferreira (1998: 207–34). For an illuminating treatment of anxiety as Adam's motivation see Quinn (1990: 227–44).

bridges the gap: the ethical is not *abandoned* by a leap of faith but understood in a more profound context.[54]

A constant theme in Kierkegaard is that 'God's ways are not our ways', and a whiff of 'total depravity' lurks around the assertion that we are 'always in the wrong' before God. For unlike most of his sophisticated contemporaries, within and without the Church of Denmark, Kierkegaard took the doctrine of original sin seriously, albeit he had no time for the traditional version that the sin of Adam brought sin and guilt to his descendants; rather Adam is the model whom we all imitate, *qua* human beings, the traditional view leading, in his view, to double predestination. Kierkegaard's Adam before his fall was subject to anxiety, again a mark of the human condition, that anxiety, in Kierkegaard's version, being probably a latter-day version of the fear induced by belief in double predestination:[55] Adam, in his unfallen state and ignorant of the difference between good and evil, is anxious about his destiny, for anxiety – an apparently necessary companion and condition of freedom – is also necessarily some kind of precursor of sin and thus an essential ingredient of our common human state. As for despair, it arises, according to Kierkegaard, whenever we long for a finite and temporal good rather than for what is eternal (*Works of Love* 40–1): Augustine would have appreciated that transformation of distinctions he had made in *On Free Choice*.

Despite much about the will – as that we can will to be good – Kierkegaard thinks we can only so will by God's grace and by obedience to God's commands. He is old-fashioned –and radically un-Kantian – in thinking with Augustine that 'ought' does not imply 'can'.[56] His treatment of Adam's (and our) inadequacy in the unfallen state, however, confirms that he is, at base, relying on a divine command morality in the Protestant voluntarist mode and so could have no time for the Augustinian dilemma that, yes, God and God's ways are incomprehensible, and yet somehow human virtues are a participation in the divine. Where Augustine risks being read as a divine command theorist, Kierkegaard makes no bones about being one.

[54] Derrida, though on different grounds, rejects Kierkegaard's radical distinction between the religious and the ethical, believing that Kierkegaard errs in regarding the 'otherness' of God as any special kind of otherness, while at the same time attempting a secularized version of Kierkegaard's 'pure sacrifice' (without any Christian redemption): for interesting comment see Jacobs (2009: 201–5).

[55] For good comment see Pattison (1998: 94–5).

[56] Kierkegaard's position here (as Augustine's) involves recognition of what Hare (1996) has dubbed the 'moral gap' – only leapable by the grace of faith – which distinguishes religious ethics from secular 'ethics'. Kirmsse rightly points out that Kierkegaard insists on 'the radical absoluteness of Christian ethics and our inability to live accordingly' (Kirmsse 1990: 312). As I have argued, Augustine's account of how we cross the chasm differs from Kierkegaard's, as from Luther's.

Kierkegaard's apparent view that religion, to avoid being corrupted, should never be institutionalized, might be condemned as either cloud-cuckoo-land or a licence for radically individualized, eccentric interpretations of Christianity. In brief, I conclude that Kierkegaard had a sense of how many of the fundamentals of Christian mentality had disappeared and could only be recovered by radical reform, yet little idea of how such reform should be achieved: not least, as I have suggested, because he assumed that reform meant only reform of the Reform or of its latter-day and degraded versions. That assumption entailed that he was unable to grasp that the intellectual crisis of traditional Christianity had begun well before the sixteenth century and had arisen not only in that medieval Christians had failed adequately to assimilate the philosophy of Aristotle in a number of fundamental respects, but that their original theological synthesis was both incomplete and substantially flawed; that without radical restructuring it carried the seeds of its own eventual dissolution – though when that dissolution was to become apparent inevitably depended on contingent circumstances, both scientific and political. Yet for all that – and in this he resembled Bishop Berkeley and even Leibniz – Kierkegaard had a strong and prophetic sense that things had gone seriously awry, as well as of the specific areas in psychology, let alone in theology – love, the person, sinfulness, the inadequacy of human moral efforts – *where* they had gone awry. If he was modern in having little interest in angels, he is far from either modern or postmodern in his call for a return to a substantive deity, a substantive soul and a radically demanding moral order: a voice crying in the wilderness – and where heard even wilfully misread!

CHAPTER 12

The Age of Deception: Virtual Religion, Virtual Morality

'The lower classes, though habitual liars, are ashamed of lying.'
J. S. Mill

'As that grand old Greek philosopher – Pardon my erudition – *Anaxagoras* said, "Man is the Measure of all Things."'
Benito Mussolini educates the last meeting of the Fascist Grand Council

Some of the more influential thinkers of the nineteenth century, looking back wistfully at the Jacobin clubs, flaunted the language of violence, often spicing their talk with a contempt for truth and a rejoicing in deception. It was yet left for the twentieth century to spawn their less than theoretical successors in the totalitarian arts: Hitler, Stalin and Mao being the three most prominent and competent professionals. And just as the practitioner succeeded the armchair theorist of violence, so the armchair liar gave way to the propagandist. As we shall see, the heirs of Mill were to become adept practitioners in these black arts, less flashy but essentially similar to the more obviously propagandist followers of Nietzsche, Feuerbach and Marx.

Nietzsche accused philosophers since Socrates and Plato, as well as the philosophical and religious establishments of his day, of abject hypocrisy, their professed search for truth concealing a will to power usually promoting a servile and degrading moralism. This may seem harsh on most (perhaps not all) philosophers before the nineteenth century, for whatever their religious and philosophical views, it is hard to deny the sincerity of their conscious activities; regarding them, Nietzsche, one has to say, might only be right at the subconscious level. During the nineteenth century things began to change. We have seen Mill (in the footsteps of Comte) flirting with the idea that it is 'perfectly conceivable that religion may be morally useful without being intellectually sustainable' (*CW* X 405) and in his younger days attracted to Comte's Religion of Humanity, at least in part because he hoped it might enable the utilitarian to spread his moral

views under the cloak of sundry quasi-religious dogmas.[1] Plato too could be similarly appropriated; his ideas about the immorality of Callicles in the *Gorgias* are socially useful, even if intellectually indefensible.[2]

Yet Mill seems uncertain, perhaps even ashamed. With Sidgwick the acceptance of planned deception is unabashed. Sidgwick's utilitarian project had been to combine Kant's rule-based morality and accepted sense of duty (which Kant thought to be at the heart of morality) with Bentham's and Mill's concern with the societal maximizing of happiness, viewed by them as pleasure. But at the end of his *Methods of Ethics* Sidgwick had to admit that this project of reconciliation had failed; duty could not be fitted into the utilitarian universe. If the reader were at this point to expect a Socratic reaction to the impasse ('Let us then go back to the beginning and see whether we can harmonize duty with happiness') he would be disappointed. For what dismays Sidgwick is less that he has failed philosophically than that news of this failure might reach the wider public,[3] resulting in an upsurge of immorality, a neglect of duty and so a substantial setback for the whole utilitarian project. Better, he concluded, to deceive: let it be assumed that utilitarianism does not entail abandonment of the moral 'ought'.

It is important to recognize that Sidgwick's élitism is the liberal version of more totalitarian 'vanguard' theories. All are radically 'undemocratic' in concluding that the ordinary man or woman cannot be trusted with the 'truth' and might lose confidence in one or other of the ideological manifestos on offer: communism for the Marxist, utilitarianism for the liberal, 'brotherhood' and 'equality' for the Jacobin. The revolutionary, of course, will try to enforce his will – and this certainly must entail a lot of direct lying; the 'liberal' will prefer mere deception – in modern usage, 'spin'. In either case honesty, and ultimately the importance of truth, will disappear, though neither Robespierre nor Marx nor Mill nor Sidgwick are prepared as yet to say so openly; better to imply that it needs to be suspended until utopia is established.

Professional lying and deception may take post-religious or (in more secular mode) post-early-modern form and it is necessary to examine

[1] See Millar (1998: 192–9).

[2] See Irwin: 'Mill puts himself in a weak position if he accepts Plato's conclusion, but rejects any argument for the conclusion', and '[Mill] cannot defend himself against the charge that he is advocating the inculcation of a false belief' (Irwin 1998: 452–4). Perhaps his position is 'weak' if he were to claim to be the kind of philosopher Irwin would approve but 'strong' from the point of view of the social engineer that he wanted to be. It is curious how Irwin and others remain surprised that utilitarians are willing to lie or deceive.

[3] Sidgwick (1907: 395–6, 490).

both, starting with the generalization that the more unashamedly post-religious will resort the more readily to violence in a godless equivalent of *odium theologicum*. We have found the origins of Robespierre's state terrorism in Voltaire and more especially Rousseau, but even granting that Robespierre's blueprint for a 'new' religion was as absurd as that of Comte, his spiritual descendant, deism – that shadow theism – still lurked in the wings, to be unmasked by Ludwig Feuerbach, the most potent source of not only contemporary atheism but – at least indirectly – contemporary theories of deception. For the post-religious liar will tend to be totalitarian; the post-early-modern deceiver and de facto atheist (Sidgwick) will be a liberal who will surprise himself – as certainly he will surprise those who are not to be deceived; who perhaps will have once been nostalgic, like some of his predecessors, but is now cynical or merely in bad faith. Who is to tell?

Feuerbach (1804–72) was originally a Hegelian who moved to Berlin in 1824 to study with the master. But he seems to have been from the beginning an uneasy disciple, his uneasiness centring on whether Hegel was trying to be overly 'religious' in his metaphysics: on whether it is possible, as Hegel supposed, to harmonize the personal God of Christianity (viewed by Hegel as the perfect religion) with the abstract Spirit of metaphysics. Hegel's metaphysical vision, Feuerbach came to think, was incompatible with the sensuous earthiness of the Christian God of Love as preached by Schleiermacher, and even though Hegel was perhaps more successful in his analysis of religion's social value, the project of reconciling personalism and abstraction in any account of religion must fail.

Feuerbach had begun publicly to distance himself from Hegel in 1839 when he published an essay entitled *Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy* but, as with Nietzsche, matters came to a boil when he had digested David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (composed in 1835). In 1841 he published his most influential work, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (like Strauss's book soon to be translated into English by George Eliot). In *The Essence of Christianity*, and in *Das Wesen der Religion* (1845), Feuerbach argued that all religious 'objectivity' (and in particular Hegel's objectivism, however attenuated) is unmasked as essentially projection, the subjective self projecting itself as object, to be affirmed as an Other, that is, as God; so Hegel had affirmed his Absolute Spirit and Christians the God of the Bible. 'Man – this is the mystery of religion – objectifies his being and then again makes himself an object to the objectivized image of himself thus converted into a subject' (*Gesammelte Werke* 5: 71). Hegel's religion disregards the imagination, hence feeling, hence longing, and religion is the projection of the

longing for a personal God (*GW* 5: 257). In effect, Feuerbach moves from theism via pantheism to atheism: a journey on which he has had many followers from his own day to ours. Then, his followers were largely ex-Protestants; now they have come to include many an ex-Catholic who has caught up with the moving train, turning to an atheist materialism on the pretext that Hegelian (as Spinozan) religion, as Feuerbach claims, must misconstrue matter as mind or Spirit. In such a case, the erstwhile believer's imagination and underlying desires trump rationality in order to project his wishful thinking.

A number of critics of *The Essence of Christianity* disturbed Feuerbach by arguing that in eliminating the abstract Spirit of Hegelianism, he had only replaced it with another abstraction: the human essence. Feuerbach took this criticism very seriously and in his later writing tried to develop a purely social concept of the self, thus offering something of a sociological parallel to the anti-Cartesianism of Hume's attempted dissolution of the *ego*. The self is constructed from I-Thou relationships, as others in his day were claiming, but is nothing more:[4] a theme still misguidedly adopted by a number of Christian believers who, aiming to demolish a purported Aristotle, suppose that proposing a being of pure relations can serve as a reply to critics of his 'essentialism'. Feuerbach could mock them: his theory (in this parallel to Hume's attack on the Cartesian self) aims (and if correct would succeed) at eliminating the self so that, with God already gone, nothing stable remains; the way lies open for nihilism or some chosen ideology. Particularly important for the future is Feuerbach's emphasis on the role of the imagination and of longing (even of love) in the construction of fantasies; for it may be that fantasies are all there is.

Then as now, Feuerbach's writings 'hit the spot', being exactly what an increasingly anti-metaphysical and anti-religious age wanted to hear. Strauss hailed *The Essence of Religion* as 'the book for our times', not least for its emphasis on the sensuousness of reality.[5] For our present enquiry,

[4] After the Romantics (Novalis, Schelling etc.) and Fichte, the relationship between the 'I' and the universe was central in extended German debates: Is pantheism or solipsism the answer? Are we to follow Spinoza or Fichte? Can the unconscious power of the artist overcome Kantian formalism and intellectualism in their failure to capture the 'whole'? Yet Feuerbach's dissolution of the self (coupled with his elimination of God) not only gave free rein to the atheists but subverted the Romantic attempt to replace religion by art. Art as religion will be treated briefly later. We should remember that almost all the late eighteenth-century German philosophers and literary lions were sons of either Lutheran (often pietist) pastors or themselves, in their early days, students of theology. Would ex-Protestants precede would-be ex-Catholics as the new ideas seeped southwards in Europe? I would suggest that what Hume's denial of the self had done for Anglo-American thought, Feuerbach's did (belatedly) for the 'Continental' tradition.

[5] Good introductions to Feuerbach can be found in Wartofsky (1977) and Harvey (1995).

however, the principal significance of Feuerbach is that he provides a psychological explanation of the entire theistic phenomenon that could match and complete the philosophical and historical deconstructions of the Enlightenment and its minimally Christian predecessors in Protestant Europe. When putting Feuerbach's dismissal of religion as mere comfort-seeking in context, we should not forget that Schopenhauer's despairing account of the chaotic Will (1818) was already in circulation and that Kant's etiolated theism was being subverted by the pure subjectivism of Fichte and the near-pantheistic naturalism (sometimes tinged with Neoplatonism) of the Romantics. All these, however (and especially the latter) might seem insufficiently bold, indeed perhaps derisively cowardly and even intellectually dishonest in their still only apparent radicalism. And, of course, there is a corollary to Feuerbach's position. If 'consolations' of the fantastic kind he envisaged are needed, perhaps other – radically anti-Christian – alternatives (with or without the appropriation of Christian language) can equally well be provided in some more up-to-date ideological form, whether 'liberal' or 'totalitarian'.

Among English-speaking Romantics (as among their Continental cousins) the admittance of lying and deceiving would have been both offensive and unnecessary. On the contrary, they could rejoice in their new liberation (or comparative liberation) in art as in society. The old institutions of *ancien régime* have gone, or will soon go, and at least the comfortable classes can relax in a new-found freedom of indifference. True, as Byron would discover, 'scandals' in art might be less risky than scandals in life, for the 'freedom' of the twentieth-century writer was still far off. Yet although the Romantics will have failed to foresee the stuffy, new conventionalism of the Victorian age – which called for new forms of revolt – and totalitarian revolutionaries like Marx and Engels were impolite enough to think that not only the middle class should be 'liberated', yet Shelley and many others could exult in the freedom – political, social and increasingly moral – which the French Revolution and its accompanying intellectual movements seemed to usher in. As usual, such intellectuals were happy to overlook the brutality normally accompanying such radical dreams of Paradise: as Saint-Simon put it in 1814,[6] 'The Golden Age of humanity is not behind us' – as foolish Christians and various secular romantics might suppose – 'it lies ahead, in the perfection of the social order'. Writers on the rights of man (and even of women and slaves) such as Tom Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft might seem to be the future; Wollstonecraft's

[6] Cited by Hill (1958: 61).

husband, Shelley, could already proclaim his happy godlessness. His adolescent *Necessity of Atheism* (1811), which got him expelled from Oxford, is well known, its spirit well represented in a letter of the same year to his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg: 'Never will I forgive Christianity.… How I wish I were the Antichrist, that it were to be mine to crush the Demon.… I expect to gratify some of this insatiable feeling in poetry.'

If this sounds like an ill-thought-out prelude to Nietzsche in its rejection both of morality and the Christianity from which in the West that 'servile' morality derived, it pointed – if only through Shelley's connection with the patron saint of anarchism, his father-in-law William Godwin – to what was to come. The wish that poetry can be a substitute for religion, already more or less explicit, emerges full-blown in Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* (written in 1821 but only published in 1840, nearly twenty years after the poet's untimely death). Here religious language is unabashedly appropriated for atheist (and deceptive) purposes, as that the sins committed by poets 'have been washed in the blood of the mediator and the redeemer, Time'.[7] But the confidence engendered by anarchism was not the only possible reaction for a poet reflecting on the presumed demise of Christianity. Its often-fashionable atheism would entail the collapse of the cult of beauty into the disillusion of post-Romantics like Flaubert and Proust. Happily, idolatry has little staying power, needing ever a supply of new and naïve believers.

I have drawn attention to the cultivation of deception among utilitarians who, having lost all other values, find no suasion against it. Now we witness already in Shelley an attempt to substitute art and culture generally for religion as generator of human perfection and to appropriate religious symbols in what can at worst amount to a ploy to mislead the uninformed or unwary.[8] With Matthew Arnold we meet it in a less

[7] For interesting comment see Beckett (2006: 399–401). Beckett draws attention to Shelley's presentation of great figures of Western literature and art (even Dante) as lovers of 'love' (however understood) rather than as teachers of Christian love and truth. Milton is great not least because he dares to present Satan as the moral rival of God. Beckett shows Romanticism as broadly speaking a reintroduction of love (but now as mere feeling) as a counterbalance to the post-Cartesian, especially Kantian, overemphasis on a new version of reason. The two aspects of the unified Platonic and Augustinian personality – love and reason – have now been reintroduced in separate and debased forms; cf. Jane Austen's title *Sense* (Kant) *and Sensibility* (Romanticism).

[8] The political use of religious language to purvey radically non-religious – at best deist – thinking had already begun in the American and French Revolutions. Thus Jefferson's first draft of the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that 'we hold these truths to be *sacred* (my italics) and undeniable' – which latter words he corrected to the more brazen claim that they are 'self-evident': a first indicator of the parallel shift in rights talk from the notion (in Grotius, Pufendorf and Locke) that rights are distributed by God to the mere assertion in the preamble to the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that 'Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal

triumphalist version, which more hesitantly shares the belief of Shelley (of whose lifestyle he disapproved) that culture can function as a religion substitute. For Arnold is nostalgic, still hoping that a 'Broad', 'Hellenic' aesthetic Christianity within the Church Established, sufficiently cleansed of its philistine and too 'Hebraic' features (deriving ultimately from Luther, that 'philistine of genius' who lacked 'spiritual delicacy' [*Culture and Anarchy* (ed. J. Dover Wilson) 30]) will suffice in times of trouble, but nervous that a merely cultural substitute will be incomplete and even impotent.

Arnold is aware that the religion of art and culture, defined as 'the study of perfection', is suitable only for that élite for whom poetry, 'which requires, no less than religion, a true delicacy of spiritual perception' (according to the preface to *Culture and Anarchy*) can be consolation in a world – as we have found him phrasing it in *Dover Beach* – which 'hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain'. Yet even for them it is a deceitful consolation – both para-theologically and artistically. For with *Dover Beach* witnessing to truth banished and beauty separated from moral goodness, Arnold signals an approaching world in which neither truth nor beauty nor goodness will find foothold. If art is to prove a delusion in its new role as comforter, and the exuberance of Shelley's freedom is to collapse into Nietzsche's desperate and despairing heroism – Is it more than a mere whistling in the wind? – what hope for inspired 'artistry', already being overtaken by massive technical skill?

and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.' So it may be, but on what principled argument are we to be persuaded that such dignity and rights are more than wishful fantasy?

For the proliferation of rights claims and its connection with the privatization of religion – a development of the seventeenth-century notion that religion should be free from state (or church) interference – see Gregory (2012: 211–16). Often, claims to individual religious freedom (enforced by the state) have gone hand in hand with the expulsion of religion from the public square. That situation could only have developed where religion was viewed (as in the United States during the revolutionary periods) as essentially individual, not (as in Catholicism) also 'corporate'.

Further ideological abuse of the word 'sacred' will be discussed later, but we should not fail to notice that at the close of that same American Declaration we hear of the 'sacred Honor' of the revolutionaries and their reliance on divine providence. Similarly in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) we read in the preamble the intent to declare 'the natural, inalienable and *sacred* rights of man', then in the first article that men are born and remain free and equal in rights, then that the purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptable rights of man, while in article 17 we find that property is an 'inviolable and *sacred* right'. Religious (in effect ex-Christian) formulations and consequent emotions are still appealed to in expressing revolutionary zeal, but by the time we reach the UN, as noted, this shadow sacredness is no longer felt to be needed, is now indeed politically inconvenient. It has consequently disappeared, to be replaced by mere undefended assumptions of the Jeffersonian sort. Perhaps it is fitting that as slave-owning Jefferson urged the abolition of slavery, so the rights-preaching UN appoints representatives of rights-abusing states such as Iran and (recently) Ghaddafi's Libya to chairmanships of committees purporting to protect human rights!

Nor does Arnold's residual Anglicanism ('the religious life of his nation') fare much better as a source of comfort, based as it is on a blinded misreading of the history of Christianity not dissimilar to Bishop Berkeley's. Arnold's hope – to which *Culture and Anarchy* bears witness – is that the Anglican *via media* between Puritan philistinism, self-asserting individualism and fanaticism on the one hand and a Greek love of beauty and order – unfortunately prone to moral 'laxity' – on the other will be sufficient to frustrate the banal designs of 'our liberal friends', whether these be utilitarians or the coming scientistics. Yet one cannot avoid the impression that what Arnold requires of the Church Established is less Christian doctrine than a vaguely Christian morality politely expressed: a check against the incivility and literalist philistinism of the Dissenters which so easily slides into a crude barbarism and bigotry. Thus Arnold, though no friend to Catholicism, holds up as representative of uncultured and intemperate fanaticism a sermon of a certain Reverend W. Cattle from Walsall who vented his contempt for the Romish Anti-Christ by declaiming among the Irish Catholic immigrants to Birmingham: 'I say, then, away with the Mass! It is from the bottomless pit; and in the bottomless pit shall all liars have their part, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone'; and again 'When all the praties were black in Ireland, why didn't the priests say the hocus-pocus (*scil. Hoc est Corpus*) over them and make them all good again?'[9]

Reverend Cattle thus expresses less bad theology than bad form, while the sweetness-and-light Christianity of which Arnold dreams looks wholly unrealistic, based as it is on failure to divine the unfolding future of the progressively demythologizing Church of England – as at least could the Biblicist Dissenters. As with Berkeley's earlier Established unease, this results from failure to grasp the inherent significance and import of post-Reformation Christian history. Indeed, Arnold's eager though anxious clinging to Greek culture (in which 'religion and poetry are one', *Culture and Anarchy* 55) reminds us of Mill's admiration for Hellenic virtue: Mill failing to harmonize his Hellenism with his utilitarianism, Arnold with his residual Christianity.

Augustine had regarded the attainment of moral perfection as in the gift of God and identical with the path to salvation. During the Middle Ages we watched the gradual separation of morality from salvation, and

[9] *Culture and Anarchy* 91. For some of the 'moral laxity' in the 'Hellenic' tradition that Arnold would not have liked to specify, see Dowling (1994). Dowling highlights the morally and theologically ambiguous role of the distinguished classicist Benjamin Jowett.

with the Reform acceptance of that separation and a massive emphasis on salvation as extrinsically given, with morality left to linger as an effect of salvation or as something that 'pagans' could usefully occupy themselves with in the brief interlude before their eternal damnation. And as we have seen, the 'pagan' response gradually strengthens until salvation is a myth and religion, converted into morality shakily based on at best deism, is eventually abandoned altogether. In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold sums up the trend: there may be a God, seen as a 'Something not ourselves', as 'that element wherein religion has its being', and which 'makes for righteousness,'[10] but Poetry (divorced from religion) draws its emotional power from the 'idea' – and that 'idea' is not that progress in morality is Augustine's progress under God's guidance towards salvation, but rather that perfection, viewed in strictly this-worldly terms, just *is* 'salvation'.[11]

This contrast between Arnold and the original Christianity of Augustine is well distinguished in a comparison of their attitudes to the poetry of Virgil. For Augustine, in the *City of God*, Virgil, proclaiming the mission of the Romans as to 'spare the vanquished and beat down the proud', represents that incarnation in Rome of the secular lust for power (*libido dominandi*) so appreciated by Machiavelli. For Arnold, Virgil (and Shakespeare) are, in the language of Swift, souls 'in whom sweetness and light, and all that in human nature is most humane, were eminent'.[12] However one might (generously) interpret 'sweetness and light', certainly Virgil – and even the 'honey-tongued' (in Meres' phrase) Shakespeare – would recognize themselves better in Augustine's description than in Arnold's – because both lived in real and demanding worlds, not the privileged Victorian one where aesthetic fantasy could briefly flourish.

Arnold opines that the Bible, freed from sectarian literalism, can remain as part of the secular consensus; it can be read, as it is in many contemporary secular universities, as Near Eastern Literature, and thus add some sort of moralizing leaven to the 'higher' aesthetic culture, itself dependent on Enlightened ideas of rationality, which is the only alternative to anarchy. Such culture, as we have seen, must be limited to those capable of it: 'Those who cannot read Greek should read nothing but Milton and parts of Wordsworth', is how one of Arnold's letters puts it.[13] The choice of

[10] *Literature and Dogma* [in volume 7 of *The Works of Matthew Arnold* (London 1903–4)] 268. For an overview see Collini (1988).

[11] Perhaps Arnold's attitude is less untypical than it seems within its own culture: according to Durkheim (1915) all cultures try to create ideals that take on the attributes of sanctity and the sacred.

[12] *Culture and Anarchy* 58 (Dover Wilson: volume 6, p. 25).

[13] See Trilling's *The Portable Matthew Arnold* (1942: 621).

poets – and omission of Shakespeare – is illuminating: the half educated are to be allowed to combine Milton's eccentric reconstruction of Christianity with Wordsworth's 'naturist' sentimentality. Nietzsche, of course, knew better: this sort of halfway house between reality and nihilism, in which religion is reduced to 'morality touched by emotion' (*Literature and Dogma* 21), rests on no solid foundations and must collapse – as it has collapsed – into nihilism, one of its more logical bugbears.[14] How that could happen – as how other fudges could be sought – can be illustrated by the careers of two more contemporary poets: T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens.

In the short run Arnold's religion substitute has enjoyed a fair degree of success. It underlies contemporary Great Books programmes and the critical axioms fixed by the literary critics I. A. Richards and F. L. Leavis. Leavis hated both technologists and aesthetes – both C. P. Snow and the London literary establishment (as well as Arnold's poetry!) – and both Richards and he encouraged detailed attention to the intelligibility of the texts to be read and studied. Yet the literary canon he for a short while established was a moralizing canon, readily seen as free floating; Christianity (perhaps regrettably) being dead, and morality having to survive as best it could on its own, the project was doomed to fail: Why make Christianity substitutes the base of a canon when Christianity is no more than a fantasy? Why privilege a dead religion? When 'theory' came in, and new canons could be built from feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis – to name but a few – Christian moralism (however well written) could be seen to have no claim to superior status; indeed the opposite conclusion could be drawn. Arnold's dream – evoked clearly enough in the title of Leavis' first book (*Mass Civilization and Minority Culture*) – had inadequate metaphysical foundation to survive.

Leavis seems to have been dimly aware of the likely failure of his project, and its reliance on wishful thinking: if only we could preserve Christian morality (or at least some of it) and accompanying aesthetics, in the absence of Christianity itself. *Before* Christianity, indeed, the project might have been viable, but it is impossible to put the clock back and recover intellectual virginity so easily.[15] Echoing Schopenhauer's 'as

[14] Here we can recognize a parallel and debased version of the treatment of religion as morality in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English defenders of what was left of Calvinist Christianity.

[15] Plato faced (and properly resolved) a similar dilemma in the *Republic* where in book 2 Socrates accepts the argument that we cannot now be satisfied with the 'city of pigs' (that is, some idealized depiction of a Golden Age in the past). Nostalgia for lost innocence (however innocent it may have been) is no reply to the Sophistic attack on simple-minded (even if in many ways admirable) earlier

if'[16] – consciously or not – Leavis can write: 'It is as if we were challenged at the profoundest level with the question, "In what does the significance of life reside?"'[17] He seems desperately to want to believe there is a significance of life, though now that he has dismissed the merely aesthetic as well as the theistic, not only Christianity but Arnold's purely cultural 'redemption' has gone. Thus we can see Leavis (like George Steiner, with his counter-Nietzschean belief in grammar) unwilling to follow through on the implications of his assumptions[18] and trying to salvage the truths lived by Hopkins and Bunyan from the wreckage of what he must suppose their impossible (or impossibly bigoted) religion. In the end he became the dupe of the very anti-religious prejudices of the establishment that in 'literary' mode he longed to despise and is driven on to the bleakness of (Schopenhauerian) Conrad or D. H. Lawrence's love of 'life' – or is it of sex? – as a recipe, however inadequate, against philistinism and as religion substitute: while Lawrence had good reasons for knowing what he hated, he would offer little defence for what he loved – hence drawing perilously close to a fascistic dogmatism.

Leavis' dilemma, and what may have been his intellectual failure to confront it – and what is the dilemma of the post-Enlightenment intellectual now too terrified to see that he stands at an intellectual dead end – can be better understood if we compare the reaction of the two poets just indicated (one of them much admired, though not uncritically, by Leavis) to a similar challenge: T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens. Both, like Leavis, started with Arnoldian presuppositions about culture and the regrettable necessity of atheism, if not of despair. Their ultimate resolutions of the problem were revealingly different, though in their different ways symptomatic of the surpassing of the Arnoldian conclusion (except in those academic

views. We must go on to construct a new post-Sophistic society in which the undefended and assumed goods of earlier days can now be defended philosophically. A similar realism appears in the debate between the Just and Unjust Arguments in Aristophanes' *Clouds*; the Unjust Argument cannot merely be ignored.

[16] I owe the (Arnoldian) reference to Schopenhauer (as well as parts of my comments on Stevens and Santayana) to Beckett (2006: 538), who cites *The World as Will and Representation* (trans. Payne, New York 1966) 407 – 'This faith can come only from grace, and hence as if from without' – and 546.

[17] Leavis (1952: 131).

[18] There is a similar oddity in a number of recent philosophical texts, perhaps most visible in the work of Nagel. Many times in his *View from Nowhere* (1986) Nagel notes that not only has some major problem in metaphysics not been solved but that it is unlikely that it will be solved, at least in the near future. But he is as yet so much the prisoner of the conventions of his age that he assumes (a) that metaphysics must be approached through epistemology (rather than the other way round) and (b) that God is so irrelevant to philosophy that it is not even worth asking whether his introduction would make any of the apparently insoluble problems easier to tackle.

institutions which retained it out of inertia or because they had no plausible alternative to propose). And with it disappeared Leavis' account of the metaphysical (as distinct from the technical) nature of 'good' literature.

Neither Stevens nor Eliot took refuge in Lawrence's retreat into primitivism, neither in its more decorous version (as in *Women in Love*) nor in its near parody of itself in the far more influential *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.[19] As a young man Eliot felt the attraction of Matthew Arnold – invoked (along with Waldo Emerson) in *Cousin Nancy* as one of the 'guardians of the faith' – but in desperate search for a tradition with which to identify himself, he settled, in 1928, for Anglicanism – more precisely for Anglo-Catholicism, celebrating this bid to leave desolation behind with a laudation of the Jacobean Archbishop Lancelot Andrewes – mouthpiece of the 'High' version of the Elizabethan Settlement of the English Church swept away by its Puritan enemies, but nostalgically resurrected in the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century. In 1930 Eliot followed with a poem celebrating his own conversion, *Ash Wednesday*.

Eliot's motives for preferring Anglicanism to the Catholicism of his day – which still retained much of the 'aesthetic' liturgy he loved – seem to have largely been that it was more 'English' and so would provide an easier tradition into which he, an American with English longings, could be assumed. Yet it can be seen to have been a cowardly *pis aller*; perhaps an example of his famous conclusion that 'human kind cannot bear very much reality'. His intellectual failure radically to disown the cultural pretentiousness and would-be self-deception of Matthew Arnold is apparent in the desolation that still pervades his latest work, the *Four Quartets*. Leavis, seriously an admirer of Eliot's creative energy, was to write that *Four Quartets* is pervaded by an 'essential nihilism',[20] in which the theme music of *The Waste Land* can still be detected. Eliot crowned his Arnoldian cultural snobbery, his historical blindness (whether willed or misled) to

[19] *Lady Chatterley* has had immense impact not only as the catalyst for the abandonment of censorship and in its exposing (*sic*) of a Victorian sexual hypocrisy which needed to be corrected if women were to play a fuller role in society, but also in lowering the cultural tone in a way Leavis should only have deprecated. One effect of the contemporary freedom in describing sexual relationships has been further to erase the concept of 'low life': surely a required concept in any adequate account of society. Such effects are often well caught by David Lodge, as in the following passage from *How far can you go?*: 'I wish you wouldn't use that word.… Actually I picked it up from D. H. Lawrence. Tha's got a loovely coont, lass…' (Lodge 1980: 216). For further comment on the disappearance of 'low life' see Rist (2004: 5–6).

[20] Leavis (1975: 203). Spurr's recent account of Eliot's Christianity emphasizes the aesthetic appeal of Anglo-Catholicism but evades (with Eliot himself) the ecclesiological questions relevant to the nature of what Anglo-Catholics thought of as the 'Catholic Church in England' (Spurr 2010: 15, 43 etc.).

the true character of the Elizabethan Settlement, his contempt for ordinary people, by being named by the cultural and religious establishments – unusually united in gratitude – to the Order of Merit in 1948. 'They have had their reward'?

Wallace Stevens – like Eliot in his New England connections and influenced at Harvard by the philosopher George Santayana – started his literary career more nostalgically and with no yearning to be a cosmopolitan or a public intellectual. His early and explicit search for an aesthetic religion substitute can be read[21] in the following more thoughtful appeal to Shelley's appropriation of religious language: 'After one has abandoned belief in God, poetry is the essence which takes its place as life's redemption.' And again: 'Poetry/ Exceeding music must take the place/ Of empty heaven and its hymns.'[22]

Leavis, who apparently hardly knew of Stevens, would have loved it, as also should Arnold. Yet whatever poetry can do, it cannot 'redeem'. This sort of appropriation of religious language – unlike that of the political propagandists we noted earlier – only serves to convey wishful thinking, in a world where Stevens, like Arnold, can find little of comfort.

Stevens probably learned something of Catholic Christianity from Santayana, as also that its time had passed; it already fascinated him, as his journals reveal, when he was a student. Santayana, too, longed for his father's Christian certainties, but while finding them now impossible, despised Arnold's proffered alternative – 'that sweet, scholarly, tenderly moral, critically superior attitude of mind which Matthew Arnold called culture'[23] – and was tempted to fall back on the eighteenth-century thesis that religion should give up claiming to deal in facts since 'religion and poetry are identical in essence'.[24] So how to proceed now that even nostalgic self-deception about culture might have to be ruled out? Schopenhauerian resignation and Nietzschean self-assertion were both on offer, but neither Stevens nor Santayana cared to help themselves from those dishes. Stevens tried to maintain versions of the theory of 'culture' and art as redemption for much of his life, but in the end took the same route as his mentor. Santayana returned to Catholicism and from 1941 lived in a monastery in Rome; Stevens, to the fury of his family, adopted it almost on his deathbed, in 1955, at age seventy-six – though he had

[21] So Taylor (1989: 493).
[22] W. Stevens, *Collected Poems* (New York 1954) 167.
[23] Santayana (1968: 2.21).
[24] Santayana (1955: 49).

sounded increasingly like a fellow traveller for some time before; already in 1940 telling a correspondent that 'he needed some substitute for religion' and that humanism would not do. At no time did he seem tempted to follow Eliot in replacing self-delusion with the choice – ultimately in bad faith – of a version of Christianity favourable to cultural snobbery: into that happily established form of Anglican cult to which Santayana had denied the rank of 'real religion', while hailing it as 'a masterpiece of social diplomacy': it did 'no harm', he thought (perhaps over-generously), while in no way impeding its adherents from getting on with 'the business of the world'.[25]

Thus far in the present chapter we have considered a selection of more or less self-deluding responses to the progressive collapse of Western certainties which has accompanied the disintegration of any recognizably Augustinian account of the relationship between man and God. That disintegration, regressing from the dissolution of God to that of man, can be conveniently tabled by assembling the writings of Feuerbach and Nietzsche. The widespread reaction to the crisis – whether taking the form of self-deception or deliberate lying and driven by varying motivations – has in consequence crystallized into a number of distinct forms. Before we proceed further, these should be reviewed and classified.

The first thing to note is that all such responses may be distinguished not only as secular or religious, but also as joyful, reckless, calculating, uneasy, nostalgic or anxious – or a combination of two or more of these. The religious refugee may be represented at its best by Eliot, at its worst by those 'continuing Christians' who remain in mainline denominations but have been busy changing the tenets of traditional Christianity (and not only those to be determined by parts below the belt) so as to bring them into line with the power of popular opinion – much as their sixteenth-century predecessors accommodated them to the wills of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and other potentates, in effect developing new forms of worship while retaining a degree of traditional nomenclature. Many of these have given up belief in the divinity of Christ, turning Jesus into a prophet like Moses or Mohammed; others, while denying atheism, no longer believe in God except in a Feuerbachian sense and continue the traditional rites out of inertia or because, at least for a while, they retain a certain ability to console, more especially at funerals.

[25] Ibid.

Dinosaurs, however, can be left aside; more prevalent and dangerous are secular post-Christian liars and self-deceivers. We proceed then to pass in review individuals and motivations of the secular sort thus far identified. Among these too we must distinguish subgroups: first those who are frightened that after the disappearance of God philosophical intelligibility may also disappear and hence the social glue be seriously diluted: what they fear is anarchy. This is the potential position of Mill – more explicitly of Sidgwick – who might still offer the philosophically strange justification for their views that if lying (and even self-deception) can promote the 'greater good overall', then truth must be sacrificed to pragmatic expediency.

A variant on this defence is also open to the second group: the revolutionaries who hope by lying and deception to promote the advent, or hasten the 'historical inevitability', of the Promised Land. Marxists (and possibly other kinds of Hegelians) fall under this rubric. 'Enlightened' vanguard groups may lie to the ignorant masses for their own good; not to preserve existing social glue but to generate that new industrialized product which will hold the coming society together with more unbreakable bonds. In contrast to the milder social gluers, however, this group will develop the consequences and corollaries of systematic lying to a much more injurious degree (as Dostoievski had foretold); betrayal and false witness will be the necessary adjuncts of the construction and the maintenance of the new social order, whose public face will be the show trial.

Third will be the nihilists. Fortified by Nietzschean denials of even the possibility of truth, and therefore relieved of any coherent 'end in itself' (whether the greatest good of the greatest number or the promotion of the objective 'purposes' of history or evolution), they can be the joyful (or dreary) worshippers of their own will to whatever they choose and hope to secure. Nazis have provided the extreme manifesto of such believers in revolution itself or in some arbitrarily or conveniently chosen pattern in which to instantiate revolution – for every acolyte of the Triumph of the Will has to select a target to which to dedicate the hatred or fear of his frenzied and love-lacking supporters. In these cases we see that separation of willing from loving, the gradual unfolding of which in Western history I have chronicled in part, in paradigm form. The welcome on the face of Auschwitz – *Arbeit Macht Frei* – in its cynical manipulation of humanity's need to work and incoherent desire for freedom, well summarizes the end of the post-Augustinian road. Where Augustine taught that the worst form

of lying was lying in matters of religion,[26] nihilists hold that the revolution itself must be authentically proclaimed through the ideological lie: the lie that is the ultimate truth substitute. Where Augustine identified 'lust to dominate', man's desire to be God in mastering his fellows' body and soul, as a basic mover of raw sin, the nihilist must treat such lust as his only 'virtue'. Hitler himself explained it: 'It is not by the principles of humanity that man lives or is able to preserve himself above the animal world, but solely by means of the most brutal struggle.'[27]

So far I have distinguished three groups, and I have left the self-deceivers and wishful thinkers more or less aside, though some of those already covered may also be wishful thinkers. I have listed, that is, fully or semi-cognizant deceivers – of self or of others – and those who (in ordinary parlance) would be deliberately lying but that in denying the concept of truth they must also deny the concept of lying itself. These latter need not be immediately totalitarian, though they may more or less unwittingly advance forms of totalitarianism; groups of this kind will tend to fall into a category of self-deceivers rather than direct liars: one thinks here of the concept of 'bullshit' as examined by Harry Frankfurt,[28] by which he characterizes a mode of speech in which the categories of truth and falsehood are irrelevant, its essence and effectiveness lying in its interminability. Bureaucratese falls under this rubric, as does also much contemporary writing in ethics, hermeneutics and elsewhere.

The task of the bureaucrat is to enable the rulers of a complex state, whether totalitarian, authoritarian or democratic, to pass executive orders on to their subjects, and arrange the instruments by which such orders can be enforced. Those who receive their orders need not (regularly do not) understand them in any detail and it is not the task of the bureaucrat to explain – hence bureaucratese must in principle be unconcerned with true or false, but only with the realities of command. The function of the bureaucrat is to enforce compliance, and the intelligibility of such compliance will depend not on the nature of bureaucracy as such but on the nature of the society it is employed to serve: thus insofar as bureaucrats *qua* bureaucrats speak the truth, they do so, as the medievals would put it, *secundum quid*. And the role of the preacher of cultural religion substitutes is analogous to that of the bureaucrat: he may tell the truth incidentally, but his basic project is essentially misleading or even in conscious bad faith. As we

[26] See Rist (1998b).
[27] Cited by Fest (1970: 27).
[28] So Frankfurt (1988: 117–33).

have seen in the cultural claims of Matthew Arnold, Leavis and the earlier Wallace Stevens, the enterprise itself is based on radical error, or at best on a certain whistling in the wind, in the bringing to light of what might be so in another kind of longed-for universe *as if* that other universe actually existed. The cultural warrior of this kind further shares with the bureaucrat the illusion of self-importance: as we have noted with Eliot's Order of Merit, it is a habit of cultural élites to award one another prizes.

Arnold-style cultural warriors met their comeuppance during the latter part of the twentieth century with the advent first of the New Criticism, then of 'theory', and for what turned out to be rather Nietzschean reasons. In essence New Critics taught that a poem, say, should be studied from its bare text alone; gone were the old-fashioned philological ideas which emanated from the tradition of teaching Greek and Latin, and which had tended to dissolve a poem into its sources and cultural background, while discouraging its readers from making more than the most broad-brush value judgements about those who wrote during some Golden Age. Leavis' English canon had been based on value judgements about the intellectual, if not the moral qualities of the particular poem, it being a given that the poem existed in a recognizable historical context; thus with the New Criticism the baby began to disappear with the bathwater: the historical background to the work under discussion was deliberately abandoned, and the result was an ever growing belief that we could not determine the poet's intention, or even subject matter, but only draw attention to, for example, his musicality, the critic being effectively free to read it as his own poem. Objective study being thus discounted, the way was open for the deconstructive phase where history, intelligibility and authorial purpose were all to be subsumed in terms of some preferred theory – usually Marxism, Freudianism or feminism.

Thus in the days of civil rights and the new feminism nostalgic literary culture came to be increasingly dismissed as not just in bad faith but élitist. The cultural warriors, and indeed the culture they purported to guard, were products of some *parti pris* that the theorist could identify, and then – as fashion took him – worship or denigrate. The supposed liberation wrought by the New Critics, however, was overtaken in its turn by interpretations governed either by theory neat or theory sexed up by genealogical accounts of what *must* be the power-driven intentions, whether conscious or subconscious, of each individual author. There was no true or even plausible standard of aesthetic excellence: all was a matter of sociologically driven preferences and Mickey Spillane really was as good as Shakespeare; this at least was the subtext, even if only a few pronounced

it aloud. One of the immediate effects, therefore, was the enlargement or replacement of what had survived of the cultural canon, as new, socially interesting and 'neglected' writers (often but not always 'ethnic') jostled for pole position with the old masters. Even lip service to the 'literary excellencies' prized by culture warriors was now taboo, with places on the official curriculum increasingly reserved for those chiming in with the ideological bias (or biases) of those who established it.

But the very ideologies on which such selection was made were themselves increasingly to be seen in terms of Nietzschean perspectivism, the theories, as well as the theorized-about texts themselves mere masks for those engaged in the power game: this criticism at least was based on the 'truth' that even when the theorists 'had a point', that point was normally exaggerated as one-size-fits-all tests were applied to the more challenging works of literature. Thus could theory itself be theorized away: a recent book of one of its earliest advocates, the ex-Catholic Terry Eagleton, is entitled *Against Theory*.

What then is to be done, or have the culture warriors won after all? Despite the fact that through a combination of inertia and common sense much of the old curriculum survives in university departments, the damage wrought by the theorists will largely outlive the theorists themselves and 'What's your bias?', the relativism which the multiplicity of half convincing theories has fostered, will persist until any substantially based restoration of older ways can be found. So the devaluation of what the cultural warriors would have judged to be great literature will probably continue – especially as many teachers as well as students seem comfortable only with studying more and more recent texts – driving older (and necessarily more challenging) material off the curricular stage.

In her deservedly still influential article on the state of contemporary ethical debate, Elizabeth Anscombe argued (as we have noted) that most of it is futile: those who engage in it employ moral terms that are appropriate and defensible only if supported by a specific psychological and metaphysical infrastructure that most of them reject.[29] The more positive parts of her article suffer from the apparent belief that the missing foundations should be viewed as at least close to a divine command theory of ethics, but difficulties with that do not detract from the force of her criticisms.[30] To remedy the situation she proposed a moratorium on moral

[29] So Anscombe (1958).
[30] For comment on Anscombe's tendency towards divine commands see O'Neill (2004: 301–16).

philosophy for a considerable period of time to allow us to get matters of philosophical psychology – action theory in particular – into a truer perspective, after which we could better return to our moral labours. Inevitably her advice has not been taken – philosophers have to be seen philosophizing – and the moves into bad faith and outright lying, for the reasons we have been examining, have been adopted ever more brazenly. If Bernard Williams was already prepared in 1973 to refer to Sidgwick's resort to lying as 'Government House Consequentialism' (a reference to the resorts of Indian civil servants), in hope to keep 'the natives' in order,[31] one might have wondered how he would rise to Anscombe's challenge. Unfortunately, any hopes we might have had have proved vain: Williams' *Truth and Truthfulness* is written from an unambiguously Nietzschean perspective; its subtitle is *An Essay in Genealogy*.

Since Anscombe's advice has been ignored, we must proceed to the latest developments in deception, self-deception and the construction of virtual moralities in contemporary philosophical debate. I shall try as far as possible to use the same categories as before, though it should be noticed at once that the more recent and religious advocates of self- or other-deception have brought little new to the table, and yet the misuse of specifically religious language and objectives by despisers of Christianity continues apace. One example will suffice, provided by the knight Sir Kenneth Dover when, as president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, faced with the problem of ridding himself and the college of an obnoxious fellow, Trevor Astin: 'It was clear to me that Trevor and the College must somehow be separated, and my problem was one which I feel compelled to define with brutal candour: how to kill him without getting into trouble.… I had no qualms about causing the death of a Fellow from whose non-existence the College would benefit, but I balked at the prospect of misleading a coroner's jury, whose *raison d'être* is to discover the truth.'[32]

Here we see Dover to be not entirely free from nostalgia, or from deploying a metaphysical vocabulary about truth and the sentiment that he supposed it might still – meretriciously or otherwise – arouse; similarly he was able to write in the same book: '*Innocent* life is *sacrosanct*, and the duty to protect it compelling. Respect for the life of even the worst-behaved humans seems to be an aberration of post-Enlightenment Christianity' (165, note 5). I have nothing further to add about specifically Christian vocabulary. Such as use it (in its Feuerbachian sense) have either

[31] Williams (1973: 16).
[32] Dover (1994: 228–9).

abandoned Christianity (like Sir Kenneth), or are in process of so doing, or (in a few cases) are being pulled back to a more robust religious faith.

With the philosophical social gluers, however, there has been considerable development and, as we shall see, it is difficult to draw any hard line between some of these – I shall dub them 'cosy nihilists' – and their more unambiguous fellows in the nihilist camp. Of more recent followers of Sidgwick perhaps the most extreme is Saul Smilansky who thinks determinism more or less 'true' but that it would be socially deleterious if belief in the absence of free will became widespread.[33] The illusion of free will, indeed, is largely positive and conveniently 'in place'. That certainly is convenient because it exonerates Smilansky from saying that we need to *induce* false beliefs; yet how do we not need to do just that if, as Smilansky also believes, we cannot live without beliefs that we – or some of us – fully realize are illusory? To remain 'alive' we would seem to need to retain, and thus to be induced to retain, these illusory beliefs – except, that is, for the few enlightened individuals and opinion formers such as have read Smilansky. The case is analogous to that of Sidgwick, though more extreme: Sidgwick proposes to deceive regretfully; Smilansky would appear to require wholehearted and 'moral' deception to make sure that the illusion remains 'in place'.

Slightly more shamefaced in his espousal of deception is Simon Blackburn, though the name given to Blackburn's position – quasi-realism – tells it 'like it is'.[34] The thesis is that moral qualities (and therefore the virtues corresponding to them) are like Lockean secondary qualities such as colour: that is, they arise when we meet some 'morally' challenging situation: for example a passer-by being attacked in the street. We are so constituted that we feel emotionally repelled (or attracted) by what we see. Clearly this is a combination of a Humean moral sense theory with the kind of emotivism advocated seventy or so years ago by C. L. Stevenson.[35] Blackburn insists that it cannot be described as 'fictionalism' because the fictionalist (rather like Smilansky) advocates moral beliefs that he does not hold and is thus being insincere.[36] Yet Blackburn scarcely evades the charge

[33] Smilansky in 2002: esp. 497–503, and in more detail in 2000.

[34] Details of Blackburn's position can be found, for example, in *Spreading the Word* (1984), *Ruling Passions* (1998) and on lust in *Lust* (2004). This latest work reveals another 'virtuality': to redefine a traditional vice so that it seems innocuous by (inter alia) separating it from its wider social effects. That move, as I indicated earlier, owes much to the efforts of H. L. A. Hart.

[35] Stevenson (1944).

[36] For Blackburn's disavowal of fictionalism see 2005: 322–38. Some forms of fictionalism may find an analogue in the magic realism of (for example) Gabriel García Marquéz. One of the advantages of magic realism is that it enables things to be said in a fantastic universe (treated as contiguous with our own) that, often for political reasons, cannot be said directly. With fictionalism, that is,

of insincerity inasmuch as his quasi-realism claims to contain a significant realistic element – in that we really do react in such ways as he describes in specific sorts of moral situations – and yet he encourages us to believe that the force is more than just emotional; it reveals something true. What it does not reveal, of course, is how that truth is a moral truth, and in suggesting that it does Blackburn reveals himself to be sincerely insincere every time he tries to pass off his quasi-realism as realism. Unsurprisingly, he commits himself elsewhere to the supremely sophistic 'The important thing about dishonesty is that we should try to be honest about it'.[37] And his second line of defence provides him with no greater security: the various moral claims we make really are 'true or false' within the confines of a particular culture or society. But this is no more than a linguistic version of Humean conventionalism, and if any member of a society holds it to be anything more – as does Blackburn himself when he claims that lust is a good thing – he is making an unfounded claim.

Clearly it is part of the aim of both Blackburn and Smilansky (as of Sidgwick) not to disturb society too radically. Blackburn indeed speaks of the moral reformer as like the sailor in Neurath's boat: as the planks of the boat, so moral beliefs can be replaced, but not all at the same time; that would be disastrous. The effect of such salami tactics will be to delude the general public that stability is being maintained while it is acclimatized (or desensitized) into not noticing the genuinely revolutionary force of the new proposals as introduced one by one. The result, in a phrase of Newman's, will be that ten years later we find ourselves in another place: the difference is that we will have been conned into finding ourselves there, by dishonest means deployed for a dishonest end.

So Smilansky and Blackburn turn out after all to be social gluers, only in their cases the social glue is applied with wholehearted deceit. This sort of social gluer still talks the talk of morality but rather than – like Sidgwick – failing to defend it and admitting his failure, insinuates that he has defended it when he has done nothing of the sort. Though he is still the 'cosy' deceiver, his behaviour points towards a more totalitarian type of lying – and indeed points the 'liberal' society he advocates to a polite form of totalitarianism which, once achieved, can reveal itself as far from polite: towards a society that will implement its aggressiveness less through traditional violence than through bureaucratic banality. Derek

we would have a means of drawing sharper attention to aspects of human nature by putting them in a strange context. I shall allude to the limits of such techniques in philosophy when considering thought experiments more generally.

[37] In an article in the *Independent* (25 January 2012).

Parfit, to whom we must also devote brief attention, wrote of the 'case of the harmless torturers':[38] these the people who can be tricked by an impersonal bureaucratic machine into inflicting pain and degradation – and on the society via the individual – without even realizing they are doing so.

Parfit, like Blackburn, is much indebted to Hume, though less in his account of morality – or virtual morality – than in his account of the human person – for problems about the freedom of the will or free choice are always connected, as we have seen, with the need for – and 'justice' of – individuals being held responsible for their actions. That means that all attempted resolutions of such problems will be related to accounts of the individuals who are to be held responsible; yet we have already noticed how first Hume, then Feuerbach moved towards dissolving the individual into a collection of qualities. If they are right in this, it is easy to infer that so 'accidental' a self can hardly 'in justice' be held responsible for anything! Parfit goes further in the same direction, arguing not only that 'I' is an 'indexical' applicable to an ever-changing set of memory qualities, but that over time this set can become completely renewed, like a club of twelve members which remains the same club even when the original twelve have all been replaced. In ordinary language, this means that I am quite literally not the same person as once I was. Similarly, if I could (at least in some sort of thought experiment) be duplicated, the ensuing person would still be me, and if the original perished, the copy ('Phoenix-Parfit') would be as 'good' (or almost as 'good') as the original. Such notions of course can only be reached if we are defined in the first place as little more than the sum of our somehow – and there is the question – connected memories.

The advantage of such thought experiments is that they make me 'matter' less than one supposed in our pre-philosophical days: put differently, we can view ourselves more objectively since our subjective experiences are supposed to matter less. This claim has rightly been viewed with a good deal of scepticism, its extreme counter-intuitiveness confirming the doubts we may have already formed about other attempts to infer what we ought to do or be concerned with from what we might rationally be supposed to do in what are in fact unreal conditions (as behind Rawls' 'veil of ignorance').[39] But Parfit, not discouraged, has recently compiled a more-than-thousand-page book *On What Matters* (Oxford 2011) – to come up with the answer: Nothing. Which 'improvement' on Sidgwick would seem to suggest that there is no longer need to lie when we are perfectly well able

[38] Parfit (1986: 80–2).

[39] For comment on the (limited) value of thought experiments of this type see Wilkes (1988).

to despair. Parfit, however, far from finding despair inevitable, supposes that in the mere recognition of the 'truth' of what he claims to show us, we shall have been liberated from our excessive care and concern for ourselves, and on that basis be in a position to construct an entirely new and secular view of the world. So he writes: 'Belief in God, or in many gods, prevented the free development of moral reasoning. Disbelief in God, openly admitted by a majority, is a recent event, not yet completed. Non-religious ethics is at a very early stage. We cannot yet predict whether, as in Mathematics, we will all reach agreement. Since we cannot know how ethics will develop, it is not irrational to have high hopes.'[40]

Defying Aristotle's warning that ethics cannot rise to mathematical precision, Parfit offers the hope that it may indeed be enabled to do so if we change the nature of human expectations so drastically that we shall have lost all sense of meaning not only in the universe but also in ourselves. The 'first-person' approach to thinking, pioneered by Augustine in the *Confessions*, will have finally been exorcized as 'scientific' impersonality prevails. Strangely, Parfit supposes that this will induce 'us' to be more altruistic – whatever in his universe that might mean. More likely, could it be achieved, we would merely become – with our instrumental rationality – the agents of some kind – it hardly matters which kind – of ruthless dictator. Love disappears; our individual wills are submerged in the Will of another; with neither altruism nor raw and simple selfishness any longer possible. Only the 'Leader' will matter, albeit irrationally, since nothing and no-one *should* matter. To quote Parfit again: 'I have argued that, in various ways, our reasons for acting should become *more impersonal*. Greater impersonality may seem threatening, but it would often be better for everyone.'[41]

But how much more impersonal? To the degree that we are not even to have a personal preference? Whereas for 'classical' utilitarians like Bentham and Mill we are to privilege our preferences if they promote the greatest good of the greatest number, and whereas for their twentieth-century successors like Rawls[42] and Nozick[43] everyone's preferences should be respected (within reason!), Parfit offers the more radical and seemingly the simplest solution: reduce our preferences by obliterating the belief in our own (or anyone's) importance. At least Parfit should agree with Bentham that rights talk is nonsense upon stilts. Appropriately enough,

[40] Parfit (1986: 454).
[41] Ibid., 443.
[42] Especially in *Political Liberalism* (1975).
[43] Nozick (1974).

at the start of the 'Concluding Chapter' of *Reasons and Persons* (443), he commiserates with Sidgwick's avowed failure and admits to partial failure himself, but insists, unlike Sidgwick, that if others try they will succeed. In a diminished world there is as yet no need to lie – and such reflections will serve to introduce the ultimate (or penultimate) act of our story.

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) has aroused wildly conflicting reactions among atheists and believers alike, some in both camps hailing him as having played a huge and largely positive role. Even among the religious I have heard him proclaimed the Aquinas of the twentieth century. Others – of both groups – from Carnap to Dummett – have condemned him as having done more harm to philosophy than anyone else in recent times. In what follows I examine his intellectual activity after 1930, largely leaving aside his earlier and more useful philosophical investigations (including *Sein und Zeit*) of the work of Brentano and Husserl, and concentrating on how his more recent thinking can be seen as summarizing many of the conclusions (theoretical and practical) of philosophical cultures apparently worlds apart.[44] Yet even in *Sein und Zeit* (1924) certain disturbing features of his later work were already in place – and of course they survived the 'turn' which in 1947 Heidegger himself identified in his position.

Heidegger recognized his beginnings in philosophy as a reaction against the phenomenology of Husserl and that under the influence of Brentano he had called for a return to some form of Aristotelianism in which the distinction between Being and beings is central. He seems to have been drawn in this direction by his one-time theology professor Carl Braig, who also encouraged his early interest in Augustine. Braig, however, had concerned himself primarily with the relationship between Being and beings as formulated by St Bonaventure (and which was to become a commonplace in Scholastic philosophy).[45]

[44] My earlier and still ill-informed intuitions about the nature of Heidegger's later work were confirmed by reading Faye (2012: 111–30). Faye's article is a sequel to his *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* (2009). For a calmly biographical account of Heidegger's Nazism see Sheehan (2006: 70–96).

[45] Braig (1896); note the comments and references of Zaborowski (2009: 183). Heidegger's early interest in Augustine is reflected not least in the work of his pupil (and Jewish (!) lover) Hannah Arendt, whose *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* (Berlin 1929) remained of interest long after Heidegger's transformation of his 'Augustinianism'. As Zaborowski observes, although there are still traces of Augustine in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger, though never entirely forgetting Augustine, shows markedly less interest in him during the 1930s (Zaborowski 2009: 185–8). As we shall see, his later mentality had become unabashedly un-Augustinian.

Heidegger's complaint against Husserl was that his phenomenological emphasis on intentionality, and hence on the human subject (which consequently he misconstrued), was blind to the raw existence of things and thus failed to uproot a subjectivism originally planted by Descartes.[46] He argued that the subjective-objective distinction must be overcome and that the individual person should be understood as *Dasein*, that is, as an experiencing or openness or dwelling in the world, or as a way of being or involvement (*Gewandtnis*) in a world that matters to me but which also enables my 'authentic' self somehow to persist: that is, not to be lost in the 'others'' self. Yet *Dasein* is somehow often 'fallen' into inauthenticity: a fact to be noticed in our unwillingness to face the reality of death as our extinction.[47] Only those who can so face death authentically 'die' – as distinct, that is, from merely perishing as part of some kind of mere event: a matter to which we shall return. An obvious difficulty with all this is that the substantial person might seem to disappear altogether into a varying set of relationships, becoming indefinitely malleable. That, as we shall see, fits better with Heidegger's eventual reduction of metaphysics to historicist politics than to the formation of an improved and adequate (Augustinian) account of personal identity.[48]

In his rejection of Husserl and Descartes, we thus recognize one of the continuing features of Heidegger's thinking: the rejection of any clear concept of the uniqueness of the person or of personality: a radical stance opposed not only to the views of Descartes but to every emphasis on 'first-person' accounts of the world proposed since Augustine's *Confessions*. Though, as we have seen, Heidegger was certainly interested in Augustine in his earlier life, what he drew from him was not the uniqueness of the human individual, but the dependence of every authentic individual on something ontologically superior: for Augustine, of course, on God; for

[46] It was largely Heidegger's hostility to the Cartesian self that won him praise among 'non-Continental' thinkers such as Gilbert Ryle, who thus invoke the dangerous principle 'your enemy is my enemy'. Heidegger's hostility should be recognized not only as posing problems in epistemology but, like Hume's and Feuerbach's, as an attempt to eliminate any Augustinian interiority.

[47] Such ideas of 'fallenness' are already present in *Sein und Zeit* (38.220).

[48] The dangers of Heidegger's approach become particularly obvious when it is (regularly) used by contemporary theologians to discuss the Trinity (and hence human nature as Trinitarian). For it simply will not do to *reduce* the Trinitarian persons to relations instead of more properly saying that they are relational (or in relation). Aristotle thus hits back effectively against Heidegger and his misguided theological followers: misguided in that recognizing that personal substance is in some kind of I-thou relationship, they are led to confuse the Aristotelian categories of substance and relation, thus looking more and more like Feuerbachian projectionists. Were they to use the Stoic category of relation (which *is* substantial) rather than Aristotle's version, they might have more chance of success. It might be argued that Augustine takes something of that step in *De Trinitate*.

Heidegger, first on Being, then on the 'local' instantiation of Being in the German *Volk*.

For Heidegger the contrast between a first-person and a third-person view is supposed to be overcome in *Dasein* (which brings him within range of Parfit who also holds that we need to assume a more impersonal view of ourselves). Yet it remains an open question how Heidegger determines what kind of 'self' is 'authentic', though it is easy to see that the 'Being' to which he refers must itself have some reference and that any scholastic solution which names God or any other *transcendental* item (in the traditional and 'pre-critical' sense of 'transcendental') is to be ruled out as bad metaphysics. Being must be immanent in the universe of beings, but not identical with any of them. Heidegger's solution is that it must be envisaged as somehow historical (as Hegel had also believed). But how?

Along with Heidegger's anti-personalism comes a moral vacuum; he seems consistently to isolate his evocations of spirituality from any kind of traditional moral belief. Already in 1971 MacIntyre had observed, commenting on his (then less well-documented) relationship to the Nazi Party, that there is nothing in *Sein und Zeit* that 'could give one a standpoint from which to criticize it [Nazism] or *any other* irrationalism'.[49] The italicized words are informative in that Heidegger's lack of interest in traditional morality might, it seems, have led him to choose *any* moral code (as, for a while, it led Sartre to choose communism and commit himself to communist-style lying about contemporary events) – just as it may lead any preference theorist unless he restricts himself by preferred – perhaps 'Lockean' – constraints. In emphasizing the apparently open-ended character of Heidegger's 'spirituality', however, MacIntyre bypasses other features of his outlook that explain his specific opting for Nazism as both plausible and deliberate.

The concept of *Dasein* might have directed Heidegger towards a more universal 'concern' for humanity – thus bringing him closer to Bentham; he presumably thought such an opening too indefinite to be adequately meaningful and 'spiritual', perhaps too Kantian in its implication of abstract duty. Considerations of that sort seem to underlie his starting tenet that *Dasein* is 'historically' directed not to humanity as a whole but to the German people. In his earlier days he seems to have seen the connection as simply racial; after the 'turn' – no doubt in part defensively – he tried to explain the German historical mission in terms of the 'inner relationship of the German language with the language of the Greeks and

[49] MacIntyre (1971: 26).

with their thought'.[50] But in his 1934–5 seminar on Hölderlin's *Germania* he liked to emphasize the line *Das 'Vaterland' ist das Seyn Selbst*. That is the *Sein* to which *Dasein* is open.

Heidegger's transformation of the study of Being into a Germanic and *völkisch* ideology derives from this notion of the 'historicity' of the *Dasein*, which can only become perfected if it recognizes itself as the member of a race to which it is driven by fate and for which it has a powerful *eros* – and not to any race at that. Some 'races' (such as 'Kaffirs') have no history, like monkeys and birds;[51] others, like Jews, are parasitic and, especially if assimilated, constitute a threat to the superior and historically authentic stock. Such ideas point to a racist rather than merely linguistic infrastructure – which confirms that the secondary emphasis on language was a recourse conveniently reached for after World War II. Indeed, Heidegger's underlying stance was visible as early as a letter of 1916 in which he writes to his wife that the 'Jewification (*Verjudung*) of our culture and universities is indeed frightening and I think the German race should try to find enough inner strength to come out on top'.[52]

The idea that inferior races are not fully human is particularly visible as late as 1949 when Heidegger, lecturing to the Bremen Club, minimizes the 'production of corpses in the gas-chambers and extermination camps' as a mere example of the effects of industrialization (*GA* 79.27), then claims that the victims cannot be said even to die, merely to perish – the distinction already present in *Sein und Zeit* (247) – because they are historically incapable of an active love of the 'essence of death'. They cannot die (but were merely put down) because dying 'pertains to the *Dasein* of the man who appears out of the essence of being': that is, who is capable of dying, and is prepared to die – if living in the Third Reich, the global expansion of which has been unhappily impeded – in accordance with the historical destiny of the German *Volk*, and more generally 'if and only if being itself appropriates the essence of man into the essence of being on the basis of the truth of its essence' (*GA* 79.56).

In the world as Heidegger saw it we can recognize two features that appear – but only appear – to be in conflict. The first derives immediately from the identification of the *Dasein* with the historical destiny of

[50] From an interview in *Der Spiegel* (31 May 1976), 'Only a God Can Save Us' (translated by M. O. Alter and J. D. Caputo in *Philosophy Today* and reprinted by Wolin (1993: 113).

[51] See *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache* (Heidegger's lecture course of summer 1934, ed. G. Seubold, as *GA* 38.81, 84 [Frankfurt 1998]). References to Heidegger will henceforth be to the *Gesamtausgabe* (*GA*).

[52] *Briefe Martin Heideggers an seine Frau Elfride* (selected by G. Heidegger, Munich 2005) 51, cited by Faye (2012: 114).

the German race and the consequent necessity for the German individual to adopt the 'harsh' measures required to achieve victory in the struggle (*Kampf*, as in *Mein Kampf*) for domination[53]: as well as other activities such as denouncing traitors to the political police, as did Heidegger himself at Freiburg. Thus all such personalization of destiny allows him to speak of total war and in particular of the motorization of the *Wehrmacht* as 'metaphysical' acts: metaphysical, that is, in the sense of acts of historical necessity. Similarly, as we have seen, it allows him to speak – even after the war – of gas chambers and extermination camps as merely expectable effects of industrialization. The end – German domination – is to be achieved by the metaphysical employment of mechanized means.

Mechanization, however, has its darker side – here the apparent contradiction appears – in that it tempts us to forget the superiority of pure spirit: an unfortunate side effect Heidegger presumably hopes can be overcome once the 'New Man' has been finally developed by the Führer[54] – for we have seen many desiderate new creations and New Humanities before, since 1789 – in his world-historical and metaphysically appropriate place. Thereafter a life no longer mechanized but modelled on that of an idyllic old world of craftsmen can be pursued by those left dwelling in the newly established Thousand-Year Paradise. 'These things shall be, a loftier race than e'er the world has seen shall rise.'

After the regrettable but necessary period of mechanization and industrialization we reach the higher spiritual goal developed, at least in part, out of Heidegger's anti-Cartesianism, and in some respects recalling the dreams of Rousseau: from a longing to return to an innocent, *völkisch*, para-peasant society in which Cartesian desires to manipulate natural man and nature itself are transcended, where folk accompany the reaper in the

[53] Faye rightly points to the number of occasions when Heidegger feels compelled to use the word 'harsh' or some equivalent (Faye 2012: 112, 116). Himmler's addresses to the SS are similarly replete with such language. For a full-scale treatment of Nazi vocabulary see Klemperer (2006). For Heidegger's exploitation of Heraclitus' discussion of war to promote the belief in the rightness of a natural German domination see Faye (2012: 111–12): the German must 'struggle' against the enemy, and if necessary invent him. Heidegger, Faye notes, is promoting this kind of struggle at the very moment when Hitler is directing the Gestapo to work on similar principles. Such synchronization resembles that effected by Pohlenz that purportedly intends to show that Cicero's ideal statesman was '*Kein Revolutionär*' at the moment when Hitler, having suppressed the SA ('*jugendlicher Sturmer*') in the Night of the Long Knives, was courting German business leaders (Pohlenz 1934: 143).

[54] 'When the Führer speaks continually of re-education … that does not mean inculcate some slogans, but rather bring about a total transformation … on the foundation of which he educates the entire people' [From Heidegger's 1933–4 course on *Die Grundfrage der Philosophie* (*GA* 36/37.225)]. On the new man required to use mechanization metaphysically, for both military and (later) exterminatory acts see *Nietzsche II*, 165–6.

fields, where the old songs can be sung, where women can presumably live barefoot, regularly pregnant and in the kitchen – though if German they, like the reaper, will be helped in their merry tasks by extensively cultivated slave labour provided by the lower races – and where their children will be allowed to grow up if and only if they meet at least an approximately Germanic perfection. Mechanized extermination will now, Heidegger seems to expect, be completed and those who have 'perished' without history will soon be forgotten.[55] In his love of nature, at least, Heidegger has transcended the over-personalized pantheism of the Romantics; in his new vision of a post-Christian 'culture' – increasingly backed by eulogies of the 'poetic', not least among the ancient Greeks – which is to succeed a failed and abject Christianity, he has transcended the semi-Christian culture of Arnold and Leavis, though like them he is prone to use inherited religious language ('soul', 'sacrifice', 'spiritual' etc.) as evocative colouring for his own non-religious, indeed anti-religious *Kulturkampf*; in advocating *Dasein's* total openness to the racist state he has transcended what will be the desiderate post-personalism of Parfit.

Faye argues that Heidegger used Being as a code name (*Denkname*) until with Hitler's accession to power he was able to speak more freely. But it is not merely a code name by which, as Heidegger says himself in a letter of 1943, 'Something is hidden'.[56] Heidegger seems genuinely

[55] It is the sad merit of Faye's work (building on that of others) to show that Heidegger never repented of his 'exterminatory will' and indeed planned the publication of his works to keep its memory green. It is a mark of the corruption of philosophy (already apparent in the case of Heidegger himself and many of his contemporaries) that his blend of traditional metaphysical language with the bleak hatreds of Nazism is still explained away (as a temporary aberration, as not affecting the core of his thought etc.). To the guilty parties mentioned by Faye himself, one must add the name of Michael Wheeler whose lengthy essay on Heidegger in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* indulges in the same sophistry. After an apparently accurate and balanced start, Wheeler quotes Heidegger's words from his *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935) 166: 'Works are being pedaled (about) nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism but have nothing whatever to do with the inner Truth and Greatness of this movement.' According to Wheeler this tells us that 'Heidegger came to believe that the spiritual leaders of the Nazi party were false gods'. But that is not what Heidegger says nor what he continued to preach: so (for example) in 1941, lecturing on *Nietzsche's Metaphysics* he describes extermination (*Vernichtung*) – already advocated in 1933 (*GA* 36/37 90–1) – in terms of the 'metaphysical necessity' of racial selection 'to the utmost consequences' so as to rule out 'the surge of all that brings decadence about' (*GA* 50 59–60). Underplaying or ignoring such remarks – some have even defended them as an *attack* on radical eugenics! – can perhaps in Wheeler's case be better understood if we look at his own reference to his pre-philosophical life. We are invited to 'click on' for further information. If we do, we find a heavy metal site identified as Hell's Headbangers and devoted to music distribution (including that of Wheeler's own group 'Triarchy'): Triarchy sits alongside other groups offering blasphemous and satanic images, Gothic script and overtly Nazi overtones (specimens include 'Upheaval of Blasphemy', 'Heathendom Incarnate' etc.).

[56] The recipient is Kurt Bauch (*Briefwechsel 1932–1975*, vol. II.I (Freiburg 2010) 92).

to have believed he was 'doing' metaphysics: the metaphysics of a Being immanent in history and transcending any mere everyday beings in their historical succession. For just as Being, identified with God for such as Bonaventure, must transcend all else, so Heidegger's immanent version must enjoy the same metaphysical – and in Heideggerian 'spirituality' also moral – immunity.

For Heidegger historical destiny – and hence truth[57] – for there is a sense in which he is a pragmatist – is worked out through individuals, within a racist framework, so that long after the utter defeat of National Socialism, he was still claiming in 1976 that 'only a God can save us'. Earlier, of course, he could be more explicit about that god's immanence: even in *Sein und Zeit* he was already speaking of the time when the *Dasein* chooses its 'hero' and is prepared to fight (384–5). By 1934, in a lecture course we have already noticed, he was able to identify that fighting – in the light of the present historical situation – as the *Kampf* under the spiritual guidance of the *Führer* himself (*GA* 36/37, 118, 225 etc.). 'Only when leader and led together bind each other in one destiny, and fight for the resolution of one idea, does true order grow.… Then the existence and superiority of the *Führer* sink down into the soul of the *Volk*, and thus bind it authentically (*mit Ursprünglichkeit*) to the task.' 'God' indeed is back, incarnate in, even again somehow 'spiritually' transcendent over his 'free' *Volk*. The impersonal *Dasein* of the individual is fulfilled in its relationship to the state, but the *Dasein* of the state as a corporate individual can only be fulfilled in an 'openness' towards a human god incarnate, the transfigured individual Adolf Hitler. Nietzsche's superman was a generalized construction not especially German – the Will to power was a challenge to all to be heroic – and he was still an 'Aristotelian' substance. With Heidegger the abstract has become concretized; 'substance' has gone, beings are transformed into relativities and Being itself has been reduced to a post-humanity in the form of a 'spiritual', but anti-moral, 'human god'.

Thus we near the end of our journey from an Augustinian through a post-Augustinian world. Secular humanism has apparently reached its highest or lowest point – whatever your preference. In the vision of the matured Heidegger, 'dwelling in' – as the Leader dwells in his people and they are able to live and die authentically only in him – has largely replaced

[57] For 'truth' as 'disclosedness' as existing solely as the history of man, see again the 1933–4 seminar *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (*GA* 36/37, 225).

temporality as the key to the relationship between Being and beings. In his apotheosis of lying and self-deception as well as of the wilful deception of others, Heidegger's defeat of the human subject has grandiosely transcended the more banal and immediately – it seems – less toxic projects of Mill and Sidgwick, Blackburn and Smilansky.[58] Yet fortunately, but at great cost, Heidegger's vision has so far failed to reach its eschatological conclusion, though *mutatis mutandis* it remains very much in the air.

If, however, we wonder whether our culture's retreating steps could be reversed, we should not delude ourselves into thinking that the moral vacuity of Heidegger and the triumph of (some kind of) Will is the only nihilism on offer. For modern nihilism, as we have seen, comes in not one but two broadly distinguishable flavours, separate or in combination: the apathetic (as in Parfit's 'nothing-much-matters') and the explicitly destructive, as in Nazism with its cult of death tarted up with the academic rationalizations of Heidegger.[59] To taste these two flavours with more discrimination we can turn, however briefly, to two further 'modern' individuals: Jean-Paul Sartre (plus Simone de Beauvoir, dubbed by her admiring radicals of the sixties 'Notre Dame de Sartre') and Richard Rorty. Apparently very different from each other, Sartre and Rorty share with Heidegger the ability to mask a destructive nihilism with an apparent, if over-reactive, concern to right injustices. In his communist phase, Sartre (the apparent 'muse' of Pol Pot) combined lying and an admiration for brutal dictators with a passion, as he claimed, to secure the People's Good (as analogously did De Beauvoir in trying to rectify much genuine injustice to the Second Sex while at the same time supplying her man with an apparently endless succession of exploitable younger women[60]); in his pragmatic final phase Rorty chose democracy – he just happened to like it – as a fig leaf for his underlying belief in nothing, characteristically observing that the profound disagreement in the eighteenth century

[58] Note Faye's comment that 'In the 1980's, Hugo Ott proved that the self-justification of his rectorship produced by Heidegger in 1945 is a text whose every sentence contains an omission or a lie' (Faye 2012: 113). In an analogous case, MacIntyre has pointed to the naïve surprise of the admirers of Paul de Man when he was exposed as a Nazi sympathizer and anti-Semite (MacIntyre 1991: 211). Quite shamelessly – without any apparent regret – De Man was able to 'forget' his past when teaching at Yale, being in this respect (like Heidegger) an 'applied' version of Nietzsche. Convenient 'forgetfulness' can be developed both as a metaphysical thesis and as an academic rationalization of past criminality.

[59] As early as 1933 the ex-Nazi turned anti-Nazi Hermann Rauschning entitled his account of the movement *The Revolution of Nihilism*, while during the Nuremburg Trials Goering said that he joined the [Nazi] Party because he was a revolutionary, not because of all the ideological nonsense.

[60] The paradox is deepened if we reflect on the at least lucid comment of one of the (American) revolutionaries of the sixties that in the revolution the only position for a woman is horizontal.

between Danton and Robespierre and in literature between (Sophocles') Antigone and Creon was sadly unresolved because none of them put in sufficient effort to reach a deal – and thus revealing that he had no idea what moral disagreement is about or that there could be such a subject as moral philosophy.[61]

Nihilism often deludes the naïve idealist with claims to benefit humanity or some idealized part of it, but its driving force, whether in the Death's Head insignia of the Stormtroopers or in the war cry 'Viva la muerte' of early twentieth-century Mexican revolutionaries or in the more banal (even apparently edifying) claim that personal identity does not matter, is a love of death, a claim – in direct opposition to the Christian tradition – that humanity is trivial – or perhaps (as Augustine might prefer to put it) yet another desperate attempt in modern or postmodern guise to annihilate the *fear* of all-conquering death by vaunting not glory (as did the ancient Romans), but if not destructiveness then the banality and worthlessness (despite the varying advocacy of altruism or of *grandeur* for those who 'deserve' it) of life itself.[62]

[61] For further comment on Rorty see Rist's review (2008: 662–4) of *Philosophy as Cultural Politics, Philosophical Papers 4*.

[62] Translating Spaemann, Sokolowski cites: 'Death is the triumph of the trivial.… Death is the triumph of facticity over any possible experience of meaning' (Sokolowski 2010: 47).

CHAPTER 13

Whither Lady Philosophy: Muse, Call Girl, Valkyrie?

> Englishman: 'Does it matter which road I take to Braemar?'
> Scot: 'Nae to me.'
>
> Urban myth: heard in Aberdeen

> 'I would be a Papist if I could. I have fear enough; but an obstinate rationality prevents me.'
>
> Dr Johnson

In the *Republic* Plato introduces Lady Philosophy as courted, like Penelope in the *Odyssey*, by a throng of unworthy suitors; however, she survived intact to console Boethius in his cell before he was clubbed to death. Had Boethius been left to live long enough to complete his hardly begun project of translating Plato and Aristotle into Latin, the course of European thought might have been very different because the Augustinian picture of God and man would have been challenged by Aristotelianism – though perhaps defended by a more powerful and genuine Platonism – long before the thirteenth century.

Yet the eventual history, though less drawn out, might have finished in the same way. For as, in the person of Hypatia, Lady Philosophy was hacked to pieces by monks, so the apparently seamless garb of Augustinianism was hacked piecemeal in the first instance by their clerical successors, most of whom supposed they were Augustinians. These then handed on the dismembered limbs to soon-to-be-less-reverend successors, who tried to patch them up or preserve them as relics in secular reliquaries where they could perform no further works of healing and were eventually hijacked by people who had come to hate their original owner. Being now parts without a whole, they could be displayed as trophies by those who first argued against an Augustinian (or any other) God, then boasted that they had (more or less) killed him off, then helped themselves to trappings of his religious language to promote an ex- or post-Christian culture. Eventually with the mangled pieces stacked up, uncomprehended, in a museum vault where few bothered even to inspect them, the attention of

the curators turned from deicide to homicide, the more shameless of Lady Philosophy's suitors advocating Nazism or nihilism, while others gave her up altogether and flirted instead with comparative literature, hermeneutics or downright banalities to which – as Plato had originally said – they were well suited. With Lady Philosophy dragged down to the level of her suitors and her few remaining admirers left wondering whether she can be retrieved – they share something like Jerome's (and Anselm's) anxiety as to whether even God can restore lost virginity – it is time to summarize the course of her ruination.

In her Augustinian avatar Lady Philosophy was not without flaws, of which only those concerned with the will, love and the choice of evil have been much treated here. Of these flaws some were readily apparent, others more deeply hidden, and as I noticed at an early stage of the present enquiry, errors and incoherencies can be handed down intact or made worse by attempted corrections. When eventually Lady Philosophy's garment fell apart, she was dressed up in others – ever more ill fitting, and so things went from bad to worse.

That the present book is developed from two separate chapters on Augustine is a measure of the variegated nature of his thought. He was always a very busy man, with projects many of which took years to complete, and in many ways he was more exegete than systematic thinker. It is by no means clear that he could have resolved all the difficulties in what he taught; he himself owned to uncertainty on a vitally important question: the origin of the soul. At the end of his life he was more concerned to ensure that Pelagians should draw no comfort from his writings than that he should tie up the loose ends, some of which were very loose indeed. So the origin of the soul and the unity of the human person aside – a very big 'aside' – we can soon proceed to list the problems with which we have been concerned. First, however, we must attend directly to a question which has lurked beneath our entire enquiry, and which even makes it difficult to determine – in modern terms – what kind of book this is intended to be: the problem of the relationship – historical, actual and desirable – between philosophy and theology.

The perils facing Lady Philosophy, as I have noted, were first pointed out by Plato, and Plato, like his master Socrates, was a very religious man: not, that is, a man to confuse problems of ethics, metaphysics and philosophical psychology with eschatological questions (The unhappiness of the tyrannical man is 'demonstrated' in the first nine books of the *Republic* before eschatology is treated in book 10.), but a thinker who moved effortlessly from ethics to transcendental metaphysics and what we would call natural

theology. He has little 'revealed' data, though his attitude to Socrates' 'divine sign' and to the inspired sayings of poets and prophets who, *qua* poets and prophets, did not understand what they might disclose, shows that he would be in no way immune to sitting in rational judgement on revealed material. We can conclude that he would not be easily satisfied with our present distinction between philosophy and theology, nor agree that they should be studied in separate academic departments.

Augustine's attitude in this respect is similar to that of Plato, as is that of Boethius. Though the *Consolation* makes no mention of Christianity, that is not surprising in the ancient context: we can and should (as Augustine taught in the *City of God*) see what can be done without revelation first – and, as Augustine supposed of the Platonists, quite a lot can be done provided we are not too arrogant and pig-headed about it. 'Theology' for Boethius, as for Augustine, is simply advanced philosophy, and if you are willing to trust its 'professors' you can learn true opinions (and not merely correct practices) without doing the hard philosophical work yourself. Anselm had the same view; that is why some of his modern admirers conclude that he is a proto-analytic philosopher of religion. Their astonishment at this discovery is intensified by the further fact that soon after Anselm's time – for reasons largely beyond our present concerns, but turf wars come into the story then as now – philosophy and theology were separated into distinct faculties in the new universities: professors always like to define their subject matter precisely and may thereby unnaturally diminish it. Although theology was supposed to rule as queen over the other disciplines, including 'philosophy', the initial separation could hardly avoid aggrandizing the distinction between two different sets of subject matter and concerns. Augustine, rightly, would have hated it.

That prefaced, we can proceed to summarize the themes of the present study as we have watched poor Lady Philosophy, damned as the Devil's Whore by Luther, almost vindicate the Reformer's bile by adopting the garb of an instrumental call girl for the post-Humeans and of a Valkyrie for the totalitarians. Which themes were as follows:

1. The growing cleavage between love and will.

Here the problem goes back to Augustine himself, who blends Stoic accounts of willing and deciding with Platonic theories of the formation of character by differing loves. Not only modern scholars but also his medieval successors have been confused by the lack of systematic treatment, leading (from the time of Anselm at least) to discussion of choice and decision with little reference to the loves that according to Augustine form our dispositions.

2. The problem of the fall of the angels, and hence of the possible choice of evil. Augustine's solution – God must have denied (or could not but have denied) Satan grace to persevere – was, tacitly at least, held to derogate from his goodness and justice. The blame had to be put unambiguously on Satan, yet if possessed of full knowledge, why should he go astray? It began to look either like bad luck or at least incomprehensible to us. The latter might have been the right answer, but not least because of the apparent (though ill-considered) parallel with Adam, further explanation was deemed essential. Satan could be seen as a 'self-mover', but if an apparently perfect self-mover moved in the wrong direction, what hope would there be for anyone else, not least for Adam? And if Adam's fall was necessary, why was Satan's so unnecessary as to be irredeemable? Beneath all this lay Augustine's inadequate account of omnipotence which during the fourteenth century came to point first to overemphasis on God's *potentia absoluta*, then to a more general emphasis on the raw will (both human and divine), then during and after the Enlightenment to dangerous accounts of human triumphs of the will and of versions of a dehumanized and dehumanizing General Will. Totalitarian will flourished after angel and demonic wills had long been forgotten, their problems given up as apparently insoluble.

3. The problem of Adam's fall is difficult in that it was a fall from Paradise. But Adam's previous situation was hard to understand. In denying that he was a mere child or moral primitive – as a fall from Paradise seemed to preclude – Augustine had committed him to a fault unnecessarily similar to that of Satan. For though Eve was corrupted by Satan, it was again hard to see how she could have been, let alone how she was also able to corrupt a knowing Adam. Augustine's proposal that Adam put love for his wife above love for God was known but effectively lost sight of in many more abstract medieval treatments of self-motivation as essential to the explanation, since without that Adam could not be justly blamed for his acts. Thus the problem of free choice trumped discussion of the dilemmas of love.

4. It was the problem of why Satan chose evil that pushed Anselm to isolate a faculty he (and others) labelled the 'will', whence discussions of wrongdoing came to be phrased as asking whether the 'will' or the 'intellect' is ultimately the guilty party. Augustine's Platonizing assumption that the intellect was not merely cognitive but also affective disappeared. Eventually Descartes' account of the mind as a kind of computer was developed from one side of the dichotomy; the notion of a voluntarist 'will', both for man and for God being the other side. That generated

the problem of whether a properly 'free' act required a choice between alternate possibilities – as Augustine had specifically denied – and also of whether God's will is arbitrary, and if not, how can it not be.

5. With the development of monasticism, and because of concerns as to whether Augustine's eudaimonism was ultimately selfish, friendship with God began to displace passionate love for him. Passionate friendship between monks – affecting what should have been the wholly different relationship between man and God – was obviously problematic. Certainly Scripture could portray saved men and women as God's friends, but with the downplaying of Platonizing Augustine's passionate devotion to God and the Good not only did God become more 'ordinary' – pointing to the seventeenth century's tendency to reduce religion to morality – but the motivation which Augustine held necessary for perseverance disappeared as well.

During the Middle Ages the loss of passion was partly offset by the growth of a sacramental formalism (which I have not discussed), but there was no need for the one to replace (rather than supplement) the other; when it did, it fostered a tendency for Christianity to degenerate into merely sacramental practice, much of which Protestants described pejoratively as 'hocus-pocus' or 'mumbo-jumbo'. Furthermore, with the growing suspicion of Platonizing and motivating passion grew the demand for ultimately indefensible accounts of obligation and duty. Cumberland, Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists recognized something of the perverse trend but were impotent to do much about it, not least because many theists had come to rely on voluntarism and divine command morality to shore up a sense of obligation that the love of God had originally supplied. Hence the abandonment of motivating love pointed to demand for new sources of obligation, divine or human, until the eventual abandonment of obligation itself pointed towards man as machine – and in need of a superhuman and world-historical operative.

6. The separation in the medieval universities of philosophy from theology pointed towards the Protestant account of salvation as strictly external (well represented by Luther's notion of imputed righteousness) and to the not unrelated development of a morality essentially distinct from salvation, as movement towards Christian perfection as such no longer reflected moral and spiritual progress. Grace is for salvation, morality for the damned (not least in politics) so long as they continue in the present life. That would eventually lead to the *replacement* of a search for salvation by the search for the more or less 'secular' good life. The problem then became how to ground such a 'good' life either metaphysically or in some

other way. A major cause of the separation of salvation from 'morality' was failure to agree whether Augustine was right – or even to understand what he meant – when he accounted 'pagan virtues' vices rather than virtues. If he was wrong, then how are non-Christian 'virtues' to be evaluated? Pre-modern understandings of the necessity of baptism exacerbated the difficulty.

7. Augustinian Christianity depended on the notion that all human beings have a natural desire, indeed longing (*eros*, *intentio*) not only for their own specific good but for the Good as such. The gradual weakening of such an understanding of final causation in philosophical psychology (notable in and after Scotus) pointed towards the later and more radical abandonment of final causation – and not only materially. But while in physics this led to significant scientific advances – albeit at a high metaphysical price – the revolution in *psychological* theory largely removed from human beings the Augustinian 'higher freedom' of desiring only the good, pointing in its place towards an extreme freedom of indeterminacy that implied that morally speaking nothing matters except 'free' choice or autonomy itself.

8. Further casualties of the early modern period (despite the attempted ultra-Augustinian reaction) included original sin (thus allowing for a facile or infuriated optimism about the human condition), the concept that we are one in Adam (thus allowing for the development of the isolated modern, hence 'free' individual, liberated both from God and his fellows), and soon the traditional association of existence with goodness (thus allowing for the possibility of good suicides and historically justified genocide).

9. The voluntarist account of God led to the belief that a new naturalism (as distinct from the naturalism of Aristotle as adapted to Christian theism by Aquinas and others) required a divine command morality. Not only could morality (as in Locke) not be sustained without divine command, but without such exigency it would lack appeal to 'natural' human beings. Without divine commands the internal conflicts within human nature could never be 'morally' resolved. Some sort of renewed (Platonizing) emphasis on love and grace would have helped, as, in different ways Cumberland, the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz recognized.

10. Voluntarist accounts of God – combined with fundamentalist exegesis of Scripture, especially of the Old Testament – led (during the eighteenth century if not before) to the Christian God appearing morally disreputable and liable to encourage superstition, the latter charge being adapted from mainstream Protestant attitudes to Papists. Hence arguments from morality [backed by objections to Christianity's apparent

exclusivism and parochialism ('How odd of God to choose the Jews'.)] were developed to explain God's necessary non-existence.

11. God removed but the assumed necessity of morality retained, disagreement broke out whether moral claims should be cognitivist (Kant) or (with Hutcheson and Hume) non-cognitivist. In the absence of metaphysical support both possibilities began to look ever more implausible. Extreme solutions, as that morality is mere social glue or, with Mandeville, useful hypocrisy – while private vices benefit society as a whole – became increasingly acceptable.

12. While cognitivist accounts of human nature were developed in line with Descartes' account of man as essentially a rational machine, their apparent reductionism encouraged a non-cognitivism that might take pseudo-Platonic form in the Romantic Movement – the purely emotional love of beauty – or might develop towards an emphasis on the 'beauty' of the raw will, often to be seen (as in Nietzsche) as will to power. That in its turn generated the creed of wilful man (seen as a creative genius) replacing a wilful God. The French Revolution and the Terror would constitute the first demonstration of the likely results of such 'enlightened' thinking.

13. Problems about the fall of the angels had long disappeared from view, but concern about 'free will' remained on the secularists' table. Freedom had come increasingly to be seen as autonomy – the claim to be able to act as unrestrictedly as possible, like some versions of the voluntarist God. That claim trumped not only Augustinian religion but also the bourgeois morality seen earlier as adequate substitute. Everything should now (theoretically) be tolerated, but that proving socially impossible, Lockean caveats were introduced to show how autonomy could be rationally restricted. Unhappily no principled ground for such caveats – associated with the emphasis on subjective rights – could be satisfactorily established.

14. Kant attempted to redefine autonomy; to this day 'nice people' like his solution because it seems to protect the notion of duties. But tied to Kant's impossible account of psychology, it rests on a view of the sanctity of the human person that Kant had inherited from Christianity and could not defend without making Christian assumptions to which he was logically not entitled. Not only Kantians but others of widely different philosophical stripes (such as the utilitarian Sidgwick) tried to reconcile duty with happiness, Kant having excluded eudaimonistic motives from strict morality. Some at least (such as Sidgwick) were honest enough to admit they had failed.

15. Now that the Kantians had excluded from morality even the friendship which medievals had tried to substitute for a less dispassionate Christian love, discussion of it virtually ceased. Morality was looking not just hypocritical (as eighteenth-century radicals and libertines had already denounced it) but emotionally impossible. The dutiful 'altruism' of an affect-less Christianity which such more recent psychologists as Erich Fromm have decried in Lutheranism had now been relocated – bringing all its psychological damage – in the heart of its secular descendants; indeed the latter were eventually to reject not only Romantic affect (and its later 'emotivist' philosophical defenders) but Kantian and Cartesian rationality at the same time. If we ask why romantic love failed to engage philosophically, we need only look at Verlaine, Toulouse-Lautrec, Proust and other particularly French disillusioned Romantics; it failed because too much was expected of it. As idolatry its deception could hardly avoid becoming transparent – as Augustine long before had grasped.

16. Already with Hume (then Feuerbach and others) scepticism had widened its attack from objective metaphysics (and with that God) to include the autonomous self that Kant, in the footsteps of Descartes, had tried to develop as subjective source of objective morality. Feuerbach indeed managed to *combine* an account of God as the projection of consolatory thinking with a dissolution of the very consoling self that had projected him! That pointed towards our more contemporary dissolution of the human person and of the importance of 'first-person' accounts of the moral universe (and hence of value) as a corollary to the by now well-established evacuation of (the more or less traditional) God.

17. A religion of culture, developed during the nineteenth century from Renaissance and Enlightened apotheoses of man – themselves reactions to medieval and Reformation accounts stigmatizing him as despicable and radically corrupt – led to an attempt by literary critics, elevated to high priests of the cult of art, to formulate a literary canon, a 'cultural Bible' that succumbed in turn to 'Nietzschean' deconstructions of the motives of its progenitors, its authority being replaced by that of a succession of ideological 'theories' (Marxist, Freudian, feminist etc.) which dictated the texts we had a right to value. But all such theories have gradually succumbed to further Nietzschean deconstruction, both before and during the contemporary postmodern phase.

18. The French Revolution showed how a political and social version of the commanding will ('holy' or otherwise) could be found in re-tooling and transforming Rousseau's notions about a 'General Will', such as instantiated in 'vanguard' individuals or groups, and could present an

alternative, within the new secularism, to the divinization of the wills of heroic individuals. It might divinize humanity or parts of it (the people, or the working-class or the *Volk*) as some sort of corporate individual (or corporate state) whose individual units had been corrupted by civil society in general or some historical form of it, such as the *ancien régime*, the Church or the bourgeoisie. In this form it might seem to preach the return to a long lost natural state still present in some sort of group (or racial) memory. Or it might also – and more commonly did – stand for some sort of consciousness of historical destiny (as in Hegelianism and Marxism) to which the parochial concerns of individuals and their petty morality must obviously be subordinated, so that a New Man (but of course no longer a regenerated Christian man) might emerge.

19. Along with earlier varieties of the General Will there had appeared a new (and certainly overdue) concern not merely with the vices of individuals but with systemic injustices, many of which (such as slavery) had traditionally been thought inevitable or even necessary effects of the fall of man. With the growth of a wider humanism of this sort, however, there also developed (especially among utilitarians) a willingness (parallel to that engendered by the General Will itself and sometimes in co-operation with it) to sacrifice individual welfare to the correction of unjust social institutions and the presumed good of humanity. In this respect the urge to eliminate systemic injustice (in a later developed theological language 'structures of sin') also exacerbated anti-metaphysical tendencies that gradually diminished the significance of personal identity, indeed of individual persons as such.

20. With God killed off and the self (once viewed as his image) dissolved, Lady Philosophy tried to hold out the promise of becoming a less personal self: less personal, that is, in the sense of having no subjective or first-personal reality, thus approximating to a machine. Her degradation from Muse to instrument reflected a tendency in the newly impersonal world to return to the pre-Christian valuation of sexual, and other, relations – still only minimally corrected by Christian ideals – as ultimate goods – when not analogous to those between master and chattel. Subjectivism thus followed objectivism in philosophy into a near oblivion from which Heidegger could dramatize the new redemption: the pure relativity of the individual person (*Dasein*) is to merge into the supposedly objective destiny of the race – in the case of the Germanic to which he happened to belong – as the corporate apotheosis of Nietzsche's superman. Philosophers are to cease thinking about *what* we are or might become and concern themselves only with *that* we are. Nietzsche would not have approved but could hardly have

denied the 'higher reality' of the result. In the Anglo-American tradition a less immediately toxic solution has been sought by Parfit and others who want to expound how ultimately nothing (or nothing much) matters after all, and that the sooner we recognize this, the happier (even the more altruistic!) we shall become. Lady Philosophy has found suitors who not only want to dishonour her but to compass her non-existence. Anglo-American and Continental philosophers are at least in this now significantly united – in their *concupiscentia* for anti-personalism.

21. Heidegger and Parfit offer pessimistic solutions that they purvey as optimistic. Heidegger also developed more familiar techniques: lying and deceiving as offering the best solution to our remaining perplexities. That move, foreshadowed by delusions about the sacredness of the human and of human culture, had been first formally proposed by utilitarians honest enough to admit philosophical failure but seeking a cover-up in the interests of social 'justice' and humanitarianism. Eventually lying and deceiving about ethics (and for Comteans perhaps about new versions of religion) are to lay the 'foundations' of 'virtual morality': the parading of foundationless assumptions about virtue in which often traditional conclusions, now unsupported by a serious meta-ethics, are foisted on an ignorant public much tempted to believe that 'in the end' nothing matters, and looking somehow to fill the consequent moral and intellectual void of the time before they die.

And as we have noticed, lying and deceiving about morality can do more than ward off boredom: they are the last hope of providing the social glue needed to protect us against wide recognition of the nihilist (and therefore dangerous) universe which the liars and deceivers themselves believe (*Unter vier Augen*) to be the real world. Deceptions may adopt either totalitarian or pseudo-democratic forms: in the latter version the public are systematically or systemically misled into believing themselves to be free and in charge of their own destiny, political and otherwise. Thus at last truth has gone the same way as goodness (entailing real morality) and beauty (even seen as a mere cultural substitute for religion rather than as affording a glimpse of the metaphysical mysteries of the universe). It has become at best a pragmatic usefulness, supported on a deception equally pragmatic. Among virtual moralists, concern for 'humanity' regularly trumps concern for individuals – indeed often accompanies a cavalier contempt for their 'petty' concerns: a tradition that, appropriately enough, they have inherited from their utilitarian predecessors.

22. From the sixteenth century on, those who should have inherited at least memories of an older and more Augustinian world have – in effect

if not in intention – largely failed to notice the steady regress developing around them. Perhaps it is not too late to remind their intellectual representatives that they should cease talking among themselves about legalistic or liturgical niceties – cease, that is, rearranging the deckchairs for the intellectual *Titanic*[1] – and begin to recover and correct Augustine's account of the universe and of the tragic condition of mankind. Nor should they agree to debate on the reductionist terms of their opponents – by assuming, that is, that they must accept a philosophical world in which Kant and above all Hume is necessarily king;[2] rather they should understand that if they do that, they are defeated from the outset. Might I, even frivolously, propose that someone tell me what is wrong with the following post-Nietzschean revision of Anselm, and having done so that he or she proceed to formulate a corrected and untendentious version:

> If anything matters, God exists; it matters whether God exists; *ergo* God exists.

Nietzsche observed (rightly) that we have not killed God while we still believe in grammar. But do we in the twenty-first century still believe that grammar matters? Or do we think that the now dishonoured Lady Philosophy should be seen no longer as the Devil's Whore (there being no devil), but as the manipulating instrumentalist's moll, or as an SS recruit, or perhaps such as to fade into mindless oblivion 'in this world if not the next'?

Surprisingly I find I have not quite reached the end of my tale. During the past few years there has arrived the inevitable attempt to reinvent Augustine in postmodern guise. Several even avowedly post-Christian postmodernists (in the steps of the early Heidegger) have shown considerable interest in Augustine, so that this might seem to constitute that new beginning of Augustinianism I have desiderated. However, 'postmodernism', as

[1] My comment should not be read as implying that no notice should be taken of what might be called the 'desacralization' of much (Western) Christian art, in parallel to the secularization of moral thinking which has been partly chronicled in the present book. For while it is incorrect to argue that from the Renaissance religious art has become solely decorative or at best didactic, that is, shorn of those more theological implications which (it is falsely argued) are only properly retained in a tradition of icon painting where the individuality of the artist is suppressed, we are in denial if we are unwilling to recognize that in the less formalized artistic tradition which has developed since Giotto and Duccio, a greater opportunity for originality has gone hand in hand with a greater risk of replacing a possible transcendence with the merely subjective. A parallel with the excesses of literary romanticism resolving themselves into subjective ideology is obvious. For a fascinating introduction to this theme see Brunet (2013: 139–65).

[2] Some of the essays in Oderberg and Chappell (2004) are a helpful introduction to such a project.

generally understood, implies a Nietzschean critique of modernity, deconstructing its 'grand narratives' and asserting that they mask mere perspectives. One such 'grand narrative' is the progessivist secularism – what MacIntyre called the 'encyclopedism' – of modernity, which secularism is itself a latter-day derivative of that broadly Augustinian world-picture which also constitutes a grand narrative. And given that postmodernism accepts much of the Heideggerian assault on traditional metaphysics – which it dismisses as 'onto-theology' – any new Augustinianism using its techniques must demonstrate that Augustine's world view does not fall under the Heideggerian ban. Otherwise, and insofar as postmodern ideas purport to demolish 'modernity' (in which they would seem to be allies of a possible revived Augustinianism), they must serve to demolish Augustinianism at the same time.

Yet a number of religious thinkers, such as John Milbank and other exponents of Radical Orthodoxy – with them Jean-Luc Marion, author of *Au lieu de soi: L'approche de Saint Augustin*, who writes much of *eros* – all claim to find in several features of postmodernism a more or less authentic appropriation of Augustine. Hence it is necessary to inspect these features briefly, even though they touch on wider aspects of Augustine's thought than have been the subject matter of my own more limited project:

1 First there is the 'decentring' of the Cartesian self and its replacement by various perspectives; this might seem in line with Augustine's claim to be a mystery to himself. Yet while it is true that Augustine is a pioneer of first-person perspectives on the world and of a degree (but only a degree) of privileged access to one's own thoughts and self, and so to a degree appears as an ancestor of Descartes, his account of what it is to know the 'I' is altogether different from the latter's. Whereas Descartes infers consequences from 'I think, therefore I am', Augustine ponders on 'I am deceived (*fallor*), therefore I am'. So far from the certainty of my own existence being any kind of foundation for recovering the world, Augustine – in this closer to Hume – refuses to move from the fact *that* I am to the Cartesian claim that I know *what* I am, being importantly aware that I do *not* know what I am, indeed holding that I am commonly deceived about it. So Augustine can more properly be invoked, not by postmodernists, but by those (like Wittgenstein) who argue for other reasons to dethrone the Cartesian 'ego'.[3]

[3] See the interesting discussion of Kerr (2009: esp. 114–21).

2 Then there is the related idea that things can only be defined with reference to their 'difference', to the radical otherness of other things; this might seem in line with Augustine's abiding sense of the otherness of God. Yet to admit the otherness of different things and different perspectives tells us nothing – despite what postmodernists may suppose – that commits us to believe all perspectives of equal value, or to deny that some particular 'grand narrative' perspective, however motivated its construction, could still be logically and morally superior to all others. In short, otherness implies neither ontological nor moral egalitarianism.
3 Augustine's is a single world: heaven and earth are linked by participation, so whatever God's otherness, he cannot (*videlicet* by his own choice) become separated from the world. He is other than us in that he can reduce that otherness – as via the Incarnation – while we cannot (without his help) reduce our otherness either from him or from ourselves. By his help, however, we can participate in him. Thus Augustine and we recognize that whatever points of contact there may be between him (Augustine) and those atheist postmodernists (such as Derrida and Lyotard) who may wish to appropriate some of his ideas, they do not understand otherness as he does.[4] Derrida himself was prepared to admit that he is an ultra-Kantian – thus a radically *un*-Augustinian dualist.[5]
4 Then there is the notion of 'confession'. Derrida uses the term 'Circumfession', not in the transgressive sense of the 'confessions' of Rousseau but in the sense of 'confessing' to the other: only, however, as acknowledgement of ontological difference and anti-essentialism, with none of the Augustinian sense of the sinner seeking repentance.
5 Heidegger, as we have seen, was inclined to follow Augustine's view of man's dependence, albeit that dependence was of a very different kind. Postmodernists pride themselves in similarly rejecting post-Cartesian (hence liberal) individualism and autonomy; yet instead of positing political and social – let alone religious – dependence, they leave man suspended in vacuity: not, it should be needless to say, Augustine's position.

In sum, the selective Augustinianism of the postmodernists is wholly inadequate to accomplish my hoped-for restoration of the pre-modern

[4] For Lyotard see the comments of Boeve (2009: 11–12).
[5] See Jacobs (2009: 195–205).

tradition. At the most basic level, postmodernists follow Heidegger's rejection of metaphysics and a transcendent God as onto-theology, and Derrida's 'transcendentalism' – being devoid of personality,[6] let alone of repentance and divine grace – does little to make things better. Thus postmodernists misuse Augustine's account of the self and of our sense of otherness. Indeed it might seem that 'Christian postmodernists', such as Milbank, while rejecting postmodernism itself – though agreeing with its anti-Cartesian thrust – are picking up bits and pieces of it to reuse for very different purposes. To have a common enemy is not enough to make more of a marriage than a very limited convenience.[7]

Strenuous compromises with current postmodern fashion offer no better defence of Augustine the Platonist than Transcendental Thomism (excessively currying favour with the Kantians) did for Aquinas. Rightly or wrongly, I can only conclude that postmodernism has little fresh to offer beyond what can already be found in Nietzsche and Heidegger, and thus is a passing phenomenon; hence – and despite the good intentions of 'postmodern Christians' – of little help in the reparative work I would set in train.[8]

[6] This aspect of postmodern theology's impersonalism shows up in radical orthodoxy's 'Christian' version as their seeing the Incarnation as a self-manifestation of God rather than as a salvific act.

[7] Smith summarizes the situation well as follows: 'The Derridean/Caputoan retrieval of Augustine is selective and filtered: a retrieval of the *amoris* without the *ordo*; a retrieval of the God who loves but not the God whose love is uniquely and scandalously embodied in Jesus Christ; a retrieval of the cross without the incarnation or resurrection; a retrieval of a chastened bishop without an ecclesiology' (Smith 2009: 211).

[8] For more sympathetic introductions to postmodernism in an Augustinian context see Brachtendorf (2012: 478–91) and (in the same collection) Caputo (492–504).

CHAPTER 14

Reformed Augustine, Genetically Modified Adam

> 'It was a savage, insensate affair, barely conceivable to the well-conducted imagination and hardly approachable without some currently unfashionable theory of human mass insanity and inbuilt, inherited corruption.'
>
> P. Fussell, *Wartime* 132

> 'But the seminal nature from which we were to be propagated already existed. And, when this was vitiated by sin and bound by the chain of death and justly condemned, man could not be born of man in any other condition.'
>
> Augustine, *City of God* 13.14

In this present study I have outlined various features of Western philosophical culture from Augustine to our own day, but what I have presented is the cultural mainstream. Certainly, features of a less 'modern' culture yet survive, especially but not only in the Roman Catholic Church, but those who have clung to that former outlook have seemed increasingly incomprehending of what has overtaken them, as failing to understand why their world has been swamped by this mainstream, and too often armed only with a set of under-intellectualized, and so undefended practices and aspirations. After the middle of the nineteenth century, the extent of the prevailing ignorance became clearer to some (like Newman and Gioacchino Pecci, later Pope Leo XIII), but the immediate remedy, usually envisaging a return to the writings of Thomas Aquinas or to the early Church, offered little encouragement to re-evaluate such material and bring it to the scrutiny of the development of such newer ideas – cultural rather than strictly religious – as the present study has highlighted. Needed was not archaism and cultural archaeology but an admission that while much of the world view and cultural traditions deriving from Augustine's magisterial synthesis remained important, yet it also encompassed problems which its medieval advocates and their successors had either failed to understand or failed to solve: and that not only when confronted with 'scientific' advances – real

or claimed – as first those of Galileo, more recently those of Darwin and the neo-Darwinians. The disastrous cultural end-state I have sketched – culminating in the 'death of God', disintegration of the human person, eclipse of love and even the 'philosophical' advocacy of deception – might seem to have demanded that serious work be undertaken to repair parts of the old system where both Augustine and his medieval successors failed: a failure which in effect permitted, indeed promoted, an invasion of a wholly alien and parasitic growth, the determinators of which have been poorly understood and scarce honestly challenged by its cowed critics and doubters.

At the outset of this final chapter I propose to embark on what may seem an irrelevant digression, but my purpose will, I hope, become clear as I pass to what ensues. It is time to return to the beginning of our cultural story – to another part of the background to Augustine – and then proceed to an Augustine whose multifarious treatments of original sin, the fall, sex, salvation and the Garden of Eden were developed within an already centuries-old context substantially controlled by three historical facts. These are:

1. In antiquity the Bible tended to be read literally and allegorically, and where apparent tensions remained they were resolved not by contextualization whereby differing versions might be shown to be complementary rather than contradictory, but by the often arbitrary or polemically driven choice of a few dominant and determining 'proof texts'. Largely because of the partisan atmosphere of much ancient (and modern) argument, and a regular confounding of defeating an opponent with getting the answer right – an abiding pitfall for both Christians and pagans – a premature generalizing marks the earlier stages of the debates.

The problem affects a huge range of biblical texts, but my immediate concern limits these to two or three recorded statements of Jesus and of Paul about marriage which helped set the stage for much early Christian debate on such variegated themes as the basic nature of mankind, our present 'fallen' state and how to explain the existence of such a state, as well as Adam's original sin and its implications for a Christian understanding of sexual differentiation, marriage and, ultimately – at least by implication – paradise. When we consider paradise we shall be poised to view some of the major themes of the present study: from the fall of the angels and of Adam to the 'will', to 'freedom' and to the rise and fall of our secular but as yet pre-nihilist moral universe.

Jesus regulates the Mosaic law of marriage; henceforth there is to be no divorce and remarriage (Mk 10:10–12; Mt 19:4–9; Lk 16:18, cf. 5: 31–2); this

evidences a high estimate of marriage among Christians, higher even than that envisaged by the Old Law. But Jesus also encouraged some – those who could receive this teaching – to be 'as eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom' (Mt 19:12), for in heaven we shall be 'like the angels who neither marry nor are given in marriage' (Mt 22:23; Mk 12: 25; Lk 20: 35–6). He also lamented the fate of the married in the desperate Last Times (Mt 24:19; Mk 13:17; Lk 21:23) prefigured in the sack of Jerusalem in AD 70. Somewhat analogously, Paul in *First Corinthians* (7:1–4) concedes that it is better to marry than to burn (whether with carnal lust or in hell – which might amount to the same thing): neither being an entirely wholehearted or traditional endorsement of marriage nor bolstered by any specific mention of its normally accepted motive in antiquity, the desire for legitimate sons to carry on one's name and inherit one's estate – daughters also being accepted as the social means thereto! Elsewhere, however, in texts still held by the ancients to be unquestionably Pauline (such as *Ephesians* 5:22–6, 33; 1 *Timothy* 2:11–13, 15 – the latter a particularly problematic passage ['Adam did not sin; the woman was tricked into transgression'] – and *Colossians* 3: 18–19), Paul assumes that most Christians will be married with families; he gives directions as to how, within such families, one can live a Christian life. Thus for interpreters even of Jesus, let alone Paul, we can recognize the possibility of easy (perhaps too easy) conflict about Christian living, and more particularly about Christian perfection. Is it or is it not the case that a spiritual athleticism of celibacy and preferably virginity distinguishes the practice of the 'real' Christian? Should such asceticism be the goal of all? Is the goal the perfection of a male Christ (*Galatians* 3: 28)?

This is a debate largely unintelligible in pagan antiquity and with very few resonances (found in Philo and Josephus and soon contradicted) in ancient Judaism. Philo's view of male superiority and the desirability of unmarried women 'becoming male', however – perhaps intelligible in a fellow Jewish teacher of the age of Jesus and Paul – found often unfortunate resonances in both Greek- and Latin-speaking Christian circles from Clement of Alexandria through Ambrose and beyond. Be that as it may, it is obvious that early Christians were faced with a daunting task. There are clear difficulties as to the interpretation of the teaching of Jesus and Paul about marriage and celibacy. How far should the apparent gaps in the 'theory' be filled from the norms then current in pagan society – or are the ideals of pagan society, even at its best, unrelated to those of Christ as, in the eyes of some, is Athens from Jerusalem? And if marriage itself is problematic, so much more must seem sexual acts even within that institution. What then was the proper but unachieved sexual destiny for Adam

and Eve? And what were the theological consequences of their failure – however understood – to enter upon it?

2. The Hebrew Bible (and its Septuagint translation) makes it clear that God created Adam, then Eve, and set them in the Garden of Eden. It did not – in the view of many Christians – make it clear whether they were intended to engender children sexually in the Garden or to fill the earth in other ways. Urged on by the Serpent (however interpreted) Eve induced Adam to disobey God and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, presumably communicating, beyond the attractiveness – the pleasure – of eating the forbidden fruit, the Serpent's message that by so doing they would become 'as gods'. But, the Christians asked, given that they had every reason not to disobey God, why did they do so? What was the motive for their sin of disobedience and why were they tempted to commit it? Was the motive perhaps sexual? Was it that Adam was already married to Eve, or was that still merely intended? And if Christian (as distinct from, say, Manichaean) answers were to be given to such questions, God must be shown as in no way responsible for Adam's fatally wrong choice. The assumption must be that God, in accordance with a specific divine plan, had done everything possible for those first beings, if they were to be *human* beings.

In the earliest Christian times the end of the world was held to be near, though no-one knew how near, as Paul had to point out (2 *Thessalonians* 2:1–3). So those who chose celibacy might do so because at this late hour there seemed little point prolonging the generations or even raising a family. Perhaps that was in Paul's mind when he alluded to avoiding lust; more positive family reasons for marriage might be seen as irrelevant. But as the end of the world failed to materialize; that too might need to be explained. After about AD 70, as a modern scholar has put it,[1] some Christians must have thought that in the churches there were 'too few Jews, too many Gentiles, and the End of the World has appeared as far away as ever'.

For a while it seems that Christians muddled along. Most were family people; a few were celibate. But the question of which lifestyle is the more Christian lay beneath the surface, and during the second century became linked with speculation about the reasons for the fall of Adam and Eve. It is not surprising, given the prevailing uncertainty about the best way of handling human sexuality, that such speculation pointed towards the possibility that a wrong attitude to sex had been the cause of the trouble. Irenaeus, Clement and Tertullian all move in this direction, the first two

[1] Fredriksen (1999: 562).

supposing that Adam and Eve, like precipitate teenagers, had disobeyed God precisely in anticipating their sexual union. So now Paul's contrast between the spirit and the flesh could easily be reduced to a contrast between love for God and lust for sex. But none of this gave any clear indication of what was wrong with Adam and Eve; hence the tendency (picked up later by Augustine's Pelagian opponents) to suggest it was mere immaturity.[2] If Adam and Eve were to grow up, they were bound to face the temptations of puberty!

That left problems of sexual behaviour, not to speak of the end of the world, unsettled. Perhaps the two were connected. Perhaps behaviour appropriate to the last days would bring the last days nearer. That, approximately, is the earlier version of the so-called encratite position, best represented by Justin's pupil Tatian and headed for a long future in parts of the Near East. Under the new Christian dispensation total abstinence – that is, a return to the supposed state of Adam and Eve before the fall – will help bring the elect back to Paradise. Real Christians do not marry.

More our immediate concern is a later version of encratism with strong metaphysical roots and elaborate theological ramifications – and now far more than a mere moralism – developed with Origen. Partly under the influence of Platonizing ideas largely mediated in this case by Philo, Origen concluded that he could explain (inter alia) the need for infant baptism, as also the frequent miseries of the apparently undeserving infant, by giving a cosmic account of the fall of Adam (*Hom. in Lev*. 8.3.5 [*SC* 287,20]). Adam and Eve were originally pure souls (or 'naked minds' as his extreme later follower Evagrius preferred to put it [*Ep. Ad Mel.*6]) that 'fell' into bodies, so that now we exist in the body, seen in terms of a Philonic realm of sense and sex and of the old Pythagorean-cum-Platonic myth of the body as prison or cavern in which the soul is enclosed as penalty for its primal sin. It followed on this reading that the original sin could not be sexual, since there were no bodies to sin with; the existence of the body, and of sexual differentiation, was the effect of sin, not its cause: a second, and not the original design of human beings. For Origen, the original sin, in fact, is a kind of boredom with perfection, almost (though not quite) a *nostalgie de la boue*. In terms of his notion of double creation, however, Adam and Eve, once in a body and expelled from the Garden, can have only polluted intercourse, with Eve receiving Adam's polluted seed, in and as which we are all present as *homunculi* in Adam's loins.[3] We were one in

[2] Cf. Lamberigts (1996: 243–60).

[3] Origen is thus a one-seed theorist of conception; see further Rist (2008a: 55) and Clark (1952: 73).

Adam corporate as well as individual beings – and the presence of that polluted seed in (or as) any human being conveys the moral character of the guilty party (Adam) as it grows in the womb. Guilt (as well as damage) is thus handed down.[4]

For Origen the aim of Christian asceticism – as of the truly 'gnostic' or advanced Christian – is to escape from this bodily entrapment and the sexual differentiation it entails. For in this fallen world, all sexual experience and activity, as Origen had learned from Philo, is entangled in the ritual-cum-moral pollution associated with seeds – ourselves in *homunculus* form – and already associated with childbirth.[5] Thus pollution marks the transmission of original sin itself, via intercourse, prenatal growth and birth, from one generation to the next.

Such theories might seem to entail a very sanitized version of the Resurrection of the body, to be seen now as no longer 'fleshly', and the followers of Origen were indeed faced with the difficulty of explaining how a purely spiritual and sexless body could be a body at all.[6] Naturally, their enemies claimed they denied the Resurrection; perhaps it would have been more accurate to say that they would have liked to deny (or at least revise) the Resurrection.

Origen thought that bodies are a punishment for sin, with all the disapprobation that this was to bring down on his head. To avoid it, some – above all Gregory of Nyssa – further developed the idea of a double creation. God had originally created us like the angels, but foreseeing our sin and consequent death, our imprisonment in the temporal and endless cycle of births and deaths, had provided sexual differentiation to enable a temporary alleviation of our miseries. Still, as in straight Origenism, Gregory believed that it is the goal of the higher Christian life to escape from this ambiguous status, in which we are as half angel and half beast, and return to the angelic life, that is to the life Adam and Eve had in the Garden before the fall. For Gregory, distinguishing himself from a more hard-line Origenism, there is no pre-cosmic fall of the soul – which makes it easier to explain *Genesis* without dragging in too much wild 'gnostic' speculation – but the supposedly Christian goal of ridding ourselves of our animal bodies in a return to the now historical but pre-fallen state of Adam and Eve is not disputed – though Gregory sought to avoid the charge, already brought against Origen by such as Methodius, of effectively denying the General Resurrection. Yes, there is a Resurrection, but to

[4] See Origen, *Com. in Rom*. 5.1; *Hom. in Lev.* 12.4; 14.5 with the comments of Laporte (1997: 441).
[5] See Laporte (1997).
[6] So Clark (1992: especially 93–4).

an angelic and pre-sexual body. We are getting nearer the world in which Augustine's early Christian thinking began, a world in which the original sin need not be sexual, but where the body and sexuality are the effects of sin, and hence sooner or later to be left behind.

Embarrassingly for Augustine, however, his own 'father in faith', Ambrose, bishop of Milan and too busy with practicalities to have time for pre-cosmic speculation in the Origenist mode, went back behind Gregory and Origen to Philo – and Philo had thought that Eve's seduction by the Serpent and Adam's consequent sin could be explained in terms of crude sensuality: Adam was undone by the love of pleasure[7] – which had to be sexual pleasure; and so that was the cause of his original disobedience. Ambrose found such Philonian themes – with their overtones of ritual-cum-moral pollution – confirmed by a congenial Latin writer, Tertullian, for whom women (and so sexual pleasure), though necessary in most Christian households, had been and could be the gateway to hell (*De Cult.Fem*. 1.1.2).

Ambrose repeats, in strong form, Tertullian's strictly graded Christian hierarchy. Once again, in contrast to Origen and Gregory, marital acts are no mere effect of sin nor a temporary, if inadequate, remedy for the sin of Adam, but among sin's unavoidable causes. We cannot avoid the pollution of sexuality, not even in marital relations, as Ambrose had learned from Origen; we are trapped in its effects, which we can only hope to mitigate. Such extremes of the 'ascetic hierarchy' as Ambrose wished to promote – albeit rather differently acceptable to his enemy Jerome[8] – drew criticism from more moderate ascetics of the day: the Roman priest known as 'Ambrosiaster', the unknown author of the *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*, the heresy hunter Epiphanius, and later Pelagius – not to speak of the heretical and 'anti-hierarchical' ascetic Jovinian. All these denied that the 'original sin' was sexually motivated; all emphasized the basic goodness of the marital union and its intended place in the Garden. So how was original sin handed down from soul to soul?

3. Adam sinned, we sin. What is the relationship between these two facts? Generally speaking, the ancients divided on the matter: some held that we merely follow the same course, thus 'imitate' Adam (because of the similarity of human nature and perhaps because we too must go through a period of moral immaturity), others that we not only imitate

[7] *De Paradiso* 16; cf. *Ep. Extra collectionem* 14.33; 15.3–34 (*CSEL* 82.3.252, 304).

[8] 'Yesterday [was Ambrose] in the amphitheatre, today in the church; yesterday the patron of actors, today the consecrator of virgins; in the evening at the circus, in the morning at the altar' *Ep*. 69.9 (*CSEL* 54, 658); cf. Hunter (2007: 234–42) and more generally Wiesen (1964).

Adam but somehow have inherited his 'original' sin – and also his guilt. For Christians, that sin and guilt is washed away in baptism (or martyrdom); hence only the baptized can be saved. Yet the morally and intellectually debilitating effects of Adam's sin remain with us and provide no small part of the explanation of our willingness to imitate our forefather's choice for evil.

How more precisely do we acquire such an inheritance? Is it through the polluted intercourse by which we are engendered, as Origen and Ambrose held, and if so, what does this tell us about the nature of the body and its relationship with the soul? That raises in a particular form questions about the nature of the soul (and hence of the human 'person'); not least for this reason did late fourth-century Christians develop an urgent and special interest in the origin of our individual souls. Of course they had all agreed, at least since Justin's time – which is as far back as our records go – that our souls are not immortal by nature (as some philosophers held) but have been created immortal by God's grace. In *On Free Choice* Augustine listed four then current explanations of their earthly state, of which the first two entail pre-existence: our souls have been created before we are born and are either sent into our bodies as punishment or, conscious of their guilt, descend of their own accord; these are both varieties of Origenism (with Plotinian parallels) and have no Augustinian future. For Augustine – and this is what matters in the anti-Manichaean context of *On Free Choice* – what at least is right about both is that they satisfy the view (held also by Origen) that the present association of souls with bodies points to our penal condition. That will explain, inter alia, the otherwise unwarrantable sufferings of infants (and others) without impugning the justice of God.

Pre-existence of the soul being rejected, the two other theories listed in *On Free Choice* remain on the table, and will at least formally remain there for the rest of Augustine's life, though his sympathy with a revised (and in some ways curiously modern) version of one of them is, in my view, perfectly obvious.[9] The two theories are usually labelled 'creationism' and 'traducianism', and each, from Augustine's point of view, has certain apparent advantages and disadvantages. Creationism, the theory that either at birth, conception or 'quickening' a new soul is created by God, has the advantage of freeing God from responsibility for human sinfulness. The soul is created pure and is damaged by its 'mixing' with the body. But the difficulty is equally obvious: the theory entails that sin is originally and essentially bodily, and that the sin of Adam is transmitted

[9] See Rist (1989b).

from body to soul, whereas Augustine always held that it is the soul (in his early view the really godlike 'us') which sins and infects the body. Yet clearly God has not created the soul sinful.

There are disadvantages to traducianism too, at least in its 'Origenist' form. If sin is handed down as pollution (ritual and/or moral), then the doctrine of original sin is preserved, but again at the price of the pollution of soul by body instead of the other way round. But perhaps it is a sinful *soul* that is transmitted? That would be easy to conclude if we could accept the madness (*dementia*: Augustine's term) of Tertullian that the soul is material, but Augustine had been converted in Milan to a more spiritualized version of Christianity whereby the soul (like God) must be immaterial, and if immaterial, then apparently not to be handed down by acts of intercourse, by the transmission of polluted seed. Clearly the difficulty lies in the more general relationship of the soul and the body, whether in our ordinary human lives or at whatever moment (conception, birth, 'quickening') the 'mixture' occurs. I would argue that it is largely Augustine's failure to give an adequate account of the 'mixture' which causes him to hesitate to make a formal commitment to traducianism.

So much for the pre-Augustinian background, and more than background, to our present problem. Now I want to return to certain aspects of the life and developing thought of Augustine himself, then to continue beyond Augustine's stopping place to introduce possibilities that would be available to him were he alive in our own day. Only after that can we ask whether he would still decline to commit himself on the 'origin of the soul' – while leaving his preference for some version of spiritual traducianism clear – or whether he would be able to advance, neglecting neither scientific nor theological data.

When Augustine was a candidate for Christian baptism, his friend Verecundus shared his desire for conversion (*Confessions* 9.3.5). But Verecundus, unlike Augustine, was married, and to a Catholic wife. Like Augustine, however, he aspired to the 'real Christianity' promoted by Ambrose but now apparently beyond his reach, the Christianity of strict celibacy after baptism: the recovery, so far as was possible for an ex-virgin, of the primeval purity of Adam and Eve. Augustine too was an ex-virgin, but after the dismissal of his long-term concubine – better, 'common-law wife' – he found himself able to accept that sexual gratification, whether with partner or wife, can be foregone in a life of post-baptismal excellence. He could proceed to the pool of Christian initiation without misgivings on that score – and could try to persuade the less free Verecundus

to accept the life they had understood from Ambrose to be that of the second-class Christian (*Confessions* 9.3.6).

The perceived misfortune of Verecundus and his own superior situation can be seen reflected in Augustine's earliest attempt to explain some of the now traditional problems of the *Genesis* story of the creation and the fall. In his *Commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans* (1.19.30; 2.4.20) he favours Adam and Eve having spiritual bodies as affirmed by Gregory of Nyssa, and as with Gregory there was to be no sexual reproduction; the human race was to be perpetuated in more etherial (and less comic[10]) fashion and thus, presumably, not be subject to death; for death is a function of the material or 'animal' body that was to come into existence after the fall and is doomed to perish. That would not entail, for Augustine, our total disappearance, for, as he was emphasizing in *On True Religion* (46.89), 'Our bodies are not what we are'; the animal body is merely an instrument, and a *locus* of punishment.

Yet unlike Ambrose (but more like Gregory) Augustine did not believe that Adam's disobedience was sexually motivated; thus while he at this time preferred to think of our primeval condition as 'spiritual' and asexual, he had not accepted Ambrose's account of original sin. Although Augustine thought that genital activity was not God's 'original' intention for mankind, he had already resisted the further step of associating the sexual distinction with sin as such. Certainly, in the fallen, it would be damaged by sin, like everything else, but in itself it is the good creation of God, and if we were created by God as distinctively sexual beings, then our created goodness (including our sexual differences) would have been transmitted non-genitally before the fall, but only our fallen nature genitally after the expulsion from the Garden. Genital sexuality, that is, would be the means of reproducing our fallen state. So the looming problem for Augustine would be how – without resorting to identifying the soul as a material substance – an evil nature could be transmitted though some vitiated human seed (or seeds). His eventual solution, as we know, was mocked by Julian of Eclanum who observed tartly that human evil relates not to seeds but to moral acts (*morum non seminum*: *Imperfect Work* 3.2).[11] For by that time, as we shall see, Augustine was already toying with the idea of an 'incorporeal seed of the soul' (*Letter* 167.1.2 [to Jerome]).

[10] Brown is right to draw attention to the more 'undignified' aspects of sexual play and performance being a source of amusement to satirists and comic poets, and so offending the *gravitas* of the wise man, whether Christian or pagan (Brown 1988: 352, citing Palladas in *AP* 10.45).

[11] Karfikova (2012: 320–1) and Clark (1986: 291–349).

Augustine's *Commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans* is much influenced by the 'spiritual' interpretations he had from Ambrose and from the Origenist tradition, going back to Philo, on which Ambrose depends. And though he wanted to try his hand at a more literal and 'historical' interpretation, at that point he found it beyond him. Which means that we cannot from this or any early commentary reconstruct his view of Adam's fall, beyond that pride seen in a Plotinian fashion as a 'swelling' into external things[12] is already the cause of the trouble, and that the 'one in Adam' thesis is already present, though without the later specifics about our 'common' and 'personal' (*propria*) lives. Perhaps some vestige of the old Origenist thesis is there too in that although we are not souls fallen into bodies, we yet share in the now criminal soul of Adam as well as in his body.[13] That sharing indicates that God willed us to be not mere atomized individualists but in solidarity with one or other, whether for good or ill.

If pride is already the root of our trouble, our present weaknesses, sexual and other – soon to be subsumed under *ignorantia* and *concupiscentia*/*difficultas* – are its fruits. That confirms the view outlined earlier that if human nature is transmitted sexually, the transmission has as such nothing to do with the sinfulness of our present nature. In a fertile sexual act, the character of the agents will be transmitted regardless: the unfallen would have generated the unfallen; the fallen generate the fallen. Yet one of the reasons for Augustine's 'bad press' is that he thinks not only that fallen sexuality – like any other fallen acts – will always depend on imperfect motivation – in this case resulting in what he calls libidinous procreation – but that this imperfect motivation is revealed in our lack of mental control over the movements (or lack of movement) of the genital organs.[14]

By the time Augustine came to write book 10 of the *Confessions*, the theory, ultimately deriving from Paul and confirmed by (among others) both Origen and Ambrose, that we are 'one in Adam' has developed its more technical vocabulary: our 'common life' becomes the root of the individual life (*vita propria*) that we live from the moment our souls and

[12] *DGM* 2.5.6; cf. *DQA* 32.69. For Plotinian aspects of this 'swelling' see Rist (1993, reprinted 1998: 103–17). Note the use of Sirach 10.10 with the comments of Teske (1991: 141–55, especially 143).

[13] Such a thesis might have found reinforcement in the Plotinian notion of the World Soul; now, however, that 'common' soul is to be isolated as Adam, the high point of creation with whom we all share the glory of being in God's image. See Teske (1991).

[14] For *ardor libidinis* see *GenLitt.* 9.3.6 (cf. 9.10.18) with discussion by Karfikova (2012: 123).

bodies are linked.[15] It is certainly through the solidarity of that common life that Augustine thinks he can explain how we can be sharers in the personal sin and guilt of Adam. Indeed it might offer much more than that: all the personal but immaterial characteristics (such as proneness to anger) which are ours can seem to recall not merely our parents and our more distant relatives but, in a more general way, the human race itself: those features, psychological as well as physical, which make us not just animals but individual *human* animals, unique specimens varying only within comparatively fixed limits. How then do we account for the derivation and transmission of such psychological or 'spiritual' vestiges as that Adamic 'common' existence – which explains, as we noted earlier, why we are specifically and not *merely* individually human beings – present in our ordinary selves, without supposing the immaterial soul infected by the guilty body?

By 404, when Augustine came to write treatises on marriage and 'holy virginity', he had also moved on the question of Adam's sexuality. Now he will give more weight to the possibility that God had originally created Adam and Eve sexually differentiated, and that he had intended them to unite and reproduce in the Garden: that is, before the fall. That means that Augustine has moved in his exegesis of the Garden from a neo-encratite position like that of Gregory of Nyssa[16] and of Ambrose, to a view more like that of Ambrosiaster and Epiphanius, while retaining something of the 'Origenist' emphasis on Paul's teaching that we are indeed one in Adam. By the time Augustine has revived and nearly completed his project for a literal commentary on *Genesis*, he is certain that man's nature has always been sexual (*DGL* 9.17.31): Adam and Eve were created sexually differentiated and were intended to reproduce sexually before the fall – and their offspring – all human beings and individual human beings – would have inherited no guilt since there would have been none to inherit.

By about this same time Augustine's view not only of the primeval state of Adam but also of the relationship between the body and soul of each of us has changed. Gone is the theory that we were once (in Adam) souls with some angelic, non-fleshly body attached – with all its Origenist risks that the incarnation and the resurrection of our present body would be called in question. Thus in 412 Augustine can tell Volusianus that we are to be identified as *personae* (*Letter* 137), though he cannot explain the special 'mix' which the word *persona* indicates, and which enables him to

[15] See also letter 98 to Boniface in 408.
[16] Cf. *De hom.op.* 17.

assume that a *persona* is a being with different sets of attributes (in the case of human beings both material and immaterial attributes) that cannot be reduced to one another.[17] Thus 'I' might be immaterially unjust and materially fat, but how that is philosophically possible Augustine does not explain. What is clear, however, is that if he is to explain how the weakness and guilt we have inherited from Adam have come down to us, he must account not only for our physical attributes (or at least for our potential physical attributes with their potential strengths and weaknesses) but also for our mental and moral tendencies. From our present point of view he knows he needs and has not yet found an adequate theory of the unity of the person and a theory to explain how we have acquired, from our common life in Adam, the non-physical characteristics that will emerge – in their inherited defective version – in our personal lives.

Augustine knew of one theory that might have begun to account for the kind of unity of the 'person' he needed: that of the Stoics. But that was of no use to him, for it was vitalist and entailed the 'materiality' of the soul: that 'madness' of Tertullian of whom he became significantly more suspicious while writing *the Literal Commentary on Genesis*.[18] He needed something more hylemorphic, more Aristotelian, but to him, as to the overwhelming majority of his patristic contemporaries, Aristotle's physics and biology were almost unknown. Had he known more of Aristotle's biology than he could pick up from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* he might have found help in Aristotle's theory of *pneuma*, that curious substance which somehow connects the immaterial soul with the physical body,[19] and the operations of which remind endocrinologists of our hormonal systems – helpfully, from Augustine's point of view, different in men and women.

Broadly speaking, the history of Western thought has thrown up two different ways of identifying humanity: one regards man as a moral agent; the other concentrates more on his metaphysical unity. The Platonic tradition well represents the first option, the Aristotelian the second. But such traditions need not be in conflict (and Aristotle thought he had harmonized them): for both moral agency and the unity of the person need explanation. As for Augustine, he could do well with moral agency, but less well on the unity of soul and body – despite being now firmly committed to the belief that both in this life and the next there is such a unity.

[17] See Rist (2008a: 72–4).
[18] See the comments of Agaesse/Solignac in *BA* 48, p. 705.
[19] See Rist (1989a: 131–4). Augustine alludes to the Aristotelian 'fifth element' in *DGL* 7.21.27, but it would perhaps be unreasonable to expect him at that point to make much use of it.

In the *City of God* (22.17–18) he comes down in favour of the view not only that the Resurrection will be fleshly, but that sexual distinctions, with their peculiar beauty, will be retained and enhanced – even though heaven is no place for genital union.

In a letter of AD 418 to Optatus, Augustine suggests two possible approaches to the difficulty, and though he seems to prefer one to the other, his enthusiasm for either seems tepid (*Letter* 190, 4.15): either (as the earlier letter to Jerome might have suggested) the incorporeal seed of the soul flows … from the father to the mother at the moment of conception, or – a more difficult alternative – it lies hidden in the bodily seed. But both these options seem to imply that the 'incorporeal' seed behaves in a bodily fashion – though an account of the incorporeal seed existing and acting as the form of the physical matter (in some unavailable Aristotelian manner) would have been more promising.

Augustine needs a theory of personal unity which will show how the soul, being neither material nor a mere epiphenomenon of the body, will survive physical death. But he also needs an explanation of how such survival will be the survival of 'us', because we are not simply souls but *personae*, 'mixtures' of souls and bodies. Aristotle could have pointed him in the right direction, but that is not my immediate concern. Rather what I am here attempting to supply is an answer to the question whether an Augustine contemporary with us could find an explanation of how we inherit both material and immaterial characteristics, and in particular how we pass on our moral debility, that *ignorantia* and *concupiscentia*[20] which are effects of our lack of love. Could he make 'scientific' sense of our seeming to be, morally speaking, genetically flawed?

The problem should be further refined. The historical Augustine would have said that he needs a theory to explain how we inherit both the *guilt* of Adam and the *effects* of that guilt. His opening move might be to say that the *effects* of our flawed humanity are obviously documented from Stalin, Hitler, Mao and their like down to the small-scale murderers, torturers and rapists we find from report to be all around us, as well as sufficiently recorded in past ages. But such evidence, though strongly indicative of the fact that humanity cannot live up to serious moral standards, is not enough for his purposes. I might retort that this is simply how the world

[20] Pre-fallen Adam was regarded (not least in early modern times) as not only capable of moral excellence but as having perfect knowledge of the natural world.

is: human beings just *are not* particularly 'moral', any more than they are normally seven feet tall.[21]

Augustine considers, furthermore, that he needs to account not only for his own present miseries but for the very fact that we live in a penal condition (*CD* 21.15). That, however, is an inference, not to be observed empirically, but depending on what we have already recognized (particularly in the example of Job) as Augustine's view that both God's omnipotence and justice would be compromised if (despite human free will) such terrible features of human life were contrary to his *active* will. Thus the question might be better posed as: Why is Augustine unwilling to pay what seems the necessary price for the 'Free Will Defence'? Why is he apparently unwilling to say that the injustices inflicted on one another by fallen human beings, as well as the 'natural' evils (famine, illness etc.) from which they suffer, are the inevitable effects of man's abuse of the divine and potentially divinizing gift of free choice? Should he not be prepared to say precisely that?

Augustine's original problem, which is also that of Origen, is set in a theistic, indeed Christian world: both want to know how what they take to be the penal condition in which we find ourselves – not least as it shows itself in the 'unjust' sufferings of infants – is compatible with God's goodness. Augustine thinks he must explain why such sufferings occur, and that the only explanation must be that since we are all guilty we all deserve to be punished. But unless we are one in Adam in some very strong sense – which entails that we *knowingly* committed Adam's sin – he might seem to need to explain not why we are punished but rather why we experience *any* kind of suffering. And perhaps the answer to that would be not a theory of punishment but a Pelagian thesis: that we imitate rather than inherit Adam's behaviour, and not in the sense that he is a poor role model but that – for whatever reason and more intelligibly in the history of the race after his fall – we ourselves just repeat his sinful behaviour.

But is it still possible that the *inherited effects* of Adam's sin, without reference to any inherited *guilt* of that sin, can be explained – though at a price – without impugning God's justice? To secure that more limited goal Augustine would need a theory by which both physical traits and psychological characteristics are handed down. Such a theory need not explain that a particular individual necessarily turns out a murderer, thief, rapist or paedophile, but only that each of us would be (more or less)

[21] In *Real Ethics* I have discussed what such use of the word 'moral' (and of moral terms) does, and more significantly does not, entail.

liable 'genetically' so to turn out. Augustine himself, in his famous reply to Simplicianus on the interpretation of *Romans*, notes that God would laugh at his pathetic failure if he tried to predict who is among the saved (*To Simplicianus* 2.22): 'respectable' married folk might be lost while performers of mime, whores and actors might show up in Paradise. The claim would seem to imply that some people are less responsible for their sins than others and of such matters we in our fallen state cannot judge. None of which would entail that, for the sake of law and order, wrongdoing (objectively viewed) should not be punished in an Augustinian world.

Recent discoveries indeed do suggest that many hitherto inexplicable physical and mental weaknesses of mankind that might have worried ancient Christians and others may be genetically explained. We now know that certain forms of illness and defect in children are 'congenital', and we are coming to recognize that illness in adults is likely to involve a strong genetic factor: not, that is, that Mr X is doomed to have a stroke or Ms Y a particular type of cancer, but that unless preventive measures are taken – and if each escapes other life-threatening situations – Mr X is more likely to have a stroke or Ms Y cancer.

What about more 'psychological' weaknesses, such as a tendency to depression or, more problematically, a tendency to violence? Or to homosexuality? Currently we have a special difficulty in the last case because there is dispute as to what actions and choices are to be held sinful or even criminal; but that is a second-order question. Our first concern is whether such behaviours are genetically influenced at all, and my Augustine *redivivus*, after informing himself adequately about DNA, could conclude that the evidence is in his favour. We shall need to be sure, however, what he would have to claim: which is, firstly that our actions are not *determined* by our genetic composition; secondly that if we are genetically flawed, the direct and entire responsibility need not go back to Adam: indeed the historical Augustine was prepared to argue that further inherited damage may have been inflicted on us by intermediary ancestors (*Against Julian* 2.12.27; cf. 1.3.6 etc.). And over the millennia our genetic structure may also have been affected by cultural and climatic conditions: we know that various groups of the human race are more prone, for example, to sickle-cell anaemia, or to alcoholism, or have developed skin pigments more resistant to the sun. Some developments in genetics point to genetic modification over time as a result of environmental factors.

The case of homosexuality is particularly interesting. Homosexuals currently claim that they form a subgroup within humanity; their proclivities are thus natural (for Augustine that would be in a postlapsarian sense of

'natural'). And Augustine could accept that some people are 'naturally', as well as culturally, more disposed – and yet not irretrievably committed – to homosexual activity: though we should be clear that such a conclusion needs to be disentangled from the question as to whether there is or is not something objectively *wrong* – in the sense of *de-formed* – about homosexual acts or even 'orientation'. The 'proclivity' or 'weakness' (Augustine would certainly think it weakness) is on this showing a mark, whether *we* approve it or not, of what he would think of as a flawed inheritance. Even supposing Freud were to be right in his theory that homosexuality among adults is – or even can be – a mark of retarded development, Augustine could still observe that some are more prone by inheritance or circumstances or their upbringing than others to such retardation. Thus whereas some homosexuals can be assumed to be genetically such, a twenty-first-century Augustine *redivivus* would view this as their particular genetic *flaw*.

How could we determine whether he was right? Granted that we are not *determined* by our genetic constitution, but rather endowed with various more or less morally significant capacities, tendencies and liabilities, it ceases to be a *scientific* question whether homosexuality – or for that matter any inherited characteristic, whether defect or talent (and not necessarily realizable in a particular cultural or familial context: an example might be musicality) – is a healthy or an unhealthy endowment. But that would be asking our contemporary 'scientists' to re-integrate their science into a holistic understanding of man and the world he so clumsily manages.

A problem remains of what Augustine stigmatized as Tertullian's *dementia*. Or does it? If we can explain certain moral weaknesses in terms of individual genetic liabilities, are we not back to the 'demented' view that the soul is material? The answer is 'not necessarily', because we are not now talking about the soul, but the genetic make-up of a particular *persona* with material and immaterial characteristics, actual and potential, which comes into existence when sperm and egg meet in a Fallopian tube. (Of course, we now know that the genetic components, the bearers of physical and psychological weakness, neither derive (as once supposed) exclusively from the male, nor are to be explained by the inadequacy of the female in 'feeding' the child in the womb: the Augustine of our day would have abandoned his one-seed theory of conception with no great difficulty.)

Where then does that leave us with the 'soul', and with the nature of that 'mixture' which is the *persona*? I have argued elsewhere that our 'souls' are not born 'whole' but 'grown' in the course of life, though always as

enmattered, not *ex nihilo*.[22] Our more developed existence must depend on the state of the partly informed matter from which we grow and then on the circumstances into which we are born and in which we mature; all of these we inherit more or less indirectly from 'Adam'. 'Souls' are not epiphenomena of matter, yet they grow in human beings as 'enmattered'. Hence our Neo-Augustine no longer has to answer the perhaps empty question, 'What is the origin of the soul?' – which is perhaps rather like asking about a man killed by slow poison: When did he who spiked his whisky become a murderer? He has already found much justification, if not for the inheritance of *guilt* from Adam – guilt involving deliberate personal responsibility, there can be, *pace* Dawkins, no such thing as a 'selfish' gene – then for the claim that – at least in part because of the fall of 'Adam' – we all 'in this darkness of social life' (*City of God* 19.6) suffer from the *effects* of that fall: and not only from social effects but from such genetic weaknesses as blight us. But we may still ask which ones, and whether we to include those associated with, though not determining, moral as well as physical malfunctioning. And all is provided we can agree that there really is moral malfunctioning, rather than merely variations in 'moral' habits.

Genetically originated moral malfunctioning as a factor is not the only serious challenge our contemporary Augustine faces. A second difficulty may be related, and could it be overcome, some of the incoherencies in the story told by the historical Augustine – and which, as we have seen, his successors, with increasingly unfortunate results, failed to resolve – can seem less problematic.

Here then is the second challenge. All ancient writers – pagan as well as Christian – who infer a primeval 'fall' of man assume a prior Golden Age. But evidence for what look like the *effects* of a 'fall' does not in itself point to the priority of such a happy human condition. What it could justify, taken by itself, is the theory that we now live in a parlous, potentially or even actually, criminal – for the theist, sinful – condition, whereas – at least in principle – our earliest ancestors, with no moral awareness and therefore no moral responsibility, simultaneously became, at least to an extent, conscious of moral responsibility and of being immersed in a fatal (or at least potentially fatal) 'infection' of the human race. None of that requires Augustine to modify his characterization of 'this darkness of social life': surely to which Fussell, in the text cited as epigraph to the present

[22] So Rist (2004: 100–8).

chapter, referred as 'some currently unfashionable theory of human mass insanity and inbuilt, inherited corruption'. Nor would it entail that we need concern ourselves with another empty question: namely, when precisely did the first lapse into vice occur?

To adduce the effects of inherited weakness is to offer an explanation of hardly controversial empirical evidence; what more then need be said about the 'fall' that is hypothesized to have generated this state? In Christian theology the fall is proposed for two reasons: because it accords with *Genesis* if, with the mature Augustine, we read the story of Adam and Eve as an historical event. God created human beings and 'saw them to be good'. So the 'fall' – quite apart from seeming applicable to an empirically identifiable human condition – corresponds not only to a literal reading of *Genesis* but also – again – to an *inference* that there must have been a Golden Age if their God or gods is not to be supposed (as early 'theology', Hebrew or pagan, did regularly suppose) responsible for evil as well as for good. But that Golden Age may not be theologically needed, and inferences apart, we need to ask exactly what kind of literalness is required to satisfy the programme of Augustine's 'literal' (*ad litteram*) commentary on *Genesis*. Certainly that the biblical text be read historically, but in what sense of 'historically'? Is it not enough to hold that God created 'Adam' and that somehow Adam sinned, leaving the mechanics, evolutionary or other, to be filled in as our scientific knowledge increases? The case then poses few problems for an evolved or evolving Adam: all we require is that at some stage he was incapable of sinning (it may be while still a 'hominid') but that later he so inclined.

In what has to be a revolutionary – even though not absolutely original – move for its time, Augustine denied, and for theological reasons, that Adam and Eve enjoyed the best possible human condition in the Garden. Before the fall (and only by virtue of the aid of God's *adiutorium sine quo non*[23]) Adam *was able not to sin*, a state (*posse non peccare*), as we have seen in Chapter 2, to which Augustine refers as a 'lesser freedom' (*Correction and Grace* 12.33) – that is, as compared with the godlike inability to sin (*non posse peccare*) that characterizes the saints in heaven. So Augustine says not that God created the best possible world, but a world in which the best possibilities will *eventually*, – that is, with created time – be actualized.

But if Adam is not as perfect as he might theoretically be, why do we need a Golden Age at all? Augustine's answer is that only a specific

[23] So particularly *DCG* 11.31; *Ench.*28.106; *CD* 14.27.

fall – that is a deliberate choice of evil by Adam (through his 'seed' genetically shared in by his descendants) – can accord with God's justice in allowing the human race to decline to its present 'penal condition'. Only sin, both inherited and accumulated, could 'justify' our present state.

Note though that this response does not give Augustine all he needs and must be further developed. If God foresaw Adam's sin and its effects, he could have prevented it. That he chose not to do so must be because man, as a semi-autonomous 'image of God', *could* only through sinning be brought to learn to be more godlike than he would or could be if originally created 'perfect'. Only through sin and repentance – achieved under grace – could he come to understand, through indispensable personal experience, that he is not God but *is* 'voluntarily' to become more perfectly God's image. It is better to be eventually sinless *and* to have understood from experience what it takes to be sinless than merely to find and accept oneself uncomprehendingly – perhaps something even logically impossible for a perfected 'image of God' – as sinless: that is, as some puppet merely programmed by God.

But in that case the 'lesser' perfection of the Garden, as proposed in Augustine's original version, becomes unnecessary, even unhelpful – which is where some sort of Darwinian theory of evolution can help out our neo-Augustine – who will certainly have room for evolution if some version of that thesis is indisputably true: indeed already *needs* to find that room, since, as we have seen, he has difficulty in explaining why Adam, in some sort of pre-moral state of happy innocence, can be *blamed*, that is, held responsible, for his disobedience. Certainly Augustine's successors – if at times perceiving more or less clearly how great the difficulty is – failed to resolve it, and in their failure added new theological and philosophical difficulties to the traditional account. Nor have we as yet even addressed what they – as many of Augustine's Christian predecessors – saw as the prior and still more serious difficulty: that is, the fall of the angels.

The core of the Darwinian thesis is that man developed from lower forms of life; how exactly that happened – or, for example, exactly how many modifications in genetic structure there are between ape and man – does not immediately matter. What matters is that there is no good nor 'earthly' reason why God should not have chosen to develop the human race through an evolutionary process. What *does* – so far – defy explanation, as we have noticed earlier, is how human beings (whatever their ultimate relationship with primitive or non-living organisms) came to develop those moral and spiritual capacities without which any payback even for our postlapsarian vices would be unjustified. Viewed as

problematic, that only requires the answer that God *intended* man to *develop* as a moral and spiritual being. Though that is not a 'scientific' claim, it cannot be 'scientifically' rejected nor rejected at all unless found to be incompatible with what can be scientifically established. It is an observable fact that man seems to be the ultimate 'highest' point the evolutionary process has attained. That this is rejected by some 'animalist' fringes (as well as by transhumanists) is merely due to its (for them) awkward self-evidentiality! The question then – and this is also a theological and no scientific question – is whether that attainment has come about by 'chance' or through God's causation.

Let us assume that Neo-Augustine finds no reason to reject the thesis that the evolutionary process has at a certain stage resulted in a 'creature' (as we will provisionally term him[24]) capable of developing moral skills. This unambiguous proto-man has to have language: that is, the ability to form and use syntactical structures. But that is not a problem, since clearly he *has* developed such structures, and Neo-Augustine can find support in a comment of Aristotle (*Politics* 1.1253a) that man differs from other 'social animals' in his ability to recognize first what is useful to him – that is, what is good for him – then what is 'just' and 'unjust', such recognition being an effect of his possessing these syntactical and hence thinking skills.[25] Man, that is, can now formulate what is useful *as* being useful – and we can see that as soon as he can think of what is useful as good, he is in the position to ask firstly whether some object or course of action is 'good for him', then whether, though good for him, it may be less good than some other object or course. Hence he will eventually be led on to wonder (with Socrates) how he can apportion and measure goodness, and finally – though this social or racial awareness will be long delayed – whether there 'exists' a 'real goodness' (as with Plato) whereby that measurement is possible: whether what is good for him (or them) is thus good per se.

Thus he will have reached the stage of making choices which require the distinction of being not merely utilitarian but *possibly* – even if only possibly – moral. At that point, and to however limited a degree, he is capable of understanding moral good and moral evil, and his choices are between genuinely alternative possibilities, at least some of which would be 'moral' or more 'just' or 'right' than others. Parts of his moral awareness will develop from having to choose between rational and irrational attractions and desires. On this scenario we have as a race gone through

[24] In earlier English 'creature' was regularly used to refer to an (often still unbaptized) infant.

[25] For the importance of syntax in the definition of human beings see Sokolowski (2009).

a process analogous to that which each of us individually goes through as we grow up and by gradually 'interiorizing' our moral, pre-reflective and pre-philosophical education form our moral selves (or souls).

The key to such a development is the observable fact that man has indeed achieved a power of rationality. As Oderberg has put it: 'The first human to have rational thought … would not have been an ape that got lucky … but an animal that, from the beginning of its existence, was empowered (due to a mutation in the gametes of its parents) to think and act rationally'.[26] It is impossible to tell *how* rationally; rationality has been developed over time and is cumulative: we inherit the knowledge of our ancestors and regularly add to it (or detract from it). Most of what we now hold to be obvious is the result of struggles hard-won in the past: not only in the complex discoveries of the mathematician, the astronomer or the geneticist but in the so 'obvious' details of everyday life, as the utility of the fork or the wheel, or in changed attitudes to war or political or physical coercion. And we can go beyond Aristotle in realizing that when we begin to wonder in what sense we recognize things as good or bad for us – and more especially as we begin to be concerned with the beginnings of some sort of 'moral' awareness – we can not only reason but also rationalize; that is, we can learn to treat something as good simply because it is (for whatever reason) desirable to us (an apple, for example: 'Eve saw it was desirable', but in this case mistakenly).[27]

It is probably the case that we cannot be fully responsible for our actions until we have developed the mental capacity to rationalize them. In that case, moral responsibility depends both on the capacity to recognize the importance of truth and contrariwise on having acquired a certain facility in self-deception. To be able to rationalize entails not only to give 'good' reasons but also having the option of giving a self-serving justification for an apparently non-rational choice; hence we make excuses (as distinct from proper recognition that we have made a mistake). Thus in the Garden Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the Serpent: 'Nothing to do with me, Guv.!'

At that stage Adam, really had become a moral being, knowing the difference between good and evil, as *Genesis* says, and learning 'the hard way' why disobedience to God has to be not merely attended with sanctions but morally negative and harmful to the agent. Furthermore, until

[26] Oderberg (2007: 29).

[27] I once saw in a doctor's waiting room a picture of Eve offering Adam a cigarette; he replies, 'No thanks, I would rather have an apple' – illuminating at least an early stage of my account of the development of moral awareness: some pleasures are best declined.

Adam knew the difference between good and evil, he could have no notion of that offence against love that the historical Augustine perceived as at the root of waywardness. A dawning awareness that there is a difference between good and evil must be counted as a dawning awareness of some kind of godliness, so some kind of god: and with that awareness goes fear and a still more or less pre-moral and fragile sense that God should be obeyed – and could be disobeyed; hence Adam's 'I heard your Voice in the garden and I was afraid.' Augustine seems to have realized that this disobedience precedes any developed moral sense, both in Adam and in our more childish selves. But when that sense begins to develop, 'Adam' can be gradually made aware of his inadequate grasp of what it is to love, which is the root of his 'sinfulness'.

So does it matter if there were many Adams? Certainly not. Nor need a 'mitochondrial Eve' affect the basic history. An understanding of the fault of one Adam (or Eve) would explain the faults of all, for given the circumstances in which they would come into existence, it is impossible that they would not be similarly faulty or fundamentally the same. We cannot *know* whether there must have been one or many ancestors of the eventual human race, nor indeed, as we have noted, at what point a potential man or woman – or more than one – became an actual one. Certainly the process would have been gradual and there is evidence that in the course of the slow development of *homo sapiens* members of the evolving species mated with members of other less evolved hominid groups. Thus the question of when 'moral' responsibility appeared out of developing ratiocination is uninteresting. We neither can nor need to answer it; we only need to recognize the fact: beyond that we must leave knowledge to God – or to the unknowable guilty man. There are many grammatically well-formed and meaningful questions which it is pointless to ask or to which to expect an answer.

What we do need to recognize, however, is that the Adam or Adams must have been moral primitives, the adolescents of the human race (as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine's opponent Julian of Eclanum believed); they will learn the possibilities both of godliness – given God, the final cause of their creation – and of vice. Being immature, their 'vices', becoming real vices, will become a part of their make-up – of their genetic structure if you will – to be inevitably handed down, as the 'traducianists' maintained. The effects of that make-up, being the effects of the 'original sin', we see all around us in action. Yet an explanation such as I propose would also relieve Neo-Augustine from one serious concern of his historical prototype: lest an inherited original sin (or a genetic flaw)

should commit him to the *dementia* of Tertullian. That perplexity arose – as did others for Augustine – from his inability to make clear sense (but without resorting to some form of materialism) of the fact that human beings are both material and immaterial beings. Yet in Aristotelian terms that combination is already present in human seeds (as well as in human ova), in virtue of form dominating their matter and indicating why they are what they are and how in tandem they will develop: not merely as material objects but as that same combination of the material and the immaterial which we ourselves display: I can be both deficient in justice and yet reasonably slim!

If the 'Adam' of *Genesis* represents a plurality of many Adams – as many these days may think probable – the effects of their various activities inside or outside the 'Garden' would make our genetic inheritance, and our genetic flaws, more complex, though perhaps to a degree variable according to time and clime – yet make no essential difference to the *ignorantia* and *concupiscentia* we all have inherited. And if God, intending us to develop to His likeness, had no better option than to teach us over time and as an effect of the fall – as individuals as well as collectively – rather than decreeing at the outset what might seem the logically possible best state, then this developing through evolutionary stages is no more a problem for a defender of divine justice than the poeticized version of our fall from 'lesser perfection' in the Garden of Eden.

In the first instance, our evolutionary 'fall' may indeed be less morally disreputable. However, though still due to a proto-pride or greed in wishing to have more than human status, its effects would be equally devastating; moreover, as sinning humans become more sophisticated, their opportunities for pride increase exponentially, culminating in the desire – observable in more recent historical times as well as among the Roman leaders chronicled by Augustine – to behave as though they are gods: what Augustine rightly identified as the futile desire for omnipotence. Thus the moral of the story in *Genesis* is not lost, only given a more historical setting than either Augustine's own 'historical' version or any more sugar-coated allegorization would allow.

In discussing Darwin and Darwinism in an earlier chapter, I have noted (as have many others) that we are currently at a particularly significant stage of the evolutionary process, since for the first time in human history we have the power to erase ourselves, whether deliberately or by mere carelessness. This may be said to give us greater 'control' of the evolutionary process than our ancestors had – even apart from the other less obvious

way in which we exert control in virtue of our increasing understanding of the process itself. We cannot read the future intentions of God, but we can certainly have more idea of what God has done up to now – and so by conscious denials delude ourselves into a more sophisticated immorality than could our ancestors: as in denying what we have by now become able to identify as systemic injustices ('structures of sin'), or as when we think we can infer from apparent 'progress' or development what we 'ought' to be like in the future: in effect reading God's mind through all-too-human eyes.

This is intended as no merely Luddite comment but as a recognition that, just as we can eliminate millions of our fellow men more effectively than in the past – a stone-age Hitler could not have had such resources and so such delusions of power as his twentieth-century successor – so the lust for power also displayed by our ancestors (Augustine analyzes his *libido dominandi* as the appetite to control not just the bodies but the souls of our fellows) can be rationalized as in accord with historical necessity and thus, indulged exponentially, readily reach proportions, already in Augustine's view, authentically demonic (*City of God* 10.19; cf. *On Music* 6.13.41). The more power we are masters of (as individuals or as a race), the greater our opportunity to abuse our fellows: more especially those who – irrationally but as we suppose conveniently – we decline to recognize as our fellows, be it Jews, Christians or the powerless and infant of our own nations.

There is an interesting corollary to my revision of the tradition of the 'fall'. More philosophically satisfactory than the 'Garden' or 'Golden Age' scenario of lost 'perfection' may be for the human race to have to 'grow' through the process of evolution, rather as our 'soul' grows through our individual lives. Neither as race nor as individuals do we start out with purity and simplicity of 'soul'; rather we acquire it – and it is our inherited genetic flaws that can afford us the possibility of learning so to grow. This accords well with the received tradition that God created us not morally perfect but in a state in which we could learn how our moral perfection entails recognizing our creaturely dependence and inability to flourish without his 'grace': in other words, in our appreciation of the metaphysical value of humility. Once such a scenario is understood, the coming of Christianity can be seen as having completed the age-long search for moral perfection: rather than, as many 'Reformers' have supposed, Christ's having abolished all past searches after the good life to replace them by an imposed reconstruction (as if *ex nihilo*) of humanity. Under this aspect

neither Reformers nor their modern counterparts have any right to suppose that we can – let alone should – proclaim the construction of Man *de novo*.

A strange, fundamental and seemingly inexplicable part of Augustine's theory of man is that we have a 'double' life: a common life (*vita communis*) in Adam and our personal life (our *vita propria*). It is the sins of the common life, the sins of each of us as 'one on Adam' which for Christians are forgiven by baptism, while our personal life, if sinful, is salvaged through repentance. One of the advantages of this distinction is that, if correct, it subverts any theory by which we are mere atomic individuals; rather, we share solidarity (in virtue as in vice) with all other descendents of Adam. A major difficulty with it, however – if it means more than would the banal observation that we are all human beings (but, so what?) – might be how to find surviving 'bits' of our *common* life in our everyday experiences. How, that is, can we explain Augustine's notion of a common life as more than a pseudo-scientific claim about our 'pre-existence' in Adam's loins? More specifically, can we find among our actions those that seem susceptible of description in terms of a 'common life' as well as a 'personal life'? There are probably many such, but perhaps the most interesting candidate – not least because it is related to our inherited genetic structures – is our sexual behaviour, more specifically in the way we behave in making love. For who can deny that every man and woman can regard their partner both as a male or a female ('Me Tarzan, you Jane'), and also as a particular man or woman? The distinction becomes clear if we look at the two varieties of love poetry. The 'guy with an eye for a thigh' (and his female equivalent), as represented for example in much of the poetry of Ovid, wants a woman, and knows what he regularly does when he gets one, whereas the romantic lover wants – even idolizes – a particular woman, with whom his sexual relationship, he insists, is unique. Yet in wanting that particular woman he also wants 'a woman'. In his particularity he is living his 'personal life', in his raw and unspecified desire he is living his 'common life' In the latter case his potential sinfulness (that is, in the yielding at least in part to unspecified lust) is forgiven in baptism, though his 'weakness' for women may remain. Indeed in his particular relationship with a special woman he may combine behaviour 'appropriate' to each of the two distinct lives; Augustine would probably claim that to a degree he is doomed after the fall always to do that. Of course, if he is an Ovidian womanizer, he depersonalizes his 'personal life', indeed dehumanizes himself by trying to live only at the 'common' level. There are other bits of human behaviour that

point to the same notion of a double life, but this one, widely indicated in love poetry, is perhaps the most obvious.

For Adam we may agree: so far, so good. Yet at least since the time of Origen – and importantly with both Augustine and his medieval successors – for free choice or free will the hard case was always not that of Adam but of Satan, and here the evolution of the human species and its hominid predecessors affords no immediate help. We are left to conclude that the fall of Satan and the 'fall' of Adam should always have been regarded as significantly distinct, and that not least because, for Augustine and all his successors, Satan's was the greater penalty. Whether or not Adam, or in the first instance Eve, being moral primitives, were tempted by Satan, either way they act in an 'immoral' or 'pre-immoral' fashion (Adam perhaps guided by a not-wholly-misguided love), and thus develop the habits of immorality. With Satan the old difficulties still pertain, the alternatives for him still seeming to lie between bad luck and the apparently unintelligible choice of evil for its own sake or at very least because he has little affinity for the good. The fundamental issue is whether a choice of evil in full knowledge that it is evil is possible for a rational being. Augustine, the pear-tree robber of the *Confessions*, clearly thinks it is, confessing that he himself on that occasion did wrong precisely because it was wrong, and by hindsight explaining his behaviour as driven by the futile aspiration to be God: that is, master source of his own morality.

If his analysis is correct, the same would apply to anyone similarly located (for example, to Adam or Eve, provided they had matured sufficiently, as 'adolescents', to distinguish, however inadequately, right from wrong), and certainly to Satan. Yet that the choice, though deliberate, might seem unintelligible perhaps affords the opening towards its explanation. Satan may have been all-knowing, but – as I have argued when examining both the views of Augustine himself and Anselm's first encounter with the problem Augustine bequeathed him – he could not have been all-loving, or at least willing lovingly to recognize that love, in its essence, has to grow. Thus he is blocked and inverted by his choice of evil while the 'good' angels continue to grow in love.

For had Satan been all-loving, he would not have loved to disobey, could not have confounded doing the loving thing with doing what he loved to do, could not have loved himself 'to the point of contempt for God'. For a being given adequate knowledge to persevere in goodness, his freedom to choose, hence his ultimate responsibility, must be located in the nature of his love. That should not surprise us; the New Testament

identifies love as the greatest spiritual character; perhaps along these lines Augustine's account of the origin of evil can be redrafted, and with material to be found in Augustine's own writings.

Full understanding can always be used to rationalize; it follows that that is what Satan, defective in loving, would have to have done. Certainty is impossible, since angels, being by definition wholly immaterial, cannot be discussed in terms of the scientific knowledge of even only partly material subjects such as are human beings. Whatever the truth about Satan, earlier Christians may not have needed to look to his love-defective fall as the ultimate immediate explanation of our ancestors' adoption of evil ways – now to be viewed in an evolutionary perspective rather than as a fall from lost 'perfection'. Satan may be more than the paradigm case and yet not the *necessary* – though still the possible – efficient cause of mankind's spiritual inadequacy and failure. That the failings of men and angels must be distinguished may shed light on the old story that whereas the fallen angels had – and would by their natures have – no second chance, that is not the case – as already seen by Augustine – for those who will be 'saved' among the descendants of 'Eve' and 'Adam'.

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Index

Abelard, Peter, 125
Adam (and Eve), 32, 34–35, 37, 40, 42, 61, 224, 317, 354, 373, 378, 383–388; sin of, 12, 41n, 42–43, 49, 59, 76–77, 86, 123n, 134, 136, 147, 154, 223, 368, 372, 375
Addington Symonds, J., 303
Aelred of Rievaulx, 127–129, 132, 295
Albertus Magnus, 122n, 129, 130n, 135
Alexander of Aphrodisias, 25, 27
Alienation, 304–305
Ambrose of Milan, 366, 372–376
Anscombe, G.E.M., 4n, 7n, 181, 336–337
angels, fall of, 12, 44–45, 50, 94–95, 98, 110–112, 149, 151, 191, 354, 357, 366
Annas, J., 23n, 292n
Anselm, 13, 15, 30, 35, 36, 47n, 84–99, 101, 104, 112, 114–116, 127, 136, 142, 145, 146, 194, 231, 353–354, 361; on Augustine, 86; on the "will", 86, 92; on two types of willing, 88–90; on three senses of *voluntas*, 90–91; on Satan, 91–95, 98–99; on perseverance, 91, 93; on freedom, 92; on omnipotence, 97; in Luther, 176–177
anti-Semitism, 188n, 261, 345
apatheia, 9
Aquinas, Thomas, 47, 70, 100–135, 146, 159n, 179, 232, 250, 356; disregard of Augustine, 104; on faculty of "will", 105–109, 121; on "will" as passive potency, 114; on love, 109–110, 125–126, 131; on fall of angels, 111–112; on human action, 113–117; on freedom, 113; on Adam, 116; on natural and supernatural ends, 117, 122n, 153n; on infused virtues, 122, 131; on pagan virtues, 123–125; on friendship, 126–128, 131
Aristotle, 7, 20–22, 64, 103, 104, 107, 113–114, 117–118, 121, 129, 133, 139, 141, 160, 171, 178, 292, 377, 385
Arminius, Arminianism, 192, 205, 209, 213, 223, 315
Armour, 200n, 201n
Arnold, Matthew, 281, 324–331, 335
assent, 24–27, 36, 80, 106
atheism, 11, 200, 202, 222, 235, 239, 242, 251, 254, 273, 322, 324, 329, 332
Augustine, *passim*; 109, 124, 127, 133, 163; on first–person view, 2, 31; on freedom, 5, 32–40, 44, 51, 56; on "will", 5, 7n, 28–32, 35, 43, 59–60, 62, 82; on our being one in Adam, 375–376; on love, 29–32, 40, 43, 62–83; on lust, 30, 49; Stoicism in, 35–36; on dreams, 38, 56–58; on pride, 44; on predestination, 48–49, 53; on guilt, 52, 56, 59; on habit, 54; on pagan virtue, 55; on regret, 58; on "double life", 59, 390; on perseverance, 77; on Plato, 78; on humility, 80–82; on lying about religion, 34
autonomy, 145, 214, 235, 236, 259–260, 264, 272–273, 300, 308, 357
Averroists, 139–140
Avicenna, 102, 104, 107–108, 135, 141, 145, 162

Babcock, W., 32n, 47n
Bacon, Francis, 215n
Baius, Michael, 204n
beauty, 64–65, 69, 72, 75, 79, 126
Beccaria, Cesare, 277
Beckett, Lucy, 324n, 329n
Bentham, Jeremy, 212, 254, 276, 279, 283–284, 286, 287, 304, 341
Berdyaev, 310n
Berkeley, 200n, 236, 239, 242–246, 280, 316
Bernard of Clairvaux, 15, 100–103, 110, 126–127, 129–130, 148, 177n, 182, 188n, 191, 198
Besselink, 209n
Blackburn, Simon, 338–340, 349
Boccaccio, 165
Boethius, 85, 106, 351, 353
Bonaventure, 139, 173, 348
Bradwardine, Thomas, 159, 173, 232
Brook, R., 288
Burke, Edmund, 250, 252n
Burlamaqui, Jean-Jacques, 248n

Butler, bishop, 249, 262, 275
Byers, S., 7n, 27n, 29n, 35n, 57n, 197n

Calvin, John, 10, 47n, 100, 136, 166, 185, 188–193, 207, 212, 216, 279; and political Calvinism, 188–189, 192–193; on Aristotle, 189n; as voluntarist, 189; on predestination, 190; on Adam, 191
Cambridge Platonists, 166, 200–201, 213, 218, 220, 222, 228, 229, 230, 231, 233, 236, 238, 249, 263, 355–356
Camus, Albert, 250
Capreolus, 159n, 160n
Cartesianism (*see* Descartes)
Chappell, T., 7n, 32n, 33n, 46n, 47n, 258n
Cicero, 129, 169, 170, 176n
Clarke, Samuel, 239–241, 248
Clement of Alexandria, 366, 368, 387
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 280, 286
Comte, Auguste, 280–281, 285, 319
Condorcet, 277
conscience, 249, 262, 270, 275
Cross, 103n, 142n
Crusius, 259
culture as religion-substitute, 324–329, 335, 358
Culverwell, Nathaniel, 219, 222, 226
Cumberland, bishop Richard, 217–220, 228, 239, 263, 355–356
Cynics, 23, 58–59

D'Holbach, Baron, 251–252, 254
Darwall, S., 201n, 202n, 217n, 222n, 224n, 247n, 249n, 256n
Darwin, Charles, 12, 297–303, 311, 312, 384
Darwinism and racism, 298
Dasein, 296, 343–347
Davenport, 32n, 40n
Davies, 113n, 116n
De Beauvoir, Simone, 349
deception, 268n, 319–350, 360
De La Mettrie, Julien Offray, 251, 253
Deism/deists, 213, 223, 243, 249, 250, 251, 277, 279, 324
De Man, Paul, 349n
Dennett, Daniel, 302
Derrida, Jacques, 317n, 363–364
Descartes, R., 83, 160, 196n, 198, 209, 278, 362; on freedom, 198–199; on the first person 198; as voluntarist, 199, 202, 216, 226, 227, 229, 257
Diderot, 253–254
Dionysius, Pseudo, 104, 162, 163, 164, 174, 185, 202
disobedience, 41, 235
Di Stefano, C., 293–294
divine command morality, 184, 317, 336
Dodaro, R., 33n, 54n, 119n
Donner, W., 283, 284n, 286n
Dostoievski, F., 307, 309–310
Dover, Sir Kenneth, 337
Dowling, L., 326
Duns Scotus, 4, 34n, 89, 140, 141–153, 173, 175, 182, 194, 196, 210, 213, 228, 232, 356; on univocity, 141, 159; on voluntarism, 142; on the "will", 142, 145–146, 148; on freedom, 142–143, 150–151; on two wills, 144
Durkheim, Emile, 327

egalitarianism, 261, 282, 287
Eleanor of Aquitaine, 128
Eliot, T.S., 329–331
emanation, 107–108
enlightened self-interest, 204
Epictetus, 9, 24, 235, 238–239
Epicurus/Epicureanism, 22–24, 166n, 176n
eros, 63–71, 83, 87, 128, 267, 356
Erasmus, Desiderius, 174, 178, 183
eudaimonism, 88, 125–126, 260
evil, 45–47, 54, 93–94, 156, 190
evolution, 298–303, 384–386, 388

fact-value distinction, 255, 261
faculty psychology, 64, 83, 91–92, 102, 105, 109, 135, 201, 231
Faye, E., 342n, 349
Fest, Joachim, 334
Feuerbach, 280, 295, 319, 321–323, 332, 340, 343n, 358
Fichte, 280, 295
Finnis, J., 196n
Frankfurt, Harry, 334
Frede, M., 24, 27n, 29n, 55n
freedom, (liberty), 17–27, 32–40, 44, 51, 86–87, 95, 110, 113, 118, 120, 141, 145–146, 150, 152, 161, 180, 182, 190, 194, 197, 199, 206, 213, 216, 224, 226, 230, 233, 240, 275, 289, 315
Freud, Sigmund, 297, 311–313, 381
friendship, 43, 62, 79, 109, 126–127, 130, 133, 231–232, 234, 263, 294
French Revolution, 12, 246, 250, 252, 276, 357–358
Fussell, Paul, 365, 382

Galileo, 12
Gassendi, 193n
Geach, P., 181
General Will, 266–268, 282, 295, 296–297, 308, 314, 354, 358
genetics, 298, 303, 380–382
Gerrish, B.A., 175n, 188n

Giles of Rome, 138
Gilson, E., 100
God: as arbitrary, 8, 49, 60, 112, 146, 151, 189, 212, 223, 240; as impersonal, 9, 71, 77–79, 234; as dead (or useless), 14, 234, 351; 359, 366; as omnipotent, 18, 51–52, 90, 137, 154, 179, 215, 232, 274; with *potentia absoluta et ordinata*, 150, 354
Godescalc, 85–86
Godfrey of Fontaines, 138
Golden Age/Paradise, 366, 369, 382–387, 389
grace, 28, 32, 36, 54–55, 77, 103n, 104, 110, 116, 118, 120, 122, 136, 148, 157, 160n, 184, 185, 203, 316, 355, 389
Grane, L., 159n, 174n
Green, T.H., 289–290
Gregory, B., 1, 3, 4, 238n, 244n
Gregory of Nyssa, 132–133, 313, 370, 374
Gregory of Rimini, 159–160, 173, 179n, 196n, 210, 232
Grote, George, 286n
Grotius, Hugo, 168, 169n, 205, 209–215, 220, 222, 248, 265
guilt, 52n, 56

habit, 54, 305–306
Haldane, John, 298
Harding, B., 1n, 172n
Hart, H.L.A., 4n, 338n
Hawking, Stephen, 250, 302
Hecht, Anthony, 281n
Hegel, G.W.F., 280, 282, 295–297, 314–316, 321
Heidegger, Martin, 268, 305, 342–349; 359–361, 363, 364; interest in phenomenology and Brentano, 342; interest in Augustine and Bonaventure, 342; and Nazism, 344–349; on *Dasein*, 343–347
Helm, P., 189n, 190n, 191n
Helvétius, Claude Adrien, 251–252, 254
Henry of Ghent, 138, 143n, 146
Herbert of Cherbury, Lord, 200n, 202n, 213–214, 223, 233
Hill, C., 212n, 215n
Hillier, 207n, 238n
historicism, 297, 304, 333, 344
Hobbes, Thomas, 158, 162, 167, 168, 169n, 170, 180, 197, 200, 201, 202, 213–217, 220, 233, 234, 235, 236, 239n, 240, 251, 254, 265, 282n
Hoffmann, T., 110n, 111n, 112, 142n, 143n
homosexuality, 69, 129, 380–381
Hume, David, 2, 101, 209, 226, 227, 235, 236, 246, 254–259, 263, 278, 307, 322, 340, 343, 357–358, 361, 362
humility, 85, 292, 389
Hunt, L., 3, 246n
Husserl, Edmund, 342–343
Hutcheson, Francis, 235–236, 246–249, 254, 263, 266, 357
Hypatia, 351
hypocrisy, 265–266, 279, 286, 358

image of God, 10, 95, 164, 166, 198, 225, 290
impersonality (see also “God”), 278, 298, 318, 340–341
innate ideas, 222, 224n, 236
Innocent III, Pope, 164
Inwood, B., 24, 35n, 57n
Irenaeus, 368
Irwin, Terence, 286n, 320n
Isaac, sacrifice of, 232

Jansen/Jansenism, 200n, 203, 205
Janz, D.R., 159n, 179n
Jefferson, Thomas, 277
Jerome, 26, 233
John of Damascus, 26, 70, 103n, 130n, 135
Johnson., Dr Samuel, 351
Julian of Eclanum, 34, 43, 387
Justin Martyr, 26, 372

Karlstadt, Andreas, 178, 180n
Kant, Kantianism, 60, 89–90, 95, 145, 209, 231–232, 234, 235, 254, 259–264, 273–274, 278, 279, 295, 315–316, 357, 361; on autonomy, 260, 273, 308, 357; on eudaimonism, 260; on the categorical imperative, 261
Kavka, 216n
Kent, B., 124n, 138n, 139n, 148n
Kepler, 224n
Kierkegaard, S., 314–318

Lamberigts, M., 34n, 41n, 369n
Lamont, 160n, 211n
Lane, 188n, 189n
Lawrence, D.H., 329–330
Leavis, F.R., 328–329, 330n, 335
Leff, G., 160n
Leibniz, G., 227, 229–234, 239, 248, 259, 295, 316, 355–356
liberalism, liberals, 258, 281–282, 286, 291, 320
Lipsius, Justus, 210, 215n
Locke, John, 212, 218, 222–227, 233, 234, 236, 249, 252, 257–258, 265, 278, 356
Lodge, David, 330
Lombard, Peter, 100, 102, 107, 178
Long, S., 122n
love, 28–29, 40, 43, 98–99, 120, 125–128, 131, 133–134, 177, 186, 190, 200, 218, 228–249, 263, 296, 299, 314, 318, 322, 353–354, 364

Lubac, H. de., 122–123n, 204n, 310n
Lucretius, 167
Luther, M., 10, 39n, 100, 119, 136, 144, 159n, 164, 166, 168, 216, 232, 325, 353, 355; on Aristotle, 174–176; on two kingdoms, 175–176; on faith alone, 176, 183, 186; on grace, 184; on love, 177, 186–187; on total corruption, 177, 182; voluntarism, 180–182, 186; on predestination, 181; on justification, 182; on freedom, 182–183; on sacraments, 185

MacDonald, S., 47n, 125n, 221n
Machiavelli, N., 10, 166–172, 180, 214; on Epicureanism, 167–168, 193; on religion, 169, 240
MacIntyre, A., 4, 6n, 116, 137n, 253n, 263, 283n, 344, 349n, 362
Mandeville, Bernard, 239–240, 243–246, 251, 259
Manent, P., 170n, 265n, 282n
Mansini, G., 130n, 131n
Marion, Jean-Luc., 362
Maritain, J., 3, 4
Marlowe, Christopher, 251
marriage, 366–367
Marsilio Ficino, 163–165, 167, 222
Marsilius of Padua, 167
Marx, Karl, 282, 290, 295, 297, 298, 303–306, 311, 319
Mary the Virgin, 53
Masham, Lady (Damaris Cudworth), 224, 230
Maximus Confessor, 26, 70, 130n, 132
McGrath, 55n, 160n, 204n
McMullin, E., 303n
McSorley, H., 179n, 183n
Melanchthon, Philipp, 179, 186n, 189, 192
memoria, 68
Milbank, J., 1, 4, 123n, 362
Mill, J.S., 5, 64, 228, 276, 280–295, 319, 326, 341; on the subjection of women, 282, 291–295, 319–320
Milton, John, 84, 205–207, 214, 238n, 277, 327–328
Molina, Luis de, 195, 197
Montaigne, 193, 209–210, 259
Montesquieu, 253, 272n
Moore, G.E., 295
moral obligation, 22, 196, 223, 255, 256, 260–261, 264, 295, 299
moral sense theories, 235–239, 254–259, 284, 338
mortalism, 207, 216
Mussolini, Benito, 319

Nagel, Thomas, 298, 329n
natural law, 196, 210–227
New Criticism, 335–336
"New Man"/"New Humanity", 12, 38, 251–252, 264–265, 271, 274, 293–294, 302, 305, 310, 323, 346, 348, 359
Newman, John Henry Cardinal, 283, 365
Nicholas of Cusa, 162n
Nicole, Pierre, 204–205, 266
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 46, 206, 265, 276, 283n, 295, 297, 298, 306–311, 312, 319, 325, 357, 359, 361, 364
nihilism, 239, 246, 263, 309
Nixon, R., 17
nominalism, 159, 162, 173
Nozick, R., 283, 341
Nygren Anders, 185n, 187n

Oberman, H., 172n, 186n
Oderberg, D., 386
O'Hear, 298, 313n
Oliphant, Margaret, 293–294
O'Neill, Onora, 250, 336n
Origen, 12, 31n, 44n, 57n, 64, 200n, 201n, 369–370, 372, 376, 379
original sin, 12, 104, 149, 153, 182, 203, 216, 223, 232–233, 243, 366, 369
Osborne, T., 37n, 124n, 130n, 143n, 152n
Ovid, 390

Pailin, 200n, 213n
Paine, Tom, 277
Parfit, D., 54n, 258n, 339–341, 360
Pascal, Blaise, 28, 193, 203, 253, 266, 269, 279
Pasnau, R., 116n, 139n
Pelagius, Pelagianism, 33–34, 38, 41n, 52, 85, 96, 126, 154–155, 158, 174, 179n, 192, 213, 229, 352, 368
personal identity, 225, 257, 377–378
perspectivism, 307–309, 336
Peter of John Olivi, 138–141, 173
Petrarch, 163, 165
Philip the Chancellor, 130n, 134
Philo of Alexandria, 63n, 367, 369–370, 375
Pico della Mirandola, 163, 165–167
Plato, Platonism, 17–20, 38n, 63–73, 78, 109, 126, 133, 162, 163, 164, 235, 239, 257, 275, 280, 286, 292–294, 297, 308, 312, 328n, 351–353
Plotinus, 34n, 63–64, 68–73, 81, 107–108, 131, 162, 163, 165, 201, 239, 267, 375
Pocock, 167n, 170n
Pohlenz, Max, 346
post-modernism, 361–364
preference theories, 285, 288–289
Preston, John, 212
pride, 41, 44, 147
Proclus, 71, 163
prohairesis, 8, 24, 26, 31

propatheia, 57
Protagoras, 235
providence, 11
Pufendorf, S., 212, 218, 220–222, 226, 229, 248, 265
Putallaz, 138n, 139n

Raleigh, Sir Walter, 215
Rauschning, Hermann, 349n
Rawls, John, 283, 340–341
Richard of St Victor, 128, 132
Richardson, Samuel, 246n, 266
Rieff, P., 173
rights, subjective, 160n, 211–214, 220, 226, 248, 258, 261, 277, 283, 324
Rist, J.M., 2, 19n, 29n, 39n, 44n, 75n, 78n, 86n, 108n, 116n, 119n, 125n, 130n, 163n, 164n, 176n, 181n, 239n, 242n, 257n, 258n, 281n, 290n, 304n, 334n, 350n, 369n, 375n, 377n, 382n
Robespierre, 12, 254, 304, 320–321
Robinson, J., 238n
Rogers, K., 32n, 39n, 89n, 93n, 94n, 95
Rogers, G.A.J., 224n
Romanticism, 83, 170, 322n, 323, 357–358
Rorty, Richard, 349–350
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 246n, 251, 252n, 254, 259, 263, 264–275, 277, 278, 282, 286, 296–297, 304, 312, 321, 346, 358; on vice the product of society, 266; on the General Will, 266, 282; attitude to Augustine, 269–272, 275
Russell, Bertrand, 11n, 23n

Sallust, 1, 169
Saak, E.L., 63, 84
Santayana, George, 330–331
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 344, 349
Satan, 34, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, 59, 86, 91–95, 98–99, 110, 114, 121, 135, 136, 147, 207, 354, 391–392
Savonarola, Girolamo, 166
scientism, 280
Schneewind. J.B., 3, 196n, 210n, 213n, 249n, 253n
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 308–309, 312, 323, 328–329
secular morality and its origins, 110, 125, 140–141, 151, 153, 173, 187, 192, 227, 355
seduction, 73
Seneca, 31
Servetus, Michael, 207n
Shaftesbury, third Earl of, 227, 235–239, 244–246, 247, 249
Shanley, B., 64, 124n
Shanley, M.L., 291n
Shaw, Bernard, 301
Shelley, P.B., 324–325, 331
Sherwin, M., 111, 125n, 131n, 132
Sidgwick, Henry, 261, 276, 286, 287, 320, 337–339, 349, 357
Slavery (also moral slavery), 39, 277, 290, 291, 323
Smart, J.J.C., 284n
Smilansky, Saul, 338–339, 349
Smith, C., 14n, 298n
Smith, J.K.A., 364n
Sokolowski, R., 30n, 350n, 385n
sola Scriptura, 178, 186, 307
Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, 276
Spencer, Herbert, 300
Spinoza, Benedict, 197, 227, 234, 295, 322
Steiner, George, 307n, 329
Stephen, F.J., 287–289
Stevens, Wallace, 331–332, 335
Stevenson, C.L., 338
Stoics, Stoicism, 9, 23–26, 35, 57, 62, 80, 87, 193, 213, 239, 268, 353
Stopes, Marie, 301–303
Strauss, David, 306, 308, 321
Stump, E., 32n, 39n, 40n, 108, 116
Suarez, 158, 195–197, 210, 219, 222, 226
Sweeney, 89n, 96n
sympathy, 255, 279, 286

Talmon, S., 252n
Taylor, Charles, 238n, 246n, 299n, 331n
Ten Commandments, 149, 188
Tertullian, 368, 373, 381
Thomasius, Christian, 210, 223n
Tierney, Brian, 211n
Tocqueville, 282
Toland, John, 237–238
toleration, 207, 242
Trego, K., 89n
Trent, Council of, 194–195, 228, 233
Tuck, R., 169n, 211n

union with God/the One, 77–78, 133
universalism, 97
utilitarianism, 219, 281–295, 320

Valla, Lorenzo, 163, 174, 193n
Vasquez, G., 195, 196–197
Villey, 160n
virtual religion/morality, 281, 319–350, 360; *see also* "deception"
virtue (of Pagans), 1, 55n, 123–125, 148, 151, 153, 156, 158, 191, 356
voluntarism, 136, 138, 142–143, 179–180, 189, 195, 199, 202, 208, 211, 217, 221–223, 227, 230, 235, 356
Voltaire, 12, 253, 254, 269, 307, 321

Walter de la Mare, 101n, 138
Walter of Bruges, 101n
Weinberg, Steven, 302
Wetzel, J., 32n, 52n, 55n
Wheeler, Michael, 347n
Wilkes, Kathleen, 340
"Will" ("v*oluntas*"), 17, 24–27, 28–31, 52, 62–63, 70, 80, 82, 87, 90, 98, 101, 102, 108, 114, 135, 137, 142, 145, 148, 151, 166, 175, 193, 201, 211, 224, 240, 255, 261–263, 297, 308, 338, 379
William of Auxerre, 122, 130
William of Ockham, 4, 143, 152, 154–162, 173, 175, 196, 213, 228, 257, 258; on evil, 156; on salvation extrinsically, 156; on absolute power of God, 157–158, 161, 232; on moral action, 157–158
Williams, Bernard, 288n, 337
Wilson, F., 280n, 284
Wippel, J., 108n, 138n
Wolf, S., 93n
Wolff, Christian, 231–232, 259
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 323
Wood, R., 154n, 159n
Wordsworth, William, 284, 286, 327

Young, F., 301n

Zaborowski, H., 342
Zwingli, Huldrych, 179n, 185, 187