B.G. Prusak's "An Analysis of Augustine's Argument in *Confessions* That Evil Does Not Exist": A Response

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> [The Son] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all crea-
> tion. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on
> earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or
> authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.
> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
>
> Col. 1:15-17 (NASB)

Prusak's analysis of and commentary upon Augustine's argument
regarding the non-existence of evil is as thoughtful as it is brief.
Indeed, Prusak is to be lauded for the skill and acumen he employs
in boiling down the dominant issue of Book VII of the *Confessions* to
a nine-pointed analysis and, still more impressively, in calling Augus-
tine's argument into question in such an abbreviated space. In what
follows, however, I will attempt to show that, despite his skill and acu-
men, neither Prusak's analysis nor his conclusion is thorough enough
to compel us to follow him in what I take to be his major assertion,
viz. that Augustine's conceptions regarding the nature of creation and
the nature of evil are both something less than fully compelling. After
a brief introductory section which comments on Prusak's paragraph
of prolegomena, my formal response to his sections of analysis and
observations will be presented. That response will be comprised of four
disparate but nevertheless connected summary points, each of which,
in turn, will be accompanied by a brief explanation.

  Prusak's five-sentence prolegomena is clear and concise. Indeed, if
it has a flaw it is that it is too concise. That is, while none of these
sentences can be said to be inaccurate *in se*, several of them could use
further qualification. First and foremost of these is the idea that the
"bedrock belief" that "creation is good" is "[p]erhaps … *the* Augus-

tinian belief." While I am more than comfortable with any view that asserts that this is *a* fundamental "augustinian" or, more accurately, *a* fundamental Judeo-Christian belief, it would be more accurate and, in fact, more helpful for the issue at hand, to say that the existence of a single, immutable, incorruptible, and good God is *the* Augustinian belief.[1] Pushing the discussion back this one step—since it obviously remains an essential, if only secondary, "augustinian" belief that the one God who possesses the aforementioned attributes is the One who is solely and uniquely responsible for the good creation—is necessary because it more accurately frames the discussion in its proper theological and metaphysical terms.[2] Along these same lines, allow me to note at the outset that any reader of the *Confessions* or, indeed, of (most of) what posterity has preserved from Augustine, does well to keep "on the table" at all times the impact that the Manichaeans and their (largely) Gnostic and thoroughly Dualist creation mythology had upon Augustine.

   Prusak's next sentence needs no such alteration. On the contrary, the sentiment it contains can only be supplemented by noting that not a few contemporary scholars of Augustine's thought have drawn very similar conclusions. Easily one of the best of these is John Rist who writes: "'*Unde malum*?' … and its more fearsome associate 'Whence did moral evil arise?' … was the most important and more enduring challenge to Augustine throughout his life" (1994, 261).[3]

   The prolegomena's fourth sentence would also benefit from the insertion of a qualifying phrase: strictly speaking, Augustine does not deny that "evil exists"; on the contrary, he clearly and frequently recognizes that many things include evil within themselves as part of what they truly are in this post-lapsarian world and, just as importantly, as we encounter and experience them in our daily lives. Augustine's actual claim is that evil has no *independent* or *metaphysical* existence in our universe precisely because it was created by the God who possesses all of the attributes mentioned above.[4] In other words, Augustine is keenly aware that evil or, more precisely still, partially evil things do exist. His broader claim is that evil can only exist by latching onto and embedding itself within something else; indeed, like any common parasite, in his view evil can only subsist if and when it is "hosted" by the already

corrupted nature of an otherwise and originally wholly good thing.[5] For Augustine, it can be said to follow logically from this that it is actually evil itself which is absurd precisely because it is fundamentally self-defeating: for the Bishop of Hippo, "[e]vil is … absurd … for to the extent that it succeeds it can only destroy that upon which it lives" (Hick 1966, 54).[6]

Having offered these brief comments and qualifications to Prusak's framing of the issue, I will now move on to my response proper. As mentioned above, that response will be confined to four major points.

1. Augustine's argument is thoroughly traditional.

While it is demonstrably true that Augustine augmented and otherwise refined what he inherited from his predecessors, the fact remains that he was neither the first Late Antique thinker nor the first Christian to respond to these questions as he did. In fact, much of his viewpoint and argumentation surrounding the problem had been firmly established in both Neoplatonic and Christian circles for at least a century and a half before he began to compose his *Confessions*.[7] Such a position was especially commonplace in Christian milieus that were consciously attempting to harmonize the Jewish revelation of omnipotent monotheism and (broadly conceived) Platonic metaphysics and ontology.[8] And, so far as we know, Augustine's first profound encounter with such a milieu came in Milan and during the period in which he was sitting under Bishop Ambrose's teaching.[9]

To cite just one example of a non-"augustinian" text that pre-dates Augustine's conversion, notice the numerous ways in which both the categories and the terminology of Athanasius, the fourth-century pro-Nicene Bishop of Alexandria, parallel those employed decades later by Augustine. Especially noteworthy is the degree to which the following excerpt from Athanasius's *De Incarnatione* includes the ideas for which Prusak takes Augustine to task—including presuppositions about the goodness of creation, humanity's creation *ex nihilo*, the linkage between corruption and existence, and, most importantly, the idea that "evil" is, in some sense,[10] connected to "non-being":

> [W]e know that, because there is Mind behind the universe, it did not originate itself; because God is infinite, not finite, it was not made

from pre-existent matter, but out of nothing and out of non-existence absolute and utter God brought it into being through the Word. He says as much in Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth …" (Gen. 1:1) For God is good—or rather, of all goodness He is Fountainhead […] But since the will of man could turn either way, God secured this grace that He had given by making it conditional from the first upon two things—namely, a law and a place. He set them in His own paradise, and laid upon them a single prohibition [… however,] having turned from the contemplation of God to evil of their own devising, [they] had come inevitably under the law of death. Instead of remaining in the state in which God had created them, they were in process of becoming corrupted entirely, and death had them completely under its dominion. For the transgression of the commandment was making them turn back again according to their nature; and as they had at the beginning come into being out of non-existence, so were they now on the way to returning, through corruption, to non-existence again. The presence and love of the Word had called them into being; inevitably, therefore, when they lost the knowledge of God, they lost existence with it; for it is God alone Who exists, evil is non-being, the negation and antithesis of good. By nature, of course, man is mortal, since he was made from nothing; but he bears also the Likeness of Him Who is, and if he preserves that Likeness through constant contemplation, then his nature is deprived of its power and he remains incorrupt. So is it affirmed in Wisdom: "The keeping of His laws is the assurance of incorruption."

(Wisd. of Sol. 6:18)[11]

As important as the tradition or, more specifically, what he understood to be the catholic tradition was to Augustine, it is just as easily shown that, with respect to this question, Scripture was at least as central to his thought. That is to say that, while it is all but impossible to divorce Augustine's attitude toward and reading of Scripture from the community and the tradition which he joined when he committed himself to catholic Christianity, it remains true that in arguing for the source and nature of evil as he did, Augustine was also consciously defending both the letter and the spirit of (significant parts of) the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament as he now understood them. In addition to Genesis 1, the import of which Prusak clearly

acknowledges in his critique, Augustine, once he came to fully accept the authority of the Jewish scriptural tradition, would have recognized the need to incorporate the claims and implications of passages from the Psalms and the Prophets such as Psalm 24:1-2; 74:12-17; 89:6-19; 90:1-6; 95:1-5; Isaiah 40:1-31 and 44:24-25—just to name a few of the more prominent. Texts germane to this issue are still more numerous and more prominent in the later and, hence, significantly more Hellenized New Testament. In addition to the text from Colossians used as this article's epigraph, relevant passages include: Matthew 7:15-20; John 1:1-3; Romans 1:19-21; 8:18-39; 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; Hebrews 1:2-4; James 1:17; and Revelation 4:11. This list could be easily extended.[12]

While Augustine nowhere betrays any hesitancy with respect to these necessary presuppositions, it remains true that they did markedly restrict the number of "moves" or "ways forward" that were open to him as a committed catholic Christian.

2. Augustine's argument as found in Book VII of the Confessions is neither the first nor the most detailed locus within his oeuvre which makes this argument.

While it certainly is an important and interesting passage with respect to Augustine's views on the source, nature, and effects of evil, *Confessions* VII is by no means the only portion of Augustine's extant works that merits study and reflection when assessing the coherence and the validity of his arguments. Chronologically speaking, there are at least four significant portions of his oeuvre that predate the *Confessions*; likewise, there are numerous germane passages in compositions from the last two decades of his life that emerged as he battled the implications that he understood to be latent within the Pelagians' teachings.[13] These "anti-Pelagian" texts should in no wise be regarded as accidental or as texts Augustine included in these works "in passing." On the contrary, it was the Pelagians in general and Julian of Aeclanum in particular who resurrected and reformulated the charge that Augustine had in thought—if not in actual allegiance—remained a Manichaean all along. What is truly remarkable about all of these passages is the degree of consistency that they exhibit. That is, even if one compares a

pre-*Confessions* text in which Augustine discusses his views on evil with one composed in response to Julian of Aeclanum in the 420s, one is immediately struck by their profound degree of overlap and similarity—especially in the language that is used. Given this, the reflective reader of Augustine might well conclude that for more than forty-five years neither Augustine nor his contemporary readers (including both supporters and opponents) were able to detect significant flaws in or substantial problems with his original argument's power and coherence. This, of course, is another way of saying that, if Augustine's presuppositions are granted, it must be significant that the closest any of Augustine's contemporaries could come to indicting his argument regarding the nature of evil is when Julian, who so adamantly opposed Augustine's theology and vision of the world, had to resort to accusing Augustine of remaining a "closet Manichaean," the very position which Augustine's argument about the nature of evil was specifically adopted to overcome and refute.

3. **Augustine's argument, while firmly committed to both plausibility and rationality, is first and foremost a Christian argument that, when necessary, prioritizes faith and revelation over rationality and logic.**

Although the comment comes in a context in which dilemmas related to the nature of grace are being discussed, James O'Donnell's characterization of Augustine's methodology is at least as applicable to the questions that surround the nature and source(s) of evil:

> Augustine does not have a simple, comprehensive solution acceptable to all for these dilemmas. His principle, as in the question of original sin, is to cling to what he knows for certain, to attempt to provide explanations for difficulties, but then to stand with what he knows by faith even when logical difficulties remain. Here, as always, revelation and experience are everything for Augustine; the arguments of the dialecticians have no authority. (O'Donnell 1985, 76)

An exceedingly clear illustration of this principle of prioritization in general and of revelation over logic can be highlighted if one makes reference to the Latin text of *Confessions* VII, xii, 18, the very passage upon which Prusak's critique of Augustine would have us focus. In

Latin, that paragraph's first clause runs:

> *Et manifestatum est mihi quoniam bona sunt quae corrumpuntur, …*

This clause might literally be rendered: "And it was revealed to me that good (things) are things that could be corrupted."[14] In Rex Warner's translation, i.e., the version that Prusak references, this clause runs: "And it became clear to me that things which are subject to corruption are good" (Augustine 1963, 140).[15] As Prusak recognizes, this clause begins a sentence that contains several elements—both explicit and implicit—that are crucial to Augustine's argument and general orientation. However, Prusak's comments do not extend to what is clearly a crucial term of the aforementioned clause and, indeed, the one that, in my view, sets the tone for much, if not for all, of what immediately follows: *manifestatum est*. This term, which is a passive form of the verb *manifesto*, may, depending upon the context in which it is used, be legitimately translated as "to manifest," "to show clearly," "to make clear," or "to reveal"—to list just a few of the most obvious possibilities. Given both the term's typical usage in the *Confessions*, which O'Donnell correctly observes to be "always of truth and usually of divine indication" (1992, 448),[16] and the immediately preceding context, i.e., VII, xi, 17, which is a brief meditation on the necessary contingency of all created things upon the God who alone "unchangeably abides [*incommutabiliter manet*]" and which contains a four-link *catena* of passages from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that is clearly designed to highlight their common assertion that it is necessary for the believer to "abide" in God, it seems easy to justify a translation that makes explicit a claim that is only implicit in Augustine.

Also notable here is the fact that precisely this same phrase, albeit coupled together with the past tense of the verb "to see" [*uidi*], occurs again some fifteen lines later in this same paragraph. This time the "revelatory" nuance of the verb is yet more obvious in that: (1) it is part of sentence that addressed God directly; and (2) it is immediately followed by an expansionist gloss on Gen 1 and that chapter's claims regarding God's activity:

> *Itaque uidi et manifestatum est mihi quia omnia boni tu fecisti et prorsus nullae substantiae sunt quas tu non fecisiti.*

Warner renders this as, "So I saw plainly and clearly that you have made all things good, nor are there any substances at all which you have not made" (Augustine 1963, 141).[17] Given the immediate context, however, something along these lines seems significantly better: "And thus I saw, and it was revealed to me that You have made all good things and there are absolutely no substances (in existence) which you have not made."[18]

   Now, if it is granted that Augustine's prioritization of revelation over rationality is an acceptable and legitimate way for a Christian theologian to proceed, then it also becomes necessary to inquire as to whether or not Augustine's theologizing is, in this particular case, sensible or, at least, not irrational. This very question has been asked by more than a few contemporary philosophers and logicians, not all of whom are in sympathy with either Augustine's presuppositions or his conclusions. Nevertheless, at least one has concluded that:

> whether or not we can share Augustine's faith that it will be revealed to us some day that the distribution of good and evil in this life reflects wholly just judgments on God's part, this does provide a possible answer to the problem of evil. That is, although one might not believe it, or one might rebel against it, *there is nothing necessarily self-contradictory in the answer.* (Griffin 1976, 199; italics added)

Like Paul and many of the Christians who had preceded him, Augustine was or, at least, had become, content with the hope that the full *uindicatio* of both his God, his God's attributes, and his faith in that God could only fully and finally be made manifest at a still-future time that He Himself would bring about, that is, in God's own eschaton.

4. **To reject Augustine's argument places one under the onus of several significant theological and philosophical implications.**

Critique *tout court* is easy; "constructive" critique is among the most difficult of all intellectual endeavors—especially if by "constructive" one means critique that is required to (a) be fair; (b) replace faulty axioms and assumptions; (c) correct the errors that it highlights; and (d) move the discussion forward. And, if constructive critique is almost always a challenge, it is infinitely more so when the views under scru-

tiny are derivative from a mind as powerful as was Augustine's.

For the sake of space, I will not endeavor to discuss each of the above requirements in detail. However, space does permit me to observe that, in connection with "b" above, if Prusak in fact rejects Augustine's thoroughly traditional argument, such a rejection behooves Prusak to explain how and with what he will replace it. More explicitly, it would seem that Prusak must reckon with the possibility that his rejection almost certainly necessitates that he abandon traditional monotheism and, by extension, traditional Christianity. This is due to the afore-mentioned fact that traditional Christianity has always declared its God to be eternally existent, eternally self-generating, wholly good, and wholly immutable. Broadly considered, it would seem that any-one who rejects a generally "augustinian" answer to this question is left with just four options: (a) atheism; (b) metaphysical dualism; (c) het-erodox/non-traditional Christianity; or (d) coherently explaining how evil can metaphysically exist in a universe created and sustained by an all-powerful, wholly good, and wholly immutable God *by means other* than those employed by the "augustinian" argument and the broader tradition that it was so frequently employed to defend. Incidentally, "d" is, at least to my knowledge, *de facto* "off the table" given the fact that, thus far, it is a goal that no one, anywhere, at any time has been able to achieve.

Epilogue: *King Lear's* "augustinianism."

Finally, if I may, I would like to offer the briefest of responses to Pru-sak's question "Is Shakespeare Augustinian [in *King Lear*]?" Given the foregoing pages, it should be obvious that I believe that the plot and the action of *King Lear* both assume and are set in a universe that is very "augustinian." However, the foregoing should also make it plain that, as a man whose Christianity was formed in the late sixteenth-century and whose tradition was both rooted in biblical language and conversant—if something less than completely comfortable—with the classical Greek philosophical tradition, Shakespeare, like Augustine, could hardly be expected to have done otherwise.

Notes

1. For more on the significance of this and other assumptions for Augustine's view, see below. Consider also *Conf.* VII, vii, 11 where Augustine confesses his reliance upon several presuppositions that God allowed him to hold onto—despite the fact that he could find "no solution" to the problem of evil and, indeed, had yet to (re-)convert to catholic Christianity. These presuppositions included: (1) that God exists; (2) that God is immutable; (3) that God cares for humanity. Finally, note the pithy remarks of O'Donnell in his commentary on *Conf.* III,vii,12 regarding why this question emerged with such particular acuity in Late Antiquity: "It is insistence on the goodness of God that makes the question a pressing one" (O'Donnell 1992, 186).

2. Although a full exposition of its significance would take us too far afield from the purpose of this essay, it is more than noteworthy that the chapters and paragraphs that precede Augustine's detailed discussion of the nature of evil in Book VII are laden with assertions—both Scriptural and non-Scriptural—about God's nature and attributes. See, e.g., ii, 3; iii, 4; iii, 5; iv, 6; and v, 7 on God's incorruptibility, immutability, supreme goodness, omniscience, and omnipotence. Also crucial is the placement of a catena of Scripture—including Exodos 3:14 and its all-important claim, stemming from God Himself, that "I am who I am"—in the two paragraphs immediately prior to Augustine's discussion of the nature of evil that begins at VII, xii, 18. Cf. also Griffin 1976, 201: "For Augustine, the evil will is the one thing in the universe that God did not create. […] The will as such is … created. But God does not create its evil volitions; in fact, these evil volitions have no efficient cause at all, but only a deficient cause. Only upon this basis could Augustine simultaneously reject Manichaean dualism and yet avoid suggesting that his own monotheistic God was responsible for the world's evil."

3. Also important here are the facts that Augustine made reference to this problem consistently throughout the years 386–430 and that, by Augustine's own admission, this complex of problems was something that had preoccupied him even in the years before he converted to "orthodox" Christianity. See, e.g., *Conf.* III, vii, 12.

4. See also Cress 1989, 112–113: "Augustine knew perfectly well that evil is indeed lively, vivid, obscenely powerful." And "in declaring evil to be non-being, Augustine is neither metaphysically obtuse nor morally perverse about his account of the nature of evil."

5. This important and necessary distinction is made quite eloquently by G.R. Evans in *Augustine on Evil* (1982, 75), where she notes that, for Augustine, although "[n]o body is simultaneously black and white, … something may be simultaneously good and evil; indeed, since evil cannot exist except by borrowing the existence of the good in which it inheres, there can be no evil unless there is simultaneously good and evil. If there is no good for evil to diminish, it is not there at all."

6. See also Note 7, below. Moreover, given that (one of) the primary attribute(s) of evil is that of destruction, it also follows that it could neither have always existed nor exist forever—either in eternity past or in eternity future: like a "consumerist" economy, if the resources which evil consumes for its own sustenance are finite, it must eventually "consume" itself out of existence.

7. This statement should not be taken as a claim that it is within Neoplatonism that positions similar to Augustine's can first be detected. On the contrary, related ideas, claims, and concepts can also be found in Plato, Epicurus, and Aristotle. For Aristotle's important but very brief and somewhat cryptic remarks, see *The Nicomachean Ethics* IV, 5, where he notes that "evil destroys even itself, and if it is complete, becomes unbearable." For this translation, see Aristotle 1998, 97; for the Greek text, see NE 1126a12 (Aristotle 1894, 81). In context, Aristotle's chief concern in this passage is anger and, specifically, explaining how patience (*praotēs*) is the mean between irascibility (*orgilotēs*) and excessive passivity or lack of spirit (*aogēsia*). For an interesting and explicit incorporation of this passage into an highly "augustinian" argument about the source and nature of evil, see Aquinas, ST Ia,49,3 where he writes: "[T]he Philosopher says that 'if the wholly evil could be, it would destroy itself'; because all good being destroyed (which it need be for something to be wholly evil), evil itself would be taken away (*subtrahitur*), since its subject is good." Thomas's Latin version of the aforementioned line from the *Ethics* reads: "*si malum integrum sit, seipsum destruet.*" For this English translation see Aquinas 1992, 36; for the Latin, see Aquinas 1967, 142.

8. This trend is most easily seen in authors, like Origen and Athanasius, who either originated in Alexandria, Egypt or were especially appreciative of Alexandrian theological methodology, like the Cappadocian fathers. For clear precursors to Augustine's arguments, see, e.g., Origen, *De Principiis* II, 9, 2; Basil the Great, *Hexameron*, hom. 2, par. 4; Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechism*, 7; and Athanasius's *Contra Gentes*, 7. See references (below) for editions of these works. For still more

references, see Cress 1989, 123 and n.4.

9. For the details of this relationship as seen from Augustine's point of view, see esp. *Confessiones* V, xiii, 23 ff. and the early chapters of Book VI. An equally impressive but much later passage that is germane to the question of Augustine's intellectual debt to Ambrose on this and similar questions—albeit again one that is wholly from Augustine's perspective—is *Contra Iulianum* I, 8, 36–39, 46 where, in a discussion with Julian about Augustine's relationship to the Manichaeans, Augustine specifically and repeatedly notes that it is "the catholic faith (*catholica fides*)" (as opposed to reason tout court) in general and the catholic faith as taught by Ambrose of Milan, whom Augustine specifically refers to here as "that teacher of mine (*ille doctor meus*)," in particular that provided him with both the incentive and the means to break with the Manichaeans once and for all. For an argument in favour of the idea that Augustine would have heard the ideas contained within Ambrose's "book (*liber*)" entitled *Isaac and the Soul*, which discusses in some detail Ambrose's defense of the idea that evil is merely a deprivation of the good, as he listened to Ambrose preach in Milan in 386, see Sertillanges 1948, 124–125. For the claim that, in turn, it was Basil the Great who served as Ambrose's primary source for his articulation, see Journet 1963, 33–34 (cited in Cress 1989, 123 and n.4).

10. Athanasius's precise language here is potentially important for the discussion at hand. Though too complex to pursue in great depth here, note that, as he makes the all-important equation between "evil" and "non-being," he says that "evil [*ta kaka*]" is "non-being [*ouk onta*]." This choice of phrase may take on another level of significance when one realizes that, in some modern philosophers' ontological discussions (e.g., Paul Tillich), the two ways of negating in Greek, *mē* (μὴ) and *ouk* (οὐκ), are deemed significant precisely because they help distinguish between "absolute non-being"—in the case of *ouk*—and, in the case of *mē*—"to the parasitic sort of non-being that is said to inhere in being." Obviously, if one regards this distinction as valid, it becomes significant insofar as the "augustinian" position would seem to require that Athanasius use *mē* here, something that he clearly does not do. How precisely to account for Athanasius's use of *ouk*, at least in this context, is a question that might benefit from further study. What seems beyond question is that this distinction would not have been grammatically necessary in this case in either classical or *koiné* Greek. For the aforementioned quotation from Cress, see 1989, 124 and n.15; cf. also 112–113 as well as Hick 1966, 46–49, esp. 48.

11. This work's formal English title is *The Incarnation of the Word of God*. I have quoted an English translation (Athanasius 1944) by an anonymous member of the C.S.M.V. S.Th. religious order. For the Greek text, as well as an alternate English translastion see Athanasius 1971, 140–145.

12. For an interesting formal response to the claim that crucial aspects of the "augustinian" privation theory of evil is without biblical precedent, see Cress 1989, 120–121.

13. See Note 9 (above). Augustinian compositions that address the problem of evil and that pre-date the *Confessions* include: *De ordine* I, 1–3, II, 23–24, and II, 46–47 (386); *Soliloquia* I, 2, 2 (386/387); *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* II, v, 7 (387/389); *De libero arbitrio uoluntatis* I, i, 1–I, iv, 10 and III, xii–xiii, 36–III, xxi, 59 (388–395). Texts that are roughly contemporary include: *De natura boni* (399), which offers an excellent example of a text in which Augustine offers a significantly more detailed argument than he does in the *Confessions*. Germane texts that were composed in the so-called "anti-Pelagian" period of 411–430 include: *De natura et gratia* 19, 21–20, 22 (415); *Contra aduersarium legis et prophetarum* I, 5, 7 (421); *Contra Iulianum* I, 8, 36–39, 46 (421/422); *Enchiridion* 10–12 (423–424); *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* III, 206 (428–430) and, perhaps most famously, *De ciuitate dei* XI, 17–23 and XIV, 5–11 (Book XI was not completed before 417; Book XIV probably did not appear before 420).

14. A published example of a similarly literal translation is readily available from Philip Burton, who renders the phrase in question as, "It was revealed to me also that it is good things that are corrupted" (Augustine 2001, 149).

15. H. Chadwick translates the passage as follows: "It was obvious to me that things which are liable to corruption are good" (Augustine 1991, 124). While by no means inaccurate, in my view, this rendering, much like Warner's, obscures both the potential significance and the probable source of the insight that, for Augustine, clearly made such a profound difference in his ability to find rest and peace in the face of these obviously difficult problems.

16. Though I clearly concur with O'Donnell's etymological insight, I just as clearly depart from (and am puzzled by) his claim that "[h]ere the development that follows the first 'manifestatum' is purely Plotinian, with no scriptural overtones." This is particularly true in light of the observations made already in my text and in O'Donnell's own comments on the immediately subsequent paragraph, i.e.,

VII, xiii, 19, that "the context is now (?) made as scriptural as possible." To raise just one objection: Why should we assume that, here, Augustine would even want to toggle so neatly between his reliance upon Scripture and the assistance he and the broader Christian tradition have received from Neoplatonism? Surely the real point throughout these paragraphs is to demonstrate, as so much of the previous Judeo-Christian tradition had attempted to do, that the two streams were compatible. In other words, to me, it seems better to recognize that this entire section's Neoplatonism is only exceeded by its reliance upon the Bible and the catholic tradition.

17. Interestingly, Chadwick (see also Note 15, above) slightly modifies his translation of "*manifestatum est*" from "It was obvious to me" to "and it was made clear to me" (Augustine 1991, 124).

18. It is again helpful to compare this to Burton's published translation: "Thus I saw and thus it was revealed to me that it is you who have made all good things, and that there are no substances at all that you have not made" (2001, 150).

Recommended Reading

The following secondary materials, most of which are cited in the text of this article, are useful for beginning to study Augustine's account of evil. The list is *highly* selective, both in respect to the sheer amount of material that has been published on the topic and in that it only includes works published in English.

Burns 1988
Cress 1989
Evans 1982
Griffin 1976
Hick 1966, especially 43-95
Mann 1982
Rist 1994, especially 97–112, 129–135, 256–266, and 321–327.
Tilley 1991, especially 113–140.
Torchia 2006

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