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# Eternal Goods (Chapter Five of Discerning the Good in the Letters and Sermons of Augustine)

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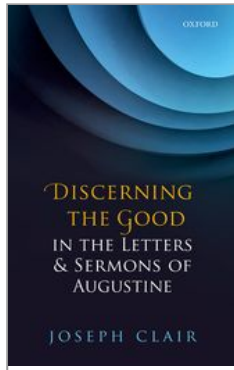
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## Discerning the Good in the Letters and Sermons of Augustine

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## Eternal Goods

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### Abstract and Keywords

For Augustine, eternal goods are the virtues and goods of genuine friendship as they will exist in eternity—as the full expression of love for God and neighbor-love. This chapter considers such goods in their plurality and temporality. That is, it treats them as human beings are able to comprehend and pursue them—and sometimes even obtain and experience them—in this life. To do so, this chapter revisits Augustine's letters to Ecdicia and Macedonius to take a closer look at where each succeeded and failed in their pursuit of higher, eternal goods. Augustine's vision of obtaining eternal goods involves a process in which the practice of virtues in this life begins to mirror more directly the way virtues will exist in eternity. The chapter also highlights elements of Neoplatonism in Augustine's theory of the virtues that shed new light on his understanding of the relationship between religion and society.

*Keywords:* virtues, friendship, eternity, Neoplatonism, love of God, neighbor-love, religion and society

We now reach the summit of our study of the hierarchy of goods found in Augustine's letters and sermons. After chapter-long consideration of the three representative temporal goods—marriage and family, public office, and wealth—we now turn to their counterpart, the eternal goods. Three questions will guide our examination of them in this chapter: what are eternal goods? How do they relate to the classification of goods we saw in Chapter 1? And, finally, how does one obtain them? The majority of the chapter will be devoted to this third question.

### 5.1. Letter 220 to Boniface

Augustine's correspondence with the military commander Boniface—whom we met in Chapter 3—provides a compressed definition of eternal goods that will serve as our starting point. Boniface was a Christian friend of Augustine, serving as military commander overseeing the protection of Roman Africa during the volatile early decades of the fifth century. His career was cut short when he fell into a conspiracy centered on rival generals Flavius Aetius, Flavius Constantius Felix, and the empress Galla Placidia.<sup>1</sup> Boniface formed his own army and for two years fought against Roman troops sent from Italy to defeat him. In the middle of this rebellion (c.428 AD), Augustine wrote to him, imploring him to return to his role and fulfill his obligation to **(p.131)** protect Africa from the Vandals (Letter 220). Augustine identifies the cause of Boniface's rebellion as rooted, ultimately, in the condition of his soul: it is disordered love for the temporal goods of wealth and public office (and of the power associated with these goods) that has led Boniface to make bad use of them and to fail to fulfill his obligation to love and protect his neighbors. Augustine advises Boniface to reorient his desires and motivations for action toward higher goods. Rather than being motivated solely by desire for "the wellbeing [*salus*] of [his] mortal body ... victory over human enemies, honor, temporal power, and the rest," Boniface must attend to:

the wellbeing of the soul, together with the immortality of the body, the strength of justice, victory over the hostile passions, glory, honor, and peace for eternity ... It is these that you must love, these you must desire, these you must seek by any means you can. Give to the poor for the sake of winning and keeping these [eternal] goods; pour out your prayers, practice fasting as you are able without impairing your physical health. Do not love the goods of this earth, however plentifully you may possess them. Make use of them in this way: do much good with them, but no evil for their sake. All such goods will perish, but good works will not perish, even those achieved with goods that are perishable.<sup>2</sup>

In the final sentences of the letter, we find Augustine's familiar distinction between virtues of good use and renunciation. Boniface, as we learned in Chapter 3, was a man who understood this distinction and was eager to pursue the so-called higher virtues of renunciation by abandoning "secular affairs" in order to pursue a contemplative life, far away from military service.<sup>3</sup> Augustine advises him to remain in the military for the sake of the community's safety, but to practice the virtues of celibacy and poverty while in public office. Boniface, Augustine says, should remain there and fight visible enemies while monks battle invisible ones through prayer—teaming up to promote both the temporal and eternal wellbeing of the people.

Yet, in the excerpt from Letter 220 just cited, we find a different Boniface, a man who has relinquished his previous desires for a life of pecuniary simplicity and continence, and has instead plunged himself into an inordinate love affair with temporal goods without regard to the social or spiritual needs of himself or the community he is responsible to protect. The language of Augustine's advice in Letter **(p.132)** 220 suggests that Boniface needs a firm reminder of the superiority of the interior goods (virtues) over exterior ones. Thus, in this exhortation we find a compressed answer to all three of our guiding questions: what are eternal goods? How do they fit into the classification of goods? And how does one obtain them?

Augustine tells Boniface that eternal goods are imperishable: goods not subject to the physical limits of bodily health or decay. With Augustine's relationship to the ancient philosophical distinction between external goods and virtues already established in Chapter 1, it seems plausible to read the distinction here between temporal and eternal goods as one more expression of the distinction between external goods and virtues—and its corresponding picture of happiness. Yet Letter 220 does not bear this all the way out. The list of eternal goods Augustine offers Boniface in this passage does include virtues, such as justice; yet it also includes eternal forms of temporal goods, such as the immortality of the body, and, perhaps more surprisingly, of some of the temporal goods relevant to Boniface's role and obligations such as eternal honor, glory, and peace. So we find that, for Augustine, among the eternal goods are the virtues and also the replenished, imperishable forms of many of the temporal goods—namely, the intrinsic temporal goods of health and friendship. (Remember that health names the first form of friendship between body and soul, on Augustine's account. Thus, immortality denotes a variety of spiritual health that is both embodied and eternal.) The notion that virtues have everlasting value is commonplace among ancient philosophers, especially the Stoics and Platonists with whom Augustine was most familiar.<sup>4</sup> Yet the notion of an eternal version of external goods, and their relationship to one's virtues, is rarer among ancient philosophers, and is extremely complicated conceptual terrain. Augustine's own unique view is that eternal **(p.133)** happiness consists of both virtue and an eternal form of the two preeminent external goods of health and friendship.<sup>5</sup> We will return to this in a moment.

In this compressed presentation of eternal goods in Letter 220 we also find that the virtues are both the way toward obtaining eternal goods and are themselves eternal goods. Augustine exhorts Boniface to “win and keep” eternal goods by cultivating particular virtues—almsgiving, fasting, making good use of temporal goods. These are the means to desire, seek, and possess eternal goods. This formulation parallels Augustine's account of virtues and eternal goods in Book 19 of *The City of God* (written at the same time):

[God] has given to men certain goods appropriate to this life. These are: temporal peace, in proportion to the short span of a mortal life, consisting in bodily health and soundness, and the society of one's own kind; and all things necessary for the preservation and recovery of this peace. These latter include those things which are appropriate and accessible to our senses, such as light, speech, breathable air, drinkable water, and whatever the body requires to feed, clothe, shelter, heal, or adorn it. And these things are given [by God] under a most fair condition: that every mortal who makes good use of these goods suited to the peace of mortal men shall receive ampler and better goods, namely the peace of immortality and the glory and honor appropriate to it, in an eternal life made fit for the enjoyment of God and of one's neighbor in God. He who uses temporal goods ill, however, shall lose them, and shall not receive eternal goods either.<sup>6</sup>

This passage reveals that, at the most rudimentary level, eternal goods are obtained when temporal goods are put to good use in the maintenance of temporal wellbeing both for oneself and one's community. In this way, eternal goods are both the virtues of good use and some replenished version of temporal goods offered to human beings as a reward for virtue in the afterlife.

Still these shorthand formulations of the way to obtain eternal goods through the life of virtue in Letter 220 and *City of God* 19 require more explanation. What precisely does the good use of temporal goods entail, for Augustine? How does the distinction between virtues of renunciation and virtues of good use fit in? We do not find much in these texts regarding Augustine's distinction **(p.134)** between the virtues from good use of temporal goods in the formation of the narrower circles of *oikeiōsis* (e.g. marriage/family, public office, wealth) and the virtues from renunciation of these same goods in the formation of alternative forms of community (e.g. monastery, church). Perhaps this lack is rooted in what Augustine knows implicitly about his direct audiences and the virtues most relevant to their lives. Or perhaps we should not drive a major wedge between these two classes of virtues, for, on Augustine's account, even the renunciation of a temporal good is its own sort of higher use of that good. Either way, Augustine ranks these virtue classes hierarchically, and one would expect to find some correspondence of their ranking in their relationship to eternal goods. And, as we have seen again and again, in Augustine's eyes, good use of temporal goods requires something more than maintenance of physical security: good use also entails recourse to a spiritual conception of wellbeing. The primary feature of the good use of temporal goods is a return to the very source of these goods in God, both for oneself and for those in one's community. Neither of these texts spells out the details of this crucial aspect of good use.

Usually discussion of Augustine's view of eternal goods turns into discussion of eternal *good*—that distinctively Platonic ontological simplification of humankind's highest good, happiness, found in absolute unification with the good itself.<sup>7</sup> While this view of eternal good is undoubtedly present in Augustine's writings—notably in Letter 155, which we will turn to later in this chapter—I want here to focus on eternal goods in their plurality and temporality. That is, taking my cue from Letter 220, I will consider eternal goods as human beings are able to comprehend and pursue them—and sometimes even obtain and experience them—in this life.<sup>8</sup>

**(p.135)** To paint a fuller picture of Augustine's conception of eternal goods we must examine his responses to the lives of people who pursue, and sometimes obtain, them. In the next two sections of this chapter, I will revisit two individuals (Ecdicia and Macedonius) from previous chapters and take a closer look at their successes and failures in pursuing and obtaining these goods. In the final section I will offer a general, moral-psychological picture of Augustine's account of the way one obtains eternal goods through the good use of temporal goods and virtues. In brief, Augustine's picture of obtaining eternal goods entails a process in which the practice of the virtues in this life begins to mirror more directly the way the virtues will exist in eternity. This process—which Augustine calls the perfection of the virtues—entails a return to God as the dual source of all virtues and temporal goods. Returning to God as the source perfects the virtues and creates a path to eternal goods.

## 5.2. A Failed Pursuit: Letter 262 to Ecdicia

The life of Ecdicia is a representative case of how truly difficult it is to comprehend, pursue, and obtain eternal goods on Augustine's account.<sup>9</sup> Her life is a perfect foil for Boniface's superficial attachment to temporal goods. Augustine identifies Ecdicia's error not as her desire for a soft, comfortable life, but rather in her idealization of the spiritual life. In Letter 262, Augustine recognizes and affirms her desire to pursue eternal goods through her practice of the so-called higher virtues of renunciation. What he warns against are the hidden forms of self-praise that lie at the core of her motivation and spoil her pursuit of eternal goods. Augustine criticizes her motives because of how their corollary actions affect those closest to her—those whose temporal and eternal wellbeing she is responsible for tending.

**(p.136)** If the essence of obtaining eternal goods consists in clinging to God, as Augustine clearly thinks it does, then it makes sense to think of the virtues of renunciation as providing a more direct and unadorned route toward this goal.<sup>10</sup> Yet, as we have seen in previous chapters, there are no short-cuts to the highest good. And the straightforward path of renunciation does not always lead one toward God, and thus not toward eternal goods.



Augustine identifies three issues in Ecdicia's pursuit of eternal goods.<sup>11</sup> First, Ecdicia decides to practice the virtue of marital continence before her husband agrees to join her. In the letter, Augustine affirms that marital continence is "a good which surpasses marital chastity."<sup>12</sup> For chastity, the reader will remember, is the virtue associated with the good use of sex in marriage for the promotion of the two primary marital goals of faithfulness (*fides*) between the spouses and offspring (*proles*).<sup>13</sup> Augustine also notes that Ecdicia's husband has joined her in the practice of this higher-level marital virtue, and he congratulates them for their shared commitment. Nevertheless, Augustine chides Ecdicia for initially depriving her husband of the "marital debt of her body" well before he had joined her in the vow, citing Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 7 to: "[l]et the husband pay to his wife the debt he owes her; likewise let the wife pay to her husband the debt she owes him. A wife does not have authority over her body, but her husband does; likewise a husband does not have authority over his body, but his wife does" (1 Corinthians 7:3-4). Rightly ordered love for the good of marriage, Augustine insists, must involve both care for physical needs and a yielding of bodily authority in mutual love.

The second issue raised in Letter 262 relates to Ecdicia's decision to pursue the virtue of poverty by donating all of her and her husband's possessions to the poor without consulting her husband. This issue is more problematic than the first, in Augustine's mind, because the explanation for her action is not that she moved toward a virtue more quickly than her husband, but that she made a rash and unilateral decision without her husband's consent—which is at odds with the demands of a virtuous marriage. The good obtained through **(p.137)** her self-willed poverty has been, in this case, cancelled out by the damage caused to her friendship and union with her husband.<sup>14</sup> "You need not repent over having given your property to the poor," Augustine tells her, "but over not having wanted to have him [your husband] as a partner and guide in your good work."<sup>15</sup> For even if her husband was "moving rather sluggishly through distributing goods more generously," Ecdicia's role as wife and mother required that she should have tried first to coax her husband respectfully toward works of mercy.<sup>16</sup> Then, "the two of you would have done in harmonious love much more wisely and much more fittingly and decently what you thoughtlessly did alone."<sup>17</sup>

The third issue centers not on a specific virtue, but rather on an aspect of the lifestyle associated with these higher virtues of renunciation. Ecdicia, after making the vow of marital continence, has abandoned the traditional attire of a married woman in favor of wearing a widow's dress (presumably the garb worn by those who had taken the vow of Christian widowhood, such as Juliana and Proba). It appears that it was this, more than the lack of sex or lost possessions, that upset Ecdicia's husband—perhaps because it caused him public embarrassment. In Augustine's letter, this third issue is identified as the central reason that her husband has taken up with another woman. Indeed, Ecdicia's choice of attire represents, on Augustine's analysis, her general confusion about how to obtain eternal goods. Her failure in the practice of the higher virtues, claims Augustine, results from a failure to love her husband. In the language of the letter, Ecdicia has failed to care for her husband's "temporal [and] eternal wellbeing."<sup>18</sup>

To understand Augustine's claims about eternal goods in this letter, we must keep in view his understanding of how one should pursue eternal goods within the context of social and political responsibility. Leaders, he claims, should use temporal goods in order to tend the temporal and eternal wellbeing of those within the orbit of their care and friendship. This is the avenue for obtaining the greater, imperishable goods. Ironically, in Ecdicia's fervent attempt to minister to the temporal wellbeing of the poor by giving away their possessions, she has neglected both the "temporal wellbeing" of her son and the "eternal wellbeing" of her husband. "Both of you [you **(p.138)** and your husband,]" Augustine writes to Ecdicia, "should have regulated together what you should store up in heaven and what you should leave for the needs of this life for yourselves and your son, so that others are not fed while you are suffering."<sup>19</sup> Augustine closes the letter by exhorting Ecdicia to think more carefully about the essential connection between her fragile marriage and her son's eternal wellbeing, "Your son needs oneness of heart between you and your husband."<sup>20</sup>

Augustine's exhortation to Ecdicia in Letter 262 is not intended as a browbeating. He is not saying: no, Ecdicia, you cannot really pursue the highest good, you are stuck in married life, stop trying so hard. Augustine is simply clarifying for Ecdicia that her roles as wife and mother—along with the correspondent duties and virtues of these roles—amount to a normative context for her pursuit of eternal goods. In cases of competing goods, the duties of love owed to her husband and son must trump the pursuit of ascetic virtue. Furthermore, when a virtue fractures household goods, it is no longer really a good at all for the one who practices it (even if it provides goods for others, as in the case of Ecdicia's poverty). Ecdicia's error was to so misconceive the higher virtues that she created a false conflict between them and the temporal goods of the household. Much like a photographic negative, this picture of how to obtain eternal goods reminds us of Augustine's claims about the unity of the love commandments (to love God and neighbor) and the obligation of social and political leaders to obey these commands in the context of their roles and the virtues associated with the excellent performance of their role-specific obligations.

The litmus test of one's love for the highest good, Augustine insists, is the quality of one's relationship to the neighbors whom God has placed in one's life.<sup>21</sup> Preaching on one of his favorite texts, 1 John 4:20 ("If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen"), Augustine sounds a familiar note of the unity of the two love commands:

**(p.139)** One wing is, "You shall love the Lord" ... But don't stick to one wing; because if you think you've got one wing, you haven't even got that. "You shall love your neighbor" ... I mean, if you don't love the brother you can see, how can you love the God you can't see? Add the other wing; in this way you will fly, in this way you will remove your cravings from earthly things, and fix your love [*caritas*] on heavenly goods.<sup>22</sup>

Ecdicia's failure, we can then conclude, is found on the horizontal axis of the return to the highest good: a failure to love rightly the neighbors that God has placed within her circle of care and friendship. This account of Ecdicia's failure echoes Augustine's conception of God as highest common good (*bonum commune*), observed in Chapter 3, and the connection between the upward and outward axes of ascent to God that we focused on in Chapter 4.

Augustine's advice to Ecdicia highlights the responsibility of Christian leaders to use temporal goods (even in the renunciation of those goods) to promote both the temporal and eternal wellbeing of oneself and those under one's care, on the model of the expanding circles of *oikeiōsis*. He reminds her that, "the relation of strangers is not the same as that of persons bound together in a society ... the relation of parents to their children is not the same as that of children to their parents. Finally, still other is the relation of husband and wife."<sup>23</sup>

It is clear from this letter who Augustine thinks wears the spiritual mantle in Ecdicia's household: Ecdicia, the ascetic overachiever. Augustine tactfully employs the language of Roman decorum throughout the letter, urging Ecdicia to play her domestic role in showing respect for her husband's authority and, even more importantly, to try to repair their fragile marital friendship.<sup>24</sup> Lest Augustine's appeals to her husband's authority be construed as uncritical **(p.140)** patriarchalism, Augustine also clearly acknowledges the spiritual authority Ecdicia exercises in the family, and he urges her to be accountable for this role.<sup>25</sup> His appeal to Ecdicia's spiritual authority should not be interpreted as a type of enforced quietism, for it is clear how interwoven the social and spiritual forms of wellbeing are for Augustine in the letter:

But was your action of refreshing the bodies of the poor by more generous alms as great a good as the harm you caused by tearing the mind of your husband away from so good a commitment [to marital continence and also to Christianity]? Or should anyone's temporal wellbeing have been more precious to you than his eternal wellbeing? If, while thinking of more ample works of mercy, you postponed giving your possessions to the poor in order that your husband might not be scandalized and be lost to God, would God not credit you with giving more abundant alms? ... For, if bread shared with a poor person has great weight in heaven [i.e. it is an eternal good], how much weight ought we to think mercy has there, by which a human being is snatched from the devil, who is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour [?].<sup>26</sup>

Ecdicia's lofty pursuit of eternal goods has put her husband's eternal wellbeing in jeopardy. Ecdicia's unilateral ascent toward the highest good has left her husband's relationship with God fractured. Still, the blame in this passage has no air of disrespect for Ecdicia's spiritual ambition. It is rather a warning shot—a call for Ecdicia to take responsibility for her own power of spiritual authority. Not knowing the full details of either side of the case, we are unable to identify Ecdicia's husband's role in the failed relationship. We can assume that he is responsible for his sin of adultery and has a share in the blame for their separation. Nevertheless the lessons and insights about virtue offered to Ecdicia stand on their own, in isolation from her husband's failures and any absolution that his guilt might provide for her faults.

**(p.141)** Ecdicia's failure to obtain genuine eternal goods is rooted in multiple failures. And since her disorderedly *virtuous* action reveals disordered motivation, Augustine exhorts her to change her disposition and action:

Put on humility of mind ... and write to him [your husband] a letter of apology, asking pardon for having sinned against him because you did what you thought you should do concerning your property without his advice and consent. You need not repent over having given your property to the poor but over not having wanted to have him as a partner and guide (*participem et moderatorem*) in your good work.<sup>27</sup>

We see here Augustine playing with the language of submission and equality (“as a partner and guide”) in his exhortation. We also find Augustine’s trademark emphasis on the virtue of humility as the necessary groundwork for the practice of the other virtues. As we saw in Chapter 2, the virtue of humility (*humilitas*) ranks higher than all of the highest ascetic virtues (e.g. celibacy, continence) and is necessary for the perfection of the other virtues.<sup>28</sup> (We will return to this later.) We also see an emphasis on confession of sin and forgiveness as preconditions for acquiring humility. In Ecdicia’s case confession takes on the concrete practice of writing a letter of apology to her husband.<sup>29</sup> Putting on humility requires self-examination, confession of sin, and, perhaps most importantly, the externalization of her inward process through the writing of an apology letter to her husband whereby she would also seek forgiveness.<sup>30</sup>

Greater goods or higher virtues are no longer such if they do not upbuild the friends and communities for whom one is responsible. Ecdicia’s choice of wardrobe reveals the content of her motivations more clearly than any of her other actions—not to mention a certain neglect for the spouse within her circle of *oikeiōsis*. She dons the appearance of ascetic virtue without achieving the interior disposition necessary to perform her role as mother and wife in a way that helps her obtain eternal goods.

**(p.142)** As we noted in Chapter 2, the root of Ecdicia's dilemma, in Augustine's view, is that she cannot discern between the highest good and her own idea of the good. Or, to put the point more precisely, Ecdicia cannot discern between loving the good (a life of true virtue) and her own idea of what loving the good looks like. For Augustine, this conflation is a form of spiritual self-deception that everyone succumbs to on some level. So, in many ways, Ecdicia's problem is the opposite of Boniface's. Boniface needs to lift his mind from the pursuit of temporal goods as a mere means toward pleasure and power, and to cultivate desire for the imperishable goods of the virtues directed toward God. Only by detaching his desire from temporal goods can he return toward God and begin the process of purification and healing for his desires. Ecdicia, on the other hand, has progressed to the point where she is quite ready to abandon temporal goods with fervor. And yet she seems no closer to the goal of the highest good than does Boniface. Ecdicia is more in love with her own idea of virtuousness than she is with practicing genuine virtue—which is inherently performative, always culminating in demonstrative love of God and neighbor. Just as Boniface needs to be detached for a time, or perhaps permanently, from his unhealthy love of certain temporal goods, so too Ecdicia's love for her own virtuousness must be detached, cleansed, purified, and healed.<sup>31</sup>

In Letter 262 we recognize for the first time that, for Augustine, the return to the highest good is always a twofold return—the perfection both of one's love for temporal goods and one's own virtues. Each requires a process of dispossession and reorientation of goods toward their final end in God so that they may be seen clearly, appreciated fully, and used properly in temporal life. Only through this process of double return can one learn to use temporal goods and virtues "as if [he] were not using them," as Augustine tells Boniface in Letter 220.<sup>32</sup> This attitude of nonpossessive desire for one's own goods is the telltale sign of a mature love for them. It reckons every good as a **(p.143)** gift and follows each one toward its source in the highest good. Thus love for the highest good entails a perfection of one's love for both temporal goods and virtues. Ecdicia gets the first part right—as evidenced by her prowess in renunciation—yet she misses the second return completely.

The pursuit of eternal goods, on Augustine's account, is difficult to theorize because it always refracts through the particular goods that make one's roles, obligations, and relationships possible. For Ecdicia, this pursuit centers on her marriage, motherhood, household, wealth, and the many virtues associated with the use or abandonment of these goods. This sheds new light on Augustine's conception of properly ordered love. For, as we have seen, the alignment of intensity of desire and degree of goodness are highly contextual and dependent on one's setting, vocation, and circumstances. Ascent toward the good and descent into social and political life are not discrete movements of the soul, in Augustine's eyes, for the soul is always partially clinging to the highest good in the midst of one's life and practice of the virtues. As mentioned at the outset of this section, although it seems that the virtues of renunciation (e.g. marital continence, poverty) might be a more direct route toward the good, given the intrinsically social nature of happiness, on Augustine's view, and its organization in the circles of *oikeiōsis*, it is all too possible to aim for an eternal good in ascetic abandonment of a temporal good, and to end up missing the good entirely. It is now time to consider a successful case: a political official who obtains eternal goods through the practice of the virtues associated with his office.

### 5.3. The Perfection of the Political Virtues: Letter 155 to Macedonius

Macedonius, the reader will recall from Chapter 3, was imperial vicar of Africa during the years AD 413–414, in which he oversaw the administration of justice in all of Roman Africa.<sup>33</sup> During his **(p.144)** tenure at this post Augustine appealed to him for clemency on behalf of a criminal condemned to capital punishment. Through their exchange of letters we learn that Macedonius grants the appeal, and Augustine writes to thank him and to congratulate him on his decision in Letter 155. The letter turns into an extended discussion of the relationship between virtue and happiness—specifically as it is practiced and experienced in the life of a political ruler. In that letter we also learn that Macedonius has read the first three books of *The City of God*, which Augustine sent to him, and that he is both eager and capable of receiving the text's philosophical meditation on happiness.



Letter 155 is Augustine's most detailed account of the way eternal goods are obtained through the practice of the virtues.<sup>34</sup> Augustine recognizes that Macedonius is hungry for such higher-level philosophical advice and suggests that he is right on the threshold of obtaining the imperishable goods constitutive of eternal happiness. Augustine declares that Macedonius' life exhibits true longing for the heavenly commonwealth—the highest level of *oikeiōsis*—and the true friendship with God and neighbor that flow from there:

I can tell that your spirit is panting for God's heavenly commonwealth, inspired by a love of eternity and of truth and of love itself ... I see you approaching near to it, and I embrace you as you burn to possess it. True friendship also flows from there; and this ought not to be weighed by temporal goods, but drunk with freely given love.<sup>35</sup>

Elsewhere in the letter, Augustine also praises Macedonius for practicing the political virtues (prudence, temperance, courage, and justice) in his work as a public official—tending to the wellbeing of the political community.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, he tells Macedonius that these political virtues—and the temporal wellbeing they are aimed at preserving—must be informed by the double commandment of love in order to be “perfected” and made “real.”<sup>37</sup> Or in other words, they require the double commandment of love to be efficacious for obtaining eternal goods.

Augustine urges Macedonius to continue pursuing God as the source of all goods: both as the source of all temporal goods and as **(p.145)** the source of his own virtues.<sup>38</sup> It appears Macedonius has been at least partially successful in making the double return to God. And it is only by continuing this double return, Augustine claims, that the political official's conception of wellbeing will be expanded from the merely temporal to the eternal horizon, even as he begins to envision what it might look like for him to use his office and its associated obligations to tend the temporal and eternal wellbeing of those under his care. Throughout Letter 155, Augustine challenges Macedonius to be attentive to and responsible for the end to which the people put the political wellbeing he struggles to provide them.<sup>39</sup> And while the goal of tending the people's temporal wellbeing is good, it does not go far enough—it is too indeterminate. Practicing the political virtues entails more than the physical health or security of the political community, on Augustine's view. Properly ordered political virtues necessarily orient one toward higher goods. Yet what are these higher goods? Is there a highest good? Augustine thinks the political official cannot avoid these questions if he is to practice the virtues necessary for doing his job well.

A key reason that the temporal wellbeing promoted through the political virtues is inherently indeterminate and unstable, Augustine tells Macedonius, is that human beings often mistake the source of happiness for something that consists entirely in either temporal goods or virtues:

You can see, then, where you should look for the object of everyone's desire, whether they are learned or not. Many fail, through error or pride, to learn where to look for it, and where to receive it. Both types are criticized together in one of the divine psalms: "those who trust in their own virtue and who boast in the abundance of their riches" (Psalm 49(48):6). This refers both to the philosophers of the present age and also to those who shun even such philosophy as that, saying that a people is happy if they have sufficient earthly wealth. Therefore we should seek virtue from the Lord our God who made us, so that we can overcome the evils of this life; we should also seek the life of happiness, so that we may enjoy it after this life for eternity. Thus both in virtue and in the reward of virtue "whoever boasts," to quote the apostle, "should boast in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17). That is what we want for ourselves and for the city of which we are citizens. The source of happiness is not one thing for a human being and another for a city: a **(p. 146)** city is indeed nothing other than a like-minded mass of human beings.<sup>40</sup>

This passage highlights why Augustine thinks a view of God as the highest good is necessary for a genuine conception of both individual and civic happiness. As it adapts Cicero's presentation of the Epicurean and Stoic views of happiness in *Tusculan Disputations*, the passage also briefly illustrates Augustine's view of the limitations of a conception of happiness wholly exhausted by either temporal goods or virtue, or some combination of the two. The imperfection of virtue, fragility of temporal goods, and magnitude of human misery—considered cumulatively—challenge and destabilize all conceptions of happiness that do not make reference to eternal goods. The Stoic view that happiness consists solely in virtue exhibits insensitivity to the limits that suffering places on flourishing, as well as a prideful unwillingness to seek happiness from a source outside of one's own control. For Augustine, only some conception of eternal happiness, received directly from its source in the highest good, can do justice to the combined force of our natural longing for happiness, our intuition that it consists in both virtue *and* temporal goods, and the magnitude of misery that human beings can experience in this life.<sup>41</sup>

If civic happiness merely consists in the accumulation of temporal goods, then Augustine's claims about its inherent indeterminacy and instability seem straightforward and require little substantiation. This sort of political wellbeing would be entirely subject to fortune. Yet Augustine recognizes that the philosophically astute, and perhaps Stoic, political readers among the intended audience of Letter 155 will not be satisfied with such a quick argument for the necessity of a guiding conception of God as the highest good and source of true happiness. Such readers would assuredly respond that civic happiness is not merely equivalent to the accumulation of temporal goods (or, "temporary advantages," for the Stoics, as we saw in Chapter 1), but rather is these goods organized by virtuous political officials for the cultivation of a virtuous political community. This is undoubtedly a step up from a materialist conception of civic happiness on Augustine's view, yet it still fails to perceive the true source of happiness.

For Augustine, if the political virtues are not referred to their source in God they cannot be used in the right way to direct people toward **(p.147)** true happiness. Without this upward reference, on Augustine's account, civic happiness, and the political official's virtues, remain imperfect and insubstantial. Reference (*referre*) here can be understood as a continuously renewed recognition that this life's goods are contingent gifts, and signals of something more than themselves.<sup>42</sup> This helps clarify what Augustine means when he tells social and political leaders such as Boniface, Ecdicia, and Macedonius to tend both the temporal and the eternal wellbeing of those under their care. There is an ambiguous middle ground between temporal and eternal happiness that virtuous Christian public officials, such as Macedonius, must inhabit.

Augustine offers Macedonius the following exhortation, and memorable snapshot, of what the twofold return to God will require:

If you recognize the source of the [political] virtues you have been given and give God thanks; if you use them even in your secular position of honor to contribute to his worship; if you inspire and lead those people under your power to praise him both by living an exemplary religious life and through the devotion you show to their interests, whether by support or deterrence; if the only reason that you want them, with your help, to live more securely is so that they might win God, in whose presence they will live happily; then, all of your virtues will be *real* ones. They will develop and be *perfected* in this way through the assistance of God, whose generous gift they were. Then, without any doubt, they will bring you to the truly happy life, which can only be eternal.<sup>43</sup> (my own emphasis)

Notice that it is only by making the second return that Ecdicia missed—i.e recognizing the source of one's virtues and exhibiting appropriate gratitude for them—that Macedonius is able to "perfect" and "make real" his political virtues. Recognition and gratitude enable **(p.148)** Macedonius to "use" his virtues appropriately—that is, to help both himself and others to return to God. Also notice the new motivational end involved in recognizing God as the source of one's virtue: the goal of contributing to God's praise. In this way Augustine is reclaiming piety as the fifth political virtue, or, more precisely, as the virtue that perfects the other political virtues. In Letter 155 true piety is both true worship of God and also obedience to the double commandment of love.

It should also be noted that Augustine's exhortation to true piety is not a call to proselytization on Macedonius' part. Augustine tells Macedonius to help inspire and lead those people under his power "to worship God both by living an exemplary religious life and through the devotion you show to their interests."<sup>44</sup> Augustine is careful to express his respect for the distinctive obligations associated with Macedonius' role as political ruler.<sup>45</sup>

Augustine continues his presentation of the perfection of the political virtues through true piety in a further description of the political virtues as they will exist in eternity—that is, as eternal goods:

One virtue alone will exist there [in eternal happiness]: both virtue and the reward of virtue. As the man who loves this says in the sacred discourse: “For me it is good to cling to God” (Psalm 73:28). Both complete and eternal wisdom, and also a life now fully happy will consist in this. Now we will have reached the eternal and supreme good; and it is the completion of our good to cling to this forever. We might also call this practical wisdom, because it will cling very prudently to the good that it will never lose; and courage, because it will cling very tenaciously to the good and will not be torn from it; and moderation, because it will cling in purity to the good, as it cannot now be corrupted; and justice, because it will cling very rightly to the good, which it deserves to serve.<sup>46</sup>

In this passage we find the ontological reduction of eternal goods to a single eternal good, a topic of frequent focus concerning Augustine’s view of eternal happiness.<sup>47</sup> The eternal good, on Augustine’s account, is the union of God as highest good, eternal happiness, and the virtues as they will exist in eternity—as the singular virtue of clinging to the highest good through love. As has been pointed out **(p.149)** by Robert Dodaro, this description of the political virtues as they will exist in eternity mirrors Plotinus’ account of the “purificatory virtues” found in *Enneads* I 2. There, in his treatise on virtue, Plotinus provides a parallel description of the four political virtues as they exist in the soul of the one who ascends to a vision of the good itself.<sup>48</sup>

Like Plotinus’ account, Augustine emphasizes the fecundity of the absolute good (its overflowing in creation) and the way this fecundity relates to the inherently social nature of a genuine encounter with the good. The soul that ascends toward the true good wants others to share in this good with it.<sup>49</sup> On this view, there is genuine continuity between the political virtues as they exist and are practiced now in temporal life and as they exist in their perfected, eternal form. Macedonius’ work in tending the political community’s temporal wellbeing and practicing the political virtues has, therefore, in Augustine’s eyes, prepared him to obtain eternal goods.

Augustine also offers Macedonius a description of the political virtues as they exist in transition—on their way toward perfection—as plural manifestations in time of the single virtue that constitutes the eternal good:

Moreover, even in this life there is no virtue except that of loving what ought to be loved. Prudence consists in choosing that, courage in allowing no hardships, moderation in allowing no temptations, justice in allowing no pride, to divert one from it. What should we choose to love particularly, if not the one thing we can find that is unsurpassed? This is God; and if in loving anything else we make it preferable or equal to him, we have forgotten how to love ourselves. The nearer we approach to him, the better it is for us; for nothing is better than him. **(p.150)** We approach him, however, not by moving but by loving. We will have him nearer to us the more we can keep pure the love that carries us to him: he is not spread out or enclosed in physical space. He is present everywhere, and entirely everywhere; we can reach him then not by foot, but by character. However, our character is usually judged not from what we know, but from what we love. It is good and bad loves that make good and bad characters ... Let us do everything we can, then, to bring to him also those whom we love as ourselves; if, that is, we can realize that loving ourselves means loving him.<sup>50</sup>

This translation of the political virtues into the idiom of the one true virtue—a society of lovers clinging to the highest good in eternity—is perhaps Augustine's most exalted presentation of the transformation of political virtues into eternal goods. He offers it to a man mired in public affairs and the daily legal administration of Roman Africa.

Augustine closes the letter to Macedonius with the highest compliment paid to an individual to be found in all of his writings: "Though you wore the belt of an earthly judge you appeared to have your mind fixed on the heavenly commonwealth."<sup>51</sup> This depiction of Macedonius' mind elevating his duties, virtues, and even his official uniform, stands in profound contrast to Augustine's admonishment of Ecdicia for her choice of dress: "Even if your husband forced you to wear the attire of a married woman and not that of a widow ... you could have had a humble heart in your proud attire."<sup>52</sup>

The perfection of the political virtues that Augustine describes to Macedonius in Letter 155 can be summarized in this way: the highest virtue is love of God, the highest good. Practice of this virtue requires two different returns: a return to God as the source of all temporal goods and as the source of one's virtues. By making this double return, the political leader learns what true wellbeing consists in and is thus able to promote the wellbeing of those under his care. The double return also provides the political leader new motivational goals for virtuous activity beyond the pursuit of his own wellbeing (and that of the political community): love of God, as the highest good, for his own sake; and the practice of the political virtues for the sake of bringing praise and glory to God who is the source of all excellence (virtue). In this way, God is both praised as the source of one's virtues and loved as the source of all temporal goods.

**(p.151)** Conversely, Augustine warns Macedonius that his virtues and the temporal happiness they provide for the political community will turn out to be illusory if he does not allow the double return to God to perfect his virtues:



Take all your virtues: all the prudence with which you try to serve human affairs, all the courage with which you allow no enemy's wickedness to frighten you, all the moderation through which you keep yourself from corruption when surrounded by the rottenness of contemptible human habits, all the justice which you use to judge correctly in assigning to each his own. Suppose that you employ all these virtues in toiling and struggling [merely] for the physical security of those you want to do well ... If so, neither your virtues nor the happiness that comes from them will be *real* ... I want to say this: if any of your governing, however informed by the virtues I listed, is directed only to the final aim of allowing human beings to suffer no unjust hardships in the flesh; and if you think that it is no concern of yours to what end they put the peace that you struggle to provide for them (that is, to speak directly, how they worship the true God, with whom the fruit of all peaceful life is found), then all that effort towards the life of true happiness will not benefit you at all. I appear to be rather shameless in saying this.<sup>53</sup>

The language of this appeal is strong. In what sense is Macedonius responsible for practicing true piety (true worship of the true God) and cultivating it among the people? If this were merely a matter of establishing Christianity as the imperial cult, it seems peculiar that Augustine makes his appeal in the complicated language of the perfection of the political virtues. Rather, Augustine is employing a complex theological and philosophical conception of virtue and detailing the role piety plays in orienting a public official's practice of the political virtues toward their true end in God.

#### 5.3.1. True Piety

Augustine's correspondence with Macedonius presents his most detailed account of true piety as the perfecting virtue and as the fulfillment of the commands to love God and neighbor. Read together, the letters (Letters 152-155) present a picture of true piety (**p.152**) as an integrated complex of the just praise that human beings owe to God as the source of all goods and virtues, properly formed self-love, and just treatment of the neighbor on the basis of his or her humanity (see Letter 153 on capital punishment). Augustine concludes his reflection on the perfection of the political virtues through true piety by saying:

We ought therefore “to love God and our neighbor as ourselves,” so that we will lead anyone we can to worship God by comforting them with kindness, or educating them through teaching, or restraining them through discipline, in the knowledge that “all of the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments” ... Here we have the practice of the virtues, there [in eternal happiness] their result; here their labors, there their reward; here their duties, there their goal ... Piety, therefore, that is the true worship of the true God, is beneficial in every way. It protects against hardships in this life, or else softens them; and it brings us to that life and that security where we will suffer no more evil and enjoy the supreme and eternal good. I urge you to pursue it more perfectly and hold on to it with great tenacity; I urge this on myself also.<sup>54</sup>

Here, at the end of Letter 155, Augustine pulls all the threads of piety together in the double commandment of love and offers an account of the way that *love* perfects and actualizes the political virtues associated with tending the wellbeing of the political community. True piety is fulfillment of the double commandment of love, and functions like a Plotinian purificatory virtue in reorienting the political ruler’s soul and perfecting his virtues—turning them into eternal goods.

What does true piety consist in? Given Augustine's claims in Letter 155, it cannot involve the mere installation of Christianity as imperial cult. True worship of the true God is not liturgical practice in this case but, rather, the archetypal virtue of love that orients everything that the political ruler does in his office. The political official's role holds him accountable to a special aspect of this project of contributing to God's praise: *referring* the people under his care toward the highest good through the *example* of his life and the *devotion* he shows to their interests.<sup>55</sup> This devotion, Augustine writes, entails educating, disciplining, and protecting the people in such a way that they are **(p.153)** drawn toward the highest good.<sup>56</sup> Augustine is keen to show "respect" for Macedonius' office and its particular demands—which are all aimed at the political community's welfare.<sup>57</sup> As we saw in Chapter 3, there is a distinct difference between the roles of judge and bishop, in Augustine's mind, and the religious transformation of the political sphere happens, if it happens at all, at the level of a political ruler's practice of the virtues associated with the excellent performance of his office.

True piety also provides the political official with a new motivation for virtuous action. Augustine offers Macedonius a shorthand formulation of the idea in Letter 155:

Therefore we should seek virtue from the Lord our God who made us, so that we can overcome the evils of this life; we should also seek the life of happiness [from him], so that we may enjoy it after this life for eternity. Thus both in virtue and in the reward of virtue "whoever boasts," to quote the apostle, "should boast in the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:17).<sup>58</sup>

Augustine's presentation of God's praise as the motivational goal necessary for an account of true virtue (the perfection of the political virtues) and of a complete definition of happiness has yet to be understood, or fully appreciated, by interpreters of his thought. Reorienting one's motivation toward God's praise is an essential step in the return to God as the source of one's virtues. Indeed, it functions as the motivational counterpart of the grateful recognition of God as the source of one's virtues. Many interpreters have puzzled over Augustine's remarks about the necessity of true piety for true virtue. Is the connection between piety and virtue mere conceptual polemics, or genuine philosophical analysis of virtue?<sup>59</sup> In the next **(p.154)** section of this chapter, I propose a fresh answer to this question by considering the details of Augustine's account of motivation for virtuous action. The practice of true piety, for Augustine, entails the completion of the practice of all the other virtues through a double return to God as both source of temporal goods and virtues.

#### 5.4. The Twofold Return to God: Praise and Love

To understand Augustine's advice on obtaining eternal goods in Letter 155 to Macedonius, we now need to take a closer look at both movements of the return. First, we will look at the return to God as source of virtue. This is the movement with which Ecdicia had the most trouble. Judging by the details of Augustine's advice in Letter 155, Macedonius has made significant progress on this leg. Second, we will consider what it means to return to God as the source of all temporal goods.

The twofold return to God, in Augustine's eyes, is a movement of praise and love. Praise is the consummation of one's return to God as the source of one's virtues. Love is the culmination of desire, found in continually renewed awareness that life's goods are contingent gifts, and signals of something more than themselves.

For as one's praise [of God, the highest good] improves and extends, so one's love and affection increases in fervor. And when this is the case, humankind cannot but advance with sure and firm step to a life of perfection and happiness. This, I suppose, is all we wish to find when we **(p.155)** speak of the highest good for humankind, to which all must be referred [*referre*] in life and conduct. For the good plainly exists; and we have shown by reasoning, as far as we were able, and by the divine authority which goes beyond our reasoning, that it is nothing else but God Himself. For how can any thing be the highest good for a human being but that in cleaving to which he or she is happy? Now this is nothing but God, to whom we can cleave only by affection, desire, and love.<sup>60</sup>

This passage highlights the symmetrical movement of praise and love in one's return to God. Indeed, for Augustine, praise and love are the twin motivations necessary for the perfection of virtue.

#### 5.4.1. God as the Source of Virtue

Based on Augustine's advice in Letter 155, we can say, in shorthand, that eternal goods are obtained when one clings to God as the highest good in the midst of using temporal goods (and the virtues associated with their use or renunciation). Yet how, precisely, does one so cling to God?

As the quotation above makes plain, it takes place at the level of “affection, desire, and love.” In Chapter 2 we considered Augustine’s distinction between virtues that characterize both disposition (*habitus*) and action (*opus*), and those that characterize disposition only. And to understand the moral psychology behind Augustine’s account of obtaining eternal goods, we must have his distinction between virtuous action and motivation for virtuous action in view. After all, the goal for virtuous activity is love of God and neighbor—and as we saw in Letter 155, neighbor love and healthy self-love find ultimate harmony in love for God as the highest good. Eternal happiness, according to *The City of God*, consists in “perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God.”<sup>61</sup> Love of God is thus the highest virtue on Augustine’s account and also the singular eternal good. Our goal in this section is to unpack what it means for one to cling to God as the highest good in the midst of moving about and using so many goods in this life, including the virtues. In what ways can God be the ultimate end of each of one’s virtuous actions?

Loving God, the highest good, provides a twofold motivational goal. It simultaneously represents loving the highest good for oneself (**p.156**) (i.e. eternal happiness) and also loving God, the good, for his own sake. The two goals come together at the highest level of motivation for virtuous action. Given that happiness is inherently social on Augustine’s view, as is the practice of all the virtues and use of all temporal goods, actions are always to be judged (admired or condemned) by the community in which they are performed. In this way, virtue is inherently tied to social practice and systems of praise and blame.

This connection is beneficial insofar as it promotes identification with the group’s morals and social accountability. Yet it can result in two related problems, given our keen ability to distinguish between an action and the motivation for that action. In a penetrating analysis of Psalm 118(119):37—“Turn my eyes away that they may not see vanity; give me life in your way”—Augustine brings this distinction to the foreground:

When we do something good, what we have in view matters a great deal. Any service we render is to be evaluated not in itself but according to the end [*finis*] on which we have our eye; we must consider not only if what we do is good but also whether we are doing it for a good purpose. The psalmist is asking that the eyes with which we envisage the end of our virtuous actions may be averted from vanity [*uanitas*], or, in other words, that when he does something good, he may not fix his gaze on vanity as the motive of his action.<sup>62</sup>

Social admiration and praise for virtuous action is not a bad thing, on Augustine's view, "for what can be more salutary for people than to admire what they ought to imitate?"<sup>63</sup> But, on the other hand, what is "blameworthy is to make the attracting of admiration the motive for one's action, for this is to set one's sights on vanity."<sup>64</sup> And, what is more:

Among all vain human objectives, the vainest is winning the praise of others. Many people reputed great in this world have achieved their manifold great deeds with a view to winning praise. They have been highly extolled in pagan civilizations, these heroes who sought glory not with God but in human estimation. For the sake of fame and glory they have lived prudently, bravely, temperately, and justly; they won praise indeed, but in attaining it they received their reward: vain men won a vain prize.<sup>65</sup>

**(p.157)** This passage resonates with Augustine's arguments about the pride of Roman glory and the limits of pagan civic virtue in Book 5 of *The City of God*. Yet something significant appears in this passage that is not present in *The City of God*. The vanity of making human admiration one's sole motive for virtuous action results in a social consequence harmful to the wellbeing of the political community.

First, in Augustine's exposition of Psalm 118(119), we find that because glory is determined solely by the standards of praise and blame within the community, it is subject to communal recognition. This can be socially beneficial, as we noted, but it also means that it is continually threatened by other community members' achievements, and memories of those achievements, and thus becomes a competitive good. Because of the lower-level motivation involved in the pursuit of human glory, and because we can distinguish between motivation and virtuous action, systems of competing glories engender a social attitude of suspicion toward the hidden motivations that might lie underneath another person's virtuous action.

No one's motives for virtuous action are entirely pure, in Augustine's view. And in the competition for glory, most people instinctively project this moral-psychological gap—along with the correspondent shame—onto other members in the community. This is especially true when one is intent on acquiring virtue for social praise. Glory requires comparing oneself to, and measuring one's own deeds by, the standard of others' conduct. Thus, virtuous actions motivated solely by the reward of human glory quickly fall prey to a cycle of comparison, conformity, interior shame, and external suspicion.<sup>66</sup>



[A]s long as a person does not turn his eyes away to prevent them from seeing vanity [i.e. making one's sole motive for virtuous action socially conferred glory], he will suspect that what goes on in himself goes on in others too. So, for instance, he thinks that his own motives for worshipping God are theirs also, or he thinks that another person does virtuous actions for the same reason as he does. This happens because although other people can see our actions, the end we envisage is hidden. Hence the possibility of suspicion arises, and someone may **(p.158)** take it upon himself to judge the hidden motives of others. Such conclusions are generally mistaken; and even if they are correct, the self-appointed judge has no right to suspect something of which he is ignorant. The Lord warns us against a suspicious attitude ... He tells us not to perform virtuous actions for the sake of winning human praise from others ... lest we suspect people whom we see to live good lives, but whose purposes [*finis*] we do not see, of being motivated in their well-doing by some [bad] motive ... God commands us "Do not judge, lest you be judged" (Matthew 7:1).<sup>67</sup>

Augustine's claims in this exposition of Psalm 118(119) and the cycle of comparison, conformity, shame, and suspicion cast new light on his more well-known criticism of systems of civic virtue oriented toward a conception of socially conferred glory (as was especially the case in the Roman literature and popular culture most familiar to him). Political glory and its relationship to eternal goods appears as a prominent theme in Augustine's letters to the public officials Boniface, Darius, Marcellinus, Volusianus, and Macedonius.

The passage above clarifies Augustine's appeal to Macedonius to make God's praise the motivation of his practice of the political virtues. This motivational reorientation is central to the work of obtaining eternal goods and in returning to God as the source of one's virtues. Making one's motive for virtuous action God's praise is an essential part of being released from vanity (i.e. making social praise the overarching motive for action) and suspicion of others' motives. Seeking God's praise does not engender competition, as does humanly conferred glory. God is the good itself, so there is no comparative edge that one could possibly attain.

If it happens that a just person does attract human praise in some degree, such praise must not be made into the object of his or her actions. Praise must be redirected to the glory of God, for whose sake truly good people perform their good actions, because such people become good not by their own powers but by God's gifts ... The praise given by other people must not be the purpose of our virtuous actions; let us rather correct such praise and refer everything to the praise of God, since whatever in us rightly deserves praise comes from him.<sup>68</sup>

**(p.159)** The motivational goal of praising God remedies the damaging effects of glory on civic virtue in two ways, for Augustine.

First, by making one's goal the love and praise of God, one distinguishes between civic virtue and mere social conformity and acknowledges God as the transcendent standard of goodness to whom one is accountable (revealed by the dictates of both conscience and Scripture). In the same exposition of Psalm 118(119) Augustine details how a desire to act in "conformity" with God as transcendent standard tempers the dangers of social conformity.<sup>69</sup>

Appealing to God as transcendent standard of goodness entails an assessment of one's conduct in the light of one's conception of God as the highest good. This appeal highlights an important aspect of the perfection of virtue, beyond seeing God as source of one's virtues and making God's praise one's goal for the practice of virtue. The truly virtuous, Augustine claims, think at least as much of their virtues' imperfections and outright vices as they do about their more stable virtues.<sup>70</sup>

The man of true virtue, who loves, believes and hopes in God, attends more to those things in himself which displease him than to those, if there are any, which are pleasing to him or, rather, to the Truth [God]. Nor does he attribute what is now pleasing in him to anything other than the mercy of Him Whom he fears to displease. To God he gives thanks for what is healed in him, and pours out his prayers for those things which are as yet unhealed.<sup>71</sup>

Holding oneself accountable to God as the standard of goodness thus entails practices of self-assessment, confession of one's shortcomings, and resolve to change one's motivations and actions. These practices are an integral component of the perfection of virtue, obtaining eternal goods, and the return to God as the source of virtue. Such practices continuously renew one with a sense of fallibility and dependence on the good. Recall the essential role of self-examination and confession of sin in Augustine's advice to Macedonius on whether to pardon the criminal. For a judge in Macedonius' position, practicing prudence, justice, and mercifulness requires constant self-examination in light of God as transcendent standard of goodness.

**(p.160)** This leads to the second way that making God's glory one's goal for virtuous action remedies (or begins to remedy) the cycle of glory that Augustine thinks is so corrosive of genuine civic virtue. In the final paragraph of his exposition of Psalm 118(119), Augustine presents a complete definition of true piety's relation to love of God and neighbor that parallels what we found in Letter 155. He claims that the practices of self-examination, confession, and repentance are all necessary for cultivating genuine love of neighbor. Suspicion of base motives, on Augustine's account, is merely a way of lifting one's virtuous actions above another's in the pursuit of a limited supply of socially conferred glory. This form of suspicion is a soul disease that can only be healed through the remedy of genuine love (*caritas*) for the neighbor: "To enjoy suspecting evil [motives] that one cannot see is a disease, but there is a remedy, and that is love [*caritas*], which is never jealous."<sup>72</sup>

As we noted in Letter 155 to Macedonius, Augustine does not think it possible to love the neighbor appropriately without first loving God as one's highest good. Augustine closes the above exposition of Psalm 118(119) with a parallel claim about the inherent unity between the love commands: "Look at me: I have longed to love you [God] with all my heart, all my soul, and all my mind, and my neighbor as myself."<sup>73</sup> We can now see more clearly why this is the case, for Augustine. Loving God as the highest good entails a recognition of God as the source of one's virtues, a reorientation of one's motivation for virtuous action toward the goal of God's praise, and a critical assessment of one's shortcomings in the light of God's perfection. Thus, the two remedies for the pitfalls of social glory (confession of sin and genuine neighbor love) work in tandem.

By making God's praise one's motive for virtuous action, one is freed from the cycle of comparison, conformity, shame, and suspicion. To practice virtue for the sake of God's glory is to bring praise to the very source in which one's excellence participates. This is the appointed consummation of virtue, on Augustine's view, because virtue represents the very measure of one's participation in God. The culmination of virtue has salutary effects on the whole network of social practices and civic virtues that make up political life insofar as praise remedies the deficiencies of the cycle of glory as a competitive social good.

**(p.161)** It is important to note that, for Augustine, recognizing God as the source of one's virtues is a claim about the ontology of one's participation in the good—and not a claim about a one-directional divine gift that wipes out human agency. In the perfection of the political virtues there is no competition between divine and human agency. Augustine's conceptual language for this leg of the return is that of intimacy. The nearer one approximates to the source and ground of one's virtues, the nearer one approximates to oneself. Fully realized agency is not autarkic, for Augustine.

Notice also that Augustine's description of the perfection of the virtues to Macedonius is erotic, in the Platonic and Plotinian sense: a picture of one clinging to the good rather than being annihilated by it.<sup>74</sup> It is a dispossession that leads to consummation. This vision of clinging, Augustine tells Macedonius, must inform the practice of the virtues in time. Thus, recognition of one's virtues as divine gifts is central to the way piety perfects the other virtues. Furthermore, this is one of the reasons that true piety is necessary, on Augustine's account, for the other virtues to be used rightly in promoting the community's wellbeing. Only in this way can virtues be perfected, made real, and motivated by freely given love for God and neighbor without a privatization of love for one's own goods and virtues.

Augustine's account of perfected political virtues and true happiness in Book 5 of *The City of God* mirrors the final paragraphs of Letter 155 to Macedonius. Although the political official described in Book 5 of *The City of God* is ostensibly an emperor, the analysis given there applies more broadly to all godly public officials. Given that Augustine was writing Book 5 and Letter 155 at the same time, and given the details of the virtues and practices recommended here (e.g. gentleness, pardon, punishment), one cannot help but wonder if this passage refers to the concrete figure of Macedonius:<sup>75</sup>

[Political officials] are happy if they rule justly; if they are not lifted up by the talk of those who accord them sublime honors or pay their **(p.162)** respects with an excessive humility, but remember that they are only men; if they make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent; if they fear, love and worship God; if they love that Kingdom which they are not afraid to share with others more than their own; if they are slow to punish and swift to pardon; if they resort to punishment only when it is necessary to the government and defense of the commonwealth, and never to gratify their own enmity; if they grant pardon, not so that unjust men may enjoy impunity, but in the hope of bringing about their correction; if they compensate for whatever severe measures they may be forced to decree with the gentleness of mercy and the generosity of benevolence; if their own self-indulgence is as much restrained as it might have been unchecked; if they prefer to govern wicked desires more than any people whatsoever; if they do all these things not out of craving for empty glory, but from love of eternal happiness; and if, for their sins, they do not neglect to offer to their true God the sacrifice of humility and contrition and prayer. We say that, for the time being, such Christian emperors are happy in hope and that, in time to come, when that to which we now look forward has arrived they will be so in possession.<sup>76</sup>

Just as in Letter 155, here too we see all the steps of the return to God as the source of one's virtues coming together in a single passage: first, we see recognition of God as the source of one's virtues; second, there is a reorientation of motivation from human to divine glory; and third, we see the corresponding practices of self-examination, confession, and repentance. All three of these movements are necessary for the perfection of the political virtues and the reception of the eternal goods constitutive of eternal happiness. Furthermore, in this passage we also find that it is through the work of perfecting the political virtues that one avoids the pitfalls of imperfect virtue—that is, the cycle of comparison, conformity, shame, and suspicion associated with “empty glory.” We now turn to the second aspect of the double return: love for God as the source of all temporal goods.

#### 5.4.2. God, the Object of Everyone's Desire

Augustine's exposition of Psalm 118(119) provides an important parallel to his comments in Letter 155 to Macedonius about God being the true "object of everyone's desire":

**(p.163)** Not even for the sake of temporal health or wellbeing must we do good, but for the eternal wellbeing which is our hope. In that eternal wellbeing unchangeable good will be ours to enjoy, the good that will come to us from God, the good which will be God himself.<sup>77</sup>

The goal, on this leg of the double return, is to follow the many temporal goods we use back to their source in the good itself. It is all too easy, Augustine preaches, to want goods without ever advancing toward a desire for the good itself:

[M]any people cry to the Lord about riches they hope to gain or losses they want to avoid, or for the wellbeing of their nearest and dearest, or for the security of their household, or temporal happiness, or worldly advancement; or even perhaps just for bodily fitness ... Many people pray for these and similar things to the Lord, but hardly anyone prays for the Lord himself. Indeed, it seems quite easy for a person to want something from the Lord without wanting the Lord himself, as though anything he gives could be more delightful than the giver.<sup>78</sup>

By ascending to a desire for the giver himself, one begins to love God as the good in a "disinterested" way, Augustine says, even as one begins to taste and obtain eternal goods in this life.<sup>79</sup>

Augustine describes this "disinterested" and nonpossessive love as an enlarging, stretching, and maturing of one's affection for temporal goods. Good use of temporal goods requires this growth. For those who have reached this stage of love:

Only God remains to them as the [true] object of their desires, for they no longer love the earth. They love him who made heaven and earth; they love him, and they are not yet with him. Their desire is kept waiting so that it may grow, and it grows that it may lay hold on its object. It is no paltry thing that God will give to one who longs, but Himself, who made all that exists; and no small effort must a lover make to be capable of receiving so great a good. Train yourself until you have a capacity for God; long and long for what you will possess forever.<sup>80</sup>

**(p.164)** Augustine picks up this exhortation in his *Homilies on the First Letter of John* and uses the striking image of a stretched-out purse:

The entire life of a good Christian is a holy desire. What you desire, however, you don't yet see. But by desiring you are made large enough, so that, when there comes what you should see, you may be filled. For, if you wish to fill a purse, and you know how big what will be given you is, you stretch the purse, whether it is made of cloth or leather or anything else. You know how much you are going to obtain, and you see that your purse is small; by stretching it you make it that much larger. This is how God stretches our desire through delay, stretches our soul through desire, and makes it large enough by stretching it ... This is our life – to be exercised [*exercere*] through desire.<sup>81</sup>

The exercise of desire, for Augustine, entails many exercises for assessing, refining, and reordering one's desires toward God. These practices result, Augustine preaches in this passage, in an overall *stretching out* of one's soul toward the good. One's soul must be made capacious in order to receive such a supremely desirable end.



Just as we found in the return to God as the source of one's virtue, this return to God as source of all temporal goods is difficult work, on Augustine's account. Anyone undergoing this exercise of desire understands that the good cannot be, or cannot remain, a mere projection of one's acquisitive self-interest. Sometimes this training involves taking pleasure in goods and following them up to their source through gratitude. Other times the training requires periods of deprivation (through abstinence or renunciation) in order to sharpen or stretch one's desire to make room for "so great a good." Still at other times the training requires patient endurance of the loss of temporal goods. Loss provides an opportunity to assess the quality of one's love for the good itself.

Death represents the ultimate loss of temporal goods. Meditation on it, in Augustine's view, provides a useful exercise for shaping one's relationship to the good, and for motivating the twofold return. Recall this characteristic passage from Augustine's preaching on wealth:

Why are you so obsessed with these things [temporal goods] as the only means of pleasure and satisfaction? That's not wellbeing. "His spirit will go out, and he will return to this earth" (Psalm 146:4). There, that's what his wellbeing amounts to, "a mist that appears for a little while" **(p.165)** (James 4:14). "His spirit will go out, and he will return to earth." Let a few years pass. Let the river flow on as usual, hurrying past the graves of the dead. Tell the difference if you can between the bones of the rich and the bones of the poor. "When his spirit goes out he returns to his earth."<sup>82</sup>

Meditating on the inevitable fact of death is an opportunity to recognize that one's goods are not entirely one's own. They are, in an important sense, merely tokens of the highest good to be used in the mysterious journey back to God. At the end of one's life, in Augustine's eyes, one is implicitly being asked to accept God as one's only good.

If one clings tenaciously to God as the source of all goods in this life, one's manifold desires will eventually come to an end in satiety:

Yet however richly endowed such a soul may be here on earth, what will it be in the world to come, where God feeds us? As long as we are still on pilgrimage here, what we shall be cannot be told. And perhaps even here, when we lift up our hands, we long for that ultimate satiety; we long for that state where we shall be totally satisfied with God's lavish gifts so that all our needs will vanish utterly, and we shall desire nothing; because whatever we desire here, whatever seems most worthy of our love here, will be available in its entirety.<sup>83</sup>

Augustine repeatedly emphasizes that this singular return of love for God is not meant to obliterate love for other goods. Indeed, love of God, in Augustine's view, is an overarching goal that can unify and order one's smaller loves for lower goods.

I am not saying that you should have no loves; I simply want your loves to be properly ordered. Put heavenly things before earthly, immortal things before mortal, eternal things before transitory ones. And put the Lord before everything, and not just by praising him, but also by loving him. It is easy enough to give him preference when it comes to praise. But ... do you show different priorities in your love from the preferences you showed in your praise?<sup>84</sup>

It is important to note that one's singular love for God should not block out neighbor love—as was discussed in Chapter 4. Augustine is **(p.166)** keen to emphasize that the stretching of desire for the good always moves upward and outward:

Hence love itself is now practiced in good works of charity, by which it stretches itself out to help the neighbor in whatever way it can, and this is its breadth ... Hence love, which looks out for that which is common rather than for what is private, is said not to seek the things that are its own.<sup>85</sup>

On Augustine's view the soul has suffered a primordial contraction in original sin and part of the remedy for it requires this stretching out toward God and neighbor. This passage reminds us of Augustine's claim in Letter 155 that there is ultimately a hidden unity between love of God, neighbor, and self that one can glimpse in this life.<sup>86</sup> The journey toward nonpossessive love of the good entails this horizontal extension. This stretching prepares us for the experience of God as the highest common good who will be enjoyed in eternity not in solitude but in that "perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God."<sup>87</sup> This fellowship represents the culmination of the enclosing circles of *oikeiōsis* and the consummation of all temporal goods and virtues in eternal happiness. Augustine declares that Macedonius' life exhibits a true longing for this "heavenly commonwealth," and the true friendship with God and neighbor that flow from there: "I can tell that your spirit is panting for God's heavenly commonwealth, inspired by a love of ... love itself."<sup>88</sup>

#### Notes:

(<sup>1</sup>) On Boniface in general, see Mandouze, *Prosopographie*, 152–5, s.v. Bonifatius; R. Markus, "Bonifatius comes Africae," in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 1:653–5. For more on Boniface, see Chapter 3.

(<sup>2</sup>) *Ep.* 220.11.

(<sup>3</sup>) *Ep.* 189.5.

(<sup>4</sup>) On Plotinus' conception of the grades of virtue, and virtue's relation to the immortality of the soul, see *Enneads* I.2. Cicero's vivid description of the afterlife of the political virtues can be found in the "Dream of Scipio" at *rep.* 6.9–29. For Seneca, see *ep.* 71.16, 76.25. Seneca's view of the afterlife of virtue is ambiguous. At *ep.* 71.16 he presents two possibilities for a virtuous person after death: the achievement of absolute tranquility, without the dispreferred elements of embodied life, or, dissolution into the cosmos as mere matter. For a comparison of Seneca's and Cicero's view of the afterlife, see I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 91. For a comparison with Plato, see D. Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 241–60.

(<sup>5</sup>) See *ciu.* 19.13–17, *ep.* 130.13–14, 155.12–17.

(<sup>6</sup>) *Ciu.* 19.13.

(<sup>7</sup>) R. Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse: Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1962), 207–20

(<sup>8</sup>) J. Bowlin, “Augustine Counting Virtues,” *Augustinian Studies* 41 (2010): 277–300*ep*

(<sup>9</sup>) See Chapters 2 and 4. On Ecdicia in general, see Mandouze, *Prosopographie*, 333–4, s.v. Ecdicia.

(<sup>10</sup>) *Lib. arb.* 2.52–3, *ep.* 140.3–4, 155.12–13, s. 335C.13.

(<sup>11</sup>) *Ep.* 262.2.

(<sup>12</sup>) *Ep.* 262.2.

(<sup>13</sup>) For more on Augustine’s account of the relationship between the virtues of marital chastity and continence see Chapter 2.

(<sup>14</sup>) *Ep.* 262.5.

(<sup>15</sup>) *Ep.* 262.11.

(<sup>16</sup>) *Ep.* 262.5.

(<sup>17</sup>) *Ep.* 262.5.

(<sup>18</sup>) *Ep.* 262.6.

(<sup>19</sup>) *Ep.* 262.8.

(<sup>20</sup>) *Ep.* 262.11.

(<sup>21</sup>) A.-I. Bouton-Touboulic, *L'ordre caché. La notion d'ordre chez Saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 2004)

(<sup>22</sup>) S. 68.13. Cf. *ep. Io. tr.* 9.10. The “wings of the soul” trope in the Platonist tradition originates in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. See *Phdr.* 246d6–e4: “By their nature [the soul’s] wings have the power to lift up heavy things and raise them aloft where the gods dwell, and so, more than anything that pertains to the body, they are akin to the divine, which has beauty, wisdom, goodness, and everything of that sort. These nourish the soul’s wings, which grow best in their presence; but foulness and ugliness make the wings shrink and disappear.” Cf. *Phdr.* 250e ff; Plotinus, *Ennead* I 6 “On Beauty.”

(<sup>23</sup>) *Ep.* 262.7.

(<sup>24</sup>) *Ep.* 262.9. Roman household decorum was as real for Paul as it was for Augustine. Like Paul in Ephesians and elsewhere, Augustine moves between appeals to the husband’s authority and headship and egalitarian appeals to partnership, mutual submission, and respectfulness.

(<sup>25</sup>) See Koch, “Augustine’s Letter to Ecdicia: A New Reading,” 173–80. Koch argues that Augustine’s use of the verb *moderare* in the first section of the letter indicates that he is turning the traditional patriarchal relationship of the *domus* on its head. By assigning the virtue of *moderatio* to Ecdicia—a virtue that only a governor could properly exercise—Augustine is signaling to her that he recognizes who has the authority in her family, and who has been playing the role of moral leader in the household. Cf. Krawiec, “‘From the Womb of the Church’: Monastic Families,” 283–307; Cooper, “Insinuations of Womanly Influence,” 159–60.

(<sup>26</sup>) *Ep.* 262.6.

(<sup>27</sup>) *Ep.* 262.11.

(<sup>28</sup>) N. Baumann, *Die Demut als Grundlage aller Tugenden bei Augustinus* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009) A *fundamento humilitatis*

(<sup>29</sup>) *Ep.* 262.11.

(<sup>30</sup>) *Ep.* 262.11.

(<sup>31</sup>) G. Lawless, “Augustine’s Decentring of Asceticism,” in *Augustine and His Critics*, ed. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2000), 142–63

(<sup>32</sup>) *Ep.* 220.10.

(<sup>33</sup>) On Macedonius in general, see Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire II: AD 395–527*, 697, s.v.

Macedonius 3; Mandouze, *Prosopographie*, 659–61, s.v.

Macedonius 2. See also Morgenstern, *Die Briefpartner des Augustinus von Hippo*, 107–8.

(<sup>34</sup>) *Ep.* 155.12.

(<sup>35</sup>) *Ep.* 155.1.

(<sup>36</sup>) *Ep.* 155.10.

(<sup>37</sup>) *Ep.* 155.12.

(<sup>38</sup>) *Ep.* 155.2, 12.

(<sup>39</sup>) *Ep.* 155.10.

(<sup>40</sup>) *Ep.* 155.9.

(<sup>41</sup>) *Ep.* 155.9, *ciu.* 14.25.

(<sup>42</sup>) For a compatible account of what Augustine means by “referring” (*referre*) all of one’s virtues and temporal goods toward their source in the highest good, see the discussion in Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 170–1. Byers notes that “when he [Augustine] says that the virtuous ‘refer’ their virtues and the things that virtue uses to the end of the highest good, this means both choosing with the right goal in mind, and *awareness* of the metaphysical hierarchy, with God at the top. Those people who ‘keep God in their thoughts’ (*ciu.* 19.4) will think of temporal goods as means to union with God, which is the primary good of the happiest life; this does not mean that they treat them as if they had less intrinsic value than they do, but rather that they know they are not to be enjoyed without *also at the same time* being used as conduits to God” (emphasis in Byers).

(<sup>43</sup>) *Ep.* 155.12.

(<sup>44</sup>) *Ep.* 155.12.

(<sup>45</sup>) *Ep.* 155.11.

(<sup>46</sup>) *Ep.* 155.12.

(<sup>47</sup>) See Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse*, 207–20.

(<sup>48</sup>) The parallel between Plotinus' twofold distinction of the political and purificatory virtues in *Ennead* I 2 and Augustine's account of the perfection of the political virtues in Letter 155 to Macedonius has been carefully examined in Dodaro, "Political and Theological Virtues in Augustine," 464–8. On the variation amongst Neoplatonist authors regarding the scale of virtues, see O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, chapter 4: "The Scale of Virtues," 40–9. Porphyry formalizes Plotinus' scale of virtues as a scale on four levels: political, purificatory, theoretical, and paradigmatic virtues (see *sent.* 32). It appears that Iamblichus extends the fourfold scale even further to include a level of theurgic virtues that directly unite the soul to the highest level of reality (see O'Meara, 48n33). The scale of virtues finds different expressions in other Platonists, such as Macrobius, Marinus, and Olympiodorus. In each case the idea is the same: in moving from the practice of the political virtues to higher levels of virtue, the soul begins to attain assimilation to the divine—Godlikeness.

(<sup>49</sup>) See Plotinus, *Ennead*, VI 9 "On the Good, or the One"; Cf. *ciu.* 10.3, 19.17. See O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 76.

(<sup>50</sup>) *Ep.* 155.13.

(<sup>51</sup>) *Ep.* 155.17.

(<sup>52</sup>) *Ep.* 262.10.

(<sup>53</sup>) *Ep.* 155.10.

(<sup>54</sup>) *Ep.* 155.15–17.

(<sup>55</sup>) *Ep.* 155.12.

(<sup>56</sup>) *Ep.* 155.15.

(<sup>57</sup>) *Ep.* 155.11.

(<sup>58</sup>) *Ep.* 155.9.

(<sup>59</sup>) *Ciu.* 19.4: “True virtues can exist only in those in whom there is true piety [*pietas*]”; 19.25: “virtues [that] only have reference to themselves and are sought for no other end are ... to be judged vices rather than virtues.” Cf. *ciu.* 5.19, *ep.* 138.17. For the best account of Augustine on the necessary relationship between piety and true virtue—that takes into consideration his correspondence with public officials such as Macedonius—see Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 202–12. The question of the relationship between piety and virtue is often construed as a question about Augustine’s view of pagan virtue. The notion that all pagan virtues are really “splendid vices” (*splendida uitia*), often attributed to him, is not to be found in his thought. See Mausbach, *Die Ethik des Heiligen Augustinus*, 2:259. Mausbach suggests that the tag is constructed from Augustine’s comments about virtue in the context of the Pelagian controversy found at *c. Iul.* 4.20 and *retr.* 1.2. For an interesting overview of Augustine on pagan virtue within the scope of a broader history of the question, see J. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), Chapter 2: “Augustine: Disordered Loves and the Problem of Pride,” 45–71. For a helpful introduction to the question and account of the motivational structure of virtuous action as it appears in *The City of God*, see T. H. Irwin, “Splendid Vices? Augustine for and against Pagan Virtues,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 105–27. Cf. Wetzel, *Augustine the Limits of Virtue*, 107–11, 119–22; R. A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 43–4; and C. Tornau, “Does Augustine Accept Pagan Virtue? The Place of Book 5 in the Argument of *The City of God*,” in *Studia Patristica* 43, ed. F. Young et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 263–75. For a compelling rejection of Markus’s optimistic account of Augustine’s view of the status of pagan virtue in *The City of God*, see Dodaro, “Ecclesia and res publica,” 237–72.

(<sup>60</sup>) *Mor.* 1.24.

(<sup>61</sup>) *Ciu.* 19.17.

(<sup>62</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).2.

(<sup>63</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).2.

(<sup>64</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).2.



(<sup>65</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).2.

(<sup>66</sup>) It is important to keep in mind that Augustine's critical comments about the vicious effects of human glory on virtuous action pertain as much to his criticism of other Christian groups, such as the Donatists and Pelagians as they do to his criticism of pagan philosophical ethics or popular Roman heroism. See Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 104, 200–2.

(<sup>67</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).4. For an excellent treatment of the indebtedness of Augustine's understanding of motivation to Stoic cognitive psychology and perception theory, see Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, chapter 2: "Motivation," 23–54.

(<sup>68</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).2.

(<sup>69</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).3, 5.

(<sup>70</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).3. Cf. *ciu.* 5.20, 24.

(<sup>71</sup>) *Ciu.* 5.20.

(<sup>72</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).5.

(<sup>73</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).5.

(<sup>74</sup>) *Ep.* 155.12–13. For Augustine, just as for Plato and Plotinus, the attractiveness of the highest good can be conceptualized in terms of beauty. Cf. *conf.* 7.16, 10.27; Plato, *sym.* 210a–212a; Plotinus *Ennead* I 6.7.2: "one who has seen the good, the desire of every soul, knows what I mean when I say it is beautiful"; Cf. *Ennead* VI 9.9.46.

(<sup>75</sup>) The passage also refers to the figure of Emperor Theodosius I, whose repentance after the massacre at Thessalonika is described in *City of God* 5.26. See Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 189, 192–3, 212–13.

(<sup>76</sup>) *Ciu.* 5.24.

(<sup>77</sup>) *En. Ps.* 118(12).2.

(<sup>78</sup>) *En. Ps.* 76.2.

(<sup>79</sup>) *En. Ps.* E. Boularand, "Désintéressement," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité. Ascétique et mystique*, Tome 3 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957), 566–71

<sup>(80)</sup> *En. Ps.* 83.3.

<sup>(81)</sup> *Ep. Io. tr.* 4.6.

<sup>(82)</sup> *S.* 33A.3.

<sup>(83)</sup> *En. Ps.* 62.14.

<sup>(84)</sup> *S.* 335C.13. This translation of Sermon 335C comes from Augustine, *Political Writings*, ed. Atkins and Dodaro.

<sup>(85)</sup> *Ep.* 140.62.

<sup>(86)</sup> *Epdoct. chr., trinciu*K. Corrigan, "Love of God, Love of Self, and Love of Neighbor: Augustine's Critical Dialogue with Platonism," *Augustinian Studies* 34 (2003): 97-106

<sup>(87)</sup> *Ciu.* 19.17. Cf. *ep.* 137.17.

<sup>(88)</sup> *Ep.* 155.1.