

Splendid Vices? Augustine For and Against Pagan Virtues

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I. PAGAN VIRTUE

Augustine is notorious for his claim that the so-called virtues of pagans are not genuine virtues at all. Bayle refers to this claim when he describes the sort of virtue that one ought to be willing to attribute to atheists:

Please notice carefully that in speaking of the good morals of some atheists, I have not attributed any real virtues to them. Their sobriety, their chastity, their probity, their contempt for riches, their zeal for the public good, their inclination to be helpful to their neighbor were not the effect of the love of God and tended neither to honor nor to glorify him. They themselves were the source and end of all this. Self-love was the basis, the boundaries, and the cause of it. These were all glittering sins, *splendida peccata*, as St. Augustine has said of all the fine actions of the pagans.¹

When Leibniz discusses Bayle's views about the prevalence of evil in the world, he disagrees about pagan virtues:

our vices doubtless exceed our virtues, and this is the effect of original sin. It is nevertheless true that also on that point men in general exaggerate things, and that even some theologians disparage man so much that they wrong the providence of the Author of mankind. That is why I am not in favor of those who thought to do great honor to our religion by saying that the virtues of the pagans were only *splendida peccata*, splendid vices (*vices éclatantes*). It is a sally of St Augustine's

I presented a version of this paper at a conference on Augustine at Cornell University. I am grateful to the participants in the discussion who raised many helpful questions, and to the editor for comments and suggestions that have helped to remove several errors and obscurities.

1. Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, trans. R. H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 401 (Clarification I).

which has no foundation in holy Scripture, and which offends reason.
(Leibniz, *Theodicy* §259).

Leibniz, like Bayle, takes the Augustinian phrase to express condemnation of pagan morality. Unlike Bayle, he does not endorse the Augustinian view.

The Latin phrase that Bayle and Leibniz use to describe the Augustinian judgment on pagan virtue is so pointed and epigrammatic, so much in Augustine's manner, that we may be surprised to discover that Augustine never wrote it.² He does not deserve any notoriety he may have acquired because of this phrase.

A more important question, however, is whether, and to what extent, the pseudo-Augustinian phrase captures Augustine's view. Bayle and Leibniz might plausibly maintain that, even if it is not Augustine's phrase, it is a substantially accurate summary of his views. For Augustine insists that without faith and true religion there can be no true virtues, and so he infers that all alleged virtues without true religion are really vices.³ He therefore seems to repudiate all pagan conceptions of virtue.⁴

Augustine's remarks inspired later Christian attacks on pagan virtues. Such attacks were ascribed to Jan Hus, and condemned as heretical by the Council of Konstanz in 1415.⁵ In the controversies of the Reformation period, questions about the vices of the pagans arose in the context of issues about free will and of good works preceding grace and justification. In 1547, the Council of Trent took a position that might appear to conflict with Augustine's view.⁶ On the other side, the English Articles of 1552 and 1563

2. See J. Mausbach, *Die Ethik des Hl. Augustins*, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1909), II:259. He suggests that the tag is constructed from *c. Iul. iv 20* and *Retr. i 3.2*.

3. "For though some people regard virtues as genuine and right (*verae atque honestae*) when they are directed towards themselves and are not sought for the sake of anything else, even then they are swollen (*inflatae*) and arrogant (*superbae*), and therefore are not to be judged virtues, but vices. For just as what makes the flesh live is not from the flesh but above the flesh, so also what makes a human being live happily is not from a human being but above him." (*CD* xix 25) Augustine relies on St Paul's remark that 'everything that is not from faith is sin' (*Romans* 14:23).

4. See Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1993), 25:

Hence the famous claim that all the virtues of pagan Rome, because they were not directed to the Christian God, were merely "splendid vices"—an expression Augustine himself never used but that does express his viewpoint with reasonable accuracy.

5. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, ed., 36th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), §1216.

6. "If any one says that all the things done before justification, in whatever way they may be done, are truly sins, or merit the hatred of God . . . let him be anathema" (Council of Trent, Canon 7 on Justification = Denz. § 1557).

might appear to reject the Tridentine position in favor of a more Augustinian position.⁷

The Council of Trent did not end disputes even on the Roman side. Michael Baius discusses these issue at length in *De Virtutibus Impiorum*, where he often appeals to remarks in Augustine similar to the one I have quoted.⁸ The Pope condemned his views in 1567.⁹ The Jansenists revived similar views, with the same Augustinian inspiration; Pope Alexander VIII condemned them in 1690.¹⁰

I say that different views “might appear” to conflict or to agree, because we need a clearer statement of Augustine’s position and of its implications before we can identify the main issues, and before we can separate differences of emphasis from significant disagreements.¹¹ Admittedly, later readers reflect on Augustine in the light of issues that seem more important to them than they seemed to Augustine, or in the light of distinctions that became clear only after Augustine. This is especially obvious in the case of remarks that are constantly cited in later controversies. Augustine’s remarks on pagan virtue are cited by medieval writers; Peter Lombard’s reference to these remarks makes them a recurrent topic of discussion.¹² Later discussions may well mislead us about the sense of Augustine’s initial remarks.

Despite these hazards, later discussions help us to understand Augustine. They present sharply-defined options that raise appropriate questions about Augustine, even if he does not define the options so clearly. If we use

7. “Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasing to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesu Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin” (*The Thirty-nine Articles*, Art. 13). See also n.59 below. The reference to St. Paul on faith and sin might be taken to suggest that the article favors a position close to Augustine’s.

8. Baius, *Michaeli Baii Opera* (Cologne: Egmont, 1696).

9. Pius V, 1567, *Errores Michaeli Baii*. Denz. 1925: “All the actions of unbelievers are sins, and the virtues of philosophers are vices.” 1933: “Everything that a sinner, or slave of sin, does is sin.” 1937: “Anyone who acknowledges any natural good, that is to say, any good that takes its origin from natural powers alone, agrees with Pelagius.” These are Pius’s descriptions of Baius’s views, not quotations from Baius.

10. Alexander VIII, 1690, *Errores Iansenistarum*. Denz. 2308: “It is necessary for an unbeliever to sin in every work.” 2309: “Anyone who hates a sin simply because of its wrongness and inappropriateness to nature, without any reference to the offense against God, truly sins.”

11. Though I speak of “Augustine’s position,” I am not trying to survey all his works. I mainly confine myself to the treatment of pagan virtue in the *CD*, and mention only a few parallels from elsewhere.

12. Lombard, 2 *Sent.* d41 c1–2, discusses “whether every aim and action of unbelievers is bad.” The whole topic is discussed by O. Lottin, *Etudes de Morale* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1961), chap. 2.

later discussions cautiously, they help us to be clearer than Augustine is about the character and implications of his position.

In particular, I will try to clarify Augustine's position by turning to Aquinas for help. This might appear an unwise move as one is struck by the fact that Augustine plainly fails to mention the claims and distinctions that Aquinas needs for his solution. Indeed, one might infer that Aquinas simply strains to avoid open disagreement with an authority such as Augustine, and so is not a sound interpreter. I do not think this is a fair assessment of Aquinas's remarks.

II. THE DIRECTION OF THE WILL

To understand Augustine's objections to pagan virtue, we must understand two claims: (1) S has a virtue only if S has the right aims and motives. (2) Pagans necessarily lack real virtues, in so far as they lack the right aims and motives.¹³

The first claim reflects Augustine's view that a virtue is primarily a condition of the will, and especially an expression of the tendency of one's love.¹⁴ If the will correctly aims at the right ultimate end, and the expressions of will towards the means are rightly connected with it, the agent is virtuous.¹⁵ Virtue is precisely the good use of freewill.¹⁶

13. I use 'pagan' rather loosely and inappropriately. Augustine's objections are directed not only against atheists, or polytheists, or deists, but also against theists who do not believe Catholic (as opposed to Manichean or Pelagian) doctrines about (for instance) creation, sin, grace, good works, and the Incarnation. For many purposes, finer distinctions must be drawn. See J. Wang Tch'ang-tche, *Saint Augustin et les vertus des paiens* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1938), chap. 3.

14. *CD* xv 22: "And so it seems to me that a short and true definition of virtue is: the [correct] direction of love." xiv 7: "And so a correct will is good love, and a misdirected will is bad love."

15. *Trin.* xi 10: "For the acts of will are correct and all connected to each other [Some editions omit 'et', and so translate "all the acts of will that are connected to each other."] if that <act of> will to which they are all referred is good. If, however, it is bad, they are all bad. And so the connected series of correct acts of will is a road taken by those rising to blessedness, proceeding, one might say, by firm steps; but the entanglement of bad and misdirected acts of will is a bond that will bind whoever acts in this way, so that he will be thrown out into outer darkness."

16. *Retrac.* i 9.6: "Among intermediate goods is found the free judgment of the will, because we can make a bad as well [as a good] use of it. However, its character is such that we cannot live correctly without it. For its good use is virtue, which is to be placed among the great goods, those which no one can use badly." At *ST* 1-2 q55 al obj 2, Aquinas attributes Augustine's description of virtue as the good use of freewill to *Lib. Arb.* ii. The words do not actually appear there, though they are a fair summary of ii 51.

In imposing this condition on virtue, Augustine agrees with a Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic demand. Moralists of these schools, in contrast to the Epicureans, all believe that virtuous people differ from other people in having a distinctive conception of the ultimate end, not simply in having distinctive views about how to get it. If we are merely disposed to do the appropriate actions for the sake of some genuine good, we have not yet acquired a virtue.

We might well agree with Augustine and with the other ancient moralists who believe that correct behavior is insufficient for a virtue. We might even agree with the view that virtue requires the choice of the right action for the right reason, looking to the very fact that makes the action right. This demand, however, might be understood, as Kant understands it, non-teleologically, so that it does not refer to any connection between virtuous action and one's ultimate end. Since Augustine is a eudaemonist, he must claim that the right choice of virtue and virtuous action lies in their direction towards the right ultimate end.

If we reject this teleological criterion, we block Augustine's argument to show that pagan virtues cannot be genuine virtues. But this reply is not open either to the Greek moralists I have mentioned or to Aquinas. We may, therefore, allow Augustine to appeal to the teleological criterion, and see what he does with it.

III. PAGAN VIRTUES AND MISDIRECTED WILL

This teleological criterion is especially prominent in one of Augustine's anti-Pelagian works. While he was writing the later books of *De civitate Dei* (*CD*), he also wrote a reply to the attack on him by the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum.¹⁷ Julian cited the virtues of the pagans as an objection to Augustine's doctrines about the effects of original sin and the role of grace, faith, and good works. Augustine answers Julian's objections by arguing that the pagans have no real virtues.

In Augustine's view, Julian speaks as though the right actions were sufficient for virtue, and hence he neglects the teleological criterion.¹⁸

17. Augustine worked on the *CD* from 413 to 426. He wrote *c. Iul.* c.421. See J. Quasten et al., *Patrology*, x vols. (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1986), 4:363, 426. To simplify matters, I treat Julian's position as being the one that Augustine attributes to him.

18. "You know, therefore, that virtues are to be distinguished from vices not by the duties, but by the ends. Now a duty is what is to be done, but the end is that because of which the duty is to be done. When, therefore, a person does something in which he does not seem to sin, if he does not do it because of what he ought, he is convicted of sin" (*c. Iul.* iv 21).

Once we apply it, we see that virtuous actions (that is, the actions proper to a virtue, those that a virtuous person would do) proceed from a virtue only if they are directed to the right end.¹⁹

In Augustine's view, pagans cannot act from appropriate motives (iv 30). If we were to attribute the right motives to a pagan, we would be rejecting Christ's pronouncement that a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit. He anticipates a possible reply by Julian, that someone might be a good tree in so far as he is a human being and a bad tree in so far as he is an unbeliever. Augustine, however, maintains that, since pagans must clearly be bad trees, Julian is forced to say that they are bad trees bearing good fruit, contrary to the Gospel.²⁰

Julian might suggest that a pagan may have a good will if (for instance) he has a merciful will. Augustine answers that it is not always a good thing to be merciful, so that being merciful is not itself sufficient for virtue. Even if it is a good work to act out of natural compassion in itself, it is still a good that the pagan misuses because he acts unbelievably.²¹

If, therefore, we apply the teleological criterion, understood as Augustine seems to understand it here, pagans seem to lack genuine virtue.²² The reply to Julian and its attack on pagan virtue have often been cited

19. "the prudence of misers, by which they work out various sorts of gain, is no true virtue; nor the justice of misers, by which they scorn what belongs to other people, from fear of severe punishment; nor the temperance of misers, by which they restrain desire for excess pleasures, whenever they are expensive; nor the bravery of misers, by which, as Horace, says, 'they travel over seas, over mountains, through fire, to escape poverty'" (*c. Jul.* iv 19). Quoted by Aquinas, *ST* 2-2 q23 a7.

20. "I ask you whether he does these good works well or evilly. If he does them in an evil way, though they are good, you cannot deny that he who does anything in an evil way sins, regardless of what he does. But since you do not wish him to sin when he does these things, you will surely say that he does good and he does it well. Therefore, a bad tree brings forth good fruit, and, according to the truth, this cannot happen . . . Will you answer that he is a good tree, not in so far as he is unbelieving, but in so far as he is a human being? . . . Therefore, there would be no bad tree of which it is said that it cannot bear good fruits. What unbeliever thinks so unbelievably? It is not, therefore, in so far as he is a human being, which is the work of God, but as being of bad will, that he is a bad tree and cannot produce good fruits. Consider, then, whether you have the nerve to say that an unbelieving will is a good will" (iv 30).

21. "And he does this good thing badly, if he does it unfaithfully; now whoever does something badly, thereby sins" (iv 31).

22. A pseudo-Augustinian gloss on St. Paul seems to sum up his view:

A gloss of Augustine commenting on *Rom.* 14:23, "All that is not from faith is sin", says: "The whole life of an unbeliever is sin: and nothing is good without the highest good." (Aquinas, *ST* 1-2 q63 a2 obj 1; *De Virt.* a9 obj 2)

in support of an extreme view, that any alleged virtue in a pagan is really not virtuous, but sinful, because it is directed to a bad end.²³

IV. AIMING AT THE RIGHT END

To see whether Augustine is really committed to this extreme view, we must examine the teleological criterion more closely. It assumes that the presence or absence of the right conception of the end of a virtuous action (in someone who does the actions of a virtuous person) determines the presence or absence of the relevant virtue. That is why someone who applies virtuous actions to a bad end must, to that extent, lack a virtue. In that case,

23. Some comments by the Reformers: Luther, *Lectures on Hebrews*, on *Heb.* 1:9:

Therefore, since love of oneself remains, it is quite impossible for a human being to love, speak, or do justice, even though he may simulate all these things. It follows that the virtues of all philosophers, indeed of all human beings, whether jurists or theologians, are virtues in appearance, but really vices. (From *D. Martin Luthers Werke* [Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–1997], 57:105. Trans. in *Luther's Works*, ed. J. Pelikan, [St Louis: Concordia, 1955–1976], 29:119).

Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1521):

And our sophists are not yet ashamed to teach righteousness of works, satisfactions, and philosophical virtues. Let us grant that there was some kind of constancy in Socrates, chastity in Xenocrates, temperance in Zeno. Still, because they were in impure minds—indeed, because these shadows of virtues arose by love of oneself [*amore sui*] from selfishness [*philautia*], they ought not to be counted as true virtues, but as vices (From *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, ed. R. Stupperich, 7 vols. [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1951–1975], 2:21f. Trans. by W. Pauck in *Melanchthon and Bucer* [London: SCM, 1969], p. 33f).

Calvin discusses *c. Iul.* at some length in *Institutes*, iii 14.2–3. He does not actually claim that pagan virtues are really vices. He comes closest to saying so in 14.3:

Therefore, since by the very impurity of the heart these <good works> have been corrupted as from their origin, they ought no more to be reckoned among virtues than the vices that commonly deceive on account of their affinity and likeness to virtue. . . . He [sc. Augustine] therefore affirms that all Fabricii, Scipiones, and Catones in their illustrious achievements have sinned in that, since they lacked the light of faith, they did not refer them to the end to which they ought to have referred them. (From *Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, ed. P. Barth and W. Niessel, 5 vols. [Munich: Kaiser, 1952–1959], vol. 4. Trans. F.L. Battles [London: SCM Press, 1960])

someone who applies virtuous actions to a good end must, to that extent, have a virtue.

This way of expressing the teleological criterion shows that it would be too simple to conclude that S lacks any virtue if S directs virtuous action to a bad end. For perhaps S directs virtuous action both to a good end and to a bad end; in that case, S has both a virtue and a vice. In that case, the question 'Does S act for a good or a bad end?' is too simple, because more than one end may be relevant to whether S is virtuous, or vicious, or both.

If the teleological criterion simply requires us to aim at some genuine good, it is too generous to be plausible, and certainly too generous to fit Augustine. For (to go back to his examples) misers may aim at genuine goods, and to that extent aim at good ends, in so far as they aim at harmony with their neighbors, or control of their own appetites; nonetheless they lack virtue because they subordinate these good ends to their own miserliness.

To see what is wrong with the miser and with the end of his alleged prudence and temperance, we need to recognize that he has the wrong conception of the relation of these virtues and their characteristic actions to the ultimate end. He takes these virtues and virtuous actions to be merely instrumental to his own material security and independence (let us say), which are 'external goods', not necessarily secured by virtuous action. If he were a virtuous person, he would recognize that virtue dominates external goods in the ultimate end; for the sake of one's happiness, one ought always to prefer the virtues over all combinations of external goods. The miser does not see that the virtues have this dominant place, in comparison with external goods, in the ultimate end. Let us describe this error by saying that he fails to grasp the morally correct end, or that he lacks the morally correct conception of the ultimate end.

The morally correct conception of the ultimate end is not the same as the unqualifiedly correct conception. For conceptions of the ultimate end may be correct and incorrect to different degrees. We can see this easily if we begin from a rather crude idea of the structure of the ultimate end. If happiness consists of just three components, A, B, and C, S may do a brave action for the sake of A, which S correctly regards as a component of the ultimate end. However, S may still have a defective conception of the ultimate end; for S may suppose that it consists only of A, or that it includes D as well as the three genuine components, and so on. S is not like Augustine's miser, who chooses virtuous action for a mistaken end, but S is still open to criticism for an erroneous conception of the ultimate end.

A teleological criterion for virtue, therefore, might be made more precise in either of two ways: (1) A moderately strict criterion: S has a virtue if S acts on the morally correct conception of the ultimate end. (2) An extremely strict criterion: S has a virtue if S's virtuous action is guided by a wholly correct conception of the ultimate end.

If Augustine accepts the extremely strict criterion, he has a clear reason

for denying that pagans have any virtues; for their conception of the ultimate end is seriously mistaken. It is not clear, however, that the extremely strict criterion expresses a reasonable demand on a virtue. This matters because Augustine is not entitled simply to stipulate necessary conditions for a virtue; he needs to show that his favored necessary conditions are independently plausible. In appealing to some teleological criterion, he relies on an independently plausible condition for a virtue (at least, within the assumptions shared by most ancient moralists); it is not so clear that an extremely strict criterion would be equally plausible.

It might seem obvious that we do not take the extremely strict teleological criterion for granted in normal judgments about virtues. If S's just actions are regulated by the appropriate non-instrumental concern for justice and for the other aspects of morality, we might reasonably regard S as a just person, even if S erroneously believes that some parts of happiness consist in foolish amusements, or S has bad taste in music or painting or architecture.²⁴ These errors apparently need not affect the correctness of S's estimate of the nature and value of justice, and hence they need not affect S's being just.²⁵

The possibility of a morally correct conception of the ultimate end that is not wholly correct emerges from Aristotle's contrast between the moral and the intellectual virtues.²⁶ The moral virtues (*êthikai aretai*) are virtues of character; they require some virtue of intellect, since they require prudence (*phronêsis*), but they do not require all the virtues of intellect. Aristotle does not suggest that someone with all the moral virtues must also have a true conception of the non-moral component of happiness, or specifically of the component that he calls 'contemplation' (*theôria*). He contrasts the life that includes contemplation with the "life in accordance with the other <sort of> virtue" which is happiest only to a secondary degree (1178a9).

Now Aristotle accepts Augustine's teleological criterion, since he agrees that a virtuous person must not only do the right action but also do it for the

24. This example makes the relevant point clearly to a modern reader (I hope), but it might not seem so plausible to Aristotle. For, in his view, magnificence (*megaloprepeia*) is a moral virtue, and a magnificent person is expected to show good taste both in commissioning new buildings for the city and in commissioning a new house for himself (*EN* 1123a6–10). I believe it would still be possible to find examples (apart from the one I develop about moral virtue and *theôria* below) that would make the relevant point for Aristotle, but I will go no further into that issue.

25. Our understanding of the morally correct conception of the end must also take account of belief—shared by Aristotle, the Stoics, and Augustine—in the reciprocity of the virtues (the claim that anyone who has one of the virtues has them all). See *Trin.* vi 6; *Epistulae* 167.5, 7. Cf. Aquinas, *De virt. card.* a2, obj. 12; *ad* 12. According to this view, a just person must not only be right about the dominance of justice over external goods in the ultimate end, but also right about the dominance of the other virtues.

26. This possibility does not emerge clearly from the Stoic position, which identifies moral virtue with happiness.

right end. He expresses this criterion by saying that the virtuous person must decide on the virtuous action for its own sake (1105a32), and because it is fine (1120a23–24, 1122b6–7). Since virtuous people (like everyone else) act for the sake of their own happiness, they satisfy Aristotle's demand because they regard virtue and virtuous action as dominant components of happiness. To that extent, their conception of the ultimate end is correct. Aristotle takes this partial correctness to imply virtue of character.

We might concede on Augustine's behalf that the moderately strict criterion is more plausible than the extremely strict criterion, but insist that this difference between the two criteria does not matter to his argument about virtue. It would matter only if we were right to conceive the ultimate end in Aristotle's way, as a compound of logically distinct components, so that we could acknowledge some components while failing to acknowledge others. An Augustinian might argue that the correct conception of the ultimate end is the conception derived from true piety, and that we either grasp this conception or entirely lack it.²⁷ If that is so, no room is left for any partially correct conception of the ultimate end; nothing could satisfy the moderately strict criterion without satisfying the extremely strict one.

Is Augustine committed to this answer? We must look more closely at his description of pagan virtue, and its relation to his own moral outlook.

V. THE AIM OF PAGAN VIRTUE

As I have already suggested in mentioning Aristotle, the difference between the moderately strict and the extremely strict teleological criterion ought to matter in one's consideration of Greek conceptions of virtue and happiness. For different philosophical schools—Stoic, Peripatetic, and Platonic—agree that the virtues are to be chosen for their own sake and for the sake of happiness; hence they attribute non-instrumental value to the virtues.²⁸ Moreover, they do not regard the virtues as minor non-instrumental goods, and hence as relatively trivial aspects of happiness. On the contrary, they agree that the virtues dominate external goods. Beyond these points of agreement, different schools disagree. The Stoics believe that virtue and happiness are identical, so that they take virtue to be the sole component of happiness. The Peripatetics believe that virtue is only

27. One might derive this conclusion from the disjunction 'aut cupiditate aut caritate', *Trin.* ix 13. Wang, *Vertus*, pp. 33–35, discusses this disjunction, and its role in the controversy arising from the Jansenist-inclined Synod of Pistoia (Denz. §2623–24).

28. I will not discuss Augustine's comments on Plato and Platonism in ethics, since I do not want an argument for the partial correctness of pagan conceptions of the ultimate end to rest on the theistic character of a given view.

one aspect of happiness, and that happiness includes other states and activities too.

Augustine believes the Stoics are right, against the Peripatetics, to insist that genuine happiness must be permanent. But he rejects the Stoics' way of ensuring the permanence of happiness. He rejects their view that external, non-moral goods and evils are no part of happiness and are really indifferent.²⁹ Indeed, he claims that their rejection of external goods is only verbal; on this topic, as on questions about the passions, he denies that the Stoics really dissent from other people's views as strongly as their terminology would suggest.³⁰ According to Varro, a human being consists of both soul and body, and not of soul without body, and therefore the primary natural advantages (*prima naturae*) must be included in the human good (*CD* xix 3). But Varro agrees with the Stoics in insisting on the primacy of virtue; for this is needed to ensure the right use of all other goods.³¹

Augustine attacks all the pagan views he has summarized (xix 4), but he does not attack all their claims about virtue and happiness. He denies that virtue, as the Stoics conceive it, is possible in this life, and he argues that, even if it were possible, it would not ensure our happiness; He also rejects the Peripatetic view that happiness can be achieved in this life.³² Truly virtuous people need true piety in order to recognize that they cannot achieve happiness in this life. Still, Augustine does not challenge the claim that virtue is superior to all external goods, and deserves to be chosen for its own sake. He recognizes that virtue claims this status, and he seems to agree with this claim; for he affirms that nothing is better or more useful in a human being.³³ He approves not only of the specific virtues that the philosophers recognize (as opposed to the philosophers' views about what the virtues are like and how we can achieve them in this life), but also of their view that the virtues should express themselves in social life that seeks cooperation with others rather than domination over them.³⁴ Although the

29. Cf. *Trin.* xiii 10.

30. See *CD* ix 4 on the Stoic doctrine of passions: "However, passions happen to the soul of the sage, without damage to his calm, because of those things that the Stoics call advantages or disadvantages, even though they are unwilling to call them good or evil. For certainly, if that philosopher counted for nothing those things that he expected he would lose by being shipwrecked, such as life itself and the preservation of his body, he would not have shuddered at the danger in such a way as to be betrayed by the testimony of his pallor."

31. *CD* xix 3: "For among all goods of body or soul, virtue puts none ahead of itself. For it makes good use both of itself and of the other goods that make a human being happy."

32. *CD* xix 4: "Therefore, those who admit that these things are bad, such as the Peripatetics, and the Old Academy, whose sect Varro defends, speak more acceptably."

33. *CD* xix 4: "the virtues themselves, than which certainly nothing better and more useful is found in a human being <in our life> here"

34. *CD* xix 5 begins: "<These pagan philosophers> want the life of the sage to be social, and on this point we approve of their position more fully."

earthly peace that is the aim of philosophical virtue is far inferior to heavenly peace, it is nonetheless worth pursuing.³⁵

To connect this discussion of the philosophers with Augustine's teleological criterion for virtue, we need to know whether Augustine agrees that the philosophers are partly right in their views about non-instrumental goods, and in particular in their belief that virtue is a non-instrumental good that deserves to be chosen for its own sake. If he agrees with them on these points, he must also agree that their conception of the ultimate end is partly correct, since they take these goods to be parts of it. If, then, they act on this moral outlook, they act for the sake of a morally correct, and hence partly correct, conception of the ultimate end.

Does Augustine agree with the view of the Greek moralists that virtue is to be chosen for its own sake? In Book V he discusses the Stoic attack on Epicurus for making the virtues instruments of pleasure.³⁶ He points out that we do not reach an acceptable account of the status of virtue if we do no more than replace the Epicurean position with a view that makes virtue instrumental to the praise of other people or to one's own self-satisfaction. In expecting us to agree with his generalization of the attack on Epicurus, Augustine appeals to the conviction that virtue is to be valued for its own sake, and not simply as a means to some further end, whether pleasure or self-approval. If this is his own conviction, he agrees with the Peripatetic and Stoic moralists. Hence he must agree their aims and motives are, to this extent, correct.

We might be inclined to dispute this conclusion, however, given Augustine's denunciation of pagan virtue. He mentions that some people take a virtue to be genuine and right if it is directed towards itself and is not sought for the sake of anything else (xix 25).³⁷ But even then, in his view, these virtues are swollen and arrogant, and so must be judged vices rather than virtues. Does he mean that virtues are not to be chosen for their own sake at all, but only for God's sake?

He certainly argues that it would be a mistake to love the virtues simply for their own sake, and not at all for the sake of happiness. If it were even possible to do that, we would cease to love the virtues themselves, since we would no longer love that for the sake of which we love them.³⁸ But Augustine does not suggest that this self-defeating attitude to the virtues is bound to result from loving them for their own sake. His discussion of pagan virtue does not suggest that pagans are wrong to believe that the virtues are to be chosen for their own sake. On the contrary, he suggests that they are right

35. *CD* xix 26: "However, even this people <alienated from God> loves a kind of peace of its own that is not to be disapproved of."

36. *CD* v 20. Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* ii 69.

37. Quoted in n.3 above.

38. See *Trin.* xiii 11: "Unless perhaps the virtues, which we love in this way for the sake of happiness alone, dare to persuade us in such a way that we do not love happiness itself. If they do this, we even cease to love them, whenever we do not love that because of which alone we loved them." Cf. Aquinas, *ST* 2-2 q123 a7 obj 2; *ad* 2. (Aquinas's text differs from the Maurist text.)

about this. That is why they violate their own standards, if they turn out to value virtuous action simply for the sake of human approval.

This examination of Augustine's remarks (in *CD* xix) on pagan virtue confirms the impression that we gained from his discussion of ancient moral philosophers, that he accepts their view about the non-instrumental value of virtue. If he accepts this view, he must agree that the pagan moral philosophers have a partly correct conception of the ultimate end. In that case, it matters whether we accept the moderately strict or the extremely strict teleological criterion for virtue. If the pagan moralists are judged by the moderately strict criterion, they turn out to have both virtues and vices. If they are judged by the extremely strict criterion, they turn out to have vices and no virtues.

I suggested earlier that the moderately strict criterion is preferable to the extremely strict criterion, since we can recognize its legitimacy without any antecedent commitment to Augustine's theological and moral outlook. In that case, Augustine ought to agree that pagans who act on the moral outlook of the Greek moralists have virtues, even though they also have vices, in so far as they are arrogant.

VI. PAGAN VIRTUES AS GENUINE VIRTUES?

Does Augustine recognize that he is committed to this conclusion about pagan virtue? No passage that I know of directly explores the implications of the fact that pagan moralists take the virtues to be non-instrumental goods. What he says about pagan virtues is not precise enough to answer our questions. In a letter written a few years earlier than the *City of God* and *Against Julian*, Augustine argues that the Christian faith encourages the growth of virtues that turn us towards the city of God, and then he considers the attitude of the Christian towards the earthly city. He argues that the Romans displayed 'civil virtues' that maintained their community.³⁹ Faith adds to the civil virtues, but does not reject them. Augustine does not suggest that Christian morality turns away from these civil virtues, but that it turns these same virtues in a different direction.

In writing against Julian, Augustine suggests that the Romans who dis-

39. *Epp.* 138.17 (written in 412): "so that, as long as we are exiled from there <sc. the heavenly city>, we may bear with those, if we cannot correct them, who, with vices unpunished, want the preservation of the commonwealth that the first Romans established and increased by their virtues; though they did not have true piety towards the true God, which was able to lead them to the eternal city by saving religion, even so they maintained an uprightness proper to them, which was able to suffice for the establishing, increasing, and maintaining of the earthly city. For in this way God showed, in the Roman empire of such great wealth and fame, the power of civil virtues, even without the true religion, so that it might be understood that, with this true religion added, human beings are made citizens of another city, whose ruler is true, whose light is charity, and whose measure is eternity."

played these civil virtues really served demons or human glory.⁴⁰ This unfavorable judgment, however, does not contradict Augustine's favorable judgment in the letter. In answering Julian, Augustine emphasizes the pagan and sinful attitude of the Romans with civic virtues. But this does not require him to deny that the virtuous Romans had a morally correct conception of the end of virtue. This morally correct conception of the end does not disappear when it is combined with incorrect views of the supernatural ultimate end.

We might try to explain these passages through a simple-minded application of Augustine's distinction between action (*officium*) and end (*finis*). Perhaps Augustine means that the Romans did the right actions, but for the wrong end, and that therefore their virtue is purely behavioral. This is the conception of 'civil' or 'political' virtue that some later moralists have in mind when they claim that pagans have only civil virtue.⁴¹

This simple division fails to match the complexity of the pagan conception of virtue, as Augustine himself understands it. For once we take account of the Stoic and Peripatetic attitude to virtue, we see that Augustine himself must agree that pagans can manifest a morally correct conception of the ultimate end, as well as the right action. Hence, the virtue that can be ascribed to them cannot be purely behavioral. Since virtues are marked by the morally correct conception of the ultimate end, as well as the correct action, these pagans have virtues as well.

Augustine's views about the moral condition of pagans have to take account of St. Paul's claim that Gentiles fulfill the demands of the law because they are "a law to themselves" (*Romans* 2:14–16). Augustine offers two interpretations (*De Spiritu et Littera* 43–48). The first takes 'Gentiles' to include only Gentile Christians. The second takes 'Gentiles' to refer to pagans. In these people, we recognize that they do the right actions, and we praise them for their actions, even though we recognize that they are done for the wrong end.⁴² 'Praising them for their actions' does not seem to imply the mere recognition that they behave correctly; Augustine also seems to suggest that pagans also have some grasp of morality that goes beyond mere behav-

40. *c. Iul.* iv 26: "these people, who showed Babylonian love for the earthly homeland, and by civic virtue, not true <virtue> but similar to true <virtue>, served demons or human glory—Fabricii, Reguli, Fabii, Scipiones, Camilli, and the others of the same sort."

41. Lottin *Etudes de morale*, 77, 83–88. The Augsburg Confession (Art. 18) speaks of 'civilis iustitia', citing pseudo-Augustine.

42. "some of <their> actions—though they are those of impious people who do not truly and justly worship the true God—we not only cannot blame, but even deservedly and correctly praise, since they have been done, so far as we read or know or hear, according to the rule of justice; though if we discuss with what end these actions are done, we scarcely find any that deserve the praise and defense appropriate to justice. Still, since God's image has not been so completely erased in the human soul by the stain of earthly affections, as to have left remaining there not even the merest outlines, from which it can justly be said that even in this very impiety of life it certainly does or understands some things belonging to the law. . . ." (*Spir. et Lit.* 48).

ioral conformity. He confirms this suggestion in his approval of the love that human beings can manifest to one another in the relations of families, friends, and fellow-citizens. He approves not only of correct behavior to others, but also of its underlying motive.⁴³

These ways in which Augustine agrees with pagan virtue make it reasonable for him to allow it a partially correct conception of the ultimate end. In his discussion of the desire for happiness in *De Trinitate* xiii, he appears to accept this conclusion. In his view, we are closer to happiness if we have the right aims and find them frustrated than if we have the wrong aims and fulfill them. Someone who aims at living according to the virtues for their own sake has one important element in happiness, since having the right aims is itself a part of happiness.⁴⁴ A pagan who has the moral virtues aims to live in accord with them, and has the morally correct conception of the ultimate end. To this extent, therefore, someone with the pagan virtues has genuine virtues.⁴⁵

VII. AQUINAS ON PAGAN VIRTUES

This discussion of Augustine's views on the pagan moralists suggests that the division he uses—in controversy with Julian and elsewhere—between the right action and the right end is too simple. He needs to say that the pagan virtues embody a conception of the end that is morally correct—because the elements of happiness that it recognizes are genuine elements of it—but also incorrect—since it fails to recognize other genuine elements of happiness.

If Augustine must recognize these virtuous aspects of the pagan virtues as well as the sinful aspects that result from pagan ignorance of the true

43. *Sermons* 349.2: "Have lawful charity therefore. It is human, but, as I said, lawful. Moreover, it is not lawful only in such a way that it is allowed, but lawful in such a way that if it lacking, <the lack> is blamed. Let it be lawful for you to love your spouses, love your sons, to love your friends, to love your fellow citizens with human charity." This passage is discussed by Wang, *Vertus*, p. 47. Pius VI quotes this passage and *Spir. et Lit.* 48, in his condemnation of the Synod of Pistoia; Denz. §2624, also discussed by Wang.

44. *Trin.* xiii 9: "And someone already has one good, and a considerable good, namely that very good will itself, if he desires to rejoice in the goods that human nature is capable of, and not in any bad action or acquisition, and pursues such goods as can be present even in this wretched life with a prudent, temperate, brave, and just, mind, and achieves them as far as he is able. . . ."

45. My discussion of pagan virtues is indebted to Wang's discussion (*Vertus*, pp. 45–57) of the 'vertus décevantes'. I doubt, however, whether he is right to explain them as belonging to a will that aims at particular good ends, without directing them to any ultimate end. I doubt whether this explanation fits Augustine's eudaemonism; nor does Wang cite any specific evidence to show that Augustine recognizes the possibility of aiming at particular goods without an ultimate good. (The passage I cited from *Trin.* xiii 11 (in n. 38 above) suggests that he denies any such possibility.)

character of the good, he ought to explain, or qualify, or supplement his claim that pagan virtues are really vices. It is consistent to claim that pagan virtues are virtues and that they are vices; some features of them make them virtues and other features make them vices. The two claims are consistent because virtues are good states or conditions or actualizations of some capacity or tendency; pagan virtues are good states of one capacity, but bad states of another.

A suitable conception of pagan virtues appears in Aquinas's comparison of the acquired with the infused virtues. When Aquinas asks whether it is possible to have virtues without the theological virtue of charity, he refers specifically to Augustine's attack on pagan virtue (*ST* 1–2 q63 a2; q65 a2; 2–2 q23 a7; *De Virt. in Comm.* a9). He concludes that we can acquire genuine virtues without theological virtues, although they are imperfect virtues; they rest on a conception of happiness that is correct as far as it goes, though it is a conception only of imperfect happiness (*ST* 1–2 q5 a5).

According to this argument, Augustine's teleological criterion is correct, if it is understood as the moderately strict criterion. In deciding whether a pagan has the morally correct conception of the ultimate end, we need to distinguish the different ends that are relevant to the virtues. In Aquinas's view, the acquired moral virtues aim at an end that pagans are capable of aiming at; if pagans do the appropriate actions, and do them for the sake of this end, they have genuine virtues. The absence of the higher end does not imply the absence of the lower, and hence it does not imply the absence of the goodness appropriate to the lower end.⁴⁶

Aquinas's division of virtues and ends supports, and also restricts, Augustine's claim that actions lacking charity are sinful because they lack charity.⁴⁷ Aquinas adds that this is not the only aspect of such actions that deserves moral evaluation; they should also be evaluated with reference to their more immediate ends.⁴⁸ Actions of agents who lack the infused virtue of

46. *2 Sent* d41 a2: "Hence, although this goodness, in accordance with which an action is called meritorious, is removed from the actions of unbelievers, nonetheless there remains another sort of goodness or civil virtue, either from the circumstance or from the kind. And therefore it is not necessary that every action of theirs is bad, but only that it has a goodness that falls short; just as, though a horse falls short of the rationality that a human being has, it is not therefore bad, but it has goodness that falls short of the goodness of a human being."

47. Augustine, *c. Iul.* iv 3.

48. In *4 Sent* d39 q1 a2 *ad* 4–5, Aquinas replies to objections derived from Augustine and from the Gloss on *Rom.* 14:23. *ad* 4: "Modesty and other virtues of unbelievers are said not to be real virtues because they cannot reach the end of real virtue, which is real happiness, just as something is not said to be real wine if it does not have the effect of wine. [*ad* 5]: An unbeliever having intercourse with his wife does not sin, if he does it for the good of offspring, or renders what is due to the fidelity by which he is bound to his wife, since this is an act of justice and temperance, which observes the due circumstances in pleasures of touch; just as he does not sin in doing other actions of civil virtues. Nor is it said that all the life of unbelievers is sin because they sin in every action whatever, but because they cannot be freed from the slavery of sin through their action."

charity may nonetheless proceed from an acquired virtue; if they accord with the acquired virtues, their goodness is limited, but genuine.⁴⁹ In this respect, they do not sin,⁵⁰ and their action does not constitute demerit before God.⁵¹

In focusing on two aspects of the virtuous actions of a virtuous pagan, Aquinas clarifies a point that Augustine leaves obscure. If the agent does not believe in God, he does not love God for God's sake, does not acknowledge his dependence on God, and so on. But these errors do not remove the goodness of his actions or of his character. The presence of the motive appropriate to the relevant virtue (together with the appropriate action) implies the presence of the virtue. Pagan virtues are genuine virtues because they aim at some particular praiseworthy end.⁵²

Aquinas's attempt to distinguish perfect from imperfect happiness, and to connect two distinct kinds of virtue with these two types of happiness, has no explicit parallel in Augustine. But I have tried to show that it clarifies an aspect of pagan virtue that Augustine implicitly recognizes, since Augustine also recognizes that pagan virtues identify some genuine elements of happiness.

Some critics claim that, contrary to what I have suggested, Aquinas's position is irreconcilable with Augustine's, and that, from Augustine's perspective, Aquinas fails to show that pagans can have genuine virtues.⁵³ Michael Baius objects that the mere fact that a pagan aims at genuine goods

49. "There can be another act of someone lacking charity, not in so far as he lacks charity, but in so far as he has some other gift of God, either faith or hope, or, indeed, some good of nature, which is not entirely removed through sin, as has been said above. And in this way there can be without charity an act that is good in its kind, but not perfectly good, because it lacks the necessary direction towards the ultimate end" (*ST* 2-2 q23 a7 ad1). "As has been said above" refers to 2-2 q10 a4; cf. 1-2 q85 a2.

50. *In Rom.* 14:23 (no. 1141): "But in an unbeliever there is a good of nature together with unbelief. And therefore, when an unbeliever does something good on the instruction of reason, not by referring it to a bad end, he does not sin."

51. *De Malo* q2 a5 ad 7: "Hence someone who, not having charity, honors his parents, does not merit eternal life, but does not incur demerit either."

52. "If, however, we take virtue in so far as it is directed towards some particular end, in this way some virtue can be spoken of without charity, to the extent that it is directed to some particular good. But if this particular good is not a true, but an apparent good, the virtue that is directed to this good, will also not be a true virtue, but a false likeness of a virtue. . . . If, however, this particular good is a true good, for instance the preservation of the state, or the like, it will indeed be a true virtue, but an imperfect virtue, unless it is referred to the final and perfect good. And according to this, a true virtue simpliciter cannot be without charity." (*ST* 2-2 q23 a7). I have omitted the passage in which Aquinas quotes from *c. Iul.* iv 19, quoted above, n. 19.

53. See Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, p. 27:

Aquinas argued that only supernatural virtues are virtues simpliciter, that these virtues alone direct one to the ultimate end, that they alone are perfect virtues. To that extent he followed Augustine's teachings. Yet he broke with Augustine in arguing that the natural virtues are true virtues even in the absence of charity and other supernatural virtues.

that could be referred to the right end does not show that he is virtuous; if he does not serve God, he is acting for the wrong ultimate end, and hence is vicious rather than virtuous. According to this argument, Aquinas does not explain Augustine's position, but rejects it.⁵⁴

Baius's objection would be plausible, if Aquinas claimed that pagans are virtuous simply because they aim at some particular good end. Augustine's example of the miser shows that this is too weak a criterion for a virtue; for the miser aims at a good immediate end not for its own sake, but purely instrumentally, on the basis of a morally incorrect conception of the ultimate end. If the good end is simply instrumental to the ultimate end, as understood through his morally incorrect conception, it does not suffice for a virtue.

This objection is less effective against Aquinas's claim that pagan virtues aim at a partly correct, though incomplete, conception of the ultimate end. This is what Aquinas has in mind when he speaks of imperfect happiness (*ST* 1-2 q5 a5).⁵⁵ Imperfect happiness is not simply a particular good; someone who aims at it, and correctly (though incompletely) grasps the character of happiness, is not like Augustine's miser, but acts on the basis of a correct (within limits) conception of the ultimate end.

Baius does not take account of this aspect of Aquinas's position. But even if he took account of it, he might argue that it makes no difference; for he might rely on the extremely strict teleological criterion, and argue that pagans who are wrong about the ultimate end have no virtue at all. We have argued, however, that the extremely strict criterion is unreasonable, and that Augustine himself does not commit himself to it.

Aquinas and Baius express opposite attitudes to the relation between one's conception of the ultimate end and one's moral virtues. According to Baius, following the extremely strict teleological criterion, one's conception of the ultimate end is fundamental. If we think of the ultimate end as a foundation, it is reasonable to suppose that effects of error about it will be

54. "St. Thomas . . . thinks they are virtues because they are referred to some particular genuine good, which can be referred to the universal good, even if these states are found in those who are ignorant of the one true God because of blindness, or who despise him because of arrogance. However, these are clearly similar to the one of whom the Psalmist says: 'The fool has said in his heart, There is no God'. Here one must especially wonder how St. Thomas thought this possible reference of a proximate end to the universal good could be enough to constitute a virtue, given that the same possible reference belongs also to that particular good that the impious seek above the universal good and in explicit contempt of it. . . . A human being is made, and is required, to love God with all his might and to serve him alone; now anyone who lives in accord with virtue does what he is required to and what he is made for; therefore, anyone who does not serve God and seeks to do the duties belonging to the virtues not because of something else but for their own sakes, does not live in accord with virtue" (*Virt. Imp.* 4 = *Opera*, p. 65). The omitted passage includes a quotation from *c. Iul.* iv 3.

55. See *ST* 1-2 q65 a2: "Moral virtues, in so far as they work good as directed to an end that does not exceed the natural capacity of a human being, can be acquired through human works. And acquired in that way, they can be without charity, even as they were in many of the Gentiles." Cf. q63 a2.

pervasive. If the foundation of a tower leans, and everything on top of the foundation is built correctly on it, the result will be a leaning tower, and the excellence of the superstructure will not make any part of the tower straight. Similarly, if pagans are wrong about the ultimate end, they set out in the wrong direction, and so cannot have any virtues.

Aquinas's conception of pagan virtue reverses the relation of foundation and superstructure. We may build a leaning tower if we begin with a straight foundation, and add a leaning superstructure. Aquinas's view of pagan virtues treats pursuit of the proper end of charity as a superstructure built on a base consisting of the acquired virtues. Hence, he answers the question whether every action of an unbeliever is sin by claiming that failure to pursue the right ultimate end does not deprive unbelievers of all correct direction of their will.⁵⁶

Baius rejects Aquinas's superstructural view of the supernatural end, and claims that it must have a fundamental place. In arguing this way, he fails to recognize the extent of Augustine's agreement with pagan conceptions of virtue; therefore, he fails to see that Augustine himself is committed to attributing some sort of virtue to pagans. The observation that the pagan does the right action for the wrong end is correct, but one-sided; a true judgment must take account of the further fact that he also does the right action on the basis of the morally correct conception of the ultimate end. Augustine implicitly recognizes this further fact. Aquinas takes account of it in his description of pagan virtue. It is therefore Aquinas, rather than Baius, who does justice to Augustine's position as a whole. It is a mistake to suppose that Aquinas's account conflicts with Augustine's position.⁵⁷

VIII. PAGAN ARROGANCE

One might reasonably object, however, that the argument I have offered for attributing Aquinas's solution to Augustine is inadequate. For—one might

56. *ST*2-2 q10 a4 ad 2: "Faith directs one's aim in relation to the supernatural last end: but even the light of natural reason can direct one's aim in relation to a connatural good. [*ad* 3] Unbelief does not so wholly ruin natural reason in unbelievers that it prevents some cognition of the truth from remaining in them, through which they are able to do some work that is good in its kind."

57. Although I believe these comparisons between Augustine and Aquinas are legitimate, they are over-simplified. In particular, I have not attached significance, for present purposes, to the difference between (a) an incomplete conception of the ultimate end, and (b) a correct conception of the imperfect ultimate end. I am inclined to suppose (against Lottin) that Aquinas's comments in different places do not express different views of pagan virtues, but I am not sure. Further issues are explored by D. J. M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1997), Chap. 8; and B. J. Shanley, "Aquinas on pagan virtue," *Thomist* 63 (1999): 553-77 (esp. p. 563, which draws a sharper contrast than I would want to draw between Augustine and Aquinas).

argue—this solution works only if the pagan conception makes an error of omission rather than commission. Aquinas implies that the pagans are wrong because their conception of the ultimate end omits an appropriate reference to the true God. But Augustine has in mind an error of commission as well as omission. He charges that pagan virtue not only lacks the right conception of the end, but also includes a mistaken conception of the end, because it expresses arrogance (*superbia*).

In Augustine's view, "no one without true piety, that is, without the true worship of God, can have true virtue, and it is not true virtue when it serves human glory" (*CD* v 19). He suggests that those who advocate the choice of virtue for its own sake without reference to God really choose it for the sake of human glory, because they choose it for the sake of their own self-approval. In doing this they display arrogance. Two mistakes are characteristic of the arrogant person: (1) He attributes to himself what in fact he achieves only in dependence on God. (2) He fails to recognize the shortcomings in his own achievements (v 19). This is why Augustine believes we would be arrogant if we were to claim to be free of passions in this life (xiv 9).

The same arrogance that produced the sin of Adam and Eve against God encourages us to believe in our own unaided success; that is why arrogance is the beginning of all sin (xiv 13). Lifting up one's heart to oneself rather than to God is the sort of arrogance that eventually abases us, since it turns us away from God (xiv 13). In turning toward God, we recognize that we are subject to sin and conflict in this present life, but that we can call on the help of God to reduce the power of misguided desires and aims (xxii 23).

It is useful, though over-simplified, to distinguish arrogance toward God from arrogance toward other human beings. Arrogance toward God causes us to deny our dependence on God, and so to exaggerate our own importance and our own achievements. Arrogance toward other people causes us to compete with them, to care more about our own interests than about theirs, and to compare ourselves favorably with them without justification. Neither Romulus nor Remus could tolerate anything less than domination over the other. Cain envied Abel's goodness, but Abel did not envy Cain, and did not seek domination over Cain (xv 5). Arrogance "perversely imitates God. For it hates equality with one's fellows under God, but it wants to impose on one's fellows one's own domination in place of God" (xix 12).

In this passage, Augustine argues that arrogance toward God results in arrogance toward other human beings. Arrogance toward God, as he conceives it, is not a purely theological error; it has moral consequences for one's relations with other people. Nonetheless, the two aspects of arrogance need to be distinguished. For, even if all those who refuse to acknowledge their dependence on God are arrogant, they may be arrogant to different degrees, and some moral outlooks may encourage arrogance toward other people more than other outlooks encourage it. If our moral outlook encourages us to compete against other people, and to pursue our own interests at their expense, and if it also encourages us to praise and esteem

the winners in such competitions, Augustine is right to charge that the (alleged) virtues recognized by such a moral outlook are themselves both effects and causes of arrogance.

Some pagan conceptions of virtue might well be open to such objections. One might plausibly argue that, for instance, the Homeric conception of the virtues encourages the attitudes that Augustine attributes to Romulus, Remus, and Cain. But these objections do not fit the Aristotelian and Stoic conceptions of virtue. If those who accept these conceptions of virtue are arrogant, that is the fault of their arrogance, not of these conceptions of virtue. Augustine takes it to be a mark of virtuous people that they are pleased, and not disappointed, by the presence of goodness in others as well as in themselves.⁵⁸ Aristotle expects this outlook in the virtuous person, who does not regard virtue as a good to fight over, and gives his friend the opportunity to do fine actions instead of trying to do them himself (*EN* 1169a6–11, 31–34). Augustine has no quarrel with him on this point.

If, then, pagans actually acquire the states of character that Aristotle and the Stoics count as virtues, they will not be more arrogant toward other people than they would otherwise have been. On the contrary, they will have acquired the non-competitive attitude that Augustine opposes to the arrogant person's desire for domination over others. This is one aspect of the virtuous person's attitude to virtue and virtuous action; he pursues these for their own sake, and he does not subordinate them to his own desire for recognition by others or by himself.

Augustine, therefore, has no good reason to maintain that the pagan virtues, as opposed to other aspects of the pagan outlook, are a special source or manifestation of arrogance. No arrogance is implied in the pursuit of the virtues recognized by pagan moralists, or in action from the motives that they teach us to value. In particular, these virtues do not teach us to make human glory a dominant, or even prominent, part of our conception of the ultimate end of our actions.

To say this is not to reject Augustine's charge that pagans manifest arrogance in their virtuous actions. That charge is entirely justified, if we manifest arrogance by failure to acknowledge the specific forms of dependence on God that Augustine describes. Since this sort of arrogance is pervasive in the life of pagans, it will be manifested in their virtuous actions as in all others; they cannot appeal to their virtuous actions to show that they are not guilty of this sort of arrogance. Since virtuous actions and states of character are our achievements, pagans will think of them in the arrogant way in which they think of all their achievements.

Augustine's arguments, therefore, do not support the view that the pagan virtues are really vices. Although they are virtues of arrogant people,

58. xv 5: "Indeed, someone who refuses to have this possession in common will not have it at all, and he will find that he possesses a fuller measure of it the more fully he is able to love the one who shares it with him."

they do not themselves aim at the distinctive ends of arrogant people; they aim at praiseworthy ends that are equally appropriate ends for anyone who lacks arrogance. The connection between arrogance and pagan virtues does not imply that pagan virtues themselves are special manifestations of arrogance.

Perhaps I can summarize these comments on Augustine's objections to pagan virtues by distinguishing the fact that they are pagan from the fact that they are virtues. From Augustine's theological point of view, pagans are indeed open to objection for being pagan, since they lack the relevant beliefs about grace and sin. But they are not open to objection for their realization or partial realization of the pagan conceptions of the virtues.

For this reason, we can recognize and accept Augustine's views about the nature and extent of arrogance in the pagan outlook without retracting our previous claim that Aquinas's account of pagan virtue does justice to Augustine's position. When we take proper account of the effects of arrogance in the pagan outlook, we must still agree that the pagan virtues embody a partly correct conception of the ultimate end of human life.

IX. CONCLUSION

It would be one-sided to endorse Aquinas's interpretation of Augustine without acknowledging that the extreme Augustinian position of Baius is genuinely Augustinian, in so far as it develops lines of thought that are present in Augustine himself. Moreover, Baius's position has the advantage of not attributing to him distinctions that Augustine does not recognize himself. The moderate interpretation favored by Aquinas introduces a division between two types of virtue that is absent from Augustine himself; one must argue for this distinction by showing that Augustine needs it in the light of what he says elsewhere, since one cannot argue that he sees he needs it.

Nonetheless, Aquinas's interpretation is preferable because it acknowledges the fact that Augustine's remarks do not require the position maintained by Baius and by Bayle. They allow the Tridentine view that not every aspect of all 'works before justification' is truly sinful, and they also allow the view of the English Articles that 'forasmuch' as these works are the works of pagans, they have the nature of sin, and cannot even deserve grace by congruity.⁵⁹ The Council of Trent and the Articles mention the two

59. See the passages quoted in n.7 above. In Article 13 "forasmuch . . ." corresponds to "cum non ex fide Iesu Christi prodeant," and to "cum non sint facta ut Deus illa fieri voluit et praecepit" in the Latin version. "Have the nature of sin" corresponds to 'peccati rationem habere,' which one might be more inclined to render "have the character of sin." My remark about the relation between Trent and this Article is imprecise. For even though the Article is entitled "Of works before justification," it is actually about works "before the grace of Christ," which are not the same.

aspects of pagan virtue that Aquinas distinguishes clearly; he also agrees with the Articles that works before justification do not deserve grace even by congruity.⁶⁰ It would be a mistake to enlist Augustine on the side of Baius and Bayle.

Once we understand why Augustine reasonably (given his theological outlook) takes pagan virtues to fall short of true virtue, we should also see why he must regard them as something more than splendid vices. If they are combined with arrogance, they are vicious; but they are not themselves part of the arrogance or vice.

60. See *ST* 1-2 q109 a6, q114 a5.