

What Does the Happy Life Require?

Augustine on What the *Summum Bonum* Includes

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1. Introduction

Many critics of religion insist that believing in a future life makes us less able to value our present activities and distracts us from accomplishing good in this world.¹ Augustine is a frequent target, given his insistence that this life is a vale of tears, where we must wait in hope for a better life, while only loving things insofar as they relate to God. Martha Nussbaum insists that “Augustinian love is committed to denying the importance of worldly losses and injustices.”² She claims that an orientation towards God and towards a future life leads one to neglect the importance of justice and charity in this life. “Death is irrelevant, real suffering in this world is irrelevant, all that is relevant is coming into God’s presence.”³ Instead of looking to the next life, we should be “directing compassion altogether toward the theater of history and not at all toward the shadowy and uncertain realm that may or may not lie outside it.”⁴ Augustine’s focus on connection to God leaves him without a strong foundation for caring “when people are hungry, when they mourn, when they are persecuted.”⁵

In this paper, I show that Nussbaum has things backwards. It is while Augustine is trying to achieve happiness in this life that he denies “the importance of worldly losses and injustices,” treats suffering as “irrelevant,” and focuses on cultivating his own divine contemplation, neglecting the material world. His attitudes change once he comes to believe that true happiness can only

¹ For example, Zarathustra speaks of the “soporific virtues” that religion engenders, passively waiting for a future life: “blessed are the sleepy ones because they will soon drop off.” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Part 1, “On the Virtuous,” Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954 (1883–5)).)

² Martha C. Nussbaum. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 552.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 553.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 552.

be achieved in the next life. In fact, this belief is what enables Augustine to compassionately engage with present suffering and allows him to see material and social goods as part of the *summum bonum*.⁶

The future life plays two key roles in Augustine's ethics. Looking to a future life allows Augustine to affirm the value of compassion (*misericordia*) in this life. As long as Augustine thinks happiness is attainable in this life, he insists that we should aim to avoid any negative emotions. By postponing complete happiness to the next life, Augustine can continue to agree with the Stoics and other ancient philosophers that the blessed life must be tranquil, while taking a very different position on what a good human life in our present condition looks like. We should experience sorrow and fear, for ourselves and others, when such emotions help them to better direct their steps. Christians mourn with those who mourn and seek to relieve their distress, looking forward to a future state in which there will be no tears.

Secondly, the hope of a perfect future life enables Augustine to develop an inclusive and expansive view of which goods we should seek as part of our happiness. The early Augustine denies that the state of our bodies or the well-being of our friends and loved ones do not affect our happiness. While the mature Augustine continues to hold that happiness is centered on enjoying God, he now insists that we should also take the well-being of our minds and bodies and our friendships with others to be part of our blessedness. For Augustine, the awaited triumph of the whole city of God allows us to expand our circle of care outwards to love all humans and seek

⁶ Translations throughout are mine unless noted. Throughout this paper, my analysis uses both "happiness" and "blessedness" to speak of the highest good which Augustine thinks all rational beings desire. "Happiness" picks up on Augustine's insistence that everyone is seeking *beatitudo* and that we cannot fail to will it. However, as many have noted, *beatitudo* (the word Augustine uses as the Latin equivalent of *eudaimonia*) refers primarily to the overall status of one's life, not to a momentary feeling or psychological state, and so has similarities with contemporary notions of well-being. "Blessedness" picks up on this, as well as on the idea that the good life should be secure and untroubled. In translating Augustine, I consistently render *beatus* and *beatitudo* as "blessed" and "blessedness" and *felix* and *felicitas* as "happy" and "happiness." As we shall see, Augustine usually equates *beatitudo* with the *summum bonum* and takes it to involve not just delighting in the good, but securely possessing it (*De Civitate Dei* [*civ. Dei*], XI 13; cf. *civ. Dei* XIX 3-4), whereas *felicitas* requires only that one be enjoying good things, even if one's state is not secure (e.g. Adam and Eve before the fall: *civ. Dei* XIV 10).

a common happiness with all who share our nature. Christians look forward to the entire city of God living together in perfect peace and everlasting love.

2. Augustine's Conditions for True Happiness

From *De Beata Vita*, his first extant work, through to the end of his writings, Augustine's inquiries are driven by his search for the blessed life. As Étienne Gilson puts it "Augustine desires truth for the sake of happiness."⁷ For Augustine, pursuit of intellectual questions should never be idle or disconnected from life, it should always be tied to our desires for fulfillment. Augustine returns again and again to the question of what the ultimate good, the *summum bonum*, is and how to obtain it. To see why he initially takes a more restrictive view of happiness, we need to start with the conditions Augustine thinks the blessed life must meet.

Throughout his writings, he consistently insists that to be blessed one must meet two key conditions, both of which are inspired by the Stoics.⁸ We see the first condition come out in an early definition of happiness:

What else is it to live blessedly but to possess an eternal object through knowing it [*aliquid cognoscendo habere*]? For the eternal is that in which alone one can rightly place his confidence, it is *that which cannot be taken away from the one who loves it* [*amanti auferri non potest*], and it is that very thing which one possess solely by knowing it.⁹

Augustine here emphasizes the security of the object enjoyed. Unlike wealth or a delicious meal, the eternal object of knowledge is not liable to be taken away against one's will. The one who truly loves the eternal must also truly know it, in order to love it. Since knowledge and love always go together, you cannot truly love the eternal without also knowing it and thus possessing it. There

⁷ *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (New York: Random House, 1960), 5. Cf. Robert O'Connell, *Augustine's Early Theory of Man, A.D. 386-391* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1968), 205: "if there is one constant running through all of Augustine's thinking, not only in [his] early period but throughout his career, it is his preoccupation with the question of happiness."

⁸ For further discussion of the ancient philosophical background to Augustine's views on happiness see Holte 1962.

⁹ *de diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, q. 35.

is no risk of disappointment or loss in loving something eternal, as it does not change. It will always be accessible and it will always be worth loving. Augustine's reasoning here is based around what I will call his **Security Condition**:

We only properly count as *beati* when we possess and enjoy the *summum bonum* in such a way that we cannot lose it unwillingly.

If, against our will, we can lose a good we are enjoying, then this possibility of loss either directly ruins our enjoyment or makes our state less than optimal. Hence we will be experiencing something less than the *summum bonum*.¹⁰ As we will see, the need for security motivates both the Stoics and the early Augustine to exclude bodily and social goods from the *summum bonum*.

Despite Augustine's framing of security in relation to an eternal object, ancient philosophers endorsed this condition without holding that the supreme good is God or that we can live forever. Indeed, Augustine is following the Stoics' insistence that a truly happy life requires securely enjoying the things in which your good consists:

Who is able to be blessed [*beatus*] when he is unsure of the good things he has?...Who will be able to be assured of either strength of body or stability of fortune? But no one is able to be blessed unless his good is stable, fixed, and enduring [*stabili et fixo et permanente*].¹¹

For the Stoics, only virtue cannot be taken away from you against your will, so only virtue is good and all the virtuous are happy. The **Security Condition** also explains why Augustine agrees with the Stoics in thinking that tranquility is required for blessedness. If we possess goods in such a way that they cannot be taken away from us unwillingly, we will not worry about losing them and so we will not experience fear.¹² By contrast, if we enjoy having certain goods but do not stably possess them, we will fear losing them. This negative emotion will then impair our current enjoyment and our happiness. Lack of security undermines our experience of good things.

¹⁰ cf. *civ. Dei* XI.13; XIV.25; XIX.10; *De Trinitate (trin.)*, XIII 5-6.

¹¹ Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* V 13.40-14.40.

¹² *Metus*, translating the Stoic *phobos*. *De Libero Arbitrio (lib. arb.)*, I 4-5, 11-12; *civ. Dei* XIV.8; cf. *civ. Dei* XI.13; XIV.25; XIX.10; *De Trinitate (trin.)*, XIII 5-6.

We also need to have all the goods that we desire. Following Cicero, whom he consistently refers to throughout his career, Augustine insists that “someone is only blessed if he has everything which he wills and wills nothing wrongly [*habet omnia quae vult, et nihil vult male*].”¹³ I will call this Augustine’s **Complete Satisfaction Condition**:

***beatitudo* both requires and consists in having all that one wills.**

For Augustine, blessedness requires having all that we desire. If we fail to obtain something that we will, we are not truly blessed. If I love something and take that thing to be necessary to my good but have not obtained it, I cannot yet count as happy. The *summum bonum* must be sufficient on its own to make my life worth choosing and lacking nothing.¹⁴ I cannot have achieved the *summum bonum* if, by my own lights, I am lacking some important part of my good.¹⁵ As in the case of the **Security Condition**, meeting this condition leads to tranquility. If I am completely satisfied, I will be experiencing the positive feeling of joy or contentment.¹⁶ I will, of course, not have any unmet desire for future goods to pain me and I will not be experiencing pain or sorrow about goods I currently lack or evils that are present.¹⁷ The **Complete Satisfaction Condition** guarantees psychological well-being.¹⁸

Augustine consistently takes these two conditions to be jointly necessary and sufficient for achieving happiness. People who meet both conditions will enjoy the *summum bonum* in undisturbed peace. Since they meet the **Complete Satisfaction Condition**, they will delight in what they have without any unfulfilled desires or any pain or sorrow. Since they meet the **Security Condition**, they will not fear losing what they love.

¹³ *trin.* XIII 5.8; cf. *de Beata Vita (b. vita)* 4.25; for discussion of this definition in Cicero see Alberto Grilli (ed., intro. and commentary). *Marco Tullio Cicerone, Ortensio, testo critico*, (Bologna: Patron Editore, 2010), fragm. 59, p. 66-9.

¹⁴ Cf. Aristotle, *EN* I 7, 1097b15-18.

¹⁵ Cf. *civ. Dei* XIV.25, *trin.* XIII 5-6.

¹⁶ *Gaudium*, translating the Stoic *chara*.

¹⁷ *Cupiditas*, translating the Stoic *epithumia*, and *tristitia*, translating the Stoic *lupē*.

¹⁸ *civ. Dei* XIX 8; cf. A.A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), fragments 65A-E.

While Augustine's conditions are inspired by the Stoics he parts ways with them from the beginning when it comes to the question of how to achieve the ultimate good. He follows Platonists such as Plotinus in his contemplative understanding of virtue.¹⁹ Instead of the Stoic conception of attaining blessedness through making excellent choices about our external actions, Augustine, throughout his writings, holds that happiness should be pursued through directing our understanding and our love upwards. Augustine consistently holds that happiness comes from the soul clinging to God. God is to be enjoyed, *frui*, and other rational creatures are to be enjoyed in God, *frui in Deo*.²⁰ This, however, leaves open the question of how we should value our bodies and external goods. What role, if any, do our bodies, our friendships, and the state of our society play in our happiness? It is here that Augustine radically changes his views.

3. Augustine's Initial Agreement with the Stoics

Before seeing how Augustine's thought is transformed by looking to a future life for happiness, we need to understand his early views on happiness, when he still thought it was attainable in this life. As we will see, the disconnected and solely spiritual view of happiness that Nussbaum critiques is precisely the view Augustine adopts when he thinks that happiness is possible in this life and attempts to achieve it. The early Augustine lacks feeling for the suffering of others, while it is the mature Augustine, waiting for future blessedness, who shares in their griefs and pains and seeks to relieve them.

Once Augustine converts to Christianity and abandons worldly pursuits to dedicate himself to philosophy, Augustine believes that blessedness is within his grasp.²¹ The early Augustine follows Cicero (influenced by Aristotle, among others) in suggesting that excellence for human

¹⁹ E.g. *Soliloquia* I.6.13

²⁰ *de doctrina Christiana* I.22.20-34.38; cf. *civ. Dei* XIX 13.1; *trin* IX 8.13.

²¹ In the introduction to his *b. vita*, Augustine states that if Theodore, the dedicant, helps him, "with a little effort I will come easily to that blessed life to which I assume you already hold fast." (*b. vita* 5) While we should read this claim within the context of dedicatory rhetoric, the language is still striking.

beings is found in using our best part well: “what else do you think a blessed life is, except to live in accordance with that which is the best element in the human being?...that part...may be called mind or reason.”²² This means that if we achieve wisdom and use our reason well, we also achieve blessedness. At this point in his life, Augustine agrees with the Stoics that bodily and external things cannot meet the **Security Condition**. Since they can be lost, they cannot be part of the *summum bonum*. Further, if we were to intrinsically value them, our desires would often be unfulfilled and we would fail to meet the **Complete Satisfaction Condition**. This is why the newly converted Augustine insists that changeable goods cannot contribute to happiness.

Indeed, at this point, Augustine, with the Stoics, insists that a good will is sufficient for virtue and happiness.²³ In *lib. arb.*, he argues that the life of those with a good will is praiseworthy and not to be avoided. But the wretched life is to be avoided. Since lives must be either wretched or blessed, the life of those with a good will must be blessed.²⁴ Now, like the Stoics, Augustine insists that his view is compatible with being careful about one’s body, wealth, and other externals, as this displays one’s wisdom and virtue.

[The wise person] will avoid death and pain, insofar as he is able and insofar as it is fitting to do so. If he did not avoid these things at all, he would be wretched, not because they happened to him, but because when he was able to avoid them, he willed not to [*noluit*], which is a clear indication of foolishness. In failing to avoid such things, then, he will be wretched not through enduring them, but through his foolishness.²⁵

²² *Contra Academicos* (*c. Acad.*), I 2.5; cf. *b. vita* 2.7-8; Cicero, *de Finibus* [*fin.*] 5.13.36; 14.38. Given that we either are our minds and souls, or are them most of all, it is their excellences that make us good and blessed: “If you ask for my opinion, I judge that the supreme good of a human is in the mind.” (*c. Acad.* III 12.27) The later Augustine will include more than the excellence of the mind in the human good, but will continue to take reason or mind to be superior to the body (*Retractiones* [*retr.*], 1.1.2; *civ. Dei* XII 21-3, 26; XIX 3; XX 29-30).

²³ In I 13, Augustine argues that those with a good will possess all four of the cardinal virtues, due to their love of things within their power and lack of attachment to things outside of our power.

²⁴ I 13. As Michael Frede rightly notes, Augustine operates with the “stock Stoic contrast of wisdom and folly” throughout *lib. arb.* (2011, 166) Here Augustine is also using the disjunctive view on happiness endorsed by the Stoics: our lives are either blessed or wretched, with no intermediate states. Augustine and Evodius both insist that attaining a good will provides us with joy which “calmly, quietly, and steadily bears up the soul.” (I 13.29, Trans. Williams) This joyful possession of such a will “is the blessed life. For doesn’t a blessed life consist precisely in the enjoyment of true and unshakeable goods?” (*ibid.*) Cf. John Bussanich. “Happiness, Eudaimonism.” In Allan D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine Through the Ages. An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 413-414: “Like the Stoics, [Augustine] insists that beatitude must be immune from fortune and independent of external goods.”

²⁵ *b. vita* 4.25.

If you are enduring death and pain because of poor and foolish choices, then you are wretched precisely because you made such choices. The suffering itself is not bad and is not what make you miserable. Monica observes, with Augustine's approval, that the person who has all material goods "is not blessed through the possession of these things, but through the moderation of his mind."²⁶ Using such goods well is evidence of happiness, but one's blessedness comes from the exercise of virtue, not from the externals themselves. Indeed, Augustine insists that the wise person will be happy no matter the circumstances:

If, however, he does not prevail in avoiding such happenings [i.e. death, pain, etc.], although he has attended to this carefully and appropriately, they will not make him wretched... "Since what you will cannot be, will what can." [Terence, *Andria*, II 1, 305-306] In what way will someone be wretched to whom nothing happens against his will? Because he is unable to will anything which it seems to him he cannot bring about. He sets his will on the most certain things, that is, in whatever he pursues, he pursues it only according to virtuous duty and the divine law of wisdom, and these things can in no way be taken from him.²⁷

Augustine insists that we should not love anything external. We should not unconditionally endorse desires to avoid pain, injury, and death. If you suffer such things despite acting wisely, then you remain happy, because you continue to act from duty and follow divine wisdom. This is sufficient for blessedness. True blessedness also requires tranquility, so we cannot care about externals. Worrying about what happens to us and others and experiencing sorrow and fear over circumstances would destroy the happiness at which we are aiming. The qualities of the soul are, alone, what determines our blessedness or wretchedness. Our souls maintain their perfect and self-sufficient condition through avoiding fear or anger about external states. The early Augustine closely mirrors Stoic teaching, advising us to avoid any negative emotions and to take externals as irrelevant to achieving the human good.²⁸

²⁶ *b. vita* 2.11.

²⁷ *b. vita* 4.25.

²⁸ Cf. *lib. arb.*, where Evodius claims to understand "the nature of that blameworthy cupidity that is called inordinate desire. Obviously it is the love of those things that one can lose against one's will." (I 4, trans. Williams). He

Indeed, at this point, Augustine thinks we should put no value on temporal relationships, on ties of family or earthly loves. We should only care for each other's souls:

If we are on fire with love for eternity we will hate temporal bonds [*temporales necessitudines*]. . . Whoever loves another as himself ought to love that in the other which he himself is. Our bodies are not truly what we are, so we should not place our wishes and desires in the human body.²⁹

The young Augustine insists that such an attitude is not inhuman, but the proper way to love a rational soul. Although we should use temporal things well and show concern for others, what happens to them does not affect our well-being.

[The just person] is not made sorrowful by the death of anyone. . . He is not made wretched by the wretchedness of another, any more than he is made unjust by the injustice of another. Just as no one can take from him justice and God, so no one can take from him his blessedness. If at some time he is perhaps moved with feeling by another's danger or error or grief, he lets it go so far as to help or correct or console that other, but not so far as to overthrow his own wellbeing.³⁰

Like the Stoics, the early Augustine thinks we should help others, but without truly feeling their pain.³¹

is implying, like the Stoics, that any attachment to such things would be excessive. Indeed, Evodius is quite clear that externals should not be intrinsically valued at all: we should always be willing to abandon them and even give up our life rather than injuring someone else (I.5.12). Augustine does not go quite so far as to say that these externals are never worth pursuing, but he is clear that valuing them is a distraction and that the good will is on a whole other scale of worth (I.12). Augustine's description of the person lacking a good will and ordered desires closely resembles Epictetus's description of the person who values externals:

Fear attacks from one side and desire from the other; from one side, anxiety; from the other, an empty and deceptive happiness; from one side, the agony of losing what one loved; from the other, the passion to acquire what one did not have (*lib arb* I.11, trans. Williams)

Whoever longs for things that are not within his power, or seeks to avoid them, can neither be trustworthy nor free, but must necessarily be subject to change, and be tossed in all directions along with those things, and is inevitably placing himself under the domination of other people, namely, those who can secure or prevent such things. (*Disc* I.5.19, trans. Hard)

Even the early Augustine, however, does not deny that we can call excellent states of the body or externals good. He never endorses the Stoic claim that virtue is the only good. He is already committed to the Platonic position on the convertibility of being and goodness: whatever is, is good, especially insofar as it participates in order, number, and measure. Nevertheless, calling these things good in some way is compatible with denying that they partially constitute the supreme good for humans. My clothing can be good (by fitting well, providing appropriate protection from the environment, etc.) or bad (being torn or broken, fitting poorly etc.) without its good or bad condition affecting whether my life is good or bad. Just so, states of the body, relationships, or reputation and wealth may be acknowledged as good or bad without thinking that they themselves constitute (even partially) the human good.

²⁹ *De Vera Religione* [*vera rel.*], 46.89.

³⁰ *vera rel.* 47.91.

³¹ cf. Seneca, *De Clementia*, II.5-6, Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 16.

Indeed, Augustine thinks we progress by entirely leaving temporal and perceptible things behind. At this point in his life, Augustine holds that happiness is attainable in this life through directing the mind's eye to God. In his other early works *De Ordine* (*ord.*) and *De Animae Quantitatae* (*quant.*), he sets forth a program of education and spiritual ascent that is to lead to an unshakeable wisdom. This ascent "is done rather quickly, in some cases; in others, slowly," but attaining contemplative knowledge of God is possible in this life, at least for the wise and dedicated.³² All seven steps of the ascent are activities of the soul that it can perform by itself allowing for the possibility of tranquility, through separating ourselves from the cares and worries of life.³³ When such heights are reached, "death, the flight and escape from this body in every way, which previously was dreaded, is now yearned for as the ultimate gift."³⁴ The soul, having attained its end, no longer values or cares for anything temporal.

As Robert O'Connell summarizes Augustine's early views: "Heaven can be dwelt in even now; even in the body, the soul can achieve effective disincarnation, unabating contemplation, unbroken happiness."³⁵ Augustine does affirm the resurrection of the body, but its purpose remains obscure.³⁶ In order to achieve happiness in this life, the early Augustine advocates for a disconnected and solely spiritual view of happiness. If we are to be secure and completely satisfied during our mortal lives, we cannot value anything external. We cannot wholeheartedly endorse desires about the state of our bodies or what happens to us or our friends, because such desires might fail to be satisfied, robbing us of blessedness. We must turn away from the body and emotionally withdraw from others, avoiding grief even at the death of a loved one. While

³² *quant.* 36.80

³³ *quant.* 35.79.

³⁴ *quant.* 33.76. Augustine notes that the seventh and last step is "not really a step, but a dwelling place...What shall I say are the delights, what the enjoyment of the supreme and true Good; what breath of serenity and eternity?" (*ibid.*) This is still a difficult goal, "to this knowledge few are able to arrive in this life, but no one is able to progress beyond it even after this life." (*ord.* II 9.26; *Ad quam cognitionem in hac vita pervenire pauci, ultra quam vero etiam post hanc vitam nemo progredi potest*).

³⁵ *Augustine's Early Theory of Man*, 253; cf. 270.

³⁶ *quant.* 33.76.

Augustine always holds that we should help others, at this point he insists that we must avoid being burdened by their sufferings if we are to be at peace ourselves.

4. The Mature Augustine: Happiness Includes the Body and Externals and Cannot Be Currently Achieved

Does Augustine hold onto this solely spiritual view of happiness throughout his life or does he change his mind? Some scholars insist that Augustine's overall views on happiness are fundamentally the same throughout his post-conversion life. Étienne Gilson claims that Augustine is consistent throughout his life in thinking that, "happiness is a good of the spirit, and cannot be endangered by the loss of any material good. Besides, a wise man desires only what is possible, precisely in order that he may not see his desires frustrated."³⁷ John Bussanich similarly insists that, for Augustine, "happiness in reality is a transcendent and purely spiritual state."³⁸ Gilson and Bussanich, however, fail to properly acknowledge that the views endorsed in Augustine's early works are ones that he ultimately rejects.

While Augustine does always think blessedness consists primarily in the knowledge and love of God achieved through our souls, his views on how we should value our bodies and the lives of others change radically. After Augustine reflects further on the Christian hope of the resurrection, he comes to think that what happens to our body and what happens to our friends and broader human society is crucial to our happiness. These interpreters have too exclusive a reading of the goods Augustine loves. Due to his changing views on happiness, he alters his views on how to live well in this life, putting much greater emphasis on helping others and sharing in their emotions and experiences, and insisting that tranquility and blessedness are not suitable goals in our present situation, where we should feel sorrow and fear and aim to purify ourselves.

³⁷ *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, 5; cf. 249-250.

³⁸ "Happiness," 414.

In his *Reconsiderations*, Augustine notes that his early claims about happiness were wrong:

I said that, during this life, the blessed life dwells only in the soul of a wise person regardless of the condition of his body; yet the Apostle hopes for a perfect knowledge of God, the greatest that a human can have, in the life to come [cf. *1 Cor* 13.12-13], for that alone should be called a blessed life where the incorruptible and immortal body will be subject to its spirit without any vexation or resistance.³⁹

Augustine is here making it clear that human wisdom is not enough for blessedness. First of all, true happiness requires a perfect knowledge of God, which we cannot yet have in this life. Secondly, blessedness requires an incorruptible and immortal body. Such a body cannot be harmed or damaged and is also entirely in harmony with and under the control of the spirit and of reason (which in turn is entirely subservient to God). As he puts it in one of his sermons, “The Stoic...is quite mistaken [*fallitur*]; I mean it’s simply untrue, it’s absolutely incorrect that a person who has the enjoyment of the virtue of his soul [*in fructu virtus animae eius*] is happy.”⁴⁰ Augustine no longer holds that human wisdom is enough on its own for blessedness. He is also now clearly taking a more inclusive view on what happiness consists in: it involves enjoying the good of mind and body as well as knowing God.

How and why does Augustine change his mind? There are, no doubt, several factors. Both the difficulties of achieving perfection and his developing theology of grace and its relation to our wills play a role.⁴¹ Once Augustine changes his anthropology and comes to believe that our bodies are part of what we are, he can no longer hold that the condition of our bodies is irrelevant to the human good. At the same time, as we will see, his reflections on the resurrection and the triumphant city of God offer him a way to include more within the *summum bonum* without giving up on the **Security** and **Complete Satisfaction Conditions**. His personal experience of the loss

³⁹ *retr.* I 2.2; trans. Mary Inez Bogan with modifications.

⁴⁰ *Sermo* 156.7, trans. Sarah Byers.

⁴¹ E.g. *de spiritu et littera, de Natura et Gratia*.

of his mother and many friends also deepened his understanding of the value of social goods.⁴²

His words in *vera rel.* perhaps ring true in a different way than he expected.

when we have [changeable goods] we imagine that we do not love them, but when they begin to leave us we discover what kind of person we are. We have a thing without loving it when we can let it go without grieving [*sine dolore discedit*].⁴³

Augustine is also shaped by his pastoral experience consoling and guiding Christians in the midst of the collapse of the Western half of the Roman Empire. He has to consider the plight of those raped by soldiers and determine when clergy are allowed to flee danger and when they should stay with their flock.⁴⁴ His life ends with Hippo, the town where he has served as bishop for decades, besieged by the Vandals and sheltering hundreds of defeated soldiers and refugees.⁴⁵

Instead of tracing all the contours of his thought's development, in the remainder of this paper, I lay out and examine the positions on happiness Augustine takes in his later works, especially in *civ. Dei* and *trin.* Focusing on his ultimate views will allow us to more effectively examine the effects that postponing happiness to the next life has for our present conduct. As we will see, Augustine takes the excellent condition of both our minds and bodies and our membership within a well-ordered and secure society to be part of the *summum bonum* precisely insofar as he thinks that they can be achieved securely and completely at the *eschaton*.

Does Augustine fit within the classical eudaimonist tradition or is appealing to a future life a deformation of eudaimonism? Augustine is certainly transformed by his reflections on grace, human achievement, and the Christian doctrines of the resurrection of the body and the new

⁴² In this respect, the *Confessions* are an intermediate work. He is not as detached and scornful of external goods as in the dialogues of Cassiciacum but is still confused about how our experience of sadness fits with our desire for happiness (IX.12.29-13.34) and unsure of the appropriate degree to which we should suffer with others and feel sorrow and anger at our own condition and the conditions of others (IV.7.11-12; IV.12.18).

⁴³ *vera rel.* 47.92.

⁴⁴ *civ. Dei* I 16-18; *ep.* 228.2.

⁴⁵ See Serge Lancel. *Saint Augustine* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 473-475 for discussion of the end of Augustine's life. For discussion of Augustine's advice to his correspondents and how he practically applies his order of goods see Joseph Clair, *Discerning the Good in the Letters & Sermons of Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

heavens and earth. However, Augustine also changes his position to solve some of the inherent tensions in ancient thought on eudaimonia. He comes to reject the Stoic view that external goods are irrelevant to happiness, but he is also unconvinced by the Peripatetic view that happiness comes in degrees and only requires a moderate amount of such goods.⁴⁶ Augustine is drawn to a maximalist position, on which blessedness consists in securely possessing all the goods of body, soul, and society. From this perspective, looking to the hope of a future life is the only plausible way to seek such a *summum bonum*. Augustine changes his thought on what happiness involves not because he increasingly devalues the material world but because he comes to more fully recognize its value. Hope in the blessedness of the future life enables him to acknowledge the goodness and desirability of the world around us.

5. Augustine against the Stoics on the Value of Natural Goods

In book XIX of the *City of God* Augustine critiques the attempts of the philosophers to achieve the *summum bonum* in this life. Augustine explicitly critiques the philosophers for putting the highest good in some condition of the human body or soul instead of looking to a higher reality, the supreme Good that is God.

[the city of God] will reply [to the philosophers] that life eternal is the supreme good, death eternal the supreme evil, and that to obtain the one and escape the other we must live rightly...As for those who have supposed that the supreme good and evil are to be found in this life, and have placed it either in the soul or the body, or in both...all these have, with a marvelous shallowness, sought to find their blessedness in this life and in themselves... For what flood of eloquence can suffice to detail the miseries of this life?...For when, where, how, in this life can these primary objects of nature be possessed so that they may not be assailed by unforeseen calamities?⁴⁷

Augustine's framing initially suggests that he is simply rejecting the views of the philosophers on theological grounds. On my reading, however, Augustine is using their own philosophical

⁴⁶ For discussion of the debate see Julia Annas. *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), chapters 18-21.

⁴⁷ *civ. Dei* XIX 4, trans. Marcus Dods with modifications.

principles against them. Admittedly, Augustine's initial critique in this passage is consistent with his early view that full human fulfillment requires our mind to be informed and governed by the best thing, God. This is why he always preferred the Platonists to the Stoics.⁴⁸ Just reading this, one might be tempted to Gilson's reading on which *beatitudo* is wholly a matter of our spiritual condition. Indeed, Christian Tornau claims that Augustine continues to side with Cicero and the Stoics in "denying external and bodily things all relevance for happiness...whatever is relevant for happiness is virtue."⁴⁹ But this does not make sense of Augustine's procedure in the rest of *civ. Dei* XIX. Why go on to catalogue all the ailments of the body, failures of friendship and family, and war and civil strife, if all these things are irrelevant to happiness? Such an interpretation does not explain Augustine's extended catalogue of the miseries of this life. These, after all, were the sorts of things that the Augustine of *b. vita* insisted were irrelevant to happiness.

Augustine critiques the current state of our minds, bodies, and relationships precisely because he has come to think that they are important to our blessedness. If our mental acuity, beauty, health, or friendships were irrelevant, then complaining about our deficiencies in these areas would be inappropriate, especially when addressing philosophers such as the Stoics, who insist that these are not real goods. Augustine's catalogue of miseries shows how expansive his vision of the *summum bonum* is. The mature Augustine thinks that we can have rightly ordered desires for health, friendship, and social harmony. Augustine no longer holds that we need only perfect our minds to achieve happiness.

Augustine has turned away from the Stoic view for philosophical as well as theological reasons, as we see in his use of Peripatetic dialectical arguments against them. Augustine's

⁴⁸ And why, perhaps, the Platonists largely drop out of the discussion of the philosophers in book XIX, despite his extensive engagement with them in earlier books (e.g. VIII-X, XIV).

⁴⁹ Christian Tornau. "Happiness in this Life? Augustine on the Principle that Virtue Is Self-sufficient for Happiness" in Øyvind Rabbås, Eyjólfur K. Emilsson, Hallvard Fossheim, and Miira Tuominen (eds.), *The Quest for the Good Life: Ancient Philosophers on Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 272.

discussion of the way illnesses and harms to our bodies and minds affect our happiness draws on Cicero's critique of the Stoics in his *de Finibus*. There Cicero's Piso insists that completing the human work and pursuing what is good by nature requires succeeding in obtaining the things at which one is aiming, not just, as the Stoics suggest, pursuing them:

We love ourselves and want every aspect of mind and body to be perfect. This shows that we love all these aspects on their own account, and that they are of the greatest importance in determining whether we live well.⁵⁰

The mature Augustine wholeheartedly agrees with this claim.⁵¹ Our good requires *actually possessing* full and stable excellences of both body and mind, states that we often lack and are fragile even when present.⁵² The rest of book XIX shows Augustine using the principles of the philosophers against them, pulling on tensions inherent to eudaimonism to argue that happiness cannot currently be achieved. Augustine continually appeals to the **Security** and **Complete Satisfaction Conditions**, but he now does so in order to show that our current lives cannot be truly blessed, not to restrict which things we should include in the *summum bonum*. The Stoics were right in thinking that bodily health, as well as friendships and social goods, cannot be securely achieved in this life, but they were wrong to conclude that these things are not part of the human good.

We see Augustine's explicit inclusion of externals within the sphere of goods sought for their own sake in his *ep.* 130 to Honora, where he considers which things Christians can appropriately request. Augustine tells Honora that Christians should wish and pray for mental and

⁵⁰ *fin.* 5.13.37, trans. Raphael Woolf.

⁵¹ Piso, following on this earlier passage, goes on to claim that "in fully realizing [the mind], [human nature] will attain its end, its supreme good. After all, understanding and reason are by far the outstanding elements." (*fin.* 5.14.40) He endorses the Aristotelian view that the best activity of our best part is sufficient for happiness. Augustine himself is sympathetic to this view in his own *b. vita*. However, in his *Retractiones*, he finds his earlier view insufficient insofar as it neglects the need for a transcendent connection to being itself and the divine life. "insofar as the nature of man is concerned, there is nothing better in him than mind and reason—and yet the man who wills to live blessedly should not live according to this, for then he lives as man lives although, in order to be able to attain blessedness, 'he should live as God lives [cf. 1 Peter 4:6].' To attain this, our mind should not be self-contented, but should be subject to God." (*Retractiones* 1.4.3, trans. Bogan with modifications)

⁵² *civ. Dei* XIX 4.

physical wholeness and friendship for both themselves and others. These have intrinsic value, unlike riches and earthly power, which Augustine continues to insist should only be valued as instruments:

the health and friendship of a human being are sought for their own sake, but a sufficient amount of necessary goods is generally sought not for their own sake but for the sake of the two previous things, when they are sought in a proper fashion. But this health consists of life itself and of the wholeness of mind and body [*incolumitas porro in ipsa vita, ac salute, atque integritate animi et corporis constituta est*]. Likewise, friendship should not be bounded by narrow limits, for it embraces all to whom we owe affection and love though it is inclined more eagerly toward some and more hesitantly toward others...We ought to pray that, when we have these goods, we may retain them and that, when we do not have them, we may acquire them.⁵³

Here we see Augustine including the excellences of mind and body, whose fragility he bemoans in *civ. Dei* XIX, within the scope of the intrinsic goods for which the Christian should pray. It is proper, Augustine insists, to will that you and those you love “live safely and soundly.”⁵⁴ Tornau is thus wrong to say that “Augustine fully endorses the traditional ideal of the sage’s—or the saint’s— independence from everything external and bodily.”⁵⁵ Augustine now includes our friendships and the state of our bodies within the scope of our care.

How can Augustine include these states of mind and body within the *summum bonum*, given their fragility? Augustine has not given up on the **Security** and **Complete Satisfaction Conditions**, conditions he appeals to repeatedly within *civ. Dei*.⁵⁶ He does so precisely because he is looking to a future happiness. These conditions are fragile in this life, but, Augustine insists, things will change after the resurrection of the dead. I may not have the health and mental acuity I will right now, but in the *eschaton* I will have mental and bodily perfections that I cannot lose and whose abilities satisfy all my desires. Augustine insists that external goods are included in the

⁵³ *ep.* 130.6.13, trans. Roland J. Teske with modifications.

⁵⁴ *Ep.* 130.5.11.

⁵⁵ “Happiness in This Life?,” 279.

⁵⁶ e.g. XI 12, XIX 4.

heavenly city, “where peace is entirely complete and entirely certain [*ubi pax plenissima atque certissima est*].”⁵⁷

[In that city] there will be gifts of nature [*naturae munera*], that is, those things of our nature [*naturae nostrae*] that are given by the Creator of all natures, gifts not only good, but also truly everlasting; gifts not only of the spirit, healed now by wisdom, but also truly of the body, revived by the resurrection.⁵⁸

While Augustine rejects the idea that our highest good could be found through excellences of body or soul *on their own apart from God*, he strongly affirms the inclusion of all human goods, both bodily and mental, within the ultimate human good.

As we saw when introducing the **Security Condition**, Cicero and the Stoics thought that no features of your body, relationships, or social standing could meet this condition, asking who can be “assured of either strength of body or stability of fortune?”⁵⁹ The early Augustine feels the force of this objection but also deeply loves his friends, seeking their well-being and sorrowing at their losses, even when he thinks he should not. He is torn. The mature Augustine has an answer to the Stoics. After the resurrection, our bodies can be in a state worthy of being called good, where they will comply perfectly with the soul, where they cannot be harmed, and where they do make a positive contribution to blessedness. For Augustine, it is because the goods of body and soul will ultimately meet the **Security** and **Complete Satisfaction Conditions**, that it is appropriate to will and value them. Christians should seek and pray for the goods of temporal health and friendship, looking forward to a future in which they will securely enjoy all the goods of human nature.

Another key feature of Augustine’s argumentation in *civ Dei* XIX is the idea that the supreme good must be unsurpassable. This, again, is not primarily a Christian stipulation. This characterization goes back to Aristotle’s insistence that the best good must be *teleion*, final or

⁵⁷ *civ. Dei* XIX 10.

⁵⁸ *civ. Dei* XIX 10.

⁵⁹ *Tusc. Disp.* V 14.40.

complete, and self-sufficient, *autarkēs*, with nothing further required.⁶⁰ The idea of the *summum bonum*, a highest and unsurpassable good, plays a key role in both Hellenistic and Imperial philosophy, with Epicureans, Stoics, Platonists, and others putting forward their candidates. Seneca argues strongly that happiness, precisely because it is the best good, is possessed completely or not at all. Indeed, Seneca uses this idea against the later Peripatetics and others who defended a view on which virtue was sufficient for the happy life, but external goods such as beauty, health, and wealth could make a life even happier.

if a life has the highest good it is supremely happy. Just as the highest good does not admit of an addition (for what is above the highest?) then neither does the blessed life, which cannot exist without the highest good. But if you introduce someone who is “more” blessed, then you can also introduce someone who is “much more” blessed. You will generate countless distinctions within the highest good, when on my understanding the highest good is that which has no level above it. If one person is less blessed than another, it follows that he will have a stronger desire for this life of the other person than for his own; but a blessed person prefers nothing to his own life. Either of these two propositions is unbelievable: (a) that there is something left for the blessed person to prefer to be the case than is already the case; or (b) that he does not want what is better than he is. For certainly the more prudent a person is the more he will strive towards what is best and desire to achieve it in any way possible. But how can someone be blessed if he can—indeed, should—desire something even now?⁶¹

This argument explains why the Stoics do not recognize external goods as goods. If they were goods, then they would be included in the *summum bonum*. The virtuous person would desire more of them and one virtuous person would be more blessed than another by having better health or greater riches. In *civ Dei* XIX, Augustine now reverses the argument. The fact that we do appropriately will the goods of mind and body, and social goods, the goods of friendship and peace, but cannot securely hold onto them shows that whatever wellbeing we have now can be surpassed and hence is not the *summum bonum*. Augustine agrees with the Stoics that blessedness must be complete and unsurpassable. Contra the Peripatetics, I can only be satisfied if I am lacking in nothing that would make my life better. This, though, means that we must wait

⁶⁰ *EN* I 7.

⁶¹ *Ep.* 85.20-21, trans. Brad Inwood with alterations; cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* V 8.23-9.25.

in hope for a condition in which we can enjoy all good things to the greatest extent possible, instead of trying to convince ourselves that we have already achieved the highest good.

6. Virtue and Loving Goods Now

While Augustine does come to believe that goods such as friendship, bodily health, and mental agility will be present in our *summum bonum*, is this actually grounds for desiring temporal goods now? The sort of friendships, bodily health, and mental agility that we have in this life seem to be easily lost, even against our will? Perhaps the sorts of external goods we can presently obtain are not worth valuing, even if there will be external goods worth having in the next life. To see why Augustine rejects such reasoning, we need to look at his views on virtue. Although he thinks that true virtue is unattainable in this life, there is continuity between the moral character that we develop now and our final state of virtue or vice. Further, Christians develop virtue through valuing goods as they will be valued in the *eschaton*, practicing the right ordering of their loves.

As we saw, the early Augustine had thought virtue is sufficient for happiness and sometimes spoke as though we ourselves can achieve its firm excellence.⁶² Augustine now thinks the level of virtue we can attain in this life is not stable and enjoyable enough to constitute a blessed life.⁶³ Indeed,

virtue itself, which is not among the primary objects of nature [*prima naturae*]...though it holds the highest place among human goods [*bonorum humanorum*], what is its activity in this world save to wage perpetual war with vices — not those that are outside of us, but within; not those of others, but our own.... But what is it we will to do when we seek to attain the supreme good? Surely it can only be that the flesh cease to desire against the

⁶² See fns. 21 and 23-27 for discussion and citations.

⁶³ The mature doctor of grace is convinced that virtue cannot be achieved by ourselves, but depends on God's gift. Both our acquiring this virtue or love and continuing in it is thanks to God. Both our acquisition of this virtue or love and our continuing in it is come by the grace of God (e.g. *De spiritu et littera* 3.5) Cf. Augustine's doubts about whether any righteous person, apart from Jesus himself, has lived without sin (*De Natura et Gratia* 36.42). We are not sufficient *on our own* to achieve virtue. Augustine is now firmly opposed to the insistence of the philosophers that a person cannot be wise and happy "unless he judges that all goods for him are placed in himself [*nisi omnia [bona] sibi in se posita censebit*] Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* V 14.42; cf. Plato, *Menexenus*, 247e-248. Augustine sharply criticizes the philosophers' attempts to secure happiness for themselves in *trin.* XIII 7.10; *civ. Dei* XIV 14.25, breaking sharply with the Hellenistic philosophers' emphasis on happiness as being up to us. Further, due to the role externals play in blessedness, virtue is no longer, on its own, sufficient for happiness. Instead, it is sufficient for being "blessed in hope [*spe beatus*]." (*civ. Dei* XIX 20; *trin* XIII 7.10)

spirit, and that there be no vice in us against which the spirit desires? Since, however ardently we will this, we cannot attain to it in this life, let us by God's help accomplish at least this, to preserve the soul from succumbing and yielding to the flesh that lusts against it, and to refuse our consent to carrying out sin. Far be it from us, then, to believe that while we are still engaged in this internal war, we have already found the blessedness which we seek to reach by victory. And who is there so wise that he has no conflict at all to maintain against his vices?... So long, therefore, as this weakness, this plague, this disease, is within us, how shall we dare to say that we are safe [*salvos*]? And if not safe [*salvos*], then how can we dare to claim that we are already blessed with that complete blessedness [*finali beatitudine*]?⁶⁴

The Christian's virtue falls short in two ways. First, Augustine emphasizes that the virtues possessed in this life are painful to exercise. They are struggles against sin and disordered desires. Exercising courage and prudence is hard and unpleasant work, it is not the joyful self-satisfied excellent activity of Aristotle's virtuous gentleman. Even more importantly, however, our selves are still divided. We continue to be liable to the temptation to disorder our loves. As long as that temptation remains, our virtue, which consists in the order of our loves, is not secure. No one is safe yet, as Augustine insists that all Christians need to pray for steadfastness and perseverance in avoiding sin and overcoming temptation.⁶⁵ Like bodily health or temporal friendships, even the best virtues of this life do not meet the **Security Condition**, so even the wisest and most moderate philosophers should admit that they cannot achieve the *summum bonum*. Augustine is not just giving an ad hominum critique of pagan failures. For Augustine, all Christians have remnants of sin to overcome even as they progress towards holiness.⁶⁶

This does not, however, mean that we should not value and cultivate virtue. Instead, our goal in life should be to love rightly and overcome our remaining disordered desires as far as we can. If we do this, there will be a continuity between the virtues we develop in this life and their culmination in the next life, as Augustine insists in his letter to Macedonius:

⁶⁴ *civ. Dei* XIX.4.3-4, Trans. Dodds with modifications.

⁶⁵ *ep.* 130.11.21; cf. Augustine's *De dono perseverantiae* (*persev.*).

⁶⁶ Augustine's influence led the Council of Carthage to insist in 418 that even the saints and the just in this life continue to pray for *their* sins to be forgiven, see "[The Canons of the Council of Carthage \(417 or 418\) on sin and grace.](#)" *Early Church Texts*. Retrieved June 29, 2018, Canons VI-VIII.

by the help of him by whose bounty they were given, [your virtues] will grow and become perfect so that they will without any doubt bring you to the truly blessed life, which is none other than eternal life. In it, prudence will not distinguish evil, which will not exist, from what is good, nor will courage endure troubles [*adversa*], because we will find there only what we love, not what we endure, nor will temperance bridle desire [*libido*] where we will not feel its enticements. Nor will justice aid the needy with help where we will have no one poor and needy. In that life there will be only one virtue, and it will be both virtue and the reward of virtue...There this will be complete and everlasting wisdom, and this same wisdom will also be the truly blessed life [*veraciter vita beata*]. It is, of course, the attainment of the eternal and highest good, and to cling to it for eternity is the goal that holds all our good. This might be called prudence, because it will with perfect foresight cling to the good that will not be lost. It might be called courage because it will most firmly cling to the good that will not be torn away. It might be called temperance because it will most chastely cling to the good by which it will not be corrupted. And it might be called justice because it will with full righteousness cling to the good to which it is rightly subject.⁶⁷

The virtues are developed now in the struggle against disordered desires but will be exercised in a new way after the resurrection. Their purgative and conflictual aspect will be taken away, but the ordering of loves in which they consist will be made stable, so as to secure the blessedness of the righteous.⁶⁸ To get to this stable condition, however, we must train ourselves by rightly loving things now. We should love God above all, but we also need to love bodily integrity and friendship more than merely instrumental goods such as riches and reputation. For Augustine, we use our knowledge of what is included in the *summum bonum* to direct our loves now, appreciating what is good and chosen for its own sake while avoiding attachment to what is merely useful.⁶⁹

7. The Emotions and Caring for Others' Happiness in the Good Life

Contra Nussbaum, Augustine's postponement of happiness also allows for greater emotional engagement and expands our circle of care. By acknowledging that we cannot achieve happiness in this life, Augustine finds latitude to both acknowledge brokenness and faults in himself and others and long for transformation for us all. While Augustine's criticisms of the Stoics on the emotions are well known, examining his mature views in light of his development on the

⁶⁷ *Ep.* 155 to Macedonius, 3.12, trans. Roland J. Teske with modifications; cf. *trin.* XIV 9.12.

⁶⁸ Cf. *civ. Dei* XIX 10. For more discussion of the continuity of ante and post-mortem virtue see Tornau, "Happiness in This Life?"

⁶⁹ Cf. *civ. Dei* XIX 10; *ep.* 130.6.13.

question of happiness clarifies several things. To begin with, as we have seen in section 3, Augustine did not always reject the Stoic view on emotions. He initially endorses the Stoic claim that we should not feel for others, even when helping them, and he did so precisely because this is the only way one could conceivably hold onto tranquility and remain undisturbed in the face of suffering. Augustine never rejects the claim that blessedness requires tranquility. In this respect, he is clearly within the main Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, which insisted that only someone undisturbed and at peace can be living the happy life. Augustine only affirms the value of negative emotions in this life once he comes to believe that we cannot yet achieve blessedness and so should not yet aim at tranquility.

For Augustine, virtuous people in this life feel sorrow and anger as well as joy and act based on these emotions. Their feelings are really affected by what happens to those around them.

And not only on their own account do [those who love God] experience these emotions, but also on account of those whose liberation they desire and whose loss they fear, and they sorrow if those perish and rejoice if they are liberated [*et dolent si pereunt et gaudent si liberantur*]..... very joyfully do we with the eyes of faith behold [Paul] rejoicing with those that rejoice, and weeping with those that weep [*Romans 12.15*]...because these emotions, when they are exercised appropriately, follow the guidance of right reason, who will dare to say that they are diseases or vicious passions? ...For as there was in [the Lord Himself] a true human body and a true human soul, so was there also a true human emotion [*humanus affectus*].⁷⁰

Throughout his later works, Augustine appeals to the apostle Paul's advice to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. For Augustine, the examples of the apostle and of the suffering Christ illustrate how to live virtuously in this life. Living well as a wayfarer does not consist in tranquility and aloofness, but rather a life of struggle, pain, and sorrow. Augustine acknowledges that the negative emotions we feel for ourselves and others prevent us from being

⁷⁰ *civ. Dei* XIV.9, trans. Dods with modifications.

at peace. But this is good given our role in the world. Avoiding appropriate feelings makes us inhuman, not happy:

Since we must live rightly in order to attain to a blessed life [*recta vita ducenda est, qua perveniendum sit ad beatam*], a right life has all these emotions right, a wrong life has them wrong. However, the blessed life eternal will have love and joy, not only right, but true and assured [*verum etiam certum*]; while it will have no fear and grief... those moved or bent by no emotion do not achieve true tranquility [*veram tranquillitatem*] but instead lose all humanity [*humanitatem totam*]. For something is not right, because it is harsh, nor is something healthy [*sanum*] because it lacks feeling [*stupidum*].⁷¹

Augustine has turned decisively against the Stoic strategy of avoiding negative emotions. He now sees this detached approach, which he had earlier endorsed, as a misguided attempt to manufacture a counterfeit happiness through suppressing the feelings we should feel in response to the evils of this life.⁷²

Augustine is not, however, rejecting what Nicholas Wolterstorff calls the *Stoic principle of emotional detachment*:

*in the truly estimable life there would be no negative emotions—no fear, no grief, no regret, no remorse, nothing of this sort.*⁷³

Instead, Augustine is separating the virtuous or estimable way of living in this life, which Jesus Christ and Paul embodied in their earthly journeys, from the ultimate blessed life, which does still satisfy this principle. The lives of Jesus and Paul are exemplary, but the suffering and death of Christ and the many trials and torments of Paul gain their value from the way in which they contribute to ultimate happiness, both for themselves and others. Augustine still holds that the truly blessed life is incompatible with negative emotions. Christians can sorrow and feel compassion now, because they are looking forward to a future life in which only positive emotions will be present.

⁷¹ *civ. Dei* XIV.9.

⁷² *civ. Dei* XIV 25; *trin.* XIII 7.10; see *vera rel.* 47.91, quoted in section 3, for his earlier view.

⁷³ Nicholas Wolterstorff. "Augustine's Rejection of Eudaimonism," in James Wetzel (ed.), *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 156.

These themes are developed in his letters, where Augustine urges his correspondents to extend their circle of care outwards, beyond close friends and family to the whole body of Christ. That is what living well and choosing the good looks like for human life under present sinful and broken conditions. Augustine follows the Stoics in calling for us to show concern for all of humanity. Augustine emphasizes that the commandment to love our neighbor means that we need to love all other humans.

We should, of course, judge who our neighbor is in this passage not on the basis of blood relationship but on the basis of our sharing in the community of reason [*rationis societate*], a community to which all humans belong.⁷⁴

This line of reasoning, of course, goes directly back to the Stoics. Augustine takes from them the emphasis on valuing every human and on promoting the welfare of all. Both Augustine and the Stoics make more universal claims than traditional Roman values, which restricted one's concern to either the citizens of your particular city or to Romans more generally. As Peter Brown notes of Roman giving, "the benefactors of cities gave to their 'fellow citizens' and never to the poor. Some of these citizens might well be poor, but their poverty in itself entitled them to nothing...to love the city was also to loves its citizens with 'unique affection'—and to love no one else."⁷⁵ Augustine insists that the city of God is the universal city, to which all owe their first allegiance. We should hope for all our fellow humans to become citizen of this city through loving God. This insistence on the universality of Christianity and the hope of including all the world within it is something new. Even a generation earlier, Latin Christians of the early 4th century could, Claire Sotinel says, imagine "Christianity as present in all parts of a [social] universe, but not a social universe that was entirely Christian."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *ep.* 155.4.14; cf. *ep.* 130.6.13.

⁷⁵ Peter Brown. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 68.

⁷⁶ Claire Sotinel. "La sphère profane dans l'espace urbain," in É. Rebillard and C. Sotinel (ed.), *Les frontières du profane dans l'antiquité tardive*, Collection de l'École française de Rome 428 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2010), 344 (trans. Brown). Cf. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 34: "[Christians in the earlier age of Constantine]

Augustine shares the Stoics' universal concern for rational creatures, but he goes beyond the Stoics in not just acting for the benefit of others but in sharing their feelings, both positive and negative. For the Stoics, we should benefit others, but without sharing in their emotions and without regarding their conditions as intrinsically good or bad. My global concern only affects which actions to pursue and how to promote things that are in themselves indifferent. While Augustine draws on the Stoics' cosmopolitan ideals and their expanding circles of concern, his views on the future life allow him to care about and be emotionally affected by what happens to others now.⁷⁷

For the Stoics, my blessedness is unaffected by what happens to my friends, family, or the rest of the cosmos. The excellence of the ruling part of my mind is the one and only thing that matters for *my* happiness. Thinking otherwise ruins our life. As Epictetus puts it,

although we have it in our power to apply ourselves to one thing alone, and devote ourselves to that, we choose instead to apply ourselves to many things, and attach ourselves to many, to our body, and our possessions, and our brother, and friend, and child, and slave. And so, being attached in this way to any number of things, we're weighed down by them and dragged down.⁷⁸

If I think my happiness depends on anything outside my own power of choice, I will never be happy. This means that I cannot place value on any external occurrences and I cannot have any negative emotions such as fear or anger or compassion, either for what happens to me or to my family or city.⁷⁹

Such feelings would show that I have not achieved wisdom and tranquility. Seneca, for example, insists that we need to act to benefit others without feeling their pain.

were proud of the fact that Christians could be found everywhere. But this did not mean that they expected that everyone everywhere would become a Christian."

⁷⁷ For discussion of the influence of the Stoic notion of expanding circles of concern on Augustine's thought and his practical advice, see Clair, *Discerning the Good in the Letters & Sermons of Augustine*, chapter 1 and interlude.

⁷⁸ *Discourses* I 1.14-15, trans. Hard.

⁷⁹ Cicero, *Tus. Disp.* V 6.15-17; 10. 28-30; 13.40-14.42.

All good men [*boni viri*] will show mercy and mildness [*clementiam mansuetudinemque*], but will avoid compassion [*misericiordiam*], which is a vice of weak spirits [*pusilli animi*] which cannot endure the sight of another's sufferings... Compassion is a disorder of the soul caused by the sight of others' miseries [*aegritudo animi ob alienarum miseriarum speciem*] or it is a sadness caused by the evils with which it believes others to be undeservedly afflicted [*tristitia ex alienis malis contracta, quae accidere immerentibus credit*]: but the wise man cannot be affected by any disorder: his mind is calm [*serena eius mens est*], and nothing can possibly happen to cloud it. Moreover, nothing becomes a human more than greatness of soul [*magnus animus*]: but a human cannot be great and sad.....the wise person will not feel compassion, but will help others and be of service, since he is born for the common aid and the public good [*in commune auxilium natus ac bonum publicum*], and from them he will give to each a share.⁸⁰

The Stoic sage helps others, but without being affected by their pain and wretchedness. He remains at peace, undisturbed in spirit. By contrast, Augustine insists that actually feeling compassion is appropriate and will help us to better love others:

In our teaching, we do not so much inquire whether a pious soul is angry, as why he is angry; not whether he is sad, but what is the cause of his sadness; not whether he fears, but what he fears. For I do not know anyone of sound mind [*sana consideratione*] who would blame someone for being angry at wrongdoers in order that they be set right or someone who sorrows for the suffering in order that they be liberated or someone who fears for those in danger in order that they do not perish. The Stoics, indeed, are accustomed to condemn compassion...but what is compassion except a fellow-feeling in our heart for another's wretchedness, by which we are compelled to help if we are at all able [*Quid est autem misericordia nisi alienae miseriae quaedam in nostro corde compassio, qua utique si possumus subvenire compellimur*]? And this passion is obedient to reason, when compassion is shown while preserving justice, as when the poor are provided for or the penitent forgiven.⁸¹

Augustine thinks that our feelings have a role to play in guiding us to help others, both spiritually and materially. Just as sorrow and fear help motivate us to flee evils and embrace the good when we feel them about ourselves, so these feelings motivate us to aid others.⁸²

⁸⁰ *De Clementia* II 5-6.

⁸¹ *civ. Dei* IX 5, trans. Dodds with modifications.

⁸² While still insisting on our obligation to love all and help all, the later Augustine is also more flexible on the role of existing relationships in how we love others than his earlier self:

We ought to pray for these things for ourselves and for ours, for strangers and even for enemies, although for different persons a different affection arises in and lifts up the heart of the person in prayer in accord with the closeness and the distance of their relationships [*propinquitates vel longinquitates necessitudinum*]. (*ep.* 130.12.23, trans. Teske)

Another key difference between Augustine and previous Greco-Roman thinkers is that he seeks happiness not only for himself, but for the whole city of God. For the Stoic, I only control myself, so I can only seek my own happiness. I would value appreciating the cosmos together with my fellow citizens, but I cannot place my hope in their joining me. For the Aristotelian, I seek happiness for myself and for those close to me, my family and fellow citizens. To achieve happiness, my love needs to be restricted to a tight circle: those whose well-being I can effectively influence. That a man's happiness should lie with himself seems to have been a prominent idea in classical Greek thought, one we find expressed in the funeral oration of Plato's *Menexenus*:

For that man's life is best arranged for whom all, or nearly all, the things that promote happiness depend on himself. Such a man does not hang from other men and necessarily rise or fall in fortune as they fare well or badly...he above all, when wealth and children come and when they go, will pay heed to the adage: because he relies on himself, he will be seen neither to rejoice nor to grieve *too much*.⁸³

The virtuous person of this oration is not completely unaffected by what happens to his family or city, but he does place his happiness primarily in himself, in what he does and how he reacts to the chances of fortune. Indeed, Cicero cites this speech as a precursor of the Stoic view.⁸⁴ Requiring others' happiness in order for you to be happy is dangerous. It seems in tension with both the **Security Condition**, because you cannot guarantee or preserve the happiness of others, and the **Complete Satisfaction Condition**, because you will not be happy if anyone whose happiness you desire fails to obtain it. For Epictetus, you should always play your role in a

Augustine now recognizes that circumstances and earthly ties can appropriately affect our loves. Christians need to have affection for all, but their prayers and actions can be informed by the relationships and responsibilities they have based on their earthly situations.

⁸³ 247e-248a, trans. Paul Ryan. In this dialogue, Socrates recites a funeral oration for the fallen Athenians to Menexenus, a speech he claims is actually composed by Aspasia, his rhetoric teacher (and the lover and partner of Pericles) (236a-c). The speech's relationship to the views of Aspasia, Pericles, Socrates, and Plato is contested and complex. For discussion, see J. M. Cooper (ed. and notes). *Plato: Complete Works*. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 950-951). On any reasonable construal, however, it can fairly be taken as a reputable ancient Athenian view on how to achieve happiness.

⁸⁴ *Tusc. Disp.* V 12.36.

relationship well and do your part. If, however, the relationship suffers fails due to the other's behavior, it will not affect your happiness or well-being.⁸⁵ Augustine, in contrast to these earlier thinkers, emphatically wills happiness not just for himself but for the whole city of God.

We see this in the advice he gives about what Macedonius, as a Christian and a public official, should be seeking:

Let us ask the Lord our God, who made us, for the virtue to conquer the evils of this life and for the blessed life that we may enjoy after this life in his eternity...let us desire this for ourselves; let us desire this for the city of which we are citizens. For a city's blessedness comes from the same source as a human's, since a city is nothing but a multitude of humans with a common goal.⁸⁶

Augustine and Macedonius are to desire virtue and the blessed life, not just for themselves, but for all those they love and for the whole city of God. Augustine does not just outwardly help others, he expands his love towards all his brothers and sisters in Christ. He can weep when they weep, because he looks forward to the “perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious community of enjoying God and one another in God [*ordinatissima et concordissima societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo*].”⁸⁷ In the end, all members of the city of God find their happiness in a shared vision of God and of one another in God. Augustine insists that only this order can be called the “peace of a rational creature,” because it is the only stable condition in which all the included rational creatures are successfully ordered to both their own happiness and the happiness of everyone else in the group.⁸⁸

Each rational member of the city of God, each human or angel, will be sharing in blessedness with and loving every other member. In this perfect heavenly society, there is no danger that anyone the righteous love will fail to be happy.⁸⁹ Since no citizen of the divine city will

⁸⁵ *Disc.* I.15, *Ench.* 30.

⁸⁶ *ep.* 155.3.9, trans. Teske.

⁸⁷ *civ. Dei* XIX 13.1; cf. XIX 18.

⁸⁸ *civ. Dei* XIX 18.

⁸⁹ Keeping in mind, however, that Augustine's prayers and his desire for happiness for others do not extend to the fallen angels or those have irrevocably excluded themselves from the city of God (*civ. Dei* XXI 24; cf. XX 22):

ultimately be sad or afraid, Augustine can share in their negative feelings now. Christian friendships in this life both prepare for and anticipate the union of loves and wills that Augustine thinks members of the city of God will ultimately achieve. His monastic way of life and the rule that Augustine himself develops are meant to serve as the first manifestations of that ultimate peaceful society. As Peter Brown puts it, “Augustine was confident that the love generated in a monastery pointed the way to an unimaginable future at the end of time. Then the firestorm of love would engulf the entire company of the blessed: ‘Out of many souls there will arise a City and a People with a single soul and heart, turned towards God.’”⁹⁰

8. Augustine on Happiness and Security

If we can only be happy in the triumphant City of God, does Augustine consign us to misery in this life? The mature Augustine clearly thinks that no one obtains the *summum bonum* in this life. His reasons for holding this, however, are compatible with experiencing enjoyment and delight in this life. As I noted in section 2, Augustine consistently holds on to the **Security Condition** for happiness: happiness must be stably possessed and, having attained it, you cannot lose it. It is this condition that rules out true happiness in this life.

The **Security Condition** is central to Augustine throughout the *civ Dei*. His criticism of Platonist views on reincarnation is based around it, as reincarnation would make the supposed joys of the separated soul false and impermanent, given its eventual return to the body.⁹¹ We see the need for security most clearly in his insistence that even the righteous Christian has not yet achieved blessedness:

his common society extends only to those who are ultimately saved and made good. Contra Origen, he insists that not all will ultimately be redeemed (*civ. Dei* XXI 17).

⁹⁰ *de bono coniugali* 18.21, trans. Brown; *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 177. For discussion of the monastic life as a “kind of divine and heavenly republic” see *Through the Eye of a Needle*, chapter 12 and Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, chapters XXI-XXIII.

⁹¹ *civ. Dei* XII 20. It is also striking that in his discussion of Adam and Eve before the fall he repeatedly describes the first humans as *felices*, but not as *beati*, the word he generally reserves for the *summum bonum* and takes to involve secure possession of the best good as well as enjoyment. (*civ. Dei* XIV 10)

However, if we look at this a little more closely, we see that no one lives as he wills but the blessed, and that no one is blessed but the righteous. But even the righteous person does not live as he wills, until he has arrived where he cannot die, be deceived, or injured, and until he is assured that this shall be his eternal condition. For this nature demands; and nature is not fully and perfectly blessed till it attains what it seeks. But what person is at present able to live as he wills, when it is not in his power so much as to live?⁹²

Augustine is not saying that the righteous are entirely wretched in the present life, just that they are not yet secure, both because they can lose some of the goods which they will (violating the ***Complete Satisfaction Condition***) and because they could still fall from grace. The failure to completely fulfill these conditions means that even the truly righteous cannot count as fully happy.

He clarifies this in book XIX:

Here, indeed, we are called blessed when we have peace, to whatever minute extent this can be had in a good life [*quantulacumque hic haberi potest in vita bona*]; but this blessedness is found to be absolute wretchedness [*prorsus miseria*] compared to that blessedness, which we call ultimate.⁹³

For Augustine, we can live a good life now, but the peace and enjoyment possible are so limited in comparison to the ultimate goal—a peace “than which a better and greater cannot be” [*qua melior et maior esse non possit*]—that this lack of security and completion make blessedness in this life unworthy of the name.⁹⁴ Augustine allows for some enjoyment and satisfaction in the goods available to us now, including the knowledge and love of God available to Christians. Yet the possibility of suffering and evil and the uncertainties of our lives mean that we cannot not yet live the best possible life in perfect harmony.

Augustine’s discussion of the angels before the fall shows again how highly he values security as a condition of the highest good. The angels all knew God, but were not truly blessed, until they were secure in their positions. This leads him to contrast the condition of Adam with that of the saints striving in the church militant:

⁹²*civ. Dei* XIV xiv.25, trans. Dodds with modifications.

⁹³*civ. Dei* XIX 10.

⁹⁴*civ. Dei* XIX 10.

The first man was more blessed in paradise than any righteous person in this state of mortal frailty, with respect to enjoyment of the present good. But as for the hope of the future, any just person in the extreme of bodily suffering is happier than the first-created. For to the just person it has been shown with the certainty of truth—not mere opinion—that, free from all distresses, he will share with the angels that endless enjoyment of God Most High, whereas that first man, even in the great happiness of paradise [*in magna illa felicitate paradisi*], was uncertain about his fate. Anyone can now easily gather that the blessedness which the understanding being desires with unswerving resolution is the product of two causes working in conjunction, the untroubled enjoyment [*sine ulla molestia perfruatur*] of the changeless Good, which is God, together with the certainty of remaining in him for eternity, a certainty that admits of no doubt or hesitation, no mistake or disappointment [*nec ulla dubitatione cunctetur nec ullo errore fallatur*].⁹⁵

Augustine is glad to say that in an important way the martyr being tortured to death is more blessed than Adam, insofar as the martyr has a sure and certain hope of attaining the final good and enjoying it forever. Adam enjoyed the full range of goods and Augustine describes him as having “great happiness in paradise.”⁹⁶ However, Adam fails to meet the **Security Condition**, because he is unsure about what will happen to him and this means that he was not truly blessed. The just person’s certainty about his future condition allows for a kind of happiness now, as the just can look forward to certain enjoyment.⁹⁷ More generally, Augustine allows for enjoying goods in this life in ways that might qualify as happiness in the weaker sense often employed in colloquial English. Augustine denies that we can presently achieve *beatitudo*, not because he thinks our lives must be invariably sorrowful and miserable but because even the best human life under current circumstances will fail to meet the **Security Condition** and the **Complete Satisfaction Condition**.

⁹⁵ *civ. Dei* XI 13, trans. Bettenson with modifications.

⁹⁶ *Felicitas*, not *beatitudo*. As I mentioned in fn. 6, Augustine uses *felicitas* more freely and without the same **Security Condition** that he applies to *beatitudo*. Cf. *civ. Dei* XIV.10 on Adam and Eve in paradise, which also describes their condition in terms of *felicitas*, but not *beatitudo*.

⁹⁷ At least for those who know their salvific status; cf. the complications of *perseverare*.

9. The Future Life and Augustine's Eudaimonism

It is the hoped-for future triumph of the city of God that allows Christians to count as pursuing blessedness in their current actions, even if they cannot yet achieve it. Augustine's ethics continues to be eudaimonist, contra Nicholas Wolterstorff, who insists that the mature Augustine breaks with eudaimonism:

I see nothing in Augustine's thought that would explain his affirmation of compassion other than that he saw this as an implication of obedience to Christ's command to love one's neighbor as one loves oneself...[Augustine] has to be interpreted as parting ways with eudaimonism and entering territory untracked by the ancient philosophers.⁹⁸

On this interpretation, Augustine's love and care for his neighbors breaks with what Wolterstorff calls the *agent-wellbeing proviso*: "one may seek to promote the wellbeing of anyone whatsoever as an end in itself—provided that doing so promises to enhance one's own overall wellbeing."⁹⁹ Ancient eudaimonists do endorse some version of this proviso, but Augustine does as well. Indeed, the shared blessedness of the triumphant city of God is precisely what allows him to hold onto it. As we saw, for Augustine, we will find happiness in enjoying God and *others in God*. In this way, each Christian's happy life involves loving every other Christian and loving the love every other Christian has for God. This mutual love of God and our appreciation for God is part of the wellbeing of the blessed. Their wellbeing is enhanced by the other saints and so their love of each other still fits with the *agent-wellbeing proviso*.

⁹⁸ Wolterstorff, "Augustine's Rejection of Eudaimonism," 203-204.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155. Wolterstorff also holds that ancient eudaimonists all shared "the *activity thesis* concerning the estimable life. They all held that the estimability of a person's life is determined solely by the actions and activities to be found in that person's life; the state and events to be found in his or her life play no role in determining its estimability." (152) He then uses this to distinguish Augustine from his ancient predecessors. This, in fact, is a distinctively Aristotelian thesis, not one shared by all eudaimonists. Aristotle has to extensively defend it, precisely because it is not a commonly acknowledged truth. Indeed, traditional Greek thought sees blessedness as largely found in the states and events in that person's life, as, for example, we see in Solon's conversation with Croesus (Herodotus, *Historia*, I 29-33 and 86-90). Indeed, it is not clear that Aristotle himself would want to defend the stark formulation Wolterstorff offers ("no role" vs. *EN* I 9-10). The Epicureans, Cyrenaics, and Pyrrhonian Skeptics, among others, would reject this thesis. Augustine himself is quite aware that the role of states and events play in a person's happiness is disputed. In *civ. Dei*, when he goes through views on the *summum bonum*, many of the philosophical options Augustine and Varro present involve intrinsically valuing things that are not themselves activities, either the primary blessings of nature, pleasure, or the absence of pain.

This proviso is vital for Augustine's psychology. Augustine never gives up on the claim that my happiness is my *summum bonum*. The will for blessedness is, he says, the only *voluntas* common to all human beings, something that even the Academic skeptics "did not doubt (although Academics doubt everything)."¹⁰⁰ For Augustine, happiness turns out to consist in enjoying God, but he never countenances the possibility that my happiness and my love of God could come apart. Throughout all his writings, he remains committed to psychological eudaimonism, to the idea that we love everything and pursue it so as to further our happiness. He never gives up on happiness. Augustine does not emphasize compassion and values externals more because he becomes a disinterested advocate of duty. Instead, once he sees how, in the end, his good involves the mutual love and excellent conditions of all members of the city of God, he sees how he can contribute to happiness by loving them now and feeling sorrow and anger alongside them. In the Latin West, we will have to wait for Anselm or John Duns Scotus to see a true rejection of eudaimonism.¹⁰¹

10. Conclusion

Augustine is the first in the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition to explicitly put forward a view of my happiness that goes beyond myself and my close connections to encompass the whole order of the universe. Without the hope of ultimate peace to which he looks forward, there are strong reasons to restrict the scope of who can affect your happiness. This is why Aristotle limits the bounds of care to one's family and *polis*. While contemporary secular eudaimonistic theories can expand the circle of care, the more such theories do so, the more impossible it becomes for

¹⁰⁰ *trin.* XIII 3.6; *trin.* XIII 4.7.

¹⁰¹ I am agreeing here with Jeff Brower. "Anselm on Ethics," in B. Davies & B. Leftow (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), fn. 5, p. 251, that Augustine is not the source or beginning of medieval movements away from eudaimonism, contra John Hare. "Scotus on Morality and Nature," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 9 (2000), 15-17. For the turn away from eudaimonism in Anselm and Duns Scotus see Brower, "Anselm on Ethics," 223-224; 240-249; Thomas Williams. "How Scotus Separates Morality from Happiness," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1995), 425-45, and Hare, "Scotus on Morality and Nature."

me to aim at or achieve happiness. If I really care equally about the welfare of all sentient beings, then I cannot be happy until all are happy and there is no practical way for me to achieve this. Without any justified expectation for a perfect culmination or any reasonable hope of attaining such a state, we are tempted either to despair or to restrict our care to those close to us.

As long as Augustine thinks happiness is attainable in this life, he insists that we should aim to avoid any negative emotions. Once he postpones complete happiness to the next life, Augustine can continue to agree with the Stoics and other ancient philosophers that the blessed life must be tranquil, while taking a very different position on what a good human life looks like now, in our condition as wayfarers. Those still running the race should experience sorrow and fear, for themselves and others, whenever such emotions help them to better direct their steps and those of others.

Augustine's vision of blessedness also becomes more encompassing. The young Augustine denies that the state of our bodies or the well-being of our friends and loved ones makes a difference to our happiness. The good we are aiming at must be entirely spiritual. While he always thinks that blessedness consists in enjoying God, once Augustine holds that happiness is only to be found in the *eschaton* he is able to include the well-being of our minds and bodies and our friendships with others within the *summum bonum*.

Augustine looks forward in hope to the point at which the wise and blessed resurrected Christians will be at peace, achieving what the philosophers were seeking. After the last judgement, every member of the city of God will rejoice together, with weeping, anger, and fear no longer having any place, since all their causes have been defeated. Because of the divine assurance that things will go well—for the whole community of God, not just for the individual—the Christian can, unlike the Stoic, desire and act for the happiness of every member of the

kingdom of God.¹⁰² Augustine's belief in a future life motivates action in this life by allowing for greater emotional range in the virtuous. It grounds his appreciation of the value of mind and body and it provides hope that present evils will be defeated.¹⁰³

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¹⁰² Cf. Immanuel Kant's claim, in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, that we must hope for a future life so that happiness and good will might be harmonized into the best possible good (5:110-219).

¹⁰³ Cf. Marilyn McCord Adams. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999). I would like to thank the participants in the 2019 Cornell Summer Colloquium in Medieval Philosophy for their insightful and helpful questions on an earlier version of this paper. I am also grateful to Joseph Clair for advice on Augustine, Matt Morginsky for inspiration and insight in thinking about the future life, and an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify several aspects of my argument.

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