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The Problem of Evil in the Anti-Manichean Works of Saint Augustine

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THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

IN THE ANTI-MANICHEAN WORKS OF

SAINT AUGUSTINE

by

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LIFE

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After his studies the writer worked as educator and teacher in Germany. At present he is teaching German at the Loyola University, Chicago.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of evil has been a stumbling block to mankind through all the ages and philosophers of all times have tried to solve this problem. At certain periods of history questions like: "Whence is evil?" or: "If there is a creator-God, how can He permit so much evil and cruelty in His world?" have especially moved the hearts of men. Without doubt our century is such a time, a century of two world wars. In the 2nd world war alone more than 50 million men, women and children were killed.[1] Thousands of times a day, when their children and beloved ones were torn to pieces by bombs and grenades, people cursed God - if indeed there was a God at all. Wolfgang Borchert expressed the mentality of a whole generation, when he wrote in 1946:

> "Lieber Gott. Lieber Gott. Aber ich sage nicht Lieber
> Gott, du, ich kenne keinen, der ein lieber Gott ist,
> du.... Wann bist du eigentlich lieb, lieber Gott?
> Warst du lieb, als du meinen Jungen, der gerade ein
> Jahr alt war, als du meinen kleinen Jungen von einer
> bruellenden Bombe zerreissen liesst? Warst du da lieb,
> als du ihn ermorden liesst, lieber Gott, ja?"[2]

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[1] *Germany Reports*, Published by the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 1961, p. 32.

[2] Borchert, *Draussen vor der Tuer*, Gesamtwerk, p. 181: "Dear God, Dear God. But I don't say 'Dear God--you'; I don't know anyone, who is a Dear God.... Tell me when you are kind, dear God? Were you kind, when you permitted my year-old son to be torn in pieces by a whirling bomb? Were you kind then, when you permitted him to be killed, dear God?"

In this situation we Christians have the responsibility to give an answer to a desparately questioning mankind. The great outlines of the answer, which the Church gave through many centuries and still gives today, were systematically elaborated by St. Augustine.

For St. Augustine as for the men of our woeful days, the problem of evil is the decisive problem of life. Augustine wrestled with the solution all his lifetime. It is the purpose of this study to point out the basic principles of his solution. Others have undertaken similar studies, including Jolivet's excellent article Le Probleme du Mal d'apres Saint Augustin. We regard this study therefore as a reevaluation of St. Augustine's teaching about the problem of evil.

This thesis will limit its consideration of the problem of evil to St. Augustine's anti-Manichean works (with a few helpful references to other books). We must state at once that we will not find in his anti-Manichean works the total answer to the problem of evil which Augustine gave. One could distinguish three stages in the solution of Augustine to the problem.

First, in the writings immediately after his conversion, as in De Ordine and De Musica, evil is primarily seen as privation of goodness and the necessary consequence of finite natures. As such evil is nihil or the tendency to nothing. This physical evil is justified from the point of view of the order of the cosmos. The great beauty of the universe could not exist without corrupting

lower beings. This solution we call with Jolivet the _esthetic solution_. As far as it goes, it is correct, but it is insufficient in a world of sin. Augustine always retains this solution. He states it still in one of his last books, his _De Civitate Dei_.

Second, reading Holy Scripture, Augustine became more and more aware of the central position which free will and sin have in the problem of evil. Augustine from then on stresses the fact that sin is the only evil. In so far as physical evil afflicts man, it gets it real meaning from free will and sin. This meaning shows it to be a punishment and medicine for moral evil. In the anti-Manichean books Augustine maintains the esthetic solution, but this _moral solution_ is the dominant one.

Third, in later years, especially in the fight against the Pelagians, Augustine had to go deeper into theological implications of the problem of evil. Thus he had to consider the relation between grace and free will and the problem of predestination. Since this thesis intends to be a philosophical study, we exclude with all the later books these theological questions from our consideration.

Augustine subdivides the basic problem into two questions: 1) What is the nature of evil? 2) What is the origin of evil? Philosophers of ancient and modern times have arrived at a variety of different answers to this problem. The Manicheans saw themselves compelled to acknowledge an evil Principle that fights against the good Principle. This fight shows itself in a world,

where parts of the good Principle are captured by the evil Principle
This evil Principle then is identified with matter. Edgar S.
Brightman, a philosopher of our time, did not go thus far but the
inexplainable aspect of evil forced him to think of God as limited
in his power by a "Given" in God himself. Others like Schopen-
hauer and his followers replaced the creator-God by a blind power.
Again others on the opposite extreme tried simply to deny the re-
ality of all evils, explaining them as a purely subjective illusion

These and similar solutions necessarily end in contradiction.
It is true that Augustine cannot explain the problem of evil with-
out leaving a residue that is not fully explainable for the human
mind. Instead of leading to final contradiction, however, his
solution ends in the mystery of the infinite God. The Augustinian
solution is satisfactory, since the human mind is willing, or at
least is able to bow before the mystery of the infinite God. It
cannot and must not,however,accept an apparent contradiction.

The most basic difference between Augustine's solution and
many of the extreme solutions, is that for Augustine the starting
point and the touchstone of all his philosophizing about the prob-
lem of evil is the infiniteness of God. God is the greatest being,
the highest good; He is Being and Goodness itself. This is an
unshakeable truth for him. Anyone who does not agree with Augustine
on this point will not be able to understand his solution.

From this theocentric way of thinking follow some characteris-
tic traits in Augustine's solution. These have caused sharp cri-

ticism of his handling of the problem of evil. One of these traits
is the overall importance Augustine attributes to the universal
order. The universal order is for Augustine an image of the unity
in God. He measures the good or evil of a single being at the de-
gree and place, how and where it fits into this order. Because of
this, Scipio[3] accused Augustine of not having solved the problem
of evil. He says that Augustine completely overlooked the indivi-
dual being. It is our concern to show that although Augustine
stressed the higher order, he did not overlook the interest of the
individual human being.

Another consequence of Augustine's theocentric thinking is his
stress of the negative character of evil. God is being, and since
evil is the opposite of being, it can only be nihil. Because of
his concept of nihil Augustine has been reproached from different
sides. Trepte[4] contends that Augustine at times uses the nihil
as a positive principle, substituting it for the evil principle of
the Manicheans. Windelband[5] goes so far as to say that Augustine
never overcame the Manichean dualism of his earlier days.

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[3]K. Scipio, Des Aurelius Augustinus Metaphysik im Rahmen
seiner Lehre vom Übel, (Leipzig 1886), p. 102

[4]A. Trepte, Die metaphysische Unvollkommenheit der Creatur und
das moralische Übel bei Augustinus und Leibniz, (Halle 1889),
pp. 3-6.

[5]W. Windelband, A History of Philosophy, trans. J. Tufts,
9th ed. (New York, 1950), p. 286.

A consequence of Augustine's concept of evil as <u>nihil</u> is his explanation of the activity of evil beings in this world. As nothing, evil cannot have any effective power. Therefore Augustine calls the evil act a 'defect'. Critics like Scipio[6] and Trepte[7] have understood this concept as if Augustine denies any power to the evil subject, to the 'natura corrupta'. Against this interpretation we contend that one has to distinguish between the formal and the material aspect of evil in order to understand Augustine in this point. The formal aspect of evil expresses the privation, the absence of the good that is due for the perfection of a being. As privation then evil cannot be effective. The material aspect, on the other hand, shows the corrupted subject, as deprived partly of its goodness. In so far as it exists, this subject has activity, but as a corrupted subject its activity is defective.

This thesis is divided in three main parts. In the first part we give a short survey of the role which the problem of evil had in Augustine's life. In the second part we deal with physical evil, and in the third, with moral evil. The second and third part are each divided into two sections. The first section is concerned with the nature of evil, the second with the origin of evil. In

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[6]Scipio, pp. 107-108

[7]Trepte, pp. 30-32

this division we follow Augustine himself when he tells the Manicheans that one cannot talk about the origin of evil before one knows what evil is.[8]

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[8] De nat. boni, IV; PL.42,553

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN
ST. AUGUSTINE'S LIFE.

This thesis will be concerned with the problem of evil in
St. Augustine's anti-Manichean books, especially De Moribus Mani-
chaeorum, De Libero Arbitrio, Disputatio contra Fortunatum, Contra
Epistolam Manichaei quam Vocant Fundamenti, Contra Faustum Mani-
chaeum, De Natura Bona contra Manichaeos, and the other minor works

In the Retractationes, Augustine himself advises his readers
to follow the order of time in which he wrote his books, so that
they might notice the progress he was able to make during his life-
time in the understanding of the mysteries of nature and grace.[1]
Such a development can also be found in his treatment of the one
problem that occupied Augustine during his whole life: the problem
of evil.

In the analysis of the following chapters it will be necessary
to neglect the temporal order. Therefore, it seems advisable to
give first a general survey of this problem at the different stages
of Augustine's theoretical development.

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[1]Retract., Prolog. 3; PL. 32,586: "Inveniet enim fortasse
quomodo scribendo profecerim, quisquis opuscula mea, ordine quo
scripta, legerit."

Reading his <u>Confessions</u> one finds that the history of Augustine's conversion was most intimately connected with the solution of the problem of evil. To his friend Evodius Augustine says that in his early youth already he was vexed by this problem but was unable to find a solution.[2]

When 19 years old Augustine read Cicero's <u>Hortensius</u>. By this book he was stirred up from the immoral life into which he had sunk at Carthage.[3] A love for truth, the philosophical <u>eros</u>[4] was awakened in him. A longing for the spiritual world became very strong in him; but the <u>Hortensius</u> itself, as Augustine says in his <u>Confessions</u>, could not satisfy this longing. In vain did Augustine look for the name of Christ in it:

> "... Quoniam hoc nomen secundum misericordiam tuam,
> Domine, hoc nomen salvatoris mei, filii tui, in ipso
> adhuc lacte matris tenerum cor meum pie biberat et alte
> retinebat, et quidquid sine hoc nomine fuisset quamvis
> litteratum et expolitum et veridicum, non me totum ra-
> piebat."[5]

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[2]<u>De Libero Arbitrio</u>, I, 2; PL. 32,1224: "Eam quaestionem moves quae me admodum adolescentem vehementer exercuit, et fatigatum in haereticos pulit atque dejecit. Quo casu ita sum afflictus, et tantis obrutus acervis inanium fabularum, ut nisi mihi amor inveniendi veri opem divinam impetravisset, emergere inde atque in ipsam primam quaerendi libertatem respirare non possem."

[3]<u>Confessiones</u>, III,2; PL. 32, 683: "Rapiebant me spectacula theatrica, plena imaginibus miseriarum mearum, et fomitibus ignis mei."

[4]Conf. III,4; PL. 686: "... hoc tamen solo delectabatur in illa exhortatione, quod non illam aut illam sectam, sed ipsam quaecumque esset sapientiam ut diligerem, et quaererem et adsequerer et tenerem atque amplexarer fortiter..."

[5]Conf. III,4; PL. 686.

So Augustine turned to Holy Scripture, but he could not yet grasp the high wisdom of the Bible and its style was too simple to fascinate him.[6]

At this critical moment the Manicheans offered to solve all his troubles. They boasted to give scientific solutions to all problems; and Augustine sought truth by means of pure human knowledge. All day long the Manicheans had the name of Christ in their mouth. This name of Christ was for Augustine a criterion where to seek the truth. They had their own method of biblical exegesis which seemed very promising to Augustine. Most of all, they offered a final solution of the problem of evil, which had become more vexing for him since he had been awakened by the Hortensius to the search of truth and felt the burden of his sensual life more than ever before.[7]

As to Holy Scripture, the Manicheans taught there to be a contradiction between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They contended that many parts of the New Testament were falsified by the Christians. This treatment of the Bible appealed very much to Augustine, for at that time he was unable to make sense out of

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[6]Conf. III,5; PL. 32,686.

[7]Conf. VI,4; PL. 32,722: "Vae, vae, quibus gradibus deductus sum in profunda inferi? Quippe laborans et aestuans inopia veri, cum te, Deus meus cum te non secundum intellectum mentis,... sed secundum sensum carnis quaererem."

most parts of the Old Testament and of great sections of the New Testament.   In order to understand the Scriptures he had to hear from St. Ambrose that the 'letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'.[8]

Augustine was especially attracted by the fundamental teaching of the Manicheans about the two independent Principles, the one good and the other evil.   These existed independently and apart from one another from all eternity.   They were to be thought of as coming into a conflict which resulted in the production of this world and of man.   The evil **Principle** more or less coincided with material being, which was originally chaos. Although the good Principle is spoken of as spirit, it is not conceived as spiritual in the full technical sense. It is material in a lighter form, vapor-like in nature.   The Father of Light is God, and the Prince of Darkness is the devil.   But unlike the Christian God, the Father of Light is finite and limited.   The Manichean God is limited by the existence of the independent Principle of Evil.   Where the kingdom of the one begins, the other necessarily ends.

Augustine himself at this early time had no concept of a pure spirit or of an absolute substance.[9]   Therefore it was hard for him to solve the problem of evil which pressed on his mind. As he

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[8] _Conf_. VI,4; _PL_. 32, 722.

[9] _Conf_. IV,16; _PL_.32, 706: "Sed quid mihi proderat, putanti quod tu, Domine Deus veritas, corpus esses lucidum et immensum, et ego frustrum de ill corpore?"

says, his piety could not admit the thought of God having created any evil nature.[10] No wonder that he could not resist the Manichean propaganda, since it boasted of giving an answer to his precise difficulties and doubts.[11]

During his stay in Cathage in the company of his friends, Augustine also was confronted with an argument against Manicheism which he could not refute. It was Nebridius who advanced the difficulty: What would the Principle of Darkness do against the Principle of Light? It could either injure it or not injure it. If it could injure it, then the Principle of Light was no real God. If the Principle of Darkness could injure the Principle of Light, then the latter did wrong in entering into conflict with the Principle of Darkness and so imprisoning part of itself in darkness.[12] This argument seemed irrefutable to Augustine.

Beside the difficulties against the Manichean creed as that raised by Nebridius, studies in astronomy made Augustine aware of

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[10]Conf. V,10; PL. 32,715: "Et quia Deum bonum nullam malam naturam creasse qualiscumque me pietas credere cogebat, constituebam ex adverso sibi duas moles, utramque infinitam, sed malam angustius, bonam grandius, et ex hoc initio pestilentioso me cetera sacrilegia sequebantur."

[11]Ibid., III,7;PL. 32,688: "Nesciebam enim aliud, vere quod est et quasi acutele movebar, ut suffragarer stultis deceptoribus, cum a me quaereretur unde malum est. Et utrum forma corporea deus finiretur, et haberet capillos et ungues..."

[12]Ibid., VII,2; PL. 32,734.

of the scientific errors in the books of Mani. How then could Mani, who claimed to be the appearance of the Holy Ghost, be right in his teaching about other subjects and about God himself, if he did not even know earthly sciences?[13]

Augustine passed many painful and distressful years in Carthage, full of inner embarrassment, waiting for Faustus. The Manicheans said this man would solve all difficulties. Added to all his intellectual doubts were the actions of the Elects of the Manicheans which he witnessed in Carthage, some of whom behaved just opposite to their professed abhorrence of women; again from Rome came rumors about various scandals in the community of the Elect.

For over nine years Augustine had waited 'nimis extento desiderio'[14] for the coming of Faustus. When Augustine was 28 years of age, he finally met Faustus and found him nothing more than a clever and agreeable talker, making no pretense at science or philosophy, and not very well read. He was unable to help solve any of Augustine's doubts and difficulties.[15] Faustus could not say anything new to Augustine and left him in a more desparate position he had ever been before.

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[13]Conf., V,5; PL. 32,709.

[14]Ibid., V,6; PL. 32,710.

[15]Ibid.: "Ergo ubi venit, expertus sum hominem gratum et jucundum verbis, et ea ipsa quae illi solent dicere, multo suavius garrientem.... Iam rebus talibus satiatae erant aures meae; nec ideo mihi meliora videbantur, quia melius dicebantur; nec ideo vera, quia diserta; nec ideo sapiens, quia vultus congruus et decorum eloquium."

Taking into consideration Augustine's accounts of his experiences among the Manicheans, one cannot escape the conviction that he never wholly was a Manichean, that he never surrendered absolutely to this system.[16] But after all these disapointments, especially with Faustus, his already weak Manichean beliefs all but dissolved. Nevertheless he did not break entirely with the Manicheans; he decided to go to Rome. The rashness of this departure seems to indicate that he wanted to get rid of all that reminded him of his intense Manichean activity in Carthage. He now sought completely new surroundings and a free atmosphere in which he could look for the truth without any narrowing presuppositions. When in spite of all his doubts Augustine remained within the community of the Manicheans, then the reason for this was that he still was unable to find another solution for the problem of evil than the doctrine of the Manicheans that the evil which happens in us is not originated by us, but by another nature. This evil nature in us is part of the evil Principle, which is <u>materia</u>. Because he could not conceive a spiritual being he could not find a solution for the problem of evil.[17]

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[16]<u>Conf</u>. VIII,7; <u>PL</u>. 32,757: "Et ieram per vias pravas superstitione sacrilega, non quidem certus in ea, sed quasi praeponens eam ceteris, quae non pie quaerebam sed inimice oppugnabam."

[17]<u>Ibid</u>., V,10; <u>PL</u>. 32,715:"Et quoniam cum de Deo meo cogitare vellem, cogitare nisi moles corporum non noveram, neque enim videbatur mihi esse quidquam quod tale non esset, eammaxima et prope sola causa erat inevitabilis erroris mei."

Shortly after his arrival at Rome he fell into a dangerous
illness that kept him in bed for a long time. While recovering
from his illnes Augustine had much time to think. He no longer
hoped to find in Manicheism the answer to his difficulties. He
came to the conclusion that the position of the so called Academics
was the one which would most fit him in all his doubts. He wanted
to safeguard himself against the danger of falling from the Mani-
chean error into some other error.[18]

Yet Augustine was too passionate a seeker of the ultimate
truth for academic scepticism to take a firm hold of him. Although
turned from Manicheism to scepticism, the wish to consult a Chris-
tian expert who was versed in the Scriptures became strong in him.[19]
After hearing much about the skill of Ambrose of Milan in explain-
ing the Holy Scriptures he accepted the offer of professor in rhe-
toric in Milan. From Ambrose he learned how the Scriptures, espe-
cially the Old Testament, could be explained in a spiritual way.
Thus he became aware of the false interpretation of the Scriptures
by the Manicheans who rejected the Old Testament completely because

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[18] Conf., V,10; PL. 32,715: "Etenim suborta est etiam mihi cogi-
tatio, prudentiores illos ceteris fuisse philosophos, quos Acade-
micos appellant, quod de omnibus dubitandum esse censuerunt, nec
aliquid veri ab homine comprehendi posse decreverunt."

[19] Ibid., V,11; PL. 32,716.

for them it contradicted the New Testament. His deeply rooted
materialism[20] and his newly accepted scepticism hindered Augustine
from a complete conversion to the Catholic Faith. Nevertheless he
decided to become a catechumen until he would reach a definitive
solution of his difficulties.[21]

The turning point for a solution of the problem of evil was
his acquaintance with Neoplatonism: "Procurasti mihi per quemdam
hominem ... quosdam Platonicorum libros ex graece lingua in latinam
versos."[22]

In hearing the sermons of Ambrose, Augustine had already be-
come familiar with quite a few elements of the Neoplatonic doctrine.
Ambrose himself used Plotinus in his exegetical sermons in such a
way that he often found it unnecessary to change a word of Plotinus'
text.[23] Thus the Christianity which Augustine received from Am-
brose was partly in Neoplatonic terms. On the other hand his later

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[20]Conf., V,14; PL. 32,718: "Tunc vero fortiter intendi animum,
si quo modo possem certis aliquibus documentis Manichaeos convin-
cere falsitatis. Quod si possem spiritualem substantiam cogitare,
statim machinamenta illa omnia solve$entur et abjicerentur ex ani-
mo meo; sed non poteram."

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., VII,9; PL. 32,740.
Cf. Switalski, Neoplatonism and the Ethics of St. Augustine. After
thorough studies Switalski comes to the conclusion--in agreement
with P. Henry--that with 'Libri Platonicorum' are meant the Enneads
of Plotinus.

[23]Cf. Boyer, Christianisme et neo-platonisme dans la formation
de St. Augustin, (Paris,1920), p. 110: "...M. Courelle a fait la
preuve que ces memes sermons contiennt d'assez longs passages de
Plotin, a peine retouches pour les necessites de l'orthodoxie. C'est

reading of the Platonists is done in the light of the Christian doctrine.[24] It is impossible, however, to speak of Augustine's conversion to Neo-platonism, as Nolan B. Harmon does it in his article on St. Augustine.[25] Quite the contrary, because he had absorbed already too much of the Christian thoughts, Augustine found in the books of the Platonists great parts of the Christian teaching.[26] As Barion says, even today the statement of St. Thomas about Augustine's relation to Plotinus must be regarded as true: "Augustinus qui doctrina Platonicorum imbutus fuerat, si qua invenit fidei accomoda in eorum dictis, assumpsit; quae vero invenit fidei nostrae adversa, in melius commutavit" (S.Th.,I, qu. 84, a. 5).

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ainsi qu'Ambroise, dans son De Isaak (VIII,78) suit manifestement, et parfois mot pour mot, de developpement du traite Sur le Beau de la premiere Enneade.... C'est assez pour comprendre comment les verites chretiennes arrivaient aux oreilles d'Augustin avec une resonnance en partie neo-platonicienne."

[24]Cf. E. Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine, trans. L.E. Lynch, (New York, 1960), p. 108: " The fact that Augustine never had the slightest doubt about the purity of Plotinus' notion of creation, leads one at least to assume that, from the outset, he read the Enneads as a Christian."

[25]Nolan B. Harmon, "St. Augustine and the Problem of Evil", Religion in Life, (1944-45), p. 404: "In fact, Augustine throughout his life was profoundly influenced by Plotinus, as he had been for a time a believer in this system--called neo-Platonism." Cf. Barion, Plotin und Augustinus, Untersuchungen zum Gottesproblem, (Berlin, 1935), p. 42: "Darin stimme ich Holl zu... dass der Einfluss des Neuplatonismus auf Augustin nicht als eine Bekehrung bezeichnet werden kann."

[26]Cf. Boyer, p. 108.

In the seventh book of the _Confessions_ St. Augustine describes the great light and the knowledge he gained from reading the books of the Platonists. There he learned that we must turn away from the contemptible things of this material world and direct ourselves to the world of spirit to find God as the eternal unchangeable Being.[27] God becomes for Augustine the highest being, the highest good and pure spirit. This concept then of God as pure spirit enabled him to conceive evil not as a substance, but as non-being. Evil is the privation of the good which is due to a nature. This much knowledge about the nature of evil was great progress. Still the uncertainty about the root of evil caused him much inner pain.[28] In this point, Christian doctrine, probably as preached by St. Ambrose, was the most helpful source of an solution to the problem of evil. St. Ambrose namely, aiming at the Manicheans, insisted strongly that the source of our evil-doing is in our own free will.

Plotinus had helped Augustine to overcome the Manichean materialism and dualism. But for Augustine the Christian, Plotinus' solution was not sufficient. For Plotinus evil was non-being and

[27] _Conf._, VII,20; _PL._ 32,746: "Sed tunc lectis Platonicorum illis libris, posteaquam inde admonitus quaerere incorpoream veritatem, invisibilia tua, per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspexi..."

[28] _Ibid._, VII,7; _PL._ 32,739: "His itaque salvis atque inconcusse roboratis in animo meo, quaerebam aestuans, unde sit malum. Quae illa tormenta, parturientis cordis mei, qui gemitus, Deus meus."

and as such must be seen within the order of the whole universe, where it has its determined place, thus contributing to the beauty of the cosmos. In the beginning Augustine embraces this solution with all his heart and he never departs from this solution. But with the progress of years Augustine more and more moves away from the philosophers, making revelation the great source of all his knowledge and searching. Correspondingly also the solution he gives to the problem of evil, gets a more theological aspect. The only real evil for him then is immoral action, the evil that originates in the human free will and is the origin of all other evils. The problem of evil becomes intimately connected then with the revealed truths about original sin, incarnation and redemption, truths which the philosophers are unable to find. The final solution of the problem of evil then becomes for him the belief in the all-surpassing love and goodness of God.

CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL EVIL

A. The Constituents of Good

1. God the <u>summum</u> <u>esse</u> et <u>summum</u> <u>bonum</u>

Augustine's solution of the problem of evil is strongly de-
termined by the most characteristic and outstanding trait of his
thinking and writing: his theocentric orientation. All Augustine's
thinking and explaining takes its start from the point of God as
the highest being and the cause of everything that exists. This
theocentric point of view was not learned from Plotinus, but was
implanted into his heart from his mother in his earliest childhood.
Even his becoming a Manichean was motivated by the desire to main-
tain the concept of God immaculate. He preferred to accept a sub-
stantial evil principle than to be forced to declare God as the
cause of evil. It is true, only the reading of the Neoplatonic
books enabled him to conceive God as the ultimate cause of all
beings. Yet Neoplatonism did not effect a completely new direction
in Augustine's thoughts but only gave him the philosophical tools

to express his most inner longing.[1]

If, therefore, we want to understand the method and the solu-
of the problem of evil in St. Augustine, we have to know first
what 'God' means for him. With regard to the Manicheans Augustine
says explicitly that a correct concept of God would have saved
them from their ridiculous thinking about evil.[2]

God is for Augustine the highest being, summum esse.[3] Being,
however, does not mean a mere factual existence , bare of all va-
lue, but means goodness as such. All the creatures that exist re-
ceived their being from God and so represent in different degrees
the infinite being of God. In them Augustine points out how valu-
able being is and how much preferable to non-being. For all beings
strive and fight to keep their existence. All human beings, even
those who are unhappy, choose to live. If they are asked what they
prefer, it is existence over non-existence. Those who commit sui-
cide, in reality do not want non-existence but they look for peace.
And what is peace other than ordered being. "The whole object of

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[1]Le Roy Burton, The Problem of Evil, A Criticism of the Augus-
tinian Point of View, (Chicago 1917), In this book the author
reproaches Augustine because of this theocentric attitude and tries
to prove that it hindered Augustine in finding a final solution of
the problem of evil. However, as an extreme evolutionist Le Roy
Burton is unwilling and unable to accept that only a theocentrical
philosophizing can reach a solution in this problem.

[2]De Civitate Dei, XI,22; PL. 41,336

[3]De Moribus Manichaeorum, 1; PL. 32,1345

wanting to die is not non-existence but rest. So while such a man erroneously believes that he will no longer exist, his nature longs to be at rest, that is, to have fuller being."[4]

If all created being is so valuable that no nature wants to lose it, how much more valuable must be that being, that is Being itself, the being that has no contact with non-being at all.

"Hoc enim intellecto atque perfecto, simul viderent id esse quod summe ac primitus esse rectissime dicitur. Hoc enim maxime esse dicendum est, quod semper eodem modo sese habet, quod omnimodo sui simile est, quod nulla ex parte corrumpi ac mutari potest, quod non subjacet tempori, quod aliter nunc se habere quam habebat antea, non potest. Id enim est quod esse verissime dicitur. Subest enim huic verbo manentis in se atque incommunicabiliter sese habentis naturae significatio. Hanc nihil aliud quam Deum possumus dicere, cui si contrarium recte quaeras, nihil omnino est. Esse enim contrarium non habet, nisi non esse. Nulla est ergo Deo natura contraria."[5]

Since God is the highest good and is being itself, He is absolutely unchangeable. This unchangeableness of God is for Augustine the most characteristic mark of God's infinite superiority above all creatures. These are all changeable because they are created out of nothingness.

All considerations about the changeable creatures lead Augustine to that Being that is the origin of the existence of all and is being in all its fullness, goodness, immutability and eternity.

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[4]De Libero Arbitrio, III,8; PL. 32, 1282: "Omnis itaque ille appetitus in voluntate mortis, non ut qui moritur non sit, sed ut requiescat intenditur. Ita cum errore credat non se futurum, natura tamen quietus esse, hoc est magis esse desiderat."

[5]De Moribus Manichaeorum, 1; PL. 32, 1345.

If we want to understand the finite things, we have to see them in their relation to their origin and cause, the highest good.

2. The goodness of all things

Augustine enumerates three reasons for the goodness of all creatures. These reasons correspond in a certain way to the three causes: the efficient cause, the formal cause and the final cause. Just as these causes are most intimately connected with one another, so the reasons Augustine gives cannot be perfectly distinguished from one another.

The reasons are: 1) all things are good because they are created by God; 2) they are good because they participate in being with its three attributes of measure, form and order; 3) all things are good because they are parts of the universal order. These three reasons we will consider now.

It is a fundamental axiom of Augustine's teaching that all finite substances are created by a free act of God's will. This doctrine is displayed in the explicit distinction between the creatures which received their existence through the will of God, from the eternal Son of God who proceded from the essence of God:

> "Ego non solum animam, sed et corpus nostrum et omnem
> creaturam et spiritualem et corporalem ex Deo esse
> dico... Sed aliud est quod de se Deus genuit, quod hoc
> est quod ipse, aliud quod fecit Deus. Quod Deus genuit,
> aequale est Patri; quod Deus fecit, non est aequale con-
> ditum conditori."[6]

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[6]De Actibus cum Felice, II,16; PL. 42,516

All finite creatures, although not good in the same way as
God is good, are good because they are caused by God. For a good
cause cannot have a bad effect. God, the Summum Bonum, whom nothing
can hinder in His activity, cannot produce anything evil. This
statement of the goodness of all natures is basic in Augustine's
conception of the world and for his solution of the problem of
evil. We find it repeated again and again in the context of this
problem.[7]

Yet to explain the different degrees of goodness in God's
creation, it is not sufficient to regard them from their efficient
cause. For this is the same one for all creatures. It is the
inner formal cause that makes these differences in goodness under-
standable. All things are good, because they participate in being,
and they are not all alike because God gave each of them a diffe-
rent degree of being.[8] Those things that received a higher degree
of being are better and nearer to the highest good than those which
received a lesser degree. So there is a broad scale of goodness

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[7]De Natura Bona, 19; PL. 42,557: "Omnis natura itaque bona
est, et omne bonum a Deo est: omnia ergo natura a Deo est."

[8]De Civitate Dei, XII,2; PL. 41,350: "Cum enim Deus essentia
sit, hoc est summe sit, et ideo immutabilis sit: rebus quae ex
nihilo creavit, esse dedit, sed non summe esse, sicut ipse est; et
aliis dedit esse amplius, aliis minus; atque ita naturas essentia-
rum gradibus ordinavit."

in the world, from the lowest form of dead matter which is near the abyss of nothingness, up to the highest form of created goodness, the spirits, which with their correctly ordinated wills and intellects partake in the life of God in the Beatific Vision.

If one asks Augustine about the characteristic marks of being that make all things to be good and to be good in all different degrees, he answers that there are three generic goods: 'modus', 'species', and 'ordo'. By contributing these generic goods to things God gives them their existence and places them within the whole of the universe. Thus the measure, form and order not only constitute the concept but the real and essential criteria of being:

> "Nam nemo formare et creare corpora nisi Deus potest: neque enim creantur, nisi cum eis modus et species et ordo subsistit...."[9]

Where these generic goods are found, there is an existing creature, which is a good; where they are not, there is nothing at all.[10] To some things God gives more of these generic goods and to others less and thus there arises the endless realm of creatures.[11] These

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[9] De Natura Boni, 18; PL. 42,556.

[10] Ibid., 23: "Ubi aliquis modus, aliqua species, aliquis ordo, aliquid bonum aliqua natura est: ubi autem nullus modus, nulla species, nullus ordo est, nullum bonum, nulla natura est."

[11] Ibid., 3; PL. 42,553: "Omnia enim quanto magis moderata, speciosa, ordinata sunt, tanto magis utique bona sunt: quanto autem minus moderata, minus speciosa, minus ordinata sunt, minus bona sunt."

goods are so much the constituents of a creature that a being of higher degree of measure, form, and order, although it is corrupted, always remains better than another being of a lower degree. As proof for this statement Augustine points to the general estimation which gold has among men. Although gold may be somehow corrupted, nevertheless men see in it a higher value than in uncorrupted silver. And in the same way, he says, is a corrupted spiritual being of a higher degree of goodness than any inanimate being.[12] If all creatures would preserve their special measure, form, and order, there would be no evil at all.[13]

The generic good of measure, form, and order, which constitute things as good in themselves, have also the connotation of the relationship to the whole of creation. To be within the universal order for Augustine attributes to things a special value. Measure not only means a well proportioned relationship between unity and multiplicity within the single creature, but means also that this creature is so proportioned that it fits well into the whole as a part. Even more has order of the single thing a relationship to the order of the whole. Order generally speaking means for Augustine the law of God's wisdom, which comprehends all and without which nothing in God's universe exists or happens. Outside of

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[12]De Natura Boni, 5; PL. 42, 553.

[13]Ibid., 37; PL. 42, 563.

God's order sin and error cannot exist or cause anything else to exist.[14]

B. The Nature and the Origin of Physical Evil

a. Preliminary questions

Since everything that is, is good, there is only one answer to the question about the essence of evil: Evil is 'nothing'. That indeed, is Augustine's answer. "Deus, qui paucis ad id quod vere est refugientibus, ostendis malum nihil esse."[15]

With this answer, however, Augustine is far from saying that there is no evil in this world. Augustine sees the life of man so afflicted with all kinds of evils that many were inclined to call Augustine a pessimist of the worst kind. His own life had been too painful with all the doubts and spiritual vexations for him to overlook the presence of evil in this world. In the City of God he paints the miseries of this life in a compact way. "We are encompassed with evils", he says, "and no flood of eloquence can suffice to detail the miseries of this life."[16] Each single person is surrounded by dangers and the seed of destruction is in him from the first day of life. He recounts the sicknesses that

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[14]De Ordine, I, c. 6; PL. 32,985: "Causarum autem series ordine includitur. Et error ipse non solum gignitur causa, sed etiam gignit aliquid cujus causa sit. Quamobrem quo extra ordinem non est, eo non potest ordini esse contrarius... Et bona et mala in ordine sunt."

[15]Soliloq., I, c.1,n. 2; PL. 32,869

[16]De Civitate Dei, XIX, 4; PL. 41,627 s.

harm or even destroy beauty and health,[17] and before which nobody

is secure, not even the wise man:

> "The amputation or decay of the members of the body
> puts an end to its integrity; deformity blights its
> beauty, weakness its health, lassitude its vigour,
> sleepiness or sluggishness its activity and which
> of these is it that it may not assail the flesh of
> the wise man?" [18]

Even the virtues, though they hold the "highest place among good

things, have as their sole occupation to wage perpetual war with

vices, not those that are outside of us, but within."[19] So the

very virtues of this life, which are the highest goods and "most

useful possessions", bring with them war and are "all the more

telling proofs of life's miseries as they are helpful against the

violence of life's dangers, toils and woes."[20]

Augustine turns to recount the miseries of social life, con-

sidering friendships, family, state and the community of mankind.

He concludes:

> "Let every one, then, who thinks with pain on all these
> great evils, so horrible, so ruthless, acknowledge
> that this is misery. And if anyone either endures or
> thinks of them without mental pain, this is a more
> miserable plight still, for he thinks himself happy
> because he has lost human feeling." [21]

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[17]De Civitate Dei, XXII, 22.

[18]Ibid., XIX, 4.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., XI, 7.

Not are there evils only within man and evils produced by the community of man, the whole of nature may become an endless danger for the human being. There are "extreme heats and cold, storms, floods, inundations, lightning, thunder, hail, earthquakes". There are dangers "from the painful or even deadly bites of wild animals, from the madness which a mad dog communicates, so that even the animal which of all others is most gentle and friendly to its own master, becomes an object of more intense fear than a lion or dragon".[22] So Augustine calls this life here on earth an "infinitely deep sea of bitterness".[22]

The answer then that evil is _nihil_ does not intend to deny in form of a superficial optimism the real presence of evils in this world, but it is founded on Augustine's concept of God and of existence as such. God is the _Supreme Being_ and evil is, as the Manicheans correctly say, the opposite of God. Yet the opposite to the _Supreme Being_ is not a supreme evil substance, but _nihil_. An evil substance would be a contradiction in itself. For substance means existence, and all existence is good.

Asked what evil positively is, Augustine's answer is that in the strictest sense there is only one evil: sin. But there is another kind of evil connected with the first one: punishment for

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[22]_De Civitate Dei_, XXII, 22.

sin. However, this is already 'evil' in a broader sense.[23] In an even wider sense 'evil' is the so called physical evil, which is conditioned by the limitation of created beings.[24]

This limitation itself, however, Augustine does not regard as an evil. Everything is good in so far as it contains the goodness of its species. That the one species contains less perfection than another species is not an evil. Sometimes, Augustine says, the lower species is called evil in comparison with a higher species,[25] but that is a very improper way of speaking. A completely developed animal is not ugly in itself but only in comparison with the human being.[26] Thus Augustine rejects an evil as the mere absence of higher goods which do not belong to the essence of the

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[23]Ctr. Fortunatum, 15; PL. 42,117: "Nam omnia Deus bona fecit, et bene ordinavit; peccatum autem non fecit: et hoc est solum quod dicitur malum, voluntarium nostrum peccatum. Est et aliud genus mali, quod est poena peccati. Cum ergo duo sint genera malorum, peccatum et poena peccati; peccatum ad Deum non pertinet, poena peccati ad vindicem pertinet."

[24]Ctr. Faustum Manich., 22; PL. 42,450: "Ac per hoc in omnibus quae humana infirmitas horret aut timet, sola iniquitas jure damnatur: caetera sunt vel tributa naturarum, vel merita culparum."

[25]De Natura Boni, 23; PL. 42,558: "Item species mala vel in comparatione dicitur formosioris atque pulchrioris, quod ista sit minor species, illa major, non mole, sed decore."

[26]Ibid., 14; PL.42,555: "....sicut in hominis forma quia major est pulchritudo, in ejus comparatione simiae pulchritudo deformitas dicitur: et fallit imprudentes, tanquam illud sit bonum, et hoc malum; nec intendunt in corpore simiae modum proprium..."

species. These limitations are the presuppositions for the exis-
tence of minor goods by which the beauty of the cosmos is construc-
ted. "Et quia non aequalia omnia fecisti, ideo sunt omnia; quia
singula bona sunt et simul omnia valde bona."[27] We must therefore
say that the limitation of goodness in each species for Augustine
is not an evil. It is not an evil to be less good.[28] One could
call it a metaphysical imperfection, because each species realizes
only a limited aspect of infinite being. But since this limitation
specifies only the positive though limited aspect of being, and
thus is not 'contra naturam' but 'secundum naturam', it is not an
evil.

On the other hand, since created being is not the absolute
highest being, this fact of limitation makes it possible for the
single examplar not to accomplish the whole perfection of what it
should be. It makes it possible for it to be robbed of goods it

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[27]Conf., VII, 18.
Cf. De Natura Boni, 16; PL. 42,556: "Quae tamen etiam privationes
rerum sic ordinentur in universitate naturae, ut sapienter consi-
derantibus non indecenter vices suas habeant. Nam et Deus certa
loca et tempora non illuminando, tenebras fecit tam decenter quam
dies. Sic enim nos continendo vocem, decenter interponimus in
loquendo silentium; quanto magis ille quarundam rerum privationes
decenter facit, sicut rerum omnium perfectus artifex?"

[28]Contra Ep. Manich., c. 31; PL. 42,197: Accusing Manichaeum
Augustine says: loquitur "de infimis et pro sui generis modulo in
imc rerum ordinatis bonis; quae dum comparantur superioribus vitu-
perandis ab imperitis existimantur; et dum consideratur quantum his
desit boni, quod illis adest, ejusdem boni absentia mali nomen
tenet."

should have. The specific metaphysical essence of finite beings includes a 'more' or 'less' in its physical realization. That means: An animal is in its essential goodness always better than a stone. This essential goodness remains as long as the subject exists. However, if a dog, for example, loses a leg or gets sick somehow, it does not represent the whole beauty and goodness that it should have. Therefore, the dog is afflicted with physical evil It lacks of an accidental being which is necessary for the full realization of its nature. Here we find not only absence of goodness but privation of goodness.

The question is: does Augustine think that the necessary consequences of the existence of limited corporeal beings, such as sickness and suffering and death, are real evils? Many critics answered 'no', and looking back to what we have seen about the goodness everything gets by being within the order of the universe, we would also be tempted to give a negative answer. Such an answer however, would not be correct.

Saying that those evils not due to free will are either punish ment or 'caused by the limits of the lowest creatures in which the one generation has to vanish and give place to another',[29] Augus-

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[29] Ctr. Secund. Manich., 15; PL. 42,596: "Nec tamen omnem defectum esse culpabilem, sed solum voluntarium, quo anima rationalis ad ea quae infra illam sunt condita conditore suo deserto declinat affectum; hoc est enim quod peccatum vocatur. Caeteri autem defectus qui non sunt voluntarii, vel poenales sunt, ut peccata puniantur moderatrice summa atque ordinatrice justitia; vel mensuris rerum infimarum interveniunt, ut praecedentia succedentibus cedant."

tinus unambiguously acknowledges physical evil as real evil. It is true that Augustine stresses at different times that this physical evil cannot be called evil in the strictestsense: "Omnium igitur corruptionum sola quae vitiosa est corruptio recte vituperatur: caeterae, autem, aut ne corruptiones quidem dicendae sunt, aut certe quia vitiosae non sunt, dignae vituperatione esse non possunt."[30]

When Augustine pronounces that "there are only two kinds of evils, sin and penalty of sin",[31] this must be understood as corresponding to what mostly absorbes his interest: God, and man in his relation to God. "What do you want to know?" he asks himself, and his answer is: "God and the soul I want to know.--Nothing else? No, nothing else."[32] Therefore such a statement as above must not

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[30]De Libero Arb.,III, c. 14; PL. 32,1291.

[31]J. Mausbach, Die Ethik des Heiligen Augustinus, (Freiburg 1.Br., 1929), vol. II, p. 153. Here Mausbach repreaches Augustine for limiting with this statement the problem of evil on an insufficient basis: "Das Dilemma, von dem er auszugehen scheint, jedes Übel müsse entweder Schuld oder Strafe sein, ist unvollständig und als Grundlage einer vollständigen Theodizee nicht zu verwerten." But on the other hand Mausbach is forced to concede that Augustine himself apparently does not understand this division of evil into sin and punishment in an exclusive way: "Diese Einteilung der Übel (indSünde und Strafe) erscheint nicht vollständig; sie wird auch von Augustinus nicht überall als ausschliessliche gefasst..." (Ibid vol. I, p. 111-112)

[32]Soliloq., I, 2; PL. 32,872.
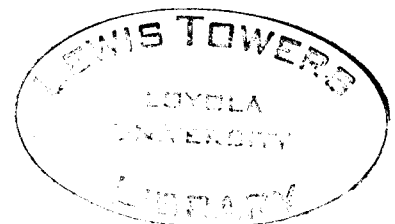
be understood 'sensu exclusivo' and it does not deny the reality
of physical evils which are conditioned by the metaphysical imper-
fection of created beings.

b. The essence of evil

After having seen that Augustine acknowledges physical evil
as real evil, although only in a broader sense, let us now con-
sider what Augustine points out as characteristic of evil in its
essence and its origin.

Augustine assigns corruption as the most outstanding charac-
ter of evil.

> "Quis enim dubitet totum illud quod dicitur malum,
> nihil esse aliud quam corruptionem? Possunt qui-
> dem aliis atque aliis vocabulis alia atque alia
> mala nominari: sed quod omnium rerum malum sit, in
> quibus mali aliquid animadverti potest, corruptio
> est."[33]

Corruption, however, can only exist in something good. Thus the
very corruption itself proves that the subject, which is corrupted,
is good.

Since goodness means participation in being, in existence,
evil as corruption, as privation of goodness, is in the same way
privation of being. Evil is defection from being, a tendency
toward nothingness: "malum tendit ad nihilum." With the growing
of evil, being is diminished. Should goodness become totally cor-

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[33]Ctr. Ep. Manich., c. 35; PL. 42, 201.

rupted, the existing nature would vanish. Finally if the nature disappears completely, corruption also disappears, because corruption can only be in a good nature.[34]

As we have seen earlier, the goodness of a subject is constituted by the generic goods of measure, form and order. All beings can exist only by participating in these generic goods. Evil, therefore, is a corruption of these modes of being: "Malum nihil aliud est quam corruptio vel privatio modi vel speciei vel ordinis naturalis."[35] Evil deprives the thing of its measure, form and beauty, and its order. But it cannot be a complete deprivation without destroying completely the subject and with it the evil itself.

Therefore, it is quite apparent that there cannot be an evil substance. To make this absolutely clear, is the main purpose Augustine pursues in his considerations about physical evils. A scorpion, for instance, is not an evil substance, as the Manicheans say. For the scorpion is beautiful in its kind, full of order measure and form. Even less, can there be a so called highest evil substance, as the Manicheans conceive it. "Evil is that which

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[34]Ctr. Ep. Manich., c. 16; PL. 42, 205: "... quanto magis augetur corruptio, tanto magis tendit ut non sit."

[35]De Natura Boni, c. 4; PL. 42, 553.

falls away from essence and tends to non-existence."[36] Thus the
highest evil would be non-existence, that is: nothing. Evil is
always against the nature of a subject of which it is an evil:
"Quod autem malum, non natura, sed contra naturam est."[37]

Considering generally what can exist and what really exists,
Augustine classifies all beings in three kinds of goods: 'bona
vitiata' or 'vitiosa', goods which are corrupted by an evil; 'bona
incorrupta', goods which are free from any evil and therefore are
of a higher rank among goods; finally there is a 'bonum incorrup-
tibile', which cannot be affected by an evil.[38] This absolutely
good nature, which is God, really exists, but there cannot be an
absolute evil nature.

Now, to evaluate correctly the descriptions and definition,
Augustine gives of evil as corruptio, defectus, privatio, amissio
boni, we have to keep in mind that they are born in the polemic
situation against the Manicheans. Against them he has to avoid
any indication that he regards evil as a palpable reality; for the
Manicheans would have understood by such a concept a substantial
reality. Therefore, in his fight against Manicheism, Augustine
views more or less only the formal aspect of evil.

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[36]De Morib. Manich., c. 2; PL. 32, 1346: "Idipsum ergo malum
est.... deficere ab essentia et ad id tendere ut non sit."

[37]Ctr. Ep. Manich., c. 33; PL. 42, 199; cf. ibid., c. 35.

[38]De Civitate Dei, XII, 3; PL. 41, 351.

This formal aspect shows evil in its metaphysical essence and as such evil is mere privation of goodness, wanting in substance, truth and beauty. The material aspect on the contrary shows the concrete object in its totality, as a substantial being with all its accidental determinations. Viewing this aspect of evil Augustine would have had to describe the concrete object in so far as it is affected with evil.[39]

Now, generally considering the formal aspect of evil, Augustine avoids having to speak about evil things or men. But Augustine does not deny the material aspect. He is not afraid to call a corrupted nature bad, although, when saying so, he never omits to stress that in so far as there is a nature, it is a good:

> "Mala itaque natura dicitur, quae corrupta est: nam incorrupta utique bona est. Sed etiam corrupta, inquantum natura est, bona est; inquantum corrupta est, mala est." [40]

Not only the corruption in an apple is bad (evil), but the corrup-

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[39]Cf. Nirschl, Ursprung und Wesen des Bösen nach der Lehre des Hl. Augustinus, (Regensburg, 1854), p.77. Nirschl well described this distinction between the formal and material aspect, calling them the subjective and objective point of view. He writes: "Im ersten Falle (i.e. in the subjective point of view) betrachtet man das böse Subjekt in seiner verkehrten Gesinnung und Tätigkeit, und darum wird man es hier mit der Sünde, ihren verschiedenen Arten und Graden zu tun haben. Im zweiten Falle wird vom bösen Subjekte gänzlich abstrahiert, und das Böse in seinem objektiven Sein zu begreifen und in seinem Verhältnisse zum Subjekte zu bestimmen gesucht. Diese Betrachtungsweise gibt uns den abstrakten Begriff des Bösen, des Bösen als solchen, während jene den konkreten zu ermitteln hat."

[40]De Natura Boni, c. 4; PL. 42, 553.

ted apple itself is bad and as such it can infect all other apples which lie in contact with it. Augustine never denied this very concrete reality, which evil has in this world, and its power to infect and to spread out. In his fight with the Manicheans, however, he purposely restricted his consideration to the formal aspect of evil.

In the Philosophie des Christentums, Staudenmaier points out that all the Fathers of the Church, agreeing with Augustine in defending the negative character of evil, at the same time never deny the objective reality and positive power of evil in this world.[41]

It is to be noted that in his later years, especially in his fight against the Pelagians, Augustine had to switch over to the more 'natural' use of the word Malum.[42] This is to say that the Pelagians forced him to speak about the corrupted nature itself, not only about the corruption within the good nature.

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[41]Staudenmaier, Die Philosophie des Christentums, p. 553: "Denn wenn auch alle Kirchenväter darin übereinstimmen, dass das Böse nicht ein wahrhaft Reales, ein Sein in wirklicher Wahrheit sei; denn wahrhaft ist nur, was aus Gott ist, und das ist das Gute, so haben sie dessen ungeachtet nie die objektive Wirklichkeit des Bösen, sowie das Streben desselben als ein dem Guten positiv entgegengesetztes geleugnet."

[42]Mausbach, vol. I, p. 110.

c. The Origin of Physical Evil

Now that we have seen what Augustine understands by physical
evil, namely a privatio boni debiti, we have to find out where he
indicates the origin of evil is. Since the negative character of
evil shows it as disagreement with nature and having no substance
of its own, Augustine puts to himself the question:"Whence then
is it?" To find the answer to this question, he says, we have to
look for the end, to which all evil leads. This end is non-exis-
tence, is nothingness. In corruption entities fall away from
their being. This means that they are brought to noncontinuance,
which is the same as non-existence. While the growing in goodness
and gaining in being can only come from God, because it is an
approaching to God, evil and corruption can only come from nothing-
ness, because it is a tendency toward nothingness:

> "Et cum ista tibi proposueris esse et non-esse, atque
> cognoveris quanto magis augetur species, tanto quid-
> que tendere ut sit; quanto magis augetur corruptio,
> tanto magis tendere ut non sit: quid dubitas dicere
> in unaquaque natura corruptibili quid in ea sit ex
> Deo, quid sit ex nihilo; cum species secundum na-
> turam sit, corruptio contra naturam."[43]

Augustine's greatest concern in dealing with the problem of
evil is to prove that God is not the cause of evil. Considering
evil under the formal aspect, namely as absence of being and good-
ness, it is not too difficult for him to accomplish this task. For

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[43] Ctr. Ep. Manich., c. 40; PL., 42, 205

what has no existence, what is nothing, needs no cause at all.
Therefore God can not be the cause of evil, of the absence of good-
ness.

However, if we consider evil under the material aspect, then
we must say that the evil corrupted nature has been made by God.
Yet it is not what is corrupted in this creature that is from God,
but only the nature, in so far as it is good. Augustine even says
that the natures as far as they are corruptible, are not from God.
"Non faceret Deus naturas corruptibiles. In quantum enim naturae
sunt, Deus fecit; in quantum autem corruptibiles, non Deus fecit;
non enim est ab illo corruptio, qui solus est incorruptibilis."[44]

As the context proves, this corruptibilis must not be under-
stood in the strict sense as the possibility for corruption. For
the possibility for corruption is at the same time the possibility
for improvement and as such it cannot be called evil. Even matter,
Augustine says, is good; for if the actual being is good, then
also the capability to the good, which represents the unformed but
formable matter, is not an evil.[45] If therefore the statement

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[44]Ctr. Ep. Manich., c. 38; PL.,42, 203.

[45]De Natura Boni, c. 18; PL., 42, 556 s: "Porro si bonum ali-
quod est forma, unde qui ea praevalent, formosi appellantur, sicut
a specie speciosi, procul dubio bonum aliquod est etiam capacitas
formae. Sicut quia bonum est sapientia, nemo dubitat quod bonum
sit capacem esse sapientiae, Et quia omne bonum a Deo, neminem
oportet dubitare, etiam istam, si qua est, materiam non esse nisi
a Deo."

that corruptible natures, in so far as they are corruptible, are not made by God, is to have any sense at all, Augustine must understand by 'corruptible natures' actually corrupted natures or even more probably the actual limitation of natures, which always includes actual absence of goodness.[46]

In this regard the question arises whether Augustine makes the 'nihil' into a substantial principle. One cannot deny that it is very misleading when Augustine says that the corruption is not 'ex Deo sed ex nihilo' or that as the species and the 'tendere ad esse' is from God so the corruption or the 'tendere ad nihilum' is ex nihilo. Among other, Trepte, for instance concludes from such statements that St. Augustine is not consistent in his conception of nothingness. It is true, Trepte says, that Augustine at different times very clearly defines 'nihil' as the absolute nothingness. So for instance in Contra Julianum, I, 8:

> "Non quia nihil habet aliquam vim; si enim habet, non
> nihil, sed aliquid esset. Nihil nec corpus est ullus
> nec spiritus nec substantiis aliquid accidens nec in-
> formis aliqua materia nec inanis locus nec ipsae tene-
> brae, sed prorsus nihil. Nihilo naturam factoris a na-
> tura eorum, quae facta sunt, discernimus."

In this sense however, Trepte says, the metaphysical imperfection cannot explain the corruptibility of the creatures. Metaphysical

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[46]It appears to me that in this and similar expressions Augustine comes very near to Leibniz' metaphysical evil, looking upon all limitation as impossibly coming from God--because it is thought to be evil.

imperfection becomes something positive; the otherwise powerless nihil is conceived as having a certain power. For otherwise the nihil could not be the basis for a change of the forms and essences as they come out of the hands of the Creator.[47]

Trepte thinks Augustine had come to this concept of a powerful nihil because of his theory of creation. As Christ is born out of God and therefore is infinite, so the creatures, because they are born out of nothing, are imperfect. Trepte thinks that this comparison proves his interpretation of Augustine's concept of nihil as a positive principle. He says also: "The natural imperfection has to be seen as the inherited nothing, out of which the creature has been formed, and if the nothing has a certain quality, then also the imperfection can have a certain power and make possible a change in the creature."[48]

Although there may be some misleading statements in Augustine's writings, they do not justify such an interpretation of the role of the nihil in Augustine's explanation of the origin of evil. The very fact that Augustine in all his writings after his conversion shows such a clear concept of the purely negative character of nothingness, should make one doubtful that such an acute thinker

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[47]Trepte, p. 5: "Nein, die metaphysische Unvollkommenheit kann in der Form, wie sie oben Augustin gefasst haben will, nicht die Verderbbarkeit der Kreatur erklaren. Sie ist vielmehr hier Augustin unter der Hand zu etwas Positivem geworden, das sonst ohnmachtige Nichts hat eine gewisse Kraft erhalten; denn ohne eine solche konnte es eine Veranderung der von Gott gesetzten Seinsweise der Kreatur nicht ermoglichen."

[48]Ibid., p. 5

would have used the nihil as a powerful principle for the real con-
struction of this world.[49]

One of the reasons why Augustine so much stresses the creation
out of nothing is that he wants to distinguish himself from those
philsophers and haeretics who do not keep a clear distinction bet-
ween the procession of the Son out of the essence of the Father,
and the creation of the world. In De Natura Boni Augustine explicit
ly refuses such haeresy[50] and stresses the fact that he does not
think of a positive power when speaking about the nihil. He ridi-
cules those haeretics, who understand the word of Holy Sripture:
"Sine illo factum est nihil", as if it said that the nihil was
created and therefore must be something. These people, Augustine
says, lost their minds because of their inclination to contradict.
He points to some statements of Holy Scripture where it is clearly
expressed that nihil does not mean 'something', as in St. Paul's
letter to the Romans (14, 17) : "Qui vocat ea, quae non sunt, tan-
quam sint."[51]

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[49] With regard to the role the nihil has in Augustine's con-
ception of creation and the finite world: cf. Mausbach, I, p. 137.

[50] De Natura Boni, c. 27; PL. 42, 560: "Ex ipso autem non hoc
significat quod de ipso. Quod enim de ipso est, potest dici ex
ipso; non autem omne quod ex ipso est, recte dicitur de ipso. Ex
ipso enim coelum et terra, quia ipse fecit ea; non autem de ipso,
quia non de substantia sua."

[51] De Natura Boni, c. 25-26; PL. 42, 559ss.

Having this historical position in mind, which was conditioned by haeretical adversaries, it becomes absolutely certain that Augustine did not conceive of the nihil as a second principle for the explanation of a finite creation and its corruptibility.

To explain the corruptibility and all change within natures, it was sufficient for Augustine to conceive God as the highest Being, the ultima substantia, and ultima causa. This God was for him the 'I am', the only being that did not receive and possess his act of existence, but who is identical with his existence and therefore cannot lose it nor change it. All other beings received their act of existence from God, and as they get it, so they can lose it. There can be a change in them because they came into existence within time, and thus they are temporal, changeable beings.

But the change from being to non-being, from the good to the bad does not need a cause. Only the movement toward God, toward greater being and greater goodness needs an efficient cause. It is Augustine's concept of evil as 'absentia boni debiti' that prevents him from conceiving nothingness as a positive power.[52]

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[52]Cf. Billicsich, Das Problem des Ubels in der Philosophie des Abendlandes, (Wien, 1955), I, p. 258, note 143. Here Billicsich quotes different modern critics like Harnack, Dorner, Heimsoeth, Ueberweg-Geyer,etc., who all tried to prove that Augustine understands the nihil as a powerful principle, which God has to use for the creation of a finite world, so that Augustine had never overcome the Manichean dualism. This objection,however, Augustine had rejected already in his book Contra Julianum.

We will have to come back to the question about the role of nothingness in Augustine's explanation of evil when talking about moral evil and its 'deficient cause'.

For Augustine the origin of physical evil lies in the created-ness of finite beings. There is no real cause for physical evil; neither is God the cause of it nor is the nihil a powerful prin-ciple that would destroy finite beings from within. Because they received their being, they can lose it. And they lose it, because God wanted a world of continuous change, in which one generation of living beings after another has to vanish to be replaced by a still new one.

It follows, therefore, that for Augustine physical evil would have been a reality also in a world without sin. It belongs neces-sarily to a finite creation. If God wanted a temporal world of inanimate and animate bodily beings, He necessarily had to admit the coming into being and dying of these things; the fact that later beings would replace the older ones and even fight against them; the gradual and partly painful decay of subhuman life.[53]

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[53]Burton's contention that Augustine completely identified sin and evil and therefore was not able to acknowledge the "neces-sity of evil wherever is life", is absolutely unfounded. As in the quotation from Contra Secundinum, XV: " Caeteri autem defectus ....mensuris rerum infimarum interveniunt, ut praecedentia succe-dentibus cedant....", it is apparent that for Augustine a finite corporeal world necessarily includes 'defectus' (i.e. evils); only he is not willing to accept this sort of 'evil' in the same sense as the evil of sin. Augustine would not deny that in human life ignorance and all sorts of difficulties could be natural and would have been present in a pure natural order. But for him these dif-ficulties of life would not have been really evils, for they would

Refusing to admit any kind of real causality, especially in God, for physical evil as a falling away from being, Augustine however speaks of some kind of permission of God for the presence of evil. Nothing can happen in God's creation without His permitting it. In De Ordine Augustine has Monica express the comprehensive words about evil in this world. These have to be applied to physical evil as well as to punishment and even to moral evil:

> "...non puto nihil potuisse praeter Dei ordinem fieri,
> quia ipsum malum quod natum est, nullo modo Dei ordi-
> ne natum est; sed illa justitia id inordinatum esse
> non sivit, et in sibi meritum ordinem redegit et
> compulit."[54]

God permitted this kind of evil in the cosmos because He saw that the corruptible beings are in such a way that they only contribute to the order and the goodness of the universe, and that their passing away would not leave any stain on the created beauty.[55]

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have given man the task to overcome them and so would have been the reason for the beauty of heroic struggle in mankind. "Ignorantia vero et difficultas si naturalis est, inde inde incipit animam proficere, et ad cognitionem et requiem, donec in ea perficeretur vita beata, promoveri." Cf. Le Roy Burton, p. 186.

[54]De Ordine, II, c. 7; PL. 32, 1005.

[55]De Natura Boni, c. 8; PL. 42, 554: "....nec esse, quamvis minora et minima bona, nisi a summo bono Deo potuerunt, sic ordinata sunt, ut cedant infirmiora firmioribus, et invalidiora fortioribus, et impotentiora potentioribus,....Fit autem decedentibus et succedentibus rebus temporalis quaedam in suo genere pulchritudo, ut nec ipsa quae moriuntur, vel quod erant esse desinunt, turpent aut turbent modum et speciem et ordinem universae creaturae: sicut sermo bene compositus utique pulcher est, quamvis in eo syllabae atque omnes soni tanquam nascendo et moriendo transcurrant."

Looking back at what we have achieved up to here, we must say that these philosophical considerations in Augustine offer a mere aesthetical solution of the problem of evil.   In its metaphysical essence evil is privation of being and good; it has a purely negative character.   Each single creature bears the germ for its decay in itself from its very beginning.   But by decaying, by falling away from being, the single creature does not pollute or affect the beauty and goodness of the universe.   On the contrary, it contributes to the goodness of the whole, by fitting in the order as God's wisdom has designed it.

Yet this is not the whole solution Augustine offers with regard to physical evil in the anti-Manichean books.   All physical evil that somehow affects man is at the same time considered as punishment. On the following pages we have to try to understand Augustine's teaching on this point and its relation to what we called the aesthetical solution.

d. Physical Evil as Punishment

In his Dialogues, written in the first years after his conversion, Augustine follows very much the pagan Neoplatonic thoughts of Plotinus and so arrives like this one more or less only at the aesthetical solution.   Very soon and with the progress of years, however, he sees this world as one whose original order has been destroyed by the sin of Adam.

Viewing evil from this standpoint, Augustine not only differs

from Plotinus but is completely opposed to him. For in Plotinus
there is no place for a really free will in a creature. Lastly
all origin of evil for Plotinus lies in matter, in what has with-
drawn furthest from the 'One'. Since a certain necessity lies over
the whole creation, the original order is never abolished. Under
the new aspect, however, the original order, which was a superna-
tural one, has been broken down and a new one had to be built by
the grace of God. So physical evil is not only the necessary con-
sequence of the finiteness of creatures, but is intimately connec-
ted with the sin of Adam. The disorder and plagues in this world,
sicknesses and death are then considered as a privation of a good,
with which man once was gratuitously gifted or which even belonged
to his nature: "vulneratus in naturalibus".

As was stated above, even in a creation of a purely natural
order there would have been physical evils. Then man would also
have been subjected to pains and sufferings. But these pains and
sufferings would not have been an evil in the proper sense. Now,
however, pains and sufferings are penalties for the sin of Adam
and our own sin. In this sense Augustine contends that the evils
are not natural: "Ecce autem omnia, quae fecisti Deus, bona valde:
mala vero non esse naturalia."

In the order in which man de facto has been created, namely
with supernatural grace and with the vocation for eternal life,
man was the lord of this world and all creatures obeyed his com-
mand. Through sin this hierarchy has been corrupted. The lower

natures no longer are obedient to the higher natures; the body and the flesh disobey the commands of the spirit. The animal world no longer respects man as its lord. This whole disorder is the effect of original sin which makes all physical evils, that afflict man a punishment.[56]

Thus all the suffering of the innocent creatures gets its real meaning only, if it is seen within the order in which sin has such an important place. In the De Libero Arbitrio, for example, Augustine points out how God uses the suffering of the children to correct their parents. The suffering of the children is without doubt an evil for the children themselves as for their parents. But God uses these physical evils to free the parents from the slavery of sin and save them for eternal life. For the children

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[56]Ctr. Ep. Manich., 37; PL. 42, 203: "Et hinc maxime apparet quantum tibi tribuerit dignitatem, quod Deus qui solus tibi naturaliter dominatur, fecit alia bona quibus tu quoque dominaveris. Nec mireris quod nunc tibi non omni modo serviunt et te aliquando etiam cruciant: quia Dominus tuus majorem potestatem habet in ea quae tibi serviunt quam tu in ipsa, tanquam in servos servorum suorum. Quid ergo mirum si tibi peccanti id est non obtemperanti Domino tuo, poenalia quibus dominaberis, effecta sunt? Hoc namque humana natura in Adam meruit, de quo nunc non est disputandi locus: sed tamen dominator justus et justis praemiis et justis suppliciis approbatur, beatitate recte viventium poenaque peccantium."

these evils soon will be as if they never had been, while for the
parents they have eternal effects.[57]

Physical evil as punishment has two meanings: it is medicine
for the sinner himself and it is a means used by God to maintain
the order of the universe, as it is de facto.

Some critics, as among others K. Scipio, reproach Augustine
of not having solved the problem of evil because, as is said, he
overlooked what the suffering under physical evils means for the
suffering human being. It is not enough, Scipio says[58] to tell the
suffering human being that his pains and sorrows belong necessari-
ly to the beauty of the universe. But this criticism is not justi-

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[57] De Libere Arbitrio, III, c. 23; PL. 32, 1304.

[58] K. Scipio, p. 106: "Das Übel erweist Augustin als kosmischen
Schein, hervorgebracht durch den beschränkten endlichen Standpunkt
des Beschauers. Er vergisst, dass für das leidende Ich das Übel
mehr ist als eine ästhetische Trübung, weil das Ich mehr ist als
ein seelenloses Atom. Er übersieht, dass der Kosmos selbst übel
ist, welcher dem Leidenden keinen andern Trost zu geben vermag als
den: 'Du leidest eigentlich gar nicht, dein Leid ist nur ein Man-
gel des Normalzustandes.' Gerade hier befindet sich die bedenk-
lichste Stelle in Augustins System: über die Tiefe des Leids und
des Übels, wie sehr er auch persönlich offenes Gemüt dafür hat,
geht er in der Erklärung zu oberflächlich hinweg. Der ernstlich
leidenden Persönlichkeit kann es überall vollständig einerlei sein,
dass ihr Leid antithetisch der Gesamtschönheit der Welt zur Folie
diene. Augustins Beseitigung des Übels ist ein Taschenspieler-
stueckchen, eine Escamotage. Nicht mit ästhetischen (universellen)
sondern mit religiösem (individuellen) Optimismus hätte er allein
den Pessimismus überwinden können."

fied. While Augustine does say that the most important factor is
that the order of the universe is maintained, or, if it is disturbed
that it is repaired by the suffering of those who are the cause of
the disturbance, he also maintains that it is better for sinners
themselves to suffer punishment for their sins, so that they might
be healed from the corruption, which sin has effected in them.
Explicitly Augustine says that all punishment, which we receive on
earth, is medicine to cure man: "Quidquid divinitus ante illud ul-
timum iudicium vindicatur, ad medicinam valere credendum est."[59]
In this sense even for the single person punishment is not an evil
strictly speaking because, as Augustine says, sin without punish-
ment is worse than the suffering of punishment. For sin is the
real evil and punishment is only the means to cure man from the
evil of sin.[60]

Besides being medicine, punishment is used by God to maintain
the order of the universe, which has been destroyed by sin. God
has a fixed plan of the world, in which everything has its place.
If now man refuses to accomodate himself to this plan then punish-

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[59] Ctr. Ep. Manich., c. 1; PL. 42, 173.

[60] De Natura Boni, c. 20; PL. 42, 557: "Sunt autem mala sine
dolore pejora: pejus est enim gaudere de iniquitate, quam dolere
de corruptione: verumtamen etiam tale gaudium non potest esse nisi
ex adaptione bonorum inferiorum; sed iniquitas est desertio meli-
orum. Item in corpore melius est vulnus cum dolore, quam putredo
sine dolore, quae specialiter corruptio dicitur."

ment has to replace what by his own the sinner does not fulfill:

> "Sicut enim qui non vigilat, dormit; sic quisquis non
> facit, quod debet, sine intervallo patitur quod de-
> bet, quoniam tanta est beatitudo justitiae, ut nemo
> ab ea nisi ad miseriam possit abscedere."[61]

God's planning and acting is always directed toward the universal good, which is at the same time the good of the individual. It depends on the free creature if it accomodates itself to God's intentions. In case the creature leaves the order and puts itself in opposition to the divine will, this very divine will and acting, which remains intending the good and happiness for the creature, must appear in the form of revenging justice. The divine order, against which the creature fights, turns itself against the sinner. "Quibus bonis omnibus qui male uti voluerit, divino judicio poenas luet."[62]

From what has been said it becomes clear that Augustine regards punishment as something good. It is good, because it is a means for God to maintain the beauty and goodness of the universe, which is an image of God. It is good because it proceeds from divine justice; and everything that is just is also good:

> "Ita ergo Deus malum (poenae) facit, quod non ipsi

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[61]De Libero Arbitrio, III, 15; PL. 32, 1293.

[62]De Natura Boni, c. 13; PL. 42, 555.

> Deo malum est, sed eis, in quod vindicat. Itaque
> ipse, quantum ad se pertinet, bonum facit, quia omne
> justum bonum est, et justa est illa vindicatio." [63]

And punishment is good in a certain way even for the punished per-
son, because it helps him to reach his final supernatural goal.
Because of this goodness of punishment Augustine does not hesitate
to attribute punishment positively to God: "Peccatum ad Deum non
pertinet, poena peccati ad vindicem pertinet."[64]

We have to ask now if the fact of physical evil being punish-
ment is another reason why physical evil is not an evil in the
strict sense. In a certain way Augustine certainly wants it to be
understood so.

As we have stressed so much before, Augustine views the single
events and facts always from the point of view of the total order,
which represents God's wisdom in this world. Thus now, because
physical evil is used by God as punishment, it contributes to the
goodness of the universe in a special way. It helps to cure the
sinful human beings so that they might fit into the universal order
and reach their final goal, and it is a kind of reparation for the
injury done to divine justice.

However, there is a certain break between the consideration
of physical evil as necessary consequence of a finite creation and

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[63] Ctr. Adimant., c. 26; PL. 42, 169.

[64] Disp. ctr. Fortunat., 15; PL. 42, 118

physical evil as punishment. While the first kind of consideration
is appliable to a pure natural order, the second kind presupposes
a supernatural order in which man is destined for eternal life in
union with God. Augustine himself, however, does not know a clear
cut distinction between a pure natural order and the supernatural
order. That's why in his writings these two points of view are
found side by side.

e. Conclusion

Looking back at our whole consideration about physical evil,
we come to the conclusion that for Augustine physical evil can be
only an evil in a very improper sense. We saw every being, in so
far as it participates in being, to be good; for to be means to be
good. Under this aspect there is no place for evil: evil is
nothing. That, however, does not mean that Augustine flatly denies
the real presence of physical evil in this world. What he wants to
deny is only that evil in its metaphysical essence is not a sub-
stantial principle, contributing positively to the existence of
this world. As it is a necessary consequence of the creation out
of nothing, so in itself it is nothing else than a tendency of the
creature toward nothingness in corruption and decay. As such
physical evil is not a stain on God's creation; much more, it under-
lines the beauty and the goodness of the universe. Finally physical
evil gets a new meaning and importance by being punishment, so
being a means in God's hands for restoring the order of justice and

a medicine against the only real evil--sin.

CHAPTER III

MORAL EVIL

A. Introduction: Physical Order and Moral Order
Encompassed by the Eternal Law

To turn from the physical order of evil to the moral order
does not mean in Augustinian philosophy to start from the very
beginning with an absolutely new subject. There is no complete
cleavage between these two spheres.

Both orders, the physical and the moral, are encompassed by
the one eternal law. This eternal law determines the well ordered
events and the development of the inanimate and animate subhuman
natures. It also orders men so that in freely living according
this eternal law they become just and united with God. "Nos vero
....secundum aeternam legem, qua naturalis ordo servatur, juste
vivimus."[1] This eternal law is identical with God's essence, or
better: with God's wisdom and His will: "Lex aeterna est ratio di-
vina vel voluntas Dei ordinem naturalem conservari iubens et per-
turbari vetans."[2]

Because this eternal law is identical with God's essence,

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[1] Ctr. Faustum, XXII, 27; PL. 42, 419

[2] Ibid.; PL. 42, 418

Augustine can say that God is the last principle of all moral good. Everything that is good is good only through Him in the same way as everything that exists has its being only through Him.

Having this in mind, we will attempt to elaborate Augustine's answer to the two questions: 1) What is the nature of moral evil? and 2) What is the origin and cause of moral evil?

B. The Nature of Moral Evil

a. Negative answer

In the answer to the question about the nature of moral evil, Augustine stresses the negative character of moral evil just as he does in regard to physical evil.

The Manicheans contended that moral evil proceeds from an evil substance in man tending toward an evil object. Against them Augustine defends the position that an evil action does not prove the existence of an evil substance either in the one doing wrong or in the object sought. The creatures to which man turns in his immoral action are good in themselves.[3] What is wrong is his inordinate attachment to them. Man was called by God to use the creatures as means to reach his final goal, God himself. In acting thus man becomes the free and dominating lord of all creatures. In

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[3]De Natura Boni, c. 34; PL. 42, 562: "Item quia peccatum vel iniquitas non est appetitio naturarum malarum, sed desertio meliorum; sic in Scripturis invenitur scriptum, Omnis creatura Dei bona est (1 Tim., IV, 4)."

immoral action, however, man makes himself the slave of the lower
creatures by making them the final end of all his wishes, seeking
in them all his happiness:

> "Quae quanquam in ordine suo recte locata sint, et suam
> quamdam pulchritudinem peragent; perversi tamen animi
> est et inordinati, eis sequendis subjici, quibus ad
> nutum ducendis potius divino ordine ac jure praela-
> tus est."[4]

Thus the object of sin is in itself good and therefore even in
immoral action man is striving for an image of God. If, however,
the object is good, it is neither necessary nor possible to con-
ceive of the one acting immorally as an evil substance. Even an
immoral act, in so far as it has an accidental being, is good.
Thus Augustine can say that in the act of sinning man is trying to
imitate God, only he does it in a wrong way:

> "Ita fornicatur anima, cum avertitur abs te, et quaerit
> extra te quae pura et liquida non invenit nisi cum
> reddit ad te. Perverse te imitantur omnes qui longe
> se a te faciunt, et extollunt se adversum te. Sed
> etiam sic te imitando indicant creatorem te esse omnis
> naturae."[5]

b. Positive answer

Since neither the object nor the subject nor the act of turning
toward the creatures as such makes an act sinful, the only evil

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[4]De Libero Arbitrio, I, 16; PL. 32, 1240.

[5]Conf., II, c. 6; PL. 32, 681.
Cf. Ctr. Secund. Manich., c.10; PL.42, 587.

in an immoral action lies in the turning away from God, in the in-
ordinate use of and the inordinate tending toward the creatures:

> "Non est ergo, ut dixi, peccatum malae naturae appetitio,
> sed melioris desertio; et ideo factum ipsum malum est,
> non illa natura qua male utitur peccans, Malum est
> enim male uti bono."[6]

Augustine describes this turning away from God as a falling away
from the highest being and greatest good, and thus a falling away
from the set order, which flows from and reflects the essence of
the highest being. This falling away from God corresponds to what
Augustine describes in the subhuman creatures as the tending toward
nothingness, their decay, by which these creatures lose part of
that goodness which they should have. Therefore immoral action is
pure deficiency. It is something negative, even privative.

Primarily Augustine sees in moral evil this absence of the
right direction of our action. But besides that, secondarily, he
describes moral evil as a privation of goodness in the soul of the
immorally acting person. As physical sickness is not the substance
of the body, but the privation of the health and completeness of
the body, so moral evil, sin, is not the substance of the soul, but
the privation of goodness and the completeness of the soul.

In book III, chapter 65 and the following of the De Libero

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[6]De Natura Boni, c. 36; PL. 42, 562.
Cf. De Libero Arbitrio, I, 16; PL. 32, 1240: ".... assentior,
omnia peccata hoc uno genere contineri, cum quique avertitur a di-
vinis vereque manentibus, et ad mutabilia et incerta convertitur."

Aruitrio Augustine treats ex professo the lessening of good in a soul acting immorally. There he contends that the soul, though losing of some goodness, is not robbed of all its goodness. This soul, though stained with sins, is on a far higher level of goodness than the goodness in lower natures. The ability to sin implies that basic goodness that is inherent in the faculties of intellect and will. Man with these faculties has greater metaphysical goodness even when he acts immorally than other creatures have which do not possess intellect and will.

> "Sicut enim melior est vel aberrans equus, quam lapis
> propterea non aberrans, quia proprio motu et sensu
> caret, ita est excellentior creatura quae libera vo-
> luntate peccat, quam quae propterea non peccat quia
> non haberet liberam voluntatem." (nr. 15)

Therefore God must be praised even in people acting immorally. This is not because they sin, but because they always keep the goodness of a spiritual being; and this is a higher form of an image of God himself.[7] According to Augustine the essential goodness of man which he possesses especially in his free will is never lost by acting immorally. The subhuman goods always remain far below man's goodness.

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[7] De Libero Arbitio, III, 5; PL. 32, 1279: "Cur ergo non laudetur Deus, et ineffabili praedicatione laudetur qui cum fecerit eas quae in legibus essent justitiae permansurae, fecit etiam animas, quas vel peccaturas vel in peccatis etiam perseveraturas esse praevidebat: cum et tales adhuc meliores sunt eis quae quoniam nullum habent rationale ac liberum voluntatis arbitrium peccare non possint?"

The fact that Augustine considers every existent as good and determines evil as the loss of good, could lead one to the conclusion that he thinks of immoral action as corruption of the substantial being of the subject.[8] Yet he often repeats that a higher nature, although corrupted, still remains better than a lower nature, although not corrupt. Thus Augustine points out that the difference between the good and bad angels lies not in having a different nature, but in the sin of the bad angels and the cleaving to God of the good angels. "The creature, therefore, which cleaves to God, differs from those who do not, not by their nature but by their acting which is immoral; and yet even in this very immoral acting the nature itself is shown to be very noble and admirable.[9]

What Augustine means by the diminution of being through immoral action is that man loses the participation in God's being. According to Augustine man and angel were gifted with supernatural

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[8]Trepte interprets Augustine in that way. He writes (p. 9s.) "Es liegt hier der Gedanke vor, dass je mehr das moralische Übel die harmonische Seinsweise der von ihm behafteten Substanz aufhebt, es um so mehr auch die Realität der letzteren verzehrt und damit zugleich seine eigene Existenz untergräbt. Denn, wie wir sehen, kann das Böse, als ein Nichtsubstantielles, nur an einem Realen in die Wirklichkeit treten. So ist das ganze Streben des böse gewordenen Realen gleichsam ein selbstmörderisches; es strebt nach seiner eigenen Vernichtung. Doch lässt Augustin, um die stete Überlegenheit des von Gott geschaffenen Realen über das widergöttliche Nichts festzuhalten, das Böse sein Ziel nie ganz erreichen, sondern sich ihm höchstens nähern (nihilo appropinquare)."

[9]De Civitate Dei, XXII, 1; PL. 41, 751-52

life from the first moment of their existence, and with the power
of this life they were directed toward God, the highest truth and
the absolute being. It is precisely this standing before God that
established the greatness of angel and man. Related by special
gift to God, they partake in His being and have in Him a higher
degree of being. They were lifted up above their created and na-
tural degree of being. But falling away from the highest being,
the _summa essentia_, angels and men are now on a level of being
lower than they had been before and lower than they should be.
Losing the intimate connection with God that was theirs, the fallen
angels and men kept only their finite nature. Yet this nature was
wholly oriented toward the supernatural life.

Thus sin not only disturbs the supernatural gifts in man, but
it corrupts that natural perfection of man which is constituted by
its corresponding measure, form and order. Measure, form and order
reach in man the highest degree possible in this visible world,
because in man they contain the ethical element of the relation
of the rational nature to God.

The measure of the soul consists in wisdom. By this the soul
avoids the deviation into the 'too much' and 'too little'. This
wisdom as measure of the soul saves man from diving into the lusts
of flesh or power, and from separating himself from all the world,
living egotistically for himself.[10]

[10]_De Libero Arbitrio_, II, 9-16; PL. 32, 1257 ss.

The natural form or beauty of the soul is the 'rectitudo voluntatis' or the 'veritas'. Man has his capacity for this actuated by grace.[11] Now, after having turned away from God, man lost this grace and with it the ability to direct his will easily toward its only and highest good. Through the aversion from God man sinks into vanity and darkness of spirit.[12]

Sin thus corrupts the order within and without. For ofder says: subordination of the body to the soul and of the soul to God. But through sin man puts created goods higher than God. By perverting this most fundamental order, the order within man falls apart. The body no longer is obedient to the spirit but revolts against it. So the tendency toward nothingness which is the characteristic of sin exists in both the loss of grace and the disorder of nature.[13]

Concluding we must say that for Augustine the characteristic trait of moral evil - as we have seen it also for physical evil - is the tendency toward nothingness. He refuses to admit that immoral action presupposes an evil substance or that such immoral

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[11]Ctr. Ep. Manich., c. 16-18; PL. 42, 184 ss.

[12]De Gen. ctr. Manich., II, 16; PL. 34, 208: "Particeps veritatis potest esse anima humana, ipsa autem veritas Deus est immutabilis supra illam. Ab ea vero veritate quiquis aversus est et ad seipsum conversus tenebratur mendacio."

[13]De Mor. Manich., c. 6; PL. 32, 1348: "....Nihil est autem esse, quam unum esse.... Quare ordinatio esse cogit, inordinatio vero non esse."

action has itself any kind of substantial evil being. Primarily immoral action is the wrong directedness of the will, its aversion from God and its inordinate conversion to the creatures. Secondarily immoral action is the loss of goodness, loss of supernatural life with its nearness to God. This loss then effects the loss of natural goodness of the human being.

C. The Origin of Moral Evil

a. Negative answer

There arises the question now: whence comes this falling away from God? Where is the origin, what is the cause of it? First of all it is apparent, Augustine answers, that God cannot be the cause of it, since it is a moving toward nothingness like corruption in the physical sphere. God cannot at the same time be the cause for being and non-being.

Always having this viewpoint in mind, Augustine endeavors to find an answer which does not imply that ultimately God is the cause of sin in any way. Because of this, the doctrine of the Manicheans that the flesh is responsible for all moral evil is unacceptable . In their dualistic conception there exist two human beings, the one born out of voluptuous desires, godless and knowing only the sinful desires of the flesh, the other born out of the spirit, similar to God and full of God's life. For Augustine, however, the total man with body and soul has been created by God.

Therefore man is good in his totality.[14] We must love not only
our soul, but also our body, since God gave it to us that it might
help us with all its faculties to reach our final goal. "Sic uti-
que diligit carnem suam, quam sibi ad obedientiam legitime subdit
atque ordinat."[15] Everybody who declares the body with its desires
as the cause of sin, accuses God and makes Him the last cause of
all moral evil.[16] The evils of the flesh, then, with its disordered
concupiscence are due to original sin and are not originated by the
body as such. These evils are the result, not the cause of sin.[17]

So we have seen that the negative answer on the question
about the origin of moral evil is very clearly given by Augustine:
neither God nor the flesh is the cause of moral evil. Therefore
the cause for all sin - in so far as there is a cause at all-

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[14]Ctr. Faustum, XXIV, 2; PL. 42, 475: "Non itaque unum hominem
fecit ad imaginem suam, et alteram fecit non ad imaginem suam: sed
quia hoc utrumque interius et exterius simul unus homo est, hunc
unum hominem ad imaginem suam fecit..."

[15]Ibid., XXI, 5; PL. 42, 391

[16]De Civitate Dei, XIV, 5; PL. 41, 408: "Non igitur opus est
in peccatis vitiisque nostris ad Creatoris injuriam carnis accusare
naturam, quae in genere atque ordine suo bona est."

[17]Ibid., XIV, 3; PL. 41, 406: "Nam corruptio corporis quae
aggravat animam, non peccati primi est causa sed poena; nec caro
corruptibilis animam peccatricem, sed anima peccatrix fecit esse
corruptibilem carnem." "....Verumtamen qui omnia animae mala ex
corpore putant accidisse, in errore sunt."

can be sought in free will alone. Thus Augustine somehow identi-
fies the question about moral evil with the question about free
will:

> "Quae tandem esse poterit ante voluntatem causae volun-
> tatis malae? Aut enim et ipsa voluntas est, et a
> radice ipsa voluntatis non recedit: aut non est volun-
> tas, et peccatum nullum habet. Aut igitur voluntas
> est prima causa peccandi, aut malum peccatum est causa
> peccandi: nec est, cui recte imputetur peccatum nisi
> peccanti. Non ergo est, cui recte imputetur nisi
> volenti."18

b. Positive answer

Now we have to find out how Augustine explains the fact that
the free will created by the good God turns away from God toward
less goods. How does free will get its movement toward nothing-
ness?

Augustine is absolutely certain that we really have a free
will, that we choose in free choice what to do and what not to do:

> "Non enim quidquam tam firme et intime sentio, quam
> me habere voluntatem eaque me moveri ad aliquid fru-
> endum; quid autem meum dicam prorsus non invénio,
> si voluntas qua volo et nolo non est mea; quaprppter
> cui tribuendum est, si quid per illam male facio,
> nisi mihi?"19

18De Libero Arbitrio, III, 17; PL. 32, 1295.

19Ibid., III, 1; PL.32, 1272.
The fact that Augustine never doubted the full freedom of will
even at the time when he had to stress the importance of grace in
the fight against the Pelagians, can be shown with his own words
in the Retractationes and the De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio:
Retractationes, I, c. 9, 3; PL. 32, 595: "Quapropter novi haeretici
Pelagiani, qui liberum sic asserunt voluntatis arbitrium, ut gra-
tiae Dei non relinquant locum, quandoquidem eam secundum merita
nostra dari asserunt, non se extollant, quasi eorum egerim causam;

Influences from outside or from our own feeling and imagination do not exclude freedom of choice. As bodily beings we are dependent on these influences. But freedom of choice only says that we have the power to reject or to accept objects which offer themselves to our eyes or inner imagination.[20]

Free will however as such does not include sinfulness or not even the possibility to sin. For if it did so, we would have to say that God has no free will, while in reality God is the most free being although He cannot sin. This peculiarity Augustine finds in the fact that the human free will has been created out of nothing. Augustine here compares the human will with all the other created beings. As they corrupt because they are created out of

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quia in his libris dixi pro libero arbitrio, quae illius disputationis causa poscebat."
De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio, 1; PL. 44, 881: "Propter eos qui hominis liberum arbitrium sic praedicant et defendunt, ut Dei gratiam qua vocamur ad eum et a nostris malis meritis liberamur, et per quam bona meritis comparamus quibus ad vitam perveniamus aeternam, negare audeant et conentur auferre, multa iam disseruimus... Sed quoniam sunt quidam, qui sic gratiam Dei defendunt, ut negent liberum arbitrium; aut quando gratia defenditur, negari existiment liberum arbitrium, hinc aliquid scribere ... curavi."

[20]De Libero Arbitrio, III, 25; PL. 32, 1307: "Quid autem quisque vel sumat vel respuat est in potestate, sed quo viso tangatur nulla potestas est: fatendum est et ex superioribus et ex inferioribus visis animum tangi ut rationalis substantia ex utroque sumat quod voluerit; et ex merito sumendi vel miseria vel beatitudo subsequatur."

nothing, so it is this very creation out of nothing that gives the free will its direction of aversion from the highest being toward lower beings.

> "Motus ergo ille aversionis, quod fatemur esse pecca-
> tum, quoniam defectivus motus est, omnis autem defec-
> tus ex nihilo est, vide quo pertineret, et ad Deum
> non pertinere ne dubites."[21]

However, a certain necessity seems to be implied in Augustine's statement, as Evodius expresses this difficulty: "Quia si ita est data, ut naturalem habeat istum motum, jam necessitate ad haec convertitur; neque ulla culpa deprehendi potest, ubi natura necessita dominatur."[22]

Against this objection Augustine answers that there is an essential difference beside the similarity: While the stone necessarily falls and the finite body necessarily corrupts - the movement of the soul is willed and free.[23] Thus the spirit is free to

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[21]*De Libero Arbitrio*, II, 20; *PL*. 32, 1270.

[22]*Ibid*., III, 1; *PL*. 32, 1270.

[23]*Ibid*., III, 1; *PL*. 32, 1271: "Qui motus si culpae deputatur (unde qui dubitat, irrisione dignus tibi visus est), non est utique naturalis, sed voluntarius; in eoque similis est illi motui quo deorsum versus lapis fertur, quod sicut iste proprius est lapidis sic ille animi: verumtamen in eo dissimilis, quod in potestate non habet lapis cohibere motum quo fertur inferius; animus vero dum non vult, non ita movetur, ut superioribus desertis inferiora deligat; et ideo lapidi naturalis est ille motus, animo vero ille voluntarius."

sin or not to sin. From the fact of being created results for him only the <u>possibility</u> to sin. For the irrational creature, however, the <u>necessity</u> of decay and of all sorts of physical evils follow from the fact of being created out of nothing.

Viewing the whole realm of being, Augustine locates within this realm the position of the free will which can sin. This will is a good in between the highest and the lowest good: The subhuman creatures cannot commit immoral acts, although created out of nothing, because they have no rational nature. God cannot commit an immoral act, although He is a rational nature with free will, because He is the absolute being, unable to fall away from Himself. Only angel and man can commit immoral acts, because they have a rational nature and are created out of nothing.

Thus we have seen that for Augustine being created out of nothing and having free will are the two presuppositions for the possibility of moral evil.[24] But they do not give the cause of moral evil. In other words, the free will itself such as it has been created by God, is not the cause of sin. To understand this answer, we have to have a closer look at what Augustine thinks about the good will.

As in his theory of knowledge, so also here in his teaching

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[24] De Libero Arbitrio, II, 20; PL. 32, 1270: "Motus ergo ille aversionis quod fatemur esse peccatum, quoniam defectivus motus est, omnis autem defectus ex nihilo est, vide quo pertineret, et ad Deum non pertinere ne dubites. Qui tamen defectus quoniam est voluntarius, in nostra est positus potestate."

on freedom of will, Augustine stresses the total dependency of man in his activity on the cooperation of God. Man can only do what God gives him the strength to do. "Da quod jubes et jube quod vis."[25]

Therefore the power of free will, according to Augustine, cannot be effective without the influence of God. He has to give divine concourse in so far as the act of choice has existence, which only God can give. God has to give his grace so that man can choose and do the good, because by choosing and doing something good man draws nearer to God; he acquires new goodness. And this acquiring of a higher degree of goodness and being can only be done by the grace of God.

Accordingly, for Augustine man cannot perform any good act without the divine help.[26] Even the virtuous acts of the pagans can only be done if God gives them His grace. However, this grace is different from the sanctifying grace of the children of God, by which they become able to perform meritorious acts for eternal life.

Generally speaking one may say that without the concursus gratiae man is too weak to tend towards the highest being and there-

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[25]Cf. Confessiones, X, 29; PL. 32, 796: "....imperas nobis continentiam. Et cum scirem, ait quidam, quia nemo potest esse continens nisi Deus det: et hoc ipsum erat sapientiae scire cujus esset donum.(Sap., VIII, 21)"

[26]De Libero Arbitrio, II, 20; PL. 32, 1270: "Sed quoniam non sicut homo sponte cecidit, ita etiam sponte surgere potest..."

fore in this case falls into disorder striving only for the goods
of this world. This sounds, however, as if doing good comes only
from the power of grace and that the will by itself can only do
evil. That is, however not what Augustine teaches. The good and
virtuous deed is not partly the effect of the will and partly the
effect of grace, but it is at the same time totally the effect of
the grace and the will. God always offers enough grace to the will
to turn toward the good. And the will always remains free to ac-
cept the grace and to act with it or to reject it. When God en-
ables the will to will, and when He bestows on it the assistance
it needs to do what He orders, it is still the will which wills and
does what He orders. The free will to do what God gave man the
power to do always remains untouched.

Having in mind this complete dependence of the good free will
on grace and the unity of the good will with grace, we can under-
stand why Augustine rejects the idea that this good free will is
the cause of moral evil. If this good free will, such as it is,
acts, the effect necessarily must be good.

So we have seen that for Augustine the good will is not the
cause of immoral action. Therefore there remains only the evil
will as the cause of all evil:

> "... radicem omnium malorum esse avaritiam (1 Tim.,
> VI, 10), hoc est, plus velle quam sat est. Tantum
> autem sat est,quantum sibi exigit naturae in suo
> genere conservandae modus... Sed avaritia in omni-
> bus rebus quae immoderate cupiuntur intelligenda
> est, ubicumque omnino plus vult quisque quam sat est.
> Haec autem avaritia cupiditas est: cupiditas porro

improba voluntas est. Ergo _improba voluntas, malorum omnium causa est_."[27]

Thus "evil will is the efficient cause of the evil action",[28] and the nature of this evil will Augustine determines as avarice. By avarice, however, he does not only mean the immoderate desire for money. Avarice is understood in a broader sense as cupidity, the want for more than is sufficient. By this excessive wanting man leaves the order into which he is placed.

It is in this sense that Augustine must be understood when in another place he calls 'pride' the beginning of all sins. In pride man looks at himself and his own greatness in a disorderly way. The real greatness of man lies in the recognition and subordination of himself to God. The proud man sees this subordination as an unjustified limitation of his own personality. He wants an absolute greatness, as it belongs only to God. Wanting more than is sufficient and proper to him, the proud man incurs disorder and is thus directed toward nothingness.

Here arises a difficulty: On the one hand Augustine declares cupidity in the widest sense as the cause of all moral evil. On the other hand he rejects concupiscence as the cause of evil, as we have seen earlier. There we saw that Augustine looks upon the

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[27]De _Libero Arbitrio_, III, 17; _PL_. 32, 1294.
Cf. _Disputatio ctr. Fortunat._, 21; _PL_. 42, 123

[28]De _Civitate Dei_, XII, 6; _PL_. 41, 353: "...mala voluntas efficiens est operis mali, male autem voluntatis efficiens est nihil."

disorderly desire of the flesh not as cause but as the effect of sin, namely of the sin of Adam. One is inclined to ask: is concupiscence not one kind of cupidity, namely cupidity in the sphere of the flesh? For Augustine it is not, and therefore the contradiction between the two statements is only an apparent one. When speaking of concupiscence, Augustine understands by it the fleshly desires which are present and active without or even against our will. Therefore, since the cause of immoral action can be only in the will, concupiscence is not the cause of immoral action. When, however, speaking of cupidity, Augustine understands by it an activity of the will, as can be seen in the quotation above: "cupiditas porro improba voluntas est." The will may have been tempted by an irrational longing. But this irrational longing is not the cause of sin. The cause is in the disorderly acting will itself.

We have seen now, what Augustine determines as the cause of all immoral actions: the evil will, 'voluntas improba'. But with a certain necessity a further question is raised for us: what causes the will to become evil, what makes him turn away from God? To this question Augustine answers: "I do not know. For that which is nothing cannot be known."[29]

To understand what Augustine means in saying that sin is a 'motus defectivus' which has only a 'causa deficiens', it is useful to look at a text in the De Civitate Dei, in which he more

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[29] De Libero Arbitrio, II, 20; PL. 32, 1269.

often uses this expression. There he writes:

> If the further question be asked, what is the efficient
> cause of evil, none is found. It is the will itself
> which makes the action evil, but what is it that makes
> the will evil? And thus evil will is the efficient cause
> of the evil action, but of the evil will there is no
> such cause... Let no one, therefore, look for the ef-
> ficient cause of the evil will; for it is not efficient
> but deficient: this will is not productive of an effect
> but it is a defect. Defection from that which supreme-
> ly is, to that which is in a less degree, this is the
> beginning of an evil will. But to seek to discover
> the cause of these defections--causes as I have said,
> not efficient, but deficient,--is tantamount to endea-
> voring to see darkness or hear silence."[30]

In order to understand correctly Augustine's doctrine, we have to

distinguish between the formal and material aspect of moral evil,

as we have done it in regard to physical evil.

The formal aspect gives the essential nature of evil, shows

moral evil as pure negativity, as the absence of the well directed

activity of the will towards God. This absence in reality is a

defective movement, is a falling away from God, the highest being,

towards the lower beings. In this falling away, Augustine says,

the will is not efficient, but deficient, it is lacking a reality

that should be there. Since this privation as such is not a real

something, it cannot be known; for it has no corresponding divine

idea. This, however, does not mean that evil does not exist. Pri-

vation, although not a real existent, designates something, a state

of affairs that is very real. This reality is the material aspect

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[30] De Civitate Dei, XII, 6 ss.; PL. 41, 353 ss.

of evil. In physical evil it was the corrupted creature, here it
is the evil corrupted will which is still powerful enough to com-
mit crimes and all kinds of immoral actions.[31]

Augustine does not at all deny the positive power which evil
has in its concrete form. Thus 'causa deficiens' must not be under-
stood as the absence of any power. It does not say that the will
is inactive in sin.[32] Therefore Augustine calls the evil will the
'efficient' cause of the evil action. The will, in so far as it
commits a sin, performs a spontaneous act: "Spontaneus est autem
iste defectus; quoniam si voluntas in amore superioris immutabilis
boni stabilis permaneret, non inde ad sibi placendum averteretur."[33]
Thus sin, evil will, in its concrete form is not pure passivity,
nor non-activity, but a spontaneous movement. Besides, many syno-
nyms, which Augustine uses for 'deficere' such as 'deserere','aver-
tere', 'relinquere', 'contemnere', all have the meaning of an ac-

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[31]K.Scipio does not see this material aspect of evil, as it
is found in Augustine's teaching about the 'causa deficiens'.
Scipio writes on p. 107: "Die Ausflucht, dass für das Übel und das
Böse keine causa efficiens zu finden sei, sondern nur eine causa
deficiens, ist doch nur ein billiges Wortspiel, vor welchem sich
der Denker in den wichtigsten Erörterungen hüten sollte. So sehr
Augustin praktisch das Böse hasst und sich der furchtbar verderb-
lichen Macht desselben bewusst ist, so ist doch seine Lehre vom
Übel und Bösen - infolge seiner antik-ästhetischen Neigungen- eben
zu sehr blosse Theoria in des Wortes etymologisch-wissenschaft-
licher Bedeutung, und es fehlt darin zu sehr das Bewusstsein von
der Macht und Bedeutung dessen, was Kant-allerdings von der anderen
Seite her zu extrem - 'das radikale Böse' genannt hat."

[32]Cf. De Libero Arbitrio, II, 20; PL. 32, 1270.

[33]De Civitate Dei, XIV, 13; PL. 41, 420.

tive movement of the will. They thus confirm the conviction that Augustine means a real active movement by his concept of 'causa deficiens'. So one may say that 'efficere' and 'deficere' are not different in regard to intensity and reality of the will's movement but they are different in regard to their direction seen against the background of the universal order.

For a deeper understanding of the concept 'causa deficiens', we have to think of what we said earlier about the intimate connection between the free acting of man and the cooperation of God that exists in the Augustinian way of thinking: Man as he has been created by God is wholly directed toward God and is called to the most intimate communion with God. For this communion with God he is equipped with a divine vital power, which he uses in his love of God. These acts of love man accomplishes himself as they have been given to him by God. Thus his acting is efficient. This is the task man has to perform, to lay hold on himself and to fulfill himself by and with his free acts.

In sin, however, man turns away from God. From the highest good he turns to the finite goods. This aversion is a defectus. But it is a defect not only in regard to the object. Man falls away from himself by not accomplishing any more the high power of grace, the love of God. In a certain way man acts with half of his power only. His activity is only 'deficiens', insufficient. In the same degree as man does not achieve himself and his own per-

fection, he also falls away from God and His divine order (lex aeterna), thus committing sin.

Concluding we must say that the origin of moral evil lies in the created free will. Turning away from God, however, the will is not efficient, but deficient, lacking goodness, not achieving that goodness God gave it the power to achieve. Since thus the evil will is deprived of goodness, it does not need an efficient cause. For the absence of goodness needs no cause. This does not mean that in sin the will is not active. It means that the sinner is rejecting the graces God offers him for doing the good, thus falling away from the intimate unity with God.

Did Augustine succeed with his teaching about the causa deficiens in making it impossible to declare ultimately God responsible for moral evil? Does not the question arise: Why did God give man free will? Is not the donor of this dangerous gift himself ultimately responsible for our morally bad deeds?[34] To this difficulty Augustine answers that the will, although not an absolute good as the virtues, nevertheless is a good[35] which was destined

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[34]De Libero Arbitrio, I, 16; PL. 32, 1240: "Sed quaero utrum ipsum liberum arbitrium quo peccandi facultatem habere convincimur, oportuerit nobis dari ab eo qui nos fecit. Videmur enim non fuisse peccaturi, si isto careremus; et metuendum est ne hoc mundo Deus etiam malefactorum nostrorum auctor existimetur."

[35]Ibid., II, 19; PL. 32, 1269: "Ita fit ut neque illa bona quae a peccantibus appetuntur, ullo modo mala sint, neque ipsa voluntas libera, quam in bonis quibusdam mediis numerandam esse comperimus."

to be used for the accomplishment of moral good. God is not responsible for the misuse of this gift. As the eye is not evil because it can be misused, so neither the will is evil because it can turn away from God.[36] The misuse does not abolish the goodness of the gift. God created man "that, whether they willed to sin or not to sin, they might be the ornaments of his universe".[37] The high position God gave to man, demanded that He equipped him with this precious gift. Because God gave to man all the help and graces he needed to stay in union with God and so to achieve his own perfection, Augustine concludes:

> "Omnino igitur non invenio, nec inveniri posse, et prorsus non esse confirmo, quomodo tribuantur peccata nostra creatori nostro Deo."[38]

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[36] Cf. De Libero Arbitrio, II, 18; PL. 32, 1267.

[37] De Libero Arbitrio, III, 11; PL. 32, 1287.
J.M. Verweyen writes in his book Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, (Berlin u. Leipzig, 1921), on page 37: "Ein Werturteil also: die Freiheit der Wahl zwischen Gut und Bosem ist, trotz ihres moglichen Missbrauches und der dadurch begrundeten ewigan Hollenstrafe, wertvoller als die naturnotwendige Richtung auf das Gute, bildet den irrationalen Einschlag in die rationalen Bemuhungen um eine Theorie des Bosen." Verweyen's misinterpretation of Augustine's point of view as irrational is founded on Verweyen's negligence of Augustine's theocentric way of thinking.

[38] De Libero Arbitrio, III, 16; PL. 32, 1293.

CONCLUSION

Let us look back now at this whole study with the question: does St. Augustine in his anti-Manichean works offer a solution of the problem of evil, that takes away from evil its threatening and frightening character.

We have seen how Augustine arrives at the first stage of his solution by application of metaphysical principles which he had learned from Plotinus. These principles enabled Augustine to see the essence of evil as non-being, as a privation of being and goodness. This Augustine will always keep as the essence of evil. The characteristic of this first stage, however, is that evil is seen as a necessary consequence of finite material beings. Even in their corruption these material things contribute to the beauty and perfection of the universal order of which they are a part. Thus the natural order of the whole justifies the corruption of the part so that the corruption cannot be called an evil in the strictest sense.

This solution, correct within its own limits, is incomplete and therefore not satisfying to man who lives in a world which has been polluted. By the study of Holy Scripture Augustine becomes more and more aware that the only real evil is sin. Sin is evil in the strictest sense, because here a creature decays, turns away

from the source of all goodness. Sin is not a necessary consequence
of man's being created, thus contributing to the beauty of a uni-
versal order; rather, by free choice it destroys the unity between
nature and God.

Through sin the whole original order is so destroyed that the
soul is no longer obedient to God, nor the body to the soul, and
the whole of subhuman nature becomes opposed to man. In this gene-
ral disorder physical evil is not merely the consequence of crea-
tion out of nothing, but it gets a new meaning: it is punishment
for sin. As punishment, physical evil has in a stricter sense the
character of evil, because it is freely contracted by the sinner.
But since punishment is a means to restore the universal order of
justice, it is not an evil in an absolute sense like sin.

Augustine's whole endeavor is to show that the cause of any
kind of evil cannot be found in God. Physical evil as such is the
necessary consequence of finite natures within a temporal hierar-
chical order. As a falling away from being, physical evil has no
cause at all. Moral evil on the contrary cannot be explained by
a hierarchical order, to the beauty of which it would contribute.
Like physical evil, it is a falling away from being. In so far,
it is similar to physical evil. But as a breaking out of the ori-
ginal order, moral evil needs an independent and free causality
and can be understood only on such terms. However, if the source
for sin would be an efficient cause, then ultimately God would be

responsible for it, since the will can be efficient only by using God's help. Yet, as a falling away from being, moral evil has no efficient cause. The cause is deficient. The will as deficient cause decides not to use the divine power, with the help of which it could accomplish its own perfection. But this decision is completely ours, to which nothing forces us. We saw that Augustine, stressing the negative character of evil, does not neglect the other aspect of evil, namely evil as a powerful force in this world.

Thus Augustine proves a God, who is not responsible for the evil in this world. God, the Summum Esse, created only the good, and as far as there is evil in His creation, it is decay from being which God permits for the benefit of a higher good. Nothing happens, that the almighty Goodness of God does not make subservient to a good.

The solution of these books then is in pointing to the almighty goodness of God. From the conviction of God's goodness man may draw his consolation; no one needs to despair, since God is goodness itself and the good is the only powerful principle, is being.

But Augustine was too much a religious thinker to be convinced that he had completely solved the problem of evil, the problem which he calls a difficillima quaestio. The problem of evil lead him to the mystery of the relation between free will and grace, to the mystery of predestination and ultimately to the mystery of Holy Trinity. His searching mind always sought to penetrate deeper

into these mysteries, but at the same time he was willing to bend his head before the infinite majesty of God, and to adore Him in His sanctity. To know that God is the highest Good was enough for him to overcome the despair and anxiety of the human heart in the face of all the evils of this world.

The ultimate solution given to the problem of evil is the divine love, which was presented to us in Jesus Christ. To this Augustine points especially in his later books, but can be found already in his anti-Manichean works:

> "Sed quoniam non sicut homo sponte cecidit, ita etiam sponte potest surgere, porrectam nobis desuper dexteram Dei, id est Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum fide firma teneamus, et expectemus certa spe et caritate ardenti desideramus."[1]

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[1]De Libero Arbitrio, II, 20; PL. 32, 1270

APPENDIX

FREE WILL AND GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

Tracing the origin of moral evil back into the human free will
Augustine necessarily had to explain the relation between free will
and God's foreknowledge.

For many a thinker of olden and modern times freedom of will
and foreknowledge are incompatible with one another.[1] Especially
in the De Civitate Dei Augustine explains in the discussion with
Cicero's solution of this problem, that this incompatibility is
only an apparent one. Augustine proves that instead of destroying
the freedom of will, God's foreknowledge makes free will possible.
For, as we have seen above, everything which exists has its exis-
tence only because it partakes in the being of God and because it
corresponds to a divine idea. How then could the knowledge of God

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[1]Le Roy Burton, p. 124: "We are inevitably forced to ask,
what is freedom? In what does a free act consist? If by a free
act we mean the reduction of a dual or multiple future possibility
to a single actual result, then it seems impossible for even omni-
science to know our future choices. Omniscience cannot perform the
impossible nor can omniscience know the unknowable. If our free
choices are foreknown according to Augustine's thought, and if this
position rests upon anything more than a desire to avoid religious
scruples, then we find an inadaquate conception of freedom."

be an obstacle for the existence of free will, since it is the
foundation for it:

> "Ita fit ut et Deum non negemus esse praescium omnium
> futurorum, et nos tamen velimus quod volumus. Cum
> enim sit praescius voluntatis nostrae, cuius est prae-
> scius ipsa erit. Voluntas ergo erit, quia volunta-
> tis est praescius. Nec voluntas esse poterit, si
> potestate non erit. Ergo et potestatis est praesci-
> us. Non ergo per eius praescientiam mihi potestas
> adimitur, quae propterea mihi certior aderit, quia
> ille cuius praescientia non fallitur, adfuturum
> mihi esse praescivit."[2]

That means that the free will as such is included in the intramun-
dane causes, as they are known in God's omniscience. Then Augus-
tine shows in the example, that if there would be human foreknow-
ledge with regard to free acts, it would not <u>cause</u> the free act.[3]
However, such an example does not explain how there can be real
foreknowledge, if we have a free will.

More satisfying is the hint that the incompatibility which
we see between free will and foreknowledge is conditioned by our
anthropomorphical conception of God's knowledge. We are accustomed
to conceive God's knowledge as being in time. But in reality there
is no past, no present and no future in God. Therefore, Augustine
says, we must compare God's foreknowledge with our human memory.
As our memory of past events does not produce or influence these
past events, so God's foreknowledge sees future events, without

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[2]De Libero Arbitrio, III, 3; PL. 32, 1275.

[3]Ibid., III, 4; PL. 32, 1276.

influencing them, because He sees them as happened, as facts.[4]

Without doubt these thoughts are not a complete explanation about the 'how' of the relation between free will and God's fore-knowledge. This 'how' will be an eternal riddle for man. But Augustine at least succeeds in pointing out that there is no con-tradiction between these two, whose existence we know with absolute certainty. The inner structure of the relation, however, remains a mystery.

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[4]*De Libero Arbitrio*, III, 4; *PL*. 32, 1276: "Sicut enim tu memoria tua non cogis facta esse quae praeterierunt; sic Deus prae-scientia sua non cogit facienda quae futura sunt. Et sicut tu quaedam quae fecisti meministi, nec tamen quae meministi omnia fe-cisti; ita Deus omnia quorum ipse auctor est praescit, nec tamen omnium quae praescit, ipse auctor est."

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Herbert H. Meyer
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The final copies have been examined by the
director of the thesis and the signature which
appears below verifies the fact that any neces-
sary changes have been incorporated, and that
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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial
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