

**Aspects of Dante's Theology of Redemption:  
Eden, the Fall, and Christ in Dante with  
respect to Augustine**

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I, Debora Marletta confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed

## **Abstract**

My thesis offers an account of salvation theology in Augustine and Dante under three main aspects: prelapsarianism, the fall, and the redemptive work of God in Christ. Resting on an analysis of the precise doctrinal position in these authors, the thesis is historical in conception, but is arranged in such a way as to allow the patterns of thought advanced by Augustine and Dante to enter into a dialogue one with the other, its overall purpose, therefore, being a species of conversation transcending the historical pure and simple.

In keeping with this, the thesis is in three chapters, the first chapter exploring the notion of man's original righteousness in Augustine and Dante, the second their respective senses of the fall in its essential substance and meaning, and the third their understanding of the redemptive work of the Christ. More precisely, the first chapter compares and contrasts Augustine's sense of how it is that man stands in need of grace for the purposes of good works even prior to the fall with Dante's sense of his direct creation in the image of God and of the implications of this for his persisting in good works without God's further assistance. The second chapter addresses the origins of sin, and, more particularly, compares Augustine's sense of evil as a matter of privation with Dante's account of it in terms of dysfunctionality on the plane of properly human loving. In Chapter Three I take up the question of the relationship between nature and grace, and, in consequence of the fall, the indispensability of the latter as that whereby man is brought home once again to God. But where in Augustine (and especially in the later Augustine) it is always a question of nature as moved by grace to its proper good, I argue that for Dante grace enters into nature for the purposes of empowering it from within itself to its proper righteousness and likeness to God.

Basing my argument on a strict reading of the text, and taking care in the introduction to identify the main historical and contemporary approaches to the question of Dante and Augustine (and thus to preserve at every stage a properly scholarly perspective), I nonetheless aim in my thesis to recreate in a manner over and beyond the purely historical something of the dialogue which is taking place here, a dialogue at every point informed, for all its distribution and re-distribution of

emphases, by a common existential intensity, a shared preoccupation with what it might mean for man *to be* both for self and for God.

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*For Guy and Simona*

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## List of Abbreviations

*Conf.: Confessions*

*Cont. duas epist. Pelag.: Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*

*De civ. Dei: De civitate Dei*

*De corrept. et grat.: De correptione et gratia*

*De div. quaest. ad Simpl.: De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*

*De doct. christ.: De doctrina christiana*

*De dono pers.: De dono perseverantiae*

*De gen. ad litt.: De genesi ad litteram*

*De lib. arb.: De libero arbitrio*

*De nat. bon.: De natura boni contra Manichaeos*

*De nat. et grat.: De natura et gratia*

*De nupt. et conc.: De nuptiis et concupiscentia ad Valerium*

*De pecc. mer.: De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptimo parvulorum ad Marcellinum*

*De perf. iust. hom.: De perfectione iustitiae hominis*

*De praed. sanct.: De praedestinatione sanctorum*

*De spit. et litt.: De spiritu et littera*

*De Trin.: De Trinitate*

*De uti. cred.: De utilitate credendi ad Honoratum*

*Ench.: Enchiridion*

*Exp. ad Rom.: Expositio ad Romanos*

*In ev. Io.: In evangelium Ioannis*

*SCG: Summa contra Gentiles*

*Serm.: Sermones*

*ST: Summa Theologiae*

*Retr.: Retractationum*

## Introduction

The absence of an Augustinian episode from the *Commedia* has been the subject of speculation in Dante studies from the early twentieth century to the present. Although Augustine appears twice in the poem, scholars have pointed out the lack of a canto or an episode in which Dante engages directly with the theologian.<sup>1</sup> In the first two decades of the twentieth century it is possible to identify two different ways of addressing the question of this absence. If on the one hand some believed that it was due to Dante's wilful distancing from Augustine's political or philosophical choices, others attributed it to his incapacity to understand Augustine's genius. In keeping with this, the absence of an Augustinian episode was deemed a matter of

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine is mentioned twice in the poem, once in *Par.* 10. 118-20: 'Ne l'altra piccioletta luce ride / quello avvocato de' tempi cristiani / del cui latino Augustin si provide', and in *Par.* 32. 34-36: 'e sotto lui così cerner sortito / Francesco, Benedetto e Augustino / e altri fin qua giù di giro in giro', where he is placed next to Francis and Benedict in the rose of the blessed. As regards Augustine's placement in the rose of the blessed next to Francis and Benedict, E. Moore, *Studies in Dante*, First Series: Scriptures and Classical Authors in Dante (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), pp. 291-94 (p. 291), writes that it is informed 'by [Augustine's] connexion with the monastic order', whereas E. Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics* (London: Dent, 1913), p. 76, believes that it is due to his role as 'an official exponent of [the church's] theology'. As regards Dante's mention of Augustine in his other works, *Con.* 1. 2. 14: 'L'altra è quando, per ragionare di sé, grandissima utilitate ne segue altrui per via di dottrina; e questa ragione mosse Agustino ne le sue Confessioni a parlare di sé, ché per lo processo de la sua vita, lo quale fu di [non] buono in buono, e di buono in migliore, e di migliore in ottimo, ne diede esemplo e dottrina, la quale per sì vero testimonio ricevere non si potea'; *Mon.* 3. 3. 13: 'Sunt etiam scripture doctorum, Augustini et aliorum, quos a Spiritu Sancto adiutos qui dubitat, fructus eorum vel omnino non vidit vel, si vidit, minime degustavit'; *Epist.* 11. 16: 'iacet Augustinus abiectus'; *Epist.* 13. 80: 'Ecce, postquam humanam rationem intellectus ascentione transierat, quid extra se ageretur non recordabatur. Et hoc est insinuaturnobis in Matheo, ubi tres discipuli ceciderunt in faciem suam, nichil postea recitantes, quasi obliti. Et in Ezechiele scribitur: "Vidi, et cecidi in faciem meam". Et ubi ista invidis non sufficient, legant Richardum de Sancto Victore in libro De Contemplatione, legant Bernardum in libro De Consideratione, legant Augustinum in libro De Quantitate Anime, et non invident.' P. S. Hawkins, 'Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*', *Publication of the Modern Language Association*, 106, 3 (1991), 471-82 (p. 471), (repr. in idem, *Dante's Testaments: Essays in Scriptural Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 197-212) speaks of the paradox between Augustine's 'minimal presentation in the *Comedy*' and 'what Dante's other works might have led one to expect'. In other words, Dante's celebration of Augustine as a model of moral progression in the *Convivio*, of divine inspiration in the *Monarchia*, of spiritual guidance and authority (as warrant to Dante's spiritual vision) in the letters to the Italian cardinals and in the letter to Can Grande della Scala, appears to be in contrast with the absence of Augustine from the poem.

Dante's reluctance to enter into conversation with Augustine, to have much to do with him at all as a theologian.

Alongside those who spoke of Augustine's absence and accused Dante of having known yet neglected or dismissed one of the most important representatives of the Middle Ages, there were also a few who, irrespective of this absence, argued in favour of Augustine's clear influence on Dante's works. While some provided an account of clear points of identification between the two, others spoke of Augustine as one of Dante's sources.<sup>2</sup>

In 1931 Carlo Calcaterra brought a new perspective on the question of Augustine's absence. Advancing his own, pre-eminently aesthetic, sense of how it is that the imagination knows no rules but its own, and claiming that the dictates of poetry freed Dante from having to account for anyone's presence or absence in the poem, he set out to refute the claims made by earlier scholarship and asserted that Augustine's absence did not prove anything at all, and that the poem is in fact permeated by doctrines traceable either directly or indirectly, through the mediation of Thomas Aquinas, to Augustine's teaching.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1931 it is possible to group the way in which scholars have looked at the relationship between Dante and Augustine into three main categories or methodological approaches – the historical or doctrinal, the existential or

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<sup>2</sup> Moore, *Studies in Dante*, p. 294, speaks of 'continually coming upon fresh points of resemblance' suggesting therefore an intertextual dialogue between Dante's and Augustine's works; G. Busnelli, 'S. Agostino, Dante e il Medio Evo', spec. issue of *Vita e pensiero* (Milan: [n. pub.], 1930), pp. 502-08, claims that no other writer had influenced Dante more than Augustine; Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, p. 48, writes that 'Dante was profoundly influenced by the works of Saint Augustine' and speaks of an analogy between Augustine's *De quantitate animae* and the general allegory of the *Commedia*. He also speaks of echoes of Augustine in the first canto of the *Inferno* and of Augustinian elements both in the *Convivio* and the *Monarchia*.

<sup>3</sup> C. Calcaterra, 'Sant'Agostino nelle opere di Dante e del Petrarca', *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica*, spec. suppl. to 23 (1931), 422-99; (repr. in idem, *Nella Selva del Petrarca* (Bologna: Lincio Cappelli, 1942)). All references to Calcaterra throughout my thesis will be from the 1942 reprint.

confessional, and the intertextual or philological. From these different perspectives scholars have revealed the significance of Augustine's influence on Dante. It is on this basis that it is now possible to read Dante and Augustine alongside each other in the informed conviction that not only had Dante read and understood Augustine, but that he had also made him part of his political, theological and poetic experience.

### **1 - Augustine in Dante: Critical Perspectives until 1931**

As mentioned above, early twentieth century scholarship advanced two main arguments to explain Augustine's absence from the poem. If some understood it as a symptom of Dante's inability to grasp the extent of Augustine's genius, others interpreted it as Dante's desire to pass over Augustine on account of the philosophical or political differences between the two. Thus, Giuseppe Boffito, claiming that Dante had not only failed to understand, but also been unable even to glimpse anything of Augustine's greatness, argues that it was Dante's reading of Augustine by way of – as Dante understood it – his later representatives (Egidius Romanus, Agostino Trionfo and Iacopo da Viterbo) that accounts for Dante's decision to exclude Augustine from the poem:

Di questo fatto [the absence of an Augustinian episode] che non ha potuto fare a meno di destar meraviglia a qualche dantista, la riposta ragione va forse cercata negli intimi rapporti che corsero tra Dante e gli Agostiniani [...] Dante dovette biasimare altamente in cuor suo le esagerazioni a cui, sebbene in buona fede, erano giunti Egidio e altri come Agostino Trionfo e Iacopo da Viterbo tutti della scuola e dell'ordine agostiniano, che vantava a suo fondatore, come anche l'Alighieri credeva, sant'Agostino; e volgere perciò sdegnosamente ad essi le spalle, e chiudere perciò ad essi, e per essi immeritatamente a Sant'Agostino, le pagine immortali della sua *Divina Commedia*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> G. Boffito, *Saggio di bibliografia egidiana, precede uno studio su Dante, S. Agostino ed Egidio Colonna (Romano)* (Florence: Olschki, 1911), p. 17.

Without reaching Boffito's extreme conclusion, Adolfo Faggi admits that 'a S. Agostino non [è] stata fatta nel divino poema la parte che si sarebbe potuta aspettare', and that the lack of an episode dedicated entirely to Augustine had deprived the *Commedia* of what could have been a moment of sublime poetry.<sup>5</sup> Advancing an explanation as to the reasons for Augustine's absence, Faggi claims that it was Dante's philosophical *forma mentis* which inclined him towards scholasticism, and therefore that it was Thomas rather than Augustine who shaped his basic attitudes and preferences in the poem.<sup>6</sup> Before Faggi, Felice Tocco had advanced a similar explanation claiming that Augustine's Platonism was responsible for Dante's scant admiration for the church father, and that 'a Dante forse pareva che l'opera di Agostino impallidisse in confronto della somma di S. Tommaso'.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Edward Kennard Rand had seen in Augustine's 'spirito platonico', which inclined him to 'voli romantici' and thus placed him in opposition to the ordered reasoning of Dante's Aristotelianism, the reasons for this absence.<sup>8</sup>

With respect to Dante's politics, Carlo Landi saw in Augustine's view of the Roman Empire, which strongly differed from Dante's, the reason for his dismissal from the pages of the *Commedia*. Landi argues that for Augustine the Roman Empire, tainted by violence and stained by the blood of its immoral conduct, was

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<sup>5</sup> A. Faggi, *Studi filosofici e letterari* (Turin: Vincenzo Bona, 1938), p. 273, (first publ. in idem, 'Dante e Sant'Agostino', *Marzocco*, 17 March 1929; and in idem, 'Nel centenario agostiniano', *Marzocco*, 7 September 1930): 'Immaginate un canto di S. Agostino come abbiamo un canto di S. Francesco e anche S. Domenico! Quali meravigliosi motivi di poesia un'anima come quella di Dante avrebbe potuto ricavare da un libro come le *Confessioni*.'

<sup>6</sup> Faggi, *Studi filosofici e letterari*, p. 195.

<sup>7</sup> F. Tocco, 'Le correnti del pensiero filosofico nel secolo XIII', in *Arte, scienza e fede ai giorni di Dante*, 4 vols (Milan: Hoepli, 1901), II, pp. 179-206 (p. 197).

<sup>8</sup> E. K. Rand, *The Founders of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), p. 279.

destined to perish after bringing to completion the Christianization of the world, which was, in Augustine's view, providentially willed. Against this, Landi presents Dante's sense of the inextinguishable role played by the Roman Empire insofar as it served, in the same way as the Church, as an instrument of divine grace.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to the positions discussed hitherto, there were, even in this early part of the twentieth century, some scholars who spoke of a clear Augustinian influence on Dante's works. Though claiming that 'The direct references to St. Augustine in Dante are not so numerous as perhaps might have been expected', Edward Moore shows Dante's debt to Augustine by listing Dante's direct and indirect references to his works.<sup>10</sup> Warning of the risk that Dante might have derived many of Augustine's 'theories or arguments' from Thomas Aquinas, he speaks, nonetheless, of 'continually coming on fresh points of resemblance' between the two authors.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Edward Gardner illustrates the influence that Augustine had on Dante presenting a number of doctrinal points that Dante might have derived from

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<sup>9</sup> C. Landi, 'Ancora Dante e Sant'Agostino', *Marzocco*, 31 March 1929, cited in Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, pp. 249-50: 'Ognun sa che, quando l'irrompere delle gotiche orde di Alaric nelle mura della stessa città eterna ebbe rinfocolate le vecchie accuse dei pagani contro il Cristianesimo, fatto responsabile della decadenza dell'impero, Agostino prese la parola per respingere le accuse e rintracciare l'azione della Provvidenza nelle vicende di questo mondo. Era sì nei voleri del Cielo che si costruisse l'impero di Roma, affinché tra le genti unificate di legge e di favella potesse celermente diffondersi la parola redentrice dell'Evangelo; ma adempiuto a questo ufficio, l'impero nato dalla violenza e macchiatosi, nel corso della sua vita secolare, d'iniquità e immoralità senza numero, doveva rassegnarsi a perire, com'era perito il superbo Ilio. A questa condanna si ribella con tutte le sue forze l'anima di Dante, pel quale la funzione dell'impero è immanente e inesauribile, in quanto strumento anch'esso, come la Chiesa, della grazia divina e necessario rimedio alle infermità del peccato, senza di che non esiste giustizia né salvezione. Tale dissenso su d'un capolavoro così essenziale per l'autore della *Monarchia*, solennemente ribadito per bocca di Giustiniano nel canto dell'aquila, se certo non era impedimento a collocare il grande santo nella gloriosa schiera dei contemplanti con Francesco e Benedetto, ben si comprende come potesse per avventura distoglierlo dall'idea di farne p. es. uno degli interlocutori del poema.'

<sup>10</sup> Moore, *Studies in Dante*, p. 294.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 294.

Augustine.<sup>12</sup> He argues, as Antonio Lubin had done before him, that the seven stages in the soul's advancement from animation to contemplation of the truth, discussed by Augustine in the *De quantitate animae*, are traceable in the *Commedia* and, more precisely, in the allegorical structure of the poem. It is Gardner's view that Dante, like Augustine, used this allegorical structure to refer to the mystical ascent of the soul in this life rather than to the state of the blessed in the other.<sup>13</sup> With respect to the moral structure of the *Purgatorio*, to its central conception of setting love in order, and the notion of love as gravitational force, Gardner traces their origin respectively to the *De civitate Dei* and the *Confessions*. He also argues that, in spite of the political differences between Dante and Augustine, they both believed in the providential role of the Empire, and that, in fact, Dante's *Monarchia* and *Convivio* were deeply influenced by the *De civitate Dei*.

## **2 - Critical Perspectives from 1931 to the Present**

In 1931 Carlo Calcaterra brought a different perspective to the question of the absence of Augustine from the pages of the *Commedia* and advanced new theories as to the influence of Augustine on Dante. Calcaterra argues that Augustine's absence, no more relevant than that of other theologians who are not granted space in the *Commedia*, ought to be understood primarily within the context of Dante's poetic freedom and artistic choices:

In fondo la domanda insistente con cui si cerca perché mai Dante nella figurazione generale della *Divina Commedia* non abbia fatto S. Agostino argomento d'un episodio speciale, non ha più valore di quella per cui si

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<sup>12</sup> Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, pp. 44-76.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 46-47; *La Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, ed. and intr. by Antonio Lubin (Padua: L. Penada, 1881), pp. 224-27.

potrebbe domandare perché egli non abbia fatto centro di un altro episodio S. Paolo, S. Giovanni Crisostomo, S. Ambrogio, S. Gerolamo, S. Gregorio Magno, S. Anselmo d'Aosta, o altri santi, i quali pure potevano essere fonte di viva e alta ispirazione poetica.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, he claims that to consider this absence as Dante's wilful omission presents the risk of either overemphasizing, as in the case of Giovanni Busnelli, or underestimating, as in the case of Boffito, the importance that Augustine had for him. As he puts it:

Ma il troppo sottilizzare sopra i motivi per i quali Dante non pose S. Agostino al centro di una scena paradisiaca, conduce a due estremi: o a quello a cui giunse il P. Boffito, che Dante non abbia non solo compresa, ma nemmeno intraveduta la grandezza del Santo, ovvero alla conclusione, a cui è giunto il P. Busnelli [*sic*] [that] da nessun altro scrittore, come da S. Agostino attingesse l'Alighieri più alti concetti di vita attiva e contemplativa.<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to this, he argues that not only is the ideological antithesis between Augustinianism and Thomism resolved within the 'serenità superiore' of the *Divina Commedia*, but also that the political opposition between Dante and Augustine can be reconciled on the basis of their shared understanding of the role of the Roman Empire, willed by God for the universal Christianization of the world.<sup>16</sup> For Calcaterra, then, Augustine's influence on Dante is much more deep-seated than previous scholarship had been willing to acknowledge.

What critics after Calcaterra have gradually come to emphasize is that, in spite of his apparent absence, Augustine has, to put it in Hawkins's words, 'an

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<sup>14</sup> Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, p. 251.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 251.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 251.

informing presence within the text itself.’<sup>17</sup> Scholarship has, in fact, continued to look closely at the relationship between Augustine and Dante focusing not so much any longer on the question of Augustine’s absence, but on his pervasive presence in the poem and what they believe to be not only, as Moore puts it, ‘fresh points of resemblance’ but also, as Hawkins writes ‘actual points of identification’ between Dante’s and Augustine’s texts.<sup>18</sup> With this I do not mean to say that scholarship has ceased to ask questions about the reasons for Augustine’s absence from the poem, but that these questions have been readdressed within the context of a now recognized influence of Augustine upon Dante’s work, and the *Commedia* especially.

## **2.1 - The Historical or Doctrinal Approach**

As far as I can say, the works which, from a doctrinal and historical perspective, have been most significant in detailing the relationship between Augustine and Dante, are those of Calcaterra, Pietro Chioccioni and Francesco Tateo.<sup>19</sup> In this section I shall look at the significance of their contributions in turn.

Besides the importance that the first of these has had in looking afresh at the much-disputed question of Augustine’s absence from the poem in the terms already discussed, he also presents a number of doctrinal points of identification between Augustine and Dante to which I shall now turn my attention. In claiming that both within a general and particular context ‘il mondo dantesco è nel suo intimo

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<sup>17</sup> Hawkins, ‘Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*’, p. 472.

<sup>18</sup> Moore, *Studies in Dante*, p. 291; Hawkins, ‘Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*’, p. 472.

<sup>19</sup> Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*; P. Chioccioni, *L’Agostinismo nella Divina Commedia* (Florence: Olschki, 1952); F. Tateo, ‘Percorsi agostiniani in Dante’, *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 76 (2001), 43-56.

compenetrato di pensiero agostiniano’, he also warns of two risks.<sup>20</sup> First, that Augustine’s and Dante’s doctrinal sameness might derive not necessarily from Dante’s direct knowledge of Augustine but from their sharing in a common faith, and second that Dante might have known Augustine’s thought indirectly, that is, through Thomas’s mediation. In spite of these warnings, Calcaterra is adamant in pointing out that in some of the doctrines espoused in the *Commedia* ‘lo stampo agostiniano è talora profondo e incancellabile’.<sup>21</sup> His analysis focuses mainly on two notions which he recognizes as distinctively Augustinian, namely the theory of the three modes of vision (the *supermondana visio corporalis*, *visio spiritualis sive imaginaria* and *visio intellectualis*), and that of the enhancement of the soul’s powers after judgment day. Other questions, such as Dante’s reference to the pagan gods as ‘falsi and bugiardi’, the temptation of error and the ignorance of truth, together with the difficulty of resisting the inclination to concupiscent behaviour, are also presented in passing to confirm Augustine’s presence in the *Commedia*.<sup>22</sup>

With respect to the first of these ideas, the three modes of vision, this, he points out, used as it is in the *Paradiso* to define the way in which Dante chooses to represent his spiritual ascent in the other world, derives from Augustine’s *De genesi ad litteram*. Calcaterra claims that after Augustine, Thomas had systematized this theory in the explanation he gives of St. Paul being taken up to the third heaven in the *Expositio et lectura super epistolas Pauli apostoli* 1. 12.<sup>23</sup> If we relate the word

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<sup>20</sup> Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, p. 259.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 259.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 259-68.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 261: ‘Questa pagina di S. Tommaso rivela all’evidenza la ragione intima e profonda dei modi di visione che sono proprii del *Paradiso* dantesco. Ma prima che di S. Tommaso la mirabile concezione era stata di S. Agostino, anzi l’interpretazione del rapimento di S. Paolo, data dall’Aquinata, non è che una più sistematica determinazione e un più ordinato chiarimento del libro XII del *De Genesi ad litteram* di S. Agostino.’

sky to the soul itself, Thomas argues, we ought to understand by it a certain kind of cognition, by which the soul ‘sees’ what surpasses natural cognition. Citing directly from Thomas, Calcaterra writes:

Se poi noi intendiamo la parola cielo secondo le cose che sono dentro l’anima stessa, allora noi dobbiamo denominare ‘cielo’ un particolare ‘grado di cognizione’, che supera la natural cognizione umana. La visione infatti è triplice, cioè: ‘corporale’, per cui vediamo e conosciamo i corpi; ‘spirituale’ o ‘immaginaria’, per cui vediamo le figure dei corpi (*corpora spiritualia sive imaginaria*); ‘intellettuale’, in cui conosciamo la natura delle cose in sé, poiché propriamente oggetto dell’intelletto è ciò che è (intendi: ‘l’essenza delle cose’).<sup>24</sup>

Calcaterra claims that Dante must have had this division in mind when he wrote the third canticle of the *Commedia*. However, crucial to his point is not so much that through Thomas Dante might have assimilated, perhaps unwittingly, Augustine’s doctrine of threefold vision, but that he knew (and used) the initial pages of Book 12 of Augustine’s *De genesi ad litteram* when, in his address to the reader in *Paradiso* 1, he wonders whether his ascent to the heavens takes place with his body or only with his soul.<sup>25</sup> Before beginning to deal with Paul’s rapture to the third sky, with the meaning of heaven, and the three forms of vision possible to man, Augustine warns the reader of the risk of trying to solve what Paul had left unsolved, whether, that is, he was taken up to the third sky with his body or only with his soul: ‘Quia et hoc ita posuit ut nescire se dixerit, utrum in corpore, an extra corpus raptus sit, quis audeat dicere se scire quod se nescire Apostolus dixit?’<sup>26</sup> It is precisely by

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<sup>24</sup> Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, pp. 260-61.

<sup>25</sup> *Par.* 1. 73-75: ‘S’i era sol di me quel che creasti / novellamente, amor che ’l ciel governi, / tu ’l sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti.’

<sup>26</sup> Likewise, F. X. Newman, ‘St. Augustine’s Three Visions and the Structure of the *Commedia*’, *Modern Language Notes*, 82, 1 (1967), 56-78, maintains that Augustine’s theory of the three visions developed in his exegesis of St. Paul’s *raptus* to the third heaven in Book 12 of the *De genesi ad litteram* played a fundamental role in the structure of the *Commedia*. Discussing the meaning of

exploiting this ambiguity, Calcaterra argues, and by combining Paul's experience with his own, that Dante was able to introduce the three modes of vision into the narrative of the *Commedia*, and have, as a consequence of this, more freedom with respect to the vision itself and his artistic representation. In Calcaterra's words:

Fu dunque in Dante finissimo accorgimento accogliere quell'avvertimento, sia per quel che riguarda la visione in se stessa, alla quale egli annetteva un significato soprannaturale, sia specialmente per quel che riguarda l'arte, giacché, lasciando egli indeterminata quella condizione, era assai più libero nella rappresentazione fantastica. Delle tre forme di visione quella che più si prestava alla rappresentazione artistica era la 'corporea', perché, se egli avesse dato prevalenza alla 'spirituale', il paradiso si sarebbe ridotto in gran parte a simbolismo e, se avesse dato prevalenza alla "intellectualis", la terza cantica o si sarebbe ridotta al momento sublime e ineffabile della comprensione dell'essenza divina o sarebbe diventata un trattato di filosofia.<sup>27</sup>

As briefly mentioned above, Calcaterra also singles out Dante's doctrine of the enhancement of the soul's powers on judgement day, tracing its source to Books 21 and 22 of the *De civitate Dei*. In response to Dante's doubt as to the intensity of the pain suffered by the damned after their body will be reunited with their soul, Virgil refers to the theory that the more something is perfect the more it suffers or rejoices: ' [...] quanto la cosa è più perfetta, / più senta il bene, e così la doglienza', (*Inf.* 6. 107-08). Even though, Virgil adds, the damned will never reach true

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*paradisus* in relation to Paul's *raptus*, Augustine advances an allegorical reading of the three Pauline heavens as representing three kinds of human visions, or modes of awareness. All types of knowledge, Augustine argues, involve these three modes, including the knowledge of God. It is in keeping with this division into *visio corporalis*, *spiritualis* and *intellectualis* that Newman accounts for Dante's growing knowledge of God in the three realms of the other world. The *visio corporalis* of *Inferno*, whereby to look upon Satan is to look upon a body, but a body stamped with the sign of God, is superseded by the *spiritualis* in the *Purgatorio* where God is perceived through images, and the *intellectualis* in the *Paradiso* in the final and direct vision of God's pure light in the last canto of the *Commedia*. Newman also claims that, before him, J. Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought in the Paradiso* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958) had spoken of a connection between the Augustinian threefold vision and the *Commedia*, placing his emphasis, somewhat mistakenly in his view, primarily on the *Paradiso*.

<sup>27</sup> Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, p. 264.

perfection, a perfection only given to the saints, the union of their soul with the body will enhance their sense of pain and suffering. With respect to this Calcaterra writes:

La parola di nessun commentatore dantesco potrebbe esser più efficace di questa pagina [*De civitate Dei* 21. 3] nel rappresentare la terribile condizione di quella gente maledetta, la quale, nel tempo stesso che è negata alla vera perfezione, nondimeno, dopo la seconda morte, per la non voluta unione dell'anima al corpo spiritualizzandosi, avrà una più acuta sensibilità al dolore, come chi siasi fatto più perfetto nel riceverlo.<sup>28</sup>

The question of the soul's perfection in its union with the body is taken up again in *Paradiso* 14, where Dante speaks of the enhancement of the soul's vision and charity. In relation to these lines and the *De civitate Dei*, Calcaterra writes:

Orbene, tutto il libro XXII del *De Civitate Dei* e altre pagine dei libri antecedenti sono un inno alla perfezione che raggiungeranno i beati dopo il giudizio universale, allorché il corpo, facendosi a sua volta spirituale, si congiungerà alle anime radiose, per reintegrar 'la persona tutta quanta' [...] questa pagina [*De civ. Dei* 22. 29] è uno de' più efficaci commenti che possano essere adottati alla terzina, ove Dante dice che allorché la carne gloriosa e santa si ricongiungerà nel cielo alle anime, '[...] la vision crescer convene, / crescer l'ardor che di quella s'accende, / crescer lo raggio che da esso vene.'<sup>29</sup>

Following the same critical approach and methodology, Chioccioni reaches, by and large, the same conclusions as Calcaterra's. With respect to the question of the absence of an Augustinian episode from the *Commedia* he writes that 'la mancanza di un episodio agostiniano non prova nulla, basterebbero a giustificarla le esigenze artistiche', clearly restating Calcaterra's argument.<sup>30</sup> When commenting on the political differences which might have been the cause of an ideological conflict between Augustine and Dante, Chioccioni claims (as Calcaterra had already done)

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 271.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 272-73.

<sup>30</sup> Chioccioni, *L'Agostinismo nella Divina Commedia*, p. 39.

that in spite of their differences, they shared the overall sense of the providential role of the Roman Empire. Chioccioni also reiterates the question of the three modes of vision, claiming Dante's Augustinianism (albeit mediated by Thomas) with respect to this notion. Against the scholarship which saw an ideological juxtaposition between Augustine and Thomas and placed Dante in line with the Thomist school, he argues, quoting directly from Calcaterra, that in the superior philosophical serenity of the *Commedia* the ideological contrast between the two had been resolved. Profoundly familiar with Augustine and of similar temperament to that of the theologian, for Chioccioni, Dante's *Commedia* is, ultimately, a harmonization of the philosophical antithesis between Augustinianism and Thomism.

Alongside the many similarities of Chioccioni's argument with Calcaterra's there are other aspects of Chioccioni's work that cast a new light on the relationship between Augustine and Dante. Important, in this respect, is the focus on Dante's philosophical and religious formation, as Dante himself refers to it in *Con.* 2. 11. 7, in the schools of Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella and Santo Spirito, which tended ideologically towards Franciscanism, Thomism and Augustinianism respectively. Chioccioni argues that Dante's attendance at these schools is a valuable testament to Dante's work as comprising the philosophical and theological trends of its time. Besides these general assumptions, Chioccioni also singles out some doctrinal points which reveal, in his view, a clear Augustinian and Thomistic influence on Dante's works and ideology, arguing for Dante's originality as regards the appropriation and reformulation of pre-existing philosophical and theological systems. It is within this context that he discusses primarily the theory of the relationship between philosophy and theology, and the doctrine of love.

Speaking of the first, Chioccioni separates his analysis between the *Convivio* and the *Commedia*, arguing for an evolution of Dante's thought in relation to the dependence of theology upon philosophy in the *Convivio*, and its overturning in the *Commedia*. In the first part of his analysis, which has the *Convivio* under scrutiny, he describes what he calls 'crisi di filosofismo puro', experienced by Dante after Beatrice's death.<sup>31</sup> In style, content and conviction, the philosophical treatise is testimony to Dante's Aristotelianism, and to the separation between man's natural and supernatural end. 'Quindi', Chioccioni argues, 'la morale di Dante, nel *Convivio* ha un fine completamente distinto dalla morale soprannaturale.'<sup>32</sup> It is in this particular phase of his experience, that Dante defines the role of philosophy as insubordinate to theology: 'Nè si dica che nel *Convivio* abbiamo una subordinazione delle altre scienze, e quindi anche della filosofia, alla teologia.'<sup>33</sup>

However, the *Commedia* marks a change in Dante's sense of the matter in hand, and a movement towards the ideology of the Franciscan-Augustinian school (of which Bonaventure was the 'migliore rappresentante'), with a sustained emphasis on the dependence of philosophy upon theology, and of the necessity of the light of revelation for the achievement of the truth.<sup>34</sup> From examples derived from the three canticles, Chioccioni argues that for Dante, 'la nostra intelligenza non è in grado di condurre a perfezione neppure le sue facoltà naturali', and adds that, 'Essa è incapace di far risplendere dentro di sè il lume della verità; il lume vero essa lo riceve dall'alto, cioè dalla Rivelazione divina.'<sup>35</sup> In conclusion, he argues for Dante's

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

preference for the Augustinian theory of knowledge, which ultimately inclines him to the mysticism of the Franciscan-Augustinian school:

A noi pare che non solo è cambiata la valutazione della filosofia, nella mente e nella vita del poeta, dal *Convivio* alla *Commedia*, ma anche che la filosofia abbia alquanto accentuato la sua funzione di ancellarità nei confronti della teologia. E Dante ci pare più in armonia, anziché con i Maestri di Santa Croce, i quali pur non misconoscendo il valore dell'umana ragione, la facevano molto poggiare sulla fede – come S. Agostino e tutti i francescani in genere – in un'intonazione che si avvicina al misticismo agostiniano-francescano.<sup>36</sup>

With respect to the doctrine of love, Chioccioni speaks of a synthesis achieved by Dante in the *Commedia* between the Thomistic and the Augustinian system. Chioccioni's theory is that the two major theological systems of the Middle Ages are grounded on the doctrine of love as the animating principle of the universe. Creation, as an act of divine charity, establishes love with respect to God's essence on the one hand and the movement of man's return to God, which is implanted in his soul upon creation, on the other. Once this is determined, it is possible to begin to look at the different ways in which the medieval schools – the Thomistic and Augustinian are a case in point here – give priority to either the cognitive or affective part of the soul in respect to man's movement back to God. 'Si trattava di precisare', Chioccioni argues, 'la preminenza del conoscere o del volere, ossia di porre se l' "*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*" dovesse attuarsi soprattutto attraverso gradi di conoscenza oppure di amore.'<sup>37</sup> In Chioccioni's view, Dante's originality lies in having united the intellectualism of the Thomistic school to the voluntarism of the

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 70.

Augustinian, in a system inspired by love as both the beginning and end of the soul's operation:

Nell'aver saputo inserire la legge universale dell'amore in un'opera filosofica che, nelle linee maestre si rifà al tomismo. Esempio singolare di una tentata conciliazione e di una generosa sintesi fra le tesi fondamentali dell'aristotelismo tomista e l'ispirazione commune del volontarismo agostiniano-bonaventuriano [...] Quel seme di felicità che è stato dato a noi e che, se coltivato, ci porterà alla beatitudine, se aristotelicamente e per Tommaso rivela il finalismo proprio ad ogni essere, per cui dalla piena attuazione della nostra natura dipende il nostro finale riposo nella raggiunta perfezione – platonicamente e per Agostino esprime quell' "*Heros*", quello slancio, quella grandiose ascensione, le cui radici si partono dal fondo del nostro animo, verso il regno del Supremo Bene e quindi della gioia perfetta.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, Calcaterra's and Chioccioni's contributions have paved the way for a new understanding of the relationship between Augustine and Dante by looking afresh at the broader question of Dante's relationship with his *auctores*. They both believed that Dante was informed and influenced by the culture of his time, and that the *Commedia* was, indeed, testament to a man capable of unifying different philosophical, cultural and political material in 'un edificio solo', varied and coherent.<sup>39</sup>

In more recent literature Francesco Tateo has argued not so much in favour of Dante's Augustinianism, but of doctrinal moments in Dante's *Commedia* that reveal a distinctive Augustinian influence.<sup>40</sup> Warning of the difficulty of isolating Augustine's *auctoritas* 'fra le altre ugualmente plausibili nell'orizzonte dantesco', he also claims that Dante must have had the *Confessions* in mind when in *Paradiso* 33 he speaks of the nature of time and eternity. 'I versi di *Par.* XXXIII', he writes, 'non

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Tateo, 'Percorsi agostiniani in Dante', pp. 43-56.

contengono precisi rimandi al testo agostiniano, ma gli echi nascosti sono di solito più interessanti delle citazioni.<sup>41</sup> Although the main focus of his article is on the relationship between time and eternity and on memory as the faculty that allows man to transcend the passing of time thus capturing the essence of eternity, Tateo also investigates the idea of earthly glory and the similarities between Dante's and Augustine's position with respect to its validity.

Tateo claims that the paradoxical definition of eternity as time devoid of the very nature of time is of Augustinian origin.<sup>42</sup> *Par.* 29. 16-18 is exemplary in this context because it presents clear points of identification with Book 9, Chapter 10 of the *Confessions*, where Augustine recounts the moment of mystical rapture that he experienced with his mother in Ostia, shortly before her death. For Tateo, the Augustinian expression 'she is not made, but is as she has been, and so shall ever be' – used here to distinguish the immutability of creative wisdom from the mutability of creation – recalls Dante's 'là 've s'appunta ogni ubi e ogni quando', in a way that confirms their paradoxical treatment of eternity, and reveals Augustine's and Dante's preoccupation with the medium of language and its efficacy in relating the concept of eternity.<sup>43</sup>

In the experience of eternity the mind transcends the passing of time and stands still in what Augustine calls the eternal present of the divine vision. Dante uses the metaphor of the point – 'il punto' of *Par.* 33. 94-96 – to describe the mind's overcoming of succession in favour of simultaneity. Tateo argues that, in Dante, the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43: 'non va dimenticata l'insistenza agostiniana sul paradosso di un'entità temporale in cui è annullato ogni termine, anteriore e posteriore, un'entità temporale in cui fosse annullato il carattere proprio del tempo.'

<sup>43</sup> *Conf.* 9. 10. 24: 'et ipsa non fit, sed sic est ut fuit, et sic erit semper.'

consequence of the vision is oblivion – the ‘maggior letargo’ of *Par.* 33. 94 – an oblivion caused not by the passing of time, but by an experience of eternity itself that goes beyond the category of time: ‘Dante pone un rapporto di misura fra l’oblio di quel punto e quello prodotto dal tempo, per poi annullare il rapporto stesso nel concetto della incommensurabilità fra l’eternità e il tempo.’<sup>44</sup> Similarly, when in Book 9 of the *Confessions* Augustine relates the mystical experience he had with his mother, he speaks of the way in which the mind must overcome its limitations and gather itself in the eternal present of the vision.

It is only through the faculty of memory that man can retain and relate the experience of eternity, because only memory can summon up something that has not been directly experienced by the senses. In *Paradiso* 33 Dante is confronted, Tateo argues, with the same problem that Augustine discusses in the *Confessions*, whether the mind can retain the memory of something that was not experienced by the senses. Tateo’s claim here is that memory has in Augustine a fundamental role in the soul’s discovery of God, and that ‘l’assunto agostiniano a proposito della memoria [...] emerg[e] nella *Commedia* [...] come problematica generale e come suggestione’.<sup>45</sup> In Book 10 of the *Confessions* Augustine advances two considerations as regards the mind’s quest of God: on the one hand, the discovery of God requires that the limitations inherent in memory be overcome, on the other the desire of God is present in man insofar as memory retains something of him within itself – ‘qualcosa è rimasto di lui nella memoria profonda dell’uomo.’<sup>46</sup> Thus put, the question of memory reveals a subtle psychological problem with which Augustine

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<sup>44</sup> Tateo, ‘Percorsi agostiniani in Dante’, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

was familiar and upon which Dante seems to ponder as well: if it is not possible to remember what has been forgotten, it is possible to remember ‘to have forgotten’.<sup>47</sup> This same paradox is, in fact, expressed in the *Commedia* by way of the metaphor of the dream in *Par.* 33. 58-63, through which Dante is able to relate an experience – that of the journey in the beyond – that ‘per lui è equivalsa ad un letargo.’<sup>48</sup> It is here that the question of eternity and that of memory converge in Tateo’s thesis. Eternity – the point at which the mind stands still outside time – is remembered (or retained by the faculty of memory) as though in a dream, the passion remains even if the content of the vision is forgotten.

As briefly mentioned above, the last few pages of Tateo’s article are dedicated to the question of the validity of earthly glory and the possibility of tracing some similarities between Augustine and Dante in respect to this idea. Tateo identifies two places in the *Commedia* in which Dante speaks of the ‘dubbia validità’ of earthly glory, namely *Par.* 6. 112-14 and *Par.* 16. 1-2, claiming that scholarship has generally interpreted the lines in *Paradiso* 6 in keeping with Thomas’s words in the *Summa Theologiae* that ‘alcuni spiriti sono spinti a compiere opere virtuose dal desiderio di umana gloria [...] ma non è veramente virtuoso chi agisce virtuosamente per ottenere la gloria umana, come dice Agostino nel *De civitate Dei*’.<sup>49</sup> Against this Tateo argues that had Dante followed Thomas’s interpretation of Augustine, he would have banished from heaven anybody who had lived for the pursuit of earthly

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 50-51: ‘In effetti Agostino, con la retorica impressionistica ed emotiva che caratterizza la sua scrittura, oscillava fra l’idea che per giungere a Dio bisognasse superare i limiti della memoria, e l’idea che in tanto si ha desiderio di Dio in quanto qualcosa è di lui nella memoria profonda dell’uomo. Agostino aveva in effetti toccato anche un sottile problema psicologico, se cioè dell’oblio si possa ricordare: se non si ricorda quello che si è dimenticato, si può almeno ricordare di aver dimenticato.’

<sup>48</sup> Tateo, ‘Percorsi agostiniani in Dante’, p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 53-54.

glory. It is Tateo's opinion that Dante's 'audace scelta' to place in heaven, and specifically in the sky of Mercury, the spirits of those who lived for the pursuit of fame and glory, was made possible, and at some level justified, by the ambiguity in Augustine's own understanding of earthly glory and its validity.<sup>50</sup>

It is true, Tateo admits, that Thomas's interpretation of Augustine is in some way correct, but it is also true that Augustine's understanding of earthly glory is much less systematic and unambiguous than Thomas had wished to believe. In Chapter 12, Book 5 of the *De civitate Dei* Augustine asserts the validity of earthly glory when this is motivated by virtue, not ambition, a distinction followed also by Dante in the *Commedia*. Glory is therefore positively understood when, inspired by the love of virtue, it is aimed at the service of a good which is common, rather than personal. In Tateo's words:

Agostino [...] sosteneva la funzione positiva dell'onore se faceva rientrare nella provvidenza divina il fatto che per mitigare i mali di molti popoli Dio affidasse quest'impero a uomini i quali si posero a servizio della patria, per l'onore e per la gloria, antepoendo la salvezza pubblica alla propria, e vincendo la cupidigia ed ogni altro vizio con la sola passione della gloria.<sup>51</sup>

Once this shift from the personal to the public is made, it is possible to speak of earthly glory as the foreshadowing of the eternal glory of the city of God. It is precisely here that Dante's references to glory in both *Paradiso* 6 and 16 become suggestive of Augustine's understanding of the same.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p. 54.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 54-55.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55: 'Ma analogia risulta fra gli spiriti attivi del cielo di Mercurio e i martiri del cielo di Marte [...] L'analogia si fonda sul discorso agostiniano che faticosamente recuperava l'azione militare dei Romani, fino ad ipotizzare che quell'amore per la durata terrena della gloria nascondesse nel fondo l'aspirazione ad una gloria eterna [...] Essi erano dunque ad un passo dall'idea della gloria eterna, perché quella terrena è imitazione, prefigurazione della gloria eterna.'

## 2.2 - The Confessional or Existential Approach

Turning to the confessional or existential approach, the works of Shirley Paolini, John Freccero and John Took share the notion that Augustine or, more precisely, Augustine's *Confessions*, functioned as a model for Dante's *Commedia* and the *Vita nuova*.<sup>53</sup> But, whereas Paolini speaks primarily of the *Confessions* as a literary model, tracing its historical origin in the Judeo Christian and classical traditions, Freccero's and Took's interest lies in understanding the *Confessions* as an example of the pattern of conversion used by Dante in the *Commedia* and the *Vita nuova*. I shall now give an account of their individual arguments looking at each in turn.

In the first of the two parts into which her book is divided, Paolini examines the origin of what she calls the confessional and autobiographical form with a view to presenting Augustine's appropriation in the *Confessions* of elements of both the Judeo Christian and classical tradition as representing a new synthesis and, indeed, a new literary genre.<sup>54</sup> She argues that in Augustine the genre of classical stories of philosophical conversion, understood primarily as a quest for truth, is combined with the Hebrew tradition of individual confession of sin and praise, from which the Christian form of the conversion of the intellect and will ultimately derives.<sup>55</sup> Modelled on the Old Testament rhetorical formulae of individual confession this new genre adds an attitude of humility inspired by the example of Christ. In other words, the confessional and autobiographical model that Augustine offers Dante

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<sup>53</sup> S. Paolini, *Confessions of Sin and Love in the Middle Ages: Dante's Commedia and St. Augustine's Confessions* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982); J. Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. and intr. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); J. Took, 'Dante and the *Confessions* of Augustine', *Annali d'italianistica*, 8 (1990), 360-82; idem, 'Dante, Augustine and the Drama of Salvation', in *Word and Drama in Dante: Essays on the Divina Commedia*, ed. by John Barnes and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), pp. 73-92.

<sup>54</sup> Paolini, *Confessions of Sin and Love in the Middle Ages*, especially pp. 1-15.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

includes, on the one hand, the protagonist's confession based upon the conversion of his intellect and will, and on the other, the liturgical aspect of this confession in the form of, precisely, personal apology and praise. Paolini's thesis is that, in spite of their specific differences, both authors were conscious of working within the frame of reference of Christian literary confession and of adapting confessional practices in the context of their autobiographies.<sup>56</sup>

It is within this methodological framework that she reads the *Commedia* tracing those moments at which confession takes either liturgical or apologetic form. In her aim to see how the notion of confession is developed with respect to the pilgrim's journey, she speaks of the pilgrim being at once confessor in the *Inferno* and confessing his own sins in both the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, and how in this latter role he adopts the apologetic model in order to defend his own life in the same way as Augustine had done before him. Though Paolini's work is undoubtedly valuable in mapping out the historical development of the confessional autobiography as a literary model and in defining Augustine as the first author to carry out a synthesis between the classical and the Judeo Christian tradition, she goes no further than this. What she does not investigate is how this model becomes part of the narrative structure of the *Commedia* and the *Vita nuova*, how, that is, the experience of conversion translates into a new way of writing prose and poetry.

This is what Freccero achieves by clearly raising at the outset of his investigation his objection to the Crocean distinction between form and content, arguing in favour of the intimate correlation between the two in Dante's text.<sup>57</sup> It is

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 12-15.

<sup>57</sup> B. Croce, 'La poesia di Dante', in *Scritti di storia letteraria e politica* (Bari: Laterza, 1922) contrasts the lyrical elements in the *Divina Commedia* with its 'non-poetic' rational and structural

in keeping with this that the model offered by Augustine's *Confessions* begins to be related not so much to single episodes or individual characters but to the narrative of the *Commedia* as a whole and that the pattern of conversion established by Augustine begins to be thought of as constituting a model for the narrative structure of the poem itself. In the article titled 'The Prologue Scene', Freccero claims that if it can be proven that Dante's spiritual itinerary starts and ends in the manner of Augustine's, then there is solid interpretative evidence to understand the whole of Dante's spiritual autobiography as Augustinian in structure. In support of his thesis he argues that there is good textual evidence, not only from *Inferno* 1, but also from other parts of the *Commedia* for considering Dante's poem as a spiritual testament in the manner of Augustine's and for believing that Dante saw his poem as a moral example for other people in the same way as Augustine had seen the *Confessions* to possess exemplary force for its readership.<sup>58</sup>

In keeping with this idea, Freccero argues that if the experience of conversion functions as an example for others to follow, then personal experience takes an 'intelligible, perhaps even symbolic, form'.<sup>59</sup> That is to say, one's personal experience of conversion can be read as a re-enactment or a 'repetition in one's own history of the entire history of Redemption'.<sup>60</sup> Freccero speaks of the moment of conversion as the moment at which grace allows for the death of the old self and a

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dimensions, while his opponents saw the interpenetration of these elements as the very reason for the work's poetic power.

<sup>58</sup> The first example is *Purg.* 30. 61-64, where Beatrice addresses Dante by his first name, identifying the pilgrim with the author of the poem. These lines open up an intertextual dialogue between *Purgatorio*, *Convivio*, and *Paradiso*. In relating the necessity (contrary to medieval convention) of speaking of oneself in the first person, in *Con.* 1. 2. 12 Dante refers to Augustine's *Confessions*, and to his experience of moral improvement as exemplary to other people. The expression 'di bene in meglio' (*Par.* 10. 38), is thus directly borrowed from the *Convivio* in order to define Dante's experience as model of moral success in the same way as Augustine's had been.

<sup>59</sup> Freccero, 'The Prologue Scene', in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

new beginning in Christ. In the narrative structure of the *Commedia* this occurs in the Edenic cantos of the *Purgatorio*, when the soul is made anew by the intervening power of sanctifying grace. But before this, Dante portrays the soul's descent into hell, which 'has the effect of shattering the inverted values of this life (which is death, according to Christian rhetoric) and transforming death into authentic life'.<sup>61</sup> The inversion of values is represented in *Inferno* 1 by the prefiguration of the ascent of the mountain of purgatory: everything in it seems to point to a success, but the climb is hindered and stopped by the three beasts. It is here that the similarities between *Inferno* 1 and the 'regio dissimilitudinis' of Book 7 of the *Confessions* are established and that Freccero's thesis begins to be founded on the intertextual dialogue between Dante and Augustine. Lost in the region of unlikeness, Augustine tries to find comfort in the light of Platonic vision, but his weakness sets him back into the things of the world. At this point in the narrative of the *Confessions*, Augustine asks himself why God should have given him certain books of neoplatonic philosophy before leading him to the Scriptures. The answer he gives is so that he might understand the difference between presumption and conversion. Both Dante and Augustine, therefore, experience what Freccero calls a 'conversion manquée', a failure that occurs because the attempt of conversion is purely intellectual (or philosophical), 'where the mind sees its objective but is unable to reach it.'<sup>62</sup>

This is what separates the philosophers' flight of the neoplatonic tradition from the Christian journey. The philosophers did not account for any help apart from their own intellectual potential, the Christian man, on the contrary, in recognition of

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

his fallenness acknowledges the necessity of God's help. Augustine's journey is therefore marked by a false start where the light of God appears too strong, followed in Book 8 by a real conversion. The same is true for Dante where the open sea, the desert and the *selva* are followed in due course (*Purg.* 28. 22-25) by the pilgrim's entrance to the Garden of Eden in a movement whereby the 'selva oscura' is transformed into the 'selva antica'.<sup>63</sup>

It is to Freccero that Took refers when he speaks of the importance that American scholarship has had on Dante criticism. In Took's view Freccero's contribution is twofold; first, his focus on the Augustinian or Christian-existential aspect of Dante's spirituality has offered an alternative perspective to the vast bibliography concerning Dante's Christian Aristotelianism, secondly, it has opened up the possibility of a reading of the *Commedia* in terms of 'becoming' or spiritual growth.<sup>64</sup> Alongside his Christian Aristotelian interest in the essence, or *quiddity*, of things, in the propositional exploration of the idea proper to the Thomistic method of analysis, Dante, Took argues, was also an existentialist, inclined not only to explore the idea, but also to pursue it.<sup>65</sup> It is with respect to this that Took speaks of the

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Took, 'Dante and the *Confessions* of Augustine', p. 360.

<sup>65</sup> Likewise Took, 'Dante, Augustine and the Drama of Salvation', p. 74, claims that one of the most remarkable aspects of the *Divina Commedia* is that it speaks differently to different people. To those who do not share partly or completely its theological assumptions it speaks in the manner of the Christian Aristotelians; to those, by contrast, who share its theological assumptions, it speaks in the Augustinian manner. The difference between the two ways lies in the way the experience of salvation is understood and represented. If for the Christian Aristotelians, Took argues, the experience of salvation is understood as a 'journey to' a destination that is other than the point of departure, as an uplifting, in other words, from a natural to a supernatural state of existence, for the Augustinians the experience is represented and understood as a 'recovery of' self, in which the point of arrival is 'obscured' or 'hidden by' the point of departure. In the latter, man, already in the presence of God, lives dramatically the experience of division between his temporal and spatial existence and the pursuit of an authentic existence, which is thus understood only when grounded in the totality of God's being.

appropriation of ‘the idea as a principle of self-affirmation’.<sup>66</sup> Within the context of Christianity, common to both Augustine and Dante, ‘self-affirmation’ is synonymous with a process of spiritual growth which entails man’s recognition of God as the ground of his being. Once this recognition has taken place, and God is ‘established as an object of knowing and willing’, man is rescued from the desperation of sin.<sup>67</sup> Here desperation is not understood as a temporary state, but an ontological condition befalling man when he has turned away from God. Ultimately, therefore, man’s journey of self-affirmation involves a movement from the Augustinian ‘region of unlikeness’ – to be understood as a state of existential unrest – to the restfulness of man’s union with God.<sup>68</sup>

It is in this context that Took speaks of the *Confessions* as a key text for Dante in a twofold manner. First, and in respect to the *Vita nuova*, the *Confessions* provides Dante with a model for the development of the Christian notion of ‘self-recovery through self-loss’.<sup>69</sup> The focus of both the *Confessions* and the *Vita nuova*, Took argues, is the redefinition of the idea of love in terms, not any longer, of appropriation and gain but of subordination and, ultimately, self-transcendence. To understand love in these terms means that man’s desire for the world about is not an end in itself, but its meaning and significance is unlocked in relation to the inextinguishable nature of the love of God. Once this takes place, man’s love begins to rest upon the certainty of a love that cannot be lost. In relation to the *Vita nuova*, this reassessment of love results technically in a new style and in an organization of the text that reflects this personal process of self-intelligibility or self-explication.

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<sup>66</sup> Took, ‘Dante and the *Confessions* of Augustine’, p. 360.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 361.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 360.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p. 369.

Both the *Vita nuova* and the *Confessions* are, in fact, highly selective autobiographies in which ‘each passage testifies, not to the casual annotation of experience, but to the purposeful intervention, to an act of reinterpretation’.<sup>70</sup> In both the *Vita nuova* and the *Confessions* the autobiographical statement is turned into a confessional one.

However, it is in the *Commedia*, Took argues, that Dante’s reflection on the significance of Augustine’s *Confessions* reaches its full maturity, for it is precisely through Augustine that Dante comes to understand the ‘structures of estrangement and reconciliation’, the sense, in other words, of what it means to be for or against God.<sup>71</sup> Though only sporadically acknowledged directly in the *Commedia*, Augustine was fundamental for Dante’s understanding of what Took calls the drama of salvation, namely the process of man’s self-recovery from the region of unlikeness to the recollection of self in and through the grace of God. Starting from the first canto of the *Inferno*, interpreted as an essay on existential alienation and spiritual dissipation, to the last of the *Paradiso*, understood as an essay of existential reconciliation or self-affirmation, Took demonstrates how every nuance, emphasis and insight in Dante’s ‘structures of estrangement and reconciliation’ is traceable back to Augustine. It was, in fact, from the *Confessions* that Dante, in Took’s view, began to appreciate the notion of the soul’s spiritual progress from the fear and anxiety deriving from its alienation from God, to the joy and exultation of the last encounter with the transcendent ‘I AM’ of God.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* p. 372.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 373.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* p. 376.

### 2.3 - The Intertextual Approach

Hawkins' intertextual approach offers a new contribution to the question of Augustine's absence from the poem, and to the long-standing debate as regards the relationship between the two authors. His fast moving yet detailed analysis of previous scholarship is aimed at confirming once again that in spite of Augustine's exclusion 'from the narrative surface of the poem', he 'functions as [...] an informing presence within the text itself'.<sup>73</sup> Broadly unconcerned with what he calls the 'Augustinianism that one might find in almost every medieval work', his is an analysis of *Purgatorio* 13 to 17 in their intertextual dialogue with the *De civitate Dei* 15.<sup>74</sup> For Hawkins in fact the absence of Augustine from the narrative surface of the *Commedia*, tied as it is to Dante's political opposition to the *De civitate Dei*, is not without ideological importance. While Augustine 'negated pagan Rome, discredited Vergil, and refused the idea of temporal beatitude as a legitimate human "end"', Dante's paraphrase of Book 15 of the *De civitate Dei*, carried out by Virgil, constitutes for Hawkins 'one of Dante's most outrageous acts of ideological revision, revealing yet another dimension of his will to power over his "authorities" – the politics of his poetics'.<sup>75</sup> With reference, though only in passing, to Ronald Martinez, Giuseppe Mazzotta and Jeffrey Schnapp as those responsible for having 'drawn attention to Dante's polemical reading' of the *De civitate Dei* and his vision of history as a 'radical reworking of both Vergil and Augustine', Hawkins sets out to demonstrate how this reworking takes place at the centre of the *Commedia*.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Hawkins, 'Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*', p. 472.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* p. 472.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p. 473.

<sup>76</sup> R. L. Martinez, 'Dante, Statius, and the Earthly City' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, 1977); G. Mazzotta, *Dante the Poet of the Desert* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University

He notes that, when in Book 15 of the *De civitate Dei* Augustine concerns himself with the question of the two cities – the first consisting of those living according to man, the second of those living according to God – he does so by looking back to the beginning of civic history in the story of Cain and Abel. Despite their common origin and their sharing in the sin of their father, there is between them a fundamental difference. Cain represents the Pauline old man whose way of life is according to the flesh; looking down at the things of the earth his life is bound by them. Abel, by contrast, is the new man – the prototype of Christ himself – who casts his glance upon the heavens in anticipation of the ultimate freedom. It is by way of this antithesis between Cain and Abel that Augustine is able to understand the mystery of God’s choice of the younger over the elder in Genesis 4. God chose Abel’s offering because it was divided well; Abel had in fact understood the difference between the goods of the earth and their creator, and placed God above all else. Cain, by contrast, had placed himself above all else, offering something of his own to God while giving himself to himself (‘dans aliquid suum, sibi autem se ipsum’).<sup>77</sup> It is for this reason that Cain had failed to find favour in God.

These themes, Hawkins argues, are discussed within a civic context in Book 15 of the *De civitate Dei*, where ‘Cain is shown to be mirrored in the earthly city he has founded’.<sup>78</sup> With the expression earthly city Augustine refers not so much to an urban place, but to the social manifestation of the same love of self that had caused the expulsion of the rebel angels from heaven and of Adam and Eve from Eden. By

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Press, 1979), especially Chapters 3 and 4; J. T. Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History at the Center of Dante’s Paradise* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986). Hawkins, ‘Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*’, p. 472.

<sup>77</sup> Hawkins, ‘Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*’, p. 473.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* p. 473.

right of birth, the spirit of the earthly city belongs to both Cain and Abel, but whereas Cain lived ‘on its premises, treating it not only as his home but as his god, Abel defines himself as an alien sojourner within enemy territory’.<sup>79</sup>

Relevant to Dante’s reworking of Augustine’s theory of the Empire is, for Hawkins, the blood link that Augustine establishes in the *De civitate Dei* between Cain’s earthly city and the city of Rome, both built on fratricide. There are, in fact, strong similarities between Cain’s and Romulus’ motivation to kill and the consequences of their murders. Just as Cain killed his brother out of envy and successively sought refuge in the earthly city, Romulus, in a similar fit of envy, killed Remus ‘and gave birth to what became the seat of the empire’.<sup>80</sup> What is common to both the Genesis story and the story of Rome’s foundation, and what ultimately defines the earthly city, is the breaking down of human partnership. Romulus killed his brother because he did not want to share his power with a living partner, thus setting, in Augustine’s mind, the destiny of Rome as master of the world, and marking its own end by virtue of that same power. In choosing division over partnership Romulus set Rome’s destiny to divide and conquer itself.

However, in spite of the determinism by which Augustine speaks of Rome’s destiny, and the death wish that Rome has created for itself, there is in his view, Hawkins argues, an alternative. Within those who live according to the greed of conquest and glory, there are some who live looking upon the heavens, imitating the polity of God’s kingdom. Experienced on earth only in part, this is a community of love and sharing that will find its full accomplishment in heaven. This community, in Augustine’s view, is formed by the followers of Abel’s ethos, who rest on the idea

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* p. 473.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* p. 473.

of a love ‘that rejoices in a good that is at once shared by all and unchanging, a love that makes “one heart” out of many, a love that is the whole-hearted and harmonious obedience of mutual affection’.<sup>81</sup> What makes this harmonious obedience and mutual affection possible is what Augustine refers to as the right priority of love, which motivated Abel to choose God above himself and allowed him to confide in a love that cannot be lost by being shared, but that, on the contrary, increases by the very fact of being shared. One can see, Hawkins argues, how this new concept of community based on the idea of sharing, shatters the values of the earthly city. By establishing the love of God as the supreme good for man and the community, and as power which is multiplied in the act of sharing, Augustine outlines a new *civitas* ruled by the ‘united affection of partners in possession’.<sup>82</sup>

It is precisely here, in Augustine’s concern with the *caritas* of those who have renounced envy and are now pilgrims on their way to the city of God, that the intertextual correspondence between the two authors becomes, in Hawkins’ view, indisputable. Cantos 13 to 17 of the *Purgatorio* comprise both the terraces of envy and wrath, and explore the social regeneration of those who have renounced *amor sui* and are preparing to become citizens of Abel’s city. In the process of purgation they are learning to refuse the values of the earthly city. In each terrace the purging souls are shown examples of vices and virtues, introducing in Augustinian fashion ‘the perennial choice of one *civitas* over another’.<sup>83</sup> It is not by chance, therefore, that the example of punished envy used by Dante in the *Purgatorio* is that of Cain and that the story of Stephen – the New Testament realization of his prototype Abel

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p. 474.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p. 474.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 475.

– is given in *Purgatorio* 15 as an example of virtue. In the story of Stephen, Hawkins argues, Dante dramatizes the polarity between the two cities in the way discussed above. Stephen, the first martyr of Christ, is depicted at the time of his stoning carried out by the citizens of the earthly city, but his portrayal is one of charitable love. Whilst dying he looks up at the heavens and forgives his murderers, turning his murder into martyrdom.

In spite of this large number of similarities between Augustine's and Dante's discourse on the two cities, Hawkins argues that there are some fundamental differences in their treatment of the relationship existing between the two. Whereas Augustine polarizes the distinction between the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei*, Hawkins writes that Dante on the contrary,

Shows Cain's power lingering even over those penitents who have thrown in their lots with Abel. He depicts the blur of civic allegiances rather than their neat separation, demonstrating to the reader that Augustine's two cities are intermingled in individuals as well as in history. Here the status of the soul after death reflects the confused state of the living.<sup>84</sup>

The episodes of Sapia and that of Guido del Duca are exemplary in this respect. Both characters condemn the earthly city but are, at one and the same time, attached to its legacy by the sheer weight of their loathing for its citizens. However, in spite of this confusion of attachments, Guido is aware of the causes of earthly affliction, which he traces in that same refusal to share 'that Augustine saw as the curse pursuing Cain and Romulus'.<sup>85</sup> The words he utters, 'o gente umana, perché poni 'l core / là 'v'è mestier di consorte divieto?' are an obvious and intentional reminder, Hawkins argues, of the Augustine of the *De civitate Dei*, whose principle of sharing and

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* p. 475.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 476.

partnership is conveyed in Canto 15 of the *Purgatorio* by Virgil, in what constitutes Guido's answer to Dante's doubt. If *Paradiso* 14 ends with a look upon the earthly city, *Purgatorio* 15 is dedicated to the analysis of that heavenly love, or charity, which increases when shared by its possessors and which is of Augustinian origin.

But what, for Hawkins, is important here is the implication of Dante's borrowing from Augustine's text. Dante assigns Virgil the role of Augustine's mouthpiece and interpreter of the *civitas Dei*, a pagan and non-believer (hence forever excluded from the heaven city), whom Augustine had so harshly criticized. In Hawkins' words:

Dante has given Augustine's description of the economy of heaven to the writer against whom he more or less openly polemicized: the chief poet of the *civitas terrena* of Romulus whose characterization of Rome as an 'empire without boundary' (*Aeneid* 1. 279) was for Augustine nothing less than a celebration of a blasphemy, the mendacity of a venerable liar: 'mendax vates erat'. All the more dangerous for being revered, Vergil was for Augustine the paradigmatic 'gentile,' a purveyor of pagan delusion against whom the *City of God* (even from its preface) raises its massive contra.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, as Hawkins stresses, this case of an Augustinian Virgil is not the only one in the *Commedia*. In *Purgatorio* 17 Virgil's speech on the ordering of love and the moral basis of *Purgatorio* is, once again, deeply indebted to passages in the *De civitate Dei* and the *De doctrina christiana*. Likewise, the description in *Purgatorio* 17 of the soul's search for rest alludes, in Hawkins' view, to the opening of the *Confessions*. Dante's manoeuvre to present Augustine in the *Commedia* through the words of Virgil has, in Hawkins' view, a twofold purpose: if, on the one hand, it creates a 'patristic Vergil' who cannot enter the celestial city, but can at least

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p. 478.

‘discern [its] true towers’; on the other it offers a ‘Vergilian Augustine’ who has pondered on the function of two cities and on rightly ordered love, but has been purged of his anti-imperial convictions.<sup>87</sup> While, in fact, Dante makes use of the same Augustinian accusations against the earthly city, Cantos 13 and 14 of the *Purgatorio* are devoid of any reference to Romulus and its bloodthirsty city; on the contrary, Rome and its citizens offer the penitent souls of the second realm examples of virtue to spur their purgation.

Dante’s reinvention of Augustine is aimed therefore at what Hawkins calls a ‘Roman revision’ which, on the one hand, rehabilitates Virgil, and on the other confirms Rome’s role as implementer of a redeemed temporal order.<sup>88</sup> If in fact Augustine had negated the possibility of a ‘beatitude constituted in and of the earthly city’, Dante, on the contrary, through Marco Lombardo’s speech, which is nested in between Cantos 15 and 17 of the *Purgatorio* ‘presents us with a vision of Rome’s place in history that is utterly antithetical to the spirit of the *City of God*’ by ‘embrac[ing] the temporal order, discuss[ing] its redemption, and even [...] call[ing] its redeemer “Rome”’.<sup>89</sup> In sum, therefore, and in Hawkins’s own words:

At the heart of the *Comedy* [...] Dante gives us the architect of the *City of God* speaking through the poet of the *Aeneid*. Disarming the Bishop of Hippo of his anti-Roman artillery simply by ignoring it, Dante lays the basis in his own work for an Augustinian vision of a redeemed secular order that does not require the fratricidal Romulus as its foil.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p. 478.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p. 478.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p. 478.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* p. 479.

### 3 - Augustine and Dante: Sameness and Otherness

Drawing some general conclusions from the scholarship that has been surveyed hitherto, we can, in my opinion, speak of the relationship between Augustine and Dante in terms of sameness and otherness, of continuity and contrast. The research carried out by Freccero and Took has given sufficient evidence to speak of Augustine as a model of conversion and spiritual becoming, and has justified Took's words that 'Augustine, far from being a mere authority, was part of what Dante was'.<sup>91</sup> In accepting this claim we are also making another, and perhaps more important assumption, that Dante, even at his most unAugustinian, remains at other levels of awareness deeply Augustinian in conviction and outlook, difference between the one and the other relating, therefore, to sameness and continuity in an endlessly changing fashion.

But to speak of continuity is not to speak of full-fledged identity. Within the context of a shared belief, of a similar, yet not identical experience of conversion which shaped and informed their spirituality, and of a theological discourse that prefers the confessional (or first person) narrative (in the case of the *Commedia* and the *Confessions*), to the propositional (Thomas is a case in point here), Dante is also his own man, with a set of preoccupations, emphases and historical circumstances that account for a doctrinal system which is at times quite other than the Augustinian. This dialectic between sameness and otherness – of otherness, more precisely, within the context of sameness – will inform my thesis in its entirety.

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<sup>91</sup> Took, 'Dante and the *Confessions* of Augustine', p. 381.

#### **4 - Methodology**

The inquiry into Dante's Augustinianism has included questions of the doctrinal similarities between Dante and Augustine, the recognition of an Augustinian model of conversion which Dante followed and made his own, and Dante's domination of Augustine's text through the authorial rewriting of the *De civitate Dei*. The recognition of this complex dialogue between Dante and Augustine is an indispensable basis for anyone who wishes to engage in a study of the relationship between the two authors. It is therefore with this wealth of resources in mind that in this thesis I shall return to the question of the relationship between Dante and Augustine with a particular focus on aspects of salvation theology. In claiming that I shall bring something new to an already rich area of scholarship I refer primarily to my methodology which, though drawing on the models offered by previous research, differs fundamentally from any of those mentioned hitherto.

My methodology is neither existential nor intertextual, but more closely comparable to the doctrinal approach of Calcaterra and Chioccioni, though with some qualifications. Unlike them, I do not engage directly with the question of Augustine's absence from the poem, and neither is my intention to establish Augustine as Dante's source as regards specific theological doctrines. Instead I read Dante alongside Augustine in order to map out, through this comparison, the emphases and nuances of Dante's theology of salvation in relation to Augustine's. The result of this is a comprehensive analysis of doctrines of prelapsarian righteousness, fallenness and redemption in both Augustine and Dante, aimed at detailing the difference in the theology of the one and the other within the context of a common faith.

As regards my choice of Augustine over other theologians whose influence on Dante has been similarly confirmed in the course of many decades of Dante criticism, my answer is in two parts.<sup>92</sup> First, my choice has been broadly dictated by my personal preference for the way in which Augustine's *Confessions* and Dante's *Commedia* present the question of man's relationship with God. My interest in Augustine stems, in fact, from the same reasons that drew me initially towards Dante and that have inspired authors such as Freccero and Took to speak of the role played by Augustine's *Confessions* in unlocking for Dante the meaning of existential exile and triumphant reconciliation. This reading of the *Commedia* in confessional terms, as the existential struggle of the pilgrim soul to move towards its reunion with God, informs a way of doing theology which is primarily concerned with the way God is in relation to man, rather than with the way he is in himself. Though, as I have already noted, this is not an approach with which I shall engage in the course of my thesis, it is this way of doing theology that has drawn me towards their work and motivated me to study them alongside each other.

Secondly, I have been driven by a personal and long-standing interest in the relationship between human nature and divine grace, a subject that underlies my investigation in its entirety. Grounded on the Genesis story of the fall of man from the primeval perfection of the Garden of Eden, Christianity speaks of human nature as corrupt, wounded by the infirmity of the first sin. In *Paradiso 7* original sin is described as a hereditary disease, so weakening of man's nature as to make it

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<sup>92</sup> Studies on Dante's sources include, K. Vossler, *La Divina Commedia studiata nella sua genesi e interpretata*, trans. by Stefano Jacini, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 4 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1927), especially vol. I; B. Nardi, 'Raffronti fra alcuni luoghi di Alberto Magno e di Dante', and 'Le citazioni dantesche del "Liber de Causis"', in *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Milan: [n. publ.] 1930); idem, 'Il tomismo di Dante', in *Nel mondo di Dante* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1944).

impossible for man to restore himself to that state of original health he enjoyed in Eden. The wound was so profound, and the penalty for the crime committed against God so grave, that external help – indeed the help of God himself – was needed to resolve the impasse of sin. It is in this context that grace becomes necessary for man both morally and ontologically, in respect both of what he *does* and of what he *is*.

It is a common theme of Augustine criticism to speak of the fundamental role he had in shaping the medieval understanding of grace leading towards the dogmatization of the doctrine itself; his personal struggle with the notion of evil and the Manichees, and the controversy with the British monk Pelagius, which occupied the greatest part of his adult writings, not only refined and ultimately defined his sense of grace, but also determined the way in which he came to understand the relationship between nature and grace.<sup>93</sup> In respect to this Augustine constitutes a significant example against which to contrast and compare Dante's sense of grace in its relationship with nature. It is in fact in the comparison with Augustine that Dante's sense of grace as confirming man in his sufficiency to his own high calling is set into relief.

My research has also presented me with an important bibliographic question. The comparison between Dante and Augustine has opened up the necessity of looking at four different types of scholarship. Besides the scholarship focused on the relationship between the two, I have delved in that branch of Dante criticism that has

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<sup>93</sup> For a historical account of the role played by Augustine in the development of the doctrine of grace, N. P. Williams, *The Grace of God* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), especially p. 18; P. L. Quinn, 'Disputing the Augustinian Legacy', in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. by Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 233-50 (p. 233); A. E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Blackwell, 2007), especially p. 364; A. N. Williams, 'The Theology of the *Comedy*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 201-17 (p. 202).

explored questions of a philosophical and theological nature. Within this area of Dante studies I rely primarily on the work of Christopher Ryan, whose contribution to the question of Dante's theology and of the relationship, primarily in the *Commedia*, between free will and grace has been fundamental to this study.<sup>94</sup> In relation to the area of Dante's Scholasticism and anthropology the work of Patrick Boyde has been my starting point.<sup>95</sup> The work of Kenelm Foster has offered an important perspective on Dante's understanding of the relationship between free will and love within the context of sin. Foster has also proved to be an indispensable starting point in disclosing the relationship between the pagan world and grace.<sup>96</sup> Antonio Mastrobuono has provided me with a detailed analysis of the doctrine of justification, whereas Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi's edition of the *Divina Commedia* together with the *lecturae Dantis* have been an essential tool for the interpretation of individual cantos.<sup>97</sup>

It has also been my endeavour to gather some of the most relevant scholarship on Augustine's theology of salvation and locate my argument within it. Alongside Carol Harrison's analysis of Augustine's philosophical and theological

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<sup>94</sup> C. Ryan, 'Free Will in Theory and Practice: *Purgatorio* XVIII and Two Characters in the *Inferno*', in *Dante Soundings*, ed. by David Nolan (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981), pp. 100-12; idem, 'Grace, Merit and *Buona Volontade*', *Italian Studies*, 35 (1980), 6-11; idem, 'Man's Free Will in the Works of Sigier of Brabant', *Medieval Studies*, 45 (1983), 155-99; idem, 'The Theology of Dante', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 136-52; idem, '"*Natura dividitur contra gratiam*": concetti diversi della natura in Dante e nella cultura filosofica-teologica medievale', in *Dante e la scienza*, ed. by Patrick Boyde and Vittorio Russo (Ravenna: Longo, 1995), pp. 363-73; idem, 'Paradiso VII: Marking the Difference between Dante and Anselm', in *Dante and the Middle Ages*, ed. by John C. Barnes and Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), pp. 117-37.

<sup>95</sup> P. Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); idem, *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); idem, *Perception and Passion in Dante's Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>96</sup> K. Foster, *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977).

<sup>97</sup> A. Mastrobuono, *Dante's Journey of Sanctification* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990); Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1991); vol. 2 (1994); vol. 3 (1997).

undertaking, and her argument for continuity in Augustine's works, I have relied on John N. D. Kelly's analytical presentation of Augustine's theology, and on Norman P. Williams' contribution on grace determinism in Augustine, alongside Eugene TeSelle's and Peter Brown's historical account of his thought.<sup>98</sup> Finally, in the vast field of Augustine scholarship I have also been drawn to the works of theologians and philosophers such as Etienne Gilson, and John Burnaby who, in their historical accounts of Augustine's philosophy and theology, have primarily focused on the notion of God's love in terms of renewal.<sup>99</sup>

Given the large number of Augustine's letters, sermons and treatises, I was forced to carry out a process of selection. For this I used two criteria: on the one hand I let Augustine criticism direct me in this endeavour; on the other, following Harrison's claim that with the *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* Augustine's thought underwent a deep change, with the exception of the *De libero arbitrio* and the *De utilitate credendi* all the texts I analyze are post 396 CE.<sup>100</sup> Also, and in keeping with my personal interest in the relationship between nature and grace, many of the works I selected belong to the anti-Pelagian controversy. As for Dante, the theological nature of my project steered me towards the *Commedia* primarily and, more specifically, towards those cantos in which questions of

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<sup>98</sup> C. Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); idem, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); idem, *Re-Thinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); N. P. Williams, *The Grace of God* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930); E. TeSelle, *Augustine* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2006); idem, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970); idem, "Justice, Love, Peace", in *Augustine Today*, ed. by Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 88-110; P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000); J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Continuum, 2006).

<sup>99</sup> E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. by L. E. M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961); J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938).

<sup>100</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, especially p. 87.

prelapsarian perfection, original and actual sin, and Christ are treated within a doctrinal context. The use of other texts, the *Convivio* and the *Monarchia* especially, has mainly served the purpose of either consolidating my argument or revealing a continuity of concern in Dante's thought.

## **5 - Chapter Division**

The focus of the first chapter is on man's prelapsarian condition, namely man's condition before his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Here I shall argue that in his analysis of man before the fall, Augustine's emphasis falls primarily on the twofold function of grace as both confirming man in a state of original righteousness and allowing man to persevere in it with a view to his eternal enjoyment of God. Augustine never denies the role that free will has in relation to man's goodness. Indeed, throughout his works the idea of man's goodness and original righteousness is always associated with that of freedom, an endowment of nature from the moment of creation. However, I shall argue that within the Edenic context what is at the forefront of Augustine's mind is not human nature in its original endowments but grace as conserving man in this state of righteousness. This is a distinctive emphasis of Augustine's thought on human nature before sin, which becomes all the more clear during the anti-Pelagian controversy with the formulation of the doctrine of the grace of perseverance. It is here that Augustine claims that even though man was created righteous, he was not able to remain so without the help of a further intervention of grace.

The emphases of Dante's account of man before the fall are, I shall argue, quite different from Augustine's. Undeniably the Garden of Eden is for Dante, as it

is for Augustine, a place irradiated by the light of God, which in the *Commedia* is always a symbol of God's provision for his creatures. Dante's representation of man in Eden is centred upon the idea of the joyfulness of man's friendship with God, an emphasis later found in Dante's representation of man's redemption through Christ's sacrifice, and rooted in the notion of man's dwelling permanently and indispensably in love. But in Dante the celebration of Eden as the place in which man and God are united in their primeval friendship is first and foremost a way to celebrate man in his original righteousness and capacity for goodness. If the Augustinian notion of the grace of perseverance is absent from Dante's understanding of man's presence in Eden, what we have in the poem is an account of man's righteousness and potential for goodness by virtue of his direct creation which makes him an image of God and a likeness to his creator. The distinction between nature and grace, which in Augustine is blurred to the point of neglect, comes to the fore of Dante's doctrine of man's conformity with God which allows him to stress the self-reflective and voluntary dimension of human nature, divinely created with the potential for sanctity, which is potentially achievable by man, in some sense and in some degree, from out of his own nature.

In the second chapter I investigate the doctrine of original sin, of actual sin and the consequence of sin. I look at the development of the question of sin as *privatio boni* in Augustine from as early as the anti-Manichaen *De libero arbitrio* to the later treatises the *Enchiridion*, the *De civitate Dei* and the *De natura boni*. I investigate how he came to apply the neoplatonic notion of privation, which explained the corruption of material things in terms of privation of good, to the operation of the will itself. In opposition to the materialism of the Manichean

approach, he asserted that an act is sinful when it comes short of what it should be. For Augustine this is the same as saying that an evil act of the will is an act that lacks a specific order, or, to put it differently, an evil act is the result of the soul's love for things other than God. An act that comes short of its good coincides with the soul's love for creation over and against God. A *privatio*, in other words, consists of a misdirection of love in the sense that love is aimed towards creation as opposed to God. *Privatio* is therefore often followed by an *aversio Dei*, by a movement against God. It is in this sense that *privatio* is present to the individual both as a principle and as a product of *aversio*, the one shaping and intensifying the other. I shall argue that for Augustine both original sin (Adam's sin) and actual sin (the sins that men commit during their life) are explainable by the above-mentioned theory of privation, whereby to say that an act comes short of what it should be means that the soul finds satisfaction in intermediate goods, having lost sight of the ultimate good.

Within a postlapsarian context, this idea of love directionality takes a radical turn in the *De doctrina christiana* where Augustine draws a distinction between what ought to be enjoyed (*frui*) and what ought to be used (*uti*). Equating enjoyment with love he claims that God alone ought to be enjoyed, maintaining therefore that all the rest – creation, that is – has to be used with a view to the sole enjoyment of God. The consequence of this is a dismissal of any created love in keeping with Augustine's sceptical view of man's ability to pursue any good whatsoever in a state of postlapsarian fallenness. The inclination to evil that man inherits from Adam at the moment of his birth makes man susceptible to the lures and temptations of the world about, which threatens his homecoming, as Augustine himself writes in the *De doctrina christiana* (1. 3-4).

I shall conclude my analysis of Augustine and sin with a section devoted to the analysis of the consequences of sin. Here I shall look primarily at Book 1 and 2 of the *Confessions*, where Augustine's reflection on man's behaviour from infancy to maturity is a clear expression of his sense of man's moral debilitation as a consequence of original sin and sin in general. His description of the jealous infant who, after being fed, cries when he sees another child at a nurse's breast, followed by examples of wickedness in later stages of life, when man becomes accountable for his actions, complete the general picture of man's morality, or lack thereof, in a condition of fallenness.

Moving to the doctrine of sin in Dante, my discussion will start by determining the first contextual and historical difference between him and Augustine. Claiming that Manicheism bears no relevance for Dante's formulation of the question of man's sin, I shall introduce this section with an analysis of Dante's sense of the relationship between astral influence and man's freedom, which in the *Purgatorio* determines the philosophical background against which the question of man's wilfulness in sin is investigated. Having defined sin as an act of the will, I shall then proceed to establish Dante's conception of sin with respect to love through a reading of the central cantos of the *Purgatorio* and the first canto of the *Paradiso*, where Dante elaborates, as some critics have it, the Augustinian theory of the *pondus amoris*.<sup>101</sup> It is here that I shall speak of the distinction between natural and elective love, and the relationship between elective love and free will.

For Dante, it is from this relationship that man's culpability ought to be traced. He argues, in fact, that if natural love is always innocent insofar as it inclines

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<sup>101</sup> Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, pp. 58-59; Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought in the Paradiso*, p. 51; Took, 'Dante Augustine and the Drama of Salvation', especially pp. 85-86.

man – as any other animate and inanimate being of creation – towards a good which is proper to his nature, elective love can be culpable, that is to say, the cause of sin, as it always implies a choice on the part of man. Though one is necessary and the other is free, natural and elective love are not opposite principles, but complementary ones, for natural love is the regulatory principle of elective love. In other words, a being endowed with rationality ‘exercises’, in the words of Gerald Morgan, ‘his or her rational love in the light of its natural inclination.’<sup>102</sup> Natural love is, therefore, the only possible context within which free will can operate. Far from hindering or impeding the activity of the will, natural love is the context against which all the other loves that the soul encounters in its temporal existence ought to be measured.

If man is a creature of love, and his relationship with the world about is established in terms of desire, then the Augustinian distinction between *frui* and *uti* has no real place within Dante’s philosophy. What for Augustine involves the dismissal, in keeping with the theory advanced in the *De doctrina christiana*, of man’s enjoyment of creation in favour of man’s use of creation, for Dante involves an ordering of different kinds of love with a view to the ultimate love of God.

In the last section of the second chapter I shall look at the consequences of sin in Dante. In maintaining that in both Augustine and Dante the main consequence of sin is the loss of man’s conformity to God, I shall also point out that there are two fundamental aspects of Dante’s treatment of the question of sin and its consequences that distinguish him from Augustine. If in Augustine, as already seen, Adam’s inheritance is equated with an inclination to evil that, from as early as infancy,

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<sup>102</sup> G. Morgan, ‘Natural and Spiritual Movements of Love in the Soul: An Explanation of *Purgatorio* XVIII’, *Modern Language Review*, 80 (1985), 320-29 (p. 323).

increases in accountability in the course of one's life, in Dante the young soul, newly created by God, is described as both joyous and naïve, moving cheerfully and innocently towards everything that causes it pleasure. Dante's account of infancy and of the youth of man is in this sense quite other than that offered by Augustine in Book 1 and 2 of the *Confessions*, quite other in its celebratory as distinct from condemnatory mood.

In the third chapter, the focus is on the Christ event viewed in respect to God's solicitude towards mankind and mankind's response. Speaking of God's redemption through the mediatory incarnation of Christ, Augustine insists primarily on its necessity and fittingness. In both the *Enchiridion* and the *De Trinitate* the question of the necessity of Christ's mediation is linked to that of original sin; the moral debilitation that man inherits with Adam's nature, and the extent of the offence incurred by the gravity of sin committed by Adam, makes it impossible for man to free himself from the captivity of sin, and pay back – from a merely judicial perspective – the price incurred by sin itself. If necessity is therefore linked to the moral debilitation caused by sin, the fittingness of the Christ event is instead justified by the doctrine of God's love for his creatures. It is, in fact, by demonstrating the infinity of his love for man that God could rekindle in man the hope of salvation.

The fittingness or suitability of the event is, therefore, for Augustine a result of the love which underlies all of God's activity. In presenting the question in these terms, Augustine is also aware of the problems deriving from attributing some form of necessity or determinism to God's absolute freedom. The question is resolved from within the context of divine love; God, that is, acts out of the necessity of his own being – which is love as of his essence – in a way that does not impede him

from acting otherwise. Thus, Augustine argues that, in keeping with his freedom, God could have acted in a number of different ways. He could have left man unaided or could have redeemed him without the sacrifice of the cross, but he chose the mediation of his son because this showed the boundless extent of his love for his creatures. For Augustine the mediation of Christ is the manifestation of what John Burnaby calls God's 'condescendence' to man, his coming down or, in other words, his partaking of the human flesh so as to allow man to share in Christ's divinity.<sup>103</sup> This notion is part of a wider sense of the efficacy of God's love for man, something that is always at the forefront of Augustine's mind, namely that divine love is not only the means of reconciliation between man and God, but also the medicine which allows for the moral healing and renewal of human beings, a renewal that, through grace, allows man to will the good and therefore act righteously for the achievement of the final glory in the soul's fruition of God.

I shall, then, examine the extent salvation depends on human decisions and actions. In this context I shall explore primarily man's response to the divine initiative by way of the theological virtues, first among these, faith. It is in the investigation of faith, its acquisition, the importance of man's response, and man's continuation in faith that the essential lines of Augustine's soteriology will come to light. In this section I shall confirm one of the main points already formulated in the first chapter, namely the priority that grace takes in Augustine, both in its pre-emptive and continuing character, and his unfailing emphasis on the insufficiency of man to continue in faith without a further infusion of grace – the grace of perseverance.

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<sup>103</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, p. 172.

While the Christ event determines the universal and historical moment of salvation, the moment at which mankind is justified, faith describes man's turning to Christ, the surrender of his 'mind to the supernatural truth of the revelation, and [...] the surrender of the whole man to the grace of Christ'.<sup>104</sup> Through conversion by faith, therefore, Augustine defines that moment at which the soul is renewed by the power of grace and its love turned to God, a love that becomes operative through the will. If man's potential to believe depends on his possession of a rational soul, faith itself is grace given – i.e. a gift of God. This latter observation points first to the doctrine of election, namely to the selective nature of salvation, and secondly, to what Augustine calls the grace of perseverance, or man's grace-given ability to continue in faith. It is within this context that I shall argue that the insufficiency of nature constitutes one of the strongest emphases of Augustine's understanding of God's intervention in the context of fallenness, resulting in a soteriology that stresses God's help over and against man's helplessness.

In Dante, the question of redemption is framed within the context of love, a love that generously creates and that, out of the same generosity, heals fallen man, returning him to a state of original sufficiency. Like Augustine, Dante speaks of God's freedom to choose among a number of alternatives with a view to man's salvation. In other words, God could have forgiven man out of his omnipotence without sacrificing his own Son, acting, therefore, out of love alone, or man could have raised himself from the deformity of sin, but this was an impossibility. It is precisely in discounting these two alternatives, and in determining that in Christ both God's justice and mercy were revealed, that Dante speaks of the *modus operandi* of

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<sup>104</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 31.

God's goodness and that his sense of the reasons for the incarnation comes to the fore.

In looking at the reasons as to why redemption took the specific form of the incarnation, Dante turns, therefore, to the way in which God's goodness operates. He claims that, in general terms, good actions are motivated by the pleasure which derives from them. Contextualized within the wider discourse of redemption, where love is always at the forefront, pleasure ought to be understood in the specific sense of pleasure in the act of right loving. In keeping with this, he argues that the more a work derives from the goodness of the one who performs it, the more it generates pleasure in the agent. As a consequence of this the incarnation was more pleasing to God because it revealed both his mercy and justice. God's pleasure in bringing about the incarnation on the one hand, and the goodness of his action on the other, are therefore two aspects of Dante's soteriology that, coupled with God's rejoicing in his own goodness, make for a different distribution of emphases from Augustine.

As for man's participation by faith in the redeeming work of the cross, Dante's sense of man's restored sufficiency chimes with his generally positive sense of man's moral nature. In Christ, man's sufficiency is confirmed, once and for all. I shall argue that the emphasis that Dante places on grace as a means for nature's empowerment and moral capacitation contrasts with Augustine's tendency to speak of grace within the context of man's insufficiency and inability to continue in goodness. It is within this context that I shall compare Dante's commitment to redemption in its universal and personal outcome as altogether sufficient to salvation, in contrast to Augustine's sense of the grace of perseverance which makes faith necessary, yet not sufficient to salvation. It is in conclusion to the Dante section

that I shall investigate his presentation of the theological virtue of faith. I shall argue that although Dante, like Augustine, believes that faith cannot exist without justification – the re-orientation of the soul, that is, by virtue of grace – this is not where his emphasis of Canto 24 of *Paradiso* lies. In contrast to Augustine, Dante's interest lies in pointing out man's responsibility in assenting to faith and in laying hold of the possibility now open to him in the Christ of new life.

## Chapter 1 - Prelapsarian Righteousness

### 1.0 - Introduction

In this chapter I investigate the notion of man's original righteousness in Augustine and Dante. More precisely, I shall compare and contrast Augustine's sense of how it is that man stands in need of grace for the purposes of good works even prior to the fall with Dante's sense of his direct creation in the image of God and of the implications of this for his persisting in good works without God's further assistance.

The difficulty in defining the doctrine of righteousness in Augustine lies primarily in determining his sense of human nature in its original perfection. In order to give a definition of righteousness, one must first consider the nature of righteousness in and for itself; and secondly whether Augustine looks at the properties and activities of innocent human nature independently from grace. The analysis of Augustine's texts points to one conclusion, that in the Garden of Eden the first man and woman enjoyed the privilege of their natural condition which was at one and the same time a graced condition. Arguably, there is no real distinction in Augustine's mind between nature and grace in Eden. Nature always points to grace, because it is grace that establishes man in the perfection in which he was created – a perfection which was a gratuitous gift of God. In Gilson's words: 'To the best of our knowledge at least, a definition of what man's metaphysical essence could have implied as belonging by right to his nature is not to be found in Augustine.'<sup>1</sup> This is why when in the *De civitate Dei* he speaks of man's having a good will, he qualifies

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<sup>1</sup> E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. by L. E. M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961), p. 149.

this statement by claiming that the efficacy of the will was dependent on the help of God – had man (who was created with a good will) relied on the help of God, he would have overcome the temptation of the bad angel.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, when in the same book he distinguishes between Adam’s original righteousness and his lapse into sin he claims that whereas the ‘reliance on the help of God was a positive act that was only possible by the help of God, the reliance on his own will was a negative falling away from favours of divine grace’.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Adam’s will remained good only with the help of God. The will’s choice to remain within the graced predicament in which it was originally created was the result of grace itself. This is not to say that when discussing man’s circumstances in Eden Augustine rules out the human-volitional aspect of righteousness, but that, with respect to its efficacy, man’s volition is always qualified within the context of God’s grace. This repeated shift of emphasis from man to grace ultimately results in limiting the moral capacity of nature even in its graced condition.

As far as I am able to say, it is in the *De correptione et gratia* that Augustine carries out one of the most detailed accounts of the relationship between nature and grace within the context of Eden. The treatise was written during the anti-Pelagian controversy between 426 and 427 CE and discusses the position of Catholic faith concerning the old covenant, free will and grace.<sup>4</sup> Augustine teaches that man’s

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<sup>2</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 27: ‘Quando quidem sic erat institutus, ut, si de adiutorio Dei fideret bonus homo, malum angelum vinceret.’

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 14. 27: ‘ita bene vivere sine adiutorio Dei etiam in paradiso non erat in potestate; erat autem in potestate male vivere.’

<sup>4</sup> Most critical studies on Augustine’s life and works have a section dedicated to the anti-Pelagian controversy and on the effect that the British monk’s Christian philosophy had on Augustine. A useful and analytical presentation of Pelagius’s ideas is given by, G. W. H. Lampe, ‘Salvation, Sin and Grace’, in *A History of Christian Doctrine*, ed. by Hubert Cunliffe-Jones (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), pp. 149-69; C. Harrison, ‘Pelagianism’ and ‘The Controversy’, in *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 101-14; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early*

deliverance from evil is only carried out by Christ's grace, without which one can do no good at all. Through this grace, in fact, man's will acts in conformity with charity, and man's works are consequently deemed meritorious. In acknowledging that not every man receives this gift, he also maintains that the rebuke of those evil men who have not received divine inspiration is just, though the reason for this justice are unknowable to man. In the context of divine election Augustine discusses the gift of perseverance given to those predestined for salvation, distinguishing this from the grace of perseverance given to Adam in Eden. Whereas those men elected to salvation are given the gift of perseverance which restores them to goodness and instils in them the will to persevere, Adam, Augustine argues, was given the grace which enabled him to persevere in goodness if he wished to. In other words, Adam was created in a state of grace, and was maintained in that state by a gift that enabled him to be maintained in it if he thus wished; the power that God left to nature was the will's freedom to turn away from grace, a freedom that Adam used to that effect.

Now, what I shall attempt to delineate in the course of the first part of this chapter is the emphasis that Augustine places on grace, and how, when describing man's goodness in Eden, he refers to the way in which this goodness is communicated to man by way of divine inspiration. Even in Eden, as Ernest Evans writes, for Augustine 'grace is just as essential to the inception of a work of righteousness as it is to its accomplishment'.<sup>5</sup> In keeping with this Gilson writes that, 'an Augustinian doctrine will incline spontaneously towards that which concedes

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*Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Continuum, 2006), especially pp. 357-72; J. Casey, 'Predestination: Augustine to Calvin and Beyond', in *After Lives: A Guide to Heaven, Hell and Purgatory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 167-79.

<sup>5</sup> *Saint Augustine's Enchiridion: Or Manual to Laurentius Concerning Faith, Hope, and Charity*, trans. and intr. by Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), p. xxi.

less to nature and more to God.<sup>6</sup> It is this emphasis in Augustine's texts that, I shall argue, marks his difference from Dante's position on the question of man's original righteousness as espoused in *Purgatorio* 28 and *Paradiso* 7.

What is at the forefront of Dante's mind in the representation of man in Eden is man, not grace. Grace is of course everywhere in Dante's Eden. The fruitfulness of the garden, the lushness of the meadows, the smiles and songs of Matelda are all signifiers of the untainted and peaceful union between God and man before the fall, a union sealed by the presence of grace in Eden. Matelda, the beautiful and joyful woman who walks the garden when Dante enters it, is primarily the representative of innocent humanity which enjoyed the restfulness of their friendship with God. Free from all anxiety, she is at one with her creator and rejoices at the bountiful fruits of creation. It is against this background, pervaded by the nourishing presence of the divine, that Dante gives a description of man before the fall. Matelda's words 'fé l'uom buono e a bene' (*Purg.* 28. 92), describing the divine act of creation of the first man, place a clear emphasis on man's goodness ('buono') on the one hand, and man's moral endeavour aimed at the accomplishment of an ultimately good end ('e a bene') on the other. Rephrasing, therefore, Gilson's earlier statement in the light of Dante's theology of Eden, a Dantean doctrine will incline spontaneously towards that which concedes more to nature, because in the state of original righteousness in which he was created man was able to be good and do good.

This is confirmed by Beatrice's speech of *Paradiso* 7 which, within the wider exposition of the doctrine of atonement, not only introduces the notion of man's conformity to God established by way of creation, but also points to safeguarding

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<sup>6</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 240.

man's original righteousness as flowing from the original perfection in which he was created. Beatrice's reference in the *Paradiso* to man's creation 'sanza mezzo' (*Par.* 7. 67), which ontologically grounds the notion of man's dependence on God only, and man's freedom from the influence of natural causality, focuses attention on man's ability and responsibility for goodness. By framing the notion of man's conformity to God within the context of direct creation Dante achieves two things on two different levels, the ontological on the one hand, and the moral (and eschatological) on the other. On the ontological level, it confirms, as already stated, man's immediate subordination to God and his freedom from causal necessity; on a moral and eschatological level, it establishes freedom as the power to choose what is good for man – a power that in Eden (before the fall) man exercised to this effect. Thus, if the power to choose remains in fallen humanity, what is lost is the power to make morally good choices.

The above remarks constitute the main thread of my argument in this chapter. From these introductory statements we can see how the perspectives from which Augustine and Dante look at the question of man's life in Eden are fundamentally different. In Augustine, grace is what makes man innocent and preserves man in this innocence. Ultimately, to speak of man's righteousness is for Augustine to praise and acknowledge the priority of God in matters moral and eschatological. For Dante, creation is a way to describe man in his *imago Dei*, namely his capacity and potential to be like God, insofar as he was created for this purpose.

## 1.1 - On the Meaning of Original Righteousness: Man's Freedom and Grace in Eden

In Book 14 of the *De civitate Dei* Augustine explores two different kinds of love that define mankind in its present predicament. The introductory remarks of Chapter 1 of the same book describe how Adam and Eve, created righteous, would not have died had they remained firm in the commandment. Death, which their offspring inherited as part of their nature, would have become eternal – what Augustine calls the second death, or death of the spirit – had God not intervened to save them from the disaster of their otherwise just predicament. It is because of the legacy of Adam's sin that humanity is now divided between those who have chosen the love of self, upon which the earthly city is founded, and those who have chosen the love of God, a love that informs and inspires all citizens of the heavenly city.

All questions presented in Book 14 – Adam's original righteousness, his sin, man's natural flaw, his regeneration through grace, man's obedience in and through grace – are discussed within the context of this separation between love of self and love of God. All human actions which define man in his relationship with God and his fellow human beings are, in fact, reducible to a love that can either bind humanity together in the common love of God, or divide them in the fracturing – both socially and individually – love of self.<sup>7</sup> In this, Augustine argues, man's will is paramount, because it is through his will that man chooses the object – be it self or

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<sup>7</sup> For a philosophical study of the doctrine of love in Augustine, O. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980); S. Taranto, *Agostino e la filosofia dell'amore* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003). With respect to love in the Christian community and with specific focus on the *De civitate Dei*, Gilson, 'The Christian Life', in *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, pp. 165-84; P. S. Hawkins, 'Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*', *Publication of the Modern Language Association*, 106, 3 (1991), 471-82. For a theological examination of love, Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), especially Chapter 7.

God – upon which man’s desire will ultimately rest. At the heart of this is the relationship between man and God defined by way of man’s freedom and God’s grace, a relationship that is true of man before and after the fall.<sup>8</sup>

In Eden the commandment not to eat from the tree of good and evil imposed a limitation upon man’s will, which, in this original state of perfection, was able to remain within the constraint of the divine prohibition. Now, the obvious implication of God’s command is obedience which, to put it in Augustine’s words, is ‘the mother and guardian of all the virtues of a rational creature’.<sup>9</sup> Thus, obedience is what preserves man, i.e. the rational creature, from losing the virtues that constituted him in this state of original perfection. In the act of remaining obedient man is recognizing both the value of his submission to God, and the authority that God exercises upon him, an authority that is not merely legalistic – sealed by the pledge that bound man and God in Eden – but that reveals the fundamental meaning of man’s dependence upon God.<sup>10</sup> To be obedient is in fact to remain within the bounds of God’s goodness. Now, for Augustine, goodness is primarily synonymous with

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<sup>8</sup> The question of the relationship between freedom and grace, being so essential to the understanding of Augustine’s philosophy and theology, has pervaded Augustine scholarship. For a study of the deterministic character of efficacious grace with respect to human volition, N. P. Williams, ‘Grace in St. Augustine’, in *The Grace of God* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), especially pp. 19-43. For a discussion focusing on grace as liberating man to his highest possibility, Burnaby, ‘Grace and Freedom’, in *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, pp. 226-34; Harrison, ‘On Free Will’, ‘Between Law and Grace’, and ‘Paul: Romans 7’, in *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, pp. 85-93. For the relationship between God’s predestination and man’s freedom, G. Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine’s Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007); P. Carey, ‘Predestined Grace: Conversion and Election’, in *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 99-126.

<sup>9</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 12: ‘quae virtus in creatura rationali mater quodammodo est omnium custosque virtutum.’

<sup>10</sup> The question of obedience in Eden is strictly related to man’s integrity as maintained in grace. Obedience is possible because it is sustained by God’s communication of goodness to man. Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 112, and Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, pp. 226-34 argue in favour of a view of grace that exercises no compulsion in man’s will. Obedience to God, understood as man’s adherence to God’s will, is the liberation of man to his real freedom.

God's provision for his creatures – 'Man in Eden lived in the enjoyment of God and he was good by a communication of the goodness of God.'<sup>11</sup> In sum, man is created good, possessing by way of divine provision the ability to remain good.<sup>12</sup> It should not, therefore, be surprising when in Chapter 12 of the same book Augustine writes, 'the sinfulness involved in breaking this precept was so very great precisely because the difficulty of submission was so very slight.'<sup>13</sup> Moreover, there is for Augustine no coercion in this submission because, as Harrison rightly puts it, God 'calls forth a response which corresponds with man's deepest desires and motivations, with his true identity and being as a creature of God'.<sup>14</sup> Submission and obedience to God represent a positive act of man's will which, inspired by divine grace, remains subservient to God's command and free from the slavery of sin. Both theologically and psychologically, then, submission and obedience are therefore synonymous with freedom. In fact, as Augustine writes in the commentary on John's gospel, man's slavery to God is – truly – man's only freedom, 'You will be free, if you are a servant still – free from sin, the servant of righteousness.'<sup>15</sup> Thus understood, the prohibition given to Adam is a matter not of constraining but of liberating the soul for its highest possibilities. Far from suggesting unlimited liberty of action, freedom points, on the contrary, to man's acceptance and embracing of the role he was

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<sup>11</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 26: '[homo in paradiso] vivebat fruens Deo, ex quo bono erat bonus.'

<sup>12</sup> The relationship between original righteousness, nature and grace in Augustine is explored by Gilson, 'Sin and Grace', in *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, pp. 148-57; Kelly, 'Augustine and Original Sin', in *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 361-62.

<sup>13</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 12: 'quod de poena transgressionis postea subsecutum est, tanto maiore iniustitia violatum est, quanto faciliore posset observantia custodiri.'

<sup>14</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> *In ev. Io.* 41. 8: 'Eris liber, si fuerit servus; liber peccati, servus iustitiae.'

created for, insofar as, to use Augustine's own words: 'it is good for man who is a creature to give his service freely to God who is the Master.'<sup>16</sup>

Now it is true that a sustained emphasis falls here on the human-volitional aspect of this, on the importance of man's own willing in Eden. Augustine himself, following Ecclesiastes, insists in the *De civitate Dei* that 'God created man upright, therefore, endowed with a good will, for without a good will he would not have been upright'.<sup>17</sup> There are, here, two related emphases. On the one hand, man's original state was one of righteousness by virtue of his creation, 'God created man upright, therefore, endowed with a good will', where 'with a good will' means that he was inclined to good because his will was not disturbed by disordered passion; on the other hand, man, by virtue of his original righteousness, could perform the good – 'for without a good will he would not have been upright.' It is clear from this, therefore, that, for Augustine, man's original state of perfection, i.e. the state of original justice in which he was created, depended in some degree on the will. Furthermore, with respect to the will's goodness, Augustine also maintains that rectitude, or absence of corruption, is an aspect – one of the leading aspects, in fact – of man's original freedom. Accordingly, in the *De civitate Dei* he writes that Adam could have refrained from his desire to eat the forbidden fruit because he was free from the hindrance of disordered appetites. Augustine writes:

Now, this command to refrain from a single kind of food when they were surrounded by an abundance of every other kind of food was so easy to

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<sup>16</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 15: 'Quo eam creaturam, cui libera servitus expediret, se esse Dominum commonebat.'

<sup>17</sup> Ecclesiastes, 7:30: 'Deus fecit hominem rectum'; *De civ. Dei* 14. 11. 2: 'Fecit itaque Deus, sicut scriptum est, hominem rectum as per hoc voluntatis bonae. Non enim rectus esset bonam non habens voluntatem.'

obey and so simple to remember for anyone still free from passions resisting the will.<sup>18</sup>

Not only, then, was man in his innocence able not to sin, but he also possessed, as Augustine confirms in the *De correptione et gratia*, the power to persevere in this situation.<sup>19</sup>

What has been said hitherto seems to suggest that for Augustine man was righteous by nature. That upon creation God had bestowed on man the ability to be good and to continue in this goodness. In other words, man was able to preserve the state of justice in which he was created with the exercise of his perfect freedom, maintaining, with perfect ease, the subordination of body to soul and of soul to God. Although this appears to be, at first glance, the logical conclusion of the above, there is, in fact, no easy answer to this because Augustine does not separate the sphere of grace's activity from nature. With respect to this, Gilson argues that we shall never find in Augustine a definition of human nature in its 'metaphysical essence', and this is in so much as Augustine 'takes no notice of it'; also in keeping with this, Eugene TeSelle claims that Augustine 'had not given much thought' to the situation in which man was first created.<sup>20</sup> The consequence of this is an overwhelming presence of grace – i.e. of the activity of grace in Eden – which blurs our understanding of man's capabilities in his prelapsarian condition. It is evident, in fact, from the description that Augustine gives of man in the *De civitate Dei* and the *De correptione et gratia*, that man's integrity needed to be conserved in Eden by a grace that was

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<sup>18</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 12: 'Hoc itaque de uno cibi genere non edendo, ubi aliorum tanta copia subiacebat, tam leve praeceptum ad observandum, tam breve ad memoria retinendum, ubi praesertim nondum voluntati cupiditas resistebat.'

<sup>19</sup> *De corrept. et grat.* 12. 33: 'Prima erat perseverantiae potestas, bonum posse non deserere.'

<sup>20</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 149; E. TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), p. 314.

communicated to man for this purpose. Although Augustine never classifies grace in types, he often suggests that the state of justice in which man was created was not enough to conserve him in righteousness, allowing therefore for a further infusion of grace to make this possible.<sup>21</sup> Thus, if on the one hand Augustine defends the freedom of man in Eden, on the other he writes:

Now, the point of Eden was that a man could live there as a man longs to live, but only so long as he longed to live as God willed him to live. Man in Eden lived in the enjoyment of God and he was good by a communication of the goodness of God.<sup>22</sup>

Man could live in Eden as he wished to live, but he could only remain its citizen as long as his desires coincided with God's will or, in the more specific sense of 'iusserat', with God's command. The last sentence qualifies how man was good by a communication of the goodness of God, which points, in my opinion, to what has been said earlier about God's provision in Eden as a means for man's continuation in goodness (upon which his Edenic citizenship depended). The same emphasis is found later in the same book. I shall transcribe the long quotation in full for the importance it bears on my analysis:

[...] This God did by permitting the bad angel to tempt the first man who had been created good, in the sense of having a will that was good by nature. The point here is that the first man had been so constituted that if, as a good man, he had relied on the help of God, he would have overcome the bad angel, whereas he was bound to be overcome if he proudly relied on his own will in preference to the wisdom of his maker and helper, God; and he was destined to a merited reward if his will remained firm with the help of God, and to an equally deserved doom if his will wavered because of his

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<sup>21</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 362, puts forward this idea when he writes: 'Already he [Adam] was wrapped around with divine grace (*indumentum gratiae*), and he was further granted the special gift of perseverance, i.e. the possibility of persisting in the right exercise of his will.'

<sup>22</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 26: 'Vivebat itaque homo in paradiso sicut volebat, quamdiu hoc volebat quod Deus iusserat; vivebat fruens Deo, ex quo bono erat bonus.'

desertion from God. Notice here that, whereas the reliance on the help of God was a positive act that was only possible by the help of God, the reliance on his own will was a negative falling away from favours of divine grace, and this was a possibility of his own choice. There is an analogy to this in living. The act of living in a body is a positive act which is not a matter of choice but is only possible by the help of nourishment; whereas the choice not to live in the body is a negative act which is in our human power, as we see in the case of suicide. Thus, to remain living as one ought to live was not a matter of choice, even in Eden, but depended on the help of God, whereas to live ill, as one ought not to live, was in man's power; therefore, man was justly responsible for the cutting short of his happiness and the incurring of the penalty that followed.<sup>23</sup>

The wider context of this chapter of the *De civitate Dei* is why God, in spite of his foreknowledge of future evil, allowed the devil to tempt man. The answer Augustine offers is twofold: first, he claims that the defeat of man by the hand of the devil allowed for the more important defeat of the devil by the hand of Christ; secondly, that by leaving man free to sin, God revealed to all rational creatures, angelic and human alike, the difference between the fruits of presumption, and God's protection. It is with respect to this broader question that, in the quotation above, Augustine speaks of the meaning of freedom as specific to man in his prelapsarian situation. That man relied on God, and was thus conserved in righteousness, was in itself made possible by the help of God; however, man's falling away from God was owed to his will which God had created free to choose for and against the divine command. The example provided serves to better emphasize man's dependence on God with respect

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 14. 27: '[...] Ac per hoc propter meritum primae malae voluntatis ita damnato atque obdurato angelo malo, ut iam bonam voluntatem ulterius non haberet, bene utens Deus cur non permitteret, ut ab illo primus homo, qui rectus, hoc est bonae voluntatis, creatus fuerat, temptaretur? Quando quidem sic erat institutus, ut, si de adiutorio Dei fideret bonus homo, malum angelum vinceret; si autem creatorem atque adiutorem Deum superbe sibi placendo desereret, vinceretur; meritum bonum habens in adiuta divinitus voluntate recta, malum vero in deserente Deum voluntate perversa. Quia et ipsum fidere de adiutorio Dei non quidem posset sine adiutorio Dei, nec tamen ideo ab his divinae gratiae beneficiis sibi placendo recedere non habebat in potestate. Nam sicut in hac carne vivere sine adiumentis alimentorum in potestate non est, non autem in ea vivere in potestate est, quod faciunt qui se ipsos necant: ita bene vivere sine adiutorio Dei etiam in paradiso non erat in potestate; erat autem in potestate male vivere, sed beatitudine non permansura et poena iustissima secutura.'

to his sustenance, and his secure death as a consequence of its cessation. In the same way as man needs food to live but he can choose to die by refusing to eat, in Eden righteousness depended on the help of God, whereas the cessation of righteousness resulted exclusively from the will's aversion to God.

Likewise, in the anti-Pelagian *De natura et gratia* Augustine argues that Adam's capacity for sinlessness was not owed to man's powers alone:

But even if he were speaking of sound and perfect human nature [...], it would not be correct for him to say that not to sin depends solely upon us, although to sin would in fact depend on us. For even in this case there would be the help of God, and it would offer itself to those who were willing, just as he does with healthy eyes, so that with its help they may see.<sup>24</sup>

Here Augustine is speaking of God's help as given following man's free decision so as to enable him to carry out what he has willed. 'But the question also arises', as TeSelle argues, 'whether even the willing of what is good can come from man himself' without some prior inspiration from God.<sup>25</sup> It is apparent from the above that Augustine believed in the necessity of divine inspiration. In TeSelle's words:

Simultaneously with the creation of its nature, and prior to any decision on its own part, a good exercise of the will is conferred by divine operation (*De civ. Dei* XII, 9). This does not diminish freedom of decision. It really establishes the set of conditions under which a genuine freedom of decision can exist.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *De nat. et grat.* 48. 56: 'Si de integra et sana hominis natura loqueretur [...] nec sic recte diceret, quod non peccare nostrum tantummodo sit, quamvis peccare nostrum esset; nam et tunc esset adiutorium Dei et tamquam lumen sanis oculis, quo adiuti videant, se praeberet volentibus.'

<sup>25</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 315.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 315.

Augustine, therefore, attributes two functions to grace in Eden. TeSelle names the first ‘operating’ or ‘prevenient’, the second ‘cooperating’ or ‘subsequent’.<sup>27</sup> The first operates within the context of man’s powers, establishing them, as TeSelle writes, ‘in a state of “integrity”, with a good exercise of the will and a proper subordination of all powers to it’; the second is offered to man with a view to his continuation in goodness.<sup>28</sup>

## 1.2 - On the Meaning of Original Righteousness: The Grace of Perseverance

It is to the best of my knowledge in the *De correptione et gratia* that Augustine offers his most comprehensive analysis of grace, and comes close to what we might call a classification or systematization of grace in Eden. The analysis takes place between Chapters 26 and 37 of the treatise and is undertaken by way of a comparison between those men predestined by God to salvation (or sainthood), and Adam. The first obvious distinction Augustine makes between the two is with respect to the grace of liberation, or justification.<sup>29</sup> Created righteous, Adam’s soul experienced no disorder. In perfect observance of the divine order, his soul enjoyed mastery over his body, and he lived in peaceful fruition of God. Already enfolded in grace, Adam did not need the grace delivered by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, for its need is strictly bound to the occurrence of original sin, which makes its

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 315.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 315.

<sup>29</sup> On the question of justification in Augustine, on its virtual absence from Augustine’s works, and the scholarly mapping out of the doctrine through the analysis of issues ancillary to it, i.e. grace, faith, merits, election, forgiveness and freedom, A. E. McGrath, ‘Augustine of Hippo’, and ‘The Development of the Doctrine in the Medieval Period’, in *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), I, pp. 23-51; D. F. Wright, ‘Justification in Augustine’, in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. by Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Backer Pub Group. 2006), pp. 55-72.

presence before sin unnecessary.<sup>30</sup> But that Adam did not require justifying grace does not mean that he did not require grace altogether:

The first man had not that grace by which he should never will to be evil; but assuredly he had that in which if he willed to abide he would never be evil, and without which, moreover, he could not by free will be good, but which, nevertheless, by free will he could forsake.<sup>31</sup>

Here Augustine claims that Adam did not possess the grace reserved for the blessed in paradise, by virtue of which their wills were firm in the good. What he possessed was a grace which worked on the will to inspire the good, which did not determine the will to remain steadfast in it, but which was necessary for the will to persevere in goodness. Therefore, man had the freedom to do evil, but he also possessed the gift necessary to remain good, insofar as, as Augustine claims in Chapter 31 of the same book, ‘free will is sufficient for evil, but is too little for good, unless it is aided by Omnipotent Good.’<sup>32</sup> For Augustine, therefore, it is by virtue of this divine gift that man’s will (in Eden), which would err otherwise, persevered in the good. The notion is reiterated in what follows:

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<sup>30</sup> *De corrept. et grat.* 29: ‘Quid ergo? Adam non habuit Dei gratiam? Immo vero habuit magnam, sed disparem. Ille in bonis erat, quae de bonitate sui Conditoris acceperat: neque enim ea bona et ille suis meritis comparaverat, in quibus prorsus nullum patiebatur malum. Sancti vero in hac vita, ad quos pertinet liberationis haec gratia, in malis sunt, ex quibus clamant ad Deum: Libera nos a malo. Ille in illis bonis Christi morte non eguit: istos a reatu et haereditario et proprio illius Agni sanguis absolvit. Ille non opus habebat eo adiutorio, quod implorant isti cum dicunt: Video aliam legem in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis meae, et captivantem me in lege peccati, quae est in membris meis. Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius? Gratia Dei per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum. Quoniam in eis caro concupiscit adversus spiritum, et spiritus adversus carnem, atque in tali certamine laborantes ac periclitantes dari sibi pugnandi vincendique virtutem per Christi gratiam poscunt. Ille vero nulla tali rixa de se ipso adversus se ipsum tentatus atque turbatus, in illo beatitudinis loco sua secum pace fruebatur.’

<sup>31</sup> *De corrept. et grat.* 31: ‘Istam gratiam non habuit homo primus, qua numquam vellet esse malus; sed sane habuit, in qua si permanere vellet, numquam malus esset, et sine qua etiam cum libero arbitrio bonus esse non posse, sed eam tamen per liberum arbitrium deserere posset. Nec ipsum ergo Deus esse voluit sine sua gratia, quam reliquit in eius libero arbitrio.’

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 31: ‘Quoniam liberum arbitrium ad malum sufficit, ad bonum autem parum est, nisi adiuvetur ab omnipotenti bono.’

At that time, therefore, God had given to man a good will [...] He had given help without which he could not continue therein if he would; but that he should will, He left in his free will. He could therefore continue if he would, because the help was not wanting whereby he could, and without which he could not, perseveringly hold fast the good which he would.<sup>33</sup>

Augustine, starting from the axiom of man's original goodness, claims that Adam needed grace to sustain his good will, but by power of his will, he could forsake grace if he wished. He could also remain within it if he wished, but the wish to remain within it was grace-given, whereas the wish to step outside its realm derived from his free will.

The grace with which Adam was endowed did not protect him from the possibility to depart from the love of God, but enabled him to act in keeping with God's desires, if he chose to stay within the commandment. That same grace enabled him to be good, a goodness that he could not have achieved with free will alone, but that he could lose by free will. In other words, God willed Adam to be with his grace, which he granted to man's will, because it is only with grace that man can be deemed good. Had man chosen to stay good, he would have persevered in goodness because of the help of grace. But because man freely forsook God, God withdrew grace from man depriving him of his righteousness.

In sum, for Augustine it was through grace that man could continue in obedience and it was through this obedience that man was deemed righteous before God. Obedience is the conformity of man's will to God, and is a necessary condition of the relationship between creature and creator. For Augustine, in the same way as

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 32: 'Tunc ergo dederat homini Deus bonam voluntatem [...] dederat adiutorium, sine quo in ea non posset permanere si vellet; ut autem vellet, in eius libero reliquit arbitrio. Posset ergo permanere si vellet: quia non deerat adiutorium per quod posset, et sine quo non posset perseveranter bonum tenere quod vellet.'

in postlapsarian terms man is made righteous by grace, in prelapsarian terms man was made righteous by virtue of his submission to God, the possibility of which was in itself God-given. In Rudolf Bultmann's words: 'the reason why "righteousness" is called "*God's righteousness*" is just this: its one and only foundation is God's grace – it is God-given, God-adjudicated righteousness.'<sup>34</sup> If righteousness is not a human attribute, it is defined by the relationship between God and man, and vice versa. The directions that man can take with regard to his moral conduct on the one hand, and his eschatological destiny on the other are two: either he is with God and justified by him, or he is against him. The former defines righteousness, the latter sinfulness. However, whereas righteousness is infused and sustained by grace, sinfulness is an effect of the will's misdirection, and results in the privation of grace.

### **1.3 - A Comparison between Augustine and Dante**

The *De civitate Dei* and the *De correptione et gratia* elucidate an idea of grace that permeates the whole of Augustine's mature sense of man before and after the fall. In the theology of Augustine, grace envelopes man from the first moment of his creation. The creation of man, arising from a gratuitous act of God's generosity, can be described as an act of divine grace. In this sense grace is understood in the simple terms of God's love for those creatures made in his image.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it is by virtue of man's likeness to God that we can speak of a relationship between man and

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<sup>34</sup> R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols (London: SCM Press, 1952), I, p. 285.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine refers to this general sense of grace, if only in passing, in *Sermo* 26. 6. 7: 'Excepta ergo illa gratia, qua condita est human natura (haec enim Christianis Paganisque communis est). Haec est major gratia, non quod per Verbum homines creati sumus, se quod per Verbum carnem factum fideles facti sumus', where he distinguishes the grace common to all human beings as made in the image of God (Christian and pagan alike), from the grace of adoption or sonship, which makes them part of his Church.

God. In other words, it is because of his rational soul (of his freedom, chiefly) that man's likeness to God is actualized.

As I have pointed out in the course of my analysis, it would be incorrect to claim that Augustine denies the importance of freedom in relation to man's moral and spiritual realization. In fact, the question needs always to be addressed within the context of the will as modified in and through a movement of grace. However, in this analysis I have pointed out an element which is quite distinctive of Augustine's theology of grace especially when compared to Dante's understanding of the role played by grace in Eden. Augustine's understanding of grace as enabling man to persevere in goodness even before the fall is consistent with his belief in man's total and unqualified dependence on God, and with the fact that man's moral behaviour and eschatological destiny is a result of God's presence in man's will. In the words of Burnaby, 'Righteousness is the "higher life" of the soul, because it is a fuller participation in the Life of God', and this 'fuller participation' is rendered possible by God's gift to man before and after the fall.<sup>36</sup> Augustine centres his examination of righteousness on man as created and aided by grace in the actualization of moral goodness. In his works, therefore, the emphasis falls on grace as a pre-requisite of righteousness.<sup>37</sup> We have also seen how prevenient grace, which establishes man's original integrity, is not sufficient to conserve man in that state. It is from this that

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<sup>36</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, p. 149.

<sup>37</sup> See, however, J. B. Kors, *La Justice Primitive et le Péché Originel d'Après S. Thomas* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1930), p. 15: 'Faut-il maintenant considerer la grâce comme la cause efficiente de la justice originelle, ou seulement comme une condition "sine qua non", c'est un point que nous n'osons pas décider. Des textes déjà cités on peut seulement déduire la gratuité de la subordination de la consupiscence: elle était due à une grâce spéciale; à quelle grâce, à celle de l'intégrité ou à la grâce sanctifiante, c'est ce que saint Augustin n'exprime pas clairement.'

Augustine derives the necessity for a further intervention, what TeSelle has referred to as subsequent or cooperating grace.<sup>38</sup>

Dante's focus is different. When in *Purgatorio* 28 and in *Paradiso* 7 he introduces questions of man's Edenic state, his interest lies first in determining man's original goodness,<sup>39</sup> and secondly his dignity within the hierarchy of beings in consequence of the soul's creation 'sanza mezzo' (*Par.* 7. 67) by God, and of the properties specific to him in his prelapsarian state (*Par.* 7. 67-84). Dante stresses the dynamic character of man's righteousness by combining original justice with its actualization by virtue of man's will, but he is also interested in the natural properties possessed by Adam in Eden through which he participated in God's essence, and which made him a likeness to God.

Like Dante, Augustine speaks of goodness as a property of man before the fall, but as has been shown, in the anti-Pelagian treatise the *De correptione et gratia*, he stresses the importance of grace in its operative and cooperative function for the preservation of goodness. Dante, by contrast, does not place such an emphasis on grace in a prelapsarian context. Dante, unlike Augustine, never speaks of the need of grace of perseverance in Eden. Augustine feels the need to confirm man's goodness in grace as a matter of course and, as I have argued, his interest in prelapsarian nature aside from grace is virtually non-existent.<sup>40</sup> Dante maintains that creation

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<sup>38</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 315.

<sup>39</sup> *Purg.* 28. 91-93: 'Lo sommo ben, che solo esso a sé piace, / fé l'uom buono e a bene, e questo loco / diede per arr'a lui d'eterna pace'; and 142-44: 'Qui fu innocente l'umana radice; / qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto.'

<sup>40</sup> Kors, *La Justice Primitive et le Péché Originel D'Après S. Thomas*, p. 11: 'Théoriquement donc, Saint Augustine ne pose pas la question de la nature pure. Il considère seulement ce fait, que Dieu créa l'homme dans la rectitude. Tout désordre dans la nature est dès lors une iniquité, un vice, un péché, contraire à l'économie divine qui se manifeste dans la création; il ne vient pas du Père, mais du monde. D'autre part, puisque, selon Augustin, cette rectitude est une grâce spéciale, elle n'était pas du

‘sanza mezzo’ is the reason for man’s perfection, his interest lies in nature, in the properties available to man, and how this nature relates to man’s original justice.

Burnaby, quoting from Gilson, has observed that with Thomas Aquinas ‘the divine likeness sinks for the first time into the heart of nature’: as a creative cause, man is summoned ‘to exert a finite participation in the infinite fecundity of the creative act’.<sup>41</sup> Dante is, with respect to this, closer to Thomas than he is to Augustine. In Dante, man’s dignity lies in his resemblance of his maker by virtue of that image of God which is the human soul. Man’s soul resembles God insofar as it is itself a cause and not merely an effect – and because it is a free agent and not a mechanical instrument. It is in this context that Burnaby’s analysis of the differences between Augustine and Thomas can be applied also to my analysis of Augustine and Dante. Burnaby, referring to Thomas’s distancing from the Augustinian tradition, writes that ‘besides the absolute dependence upon God which man shares with the whole created world, [he] insists upon man’s relative yet real independence’, therefore, ‘in the tendency of Augustinianism to “detract from the perfection of the creature”, [Thomas] sees a danger of “detracting from the perfection of the divine power.”’<sup>42</sup> In keeping with this, Dante’s presentation of prelapsarian humanity

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tout due à la nature comme telle. Dieu aurait pu créer l’homme dans des conditions naturelles sans aucune injustice.’

<sup>41</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, p. 265.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 265. *SCG* 3 q. 69: ‘Amplius. Perfectio effectus demonstrat perfectionem causae: maior enim virtus perfectiorem effectum inducit. Deus autem est perfectissimum agens. Oportet igitur quod res ab ipso creatae perfectionem ab ipso consequantur. Detrahare ergo perfectioni creaturarum est detrahare perfectioni divinae virtutis. Sed si nulla creatura habet aliquam actionem ad aliquem effectum producendum, multum detrahatur perfectioni creaturae: ex abundantia enim perfectionis est quod perfectionem quam aliquid habet, possit alteri communicare. Detrahit igitur haec positio divinae virtuti [...] Adhuc. Subtrahere ordinem rebus creatis est eis subtrahere id quod optimum habent: nam singula in seipsis sunt bona, simul autem omnia sunt optima, propter ordinem universi; semper enim totum est melius partibus et finis ipsarum. Si autem rebus subtrahantur actiones, subtrahitur ordo rerum ad invicem: rerum enim quae sunt diversae secundum suas naturas, non est colligatio in ordinis unitatem nisi per hoc quod quaedam agunt et quaedam patiuntur. Inconveniens igitur est dicere quod res non habeant proprias actiones.’

focuses on human nature, its privileged position within creation, and its attributes as belonging to his nature by virtue of creation.

In the following two sections of this chapter I therefore set out to discuss questions of man's ideal state in Eden in the context of these preliminary remarks. It is above all in *Purgatorio* 28 and *Paradiso* 7 that Dante chooses to examine questions relating to man's original perfection, to his innocence, righteousness and his primeval enjoyment of God. In the first, the narrative context is the Garden of Eden, which Dante the pilgrim reaches at the summit of mount Purgatory with the aid of his first guide, Virgil. In *Paradiso* 7, the pilgrim has passed into a new phase of his journey and reached, with the help of Beatrice, the second heaven (or heaven of Mercury). I shall begin with *Purgatorio* 28.

#### **1.4 - Man in Eden: *Purgatorio* 28**

In *Purgatorio* 28 the representation of Eden in the joyful smiles of Matelda, in the fruitful proliferation of vegetation, in the peacefulness of the rivers flowing through it, and in the tepid air which suffers no earthly perturbation, signify, ultimately, the enjoyment, the peacefulness, the fruitfulness, and productiveness of man's original fruition of God.<sup>43</sup> But Dante's representation of the 'selva antica' (*Purg.* 28. 23) is never without a range of different functions and meanings. If it is at once symbol and reality of man's original union with God, it also functions as dramatic juxtaposition with the other forest of the *Commedia*, namely the 'selva selvaggia' (*Inf.* 1. 5). On the plane of the allegorical this contrast between the infernal forest and the Garden

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<sup>43</sup> For an analysis of the mood of joyful tranquillity of the earthly Paradise, P. Pacchioni-Becker, *Matelda e il paradiso terrestre nella Commedia di Dante Alighieri: intertestualità e tipologia* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002).

of Eden points to two opposite existential realities: one dominated by sin, the other informed by the serenity of man's friendship with God.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, in *Inferno* 1 the author's linguistic choices aim at defining the mood of the canto by evoking images of ontological shipwreck.<sup>45</sup> The angst of the pilgrim crossing the deserted wastes of the 'selva oscura' (*Inf.* 1. 2) is revealed by the language of this first canto, representing through sounds, rhythm and images, the consequences of man's severance from God in sin. The image of a desert-like land ('nel gran diserto', l. 64), which is suggestive symbolically of man's existential alienation from God, is supported by a number of linguistic preferences which allude to the horror, terror, and anguish deriving from man's exile from God. The choice of harsh fricative sounds like 'aspra', the gemination of consonants like 'mezzo' (l. 1), 'diritta' and 'smarrita' (l. 3) or 'selvaggia' (l. 5), the privileging of the closed sound of the vowel 'u' in rhyming words like 'oscura' (l. 2), 'dura' (l. 4), 'paura' (l. 6), 'punto' (l. 11) 'giunto' (l. 13), 'compunto' (l. 15), all conspire to create the sense of terror that the pilgrim feels in the forest (and that man faces in his alienation from God). In addition to this, and in contrast with the openness and airiness of the

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<sup>44</sup> For the dialectic between the before and after of sin, *Purg.* 29. 22-30: 'E una melodia dolce correva / per l'aere luminoso; onde buon zelo / mi fé riprender l'ardimento d'Eva, / che là dove ubidia la terra e 'l cielo, / femmina, sola e pur testé formata, / non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo.' Here, man's severance from God conveys a sense of melancholy loss, entwined with anger and pain. Dante, in fact, vents his frustration at seeing at firsthand (as protagonist of the *Commedia*) the beauties of the Eden which had been lost to mankind by the 'ardimento' of the first woman. Also *Purg.* 28. 91-96: 'Lo sommo ben, che solo esso a sé piace, / fé l'uom buono e a bene, e questo loco / diede per arr'a lui d'eterna pace. / Per sua difalta qui dimorò poco; / per sua difalta in pianto e in affanno / cambiò onesto riso e dolce gioco', and *Par.* 7. 85-87: 'Vostra natura, quando peccò tota / nel seme suo, da queste dignitadi, / come di paradiso, fu remota', in which he talks specifically of the loss of perfection experienced by humanity as a consequence of Adam's sin.

<sup>45</sup> For the relationship between form (poetry) and content (meaning) in this canto, P. Dronke, 'Dante's Earthly Paradise: Towards an Interpretation of *Purgatorio* XXVIII', *Romanische Forschungen*, 82 (1970), 467-87 (p. 474), where Dante's poetic choices are seen in relation to Alan of Lille's representation of the garden of Natura in the *Anticlaudianus*.

Garden of Eden, the infernal ‘selva’ is described as difficult to access for both its darkness and its form ‘oscura’, ‘selvaggia’, ‘aspra’ e ‘forte’ (ll. 2 and 5).

*Purgatorio* 28 contrasts with *Inferno* 1 both in its language and mood with a view to introducing the different existential dimension that it is set to portray.<sup>46</sup> Matelda, whom scholars have claimed to symbolize man in a state of innocence, is seen by Dante in the act of singing and plucking flowers from the plentiful meadows of the garden.<sup>47</sup> Her radiant beauty, invigorated by the rays of the eternal love (ll. 43-45), reminds the pilgrim of Proserpine ‘nel tempo che perdette / la madre lei, ed ella primavera’ (ll. 50-51), the time, that is, at which her kidnapping deprived her mother of spring.<sup>48</sup> Here, the reference to spring is not fortuitous and serves, in my opinion, three purposes. First, as I shall explore in more details in what follows, it is suggestive of ideas of birth and growth of which the whole canto is permeated;

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<sup>46</sup> In relation to the two forests of the *Commedia* and their allegorical significance, S. Battaglia, *Esemplarità e antagonismo del pensiero di Dante*, 2 vols (Naples: Liguori, 1975) I, p. 143: ‘Per la coscienza di Dante la “selva” e la “foresta” fanno parte di un vocabolario coerente e unitario, nelle cui relazioni si squaderna la visione più essenziale del mondo. La “selva” e la “foresta” sono anteriori all’uomo e si trovano nella prospettiva del creato appunto per significare la duplice ed opposta condizione dell’umanità, che pecca e che si salva.’

<sup>47</sup> Various scholars have examined the role that Matelda plays in the *Commedia*. Some early scholars saw in Matelda a real historical character, A. Lubin, *La Matelda di Dante Alighieri* (Graz: Giuseppe A. Kienreich, 1860); A. Borgognoni, *Matelda* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi Tipografo Editore, 1887); and also, M. Ottonello, *Chi è la Matelda di Dante?* (Parma: Alfonzo Zerbini, 1906). Others have looked at her symbolic presence as an example in the *Commedia* of active life, G. Picciola, *Matelda* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1902). Others still have focused on her role as symbolic of humanity before the fall, E. Brown, ‘Proserpina, Matelda, and the Pilgrim’, *Dante Studies*, 89 (1971), 33-48; M. Shapiro, *Women Earthly and Divine in the Comedy of Dante* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975). In line with these, R. Harrower Blanche, *A New Theory of Dante’s Matelda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), speaks of Matelda as a symbol of intellectual innocence, rather than moral innocence. More recently, and unlike most of her peers, Pacchioni-Becker, *Matelda e il paradiso terrestre nella Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, especially p. 79, sees Matelda as representing redeemed humanity in a condition of impossibility to sin – the *posse non peccare* that Augustine attributes only to sainthood in heaven.

<sup>48</sup> Proserpine, daughter of Ceres, was abducted by Pluto, the God of Hades, and subsequently remained with him in joint rule of his kingdom (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5. 385-412). Pacchioni-Becker, ‘Gli attributi di Matelda’, in *Matelda e il paradiso terrestre nella Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, pp. 61-106, argues that the figure of Matelda alludes both to Eve and Proserpine but is neither the one nor the other. She has the attributes of innocence possessed by Eve and Proserpine before their lapse, but she is, by contrast, eternally innocent. In conclusion she argues that Matelda represents a further state of human perfection. Her representation alludes, that is, to an eternal state in which man will be unable to sin.

secondly, it sets the scene for the process of moral regeneration that Dante the pilgrim will experience on entering the garden; thirdly, the association of Matelda with Proserpine (the spring-like being), before she plucked the flower of sleep and death, reminds us of the paradise that has been lost.<sup>49</sup> In the same way, the Matelda-Proserpine association reiterates the dialectic of the before and after of sin by also recalling Eve, ‘the “antica madre” who lost her innocence and brought death to herself and humanity by tasting the forbidden fruit’ in that very same garden.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, terms such as ‘temperava’ (*Purg.* 28. 3), ‘aura dolce’ (l. 7), ‘soave vento’ (l. 9), ‘letizia’ (l. 16), ‘cantando’ (l. 17), ‘acque [...] monde’ (l. 28) accompanied by diminutives such as ‘augelletti’ (l. 14), ‘picciole’ (l. 26), ‘fiumicello’ (l. 35), ‘soletta’ (l. 40), and adverbial expressions such as ‘lento lento’ (l. 5), ‘sanza mutamento’ (l. 7), ‘lenti passi’ (l. 22) serve to convey the tranquillity and, by allegoric extension, the existential restfulness of the ‘luogo eletto / a l’umana natura per suo nido’ (ll. 77-78). The rhythm of Eden, as imagined by Dante in its

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<sup>49</sup> Upon entering the earthly paradise, Virgil declares Dante free from sin, *Purg.* 27. 139-42: ‘Non aspettar mio dir più né mio cenno; / libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio, / e fallo fora non fare a suo senno: / per ch’io te sovra te corono e mitrio.’ Within the context of Dante’s journey of sanctification these lines signify the pilgrim’s attainment of the freedom possessed by Adam and Eve in Eden before the fall. In *Purgatorio* 31 Beatrice will complete the process of Dante’s moral regeneration with the sacramental rites of confession (*Purg.* 31. 34-36) and of baptism (ll. 94-105).

<sup>50</sup> Shapiro, *Women Earthly and Divine in the Comedy of Dante*, p. 173. As regards the relationship between Matelda, Proserpine and Eve established in this canto, and the related notion of innocence and its loss both in the classical and Biblical tradition, Pacchioni-Becker, *Matelda e il Paradiso terrestre nella Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, p. 70: ‘Il motivo della perdita dell’innocenza è tanto importante quanto quello dell’innocenza stessa, in quanto riveste una funzione ben precisa: stabilire una relazione figurale tra Eva e Proserpina. La perdita della condizione di purezza iniziale accomuna la figura della tradizione biblica e quella della tradizione classica.’ The dialectic between the possession and loss of Eden embodied by Matelda/Proserpine is put forward by Dronke, ‘Dante’s Earthly Paradise: Towards an Interpretation of *Purgatorio* XXVIII’, p. 478: ‘She [Matelda] is joyful (*ella ridea*, l. 67), and yet Dante, at the moment of seeing her, feels his thrill at her beauty mingled with sadness: to him she is like Persephone, at the moment when the young goddess, and all the bliss of spring that she brings with her, must part from the world. The exultant beauty he perceives has the poignancy of impermanence – it is paradise, and implicitly, paradise lost.’

primeval significance, is therefore slow, pervaded by a sense of peaceful and hopeful expectation for future beatification; its climate is temperate and its mood tranquil.

In this evocative context Dante explores the meaning of man's prelapsarian perfection and the role played by man in Eden before the fall. In what might be described as the doctrinal or didactic moment of this canto, Matelda, prompted by Dante's doubt as regards the origin of the Edenic atmospheric perturbation ('L'acqua [...] e 'l suon de la foresta', *Purg.* 28. 85), starts her explanation by referring (by way of short preamble) to the creation of man and God's offering of Eden as pledge of 'eternal peace' (*Purg.* 28. 93).<sup>51</sup> The tercet that follows specifies the role of Adam and Eve in Eden, their natural attributes and their active moral endeavour:

Lo sommo ben, che solo esso a sé piace,  
fé l'uom buono e a bene, e questo loco  
diede per arr' a lui d'eterna pace. (*Purg.* 28. 91-93)

The expression 'che solo esso a sé piace' describes God taking pleasure or delighting in the goodness of his own being, preceded by the periphrasis 'lo sommo ben', which defines God as the supreme good who implements his goodness in the act of creation – 'fé'. Thus God is presented in both his attributes, the first being the intellectual delight in self, the second the implementation of his infinite goodness in

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<sup>51</sup> Dante, encouraged by Matelda's generous request, asks her to clarify the origin of the rivers flowing through the garden and the Edenic wind. His experience of the Edenic perturbation seems to contrast with Statius's suggestion that the second realm of the otherworld (from the door of *Purgatorio* proper) suffers no atmospheric change. The answer, which unfolds in the rest of the canto, is aimed at clarifying that the wind is, in fact, caused by the movement of the *Primo Mobile* and that the rivers have their origin in God, who eternally invigorates them. *Purg.* 28. 103-11: 'Or perché in circuito tutto quanto / l'aere si volge con la prima volta, / se non li è rotto il cerchio d'alcun canto, / in questa altezza ch'è tutta disciolta / ne l'aere vivo, tal moto percuote, / e fa sonar la selva perch'è folta; / e la percossa pianta tanto puote, / che de la sua virtute l'aura impregna, / e quella poi, girando, intorno scuote', and 121-26: 'L'acqua che vedi non surge di vena / che ristori vapor che gel converta, / come fiume ch'acquista e perde lena; / ma esce di fontana salda e certa, / che tanto dal voler di Dio riprende, / quant'ella versa da due parti aperta.'

the active outpouring of love in creation. Likewise, man is defined in both his natural constitution – his innate goodness belonging to his rational soul ('l'uom buono') – and the implementation or actualization of goodness through his volition ('e a bene'). The repetition of the term 'bene' in lines 91 and 92, which Dante associates firstly with God and then with man, casts light on this conformity of creature and creator, stressing the importance of the creative act of the will in the carrying out of their potential as rational beings.

The expression 'Fé l'uom buono e a bene' means a number of different things which relate to man's goodness and the actualization of this goodness on a natural and supernatural plane. The content of *Purg.* 28. 91-92 is, therefore, moral, anthropological and teleological – the phrase is so rich that it means any of the following things: that man was created equal to his natural and/or supernatural good, or that he was made for an ultimately good end. That man was created equal to his natural good means that he possessed the rectitude necessary to pursue those goals proper to his nature, which is to say that it was in his power to act morally, in accordance to his natural end; that he was created equal to his supernatural good means that as a creature made in God's image, he could partake in an order of reality which involved the potential of fruition of God, and the actualization of that end.

Furthermore, towards the end of *Purgatorio* 28 Dante couples his representation of man's goodness with that of man's innocence, when in lines 142-43 he writes, 'Qui fu innocente l'umana radice; / qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto.' Adam, who is described as the root of humanity, was 'buono e a bene' insofar as he was created innocent, which is the same as saying that he was made morally righteous and capable of performing good actions. The term 'innocente' also

echoes other adjectives that Dante uses to describe Adam in Eden: ‘sincer[o]’, ‘buon[o]’ (*Par.* 7. 36), ‘onesto’ (*Purg.* 28. 96) are all related to Adam’s original purity of intent.<sup>52</sup> As I have pointed out with reference to *Purg.* 28. 91-93, in *Purg.* 28. 142-43, Dante conveys the dynamic nature of man’s presence in the earthly paradise by presenting original innocence under the aspect of fruitfulness (‘qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto’) as potential towards and anticipation of eternal fruition. Innocence is therefore within this context a state in which man is created, but also one that he ought to – and was in fact able to – maintain through the right exercise of his powers.

The difference of emphasis between Augustine and Dante appears in the way they set up the context in which man’s original righteousness is analyzed. There is no doubt that both Augustine and Dante underline the Edenic character of man’s communion with God, its fruitful nature, and God’s communication of goodness to man by virtue of this primeval union.<sup>53</sup> This is, in fact, the general meaning of Eden and common to both Augustine and Dante as party to a common profession of faith. The garden is the ‘pledge’ – ‘arr[a]’ (*Purg.* 28. 92) – between man and the divine made on the basis of man’s respectful observance of the commandment, which defines his subordination to God. In the recognition of this limitation, man accepts

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<sup>52</sup> Whereas the first two terms refer to human nature in its original perfection, the third refers to the state of innocent felicity that Adam and Eve experienced in Eden. Both in *Purgatorio* 28 and *Paradiso* 7 Dante contrasts the sinful condition of fallen man with the state of supreme happiness experienced by man in Eden.

<sup>53</sup> With respect to man’s Edenic dependence on God as expressed by the simple and effective reference to the garden as man’s nest, *Purg.* 28. 76-81: “‘Voi siete nuovi, e forse perch’io rido”, / cominciò ella, “in questo luogo eletto / a l’umana natura per suo nido, / maravigliando tienvi alcun sospetto [...]’. With the use of the word nest a whole new series of references come to mind confirming that initial idea of dependence and nurturing. The nest is, in fact, at one and the same time, the structure made by a bird for laying eggs and sheltering its young, but it is also the place where the bird returns with food for the young’s survival, recalling ideas of making/creation on the one hand, and dependence for survival on the other.

that this submission is good for him and for the continuation of his life in the garden because it is on the basis of this subordination that he is deemed righteous. This is the meaning of the ‘e questo loco / diede per arr’ a lui d’eterna pace’. The eternal peace in the garden is dependent on man’s obedience. In other words, man is called on to exercise free will as a principle of constraint. Later in the *Commedia*, Beatrice will speak of the moral character of the limitation imposed on Adam and Eve (‘freno a suo prode’, *Par.* 7. 25), focusing on the benefit of this limitation.

Man’s fruition of God, and man’s obedience to his creator are all notions present in Dante and Augustine alike, but they are treated differently from the one and the other. As I have shown, Augustine’s examination of man before the fall is a celebration of man’s perfection in and through the grace of God. Augustine’s theology is always *ex gratia*; grace is what makes man upright and is, therefore, in this respect always prevenient, but grace is also in God’s subsequent intervention with a view to preserving man in the goodness of his original state. Augustine’s emphasis, as TeSelle argues, lies upon the power of grace in its – from the outset – operative and continuing character.<sup>54</sup> By contrast, in Dante, God’s generous giving at the time of creation is a way to celebrate the goodness of all creatures, and of man in particular with respect to his powers and endowments granted to him by virtue of his direct creation and belonging to him by nature. For Dante, the celebration of man is simultaneously a celebration of God. When in *Paradiso 7* he discusses Christ’s incarnation in relation to Adam’s original sin, his focus on the original state of justice of prelapsarian humanity is not on grace, but on man, and more specifically on what makes man like his creator.

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<sup>54</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 315.

In this Augustine and Dante diverge fundamentally. We have seen in this chapter how in Augustine's treatment of man in his *pure essence* is non systematic and almost non-existent. Dante's understanding is different. His interest lies in man's participation in God's essence, by virtue of his own essence made in the likeness of his creator because of the constituent parts of his rational soul, namely his intellect and will. Thus, in a prelapsarian context Dante not only concentrates on man as an image of God, but also on the fact that the will and intellect still possessed, in Eden, an efficacy that depended exclusively on the state of original righteousness in which man was created. This becomes clear in *Paradiso 7*, certainly the most detailed celebration in Dante of man in the proprieties and efficacy of his nature. This will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

### 1.5 - Man's Likeness to God: *Paradiso 7*

In *Paradiso 7* Beatrice reveals the reason for the incarnation. In order to do so she begins from the time of creation, when man, created 'sanza mezzo' (*Par. 7. 70*) – without, that is to say, the intervention of secondary causes – was made free and immortal, in the image of his creator:

La divina bontà, che da sé sperne  
ogne livore, ardendo in sé, sfavilla  
sì che dispiega le bellezze etterne.

Ciò che da lei sanza mezzo distilla  
non ha poi fine, perché non si move  
la sua impronta quand'ella sigilla.<sup>55</sup>

Ciò che da essa sanza mezzo piove  
libero è tutto, perché non soggiace

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<sup>55</sup> Also with respect to the theme of immortality, *Par. 13. 52-54*: 'Ciò che non more e ciò che può morire / non è se non splendor di quella idea / che partorisce, amando, il nostro Sire.'

a la virtute de le cose nove.  
 Più l'è conforme, e però più le piace;  
 ché l'ardor santo ch'ogne cosa raggia,  
 ne la più somigliante è più vivace.  
 Di tutte queste dote s'avvantaggia  
 l'umana creatura, e s'una manca,  
 di sua nobilità convien che caggia.  
 Solo il peccato è quel che la disfranca  
 e falla dissimile al sommo bene,  
 per che del lume suo poco s'imbianca;  
 e in sua dignità mai non rivene,  
 se non riempie, dove colpa vòta,  
 contra mal dilettrar con giuste pene.  
 Vostra natura, quando peccò *tota*  
 nel seme suo, da queste dignitadi,  
 come di paradiso, fu remota. (*Par. 7. 64-87*)

To say that man is like God is to acknowledge something about his essential nature. In other words, to speak of man's likeness to God is to speak of the properties of man's rational soul, properties which distinguish him from the rest of the sublunary creation but which bring him into a certain kind of self-conscious relationship with God. In the *Monarchia* Dante distinguishes between the meaning of likeness and that of image:

It is God's intention that every created thing should show forth his likeness in so far as its own nature can receive it. For this reason it is said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'; for although 'in our image' cannot be said of things lower than man, 'after our likeness' can be said of anything, since the whole universe is simply an imprint of divine goodness. So mankind is in a good (indeed, ideal) state, when, to the extent that his nature allows, it resembles God.<sup>56</sup>

Dante suggests that image is an attribute used to define only man, whereas

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<sup>56</sup> *Mon. 1. 8. 2*: 'De intentione Dei est ut omne causatum divinam similitudinem representet in quantum propria natura recipere potest. Propter quod dictum est: "Faciamus hominem ad ymaginem et similitudinem nostram"; quod licet, "ad ymaginem" de rebus inferioribus ad homine dici non posit, "ad similitudinem" tamen de qualibet dici potest, cum totum universum nichil aliud sit quam vestigium quoddam divine bonitatis. Ergo humanum genus bene se habet et optime quando, secundum quod potest, Deo assimilantur.'

everything that is created, including animate and inanimate beings, is a likeness to God.<sup>57</sup> More precisely everything, including man, is a likeness to God, but man's likeness is of a more complex kind. With the use of the term image, which has its roots in Genesis, wherein 'Let us make man in our image and likeness', Dante means that humans are in the image of God in their rational soul.<sup>58</sup> Image defines man's self-consciousness and the potential for spiritual and moral reflection and growth. This is because, unlike other creatures of the sublunary world, man possesses the capacity to deliberate and make free decisions, and it is through his intellect and

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<sup>57</sup> The history of the distinction between the terms image and likeness is a long and complex one. Although Dante does not differentiate between the two terms (to the best of my knowledge, the instance in the *Monarchia* is the only one), the theologians before him used the term 'image' to define the intellectual and volitional qualities belonging to the rational soul, which enable man to participate in the life of God, whereas with the term 'likeness' they understood the actualization of this participation by virtue of grace. For a historical account of the notion of *imago Dei*, D. Cairns, *The Image of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953); R. Cessario, 'In the Image of God: The Anthropology of the Theological Life', in *Christian Faith and the Theological Life* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 38-48; S. J. Grenz, 'From Structure to Destiny: The *Imago Dei* in Christian Theology', in *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), especially p. 144.

<sup>58</sup> Genesis, 1:26: 'Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.' In *Purgatorio* 25 Statius speaks of the infusion of the rational soul in man in relation to Dante's doubt about the ability of the disembodied souls to feel and perceive as if they were still in the body. It is in this context that Statius distinguishes between man and the rest of the sublunary creation with reference to the moment at which the rational soul is infused in man causing the vegetative and sensitive functions to be gathered up in one single soul. Statius's claim is that at moment at which the rational soul is infused the irrational animal becomes a child (or, indeed, a man) 'animal divenga fante' (l. 61). The term 'fante' from the Latin 'fari', with the meaning of to speak, defines man in his need to communicate with others as part of his intellectual activity. Dante himself confirms this point in the *De vulgari eloquentia* 1. 2. 3. Additionally, the self-sufficient nature of rational beings in the cognitive act which is proper to them is expressed in *Purg.* 25. 67-75: 'Apri a la verità che viene il petto; / e sappi che, sì tosto come al feto / l'articular del cerebro è perfetto, / lo motor primo a lui si volge lieto / sovra tant'arte di natura, e spira / spirito novo, di virtù repleto, / che ciò che trova attivo quivi, tira / in sua sustanzia, e fassi un'alma sola, / che vive e sente e sé in sé rigira.' With respect to these lines of the *Purgatorio*, C. Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 127, writes: 'Thus this soul not only "lives and feels" (*vive e sente*), through the powers of nutrition and sensation it has subsumed; it also "turns itself upon itself" (*sé in sé rigira*): like the angels, and the ultimate ontological principle itself, it is a power of self-awareness or consciousness or self-knowledge, a power to know all things as itself, and to know itself (one with) the ground of all things.' The same process, but with more emphasis on the role of the heavens in the production of the animal organism is expressed in *Con.* 4. 21. 4-5: 'E però dico che quando l'umano seme cade nel suo recettaculo, cioè ne la matrice, esso porta seco la virtù de l'anima generativa e la virtù del cielo e la virtù de li elementi legati, cioè la complessione; e matura e dispone la materia a la virtù formativa, la quale diede l'anima del generante; e la virtù formativa prepara li organi a la virtù celestiale, che produce de la potenza del seme l'anima in vita. La quale, incontanente prodotta, riceve da la virtù del motore del cielo lo intelletto possibile; lo quale potenzialmente in sé adduce tutte le forme universali, secondo che sono nel suo produttore, e tanto meno quanto più dilungato della prima Intelligenza è.'

freedom that he can participate in the life of God himself. As Boyde writes, ‘Man’s intellect enables him to gain certain knowledge (*scientia*) about his own nature and the “end” of human life’, but it also enables him to see the goodness of an object as a means to his end.<sup>59</sup> On the basis of this knowledge the intellect can freely implement the content of understanding. Thus freedom presupposes the intellect but brings to man’s intellectualism the capacity to be engaged not only in understanding, but also in love. This is an ability that man receives in creation, and is therefore connatural to him. In other words rational beings can be called divine in their ability to actualize their intellectual and volitional qualities. To say that humans are like God or in the image of God is to recognize those qualities that ennoble them over and above the rest of the sublunary creation, and that allow God to be manifest in them. Thus humans’ conscious recognition of their likeness to God means that God’s plan for them can be actualized through the operation of the soul. It is in this sense – namely, in man as a creature of rational endowment – that he is co-creator with God. Furthermore, it is because man is made in the image of God that man can know and love God and enter a relationship with him.

In the lines just quoted from the *Paradiso* the question of creation is the starting point. With respect to man, the angels, first matter and the heavens – i.e. everything that is created without the intervention of secondary causes – creation ‘*sanza mezzo*’ is synonymous with man’s likeness to God by way of his freedom and

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<sup>59</sup> Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*, p. 284. The sections of his book, ‘Our Likeness to God: (a) Knowledge and Freedom’ and ‘Our Likeness to God: (b) God-Longing and Immortality’, pp. 283-90, are relevant in this context as they explore the meaning of man’s likeness to God in terms of his intellect and freedom.

immortality.<sup>60</sup> Divine goodness which, burning in the eternal flame of love, sparks everything into being, confers goodness on all things existing. Furthermore and in Dante's own words, 'Più l'è conforme, e però più le piace; / ché l'ardor santo ch'ogne cosa raggia, / ne la più somigliante è più vivace.' That is to say that, although the imprint of God ('la sua impronta') is present in all creation, his light, which inundates everything, shines more brightly upon what is more similar to him. In the context of these lines, the 'somiglianza' of the human creature to God is to be found in his soul for its ability to participate in God's essence. Similarly, but with emphasis on the soul's intellectual rather than volitional nature, in *Con.* 3. 2. 14 Dante writes that 'l'anima umana [...] con la nobilitade de la potenza ultima, cioè ragione, partecipa de la divina natura a guisa di sempiterna intelligenza'. This is the heart of the question: to say that man is created in conformity to God, or as a likeness to God ('conforme' and 'somigliante') is to recognize both his capacity for participation by virtue of his rational nature, and the actual participation he enjoyed before the fall by virtue of his 'dote' and dignitadi', namely freedom and immortality.

Now, the part of Beatrice's speech comprised within lines 64 and 78 has a sustained prelapsarian emphasis. It is only in line 79, with the introduction of the theme of sin in general, and original sin in particular in lines 85 to 87, that the focus shifts from the perfection of a free and immortal creation, to the time of the fall when perfection was lost, with a view to introducing the atonement aspect of this canto. Within a prelapsarian context, man's conformity with God means that his soul,

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<sup>60</sup> For a philosophical understanding of creation in Dante, Boyde, 'Creation: *Paradiso* XXIX, 1-57', 'Generation and Universal Nature', and 'The Making of Man, in *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher*, pp. 235-95. For more recent literature, Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, especially p. 107.

created in the likeness of God, retained in itself the original endowments ('queste dote' and 'queste dignitadi') which belonged to him by virtue of his direct creation, endowments that were lost when sin defaced man's original deformity ('Vostra natura, quando peccò *tota* / nel seme suo, da queste dignitadi, / come di paradiso, fu remota'). It is only through the sacrifice of Christ that man could be restored ('riparar', l. 104) to the fullness of his life ('a sua intera vita', l. 104), because in and through Christ man was returned to his original sufficiency ('per far l'uomo sufficiente a rilevarsi', *Par.* 7. 116).

But what does it mean for man to be free? Is the freedom of which Beatrice speaks when she claims that everything that immediately rains from the highest good is free (ll. 70-72) the same freedom that man forfeits with sin (l. 79)? The reference to 'cose nove' – here to be understood as the heavenly bodies – recalls Marco Lombardo's words of *Purgatorio* 16, where he introduces the notion of free will. Though recognizing an initial influence of the heavens upon man's soul, Marco claims that man's submission is to God only, because 'la mente', created by God, is not determined by the heavens ('A maggior forza e a miglior natura / liberi soggiacete; e quella cria / la mente in voi, che 'l ciel non ha in sua cura', *Purg.* 16. 79-81).<sup>61</sup> The freedom of the rational soul is, as Moevs writes, 'that it lies subject to

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<sup>61</sup> Within the context of *Purgatorio* 16, aimed at defending the privileges of man as rational creature endowed with freedom, the influences of the stars are not denied but described in their potential negative outcome as challenging this very freedom (see, for example, ll. 76-78: '[...] che, se fatica / ne le prime battaglie col ciel dura, / poi vince tutto, se ben si notrica'). The question of the influence of the stars within the area of human activity is taken up again in *Paradiso* 8. This canto has a different take on the question of celestial influences. The stars and their effects are discussed within the context of God's providence. Angelic intelligences and the planets moved by them provide for the sublunary world in a way that cannot contravene God's divine plan for creation. Here divine provision by way of planetary influences is synonymous with natural dispositions which amount to the differences among all created beings.

a higher power and greater nature than the natural world.’<sup>62</sup> Because it is created and not generated, the spheres have no power over the rational soul.<sup>63</sup> The intertextual references between *Paradiso 7* and *Purgatorio 16* with respect to the theme of creation and freedom from astral influences seems to point to a meaning of ‘libero è tutto’ (*Par. 7. 71*), as the faculty of choice which loses – in the wake of the fall – the power to make morally good choices (*Par. 7. 79-80*). The meaning of freedom in these lines is therefore twofold: first, the power to choose, that man retains even after the fall; second, the power to make morally good choices, that is obscured in man with the occurrence of sin, because the soul is deflected by sin from God as its highest good. A twofold meaning of which Augustine himself speaks in *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* when he claims that if *liberum arbitrium* lives on in the sinner (i.e. fallen man) as the power to make libidinous choices, liberty or freedom as such does indeed disappear with sin.<sup>64</sup> God’s work in Christ, therefore, was to restore the soul to its original efficacy – or sufficiency – upon which man’s righteousness depended before the fall, and continues to depend after it.

I wish to conclude this section with the lines of *Paradiso 13*, where Adam and Christ are described as revealing the true or original nature of the human being in its likeness to God. Dante is concerned by Thomas’s earlier assertion that ‘a veder tanto non surse il secondo’ (*Par. 10. 114*). If it is true that no man matched Solomon’s wisdom, what do we make of Adam and Christ? The answer, which

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<sup>62</sup> Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante’s Comedy*, p. 129.

<sup>63</sup> The inability to see this truth led the pagans to make planets into gods, *Par. 4. 58-63*: ‘S’elli intende tornare a queste ruote / l’onore de la influenza e ’l biasmo, forse / in alcun vero suo arco percuote. / Questo principio, male inteso, torse / già tutto il mondo quasi, sì che Giove, / Mercurio e Marte a nominar trascorse.’

<sup>64</sup> *Cont. duas epist. Pelag. 1. 5*: ‘quis nostrum dicat quod primi hominis peccato perierit liberum arbitrium de genere humano? *Libertas* quidem periit per peccatum [...] *liberum arbitrium* usque adeo in peccatore non periit ut per ipsum peccent maxime omnes qui cum delectatione peccant et amore peccati et hoc eis placet quod eos libet.’

distinguishes between relative and absolute wisdom, reiterates what Dante has already said both in the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* about creation and generation. In order to demonstrate Adam's and Christ's perfection, Dante begins from the moment of creation, represented analogically as a reflection of the divine idea, or the Word. Its light, descending from the 'nove sussistenze' (*Par.* 13. 59) – the angels and the heavens – to the 'brevi contingenze' (*Par.* 13. 63) – all corruptible things – remains eternally one. The union of the elements ('la cera di costoro', *Par.* 13. 67) from which the heavens generate brief contingences may be differently suited to receive that celestial influence which, as Thomas explains, 'non sta d'un modo' (*Par.* 13. 68), i.e. may vary in efficacy. This is why two trees belonging to the same species might produce a different number of fruits, and why men are born with different temperaments and inclinations. The differences among things which are generated, in other words, depend on the disposition of the 'cera' (or the 'materia' of *Par.* 29. 22) and the influence of the heavens. If at the moment of generation matter ('la cera') were to be perfectly predisposed to receive an equally perfect celestial influence, the light of the imprinting seal – 'la luce del suggel' (*Par.* 13. 76) – would be revealed in its full splendor. However, working like an artisan with an unsteady hand, 'nature always transmits the light of being defectively (*Par.* 13. 76-78), except with the creation of Adam (humanity in its original or natural state) and the incarnation of Christ':<sup>65</sup>

Però se 'l caldo amor la chiara vista  
de la prima virtù dispone e segna,  
tutta la perfezion quivi s'acquista.  
Così fu fatta già la terra degna  
di tutta l'animal perfezione;

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<sup>65</sup> Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, p. 128.

così fu fatta la Vergine pregna. (*Par.* 13. 79-84)

As Moevs puts it, at the moment of Adam's creation, and at the incarnation, the warm love ('l caldo amore'), 'of the Trinity perfectly disposed and aligned nature through the whole ontological hierarchy, so that the fulness of divine being was manifest in nature through the human form, the greatest work of nature.'<sup>66</sup> Thus, in Adam, the union of the elements ('la terra') and the unfaltering influence of the heavens, allowed the rational soul (created directly, free and immortal) to fully manifest its deiformity in a perfect human being. In the case of the incarnation, the informing power of God impregnated the Virgin. In Moevs' words, 'in both cases, the imprinting light of the divine revealed itself in nature through the human form, thus revealing the human being in his perfect deiformity – a perfection of both body and soul.'<sup>67</sup>

## **1.6 - Conclusion**

When Williams observes that 'the more glorious man's original state and endowments are made, the deeper, by contrast, become the criminality and the guilt of the Fall', he is also highlighting the character of Augustine's theology which describes human life in terms of the overwhelming presence of grace in the human domain, and the ultimate disaster which man experiences in the absence of the divine gift.<sup>68</sup> Gilson, for his part, argues that in order to understand the essence – the spirit, as he prefers to call it – of Augustine's theology, one must first of all look at his

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>68</sup> N. P. Williams, *The Idea of the Fall and Original Sin* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1927), p. 361.

personal experience, which is dominated by ‘the religious experience of his own conversion’.<sup>69</sup> The *Confessions* are in this respect exemplary of Augustine’s journey from a youth captivated by aesthetic beauty and driven by the quest for sexual fulfilment, to the abdication of the love of self for the love of God. It is on this abdication – or on the realization of the necessity of this abdication – that man’s ultimate freedom and sufficiency depend. Now, the consequence of this personal experience at every point permeates his thought and teaching, resulting in a system everywhere turning on a sense of the indispensability of grace in the area of human activity. For Augustine this is true of man before and after the fall. It is in this context that he explores both the prelapsarian innocence of man in his original communion with God and the tragic predicament of man excluded from grace and imprisoned in disobedience until the time of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

In my analysis of Augustine’s prelapsarian theology I have attempted to demonstrate how this overwhelming presence of grace is revealed by the insufficiency of integral nature to preserve itself in righteousness, without a further intervention of grace. As TeSelle puts it, ‘simultaneously with the creation of its nature, and prior to any decision on its part, a good exercise of the will is conferred by divine operation.’<sup>70</sup> Likewise, and still with respect to Adam’s righteousness, Kelly argues that, ‘Already he was wrapped around with divine grace (*indumentum gratiae*), and he was further granted the special gift of perseverance, i.e. the

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<sup>69</sup> E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, trans. by A. H. C. Downes (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. 132.

<sup>70</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 315.

possibility of persisting in the right exercise of his will', confirming the notion of grace as cooperative with nature even before the fall.<sup>71</sup>

Now, grace in its prevenient and cooperating function, 'does not diminish freedom of decision'; on the contrary, 'It really establishes the only set of conditions under which a genuine freedom of decision can exist.'<sup>72</sup> This is ultimately the meaning of grace for Augustine both in a prelapsarian and postlapsarian context. The consequence of placing so much focus on grace and so little on nature is twofold: on the one hand, very little room is left for an understanding of nature's functions and powers – for an anthropology of nature as such; on the other, if everything that man possessed in Eden was communicated to him by way of grace, then the distinction between what man possessed by nature, and what possessed by grace is irrevocably blurred.

In Dante's representation of man before the fall the emphases are very different. From the time in the *Commedia* at which we are introduced to Matelda and, by her, to the story of the first man and woman who inhabited that same garden, the emphasis is on man's endeavour, and potential to eternal fruition. The question of freedom, which man possessed in Eden by virtue of his creation 'sanza mezzo' and which is at the forefront of Dante's understanding of man's responsibility and moral integrity, is set within the context of man's conformity with God. To speak of man's conformity with God is also to acknowledge his *imago Dei*, the structures lodged in the soul that ground his *capacitas Dei*. Thus, in *Paradiso* 7 Dante offers an analysis of freedom which confirms its nature at one and the same time as a matter of man's dependence on God only and, within the specific context of Adam (and

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<sup>71</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 362.

<sup>72</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 315.

redeemed man) as the efficacy of the will to choose God over and against all other possibilities, with a view to preserving the immortality with which he was endowed. In keeping with this, the 'dote' or 'dignitadi' (freedom and immortality) which confirm man in his likeness to God, were possessed in Eden upon creation, belonged to nature at the point of its original creation in coming forth from nothing.

## Chapter 2: The Question of Evil and Adam's Fall

### 2.0 - Introduction

Both Augustine and Dante advance a thoroughgoing defence of free will. The question of man's voluntary withdrawal from God in an act of free choice is one that characterizes the writings of each alike with respect to original sin and sin in general. Granted that they both share the same premise, namely, that it is man who sins according to his own will, their investigation into the origin of evil also reveals various and at times contrasting nuances when set against their diverse background and differing preoccupations. Within the context of this chapter which, at all times, acknowledges Augustine's and Dante's shared profession of faith, I shall, therefore, attempt to highlight some of the different emphases in their understanding of the issue in question.

A decisive influence on the development of Augustine's understanding of evil is his early Manichaeism. In the Augustinian section of this chapter I shall note, first, how the theologian's rejection of the Manichaean philosophy informs both the notion of evil as *privatio boni* and the relationship between freedom and evil within a moral context. *Privatio boni*, Augustine argues, defines an act of the will which lacks a certain order, an act, that is, that comes short of what it should be. The point he makes is deeply informed by his opposition to the Manichaean understanding of sin as substance, separate from and coexistent with the good. To say that evil is a privation in the will is to recognize that the will is responsible for its own shortcoming. The question of the misdirection of love, therefore, derives from this initial premise. An act, in fact, that comes short of its good coincides mostly with the

soul's love for creation over against God. That is to say that a *privatio* equals a misdirection of love in the sense that love is aimed towards creation as opposed to God. It is in this sense that a *privatio* is often followed by and indeed coincides with an *aversio Dei*.

Manichaeism bears no importance in tracing Dante's evolution of the doctrine of evil. It is, by contrast, the doctrine of astral influences that in the *Commedia* offers the background to his analysis of man's freedom of choice. The analysis, which occupies the three central cantos of the *Purgatorio*, successively discloses the relationship between the soul's innate movement of love and its freedom. Scholars have not failed, therefore, to underline the structural importance of these cantos for Dante's philosophical and theological undertaking generally.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between love and freedom is, indeed, at the centre of the poem because for Dante love in its relationship with freedom is central to man's activity. The discourse on love anthropology, which is taken up in *Purgatorio* 16 by Marco Lombardo, and is developed in *Purgatorio* 17 and 18 by Virgil, conveys the notion that righteousness lies in the right ordering of man's affection. Man is a loving creature: created by a loving God, his relationship to the world about is fundamentally defined in terms of affectivity. From the moment of its issuing forth from the hands of its creator the soul becomes enamoured with objects which it

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<sup>1</sup> On the structural and ideological centrality of *Purgatorio* 16, 17 and 18 to the *Commedia* as a whole, S. Wenzel, 'Dante's Rationale for the Seven Deadly Sins (*Purgatorio* XVII)', *Modern Literature Review*, 60 (1965), 529-33; R. Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 139; K. Foster, 'The Human Spirit in Action: *Purgatorio* XVIII', in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), pp. 107-19; G. Morgan, 'Natural and Spiritual Movements of Love in the Soul: An Explanation of *Purgatorio* XVIII. 16-39', *Modern Literature Review*, 80 (1985), 320-29; A. Triolo, '*Purgatorio* XVIII', *Lectura Dantis: Introductory Readings II*, 12 suppl. (1993), 259-79; Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi (Milan: Mondadori, 1994), p. 459; F. Salsano, *Lecturae Dantis* (Ravenna: Longo, 2003), pp. 163-75.

perceives as desirable. Thus, it moves from one love to the next because its nature requires it to love. Accordingly, Virgil asserts that ‘Né creator né creatura mai [...] / figliuol, fu sanza amore’, (*Purg.* 17. 91-92). All creatures, he will go on claiming, are endowed with a kind of love, which moves them towards the perfection proper to their nature. If for some creatures love is just natural and instinctual, for others (and man is in this category) it is both natural and elective. It is natural insofar as it defines an innate inclination of the soul, elective because as a creature endowed with rationality man has to measure the love for the world about – i.e. for the transient and proximate – against the immutable and eternal love of God. It is when man fails to put a check on his love according to this measure that he falls into error and sin.

When in the *De libero arbitrio* Evodius asks Augustine where the origin of sin lies Augustine claims not to know, because *nothing* (no-thing) cannot be known.<sup>2</sup> Here lies the paradox inherent in defining something that is, by nature, undefinable insofar as it is not a substance. If by definition sin is a privation residing in a nature – an absence within a substance – its effects can, on the contrary, be seen. This is where Augustine’s and Dante’s argument converge: the operational defectivity of a substance, the soul in this specific case, is revealed in its deviational love, making love as disordered equal to sin. Dante, however, was neither philosophically nor historically compelled by Manichaeism and felt no need to discuss sin negatively, i.e. as privation. His understanding of sin rests entirely on man as a creature endowed with love and on the potentially deviational character of love itself.

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<sup>2</sup> *De lib. arb.* 2. 20. 54: ‘Sed tu fortasse quaesiturus es, quoniam movetur voluntas cum se avertit ab incommutabili bono ad mutabile bonum, unde iste motus existat; qui profecto malus est, tametsi voluntas libera, quia sine illa nec recte vivi potest, in bonis numeranda sit. Si enim motus iste, id est aversio voluntatis a Domino Deo, sine dubitatione peccatum est, num possumus auctorem peccati Deum dicere? Non erit ergo iste motus ex Deo. Unde igitur erit? Ita quaerenti tibi, si respondeam nescire me, fortasse eris tristior: sed tamen vera responderim. Sciri enim non potest quod nihil est.’

The consolidation of the concept of love as *appetitus* in Dante, of the natural inclination of the soul for objects that it perceives as desirable, makes for another difference between him and Augustine with respect to man's relationship with the world about. Notably, in Book 1 of the *De doctrina christiana* Augustine makes a distinction between the enjoyment (*frui*) of things and their use (*uti*).<sup>3</sup> In equating love with enjoyment, he argues that man is to enjoy only what is loved for its own sake, and to use all other things for the achievement of what ought to be loved *per se*. In other words, the only legitimate love is that of God, all other things have to be used as a means to this love. Ultimately, the Augustinian distinction between the 'enjoyment' of God over against the 'use' of the world is superfluous within the context of Dante's love philosophy where the voluntary movement of the rational soul towards (or away from) an object of desire is always seen within the context of endless attractedness.

The concluding section of this chapter will focus on Dante's and Augustine's understanding of the consequences of original sin. The difference between the two will be demonstrated by way of their sense of the viability of man's moral nature. The Augustinian account of the moral shipwreck of humanity as a consequence of original sin is contrasted with Dante's sense that original sin does not destroy the whole of man's goodness, as he reveals in the episode of the unbaptized children in *limbo*. This account will be included in the wider question as to whether Dante shared with Augustine the sense that the soul, bearing the guilt of original sin, is

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<sup>3</sup> *De doct. christ.* 1. 3. 3: 'Res ergo aliae sunt quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur. Illae quibus fruendum est nos beatos faciunt; istis quibus utendum est tendentes ad beatitudinem adiuvamur et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas quae nos beatos faciunt, pervenire atque his inhaerere possimus. Nos vero qui fruimur et utimur, inter utrasque constituti, si eis quibus utendum est frui voluerimus, impeditur cursus noster et aliquando etiam deflectitur, ut ab his rebus quibus fruendum est obtinendis vel retardemur vel etiam revocemur, inferiorum amore praepediti.'

necessarily inclined to evil. The comparison between Book 1 of the *Confessions* where Augustine describes the evil inclination of an infant who, from the moment of his birth, competes angrily and enviously with those other infants sharing in the nurse's milk, and Dante's developmental theory of *Purgatorio* 16 where the infant soul is shown in its joyful experience of the world about, will offer a negative answer to this question. This, I shall argue, confirms Dante's sense of the positive presence of man in the world as always resolved within the context of affectivity.

### **2.1 - *Privatio Boni*: Evil and Human Responsibility**

For nine years Augustine adhered to the philosophy of the Manichees.<sup>4</sup> He speaks of the reasons for joining the sect in the letter the *De utilitate credendi*, written in 391 CE to his friend Honoratus, whom Augustine had introduced to the Manichean philosophy and was now eager to rescue from its errors. The emphasis placed by the sect on the operation of the intellect in the discovery of truth appealed to the pride of Augustine's mind.<sup>5</sup> The Manichees' disparagement of the Old Testament enabled

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine records the duration of his adherence to Manichaeism in *Conf.* 4. 1. 1: 'Per idem tempus annorum novem, ab undevicesimo anno aetatis meae usque ad duodetricesimum, seducebamur et seducebamus falsi atque fallentes in variis cupiditatibus et palam per doctrinas, quas liberales vocant, occulte autem falso nomine religionis, hic superbi, ibi superstitiosi, ubique vani, hac popularis gloriae sectantes inanitatem usque ad theatricos plausus et contentiosa carmina et agonem coronarum faenearum et spectaculorum nugas et intemperantiam libidinum, illac autem purgari nos ab istis sordibus expetentes, cum eis, qui appellarentur electi et sancti, afferremus escas, de quibus nobis in officina aqualiculi sui fabricarent angelos et deos, per quos liberaremur. Et sectabar ista atque faciebam cum amicis meis per me ac mecum deceptis.' For a historical account of Manichaeism and its influence in North Africa, W. H. C. Frend, 'The Gnostic-Manichean Tradition in Roman N. Africa', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 4 (1953), 13-26. For a historical survey of the expansion of the Manichean influence from Africa to China in the eighth century, S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> *De uti. cred.* 2: 'Quid enim me aliud cogebat, annos fere novem, spreta religione quae mihi puerulo a parentibus insita erat, homines illos sequi ac diligenter audire; nisi quod nos superstitione terreri, et fidem nobis ante rationem imperari dicerent, se autem nullum premere ad fidem, nisi prius discussa et enodata veritate? Quis non his pollicitationibus illiceretur, praesertim adolescentis animus cupidus veri, etiam nonnullorum in schola doctorum hominum disputationibus superbus et garrulus: qualem

Augustine to reconcile himself with what he believed to be a purer form of Christianity cleansed from what he found problematic in it.<sup>6</sup> In fact, as he himself claims, driven by ignorance and pride, in his early years he dismissed the Scriptures almost unread.<sup>7</sup>

However, it was the interest that the Manichees showed in the problem of evil and the explanation they gave of it that enticed Augustine towards the sect. By establishing evil as a substance coeternal and coexistent with the good, the Manichees justified its presence in the universe and in man. For them man was implicated as of the essence in evil by virtue of his sharing in the material principle of the universe, which limited his liberty. In their philosophy the division between good and evil was synonymous with the separation between spiritual and material, with a spiritual conception of God not completely free from notions of space, measurement and mutability.<sup>8</sup> Though critical of the anthropomorphic representation of God present in the Old Testament, the Manichees were far from the spiritual explanation of an incorporeal and immutable divinity that was later offered to

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me tunc illi invenerunt, spernentem scilicet quasi aniles fabulas, et ab eis promissum, apertum et sincerum verum tenere atque haurire cupientem?'

<sup>6</sup> C. Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 8: '[The Manichees] criticized just those features of traditional Christianity that Augustine also found troublesome: the emphasis on faith (which seemed like credulity) (*On the Usefulness of Belief*); the anthropomorphic conception of God so characteristic of African Christianity (*Conf.* 5.10.19); the deficiencies of Scripture which were ruthlessly taken apart by the Manichees' literal, rational criticism – for example the incredible account of creation in Genesis 1 (*On Genesis against the Manichees* I.2.3 f), the dubious morality of the Patriarchs (*Conf.* 3.7.12–10.18) and the contradictory genealogies of Matthew and Luke (*Sermon* 51. 4-5), to cite but a few.'

<sup>7</sup> *De uti. cred.* 13: 'Sed scilicet intellegentissimi adolescentes, et miri rationum exploratores, non evolutis saltem illis Litteris, non quaesitis magistris, non aliquantum nostra tarditate accusata, non denique vel mediocri corde concesso eis qui eiusmodi Litteras per totum orbem tam longo tempore legi, custodiri, tractarique voluerunt; nihil apud illos credendum putavimus, eorum qui istis inimici infestique sunt voce commoti, apud quos falsa pollicitatione rationis inaudita millia fabularum credere et colere cogemur.'

<sup>8</sup> *Conf.* 5. 10. 19: 'Et quoniam cum de Deo meo cogitare vellem, cogitare nisi moles corporum non noveram (neque enim videbatur mihi esse quidquam, quod tale non esset) ea maxima et prope sola causa erat inevitabilis erroris mei.'

Augustine by the Neoplatonic teaching of Ambrose and Simplicianus in Milan. For the Manichees the soul, which constituted a fragment of the divine spiritual substance, was good yet trapped in the human body, which, by virtue of its matter, shared in the evil substance.

As Gillian R. Evans writes, it was precisely the materialistic dualism of the ‘Manichaean system [that] provided an explanation for what [Augustine] had himself felt about his body and soul “that they had been enemies since the creation of the universe (*Manichaean Psalm Book* ccxlviiii)”’.<sup>9</sup> For the young Augustine the belief that there existed outside himself a cosmic power which was the cause of evil was an easier solution than that of recognizing, as he did subsequently, the corruption that man had brought upon himself. It was easier to believe in a system that diminished or negated human responsibility and to interpret the burden of personal sin in terms of the cosmic (and impersonal) battle of the good and evil principle, than to look at man’s personal implication in the actualization of evil.<sup>10</sup>

But, as Augustine himself documents in Book 5 of the *Confessions*, he began to doubt the viability of Mani’s philosophy, finding the answers that some of the elect offered to his questions unsatisfactory.<sup>11</sup> His meeting with Faustus, a well-

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<sup>9</sup> G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 13. Given the importance of Manichaeism in the evolution of Augustine’s thought, the literature on the subject is considerable: G. Bonner, *Augustine: Life and Controversies* (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 157-236; P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 94-118; Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, pp. 11-16; Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey*, pp. 117-53; J. J. O’Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), II, pp. 174-75; P. Brown, ‘Manichaeism’, in *Augustine of Hippo*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), pp. 35-49; Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, pp. 7-10.

<sup>10</sup> Rejecting his early Manichaean conception of evil, Augustine advocates man’s sole responsibility in the act of sinning, *Conf.* 7. 3. 4: ‘Itaque securus eam quaerebam et certus non esse verum quod illi dicerent, quos toto animo fugiebam, quia videbam quaerendo, unde malum, repletos malitia, qua opinarentur tuam potius substantiam male pati quam suam male facere.’

<sup>11</sup> *Conf.* 5. 6. 10: ‘Et per annos ferme ipsos novem, quibus eos animo vagabundus audivi, nimis extento desiderio venturum exspectabam istum Faustum. Ceteri enim eorum, in quos forte

known Manichee, whom Augustine found lacking in the knowledge of the liberal arts, curbed his already decreasing enthusiasm for the sect and motivated his distancing from it.<sup>12</sup> Augustine's move from Carthage to Rome and Milan was decisive for his introduction to Neoplatonism and his subsequent conversion to Catholicism. Through Ambrose, who was bishop in Milan at the time of Augustine's visit, and his mentor Simplicianus, Augustine familiarized himself with the writings of the *Platonici*, with their sense that true reality is spiritual and with their understanding of the goodness of all things that exist.<sup>13</sup> The impact of their philosophy, which became an essential stepping-stone for his conversion to Catholicism, was also fundamental for the development and consolidation of his understanding of evil as privation of good. More importantly, this doctrine of evil as privation could be used within a moral context to justify the presence of evil in the will. As Harrison writes:

[Augustine] was able to follow Plotinus in teaching the initiative of the

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incurrissem, qui talium rerum quaestionibus a me obiectis deficiebant, illum mihi promittebant, cuius adventu collatoque colloquio facillime mihi haec et si qua forte maiora quaererem enodatissime expedirentur.'

<sup>12</sup> *Conf.* 5. 7. 12: 'Nam posteaquam ille mihi imperitus earum artium, quibus eum excellere putaveram, satis apparuit, desperare coepi posse mihi eum illa, quae me movebant, aperire atque dissolvere; quorum quidem ignarus posset veritatem tenere pietatis, sed si Manichaeus non esset.'

<sup>13</sup> In Book 7 of the *Confessions* Augustine writes of his encounter with the *Platonici*. Through them, he begins to see that if all that exists is good as of the essence, then evil is nothing but a privation or a declining from this goodness. *Conf.* 7. 12. 18: 'Et manifestatum est mihi, quoniam bona sunt, quae corrumpuntur, quae neque si summa bona essent, neque nisi bona essent, corrumpi possent, quia, si summa bona essent, incorruptibilia essent, si autem nulla bona essent, quid in eis corrumperetur, non esset. Nocet enim corruptio et, nisi bonum minueret, non noceret. Aut igitur nihil nocet corruptio, quod fieri non potest, aut, quod certissimum est, omnia, quae corrumpuntur, privantur bono. Si autem omni bono privabuntur, omnino non erunt. Si enim erunt et corrumpi iam non poterunt, meliora erunt, quia incorruptibiliter permanebunt. Et quid monstrosius quam ea dicere omni bono amisso facta meliora? Ergo si omni bono privabuntur, omnino nulla erunt; ergo quandiu sunt, bona sunt. Ergo quaecumque sunt, bona sunt, malumque illud, quod quaerebam unde esset, non est substantia, quia, si substantia esset, bonum esset. Aut enim esset incorruptibilis substantia, magnum utique bonum, aut substantia corruptibilis esset, quae nisi bona esset, corrumpi non posset. Itaque vidi et manifestatum est mihi, quia omnia bona tu fecisti et prorsus nullae substantiae sunt, quas tu non fecisti. Et quoniam non aequalia omnia fecisti, ideo sunt omnia, quia singula bona sunt et simul omnia valde bona, quoniam fecit Deus noster *omnia bona valde*.'

good in giving form to matter, and evil as a declining from this order whilst being comprehended by it – a sort of *privatio boni* (or privation of the good) (*Conf.* 7.3.4-5.7) which could be attributed, in man, to the free will.<sup>14</sup>

It was Augustine's rejection of the Manichaean understanding of evil that prompted him to write the *De libero arbitrio*.<sup>15</sup> The treatise comprises three books written respectively in 388, 395 and 397 and is an investigation of man's personal responsibility in relation to sin. Its dialogic structure, developed around Evodius's questions and Augustine's answers, presents, in turn, philosophical and theological problems with a view to investigating the topic of the title. In it Augustine engages systematically with a vast number of issues such as the relationship between God and evil, evil and matter, and man's freedom and divine foreknowledge, but, ultimately, he aims at demonstrating that 'evil is not caused by God or inherent in matter, but is wholly attributable to man's misuse of free will'.<sup>16</sup>

The initial question posited in Book 1 'is God not the cause of evil?' prompts Augustine to separate between two kinds of evil: the evil that one perpetrates and the evil that one suffers.<sup>17</sup> Augustine argues that if one believes that God is good and just, then he cannot do evil; by the same token, if God is good and just, it follows that he punishes the wicked and rewards the good. Now, the punishment inflicted upon the wicked causes them to suffer evil, but if one believes in God's providence and the goodness of his justice, then God can only be the cause of the second kind of

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<sup>14</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine speaks of the reasons for writing the *De libero arbitrio* in *Retr.* 1. 9. 2: 'Propter eos quippe disputatio illa suscepta est, qui negant ex libero voluntatis arbitrio mali originem duci, et Deum, si ita est, creatorem omnium naturarum culpandum esse contendunt.'

<sup>16</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 85.

<sup>17</sup> *De lib. arb.* 1. 1. 1: 'Dic mihi, quaeso te, utrum Deus non sit auctor mali?'

evil.<sup>18</sup> As for the first kind, which God does not cause, Augustine's answer is as follows:

Such evil could not occur unless someone caused it. But if you ask who that someone is, it is impossible to say. For there is no single cause for evil; rather, everyone who does evil is the cause of his evildoing. If you doubt this, recall what I said earlier: Evil deeds are punished by the justice of God. They would not be punished justly if they had not been performed voluntarily.<sup>19</sup>

Here Augustine makes three claims which help to define his understanding of moral evil within a Christian context. First, he says that for there to be evil, there must be an agent. Secondly he observes that there is not a single cause of evil; rather, there are many causes originating in the will of those who perpetrate evil actions. And thirdly, contextualizing the question in relation to divine providence, he claims that for an action to be punished justly it has to be performed voluntarily.<sup>20</sup> In his reply Evodius recognizes and restates the importance of God's justice by claiming that 'it is indeed a great punishment [...] and a perfectly just one, if someone chooses to descend from the heights of wisdom and become a slave of inordinate desire'.<sup>21</sup> Soon after, shifting the question more specifically to Adam's sin, Evodius reveals his perplexity with respect to its origin:

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 1. 1. 1: 'At si Deum bonum esse nosti vel credis, neque enim aliter fas est, male non facit: rursus, si Deum iustum fatemur, nam et hoc negare sacrilegum est, ut bonis praemia, ita supplicia malis tribuit; quae utique supplicia patientibus mala sunt. Quamobrem si nemo iniuste poenas luit, quod necesse est credamus, quandoquidem divina providentia hoc universum regi credimus, illius primi generis malorum nullo modo, huius autem secundi auctor est Deus.'

<sup>19</sup> *De lib. arb.* 1. 1. 1: 'Est certe: non enim nullo auctore fieri posset. Si autem quaeris quisnam iste sit, dici non potest: non enim unus aliquis est, sed quisque malus sui malefacti auctor est. Unde si dubitas, illud attende quod supra dictum est, malefacta iustitia Dei vindicari. Non enim iuste vindicarentur, nisi fierent voluntate.'

<sup>20</sup> Augustine reiterates the question of just punishment for man's voluntary turning away from the eternal to the temporal in *De lib. arb.* 2. 19. 53: 'sed malum sit aversio eius ab incommutabili bono, et conversio ad mutabilia bona: quae tamen aversio atque conversio, quoniam non cogitur, sed est voluntaria, digna et iusta eam miseriae poena subsequitur.'

<sup>21</sup> *De lib. arb.* 1. 11. 23: 'Magnam quidem istam poenam esse iudico, et omnino iustam, si quis iam in sublimitate sapientiae collocatus, inde descendere ac libidini servire delegerit.'

We do, of course, believe that human beings were created perfectly by God and established in a happy life, so that it is by their own will that they have fallen from happiness into the hardship of mortal life. Nonetheless, although I believe this most firmly, I have not understood it.<sup>22</sup>

Evodius points out the discrepancy between faith and reason when attempting to understand the cause of the first sin. He claims that what he holds by faith he does not understand by reason. Evodius's reasoning is both justifiable and logical: if man is created righteous, namely, in possession of a good will, it is difficult to make sense of his lapse into sin. Therefore, the question – where does this aversion to God come from? – remains unanswered. The same question is posited in Book 2 where Augustine suggests a first, provisional, answer by which he sets out to provide the philosophical basis for an understanding of evil in the context not only of original sin but also of actual sin:

But perhaps you are going to ask what is the source of this movement by which the will turns away from the unchangeable good towards the changeable good. This movement is certainly evil, even though free will itself is to be counted among good things, since no one can live rightly without it. For if that movement, that turning away from the Lord God, is undoubtedly sin, surely we cannot say that God is the cause of sin. So that movement is not from God. But then where does it come from? If I told you that I don't know, you might be disappointed; but that would be the truth. For one cannot know that which is nothing.<sup>23</sup>

In this passage Augustine does two things. First, he claims that what is called evil is not the will – '*in bonis numeranda sit*' – but the movement of the will which turns

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 1. 11. 23: 'Uamquam enim credamus hominem tam perfecte conditum a Deo, et in beata vita constitutum, ut ad aerumnas mortalis vitae ipse inde propria voluntate delapsus sit; tamen hoc cum firmissima fide teneam, intelligentia nondum assecutus sum.'

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 20. 54: 'Sed tu fortasse quaesiturus es, quoniam movetur voluntas cum se avertit ab incommutabili bono ad mutabile bonum, unde iste motus existat; qui profecto malus est, tametsi voluntas libera, quia sine illa nec recte vivi potest, in bonis numeranda sit. Si enim motus iste, id est aversio voluntatis a Domino Deo, sine dubitatione peccatum est, num possumus auctorem peccati Deum dicere? Non erit ergo iste motus ex Deo. Unde igitur erit? Ita quaerenti tibi, si respondeam nescire me, fortasse eris tristior: sed tamen vera responderim. Sciri enim non potest quod nihil est.'

away from the immutability of God and the eternal law, towards the mutability and corruptibility of creation.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, he lays the ground for the notion of *privatio boni* which will become Augustine's definite answer to the question of moral evil. A more detailed explanation of the same notion is given in Chapter 20 of Book 2:

For any nature you come across is from God. So if you see anything at all that has measure, number and order, do not hesitate to attribute it to God as craftsman. If you take away all measure, number and order, there is absolutely nothing left [...] But every good thing comes from God, so there is no nature that does not come from God. On the other hand, every defect comes from nothing, which we admit is sin, and that movement of turning away, which we admit is sin, is a defective movement.<sup>25</sup>

The goodness of all things is held as an undisputable truth grounded in the doctrine of creation. All things that belong to creation possess measure, form and order. If these three attributes are contained in high degree, the creature possessing them will be a great good. In the degree, however, to which the creature lacks measure form and order it will decrease in goodness until, in principle, it lacks goodness altogether.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, if everything which is made up of these attributes is a

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<sup>24</sup> *De lib. arb.* 1. 16. 34: 'nam quaerere institueramus quid sit male facere, et propter hoc omnia quae dicta sunt, diximus. Quocirca licet nunc animadvertere et considerare, utrum sit aliud male facere, quam neglectis rebus aeternis, quibus per seipsam mens fruitur, et per seipsam percipit, et quae amans amittere non potest, temporalia et quaeque per corpus hominis partem vilissimam sentiuntur, et nunquam esse certa possunt, quasi magna et miranda sectari. Nam hoc uno genere omnia malefacta, id est peccata, mihi videntur includi. Tibi autem quid videatur, exspecto cognoscere.'

<sup>25</sup> *De lib. arb.* 2. 20. 54: 'Ita enim nulla natura occurrit quae non sit ex Deo. Omnem quippe rem ubi mensuram et numerum et ordinem videris, Deo artifici tribuere ne cuncteris. Unde autem ista penitus detraxeris, nihil omnino remanebit [...] Omne autem bonum ex Deo: nulla ergo natura est quae non sit ex Deo. Motus ergo ille aversionis, quod fatemur esse peccatum, quoniam defectivus motus est, omnis autem defectus ex nihilo est.'

<sup>26</sup> *De nat. bon.* 6: 'Corruptio autem si omnem modum, omnem speciem, omnem ordinem rebus corruptibilibus auferat, nulla natura remanebit. Ac per hoc omnis natura quae corrumpi non potest summum bonum est, sicut Deus est. Omnis autem natura quae corrumpi potest, etiam ipsa aliquod bonum est: non enim posset ei nocere corruptio nisi adimendo et minuendo quod bonum est'; *De nat. bon.* 23: 'Malus ergo modus, vel mala species, vel malus ordo, aut ideo dicuntur quia minora sunt quam esse debuerunt, aut quia non his rebus accommodantur quibus accommodanda sunt; ut ideo dicantur mala quia sunt aliena et incongrua, tamquam si dicatur aliquis non bono modo egisse quia minus egit quam debuit, aut quia ita egit sicut in re tali non debuit, vel amplius quam oportebat, vel non convenienter.' For the question of evil as seen in relation to lack or privation of goodness, M. Le

good, evil is nothing but corruption of one or another of these perfections.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, vitiation occurs when a good lacks, or suffers a loss of some measure, form or order. However, this is not to say that the good ceases to be a good; it is still a good insofar as it possesses these attributes, but it is also evil insofar as it does not possess them in the measure it should.<sup>28</sup> As Gilson puts it, ‘Evil is not merely a privation: it is a privation residing in some good as in its subject.’<sup>29</sup>

The same can be said of evil originating from the will, or moral evil. Any free act of the will is comparable to any substance which possesses the three attributions of measure, form and order. If a voluntary act lacks one or more of these three perfections, the act is considered imperfect and man is deemed responsible for this imperfection.<sup>30</sup> However, as in the case of the creature lacking these perfections without ceasing to be good altogether, even in the case of the bad act, the will conserves its goodness, but it falls short of being quite what it should be. Even in this case, therefore, evil cannot exist without a good. To use Augustine’s words:

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Roy Burton, ‘The Problem’, in *The Problem of Evil: A Criticism of the Augustinian Point of View* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1909), pp. 1-26; W. E. Mann, ‘Augustine on Evil and Original Sin’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 40-48; J. Hick, ‘The Fountainhead: St. Augustine – Evil as Privation of Good Stemming from Misused Freedom’, in *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp. 38-69.

<sup>27</sup> *De nat. bon.* 3: ‘Nos enim catholici Christiani Deum colimus a quo omnia bona sunt, seu magna, seu parva; a quo est omnis modus, seu magnus, seu parvus; a quo omnis species, seu magna, seu parva; a quo omnis ordo, seu magnus, seu parvus. 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’; also, *De lib. arb.* 3. 36. 13: ‘Omnis natura quae minus bona fieri potest, bona est; et omnis natura dum corrumpitur, minus bona fit.’

<sup>28</sup> *De nat. bon.* 4: ‘Proinde cum quaeritur unde sit malum, prius quaerendum est quid sit malum; quod nihil aliud est quam corruptio vel modi, vel speciei, vel ordinis naturalis. Mala itaque natura dicitur quae corrupta est: nam incorrupta utique bona est. Sed etiam ipsa corrupta, in quantum natura est, bona est; in quantum corrupta est, mala est.’

<sup>29</sup> E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. by L. E. M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961), p. 144.

<sup>30</sup> *De lib. arb.* 2. 20. 54: ‘omnis autem defectus ex nihilo est, vide quo pertineat, et ad Deum non pertinere ne dubites. Qui tamen defectus quoniam est voluntarius, in nostra est positus potestate.’

In itself the will is good, because without it no one could lead an upright life. It comes to us, therefore, from God, and we should find fault with those who use it badly, not with Him Who gives it to us.<sup>31</sup>

Notwithstanding the inherent goodness of the will, in other words, it can be a cause of evil, because it is by the freedom of his will that man can fall short of his good.

The doctrine of evil as privation of good was of the greatest importance for Augustine when it came to resolving those questions which he had explored as a Manichee and to which he had found no satisfactory answer. By stating that evil is nothing but a privation of good he exonerated God from charges of being the cause of evil insofar as 'privation' or 'nothing' cannot be created. This doctrine also allowed him to include evil within the order of creation because *creatio ex nihilo* carried with it the seed of corruption.<sup>32</sup> The creator differs from his creatures because he stands immutable before all that is mutable. In other words, because God is the highest good he can neither lose nor acquire anything. On the contrary, creatures which are created from nothing, participate in non-being as well as in being. It is because of this natural deficiency that they are affected by mutability and change. Man belongs to this category, and as a creature made from nothing he fluctuates between being and non-being.<sup>33</sup> It is, therefore, by nature that he can become corrupt and fall into error; however, by nature he is not determined to fall into error. Both in

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 18. 48: 'Sic liberam voluntatem sine qua nemo potest recte vivere, oportet et bonum, et divinitus datum, et potius eos damnandos qui hoc bono male utuntur, quam eum qui dederit dare non debuisse fatearis.'

<sup>32</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 13. 1: 'Sed vitio depravari nisi ex nihilo facta natura non posset. Ac per hoc ut natura sit, ex eo habet quod a Deo facta est; ut autem ab eo quod est deficiat, ex hoc quod de nihilo facta est.' The context here is Adam's sin and the evil that arose in his soul before committing the act of eating from the tree of good and evil. After offering an explanation of pride as man's love of self and desire for excellence, Augustine explains why such a desire should have arisen in the first place. The reason is found in creation out of nothing that makes man susceptible to falling away from his true being by virtue of his sharing in nothingness.

<sup>33</sup> The ontological goodness of nature in Augustine has been studied in relation to evil's non-existence by S. Taranto, 'Il fondamento della *poena peccati*', in *Agostino e la filosofia dell'amore* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003), pp. 21-62.

the context of original sin and actual sin, moral evil is, in other words, synonymous with a decrease in goodness, a coming short of what an act should be. In both contexts free will, the power of the soul involved in making choices is central. Ranked as an intermediate good between the material things (comprising the things of the world that are good in themselves but can be used wrongly) and the spiritual (i.e. fortitude, temperance and justice, that cannot be used wrongly without destroying their essence), Augustine sees free will as a good that can be put to bad use.<sup>34</sup> Not only this, but as Gilson explains, ‘the possibility of the evil use of free will was the necessary condition for the goodness and happiness brought about by its good use.’<sup>35</sup> On his part, William H. Mann writes:

A genuinely free will necessarily carries with it the liability to sin. But without having freedom of choice, with its built-in liability, humans would lack the capacity to choose to live rightly.<sup>36</sup>

This was the case of Adam and his will. Created *ex nihilo*, yet perfectly free, he could choose to be either in God and participate in being, or to turn away from God and move towards non-being. Thus, as Gilson puts it, ‘it was in [the will’s] *power* to separate itself from God, [but] it was its *duty* not to do so.’<sup>37</sup> Its fall, therefore, was not the natural and necessary fall of a stone, but it was the fall of a

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<sup>34</sup> *De lib. arb.* 2. 18. 50: ‘Intueris enim iustitiam, qua nemo male utitur. Haec inter summa bona quae in ipso sunt homine numeratur, omnesque virtutes animi quibus ipsa recta vita et honesta constat. Nam neque prudentia, neque fortitudine, neque temperantia male quis utitur: etiam in his enim omnibus, sicut in ipsa quam tu commemorasti iustitia, recta ratio viget, sine qua virtutes esse non possunt. Recta autem ratione male uti nemo potest.’ *De lib. arb.* 19: ‘Ista ergo magna bona sunt: sed meminisse te oportet, non solum magna, sed etiam minima bona non esse posse, nisi ab illo a quo sunt omnia bona, hoc est Deo. Id enim superior disputatio persuasit, cui totiens tamque laetus assensus es. Virtutes igitur quibus recte vivitur, magna bona sunt: species autem quorumlibet corporum, sine quibus recte vivi potest, minima bona sunt: potentiae vero animi sine quibus recte vivi non potest, media bona sunt.’

<sup>35</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 147.

<sup>36</sup> Mann, ‘Augustine on Evil and Original Sin’, p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 148.

will that abandons higher things and chooses to enjoy inferior things.<sup>38</sup> The enjoyment or love of inferior things thus resulted from a deficiency in the will – i.e. from the will’s movement to non-being. Now, in the same way as silence is the absence of sound and darkness is the absence of light, sin is a lack of being (a no-thing), an absence, that is, of the love of God which reveals itself in man’s attachment to things which are inferior to God.<sup>39</sup> In Burnaby’s words:

Negatively, it [sin] is the failure to love God; positively, it is the inevitable transference of love to objects which, though good because God’s creatures, are goods less than the highest [...] Not the being of the self, nor its desire to know and enjoy, are evil: its *preference* of its own being and of the knowledge and enjoyment of things temporal, to the one eternal good, is what constitutes sin.<sup>40</sup>

Once this equivalence between disordered love and sin is made, it is possible to speak of sin in terms of pride or *amor sui*.<sup>41</sup> In the case of the fall Augustine sees in the love of self the motive of the original impulse away from God. In the *De genesi ad litteram* Augustine writes:

We must not imagine that the tempter would have caused the man to fall unless there had arisen in the man’s soul a proud spirit that needed to be checked, so that the humiliation of his sin would teach him how wrong he was in relying on himself [...] But whether these words were said about the first man or about another, a lesson had to be taught to the soul that exalted

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<sup>38</sup> *De lib. arb.* 3. 1. 2: ‘Restat igitur ut eius sit proprius iste motus, quo fruendi voluntatem ad creaturam a Creatore convertit: 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.’

<sup>39</sup> *De civ. Dei* 12. 7: ‘Nemo igitur quaerat efficientem causam malae voluntatis; non enim est efficiens, sed deficiens, quia nec illa effectio sed defectio. Deficere namque ab eo, quod summe est, ad id, quod minus est, hoc est incipere habere voluntatem malam. Causas porro defectionum istarum, cum efficientes non sint, ut dixi, sed deficientes, velle invenire tale est, ac si quisquam velit videre tenebras vel audire silentium.’

<sup>40</sup> J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> For a study of the doctrine of *amor sui* in Augustine, O. O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

itself and trusted too much in its own strength, even if the lesson involved experiencing punishment; for it must learn how wretched is the state of a creature if it withdraws from its Creator.<sup>42</sup>

In these lines Augustine explains how the disorder in Adam's soul resulted in the choice of self (the creature) over and against God (the creator). Moreover, Augustine's claim that the tempter would not have succeeded had man not begun to develop in his soul an aversion to God, is indicative of man's potentiality to sin which he possessed by virtue of his freedom.

Now, this falling away is the soul's own doing, for, if the will had merely remained firm in the love of that Higher immutable Good which lighted its mind into knowledge and warmed its will into love, it would not have turned away in search of satisfaction in itself and, by so doing, have lost that light and warmth.<sup>43</sup>

Chapter One showed how the possibility of man's remaining firm in the love of God was grace given. I have also pointed out how in the *De civitate Dei* Augustine speaks of sin as being a possibility for nature at the point of creation, and how by the grace that in Eden made man righteous and conserved him in that same righteousness, he could remain in receipt of God's grace. In other words, by nature man could sin, by grace he could remain firm in God's grace. Hence, in these lines Augustine claims that, by his voluntary falling away from the warmth of God's love man incurred the loss of wisdom – insofar as man was no longer illuminated by God's light – and God's love – which ceases to inspire man's will to charity. Thus

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<sup>42</sup> *De gen. ad litt.* 11. 5. 7: 'Nec arbitrandum est quod esset hominem deiecturus iste tentator, nisi praecessisset in anima hominis quaedam elatio comprimenda, ut per humiliationem peccati, quam de se falso praesumpserit, disceret [...] Sed sive illud de hoc homine, sive de alio dictum sit, extollenti se tamen animae, et nimium tamquam de propria virtute praefidenti, etiam experimento poenae fuerat demonstrandum quam non bene se habeat facta natura, si a faciente recesserit.'

<sup>43</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 13. 1: 'Spontaneus est autem iste defectus, quoniam, si voluntas in amore superioris immutabilis boni, a quo illustrabatur ut videret et accendebatur ut amaret, stabilis permaneret, non inde ad sibi placendum averteretur et ex hoc tenebresceret et frigeret.'

seen, man's turning away from God (what Gilson calls 'the absence of the love of God') constitutes at one and the same time man's sin (because man loves things other than God) and God's punishment (because the subtraction of God's love from man incapacitates man's ability to love righteously).<sup>44</sup> The evil of Adam's first sin lay, therefore, in substituting obedience (the love of God) with self-reliance (the love of self), thus falling to radical estrangement from the creator.<sup>45</sup> Here, the meaning of pride and self-reliance overlap. With these two terms Augustine describes man's voluntary negation of his status, and his denial of God as creator. 'The love of God which is God's gift of Himself' and 'the one all-sufficient motive of the Christian life' is therefore forfeited for the earthy and temporal, the corruptible and the mutable.<sup>46</sup> In doing so man substitutes God with the love of self, he turns his interest to what should not be his concern, or to what is inferior to him, and he does so because his will – as intermediate good – stands midway between the eternal and the temporal, between being and non-being.

## 2.2 - The Effects of Sin

In Book 13 of the *De civitate Dei*, Augustine writes:

God, the author of all natures but not of their defects, created man good; but man, corrupt by choice and condemned by justice, has produced a progeny that is both corrupt and condemned. For, we all existed in that one man, since, taken together, we were the one man who fell into sin [...] Thus, from a bad use of free choice, a sequence of misfortunes conducts the whole

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<sup>44</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 148.

<sup>45</sup> For Augustine's understanding of some good aspects of the 'love of self', O'Donovan, 'Self-Love and the Love of God', in *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, pp. 37-59 (p. 37): 'But Augustine also recognizes as entirely coincident and coextensive with the love of God the principle of right self-love. The perfection of the one was the perfection of the other. There was no kind of right self-love which did not imply the love of God; there was no way in which God could be loved without the lover loving himself as well.'

<sup>46</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, p. 183.

human race, excepting those redeemed by the grace of God, from the original canker in its root to the devastation of a second and endless death.<sup>47</sup>

The terms ‘misfortune’, ‘devastation’ and ‘death’ define the existential consequences of the fracture which sin creates between man and God, and are aimed at describing a state of alienation which is not only universal but also intimately personal. Thus, Augustine recognizes how original sin affected humanity as a whole by vitiating his original perfection, and how it continues to affect the individual man on a moral plane. What Adam experienced as punishment for his failure to remain obedient to a commandment easy to obey, the rest of humanity experiences as a flaw in their nature which manifests itself in the soul’s subjection to ‘death, to the great corruption that we can see and experience, and to the many and such opposing passions which disturb and disorder it’.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, Augustine writes that no other sin would ever affect human nature as the first sin did, describing death as one of its tragic occurrences:

Some may be puzzled by the fact that other sins do not change human nature in the way that the transgression of our first parents not merely

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<sup>47</sup> *De civ. Dei* 13. 14: ‘Deus enim creavit hominem rectum, naturarum auctor, non utique vitiorum; sed sponte depravatus iusteque damnatus depravatos damnatosque generavit. Omnes enim fuimus in illo uno, quando omnes fuimus ille unus [...] Ac per hoc a liberi arbitrii malo usu series calamitatis huius exorta est, quae humanum genus origine depravata, velut radice corrupta, usque ad secundae mortis exitium, quae non habet finem, solis eis exceptis qui per Dei gratiam liberantur, miseriarum connexione perducit.’

<sup>48</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 12: ‘Tanto maiore iniustitia violatum est, quanto faciliore posset observantia custodiri’; *Ibid.* 13. 3: ‘Neque enim ita homo ex homine, sicut homo ex pulvere. Pulvis namque homini faciendo materies fuit; homo autem homini gignendo parens. Proinde quod est terra, non hoc est caro, quamvis ex terra facta sit caro; quod est autem parens homo, hoc est et proles homo. In primo igitur homine per feminam in progeniem transiturum universum genus humanum fuit, quando illa coniugum copula divinam sententiam suae damnationis exceptit; et quod homo factus est, non cum crearetur, sed cum peccaret et puniretur, hoc genuit, quantum quidem attinet ad peccati et mortis originem.’

damaged theirs but had the consequence that human nature, ever since, has been subject to death.<sup>49</sup>

As regards physical death, Augustine speaks of a fundamental difference between Adam and his offspring: in Eden death was not in the order of nature, had man not sinned he would not have died; however, after original sin, death becomes a necessary state of nature for Adam's progeny. As for spiritual death, the inclination to sin that man inherits with original sin makes him liable for another, eternal and everlasting death from which man is rescued only by the grace of Christ.<sup>50</sup> As a result, while drawing a distinction between the guilt of original sin and the evil that this inflicts in man's nature, Augustine sees nothing incongruous in attributing both to fallen man. Burnaby claims that,

The evil of concupiscence is the war in our members, and this war is a fault, a *vitium*, but it is not, properly speaking sin: it is only 'called' sin because it is both the effect and the occasion, the 'daughter' and the 'mother' of sin. Augustine's difficulties arise from the premises of his anti-Manichaean argument: namely, that all human evil is either sin or punishment. The state in which we are born is evil. But if this evil is punishment rather than sin, what of the guilt (*reatus*) which punishment implies? The only possible answer seemed to be that we bear the 'guilt' of a sin which we have not ourselves committed: the 'innocent' child is at the same time 'guilty'. But then guilt [...] stands for the fact that man comes into the world 'without God', severed from the love which is his life.<sup>51</sup>

This distinction between *vitium* and *reatus* is set into relief if looked at with respect to the sacrament of baptism. The fault, or *vitium*, that man inherits from Adam's sin is not sin properly speaking, but it impairs the will so much as to dispose it to

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<sup>49</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 12: 'Si quem vero movet, cur aliis peccatis sic natura non mutetur humana, quemadmodum illa duorum primorum hominum praevaricatione mutata est, ut tantae corruptioni, quantam videmus atque sentimus, et per hanc subiaceret et morti.'

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 14. 1: 'Mortis autem regnum in homines usque adeo dominatum est, ut omnes in secundam quoque mortem, cuius nullus est finis, poena debita praecipites ageret, nisi inde quosdam indebita Dei gratia liberaret.'

<sup>51</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, p. 191.

concupiscent inclination even after the cleansing waters of baptism. As for the *reatus*, or guilt, this is removed with baptism.<sup>52</sup> For Augustine, in other words, it is this *vitium* that has an impairing effect on man's moral conduct. Although original sin is not committed by the individual man, it, nonetheless, affects nature so deeply as to cause a disorder in the soul which results in the will's propensity to make evil choices. This is a condition of nature that can only be cured by grace. Augustine's point here is that the corruption that nature incurred by original sin binds the will to a natural necessity to sin.<sup>53</sup> In the following quotation Burnaby marks the distinction between the freedom of nature before original sin, and nature's postlapsarian bondage to sin:

When man knew the law of God, and while there was as yet in him no lusting of the flesh against the spirit, he was free to do right. But *that* freedom is his no longer. Man has fallen *sponte*, by his own act; his own act cannot raise him again. He is *sold under sin*.<sup>54</sup>

In other words, on a moral plane man is utterly insufficient to pursue a good end. Augustine describes this condition of bondage in the *Confessions* with respect to his own experience before conversion:

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<sup>52</sup> *De nupt. et conc.* 1. 26. 29: 'In eis ergo, qui regenerantur in Christo cum remissionem accipiunt prorsus omnium peccatorum, utique necesse est ut reatus etiam huius licet adhuc manentis concupiscentiae remittatur, ut in peccatum, sicut dixi, non imputetur [...] Sic itaque fieri e contrario potest, ut etiam illud maneat actu, praetereat reatu.'

<sup>53</sup> Many Augustine scholars have explored the question of man's bondage to sin from a number of different perspectives. For an account of the relationship between freedom and predestination, Hick, 'The Free-Will Defense in St. Augustine', in *Evil and the God of Love*, pp. 59-69; TeSelle, 'Original Sin and Predestination: Threats to Freedom?', in *Augustine* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2006), pp. 37-46; P. Cary, 'Willing Becomes Difficult', in *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 40-45. For a historical contextualization of free will and grace, and the question of the liberation of the will from the bondage of sin by grace, A. E. McGrath, 'Augustine of Hippo', in *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1, pp. 25-37. For a critical account of Augustine's grace determinism, N. P. Williams, 'Augustinianism', in *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), pp. 317-91; idem, 'Grace in St. Augustine', in *The Grace of God* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), pp. 19-43.

<sup>54</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, p. 188.

So I was bound, not in someone else's irons, but by my own iron will [...] From a perverse will came lust, and lust being obeyed became habit, and habit not resisted became necessity. By these things, connected to each other like links in a chain, I was held in strict servitude.<sup>55</sup>

Commenting on these lines, Phillip Cary observes that,

Free will remains (as always) free from external compulsion, but inwardly it is chained by its own past willing. Because it once consented too easily and too regularly to what it no longer wills, it is not now free to do what it wills or even to will what it wills.<sup>56</sup>

Here Cary exemplifies Augustine's view that if fallen man is still able to act freely (i.e. by retaining the ability to choose between alternatives), on a moral plane, he is determined (or bound) by a kind of habitual attitude to sin. In the lines just cited from the *Confessions* Augustine describes the psychological dimension of sinning which transforms illicit or perverse desire into the will's full-fledged slavery to sin. Once man obeys the requests of a perverse will, lust becomes habit and unbridled habit binds the will to a necessity to sin. In keeping with this, and as Mary Clark puts it,

[there are] two aspects of human freedom: the faculty of free choice and free will, and the freedom that qualifies man when free choice is used according to its purpose – to attain the true end of man, thereby enabling him to be all that he should be.<sup>57</sup>

For Augustine, then, fallen man has lost the second of these freedoms. A bound will is, therefore, a concupiscent will. If, as Cary argues, up to the time of the *Confessions* the downward pull of 'fleshly habit' (*carnalis consuetudo*) had been

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<sup>55</sup> *Conf.* 8. 5. 10: 'Cui rei ego suspirabam ligatus non ferro alieno, sed mea ferrea voluntate [...] Quippe ex voluntate perversa facta est libido, et dum servitur libidini, facta est consuetudo, et dum consuetudini non resistitur, facta est necessitas. Quibus quasi ansulis sibimet innexis (unde catenam appellavi) tenebat me obstrictum dura servitus.'

<sup>56</sup> Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*, p. 42.

<sup>57</sup> M. T. Clark, *Augustine Philosopher of Freedom* (Paris: Desclée Company, 1958), p. 45.

central in Augustine's moral psychology of sin, with the *Confessions* and the anti-Pelagian writings, Augustine began 'thinking about a deeper pathology of the will', which he describes as 'the covetousness (*concupiscentia*) that is our common inheritance from the first sin'.<sup>58</sup> The term enters Augustine's discourse because Paul cites the commandment 'Thou shalt not covet' (*non concupisces*) as the prime example of our inability to keep the letter of the Law even when man wills to do so.<sup>59</sup> With this Augustine recognizes not only that man has difficulty doing and willing what is right, but also that this difficulty is something that all men share because of their descent from the first man. What for prelapsarian man was the ability not to sin becomes, in postlapsarian man, the inability not to sin. Thus, as Kelly puts it,

Augustine can speak of 'a cruel necessity of sinning' resting upon the human race. By this he means, not that our wills are in the grip of any physical or metaphysical determinism, but rather that, our choice remaining free, we spontaneously, as a matter of psychological fact, opt for perverse courses.<sup>60</sup>

In sum, Augustine does not deny the fact that fallen man possesses a will and that with it he is still able to make choices. The distinction drawn by Clark between the faculty of free choice and man's ability to act in accordance with his highest end, what Augustine refers to as *liberum arbitrium* and *libertas*, brings this point home: man has retained the former, but has lost the liberty which enables him to make

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<sup>58</sup> Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*, p. 42.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42, where Cary writes of Romans, 7:7 as regards the fallen will's inability to follow the letter of the old covenant. Cary also refers the reader to the beginning of the *De spiritu et littera* 4. 2 where Augustine takes up Paul's argument and the distinction he makes between the letter which kills and the letter which gives life.

<sup>60</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 365-66. By the same token, but within the context of man's presence in the world and the influence that the world has in shaping his behaviour and his habits, TeSelle, *Augustine*, p. 41, writes: 'When Augustine thinks in terms of the bondage of the will and original sin, he suggests that Adam's progeny choose evil inevitably but still on their own responsibility.'

morally good choices, a liberty that in fallen man, as I have pointed out in Chapter One, is made possible solely by grace. The state of original sin has, therefore, left man in the condition of being unable to refrain from sinning. In other words, man is still able to make choices according to his desires, but his desires remain chained by evil impulses leading him unfailingly to sin.

### **2.3 - Dante and Augustine and the Question of the Order of Love**

Augustine's sense of sin as a disorder of the will raises two questions with respect to the relationship between *privatio boni* and love. If negatively, privation is an absence of (or decline from) the love of God, positively, it is the substitution of the love of God with the love of the world (including the love of self). Love as disordered offers, therefore, a definition of evil as a faulty movement of the will – a turning away from God – which results in man's love for something other than God.<sup>61</sup> Now, the inability to love God above all creation is something that man is born with, because man, by virtue of original sin, is chained – as already mentioned above – by a necessity to sin. It is only through grace that man is enabled to direct himself to the good of creation in keeping with the norms of the eternal law which reveal themselves in the order with which creation itself is endowed. As Harrison argues, Augustine inherited this idea of natural order from the classical tradition, and used it in his defence against the Manichees: 'insofar as creation possesses order, expressed

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<sup>61</sup> In spite of its inherent goodness, creation should not be the end term of man's desire. Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 85, writes that it is in the *De libero arbitrio* that the question of love is discussed for the first time alongside free will and its operation: 'The notion of choice is not new – we have already found it in the language of love in *On the Moral of the Catholic Church*. What is new, however, is the language of will in order to express the operation of man's love [...] If the will errs in cupidity loving mutable, temporal things (1. 4. 9), then he alone is responsible for evil, his sin is voluntary.'

as measure, number, and weight, to that extent it is good and reveals its divine Creator, Orderer and Sustainer.’<sup>62</sup> Man’s participation in this order entails the ordering of his love (made possible in fallen man solely by grace) in a hierarchy by which the love of God, as author of all things, is the measure of all of man’s other loves. Augustine advances this idea in the *De civitate Dei* where, maintaining the goodness of all existing things, he claims that love for these is wrong if it becomes substitute for the love of God.<sup>63</sup> Thus, if man’s love does not submit or conform to this order he experiences a decline, which leads him away from God towards the nothingness from which he was created.

This notion of love as order – as a love hierarchy or love ladder, so to speak, leading up to God – where all loves are legitimate if referred to the love of God, must be seen in relation to an alternative theory of love that Augustine develops in the *De doctrina christiana*, where he reveals his doubts as to the legitimacy of any love other than man’s love of God. In Book 1 of this treatise Augustine marks the distinction between *uti* – the use of things as a means for a good end – and *frui* – the enjoyment of things *per se*.<sup>64</sup> Once again, this distinction is grounded on the concept

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<sup>62</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 97.

<sup>63</sup> *De. civ. Dei* 15. 22: ‘Sic enim corporis pulchritudo, a Deo quidem factum, sed temporale carnale infimum bonum, male amatur postposito Deo, aeterno interno sempiterno bono, quemadmodum iustitia deserta et aurum amatur ab avaris, nullo peccato auri, sed hominis. Ita se habet omnis creatura. Cum enim bona sit, et bene amari potest et male: bene scilicet ordine custodito, male ordine perturbato [...] Creator autem si veraciter ametur, hoc est si ipse, non aliud pro illo quod non est ipse, ametur, male amari non potest. Nam et amor ipse ordinate amandus est, quo bene amatur quod amandum est, ut sit in nobis virtus qua vivitur bene. Unde mihi videtur, quod definitio brevis et vera virtutis ordo est amoris; propter quod in sancto *Cantico canticorum* cantat sponsa Christi, civitas Dei: *Ordinate in me caritatem.*’

<sup>64</sup> *De doct. christ.* 1. 4. 4: ‘Frui est enim amore inhaerere alicui rei propter seipsam. Uti autem, quod in usum venerit ad id quod amas obtinendum referre, si tamen amandum est. Nam usus illicitus abusus potius vel abusio nominandus est.’ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 98, argues that the difference between ‘use’ and ‘enjoyment’ (of Stoic origin) is already present in the *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*: ‘where Augustine talks in terms of the right (*honestum*) and the useful (*utile*), that is, of “what is desired for its own sake (*honestum*), and what is desired for the sake of something else (*utile*)” and comments that, “we are said to enjoy (*frui*) things which satisfy

of an ontological order in creation or, as Joseph Mausbach has argued, an ‘objective order of things’.<sup>65</sup> In other words, the subordination of the things of creation to God is not a decision of the individual subject but, in Oliver O’Donovan’s words:

it is an ontological reality which confronts the subject and demands that he conform his love to it. Because God, for Augustine, is both *beata vita* and *lex aeterna*, participation in the joy of the divine being is at the same time an embrace of the created order and an obedience to the divine law.<sup>66</sup>

Now, conformation to this order means that human beings should ‘enjoy’ some things or cleave to them in love, and ‘use’ others, relating or subordinating them to the attainment of what they love. In distinctively Christian terms, the proper object of enjoyment is God. To enjoy God means, therefore, to hold fast to him in love for his own sake. If God is the only thing that must be enjoyed, everything else, all things belonging to creation – all temporal things – must be used and referred to this end. In Augustine’s own words:

To enjoy something is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake. To use something is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love – if indeed it is something that ought to be loved (the improper use of something should be termed abuse). Suppose we were travellers who could live happily only in our homeland, and because our absence made us unhappy we wished to put an end to our misery and return there: we would need transport by land or sea which we could use to travel to our homeland, the object of our enjoyment. But if we were fascinated by the delights of the

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our desire; we use (*utimus*) those which we refer to the acquisition of the things which satisfy our desire.” For the distinction between *uti* and *frui* in the *De civitate Dei* and Augustine’s earlier works, within the context of Augustine scholarship, O. O’Donovan, ‘*Usus and Fruitio* in Augustine: *De Doctrina Christiana I*’, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 33, 2 (1982), 361-97; E. Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 13, writes of the distinction between the two terms with respect to Augustine’s Christian appropriation of the idea of a cosmic desire: ‘A key to the Augustinian strategy is the distinction between the ‘intransitive’ *uti* (the love of the creature referred to the Creator) and the ‘intransitive’ *frui* (love *per se*). Human life is a long journey in the dimension of use, a ‘holy desire’ (*desiderium sanctum*), until the creature is joined and fulfilled in the fruition of God.’

<sup>65</sup> J. Mausbach, *Die Ethik des Heiligen Augustinus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Freiburg: [n. pub.], 1929), p. 51, cited in O’Donovan, ‘*Usus and Fruitio* in Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana I*’, p. 362.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p. 362.

journey and the actual travelling, we would be perversely enjoying things that we should be using; and we would be reluctant to finish our journey quickly, being ensnared in the wrong kind of pleasure and estranged from the homeland whose pleasures could make us happy. So in this mortal life we are like travellers away from our Lord (2 *Cor.* 5:6): if we wish to return to the homeland where we can be happy we must use this world (cf. 1 *Cor.* 7:31), not enjoy it, in order to discern ‘the invisible attributes of God, which are understood through what has been made’ (*Rom.* 1: 29) or, in other words, to derive eternal and spiritual value from corporeal and eternal things.<sup>67</sup>

The metaphor of the pilgrim’s journey back home carries with it the idea of man’s remoteness from those things which he should love the most, and is here adopted to signify man’s homecoming to God as the sole most important object of his desire. But, Augustine argues, the journey may pose a risk: in the same way as the traveller can become enthralled with the delight of the journey, subordinating the end to the means, the soul can be sidetracked from the right path into the false pleasures of this world. Now, this happens when what ought to be used for the enjoyment of God is rather enjoyed for its own sake. In doing so man is held back or, ultimately, diverted from the attainment of things that must be enjoyed:

but if we choose to enjoy things that are to be used, our advance is impeded and sometimes even diverted, and we are held back, or even put off, from attaining things which are to be enjoyed, because we are hamstrung by our love of lower things.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *De doct. christ.* 1. 4. 4: ‘Fruī est enim amore inhaerere alicui rei propter seipsam. Uti autem, quod in usum venerit ad id quod amas obtinendum referre, si tamen amandum est. Nam usus illicitus abusus potius vel abusio nominandus est. Quomodo ergo, si essemus peregrini, qui beate vivere nisi in patria non possemus, eaque peregrinatione utique miseri et miseriam finire cupientes, in patriam redire vellemus, opus esset vel terrestribus vel marinis vehiculis quibus utendum esset ut ad patriam, qua fruendum erat, pervenire valeremus; quod si amoenitates itineris et ipsa gestatio vehiculorum nos delectaret, conversi ad fruendum his quibus uti debuimus, nollemus cito viam finire et perversa suavitate implicati alienaremur a patria, cuius suavitas faceret beatos: sic in huius mortalitatis vita peregrinantes a Domino, si redire in patriam volumus, ubi beati esse possimus, utendum est hoc mundo, non fruendum, ut invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciantur, hoc est, ut de corporalibus temporalibusque rebus aeterna et spiritalia capiamus.’

<sup>68</sup> *De doct. christ.* 1. 3. 3: ‘Nos vero qui fruimur et utimur, inter utrasque constituti, si eis quibus utendum est frui voluerimus, impeditur cursus noster et aliquando etiam deflectitur, ut ab his rebus quibus fruendum est obtinendis vel retardemur vel etiam revocemur, inferiorum amore praepediti.’

Man should use the world freely and should not depend on it as a source of pleasure. Furthermore, the relevance of means and tools is determined by the ultimate purpose of the user. That is to say that the world, which gains its significance in relation to the final good, is used with a view to reaching that good.

Many scholars have pointed out how this distinction between ‘use’ and ‘enjoyment’ eventually presented Augustine with a problem, namely reconciling the commandment of the love of self and the love of neighbour with the notion that the only legitimate love is the love of God.<sup>69</sup> Is the neighbour to be used instrumentally – as a tool, that is – for one’s achievement of the ultimate love of God, and is this ‘use’ of another human being exploitative at some level? Or is the use of one’s neighbour nothing other than understanding that he is a creature ontologically ordered, and therefore subordinated, to the uncreated Supreme Being? Towards the end of Book 1 of the *De doctrina christiana* Augustine reconciles the concept of instrumentality and that of the natural or ontological order of creation with a new understanding of the doctrine of use. He acknowledges that man naturally loves himself, and that man is naturally able to assess the value of things, and therefore to acknowledge (at least in principle) the subordination of the love of the body to that of the soul, and the love of his neighbour to that of God, and to use therefore the love of neighbour as a means to an ultimate and supreme end. What we see here is, therefore, a tempering of the distinction of ‘use’ and ‘enjoyment’ in favour of a doctrine that allows for a

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<sup>69</sup> Mausbach, *Die Ethik des Heiligen Augustinus*, especially p. 51; A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. by Philip S. Watson (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), p. 512; R. Holte, *Béatitude et Sagesse: Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l’homme* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1962); O’Donovan, ‘*Usus and Fructio* in Augustine, *De Doctrina Christina I*, especially pp. 383-90; Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 99.

newly nuanced meaning of ‘use’ which, when referred to one’s neighbour or self, entails a form of love for the sake of someone else, namely God.

O’Donovan writes that ‘this distinction between “love” (or, more precisely, enjoyment) and “use” is not reiterated by Augustine in his other works’, and that, in fact, the emphasis that ‘medieval and modern readers’ have placed on it might ultimately exaggerate its conclusions.<sup>70</sup> This may be true, but there can be no doubt even so that Book 1 of the *De doctrina christiana* offers an important insight into Augustine’s scepticism in relation to the world as love object, scepticism which is by no means shared by Dante whose philosophy of love rejoices in the presence of creatures in the world seen and experienced as love object, provided, that is, that love is given discipline and self-direction. Once the notion of love becomes an anthropological notion – in the sense of being contemplated as a structure of existence and a fundamental principle of self-interpretation – any distinction between use and enjoyment must be relinquished in favour of a natural *appetitus* – or natural love, as in the case of Dante – that moves all creatures towards an ultimately good end, and an elective love that is good inasmuch as it measures itself up to the natural love. It is to these notions, to the question of love and its relationship with freedom in Dante that I shall now turn my attention.

#### **2.4 - Purgatorio 16-18: Man and the Origin of Evil**

It is at the structural centre of the *Commedia* that the exposition of free will and love by Marco Lombardo and Virgil takes place. As I have mentioned already, the importance of these cantos in the economy of this chapter lies in the fact that for

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<sup>70</sup> O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, p. 27.

Dante the interaction between love and free will offers an explanation for evil in a social and individual context. The background to this discourse, which occupies three consecutive cantos of the *Purgatorio*, is Dante's request for a clarification as regards Guido del Duca's statement in *Purg.* 14. 38-39. In the course of his invective against the corruption of the regions of Tuscany and Romagna, Guido had suggested that the derangement of the peoples inhabiting the lands cut through by the river Arno was caused either '[...] per sventura / del luogo, o per mal uso che li fruga'. The issues raised by this statement are taken up by Dante two cantos later when, speaking with Marco Lombardo, the pilgrim asks him to clarify the origin of 'malizia' (*Purg.* 16. 60).<sup>71</sup> The ambiguity of Guido's claim that corruption is either brought about by the negative influence of the stars ('[...] o per sventura / del luogo'), or by men's bad habits which incline them to evil ('o per mal uso che li fruga') is resolved by Marco's reply which denies the decisive influence of the skies (other than in confirming basic properties of personality) and affirms man's individual responsibility in the act of sin. If man can avoid sin, Marco claims, it is because he possesses free will and he can assert himself over other influences and causes, but he augments his discourse by establishing the importance of the movements of love in the soul as fundamental when it comes to identifying the origin of sin. The brief reference to the movements of love in the soul, made by Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* 16, is later expanded by Virgil in *Purgatorio* 17

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<sup>71</sup> For the meaning of 'malizia' in the context of the *Inferno*, W. H. V. Reade, *The Moral System of Dante's Inferno* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909); A. A. Triolo, 'Ira, Cupitidas, Libido: The Dynamics of Human Passions in the *Inferno*', *Dante Studies*, 95 (1977), 1-37. In the context of the *Commedia* as a whole, A. Bufano, 'Malizia', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, 3 (1973), pp. 792-93; R. H. Lansing, 'Dante's Concept of Violence and the Chain of Being', *Dante Studies*, 99 (1981), 67-87; J. Pequigney, 'Malice', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard H. Lansing (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 588-89; and with specific reference to the *Purgatorio*, M. Cogan, *The Design in the Wax: The Structure of the Divine Comedy and its Meaning* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), pp. 2-9.

which, in Alfred Triolo's words, 'establishes and grounds the Seven Capital Sin structure of the *Purgatorio* proper.'<sup>72</sup> A didactic crescendo is then reached in *Purgatorio* 18 when Dante, having learned from Virgil that two types of love – 'o naturale o d'animo' (*Purg.* 17. 93) – reside in the soul, prompts him to explain his conception of love.

But let us proceed in order. In *Purgatorio* 16 Dante asks Virgil to clarify the cause of sin in what is the starting point of Dante's most thorough defence of individual freedom in the context of the poem:

Lo mondo è ben così tutto deserto  
d'ogne virtute, come tu mi sone,  
e di malizia gravido e coverto;  
ma priego che m'addite la cagione,  
sì ch'i' la veggia e ch'i' la mostri altrui;  
ché nel cielo uno, e un qua giù la pone. (*Purg.* 16. 58-63)

The image of a world 'covertò' by iniquity reflects the atmosphere of this third terrace of *Purgatorio*, in which the repentant souls atone for the sin of wrath. Upon entering the terrace the pilgrim finds himself enveloped by dark smoke which covers and irritates his eyes with its rough and unpleasant texture.<sup>73</sup> In this context darkness signifies the blindness caused by anger, a blindness which, if on a personal level obliterates one's judgement leading to a disorderly desire for revenge, on a social level is conducive to the collapse of interpersonal or communal relationships. It is

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<sup>72</sup> Triolo, '*Purgatorio* XVIII', p. 259.

<sup>73</sup> *Purg.* 16. 1-7: 'Buio d'inferno e di notte privata / d'ogne pianeto, sotto pover cielo, / quant'esser può di nuvol tenebrata, / non fece al viso mio sì grosso velo / come quel fummo ch'ivi ci coperse, / né a sentir di così aspro pelo, / che l'occhio stare aperto non sofferse; / onde la scorta mia saputa e fida / mi s'accostò e l'omero m'offerse.' For an earlier description of the smoke that invests Virgil and Dante in the third terrace of *Purgatorio*, *Purg.* 15. 139-45: 'Noi andavam per lo vespero, attenti / oltre quanto potean li occhi allungarsi / contra i raggi serotini e lucenti. / Ed ecco a poco a poco un fummo farsi / verso di noi come la notte oscuro; / né da quello era loco da cansarsi. / Questo ne tolse gli occhi e l'aere puro.'

here, within the darkness of anger that Dante asks Marco Lombardo why an equally thick smoke of malice hangs over the world. In malice Dante sees the common denominator of the three sins classified by Virgil in *Purgatorio* 17 as pride, wrath and envy. Malice is, in fact, an evil disposition of the soul which leads man to desire his own good with a view to his neighbour's suppression; ultimately malice is *amor sui* with a view to self-exaltation. It is in this context that Dante asks Marco to clarify the cause of malice: is it to be found in the influence of the stars, the pilgrim asks, or here on earth? The answer Marco gives is as follows:

Alto sospir, che duolo strinse in “uhi!”,  
mise fuor prima; e poi cominciò: “Frate,  
lo mondo è cieco, e tu vien ben da lui.  
Voi che vivete ogne cagion recate  
pur suso al cielo, pur come se tutto  
movesse seco di necessitate.  
Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto  
libero arbitrio, e non fora giustizia  
per ben letizia, e per male aver lutto.  
Lo cielo i vostri movimenti inizia;  
non dico tutti, ma, posto ch’i’ ’l dica,  
lume v’è dato a bene e a malizia,  
e libero voler; che, se fatica  
ne le prime battaglie col cielo dura,  
poi vince tutto, se ben si notrica.  
A maggior forza e a miglior natura  
liberi soggiacete; e quella cria  
la mente in voi, che ’l ciel non ha in sua cura.  
Però, se ’l mondo presente disvia,  
in voi è la cagione, in voi si cheggia;  
e io te ne sarò or vera spia. (*Purg.* 16. 64-84)

The tone of Marco's reply is set by his cry “uhi”! which reveals his grievance for the world's blindness and ignorance. The first two introductory tercets of Marco Lombardo's speech are centred on the opposition between the erroneous ways of the world and, implicitly, the righteousness and justice of *Purgatorio*. Here, by

‘righteousness’ I mean the souls’ submission to the divine order and acceptance of their punishment, while by ‘justice’ I indicate God’s providential order which demands submission and acceptance from the purgatorial souls. Marco, from the vantage point of eternity, speaks of the ‘mondo cieco’ stressing the pilgrim’s coming from the world (‘e tu vien ben da lui’) and the errors of its ways. Marco places, therefore, the world of the living (‘Voi che vivete’) in moral opposition with that of the souls who inhabit the second realm. It is by virtue of this opposition, that his speech gains authority. Accordingly, from the vantage point of eternity Marco Lombardo provides an extensive correction of the doubt of the earthbound pilgrim.<sup>74</sup>

It is, therefore, with urgency that Marco Lombardo wishes to rule out the flawed convictions of the world by confuting any argument in favour of an influence of the stars upon man which amounts to natural determinism, and by dispelling any doubt that man alone is responsible for his moral perversion. Marco acknowledges that the stars impart some influence upon man but denies that this influence in any way hinders his freedom.<sup>75</sup> As Boyde clearly puts it, ‘The primary function of the

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<sup>74</sup> It is not the first time that Dante separates the world of the living from that of the souls of the other world with a view to casting a moral judgment on the former. In *Purg.* 13. 94-96: ‘O frate mio, ciascuna è cittadina / d’una vera città: ma tu vuoi dire / che vivesse in Italia peregrina’, Sapia, in reply to the pilgrim’s request to speak with a Latin soul, claims that in purgatory all are citizens of the same celestial city. The intention of her reply is clearly aimed at opposing the sectarian ways of the world against the communitarian ways of the real city, namely the Emyrean of the blessed.

<sup>75</sup> Studies on the astrological question in the Middle Ages and with specific reference to Dante include, Cogan, *The Design in the Wax: The Structure of the Divine Comedy and its Meaning*; R. Kay, *Dante’s Christian Astrology* (Philadelphia, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*; A. Cornish, *Reading Dante’s Stars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); C. Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante’s Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); with respect to the soul’s inclination to sexual desire and the influence of Venus on the human soul, see also, P. Williams, *Through Human Love to God: Essays on Dante and Petrarch* (Leicester: Troubador, 2007), pp. 35-59. There are a numerous references in the *Commedia* and the *Convivio* to the role that the stars play in the context of human life. In the *Commedia* Dante attributes his own genius to the action of the stars, *Par.* 22. 112-14: ‘O gloriose stelle, o lume pregno / di gran virtù, dal quale io riconosco / tutto, qual che si sia, il mio ingegno.’ The influence of the superlunary world on the sublunary is clearly stated in *Par.* 2. 121-23 after Beatrice’s explanation of the nature of the lunar spots: ‘Questi organi del mondo così vanno, / come tu vedi omai, di grado in grado, / che di sù prendono e di sotto fanno.’ For the role played by the

heavens is to diversify individuals of the same species;’ it is, in fact, ‘when explaining why some individuals are different from and superior to others’ that Dante speaks of ‘the variable factors – the disposition of the father, the complexion of the seed, and, in particular, the conjunction of the heavens’.<sup>76</sup> But this does not amount to astral determinism: man receives certain capacities or inclinations from the heavens, which can be misused, but can also be used correctly if man is guided by reason and free will along the path of virtue.

To corroborate this point, Marco Lombardo claims that the soul, to which the powers of reason and free will belong, is subject to God only, in other words the soul is free for a higher authority and obedience (‘A maggior forza e a miglior natura / liberi soggiacete’). With these lines Dante links Marco’s philosophical investigation (and Virgil’s of *Purgatorio* 18) into the cause of sin to Beatrice’s discourse of *Paradiso* 7.<sup>77</sup> As I have already discussed in Chapter One, in *Par.* 7. 70-72 Beatrice restates the question of astral influence with clear references to the speech of *Purgatorio* 16. Here, Beatrice says that ‘Ciò che da essa [divine goodness] senza mezzo piove / libero è tutto, perché non soggiace / a la virtute de le cose nove.’ The reference to ‘cose nove’ (the new or created things, i.e. the heavens) and the repetition of the verb ‘soggiacere’, also present in *Purg.* 16. 80, are indicative of the urgency that Dante felt to try to dispel any doubt regarding the stars as a decisive

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heavens during the formation of the sensitive soul, *Con.* 4. 21. 4: ‘E però dico che quando l’umano seme cade nel suo recettaculo, cioè ne la matrice, esso porta seco la virtù de l’anima generativa e la virtù del cielo e la virtù de li elementi legati, cioè la complessione; e matura e dispone la materia e la virtù formativa, la quale diede l’anima generante, e la virtù formativa prepara li organi a la virtù celestiale, che produce de la potenza del seme l’anima in vita.’

<sup>76</sup> Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*, p. 281.

<sup>77</sup> In *Purg.* 18. 46-48 with respect to the notion of love and its meritorious character Virgil tells Dante that the full answer into his inquiry will be given by Beatrice in *Paradiso*: ‘Ed elli a me: “Quanto ragion qui vede, / dir ti poss’io; da indi in là t’aspetta / pur a Beatrice, ch’è opra di fede.’ The answer is provided in *Paradiso* 7 within the context of the *imago Dei*, which I have analyzed extensively in Chapter One.

principle of moral evil in human experience. For man to be created free is be a likeness to God, to participate in God's freedom by virtue of the rational soul that makes man subject only to God's authority and therefore independent from astral determinism.

The conclusion that Marco reaches is, therefore, the only logical one. If the soul is subject to God who creates it with free will and capable of distinguishing between good and evil ('lume v'è dato a bene e a malizia'), and if – as consequence of this free subjection – the skies do not impart necessity upon his actions, then the origin of man's corruption must reside within himself. Malice, therefore, is to be found in the failing of the intellectual and volitional powers of the soul: 'Però, se 'l mondo presente disvia, / in voi è la cagione, in voi si cheggia; / e io te ne sarò or ver spia.' Dante brings this point home by way of the repetition of 'in voi' which recalls *Purg.* 28. 94-95 where Matelda, this time in the context of original sin, claims that man fell from the perfection of Eden 'per sua difalta' – repeating the expression twice, 'per sua difalta qui dimorò poco; / per sua difalta in pianto e in affanno / cambiò onesto riso e dolce gioco.'

From this point onward Dante the author ascribes to Marco and Virgil the responsibility of explaining how man can use his freedom wrongly. Line 84 'e io te ne sarò or ver spia' is the first step towards the unfolding of free will in the practical work of love:

Esce di mano a lui che la vagheggia  
prima che sia, a guisa di fanciulla  
che piangendo e ridendo pargoleggia,  
l'anima semplicetta che sa nulla,  
salvo che, mossa da lieto fattore,  
volentier torna a ciò che la trastulla. (*Purg.* 16. 85-90)

The child-like soul which issues from the hands of its maker ('fattore') is depicted in the act of tending towards everything that causes it to be happy. The description stresses the joyful nature of this movement which, arising from the act of God's creation ('esce di mano'), finds satisfaction in what gives it pleasure, 'volentier torna a ciò che la trastulla.' The mood of these tercets is playful and serene. Not only do words such as 'fanciulla', 'pargoleggia', 'semplicetta' stress the innocence and naïveté (hence the possibility of error) of this newly created soul, but they are also suggestive of the dependence of the child-soul upon its maker, a dependence which resembles that of a child to its father.<sup>78</sup> The joyful expressions relating to the soul are coupled with the sensual character of the expression 'che la vagheggia / prima che sia' whereby God is depicted in his eternal engagement in the loving contemplation ('vagheggiamento') of the newly created soul. These tercets, therefore, are indicative of a twofold and reciprocal movement of desire: the first issuing from God, the second from the loving nature that the soul derives from its joyful creator whereby it turns eagerly to all that gives it delight.

This movement – which directs all things to the destinations ('porti' *Par.* 1. 112) proper to their nature – is described in *Par.* 1. 103-45 within Beatrice's speech

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<sup>78</sup> Dante uses a similar image of the infant soul inclining to different objects of desire owing to its natural inclination to love in *Con.* 4. 12. 16: 'E però che Dio è principio de le nostre anime e fattore di quelle simili a sé (sì come è scritto: "Facciamo l'uomo ad imagine e similitudine nostra"), essa anima massimamente desidera di tornare a quello. [...] E perché la sua conoscenza prima è imperfetta, per non essere esperta né dottrinata, piccioli beni le paiono grandi, e però da quelli comincia prima a desiderare. Onde vedemo li parvuli desiderare massimamente un pomo; poi più procedendo, desiderare uno augellino; e poi, più oltre, desiderare bel vestimento; e poi lo cavallo; e poi una donna; e poi ricchezza non grande, e poi grande, e poi più.' Even though the imagery of *Purg.* 16. 85-90 and *Con.* 4. 12. 16 is similar, the contexts are quite different: in one, as I have pointed out in the body of the text, Dante is discussing the question of free will in the practical operation of love, in the other he is discussing whether – in the same way as the acquisition of riches leaves man unsatisfied and wishing for more – the desire for knowledge is destined to the same failure, pointing to a kind of imperfection in the process of knowledge acquisition itself.

on the order of the universe, a speech solicited by Dante's doubt as regards his ascension with his body to the angelic spheres, an ascension which he believes to contravene the laws of physics (as he also writes in the *Convivio*, the natural movement of the heavy bodies – including man's own body – is downward).<sup>79</sup> In claiming that everything in the cosmos is ordered according to its being, she also states that it is this very order of one thing in relation to another which makes all that *is* a likeness to its creator: 'Le cose tutte quante / hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma / che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante', (ll. 103-05). Put it more simply, the order of the universe is a likeness to God's perfection, an analogy that rational beings are able to recognize: 'Qui veggion l'alte creature l'orma / dell'eterno valore', (ll. 106-07). It is within this order that all beings, according to their different dispositions or instincts, are naturally moved towards a goal ('onde si muovono a diversi porti / per lo gran mar dell'essere, e ciascuna / con istinto a lei dato che la porti', ll. 112-14), where they will, ultimately, find rest. This movement, natural inclination, or love, Beatrice claims, is present in all beings, irrespective of their rationality or irrationality: 'Nell'ordine ch'io dico sono accline / tutte nature, per diverse sorti, / più al principio loro e men vicine' (ll. 109-11). Driven by this natural movement the flames of the fire will always move upwards towards the moon in the same way as the love of the rational beings will always and naturally move towards

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<sup>79</sup> Everything, Dante writes in *Con.* 3. 3. 1-15, is endowed with love according to its nature. It is by virtue of this love that all creatures incline naturally to their good. Thus, Dante distinguishes between simple natures, like the fire which always goes upward to 'la circonferenza di sopra' (3. 3. 2), or the earth, which moves 'al centro' (3. 3. 2), from increasingly more complex natures such as the minerals, the plants, and animals. At the summit of them all is man who shares in all natures (sensitive, vegetative and animal), and is also endowed with rationality, sharing therefore in the divine nature. By virtue of his complexity man is subject to different kinds of inclinations or love, among these is the downward movement of his heavy body, *Con.* 3. 3. 6: 'per la natura del semplice corpo che ne lo subietto signoreggia, naturalmente ama l'andare in giuso.'

goodness.<sup>80</sup> It would be, therefore, unfathomable, Beatrice claims, that Dante the pilgrim, cleansed of all of the soul's impediments, should remain earthbound: 'Meraviglia sarebbe in te, se, privo / d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso, / com'a terra quiete in foco vivo', (ll. 139-41).

There is a commitment, on Dante's part, to stress the natural character of love as given in the act itself of existence, but also, to understand man's natural movement in love in its full transcendental potential. In *Purg.* 17. 127-29, Virgil brings this point home by claiming that 'Ciascun confusamente un bene apprende / nel quale si queti l'animo, e disira; / per che di giugner lui ciascun contende'. Here Virgil acknowledges that everyone has a sense, even if confused, of a good to which he or she strives and upon which he or she wishes to rest.<sup>81</sup> In Book 3 of the *Convivio* Dante refers to natural love (the same 'amore naturale' of *Purg.* 17. 93) – which, however, he describes here as 'special love' – when he writes that everything belonging to creation is endowed with love according to its nature:

Onde è da sapere che ciascuna cosa, come detto è di sopra, per la ragione di sopra mostrata ha 'l suo speziale amore. Come le corpora semplici hanno amore naturato in sé a lo luogo proprio, e però la terra sempre discende al centro; lo fuoco ha [amore a]la circonferenza di sopra, lungo lo cielo de la luna, e però sempre sale a quello. (*Con.* 3. 3. 2)

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<sup>80</sup> For a study of the philosophy of love in Dante, its origin and development, A. Di Giovanni, *La filosofia dell'amore nelle opere di Dante* (Rome: Abete, 1967), especially pp. 288-302, where, within the context of love as natural *appetitus*, Di Giovanni examines Book 3 and 4 of the *Convivio*. The question of love as a natural *appetitus* present in all creatures, the Thomistic origin of this idea, and Dante's use of it in *Purgatorio* 17 is discussed in, K. Foster, 'The Human Spirit in Action, *Purgatorio* XVII', in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), pp. 107-19 (p. 115).

<sup>81</sup> Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*, p. 286, writes that: 'Dante will still insist that even in societies that lived in ignorance of the revealed truth about God – societies where man's innate love for God remained no more than a confused aspiration towards a 'good' in which nothing would be lacking and the mind would be stilled – this aspiration was present as a vital and distinctive element in human nature. His poem seeks to demonstrate that nothing but union with God can satisfy man's need and longings.'

Dante writes that if this love moves the earth downwards and the fire upwards a similar natural love will move the soul of rational beings towards virtue:

Li uomini hanno loro proprio amore a le perfette e oneste cose. E però che l'uomo, avvegna che una sola sustanza sia, tuttavia [la] forma, per la sua nobilitade, ha in sé [e] la natura [d'ognuna di] queste cose, tutti questi amori puote avere e tutti li ha. (*Con.* 3. 3. 5)

He continues by listing all different types of love present in man and concludes, motivated by the ethical context of the treatise, that the love proper to the rational soul is, in fact, the love of virtue: 'E per la quinta e ultima natura, cioè vera umana o, meglio dicendo, angelica, cioè razionale, ha l'uomo amore alla veritate e alla vertude' (3. 3. 5-6).

Regardless of the differences between the properly ethical context of the *Convivio* and the more specifically theological interest of the *Commedia*, what is useful here is to stress Dante's sense of the innateness of this love, an innateness that – when speaking specifically of rational beings – he attributes to the soul's partaking of the nature of his creator – a loving God creates, in other words, a loving soul. God's delight in being and goodness is present in all creatures but reveals itself more precisely in the movement of return to him of rational beings.<sup>82</sup> This focus on love as an anthropological notion central to man's activity allows one to speak of Dante's sense of the relationship between man and the world in terms of affectivity. It is

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas describes this natural movement of return to God in *ST* 1a. q. 60. a. 5. 4ad: 'Ad quartum dicendum quod Deus, secundum quod est universale bonum, a quo dependet omne bonum naturale, diligitur naturali dilectione ab unoquoque.' The same notion is supported by Thomas's earlier statement in *ST* 1a. q. 60. a. 5co., where, in order to demonstrate that both angels and man love naturally God more than themselves, he claims that all beings that belong to another are naturally more inclined to the being on which they belong than to themselves. Insofar as man and angels belong ontologically to God, they love God more than they love themselves: 'Unumquodque autem in rebus naturalibus, quod secundum naturam hoc ipsum quod est, alterius est, principalius et magis inclinatur in id cuius est, quam in seipsum.'

useful to remember, though, that when Dante speaks of the affective nature of man which inclines him towards a real, yet confused, understanding of goodness, he is speaking of a morally neutral inclination – an attraction or ‘prima voglia’ which operates in the soul from the moment of birth and for which man has no moral credit.

It is now useful to return briefly to Augustine and pause on a doctrinal point which is, in my opinion, of importance as regards his interpretation of love in relation to Dante. I shall also briefly refer to Thomas Aquinas whom Kenelm Foster has identified as Dante’s most immediate source with respect to the systematization of the doctrine of natural and elective love (the love that, as we shall see later, involves a process of selection through the power of free will).<sup>83</sup> When in *Conf.* 13. 9. 10 Augustine writes of natural love, the terms he uses are similar to those used by Dante in *Par.* 1. 114 and *Con.* 3. 3. 2-3. However, whereas, as I have pointed out hitherto, for Dante love is an anthropological notion – in the sense that all creatures, and man especially, move towards their proper end – in this passage from the *Confessions* Augustine suggests that where inanimate being is somehow moved from within itself, man is lifted by the outpouring of divine love, associating the notion of love closely with that of *caritas*, or grace:

A body tends by its weight towards the place proper to it – weight does not necessarily tend towards the lowest place but towards its proper place. Fire

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<sup>83</sup> Foster, ‘The Human Spirit in Action: *Purgatorio* XVII’, in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies*, p. 117. Other scholars have seen in Thomas Dante’s precursor of the theory of love as natural appetite, Di Giovanni, *La filosofia dell’amore nelle opere di Dante*, p. 391; Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, ed. by Natalino Sapegno, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1968), p. 190, where Sapegno sees the origin of the distinction between natural and elective love in scholastic philosophy; G. Favati, ‘Amore’, in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, 1 (1970), pp. 221-36 (p. 229); Morgan, ‘Natural and Spiritual Movements of Love in the Soul: An Explanation of *Purgatorio* XVIII. 16-39’, pp. 322 and 323, reads the canto alongside the *Summa Theologiae* speaking of man’s natural appetite as the Thomistic ‘*voluntas ut natura* (*ST*, 3a 18. 3)’; Triolo, ‘*Purgatorio* XVIII’, p. 266, claims that the love discourse of *Purgatorio* XVIII ‘is a basically conventional, if poetically energized, Aristotelian-Thomistic appetitive analysis.’

tends upwards, stone downwards. By their weight they are moved and seek their proper place. Oil poured over water is borne on the surface of the water, water poured over oil sinks below the oil: it is by their weight that they are moved and seek their proper place. Things out of their place are in motion, they come to their place and are at rest. My love is my weight: wherever I go, my love is what brings me there. By your gift we are on fire and borne upwards: we flame and we ascend. In our heart we ascend and sing the song of degrees. It is by your fire, your beneficent fire, that we burn and we rise, rise towards the peace of Jerusalem.<sup>84</sup>

When Augustine speaks of the notion of weight in general terms he defines it as the movement which directs all creatures to their natural place of rest. Weight and love are, in the quotation above, one and the same thing. This comparison between love and weight is telling insofar as it tends to emphasize the naturalness, or innateness of this love. In other words, all material creatures possess love in the same way as they have weight. Like Dante, Augustine believed that in love all creatures tend towards their ‘proper place’ in keeping with their nature, and once that place is reached, their state is one of rest. Love is also in rational creatures and it is through this movement that the souls seek rest (in God). It is here that, as regards this passage from the *Confessions*, the similarities between Dante and Augustine come to an end. Unlike Dante, when speaking of that love that leads human creatures to their resting place, Augustine associates natural or instinctual love with a divine gift – *dono tuo*, as he himself puts it in the quotation above. If this love is a divine gift we must exclude an association with what Dante calls natural love, which, in as much as it is innate to

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<sup>84</sup> *Conf.* 13. 9. 10: ‘Corpus pondere suo nititur ad locum suum. Ponderis non ad ima tantum est, sed ad locum suum. Ignis sursum tendit, deorsum lapis. Ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. Oleum infra aquam fustum super aquam attollitur, aqua supra oleum fusa, infra oleum demergitur; ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. Minus ordinata inquieta sunt: ordinantur et quiescunt. Ponderis meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror. Dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur; inardescimus et imus. Ascendimus *ascensiones in corde* et cantamus canticum graduum. Igne tuo, igne tuo bono inardescimus et imus, quoniam sursum imus *ad pacem Hierusalem*, quoniam *iucundatus sum in his, qui dixerunt mihi: In domum Domini ibimus*. Ibi nos collocabit voluntas bona, ut nihil velimus aliud quam permanere illic *in aeternum*.’

man and integral to his soul, is not a gift of grace. In the case above, the grace to which Augustine refers is identifiable with a kind of divine *caritas* which enables man to ‘rise towards the peace of Jerusalem’. Viewed from this perspective, it is my opinion that Augustine comes short of the difference – central to Dante’s understanding of love in the *Commedia* as an ontological principle in respect of man – between love as innately present in the soul and love as externally offered as grace.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, it is specifically with Thomas that the notion of natural or instinctual love finds more ample expression. In the *Summa Theologiae* he observes that this inclination is antecedent to any principle of knowledge and it is given to beings with the act itself of existence.<sup>86</sup> In keeping with this, Foster points out that it was, precisely, Thomas before Dante who most clearly spoke of love in terms of natural *appetitus*:

From the scholastics, Dante’s masters, the term [amor] got a finer precision. [...] Thomas Aquinas identifies *amor* with the natural *appetitus* or desire which inclines every conceivable being towards the perfection appropriate to its nature. And so *amor* expresses the dynamic factor in the cosmos, variously realised on all levels of existence; a dynamism which derives from

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<sup>85</sup> However, it is useful to note at this point, if only in passing, that in an earlier stage of his reflection of the question of natural appetite, namely *Con.* 4. 22. 5, Dante attributes man’s natural appetite, which ultimately finds satisfaction in the contemplation of God, to the activity of divine grace: ‘così questo naturale appetito, che da la divina grazia surge, dal principio quasi si mostra non dissimile a quello che pur da la natura nudamente viene.’ The natural appetite to which Dante is here referring is the love of self, understood positively as an instinct of self-preservation. This love, which is common to all creatures, is not, however, man’s only love. In the course of his life man begins to love things which are other than self and to subordinate other loves to the love of self. During this process man is not only able to distinguish between the different parts of his nature, and to love his soul – his noblest part – above all else, but also to gain happiness in the contemplation of the highest things, and God’s works especially. The implication of this is that the natural appetite, which is a gift of grace, is implanted in man with a view to leading man back to God.

<sup>86</sup> So, for example, *ST* 1a q. 60 a. 1co.: ‘Est autem hoc commune omni naturae, ut habeat aliquam inclinationem, quae est appetitus naturalis vel amor. Quae tamen inclinatio diversimode invenitur in diversis naturis, in unaquaque secundum modum eius. Unde in natura intellectuali invenitur inclinatio naturalis secundum voluntatem; in natura autem sensitiva, secundum appetitum sensitivum, in natura vero carente cognitione, secundum solum ordinem naturae in aliquid.’

and variously manifests the absolutely primal subsistent love which is simply the Creator himself. ‘God is love’ (*Deus caritas est* 4:7) Saint John said, and this Christian word expresses, for Thomas Aquinas, a metaphysical necessity too; for the summit of being could not be conceived of as not delighting in being and goodness.<sup>87</sup>

Within the economy of this chapter, aimed at investigating specific questions of sin and its origin, the relevance of this doctrine comes to the fore when recognizing that, if in itself morally neutral, natural love – man’s natural inclination to a good proper to him – is the measure of all the other loves that he encounters in his temporal existence. This foundational love constitutes the standard by which to measure all other desires that arise in the soul. As Marco Lombardo explains in *Purgatorio* 16 the newly created soul inclines naturally to everything that gives it pleasure, but not everything pleasurable is morally licit. In this search for happiness the soul can err, misjudging the rightness of a particular object of desire. This brings us further into the discussion of love, within the context not anymore of natural love, but of elective or rational love, to which I shall now turn my attention.

In *Purg.* 18. 19-33 – which provides the philosophical basis for the subdivision of sins of *Purgatorio* 17 – Virgil speaks of the process of apprehension whereby *intentions* of the world about are established in the forum of consciousness as objects of contemplation and appetition. What follows is, in fact, an analysis of a psychology of perception:

L’animo, ch’è creato ad amar presto,  
ad ogni cosa è mobile che piace,  
tosto che dal piacere in atto è desto.  
Vostra apprensiva da esser verace  
tragge intenzione, e dentro a voi la spiega,

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<sup>87</sup> Foster, ‘The Human Spirit in Action: *Purgatorio* XVII’, in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies*, p. 115.

sì che l'animo ad essa volger face;  
 e se, rivolto, inver' di lei si piega,  
 quel piegare è amor, quell'è natura  
 che per piacer di novo in voi si lega.  
 Poi, come 'l foco movesi in altura  
 per la sua forma ch'è nata a salire  
 là dove più in sua matera dura,  
 così l'animo preso entra in disire,  
 ch'è moto spiritale, e mai non posa  
 fin che la cosa amata il fa gioire. (*Purg.* 18. 19-33)

In this first tercet Virgil introduces the theme of man's instinctual love which he describes as 'highly mobile' or easily moved to action, and which is not to be confused with the 'amore naturale' of *Purg.* 17. 94 (i.e. man's innate love of God).<sup>88</sup> As Triolo argues, the soul's natural disposition for the love of the world about is, in fact, described by words belonging to the semantic field of movement and velocity, with a view to stressing the spontaneity of the soul's desire.<sup>89</sup> Terms such as 'presto', 'mobile', 'tosto' and 'desto' are here used to express the activity of the soul which naturally inclines to an object external to the soul. In this process the soul's propensity to love (its innate disposition) is turned into action by the external presence of the desired object.

The details of the love movements in the soul are then explored by Virgil in more detail in lines 22-33 of the same canto. As Ryan suggests 'there are two preconditions for love': first, 'the existence of a real object' and secondly, 'the

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<sup>88</sup> Triolo, '*Purgatorio* XVIII', p. 266, takes issue with Morgan, 'Natural and Spiritual Movements of Love: An Explanation of *Purgatorio* XVIII. 16-39', pp. 324-25, claiming that Morgan's description of this instinctual love as natural love leads to a possible confusion between what Virgil describes as 'amore naturale' and what here is the first stage of 'amore d'animo'. In Triolo's words: 'However, for me, there arises a conceptual difficulty due to the fact that we have to match a natural endowment which is tantamount to an instinct and which is highly mobile and easily ignited to action, with a somehow allied root natural love which is stable, inerrant, a standard measurement for every other desire.'

<sup>89</sup> Triolo, '*Purgatorio* XVIII', p. 266.

cognitive moment of the mind reflecting that object in idea and image.’<sup>90</sup> Virgil speaks of the way in which the apprehensive power (which includes both sensible perception and intellective cognition) grasps the image of an external object and how that image is, then, offered to the mind. This activity of cognition causes the soul to turn to the image (ll. 22-24) but this turning does not yet constitute love. The movement of love – what Ryan categorizes as the first stage of the love process – begins when the soul’s ‘turning’ becomes the soul’s ‘piegarsi’ (bending), which causes the soul to be ‘united’ with the object of apprehension (in this stage the union is not with the object, but with the ‘intenzione’, the scholastic *species conoscibilis*).<sup>91</sup> This bending of the soul is followed by the ‘disio’ – the second stage of the love process, which takes place when the mind seeks union with the object (ll. 28-31), a desire which does not cease until the soul appropriates the object proper – the third and last stage of the love process (ll. 32-33).

However, Virgil’s speech poses more questions than it resolves. Contrary to the notion of man’s responsibility, Virgil’s definition of the ways of love contains a deterministic trait that Dante the pilgrim is quick to recognize. If love is offered from without and if the soul responds, connaturally, or instinctively, to the pleasure awoken by the object, where does man’s responsibility lie?<sup>92</sup> Is there something in the soul which guides love to its right destination? Virgil’s answer gathers together, if only provisionally, all the threads of the discourse which has taken place in three

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<sup>90</sup> C. Ryan, “‘Free Will in Theory and Practice’: *Purgatorio* XVIII and Two Characters of the *Inferno*”, in *Dante Soundings: Eight Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. by David Nolan (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981), pp. 100-12 (p. 104).

<sup>91</sup> Triolo, ‘*Purgatorio* XVIII’, p. 266.

<sup>92</sup> *Purg.* 18. 40-45: “‘Le tue parole e ’l mio seguace ingegno” / rispues’io lui “m’hanno amor scoperto, / ma ciò m’ha fatto di dubbiar più pregno; / ché, s’amore è di fuori a noi offerto / e l’anima non va con altro piede, / se dritta o torta va, non è suo merto.””

consecutive cantos. Here Virgil harmonizes the two doctrines of ‘amore naturale’ and ‘amore d’animo’ cautiously (‘Quanto ragion qui vede’, *Purg.* 18. 46), introducing free will as a power of the rational soul which ‘dell’assenso de’ tener la soglia’, (l. 63). It is through free will, Virgil suggests, that man chooses or refuses to pursue those objects which are in accordance or in disagreement with what he perceives (if only in a confused way) as his ultimate good.

In Triolo’s words, free will has a definite function: to enable the love ignited from without to gather itself into the innate personal desire for the highest good. In *Purg.* 18. 49-63 the periphrasis ‘virtù che consiglia’ (l. 62) suggests an advisory or confirmatory power with respect to a movement of secondary loving. If the human soul has a general intuition of the love of goodness, knowledge of truth, happiness, and love of God, free will has the function to measure the particular up against these general notions. It is interesting to note that Virgil is made to include this question within a wider discourse on *conscientia* (or conscience) which, in one of its senses, meant precisely this application of general principles to the particular.<sup>93</sup> More to the point, this selective process becomes operative through the activity of the will. With respect to this, Dante uses of the image of winnowing: the soul takes the ‘amori’ and passes them through the sieve, ‘retaining the good and dropping, casting away the bad’.<sup>94</sup> By way of conclusion, it is through the faculty of free choice that the kind of

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<sup>93</sup> For an account of the notion of *conscientia* in the Middle Ages, T. C. Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), especially pp. 45-60, which focuses particularly on Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>94</sup> Ryan, ‘Free Will in Theory and Practice: *Purgatorio* XVIII and Two Characters in the *Inferno*’, p. 107. *Purg.* 18. 61-66: ‘Or perché a questa ogn’altra si raccoglie, / innata v’è la virtù che consiglia, / e de l’assenso de’ tener la soglia. / Questo è ’l principio là onde si piglia / ragion di meritare in voi, secondo / che buoni o rei amori accoglie e viglia.’

love denoted by the expression ‘amore d’animo’ is confirmed in its legitimacy and accountability.

This noted, it has been rightly pointed out that if the analysis of the love phenomenology and its relationship with sin, which takes place in *Purgatorio* 18, succeeds in offering an adequate explanation of the structure of the sins of lust, gluttony and greed (or prodigality), it fails, by contrast, to account philosophically for the sins of anger, pride, envy and sloth.<sup>95</sup> *Purg.* 18. 19-33, central for its tracing of the origin of desire in the soul, calls for, as I have mentioned earlier, the existence of a real object (‘L’animo, ch’è creato ad amar presto, / ad ogni cosa è mobile che piace [...] Vostra apprensiva che da esser verace / tragge intenzione). The need for an external object is posited chiefly to account for the quickness of love (*Purg.* 18. 19-33) and secondarily to provide a philosophical explanation for sin. At the heart of Virgil’s discourse is the claim that sin results from failing to organize love in respect to an external object. In keeping with this, what is, one may ask, the ‘desirable object’ in the sins of anger, pride, envy and sloth? If, with respect to the sins of incontinence, the ‘obietto’ is immediately identifiable with the objects of the world about, with respect to those of malice, the ‘malo obietto’ is something more complex, namely, ‘one’s neighbours’ misfortune’. In other words, when sinning maliciously man, prompted by external circumstances (somebody else’s riches, fortune, power) develops an antipathy towards his neighbour which results in the desire for his or her misfortune. Therefore, in the specific case of pride, when Virgil speaks of its origin in *Purg.* 17. 115-17 he focuses chiefly on two points: first, he

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<sup>95</sup> Triolo, ‘*Purgatorio* XVIII’, p. 268, writes: ‘In the last analysis, as I have implied, Dante has not given his Virgil the tools to make the love process discourse adequate to the Pride, Envy and Wrath, and even to the Sloth of XVII.’

claims that pride arises in man's soul when he wishes his own excellence; secondly, he claims that, as a consequence of this, the proud man wishes the suppression of his neighbour and it is the latter that, in the context of his wider discourse, constitutes the 'malo obietto'. This last point is relevant in relation to the next section of this chapter which focuses, precisely, on original sin as the first example of man's pride.

## 2.5 - Original Sin

Is Adam's sin a form of love's misdirection as described in *Purgatorio* 17? In other words, is Adam's love a 'mal diretto amore', a love of 'male obietto', which manifests itself in pride? That pride, as a form of *amor sui*, which resulted in disobedience was the cause of Adam's sin is stated in *Par.* 26. 115-17 when Adam himself, as a character in the *Commedia*, claims that 'non il gustar del legno / fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio, / ma solamente il trapassar del segno'. Foster has pointed out that the account of pride given by Virgil in the *Purgatorio* needs to be revised in the face of Adam's sin insofar as it comes short of the 'religious dimension' of pride.<sup>96</sup> 'Virgil', Foster writes, says that man 'cannot desire evil for himself and for God, but only for [his] neighbour, and [...] reduces pride only to an offence against one's fellowman'.<sup>97</sup> According to Foster's claim, what Virgil emphasizes in his definition of pride is its 'social outcome' which is nothing but 'a by-product' of the religious meaning of pride consisting of the intolerance of

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<sup>96</sup> Foster, 'The Human Spirit in Action: *Purgatorio* XVII', in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies*, p. 117.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* p. 117. Virgil explains how man cannot hate God and self, and how he can instead develop a hatred for his neighbour in *Purg.* 17. 106-17. Specifically in lines 115-17, he speaks of pride as a matter of social excelling: 'Or, perché mai non può da la salute / amor sementa in voi d'ogne virtute / e d'ogne operazion che merta pene. / Or, perché intender non si può diviso, / e per sé stante, alcuno esser dal primo, / da quello odiare ogne effetto è deciso. / Resta, se dividendo bene stimo, / che 'l mal che s'ama è del prossimo; ed esso / amor nasce in tre modi in vostro limo. / È chi, per esser suo vicin soppresso, / spera eccellenza, e sol per questo brama / ch'el sia di sua grandezza in basso messo.'

‘superiors, and above all the superior who is one’s maker’.<sup>98</sup> This may be true, but it must not be forgotten that Virgil is speaking in character here. He says no more than Virgil, as a pagan, can or could say. Dante’s understanding of the matter of the sin of pride with specific reference to Adam’s sin, takes us further, into the religious dimension of pride. In Dante’s understanding, Adam, Eve and Lucifer are guilty of the same charge, namely, a rebellion against God which arose on the one hand from an excessive and disordered love of self (the ‘mal dilettar’ of *Par.* 7. 84), and on the other from the inability of free will to refrain from acting upon this newly born inclination to evil, choosing self over and against God.

Their sin was more culpable and with greater consequences because it arose in the context of unadulterated nature. The portrait of man given in Chapter One of my thesis, as a likeness to his creator, in full possession of the freedom that made him an *imago Dei*, still able to choose the authority of God above all else, including self, should serve here as a measure to understand the gravity of original sin. In Eden man’s natural desire, or ‘amore naturale’, inclined his soul spontaneously to God, whom he recognized as the beginning and end of his existence. Free from the passions and from the ignorance which clouded his mind after the occurrence of sin, he was able to exercise his will in keeping with the gift of original freedom – God’s greatest gift to man (‘lo maggior don’, *Par.* 5. 19, and ‘libertas [...] est maximum donum humanae naturae’, *Mon.* 1. 12. 6) – which made him like God. Thus, his free will, to use a metaphor of *Purgatorio* 18, still functioned as a perfect sieve, separating the good desires from the bad, allowing for the order in which he was created, which entailed his subordination to the higher authority of God, to be

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<sup>98</sup> Foster, ‘The Human Spirit in Action: *Purgatorio* XVII’, in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies*, p. 117.

maintained. Within this context of prelapsarian perfection therefore, the only possible answer to the question of evil is man's wilfulness within the context of deviational love. In the *Paradiso* Dante writes that:

Per non soffrire a la virtù che vole  
freno a suo prode, quell'uomo che non nacque,  
dannando sé dannò tutta sua prole. (*Par. 7. 25-27*)

The verb to suffer, here used in the negative form with the meaning of not to tolerate, is an indicator of Adam's hubris at the time at which he forfeited the divine command. The verb qualifies the action of the will to which Beatrice refers by way of the periphrasis 'la virtù che vole', stressing the notion of volition proper to the will ('che vole', i.e., which wants/chooses), with a view to emphasizing the wilfulness of Adam's sin. The same concept of pride as wilfulness returns later in the same canto in line 100 where it is said that Adam '[...] disobediendo intese ir suso'. Here Dante associates disobedience with Adam's desire of advancing his status ('ir suso'), which arose from man's challenge to God's authority, and resulted in his fall. This movement is, then, contrasted to another, opposite to the first, which constitutes the lowering of oneself, in submission and humility, to God's command ('ir giuso / con umiltate').

The terms in which Dante describes the pride of sin in contrast to the humility of obedience recall the *De civ. Dei* 14. 13, whereby Augustine conveys the moral character and existential consequences of the one and the other. As with Dante, Augustine constructs his discourse around the image of an upward and downward motion of the soul. Paradoxically, Augustine claims, the soul which attempts to uplift itself is destined to be abased, whereas the soul which humbly

abases itself is destined to be uplifted. In Augustine's words, 'it is [certainly] good for the heart to be lifted up, not to oneself, for this is the mark of pride, but to God', and he also adds that, 'there is [...] a kind of lowliness which, in some wonderful way, causes the heart to be lifted up, and there is a kind of loftiness which makes the heart sink lower.' He provides an explanation for this paradox by claiming that in humility man recognizes God's authority over himself and, therefore, by exalting God man is, in turn, exalted; by contrast, the man who exalts himself is one that, in the act of lifting himself, falls 'down from Him who is supreme'.<sup>99</sup>

In keeping with this, as Dante writes in *Par.* 7. 25-26, the act of disobedience performed by Adam in Eden equated to a spirit of pride, or of self-reliance that led him to challenge the limitation imposed by God upon his will which needed to be kept in control. The line 'freno a suo prode' – which recalls the 'freno' of *Purg.* 16. 94, used here to indicate the need for spiritual and temporal guidance within man's potentially deviational inclination to love<sup>100</sup> – indicates the moral character of the limitation which, in the context of Eden, is interdependent with that of obedience. Limitation (here in the sense of God's provision rather than privation) constitutes a necessary factor of the relationship between God and his creatures from the time of creation, and obedience defines the creatures' free and positive response to God's demand. Accordingly, in *Par.* 26. 115-17 Dante makes Adam speak of his

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<sup>99</sup> The *De civ. Dei* 4. 13 passage in its entirety: 'Bonum est enim sursum habere cor, non tamen ad se ipsum, quod est superbiae, sed ad Dominum, quod est oboedientiae, quae nisi humilium non potest esse. Est igitur aliquid humilitatis miro modo quod sursum faciat cor, et est aliquid elationis quod deorsum faciat cor. Hoc quidem quasi contrarium videtur, ut elatio sit deorsum et humilitas sursum. Sed pia humilitas facit subditum superiori; nihil est autem superius Deo; et ideo exaltat humilitas, quae facit subditum Deo. Elatio autem, quae in vitio est, eo ipso respuit subiectionem et cadit ab illo, quo non est quicquam superius, et ex hoc erit inferius et fit quod scriptum est: *Deiecisti eos, cum extollerentur.*'

<sup>100</sup> *Purg.* 16. 94-96: 'Onde convenne legge per fren porre; / convenne rege aver che discernesse / de la vera cittade almen la torre.'

predicament in Eden at the moment of the fall in terms of stepping over the boundaries (or, indeed, the limitation) imposed by God:

Or, figliuol mio, non il gustar del legno  
fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio,  
ma solamente il trapassar del segno.

Here Adam claims that the act of eating from the tree was not the substance of original sin; his sin lay ‘solamente’ in the ‘trapassar del segno’, where ‘solamente’ is used to mark the idea that sin depends exclusively on the will’s disorderliness, and ‘segno’ defines the notion of divine limitation. In the *Purgatorio* the same terms are used for Eve:

E una melodia dolce correva  
per l’aere luminoso; onde buon zelo  
mi fé riprender l’ardimento d’Eva,  
che là dove ubidia la terra e ’l cielo,  
femmina, sola e pur testé formata,  
non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo. (*Purg.* 29. 22-27)

Eve is described with words that, by focusing on the weakest aspects of her constitution – ‘femmina’, and ‘pur testé formata’ – contribute to emphasizing the ‘follia’ (*Par.* 7. 93) of the creature’s sin. As Chiavacci Leonardi writes, ‘i tre dati: donna, sola, appena entrata nel mondo, vogliono esprimere il massimo della debolezza: eppure ella non tollerò limitazioni.’<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the use of the verb

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<sup>101</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia: Purgatorio* 29, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi (Milan: Mondadori, 1994), p. 855 (note 26): ‘sono tre circostanze che dovevano favorire l’obbedienza: *femmina*, “il cui senso doveva essere più timido” (Landino); *sola*: l’aver compagnia – spiega Benvenuto – rende l’uomo più ardito a disobbedire; *pur testé formata*: appena plasmata dalle mani di Dio, e quindi ancora senza alcuna esperienza.’ It is unlikely, in my opinion, that Dante with ‘sola’ meant to suggest that Eve was alone in Eden. Eve was Adam’s companion, created after him and dwelling in Eden with him. Chiavacci Leonardi’s reading of the text is here, therefore, misleading. I would suggest that, in keeping with the context of *Purg.* 29. 23-27, ‘sola’ means ‘da sola’, out of her

‘soffrire’ also present in *Par. 7. 25* – strengthened by the presence of ‘ardimento’ and ‘sola’ (here meaning out of her own recklessness rather than alone) – is symptomatic of the importance that Dante attributes to it in the context of original sin which, as in *Paradiso 7*, he associates with man’s challenge to God’s authority in his desire to ‘remove the veil’ of divine prohibition.

## 2.6 - Hubris and Humility: The Tree in the Garden

The dialectic between obedience and disobedience, hubris and humility is explored, once again with respect to the cause and effects of original sin, in *Purgatorio 32*. The context is that of the Edenic procession of which Dante the pilgrim has been spectator for four consecutive cantos. In the lines which follow, the procession is approaching and beginning to circle around a bare and leafless tree located in the middle of the florid garden:

Sì passeggiando l’alta selva vòta,  
colpa di quella ch’al serpente crese,  
temprava i passi un’angelica nota.  
[...]  
Io senti’ mormorare a tutti ‘Adamo’;  
poi cerchiaro una pianta dispogliata  
di foglie e d’altra fronda in ciascun ramo. (*Purg. 32. 31-33; 37-39*)

The emptiness of the wood (‘selva vota’) brings – together with the reference to Eve’s disobedience in line 32 – the consequences of the fall to the fore. As a matter of fact, in Dante’s experience as voyager of the three realms of the otherworld the forest is not empty. In it he has encountered Matelda, and he himself is voyaging through it with Virgil and Statius, his newly acquired companion, and in it he has

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own recklessness. Additionally, it is possible that with ‘sola’ Dante refers to her sinning before Adam and, perhaps, without his incentive.

also encountered the vastly populated procession. But the interest of the expression ‘selva vota’ does not rest on those who inhabit or, indeed, traverse, in the fictional time of the poem, the forest, but on the first parents who inhabited it and were expelled from it.

The term ‘selva’ is also used in this context in order to recall the first ‘selva’ of the poem, the ‘selva oscura’ of *Inf.* 1. 2. This enables Dante to relate his own and everyman’s actual sin with the original sin of Adam, confirming the universally tragic character of sin: if, in fact, the ‘selva vota’ is the physical place of man’s first sin, the ‘selva oscura’ represents the place in which Dante – as representative of mankind – dwells in sin. The emptiness of the wood evokes the time before the fall at which man still enjoyed the fruits of his original friendship and, indeed companionship, with God. Furthermore, the fruitlessness of the plant is indicative of the interruption of this companionship. When Dante the pilgrim first beholds it, the tree is ‘dispogliata / di foglie e d’altra fronda in ciascun ramo’; in the use of the participle form, the verb ‘dispogliare’ stresses the transition between a time at which the plant was, in fact, florid with ‘foglie’ and ‘altra fronda’ and its subsequent death. This transitory change in the state of the plant is confirmed by its renewal as part of the narrative development of the canto.<sup>102</sup> If, as we shall see in more detail later, the plant is the pledge of God’s friendship with man, its dying is the marker of man’s alienation from God, a condition reversed by the coming of Christ.

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<sup>102</sup> For the transformation of the plant see *Purg.* 32. 49-60: ‘E vòlto al temo ch’elli avea tirato, / trasselo al piè de la vedova frasca, / e quel di lei a lei lasciò legato. / Come le nostre piante, quando casca / giù la gran luce mischiata con quella / che raggia dietro a la celeste lasca, / turgide fansi, e poi si rinovella / di suo color ciascuna, pria che ’l sole / giunga li suoi corsier sotto altra stella; / men che di rose e più che di viole / colore aprendo, s’innovò la pianta, / che prima avea le ramora sì sole.’

Notwithstanding the difficulty that Dante scholars have found in trying to interpret the meaning of the allegorical representation (to which the lines above refer) and the different elements present in it, critics are generally agreed in identifying the plant with the tree of good and evil, whose fruits had been prohibited to Adam and Eve.<sup>103</sup> The description that Dante gives of the tree marks its uniqueness. As in the two plants of the terrace of the gluttons, the branches of the tree of knowledge are shorter at the bottom of the robust trunk, and grow longer and thicker as the tree reaches to the sky, where its top disappears:

La coma sua, che tanto si dilata  
più quanto più è sù, fora da l'Indi  
ne' boschi lor per altezza ammirata. (*Purg.* 32. 40-42)

In support of the interpretation that the plant is, indeed, the tree of good and evil, in *Purgatorio* 33 Beatrice tells Dante that:

Qualunque ruba quella o quella schianta,  
con bestemmia di fatto offende a Dio,  
che solo a l'uso suo la creò santa.  
[...]  
per tante circostanze solamente  
la giustizia di Dio, ne l'interdetto,  
conosceresti a l'arbor moralmente. (*Purg.* 33. 58-60; 70-72)

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<sup>103</sup> L. Tondelli, *Il Libro delle Figure dell'abate Gioacchino da Fiore*, 2 vols (Turin: S.E.I., 1940), II, pp. 239-76, argues that the tree represents the race of man, of which Adam is the root; K. Foster, 'God's Tree (*Purgatorio*, XXXII-XXXIII)', in *God's Tree: Essays on Dante and Other Matters* (London: Blackfriars, 1957), pp. 33-49 (p. 34), finds himself in agreement with Bruno Nardi, *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Milan: [no publ.], 1930), pp. 270-71, who takes the tree 'as a symbol of justice, understanding by this not a particular virtue but a general rectitude of the will: *rectitudo voluntatis propter se servata*'. In more recent literature, L. Pertile, 'La pianta' in *La puttana e il gigante: dal Cantico dei cantici al Paradiso terrestre di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1998), pp. 163-96 (p. 164-65), argues for a more complex layering of meanings as regards the interpretation of the tree. Unlike the chariot and the griffin, in fact, the tree of the Garden of Eden has for Dante a historical, hence typological reality, which needs to be acknowledged alongside its allegorical meaning. Claiming that 'La difficoltà maggiore, con cui si è scontrata la tradizione critica, è stata e rimane proprio quella di conciliare proprio questi due ordini di significati, cioè di arrivare ad un significato allegorico unico', he points out that, 'un tale significato unico risulta del tutto estraneo al linguaggio qui utilizzato dal poeta.'

In lines 70-82 Beatrice states that the moral meaning of the plant is conveyed by its peculiar shape, a meaning that Dante – as she clearly suggests – should be able to grasp without difficulty (ll. 70-72). Morally, the tree represents divine justice, expressed by the notion of prohibition ('interdetto'). As these lines show, the shape of the tree and 'interdetto' signify one and the same thing, they are both representations of God's justice which, over and again in the poem, is referred to as ineffable or impenetrable. The meaning of 'giustizia' is, in my opinion, close to the idea of orderliness by which man remains a creature in relation to his creator and by which his righteousness is conserved. In Lino Pertile's words: 'Esso è dunque il segno e il simbolo del potere sovrano di Dio e allo stesso tempo della condizione subalterna dell'uomo nel creato.'<sup>104</sup> The main characteristics of the plant are, in fact, its inverted shape and its abnormal tallness, which makes it inaccessible to man. Furthermore, the tree is the only thing in the garden that God created for his exclusive use ('che *solo* a l'uso *suo* la creò santa'), directly and outspokenly precluding man from making use of it. The plant is, therefore, the sign and symbol of the supreme power of God and of man's subordination to the divine decree. To touch the tree and eat its fruit is to violate the supreme power of God in an act of voluntary disobedience. As a matter of fact, to violate the plant, as Adam and Eve did, is, effectively to blaspheme the divine authority. Moreover, Beatrice claims, the violation of the plant is an act of robbery ('ruba') followed by destruction ('schianta').<sup>105</sup> Those who touch the tree are culpable of stealing from God's

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<sup>104</sup> Pertile, *La puttana e il gigante: dal Cantico dei cantici al paradiso terrestre di Dante*, p. 165.

<sup>105</sup> Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin*, p. 364, in relation to Augustine writes that: 'Trivial as the act of tasting the forbidden fruit may appear to us, it was none the less a direct

property (let us remember that the plant was for God's use only) and are therefore liable to suffer the effects of his justice – namely man's exile from God, and the desire of reunion – effects which are counteracted only by the redeeming sacrifice of Christ:

Per morder quella, in pena e in disio  
cinquemilia anni e più l'anima prima  
bramò colui che 'l morso in sé punio. (*Purg.* 33. 61-63)<sup>106</sup>

Alongside hubris and disobedience, *Purgatorio* 32 offers a representation of humility and obedience as expressed in the act of the griffin's respectful observance of the sacred tree:

“Beato se’, grifon, che non discindi  
col becco d’esto legno dolce al gusto,  
poscia che mal si torce il ventre quindi”.  
Così dintorno a l’albero robusto  
gridaron li altri; e l’animal binato:  
“Sì si conserva il seme d’ogne giusto.” (*Purg.* 32. 43-48)

Despite the controversy that the symbolism of the griffin has caused among scholars, what is important in this context is that the behaviour of the ‘animal binato’ is diametrically opposite to Adam's: the animal acts obediently, in observance of the ‘interdetto’.<sup>107</sup> His blessedness is expressed by the act of not touching the plant

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transgression of the divine command, and as such included in itself all possible forms of sin. It involved the sin of pride, which claims to be independent of God; of infidelity, which refuses to believe in His word; of homicide, in that it rendered both Adam and his descendants liable to death; of spiritual fornication, inasmuch as it corrupted his moral integrity; of avarice, which claimed more than man's just due. The passage of the *Enchiridion* which discovers all these forms of vice in the first sin concludes with an anticlimax, of which Augustine is not always guilty: the first sin included the sin of theft, inasmuch as the forbidden fruit was not Adam's property.’

<sup>106</sup> See also, *Par.* 26. 118-20: ‘Quindi onde mosse tua donna Virgilio, / quattromilia trecento e due volumi / di sol desiderai questo concilio.’

<sup>107</sup> The most comprehensive study on the symbolism of the griffin, its significance within the context of the *Purgatorio* and the *Commedia* as a whole, is offered by P. Armour, *Dante's Griffin and the History of the World: A Study of the Earthly Paradise, Purgatorio, cantos xxix-xxxiii* (Oxford:

(‘beato se’ [...] che non discindi’), which contrasts with Adam’s and Eve’s violation of the same (‘schianta’ / ‘non discindi’). Indeed, in climactic conclusion of this Edenic scene, the chanting of the souls which surround the tree, constitutes the epitome of the entire episode: the seed of all justice, the souls cry out, is conserved by the respect, the wilful observance, of the prohibition.

However, the significance of the Edenic prohibition is not merely legalistic; on the contrary, its value and worthiness reach down into the depths of human existence and man’s creaturely dependence on God. To remain within the boundaries of the divine command is the same as to love righteously and, therefore, to fulfil the natural and spiritual demands of man as creature both living in time and longing for eternity. In prelapsarian Eden man’s natural disposition, which inclined him to his perfection, and supernatural inclination, which sealed his relationship with God were, at one and the same time, symbolized and conserved by the pledge. Man’s respect of the divine command symbolized, ultimately, the harmonization of man’s will to God, which culminated in the perfect convergence of God’s love for man and

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Clarendon Press, 1989); idem, “La spuria fonte isidoriana per l’interpretazione del grifone dantesco”, *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 67 (1992), 163-68; idem, ‘Griffin’, *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard H. Lansing (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 455-56 (p. 455), where he summarizes his understanding of the dual nature of the griffin: ‘as the union of the divine and the human, the imperial and the popular powers in Dante’s conception of ideal Rome, its empire, and its Christlike prince, the agent of the redemption at Christ’s birth and death, and the guide to temporal happiness in the Earthly Paradise.’ Other works include: A. N. Didron, *Christian Iconography*, trans. by E. J. Millington, 2 vols (New York: Ungar, 1965), I, p. 317, who speaks of the griffin as the combined temporal and spiritual powers of the papacy, contradicting, as Armour, ‘Griffin’, p. 455, points out, ‘Dante’s doctrine of the separation of the two earthly powers; C. Hardie, ‘The Symbol of the Gryphon in *Purgatorio* XXIX.108 and the Following Cantos’, in *Centenary Essays on Dante* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 103-31, writes of the griffin as the harmony of Dante’s own spiritual and sensitive powers; P. Dronke, ‘*Purgatorio* XXIX’, in *Cambridge Readings in Dante’s Comedy*, ed. by Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 114-37, speaks of the griffin as symbolizing chastity and Dante’s *daimon* guiding his soul.

man's love for goodness.<sup>108</sup> This is, in my opinion, one of the interpretative contexts for *Par. 7. 38-39* where Adam's sin is equated to death, 'però che si torse / da via di verità e da sua vita.' To die is, ultimately, to sever oneself from the truth of one's existence and to be cut off from life – the only life possible – in the presence of the divine.

## 2.7 - The Consequences of Sin

Dante shares with Augustine the doctrine of the hereditary character of original sin. Like Augustine, Dante was persuaded that sin is passed onto mankind as a whole. In *Paradiso 7* Beatrice claims that, '[...] quell'uomo che non nacque, dannando sé dannò tutta sua prole' (ll. 24-25), and 'vostra natura quando peccò *tota* / nel seme suo, da queste dignitadi, / come di paradiso, fu remota', (ll. 84-85). By referring to Adam as seed of humanity Dante, unambiguously, points to his role as father of mankind but he also reinforces the idea of the fruitfulness/fruit-bearing of man's original relationship with God, of which I have already spoken in Chapter One. In thinking of Adam as seed, the reader is immediately drawn to images of progressive growth and strengthening, which are evocative of the florid images of the Edenic cantos of the *Purgatorio*. But the reader is also drawn to opposite images of death as a consequence of the corruption of Adam and of the Adamic seed – a corruption which is both of the seed and its fruits.

In *Paradiso 7* the consequences of original sin are presented in the general terms of man's loss of his likeness to God, his freedom and immortality. Moreover,

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<sup>108</sup> *Par. 3. 79-84*: 'Anzi è formale ad esto beato *esse* / tenersi dentro a la divina voglia, / per ch'una fansi nostre voglie stesse; / sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia / per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace / com'a lo re che 'n suo voler ne 'nvoglia.'

in the canto in which man's 'dignity' ('dignità' l. 82) and 'nobility' ('nobiltà' l. 78) are described as deriving from man's direct issuing from the hands of God, Dante also speaks of the wounding of man's nature and the loss of his conformity to God.<sup>109</sup> It is thus that the contrast between the before and after of sin is carried out, in *Paradiso* 7, by way of opposites. If, therefore, before sin man was 'degno' (l. 82), 'conforme' (l. 73), 'libero' (l. 71), after sin, he became 'dissimile' (l. 80) to his creator. His freedom became slavery to sin – 'libero', 'disfranca' (l. 79) – his nobility became 'colpa' (l. 83), 'follia' (l. 93), 'peccato' (l. 79), and the light which shone upon him became a shadow of what it once was – 'vivace' (l. 75), 'poco s'imbianca' (l. 81). Spatial metaphors are also used in this context with a view to stressing the reality of the severance and disenfranchisement that sin caused between God and man by way of sin. Therefore, Dante writes that human nature '[...] dal suo fattore / s'era allungata' (l. 32) using the term 'allungata' in the sense of distancing oneself from. The idea of the distance which sin imposes between man and God is also present in words such as 'remota' (*Par.* 7. 87) and 'essilio' (*Purg.* 26. 116), with a view to emphasizing man's alienation from his real home.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> P. Delhaye, 'Peccato, (la nozione di)', in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 4 (1973), pp. 357-59: 'Due sono i temi essenziali da tener presenti: il primo riguarda il peccato definito e descritto in sè stesso o nei suoi effetti. Peccare significa, essenzialmente, abbandonare l'unità per la molteplicità e la dispersione. *Mn.* I xv 1-3 riprende in proposito un tema caro a Plotino e a S. Agostino. Un altro modo, comune tra i mistici del XII secolo, di descrivere il peccato è quello mediante la nozione della dissomiglianza. L'uomo, peccando, cancella la propria somiglianza con Dio: egli entra in regione dissimilitudinis passando dalla luce alla tenebra. Attraverso il peccato, specifica D., *l'umana creatura... era partita e disformata* (*Cv* IV V 3).'

<sup>110</sup> The term 'essilio' recurs frequently in the *Commedia* to describe man's either temporary or eternal estrangement from God. Within the fraudulent of the eighth circle of the *Inferno* Virgil displays his wonderment for the punishment of Caifas who, among the hypocrites of the sixth pit, lies crucified on the ground. His self-interested council to the Jewish elders led to Christ's crucifixion, and he is now justly bound to what is described as an eternal 'essilio', an eternal separation from God, *Inf.* 23. 124-26: 'Allor vid'io maravigliar Virgilio / sovra colui ch'era disteso in croce / tanto vilmente ne l'eterno essilio.' In *Purg.* 21. 16-18: '[...] "Nel beato concilio / ti ponga in pace la verace corte / che me rilega nell'eterno essilio"', Virgil speaks of his dwelling in *limbo* as the right consequence of God's justice. In *Paradiso* Dante juxtaposes the earth as the place of exile to paradise, man's real home, *Par.* 23.

These latter images are often present in the *Commedia* as part of the narrative describing the journey of Dante the pilgrim as a movement of progressive sanctification. From as early as *Inf.* 1. 3, the image of ‘smarrimento’ suggests the loss of the pilgrim’s bearings and becomes emblematic of Dante’s infernal predicament. Starting with the fall into a strange, intricate and dangerous place of physical and emotional alienation, Dante’s journey is a progressive, homeward return to the peacefulness and restfulness of the Empyrean. Likewise, in *Inferno* 15, speaking to Brunetto Latini of his predicament, the pilgrim describes his traversing of hell as part of the journey which will lead him back home. The home to which Dante refers is not the earth, but the Empyrean, the abode to which mankind aspires:

“Là su di sopra, in la vita serena”  
rispuos’io lui, “mi smarrì in una valle,  
avanti che l’età mia fosse piena.  
Pur ier mattina le volsi le spalle:  
questi m’ apparve, tornand’io in quella,  
e reducemi a ca per questo calle.” (*Inf.* 15. 49-54)

Alienation from God as the ground of being is the main aspect and consequence of sin. In a post-lapsarian state man’s ‘essilio’ is a natural condition acquired at birth with original sin and restorable only by means of grace. In this both Augustine and Dante agree. But in spite of the obvious similarities there are some differences between the two, regarding primarily man’s inclination to evil inherited with original sin, which I here set out to examine within the specific context of evil in infants.<sup>111</sup>

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133-35: ‘Quivi si vive e gode del tesoro / che s’acquistò piangendo ne lo essilio / di Babilòn, ove si lasciò l’oro.’

<sup>111</sup> For some of these ideas I am particularly indebted to P. Williams ‘Nature, Grace and Original Sin in Dante’ (unpublished article presented at the *Medieval International Congress*: University of Leeds, 2008).

As I have already noted Augustine equates original sin with concupiscence. With this he does not mean primarily a lustful desire of the body but an evil inclination of the soul. For Augustine this inclination is a condition of nature inherited by mankind as a whole as a consequence of original sin and remediable only by an infusion of grace. In Books 1 and 2 of the *Confessions* Augustine maps out the stages of this evil inclination from infancy to maturity. It would be wrong to think that for Augustine the soul of an infant wilfully turns away from God towards the proximate and transient in the movement which I have earlier described as *adversio Dei*. A wilful action involves a rational choice, the ability, that is, to deliberate between alternatives, and infants have not yet developed ratiocapabilities. However, bearing both the *reatus* (the guilt), and the *vitium* (the inclination to evil) of original sin, the soul comes to life severed from God: though not willingly moving away from God, the soul comes to this life already without God. If the guilt is cancelled through baptism, the *vitium* remains, inclining the soul to evil and surfacing even in the very early stages of life, in what Augustine sees as the envious behaviour of an infant.

When referring to the early stages of one's life, he makes a distinction between the *imbecillitas* of the infant who, in the weakness of his body can do no harm, and the jealousy resting in his soul from his first day upon the earth: 'Then, in the weakness of the infant's limbs, and not in its will, lies its innocence. I myself have seen and known an infant to be jealous though he could not speak.'<sup>112</sup> He describes the infant who is made to share the milk of his nurse's breast speaking of

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<sup>112</sup> *Conf.* 1. 7. 11: 'Ita imbecillitas membrorum infantilium innocens est, non animus infantium. Vidi ego et expertus sum zelantem parvulum; nondum loquebatur et intuebatur pallidus amaro aspectu collectaneum suum.'

the rage with which he looks at the *collactaneum suum* (*Conf.* 1. 7. 11), and sees in this a sign of the infant's early evil disposition, which is only to increase and become responsible during one's life. And, in fact, with childhood and the acquisition of language there comes the distinction between obedience and disobedience and, therefore, responsibility and accountability for evil-doing (*Conf.* 1. 9. 14). Of his adolescence Augustine writes thus:

Arrived now at adolescence I burned for all the satisfactions of hell. And I sank to the animal in a succession of dark lusts: my beauty consumed away, and I stank in your eyes, yet was pleasing in my own and anxious to please the eyes of men.<sup>113</sup>

Of the same period of life he describes the episode of the stealing of the pears as an act carried out in the full awareness of the wrong he was doing and with the sole intention of pursuing an iniquitous act:

Yet I chose to steal, and not because want drove me to it – unless a want of justice and contempt for it and an excess of iniquity. For I stole things which I already had in plenty and of better quality. Nor had I any desire to enjoy the things I stole, but only the stealing of them and the sin. There was a pear tree near our vineyard, heavy with fruit, but fruit that was not particularly tempting either to look or to taste [...] We carried off an immense load of pears, not to eat – for we barely tasted them before throwing them to the hogs.<sup>114</sup>

With the passing of time, then, and growing maturity the substance of sin changes but the desire and inclination to sin remains persistent in the soul. The conclusions

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 1. 1: 'Exarsi enim aliquando satiari inferis in adulescentia et silvescere ausus sum variis et umbrosis amoribus, et contabuit species mea et computrui coram oculis tuis placens mihi et placere cupiens oculis hominum.'

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 4. 9: 'Et ego furtum facere uolui et feci nulla compulsus egestate nisi penuria et fastidio iustitiae et sagina iniquitatis. Nam id furatus sum, quod mihi abundabat et multo melius, nec ea re volebam frui, quam furto appetebam, sed ipso furto et peccato. Arbor erat pirus in vicinia nostrae vineae pomis onusta nec forma nec sapore illecebrosis [...] et abstulimus inde onera ingentia non ad nostras epulas, sed vel proicienda porcis.'

Augustine reaches are not, in my view, without ambiguity: the connatural wickedness of the will surfaces from the very outset of human life, when the child is still not capable of making rational decision he is guilty all the same. This is ultimately the meaning of the *massa damnata*, of the universal sharing in the sin of Adam. Augustine's is, therefore, a tragically pessimistic view of man's entering and being in the world, a view that, in my opinion, Dante did not share in its entirety.

As I have already discussed above, Dante, like Augustine, believed in the hereditary character of original sin. In *Paradiso 7* he speaks of man's dwelling in sin – 'in grande errore' (l. 29) – and he speaks of the consequences of Adam's disobedience as man's loss of the three dignities that, before the fall, made him an image of his creator. Having lost freedom, conformity and immortality the soul can only be 'rilevata' (*Par. 7. 112, 116*), Dante claims, by Christ's sacrifice. In spite of the obvious similarities, when compared with the Augustinian notion of the *massa damnata* and the envy of the infant soul, Dante's is, by contrast, a joyous picture of the soul's issuing forth from the hands of its creator. As already noted, the joyfulness of the soul results immediately from the joyous nature of its creator. As Foster puts it, 'derived from the joy of God the soul desires joy; joy is native to it.'<sup>115</sup> The 'lieto fattore' (*Purg. 16. 89*) informs the souls with its joy infusing in them a natural desire of return to the original source of delight. The soul naturally tends to the world about because God has infused it with the natural love which leads it to the good – a good which is dimly perceived by the newly created soul. In these first stages of the soul's existence love is only a natural disposition, an instinctual inclination towards the world about and therefore not culpable. In both the *Convivio* and the *Purgatorio*,

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<sup>115</sup> Foster, 'God's Tree', in *God's Tree: Essays on Dante and Other Matters*, p. 48.

works in which the soul's inclination to love is described in its evolution from infancy to maturity, Dante speaks of the naiveté of the newly created soul which, because of its inexperience, can fall into error. But we must pause briefly upon this idea of error. Although Dante does not specify the moment at which the soul becomes personally responsible for its choices, we must assume that this is only when the soul is capable rationally to make choices, to separate, that is, one object of desire from another in keeping with its natural inclination to love God as the good proper to it. It is only at this point that man becomes responsible and therefore culpable.

What are we to make then of Dante's understanding of the soul of infants? What has been said hitherto already makes, in my opinion, for a different set of emphases in Dante with respect to Augustine, which become even more conspicuous when Augustine's doctrine of the *limbo puerorum* is looked at alongside Dante's.<sup>116</sup> In the *De libero arbitrio*, when discussing the fate of unbaptized children Augustine writes:

What is superfluous is to ask about the merits of someone who has not merited anything. If there can be a life that is intermediate between sin and right action, have no fear that our Judge can pronounce a sentence that is intermediate between punishment and reward.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Studies on Dante's limbo include: T. P. Bottagisio, *Il limbo dantesco: studi filosofici e letterari* (Padua: Antoniana, 1898); G. Busnelli, 'La colpa del "non fare" degli infedeli negativi', *Studi danteschi*, 23 (1938), 79-97; F. Mazzoni, 'Saggio di un nuovo commento alla *Commedia*: il canto IV dell'*Inferno*', *Studi Danteschi*, 42 (1965), 29-206; G. Padoan, 'Il Limbo dantesco', in *Il pio Enea, l'empio Ulisse: tradizione classica e intendimento medievale in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1977), pp. 103-24; A. A. Iannucci, 'Dante's Limbo: At the Margins of Orthodoxy', in *Dante and the Unorthodox: The Aesthetics of Transgression*, ed. by James Miller (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), pp. 63-82.

<sup>117</sup> *De lib. arb.* 3. 23. 66: 'Sed sane superfluo quaeri de meritis eius qui nihil meruerit. Non enim metuendum est ne vita esse potuerit media quaedam inter recte factum atque peccatum, et sententia iudicis media esse non possit inter praemium atque supplicium.'

But even before his full involvement in the Pelagian controversy Augustine had ceased to support this view and persuaded the Council of Carthage (418 CE) to condemn the existence of ‘an intermediate place, or of any place anywhere at all (*ullus alicubi locus*), in which children who pass out of this life unbaptized live in happiness’.<sup>118</sup> This meant that Augustine came to the belief that infants who die before baptism share in the same punishment as the souls of the damned and that the only difference between the two is the nature of the punishment: milder for the infants.<sup>119</sup> As remarked by Richard P. McBrien,

Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) and the Scholastics after him held to the Augustinian belief that such individuals were forever excluded from eternal happiness, but they allowed them a place of natural happiness, i.e., limbo.<sup>120</sup>

It is useful to point out that the doctrine of the infants’ natural happiness was not shared by all theologians who accepted the existence of limbo. Abelard, for example, believed that the pain suffered by unbaptized children was one of loss, implying therefore a certain amount of torment in what was effectively an exclusion from the vision of God.<sup>121</sup> It was only with Thomas that theology broke sharply from the Augustinian tradition claiming that infants who die before receiving the sacrament of baptism experience an afterlife of natural happiness.<sup>122</sup> Dante ought to be placed

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<sup>118</sup> ‘Limbo’, *New Advent*, ed. by Kevin Knight <http://www.newadvent.org/> [accessed 8 June 2010]. V. Wilkin, *From Limbo to Heaven: An Essay on the Economy of Redemption* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), p. 5, speaks of the single authority of Augustine ‘certifying the mass consignment of infants to hellfire’; R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1989), II, p. 1154: ‘Over and against the Pelagians, Augustine (d. 430) had argued that such children [unbaptized children] were condemned to real, though diminished, pains of hell.’

<sup>119</sup> *De pecc. mer.* 1. 16. 21: ‘Potest proinde recte dici parvulos sine baptismo de corpore exeuntes in damnatione omnium mitissima futuros.’

<sup>120</sup> McBrien, *Catholicism*, II, p. 1154.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Limbo’, *New Advent*, ed. by Kevin Knight <http://www.newadvent.org/> [accessed 8 June 2010].

<sup>122</sup> *De malo*, q. 5 a. 3 ad 4: ‘Ad quartum dicendum, quod pueri in originali decedentes, sunt quidem separati a Deo perpetuo quantum ad amissionem gloriae quam ignorant, non tamen quantum ad participationem naturalium bonorum quae cognoscunt.’

within the scholastic tradition, although he says nothing of the psychological condition of unbaptized infants. The focus of *Inferno* 4 rests primarily on the hopeless desire of the pagan souls – of Virgil, that is, and his companions ‘che sanza speme vivemo in disio’ (*Inf.* 4. 42), and it is highly unlikely, in my opinion, that this condition can refer to the infant souls. Of the latter (as well as of the adults’ souls) Dante only says that they did not sin, ‘ch’ei non peccaro’ (*Inf.* 4. 34) – restating their innocence in *Purg.* 7. 31-33 when Virgil speaking to Sordello of his dwelling in *limbo* claims: ‘Quivi sto io coi pargoli innocenti / dai denti morsi de la morte avante / che fosser da l’umana colpa essenti.’ If their immaturity makes them immune to damnation proper, the stain of original sin, which they still carry in their soul, excludes them from the joy of salvation.

## **2.8 - Conclusion**

That wilfulness is at the heart of sin is true of both Augustine and Dante. Their investigation on the reasons of original sin focuses primarily on the intentionality of the act. Augustine speaks of man’s desire to rise above the authority of God; Dante claims that sin was a stepping beyond the limit imposed by divine prohibition. The difficulty of explaining why man sinned lies precisely in the perfection in which man was first created. In spite of his state of original righteousness, of the gifts of grace that enfolded his soul, of the original justice which he enjoyed by virtue of his issuing directly from the hands of God, man sinned, forfeiting what was freely given to him. Thus, man sinned because he possessed the power to choose between alternatives: his nature was created free, in possession, that is, of a faculty of choice that made him responsible for his destiny. Not compelled to remain in the state in

which he was created, man could remain in that state if he wanted to, and refuse it, if he chose to do so. But if freedom and wilfulness explain the sinful act itself, they come short of explaining the motives of man's first rebellion. It is somehow unsatisfactory to say that man sinned out of his own wilfulness, and Augustine and Dante knew this. It is precisely in trying to find an answer to these motives that Augustine and Dante differ.

The discourse on the origin of evil is central in Augustine. From Manicheism to Platonism, his was a desire to understand why there is evil in the soul. Ultimately Augustine finds the answer in the doctrine of man's creation *ex nihilo*, which establishes man's ontological potential to fall back into the nothingness from which he was created. The question of freedom and *privatio boni* follows on from this original premise: inasmuch as man is a being created from nothing he moves between the possibility of being and non-being. In man this possibility hinges on free will which, being an intermediate power of the soul, can either be put to good or bad use. Original sin is therefore a fall into nothingness, a movement away from the perfection that God provided freely to man in Eden, towards the non-being of sin. Now, if negatively sin is a falling away from the ontological perfection that man enjoys in his dwelling in grace, positively it is a choice for something other than God, namely for the proximate and transient things of the world. It is in this second meaning that sin is also understood as the love for the world, as opposed to the love of God.

Chioccioni argues that 'il problema della vita (intellettuale e morale) si riduce in Agostino al problema del duplice amore: l'amore all'amore essenziale e l'amore del mondo e delle cose' – a twofold love that Augustine found at times difficult to

harmonize.<sup>123</sup> It is precisely when he fails to do so, when he sees in the world the potential danger of sin, that Augustine develops an alternative theory of love in the notable distinction between the enjoyment and use of things. This reveals, in my opinion, the scepticism that is at the heart of Augustine's sense of man and the world about, a scepticism that is perfectly coherent with his postlapsarian theory of man, whereby his inherited inclination to evil removes from him the possibility of any moral behaviour whatsoever. It is at the outset of the *Confessions* that Augustine traces the various moments of this evil inclination from the first days of an infant life to adulthood. If in an infant this is the natural expression of original sin, a somewhat instinctual act of self-preservation, in the adult in receipt of grace sin involves always a choice.

Turning to Dante, we are confronted with a different set of preoccupations. Unconcerned with the dualism of the Manichees, Dante never speaks of evil as a privation of good. Equally uninterested in the materialism of Mani's philosophy, his is rather a defence of man's freedom against the threat of astral determinism. Ultimately, man is free because he is subject to none other than to the authority of his creator. This noted, it is Dante's anthropology of love, his understanding of love as a principle of being with respect to man, that offers an explanation for the possibility of original sin and sin in general. Created by a joyful creator in an act of love, the soul shares in that same love which naturally inclines it to the world about in a movement of incessant desire. From the outset of his existence man is, therefore, involved in a journey which will find satisfaction in the fruition of that very love from which it derives.

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<sup>123</sup> P. Chioccioni, *L'agostinismo nella Divina Commedia* (Florence: Olschki, 1952), p. 74.

In *Con.* 4. 12. 16 the soul is depicted as moving step by step from one desire to the next believing each one to be the ultimate and moving forward for lack of satisfaction. This movement is not in itself sinful, but it can become so if man fails to measure the love for the things of the world up against the natural love for God. At the heart of this is a selective process that is carried out by man's rational faculty of the soul, whereby free will acts as a sieve refusing those loves which hinder man's return to God and accepting those which do not. The danger of sin does not lie, therefore, in natural love but in rational or elective love – the love that is ideally directed by reason and actualized by free will – upon which man's dignity depends. It is through this love that man gains moral status with respect to the other loving creatures, and it is through it that man earns his final victory. Natural love is the guiding principle to which rational or volitional love should always conform. To grow in love is, for Dante, to be able to order the natural affection with which man tends to the world with a view to uniting himself to the ultimate affection.

## Chapter 3: Christ and the Doctrine of Redemption

### 3.0 - Introduction

Scholarship has widely commented on the absence in the vast corpus of Augustine's writings of a treatise, letter or sermon dedicated entirely to Christ.<sup>1</sup> What has been generally acknowledged is that if, on the one hand, this absence makes it difficult to recreate what Joanne McWilliam has called a 'mosaic' and 'episodic' Christology, on the other, it should not be taken as a proof of Augustine's lack of interest in the Christological question.<sup>2</sup> In trying to piece together Augustine's understanding of the Christ event, I shall always bear in mind that for Augustine Christology (the analysis of the person and nature of Christ) is never separated from his soteriological discourse (the effect that the person and nature of Christ has upon man's morality and destiny). To speak of Christ, of his presence in the world, his mediatorship, is always, in other words, to speak of the activity of God's grace with a view to man's restoration and salvation.

In spite of the difficulty presented by the 'episodic' nature of Augustine's Christology, it is nonetheless clear from his works that the mystery of the *Deus*

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<sup>1</sup> J. McWilliam, 'The Study of Augustine's Christology in the Twentieth Century', in *Augustine from Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. by Joanne McWilliam (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), pp. 183-205 (p. 183): 'To say that Augustine devoted no particular work to christology is not to say that Christ was unimportant to him, but that his writing on Christ was occasional and episodic – a mosaic composed over at least a quarter of a century – and consequently harder to control than other aspects of his thought'; A. E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 29: 'It must be emphasised that it is manifestly an imposition upon Augustine's theology to develop a systematic account of the work of Christ, for the bishop is primarily concerned with the question of *how* God justifies man, rather than how God is *able* to justify him'; W. Harmless, 'Christ the Pediatrician: Augustine on the Diagnosis and Treatment of the Injured Vocation of the Child', in *The Vocation of the Child*, ed. by Patrick McKinley Brennan (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 127-53 (p. 130): 'The difficulty in studying Augustine's Christology comes from the fact that his views are scattered about in a vast assemblage of treatises, letters, and sermons composed over more than thirty-five years.'

<sup>2</sup> McWilliam, 'The Study of Augustine's Christology in the Twentieth Century', p. 183.

*homo* and his relationship to man's salvation is never far from his mind. In the course of this chapter, I shall therefore attempt to piece together this 'mosaic' by presenting what I believe to be the main emphases of Augustine's discourse on Christ, and by looking at the ways in which the relationship between God's prevenience (in the sense of God's prior provision for man) and man's response is at the forefront of Augustine's analysis of the beginning and accomplishment of man's righteousness. The Augustinian section of this chapter is thus divided into three parts, the first devoted to an analysis of the reasons for redemption in the specific mode of mediation, the second and third aimed at investigating the effects of the mediatory sacrifice upon humanity through God's grace in Christ. The Dante section will follow the same pattern.

For Augustine, Christ is the mediator because he stands midway between man and God, and his work is efficacious precisely because Christ is both man and God. The union in the one person of Christ of two natures has, therefore, for Augustine a soteriological significance in that it is precisely in this union that the work of reconciliation can take place. Thus, in the words of Gerald Bonner:

Manhood is ennobled by union with the Godhead through a divine act of humility and without any merit, and it is because of this union of sinless manhood with divinity that it becomes possible for fallen man, by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, to become a partaker of divinity in the Body of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Christ is at one and the same time the innocent victim that offers satisfaction to a just God, and the manifestation of the love of God for man through an act of unprecedented humility. The love of God as revealed in Christ becomes the way of

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<sup>3</sup> G. Bonner, *God's Decree and Man's Destiny: Studies on the Thought of Augustine of Hippo* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), p. 270.

reconciliation between man and the divine not only because in the sacrifice is the seal of God's renewed friendship with man, but also because in Christ's death is the dispensing of a medicine that heals the soul allowing it to participate, once again, in God's divinity. The at once necessary and fitting event of the cross is thus intimately related to its restoring and refashioning effects upon the soul and to the building of faith and hope upon which man's individual salvation rests. The coming of Christ is in this sense the pledge of God's eternal and unchangeable love for man and the power that allows man to love God in return.

In the second and third part of this first section I shall discuss how reconciliation has direct consequences for man's moral progress. Here I present two main questions, the first being man's response to the universal work of redemption by faith, the second the notion of man's continuation in faith by virtue of God's grace. It is within this context that I shall look at the way in which grace enters nature to elicit a free response in favour of God, and reach some further conclusions relative to the relationship between redeemed (or graced) nature and its ability (if any) to move steadily towards perfect righteousness without a further infusion of grace. I shall end this section by looking at Augustine's renewed commitment to the prevenient and continuing work of grace within the context of redeemed humanity.

Coming to Dante my intention is to pose the same questions asked of Augustine: what are the reasons for the cross? How does man respond individually to the call to faith elicited by the cross? What, ultimately, is the relationship between God's initiative and man's response? It is, precisely, when answering these questions that the different emphases of Augustine's and Dante's sense of the Christ event will begin to emerge. In keeping with this I shall begin by looking in *Paradiso 7* at

Beatrice's response to the pilgrim's questions as to the reasons for the incarnation. Like Augustine, Dante prefaces the discourse with the doctrine of the fall and, on account of the gravity of his offence, the impossibility of man's earning salvation by himself; although not uppermost in his mind, the question of satisfaction is also present in Dante, as it is in Augustine. Similarly, as in Augustine, love is central to Dante's understanding of redemption. But, in keeping with Ryan's position on the matter, I shall argue that there is something in Beatrice's answer to Dante's doubt regarding the reasons for the cross that is distinctively Dantean.<sup>4</sup> In Dante, the Christ event is explained within the broader context of God's rejoicing in his goodness, and of his pleasure in bringing about redemption as originating from what he sees as God's original and continuing love of man. Pleasure, and indeed joy, as being a permanent and central object of divine concern, is, therefore, a specifically Dantean emphasis which is at one with his general sense of the relationship between God and man and vice versa.

Moving then to the question of man's justification, I shall look at the implications, in the broader context of the *Commedia*, of Dante's statement that man is made sufficient, at least in some degree, to his proper moral and intellectual calling through the grace secured by Christ's sacrifice. The idea of man's sufficiency as acquired by the cross will be placed within the context of the doctrine of justification both with respect to its universal and individual effects upon mankind. It is, precisely, in doing so that Dante's sense of the incarnation, or, more exactly, of God's purposes in the incarnation as Dante understands them, will come to the fore.

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<sup>4</sup> C. Ryan, 'Paradiso VII: Marking the Difference between Dante and Anselm', in *Dante and the Middle Ages: Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. by John C. Barnes and Cormac Ó Cuilleain (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), pp. 117-37 (p. 131).

I will argue that Dante's understanding of the natural being of man, in its connatural yearning to move to its good, has a twofold implication as regards the more general relationship between nature and grace. If on the one hand, grace allows man to achieve a potential which is present in man from the moment of creation; on the other, through the grace, of Christ nature is made able – or, indeed, sufficient – to respond to the divine call and continue in righteousness without further *auxilia Dei*.

The last section of this chapter will look at faith and its origin with a view to drawing further conclusions relative to Dante's and Augustine's sense of the relationship between nature and grace reaffirming Dante's generally positive sense of the moral viability of human nature (as confirmed in grace) over against Augustine. I shall argue that the focus in *Paradiso* 24 on man's response to the finite channels of grace, namely the Scriptures and the Church, and on the moral responsibility that man bears in relation to the Christian message of the revelation, confirms, once again, the idea of grace as a principle of moral efficacy, as that whereby man is empowered from within himself to a certain kind of moral righteousness.

### **3.1 - Christ's Mediatorship and God's Love**

When in the *Enchiridion* Augustine speaks of Christ, he introduces the theme of the hypostatic union, the presence in his person of both a divine and a human nature.<sup>5</sup> In the course of the years Augustine, William Mallard argues,

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<sup>5</sup> *Ench.* 10. 35: 'Proinde Christus Iesus, Dei Filius, est et Deus et homo: Deus ante omnia saecula, homo in nostro saeculo: Deus quia Dei Verbum; *Deus enim erat Verbum*; homo autem quia in unitatem personae accessit Verbo, anima rationalis et caro.' The Christological question has a long history and much has been written about it. For a historical account which traces the development of the Christological question from its apostolic birth to Gregory the Great, A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, trans. by John Bowden, 2 vols (London:

employed different images to express this wondrous unity of the eternal and the mortal in Christ. He spoke of the humility in effecting such an incarnation (e.g., *Trin.* 4. 2. 4). Again he spoke at times of Jesus as a human being under predestining grace, especially elected to be the Christ (*Praed. sanct.* 15. 31). At times he adopted a model from the Neoplatonists, who spoke of the ‘substantial’ union of the human soul and the human body in one human being; yet the soul is spiritual, the body fleshly! Similarly, said Augustine, God the divine Word and the human Jesus are a single substantial union in the incarnation (*Ench.* 11. 36).<sup>6</sup>

What is important to note here is that the union of the Word and the human nature in Christ is not for Augustine a source of merely theoretical examination, but has primarily a soteriological significance: it is in the union in his person of the divine and human nature that Christ mediates between man and God, and it is in this union that the work of reconciliation between man and God can take place.<sup>7</sup> In practical

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Mowbray, 1965), vol. 1 especially deals with the apostolic birth of Christology up until the Council of Chalcedon, with Chapters 3-4 of Part 2 dedicated entirely to the Nicene Creed, and pp. 405-10 specifically to Augustine. For questions of the relation between the doctrine of salvation and Christ, and the Biblical foundations and the early centuries of Christology, W. Lowe, ‘Christ and Salvation’, in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks*, ed. by Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (London: S.P.C.K., 1982), pp. 196-222. The Christological question as developed at Nicaea and its legacy is explored in L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For the evolution of the Christological doctrine in Augustine, W. Mallard, ‘Jesus Christ’, in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 463-70; R. Dodaro, ‘Augustine of Hippo (354-430)’, in *Jesus in History, Thought and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, 2 vols, ed. by Lesley Houlden (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), I, pp. 109-14; the Christological question is also developed in J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Continuum, 2006), with a specific focus on Augustine in Part 3, Chapters 14-15, ‘Christ’s Saving Work’, and ‘Christ’s Mystical Body’, pp. 375-421. An account of the different scholarly approaches on Augustine’s understanding of Christ’s person and works is given by B. Studer, ‘A Hundred Years of Study of Augustine’s Picture of Christ’, in *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, trans. by Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), pp. 10-13. For the meaning and development of the Pauline expression ‘*Christus Totus*’ – i.e. that the Church is the fullness of Christ, and that without his believers Christ cannot exist as Head – in Augustine’s Christology, T. Van Bavel, ‘The “*Christus Totus*” Idea: A Forgotten Aspect of Augustine’s Spirituality’, in *Studies in Patristic Christology*, ed. by Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1998), pp. 84-94.

<sup>6</sup> Mallard, ‘Jesus Christ’, p. 464.

<sup>7</sup> Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, pp. 9-10, argues that the overly sharp distinction that scholarship has found in Augustine between his understanding of the work and the person of Christ must be overcome to allow for a unified discourse of his Christology and soteriology. On his part, and in more recent literature, W. Harmless, ‘Christ the Pediatrician: Augustine on the Diagnosis and the Treatment of the Injured Vocation of the Child’, p. 136: ‘Augustine is more interested in soteriology, in what the grace of

terms, therefore, ‘the incarnation shows God’s unique initiative for human salvation.’<sup>8</sup> Sharing in the humanity of man, man is made to share, through Christ, in the divinity of God. As Kelly puts it, ‘It is through His humanity that Christ exalts us to God and brings God down to us.’<sup>9</sup> In this doctrine there lies, ultimately, the sense that Christ’s mediatorship functions as meeting ground between God and fallen humanity because it is in and through Christ’s humanity and divinity that fallen man is reconciled with God.<sup>10</sup> Thus in the *De Trinitate* Augustine writes that,

[Christ] is the one true mediator reconciling us to God by the sacrifice of peace, remaining one with him to whom He made the offering, making one in Himself those for whom He offered it, Himself one as offerer and sacrifice offered.<sup>11</sup>

In his mediatorship Christ is at once God who receives the sacrifice and man who offers himself as sacrifice. In keeping with this, although Augustine emphasizes at times the importance of Christ’s humanity over his divinity and vice versa, he will

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Christ does for us. But Augustine too had Christological interests [...] Images of Christ the Physician [...] are at once Christological and soteriological. Such images spell out both who Christ is and what he does.’

<sup>8</sup> Mallard, ‘Jesus Christ’, p. 464.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 391. For the question of Christ’s mediation in Augustine see C. Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially the section titled ‘The One Mediator’, pp. 36-38, where looking at the *De civ. Dei* 10. 32 she discusses the notion of Christian mediatorship in relation to Platonism claiming that it is, indeed, the centrality of Christ as mediator of wisdom which marks the break between Platonism and Christianity. The centrality of Christ as mediator sets Christianity apart as the ‘Universal Way’ to wisdom which philosophers had sought but not found. Still on the relationship between Platonism and Christianity with respect to the doctrine of mediation, E. TeSelle, *Augustine* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2006), p. 58, claims that Augustine was, indeed, helped by the Platonists, who thought of a mediator not as something between two extremes but as ‘having characteristics of both extremes, united immediately’. Thus, ‘In the case of the Incarnation, God is unchangeable and righteous, humanity is changeable and unrighteous, and Christ in his humanity is changeable and righteous.’

<sup>10</sup> The question of Christ’s mediation as being related to the work reconciliation and man’s homecoming is taken up by Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, p. 60: ‘Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and humanity, is also the way that leads to the homeland; he is this for the individuals and for the entire human race.’

<sup>11</sup> *De Trin.* 4. 14. 19: ‘idem ipse unus versusque Mediator, per sacrificium pacis reconcilians nos Deo, unum cum illo maneret cui offerebat, unum in se faceret pro quibus offerebat, unus ipse esset qui offerebat et quod offerebat.’

always recognize that this union between the human and the divine reveals God's salvific work for man.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the *Confessions* he writes that 'It is as man that he is mediator. He is not midway as Word; for the Word is equal to God', whereas, in the *Sermons* he states that we could not have been delivered by the one mediator were he not also God.<sup>13</sup> However, when in the intimately personal language of the *Confessions* he speaks of the work of Christ as salvific to his own troubled spirit he writes of the mingling of the Word with the human flesh as the way in which he was brought to spiritual maturity. The spiritual food of the Word that he would have otherwise been too weak to receive became flesh so that he was enabled to participate in divine wisdom.<sup>14</sup>

I sought a way to obtain strength enough to enjoy you; but I did not find it until I embraced 'the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (I *Tim.* 2: 5), who is above all things, God blessed for ever' (*Rom.* 9:5). He called and said 'I am the way and the truth and the life' (*John* 14:6). The food which I was too weak to accept he mingled with flesh, in that 'The Word was made flesh' (*John* 1:14), so that our infant condition might come to suck milk from your wisdom by which you created all things. To possess

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<sup>12</sup> Mallard, 'Jesus Christ', pp. 466-68, offers an overview of twentieth century scholarship focusing particularly on the work of A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. by J. Millar (London: Williams and Norgate, 1898), whose revisionist interpretation of Augustine's Christology stressed the character of the human-God rather than the God-human in his theology. Opposed to this theory, Mallard argues, is E. Portalié, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Ralph J. Bastian (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), who emphasized the salvific priority of the divine Word over against the human person of Christ. Both works offer a large number of examples to support one or the other interpretation.

<sup>13</sup> *Conf.* 10. 43. 68: 'In quantum enim homo, in tantum mediator, in quantum autem Verbum, non medius, quia aequalis Deo'; *Serm.* 293. 7: 'Nam in quantum Deus non mediator, sed aequalis Patri, hoc idem quod Pater, cum Patre unus Deus. Quando esset ista sublimitas mediatrix, a qua multum longe disiuncti iacebamus? Ut medius sit, aliquid assumat quod non erat: sed ut perveniamus, maneat quod erat.'

<sup>14</sup> For an analysis of the idea of man's participation in God's wisdom through Christ, D. V. Meconi, 'The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine's *Confessions*', *Augustinian Studies*, 29, 2 (1998), 61-75 (p. 63): 'There are two types or levels of wisdom: Wisdom *in se* and participatory wisdom. The first is everlasting and unchangeable. It is identified with the immutable (*incommutabiliter*) and eternal (*coaeternus*) Son. Wisdom in the Son is identifiable with his being: he is what he has and is thus not in need of participation. The second level of reality is derived and contingent. This participatory and mutable wisdom stands in need of constant renewal through participation in the Son.'

my God, the humble Jesus, I was not yet humble enough. I did not know what his weakness was meant to teach.<sup>15</sup>

To know the incarnation is to know that one's salvation depends on man's relationship with Christ, because through him man matures in wisdom, and through him man understands God's humility which will, in time, give him strength. To know and understand Christ's mediation is, for Augustine, to experience in one's existence the love and humility of God in Christ and to be thus humbled by the teaching and example revealed by God through the Son. Given the importance that Augustine places on Christ incarnate it is therefore not surprising that when in the *Enchiridion* he speaks of Christ's mediation he focuses on its necessity for the work of reconciliation between God and man:

[...] the apostle observes, *For we also were by nature children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2. 3)*. Since men were in this wrath through original sin, and that the more seriously and destructively the more they added greater and more serious sins, there was a need for a mediator, that is, a reconciler, who should propitiate this wrath by the offering of that one and only sacrifice of which all sacrifices of the Law and the Prophets were shadows cast beforehand. Of this the apostle observes: *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled now in his blood, we shall be safe from the wrath through him*. But when they speak of God 'being wroth', they are not suggesting any agitation of his, such as is in the mind of a man who is wroth; but, by the borrowing of the term from human emotions, his vengeance, which cannot but be righteous, has had the name 'wrath' given to it. The fact then that we by a Mediator are being reconciled to God, and do receive the Holy Spirit, so as, instead of enemies, to be made into sons – *for as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Rom. 8:14)* – this is the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Conf.* 7. 18. 24: 'Et quaerebam viam comparandi robberies, quod asset done ad fraenum tee, neck inveniebam, donec amplecterer *mediatorem Dei et hominum, hominem Christum Iesum, qui est super omnia Deus benedictus in saecula*, vocantem et dicentem: *Ego sum via et veritas et vita*, et cibum, cui capiendo invalidus eram, miscentem carni, quoniam *Verbum caro factum est*, ut infantiae nostrae lactesceret sapientia tua, per quam creasti omnia. Non enim tenebam Deum meum Iesum humiliter nec cuius rei magistra esset eius infirmitas noveram.'

<sup>16</sup> *Ench.* 10. 33: '[...] propter quod dicit Apostolus: Fuimus enim et nos natura filii irae, sicut et ceteri. In hac ira cum essent homines per originale peccatum, tanto gravius et perniciosius quanto maiora vel

The context is that of the fall and of original sin as the deliberate act of hubris which makes man an enemy of God and guilty of a crime that he himself cannot undo without the direct intervention of God. As Mathijs Lamberigts writes, ‘It would not be unfair to claim that during the Pelagian controversy, Augustine’s whole view of history could be reduced to the story of two individuals: Adam and Christ.’<sup>17</sup> ‘Christ’, he adds, ‘is the center of salvation history; Adam marks the beginning of human history in so far as it is characterised by sin and death.’<sup>18</sup> The lines just quoted from the *Enchiridion* unfold this dialectic between Adam and Christ in the context of God’s justice, which punishes a humanity guilty of universal and personal sin, and his mercy which forgives mankind by sacrificing himself in an act of gratuitous offering of the Spirit through Christ.

In Augustine’s understanding of the Genesis story of the fall, the anger (or wrath) that Adam’s sin produced in God was so great as to make its appeasement and the satisfaction of divine justice impossible for man to achieve with his own strength. The evil power justly held sway over humanity ‘until he [the devil] slew the Just Human One [Christ], in whom he could point nothing worthy of death’.<sup>19</sup>

Augustine is adamant in claiming that in sacrificing his own Son, God acted out of

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plura insuper addiderant, necessarius erat mediator, hoc est reconciliator, qui hanc iram sacrificii singularis, cuius erant umbrae omnia sacrificia Legis et Prophetarum, oblatione placaret. Unde dicit Apostolus: *Si enim cum inimici essemus reconciliati sumus Deo per mortem Filii eius, multo magis reconciliati nunc in sanguine ipsius salvi erimus ab ira per ipsum.* Cum autem Deus irasci dicitur, non eius significatur perturbatio qualis est in animo irascentis hominis, sed ex humanis motibus translato vocabulo vindicta eius, quae non nisi iusta est, irae nomen accepit. Quod ergo per mediatorem reconciliamur Deo, et accipimus Spiritum Sanctum ut ex inimicis efficiamur filii: *Quotquot enim Spiritu Dei aguntur, hi filii sunt Dei:* haec est gratia Dei per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum.’

<sup>17</sup> M. Lamberigts, ‘Competing Christologies: Julian and Augustine on Jesus Christ’, *Augustinian Studies*, 36, 1 (2005), 159-94 (p. 174).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 175.

<sup>19</sup> *De lib. arb.* 3. 10. 31: ‘sed tamen iure aequissimo vindicabat, tamdiu potestas eius valeret, donec interficeret iustum, in quo nihil dignum morte posset ostendere.’

justice rather than force. Christ's passion – the unjust slaughter of a sinless man – was efficacious precisely because in Christ Satan seized upon a faultless and just prey and was then forced to free mankind as a penalty for his arrogance and greed.<sup>20</sup> But, returning to the quotation from the *Enchiridion* 10, it is precisely by calling upon the notion of the appeasing of God's wrath and drawing on the idea that man could not repay God because of the infinite nature of the offence caused, that Augustine establishes an inescapable relationship between sin and divine help.

Original sin, then, and those sins which followed from the first (actual sins), by causing an interruption or a fracture in the relationship between man and God, constitute the reason for divine intervention in the form of mediation. It is thus that, for Augustine, God's help in the person of Christ means, precisely, for man to be reconciled with the divine. If the enmity – 'we were at enmity with him because of sin'<sup>21</sup> – is the result of man's own work, the love of God in Christ is God's answer to

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 3. 10. 31: 'Atque Verbum Dei unicus Dei Filius, diabolum quem semper sub legibus suis habuit et habebit, homine indutus etiam homini subiugavit: nihil ei extorquens violento dominatu, sed superans eum lege iustitiae; ut quoniam, femina decepta, et deiecto per feminam viro, omnem prolem primi hominis tamquam peccatricem legibus mortis, malitiosa quidem nocendi cupiditate, sed tamen iure aequissimo vindicabat, tamdiu potestas eius valeret, donec interficeret iustum, in quo nihil dignum morte posset ostendere, non solum quia sine crimine occisus est, sed etiam quia sine libidine natus: cui subiugaverat ille quos ceperat, ut quidquid inde nasceretur, tamquam suae arboris fructus, prava quidem habendi cupiditate, sed tamen non iniquo possidendi iure retineret. Iustissime itaque dimittere cogitur credentes in eum quem iniustissime occidit, ut et quod temporaliter moriuntur, debitum exsolvant, et quod semper vivunt, in illo vivant, qui pro eis quod non debebat exsolvit. Quibus autem infidelitatis perseverantiam persuasisset, iuste secum haberet in perpetua damnatione consortes. Ita factum est ut neque diabolo per vim eriperetur homo, quem nec ipse vi, sed persuasione ceperat: et qui iuste plus humiliatus est, ut serviret cui ad malum consenserat, iuste per eum cui ad bonum consensit liberaretur; quia minus iste in consentiendo, quam ille in male suadendo peccaverat.' Many studies have focused on the so-called 'ransom' theory which Augustine, as E. TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns and Oates, 1970), p. 165 notes, must have learned from the Ambrosiaster. This view, prevalent among the Church Fathers advocated that the death and resurrection of Christ is a kind of transaction with the devil. The devil, who had laid his right over mankind after the temptation of Adam by way of deception, was conquered by the justice of God when the devil seized the righteous Son of God and killed him on the cross. See also the concise yet excellent account of the 'ransom' theory in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, especially pp. 391-92.

<sup>21</sup> *In ev. Io.* 110. 6: 'cum quo propter peccatum inimicitias habebamus.'

man's sin.<sup>22</sup> For Augustine, Christ's mediation confirms man in his status as a son because it is through Christ that the grace of the Holy Spirit is delivered to mankind. As Rowan Williams argues, 'If the Spirit is traditionally described as God's gift, and if that gift is the active love that effects our reconciliation and makes us adoptive children of the Father, the Spirit is *caritas*', and in the case of the *Enchiridion* God's *caritas* is the love that delivers man from sin and reconciles man with God.<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that the emphases of Augustine's soteriology change according to whether his focus is either on God's response to the Devil's dominion over mankind, or on man's redemption through Christ. If *justice* dominates Augustine's sense of God's response to Devil, it is *love* that is the most conspicuous notion in his discourse on the redemptive power of the cross for the deliverance of man from sin. Thus, in the concluding lines of the *Ench.* 10. 33 quoted above Augustine writes that 'this is the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord', where the pronoun 'this' suffices for the two moments of God's providential plan for man – the incarnation and the reconciliation – a plan motivated primarily by God's love for man.

That Augustine understood Christ's mediation as originating from God's love for his creatures is evident in the *De Trinitate*:<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The idea that for Augustine the work of reconciliation through Christ is, primarily, an act of divine love is brought forward by R. Hastings, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1920), p. 331; likewise, J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), pp. 168-78, argues that the love of God for man has the power to refashion man into his original God-likeness; on his part, TeSelle, *Augustine*, p. 58, writes that the cross 'is the ultimate example of God's love for sinful humanity'; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 392-95, where he speaks of the priority of love over justice in Augustine's theology of redemption.

<sup>23</sup> R. Williams, 'Trinitate, De', in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 845-51 (pp. 845-46). For an analysis of love and the Holy Spirit and Augustine's association of divine love with the person of the Holy Spirit, Burnaby, 'Love and the Holy Spirit', in *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, pp. 173-77.

<sup>24</sup> In Books 8 to 15 of the *De Trinitate* Augustine not only elaborates analogical structures that can enable man to think about God, but also the way in which man's thinking of the Trinity is intimately

Those then who say, What, had God no other way by which He might free men from the misery of this mortality, that He should will the only-begotten Son, God co-eternal with Himself, to become man, by putting on a human soul and flesh, and being made mortal to endure death? – these, I say, it is not enough to refute, as to assert that that mode by which God deigns to free us through the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, is good and suitable for the dignity of God; but we must show also, not indeed that no other mode was possible to God, to whose power all things are equally subject, but that there neither was nor need have been any other mode more appropriate for curing our misery. For what was so necessary for the building up of our hope, and for the freeing the minds of mortals cast down by the condition of mortality itself, from despair of immortality, than that it should be demonstrated to us at how great a price God rated us, and how greatly he loved us? But what is more manifest and evident in this so great proof hereof, than that the Son of God, unchangeably good, remaining what He was in Himself, and receiving from us and for us what He was not, apart from any loss of His own nature and deigning to enter into the fellowship of ours, should first, without any evil desert of His own, bear our evils; and so with unobliged munificence should bestow His own gifts upon us who now believe how much God loves us, and who now hope that of which we used to despair without any good deserts or our own, nay, with our evil deserts too going before?<sup>25</sup>

Augustine is here confronting the argument of those who believed that God could not have chosen a way other than the mediatory sacrifice of the cross to liberate man from sin. In confuting this point, he claims that it is not enough to say that Christ's

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related to the process of man's sanctification. Book 13 deals with the nature of Christian revelation by presenting historical events in their relationship with the eternal. Augustine presents this relationship in terms of *scientia* and *sapientia*. If the first acquaints man with the life of Christ, and teaches him the importance of obedience, what saves man is not following the example, but the power of the incarnate Word, which Augustine equals to the achievement of *sapientia*. For the analysis of the *De Trinitate*, its importance in the confutation of Arianism, Williams, '*Trinitate, De*', p. 846.

<sup>25</sup> *De Trin.* 13. 10. 13: 'Eos itaque qui dicunt: "Itane defuit Deo modus alius quo liberaret homines a miseria mortalitatis huius, ut unigenitum Filium Deum sibi coaeternum, hominem fieri vellet, induendo humanam animam et carnem, mortalemque factum mortem perpeti?" parum est sic refellere, ut istum modum quo nos per Mediatorem Dei et hominum hominem Christum Iesum . Deus liberare dignatur, asseramus bonum et divinae congruum dignitati: verum etiam ut ostendamus non alium modum possibilem Deo defuisse, cuius potestati cuncta aequaliter subiacent; sed sanandae nostrae miseriae convenientiorem modum alium non fuisse, nec esse oportuisse. Quid enim tam necessarium fuit ad erigendam spem nostram, mentesque mortalium conditione ipsius mortalitatis abiectas, ab immortalitatis desperatione liberandas, quam ut demonstraretur nobis quanti nos penderet Deus, quantumque diligeret? Quid vero huius rei tanto isto indicio manifestius atque praeclarius, quam ut Dei Filius immutabiliter bonus, in se manens quod erat, et a nobis pro nobis accipiens quod non erat, praeter suae naturae detrimentum, nostrae dignatus inire consortium, prius sine ullo malo suo merito mala nostra perferret; ac sic iam credentibus quantum nos diligat Deus, et quod desperabamus iam sperantibus, dona in nos sua sine ullis bonis meritis nostris, imo praecedentibus et malis meritis nostris, indebita largitate conferret?'

mediation was either suitable for the dignity of God, or that God in his omnipotence could have chosen a solution other than the cross. It is my conviction that Augustine, in this rather difficult passage, points at clarifying his sense of the priority of God's love over against his justice. In his view, in fact, the arguments he wishes to disprove are chiefly directed at defending the infinity of God's power, rather than at pointing to the infinity of his love. What he believes to be a better argument against the aforementioned mistakes is the evidence that there was no better or more suitable way than the cross to heal man from sin because this way revealed, precisely, the full extent of God's love for man. This manifestation of unmerited love was, in fact, necessary to rekindle man's hope and raise his mind from despair to the freedom of immortality.

For Augustine, then, man, in his original sin, had forfeited his fellowship with his maker, breaking the bond of love which united unfallen man with God. As a consequence of this the act by which sin could be overcome ought to have consisted, precisely, of a revelation of the love that was lost to man by sin. Accordingly, Rashdall Hastings writes that:

St Augustine, indeed, will not say that God could not have redeemed men by some other means. But he holds that the arrangement actually adopted was just, and was peculiarly 'convenient' or congruous to the nature and character of God, because no other method of redemption would have exhibited so much love.<sup>26</sup>

And again in Kelly's words:

Both in His Person and in what He has done, Christ, our mediator, has demonstrated God's wisdom and love. The spectacle of such love should have the effect of inciting us to love Him in return: *nulla est enim maior ad*

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<sup>26</sup> Hastings, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 331.

*amorem invitatio quam praevenire amando.* More particularly, it should bestir our hearts to adore the humility of God which, as revealed in the incarnation, breaks our pride.<sup>27</sup>

Or finally, in Burnaby's words:

The race of man, so made for fellowship with its Maker, has sold its birthright and separated itself from God. God's love cannot change, but *for man* it is no longer a present reality; for he is fastened by sin either in presumption or in despair. So the act of God by which sin is overcome must consist in a revelation of the love in which sinful man cannot believe. This is the one purpose of Christ's coming – *ad demonstrandam erga nos dilectionem Dei* – to show the love of God.<sup>28</sup>

The coming of Christ is, therefore, at one and the same time, the pledge of God's eternal and unchangeable love for man and the power which allows man to love God in return in the hope of that immortality which sin had made impossible.

In other words, Christ's mediatorship was the sole appropriate way to cure man's diseased nature, because through this love man was made capable of responding to God in that faith which is born out of grace. It is in this conclusion that for Augustine the grace of the incarnate Word takes on the creative – or, as Burnaby points out – the recreative power of God's love.<sup>29</sup> The power of divine love which had, in the beginning, created all that *is* is now that love that, through Christ, refashions man in faith. Love, which is co-terminous with God's very nature – *Deus caritas est*, as the apostle John writes in his first Gospel (I John 4:16) – informs and determines God's choice, because it is through this love – as expressed in Christ's sacrifice – that man's relationship with God is renewed. In the last lines of the quotation from the *De Trinitate* 13 cited above, Augustine writes that God's offering

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<sup>27</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 393.

<sup>28</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 170.

of himself is the clearest proof of God's unconditional love for man because it is in and through this offering that man's mortal humanity is made to share in Christ's divinity. Christ is, in this sense, the embodiment of that divine love which at one and the same time predisposes man to righteous loving, so as to allow him to re-direct his love to God. It is in this sense that Augustine's soteriology rests on a sense of Christ's mediation making known a boundless source or reservoir of love, which makes it possible for man to respond in kind – i.e., to love unqualifiedly and boundlessly in return.

### **3.2 - The Origin of Faith**

Faith in the effectiveness of Christ's salvific presence is, therefore, a central part of man's regeneration: 'with good reason my firm hope is in him. For you will cure my diseases through him who sits at your right hand and interceded with you for us.'<sup>30</sup> 'Firm hope' implies belief, and to say that those who believe are cured from the disease of sin is to recognize that man is called upon to make a profession of faith in Christ. For Augustine faith is at one and the same time the surrender of the mind to the supernatural truth of the revelation and, as Gilson puts it, 'the surrender of the whole man to the grace [of God] in Christ.'<sup>31</sup> In other words, faith enables the mind – which is endowed with a natural ability to have faith<sup>32</sup> – to understand the content of religious belief, the belief, that is, that everything is from God and that all things derive their being from him. And it is, also, a turning of the will to God in a

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<sup>30</sup> *Conf.* 10. 43. 69: 'Merito mihi spes valida in illo est, quod sanabis *omnes languores* meos per eum, qui sedet *ad dexteram* tuam et te *interpellat pro nobis.*'

<sup>31</sup> E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. by L. E. M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollanz, 1961), p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> *De praed. sanct.* 5. 10: 'Proinde posse habere fidem, sicut posse habere caritatem, naturae est hominum.'

movement informed by charity. It is in this sense that, as Gilson writes, ‘the Augustinian doctrine of the relations between faith and reason gives formal expression to a moral experience’, inasmuch as for Augustine it is impossible to separate ‘illumination of the mind from purification of the heart’.<sup>33</sup> For Augustine to have faith in a religious sense means to embrace obedience and to abdicate pride in an act which marks the beginning of man’s journey to righteousness.<sup>34</sup>

But what does it mean for man to be called upon to make a profession of faith? Moreover, if faith is a divine gift offered to those who believe, what is the relationship between this gift and free will? Lastly, if the initiative of salvation belongs to God, in what way does man engage in his own salvation? These are all questions that reveal the difficult balance of the relationship between divine prevenience and free will, questions that Augustine begins to develop some time before 396 CE, a year at which, with the writing of the *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, his thought undergoes a substantial change.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> *Ench.* 3. 10: ‘Liberaliter enim servit qui sui domini voluntatem libenter facit, ac per hoc ad peccandum liber est qui peccati servus est. Unde ad iuste faciendum liber non erit nisi a peccato liberatus esse iustitiae coeperit servus. Ipsa est vera libertas propter recte facti laetitiam, simul et pia servitus propter praecepti obedientiam. Sed ad bene faciendum ista libertas unde erit homini addicto et vendito, nisi redimat cuius illa vox est: *Si vos Filius liberaverit tunc vere liberi eritis?*’

<sup>35</sup> Scholarship has recognized a shift in Augustine’s theology and, specifically, in his understanding of faith and its origin with the writing of the *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* in 396 CE. Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, p. 87, claims that in the writings prior to 396 Augustine ‘maintains that the individual must have been elected by God, on the basis of his freely willed faith and desire to do the good, so that he is then assisted with the help of the Spirit (*Exp. prop. Rom.* 44. 3)’ and adds that: ‘it is only in *To Simplicianus* that, in light of man’s fallenness, he takes the final, irrevocable step and attributes man’s faith and any good work that he does wholly to the action of God’s grace.’ For the question of faith and its origin in the philosophical context of man’s search for God through understanding, see also Gilson, ‘The First Step: Faith’, in *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, pp. 27-37; The question of faith is analyzed with respect to Augustine’s development of the doctrine of grace in P. J. Burns, *The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980); the question of faith as God’s gift to the elect is, once again, taken up by Harrison, ‘Between Law and Grace’, in *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, pp. 86-88. R. Cessario, *Christian Faith and the Theological Life* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), provides a thorough historical account of the

As TeSelle explains in relation to the *Expositio ad Romanos* – written between 394 and 396 CE – in this earlier stage of his analysis on faith, Augustine claims that God chooses to elect some according *not* to their good works, which are the result of the Spirit’s indwelling in the soul, but according to their faith.<sup>36</sup> That is to say that God chooses to give the gift of the Spirit to those who he foresees will believe.<sup>37</sup> Where there are no merits, Augustine argues, there can be no divine election, insofar as it is through merit that one man is distinguished from another and thus prepared to receive the gift of the Spirit.<sup>38</sup> In TeSelle’s words, therefore, ‘the merit of faith is simply man’s response to the preaching of grace, accepting the divine offer of aid and renouncing independent efforts of his own.’<sup>39</sup> The consequence of this is that if man ‘cannot take credit for being called’, he can take credit for responding to the call, and it is in this sense that man’s response to faith is meritorious.<sup>40</sup> What needs to be noted here is the importance that Augustine places on the freedom of the will in its ability to respond to the divine call.<sup>41</sup> As TeSelle puts it:

Grace is offered freely to all men; its reception in faith is their own act; then the aid of the Holy Spirit is given to them, and if they remain in the

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relationship between faith and reason, and the relationship between God’s grace and man’s response to the divine call.

<sup>36</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, especially pp. 177-78.

<sup>37</sup> *Exp. ad Rom.* 52. 60: ‘Quia nisi quisque credat in eum et in accipiendi voluntate permaneat, non accipit donum Dei, id est Spiritum Sanctum, per quem diffusa caritate bonum possit operari. Non ergo elegit Deus opera cuiusquam in praesentia, quae ipse daturus est, sed fidem elegit in praesentia, ut quem sibi crediturum esse praescivit, ipsum elegerit, cui Spiritum Sanctum daret, ut bona operando etiam aeternam vitam consequeretur.’

<sup>38</sup> *Exp. ad Rom.* 52. 60: ‘Si enim nullo merito non est electio; aequales enim omnes sunt ante meritum nec potest in rebus omnino aequalibus electio nominari.’

<sup>39</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 177.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 177.

<sup>41</sup> *Exp. ad Rom.* 52. 60: ‘Quod si vocatus vocantem secutus fuerit, quod est iam in libero arbitrio, merebitur et Spiritum Sanctum, per quem bona possit operari; in quo permanens (quod nihilominus est in libero arbitrio) merebitur etiam vitam aeternam, quae nulla possit labe corrumpi.’

company of the Spirit (which is again their own doing) they will inherit eternal life on the basis of their good works.<sup>42</sup>

With the *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, however, Augustine introduces some new emphases to his analysis of the will's assent to faith. On the one hand, it is God who, by calling, enables man to will and, by infusing his love, gives man the power to do what he wills; on the other, it is because the call is appropriate to man's condition at the time of the issue of the call, that man can freely respond to it. If many are called but few are chosen it is because only those who are elected – or offered an efficacious call – can accept it.<sup>43</sup> TeSelle explains this relationship between the congruous correspondence between divine call and free response very clearly in the following:

Augustine [...] suggests the perfect harmony between an efficacious calling and a free response, for just as the calling agrees with the one who is called, his response is an agreeing with and an accommodating to (*congruere* and *contemplari*) the one who calls.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast with the *Expositio ad Romanos*, where Augustine advocates a kind of universal and equal dispensation of grace to which the will is free to respond, something begins to be clearly different here: whether one believes or not depends on the character of the call – God can choose to reject some and offer salvation to others in perfect keeping with his justice.<sup>45</sup> Although this notion is clearly associated

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<sup>42</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 177.

<sup>43</sup> *De div. quaest. ad Simpl.* 1. 2. 13: 'Illi enim electi qui congruenter vocati, illi autem qui non congruebant neque contemperabantur vocationi non electi, quia non secuti quamvis vocati. Item verum est: *Non volentis neque currentis sed miserentis est Dei*, quia etiamsi multos vocet, eorum tamen miseretur quos ita vocat, quomodo eis vocari aptum est ut sequantur.'

<sup>44</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 179.

<sup>45</sup> *De div. quaest. ad Simpl.* 2. 16: 'Ait enim paulo ante: *Quid ergo dicemus? Numquid iniquitas est apud Deum? Absit! (Rom. 9. 14)*. Sit igitur hoc fixum atque immobile in mente sobria pietate atque stabili in fide, quod nulla est iniquitas apud Deum. Atque ita tenacissime firmissimeque credatur id

with the question of God's predestination of the elect, 'Augustine', as Williams points out, 'must be credited with the fact that [...] when he devotes any extended discussion to the question of [grace's] interior *modus operandi* this is always described as proceeding by way of ineffable attraction.'<sup>46</sup>

This same relationship between God's efficacious calling and man's necessary response, which is based on what TeSelle calls, 'Augustine's general theory of volition' that one cannot will anything unless 'something comes before' him 'delighting and attracting' his affection, is indeed expressed in terms of love and delight in many of Augustine's works.<sup>47</sup> When in the *In evangelium Ioannis* 26 Augustine analyzes John's statement 'No one comes to me unless drawn by the Father' (6:44), he claims that this drawing is not through any kind of necessity, but through delight or pleasure, in a way that evokes voluntary consent.<sup>48</sup> In keeping with this, Augustine writes that the will is attracted to God in faith '*non necessitas, sed voluptas; non obligatio, sed delectatio*', precisely because faith is the love which, initiated by God, draws the soul back to God according to the soul's deepest desire to return to him. Likewise, in the *Sermons* he writes that the Father's 'drawing' is a 'violence done to the heart', but 'not a rough or painful violence [...]

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ipsum, quod Deus *cuius vult miseretur et quem vult obdurat*, hoc est cuius vult miseretur et cuius non vult non miseretur, esse alicuius occultae atque ab humano modulo investigabilis aequitatis.'

<sup>46</sup> N. P. Williams, *Grace in Saint Augustine* (London: Langmans, Green and Co., 1930), p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> *De div. quaest. ad Simpl.* 2. 21: 'nec velle nec currere nisi eo movente atque excitante poterimus'; *Ibid.* 2. 22: 'Sed voluntas ipsa, nisi aliquid occurrerit quod delectet atque invitet animum, moveri nullo modo potest.'

<sup>48</sup> For this notion of delight in the will's response to the divine call, see E. TeSelle, 'Faith', in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, pp. 347-50 (p. 349). *In ev. Io.* 26. 4: [...] *Nemo venit ad me, nisi quem Pater attraxerit.* [...] *Quomodo voluntate credo, si trahor? Ego dico: parum est voluntate, etiam voluptate traheris. Quid est trahi voluptate? Delectare in Domino, et dabit tibi petitiones cordis tui. Est quaedam voluptas cordis, cui panis dulcis est ille coelestis. [...] Trahit sua quemque voluptas; non necessitas, sed voluptas; non obligatio, sed delectatio.'*

It is sweet, its very sweetness draws'.<sup>49</sup> And again, in the *De spiritu et littera* Augustine writes that a righteous life is a life inspired by the Holy Ghost which 'informs the mind with a love of God and a delight in him', and he adds that it is 'through this gift that [man] cleaves to his maker and burns to enter in participation with his light'.<sup>50</sup> In keeping with the language of election, therefore, God inspires the elect to yearn for goodness and pursue it by presenting the virtue of faith to them under what Williams calls, 'the most beautiful and seductive guise'.<sup>51</sup>

This emphasis on the doctrine of election – namely, the selective nature of the call to faith – becomes more conspicuous in the anti-Pelagian treatise the *De praedestinatione sanctorum* (428 CE). Objecting to the belief that if faith is in man's power, the strengthening of the same is, by contrast, informed by the grace of God, Augustine stresses the insufficiency of man's ability to initiate any morally viable operation without the help of God's grace.<sup>52</sup> Thus, paraphrasing Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he writes, 'no one is sufficient unto himself for the beginning or the completion of any good work [...] in the beginning as well as in the perfecting of every good work, our sufficiency is from God.'<sup>53</sup> The language of pleasure and

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<sup>49</sup> *Serm.* 131. 2: 'Ista violentia cordi fit [...] Ne arbitreris istam asperam molestamque violentiam: dulcis est, suavis est.'

<sup>50</sup> *De spir. et litt.* 3. 5: '[Spiritus Sanctum,] quo fiat in animo eius delectatio dilectioque summi illius atque incommutabilis boni [...] atque inflammetur accedere ad participationem illius veri luminis.'

<sup>51</sup> Williams, *The Grace of God*, p. 33.

<sup>52</sup> *De praed. sanct.* 2. 3: 'Prius itaque fidem qua christiani sumus, donum Dei esse debemus ostendere: si tamen diligentius id facere possumus, quam in voluminibus tot tantisque iam fecimus. Sed nunc eis respondendum esse video, qui divina testimonia, quae de hac re adhibuimus, ad hoc dicunt valere, ut noverimus ex nobis quidem nos habere ipsam fidem, sed incrementum eius ex Deo: tamquam fides non ab ipso donetur nobis, sed ab ipso tantum augeatur in nobis, eo merito, quo coepit a nobis. Non ergo receditur ab ea sententia, quam Pelagius ipse in episcopali iudicio Palaestino, sicut eadem *Gesta* testantur, damnare compulsus est: "Gratiam Dei secundum merita nostra dari"; si non pertinet ad Dei gratiam quod credere coepimus, sed illud potius quod propter hoc nobis additur, ut plenius perfectiusque credamus: ac per hoc, initium fidei nostrae priores damus Deo, ut retribuatur nobis et supplementum eius, et si quid aliud fideliter poscimus.'

<sup>53</sup> *De praed. sanct.* 2. 5: 'nemo sibi sufficit ad incipiendum vel perficiendum quodcumque opus bonum [...] unde in omni opere bono et incipiendo et perficiendo *sufficiencia nostra ex Deo est.*'

delight is here passed over in favour of the compulsive nature of the divine call, which, as anticipated by the title itself, rests on the idea of predestination and the ineffability of God's choices. Seen in these terms, God's unsearchable judgments define nothing other than what Cary calls 'God's foreknowledge of his own gifts' – 'By predestination God indeed foreknew that which he himself was going to do, whence it was said, "He has made that which shall be."' <sup>54</sup> That is to say that the elect are chosen not with respect to their own future actions and merits, but in keeping with the divine foreknowledge of what will happen from the beginning until the end of time, including all that God will do with respect to man's salvation and how he will distribute his gifts of grace to save some from the *massa damnata*.

In keeping with what has been said hitherto we can begin to draw some conclusions. Christ's mediation opens up every man to the possibility of salvation because if on the one hand it offers the appropriate sacrifice for the offence caused by Adam's sin, on the other, it reveals the boundless source of God's love for man – a love that becomes operative in man through faith. In other words, Christ's mediation begins to be effective in the life of an individual only when he or she responds to it in faith that is active through love. Thus put, faith and love become inseparable in Augustine: faith is man's response to God's love for his creature, and faith makes man righteous only when belief in God is informed by charity, which is itself a gift of God. As TeSelle writes, there is for Augustine a difference between *credere Deum* and *credere in Deum*. Whereas the former defines a belief in the existence of God that is shared also by the devils, the latter 'is understood to be

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<sup>54</sup> P. Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 117. *Ibid.* 10. 19: 'Praedestinatione quippe Deus ea praescivit, quae fuerat ipse facturus: unde dictum est: *Fecit quae futura sunt* (Is. 45. 11).'

personal adherence to God or movement towards God', a movement which is ascribed to love.<sup>55</sup> It is with respect to this doctrine of love that we must understand Augustine's sense of God's prevenience. The love of God for man comes always before the love of man for God because it is the former that informs and makes the latter possible.

But, what are we to make then of man's free will? It is my conviction that for Augustine there is no real paradox in the understanding that the bound will of a fallen man, which is naturally inclined to sin, can only be restored to right loving by the pre-emptive activity of divine love. In Chapter Two we have seen how the voluntary act of revolt against God has partly defaced man's likeness to his creator, making him incapable of choosing rightly outside the activity of grace. The divine call is therefore indispensable inasmuch as it enables the bound will to begin to love rightly by effecting in it the delight in goodness, which was lost by sin. To put it in Augustine's own words, faith itself can be called the good will, that is, the good use of the will, and it is in this sense that to have faith is also to begin to be righteous.<sup>56</sup>

### **3.3 - Man's Righteousness and Perseverance in Goodness**

Faith marks, therefore, the moment at which the problematic nature of willing – the inability, inherited with original sin, to clearly see the good and move towards it – begins to be resolved in favour of a progressive harmonization of man's will with

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<sup>55</sup> TeSelle, 'Faith', p. 349.

<sup>56</sup> *Cont. duas epist. Pelag.* 1. 3. 7: 'Ac per hoc bona voluntas, quae se abstrahit a peccato, fidelis est, quia *iustus ex fide vivit* (*Rom.* 1. 17). Ad fidem autem pertinet credere in Christum, et nemo potest credere in eum, hoc est venire ad eum, nisi fuerit illi datum. Nemo igitur potest habere voluntatem iustam, nisi nullis praecedentibus meritis acceperit veram, hoc est, gratuitam desuper gratiam.'

God's will, in what constitutes man's righteousness.<sup>57</sup> It is in the *De peccatorum meritis* that Augustine speaks (even if only theoretically) of the possibility for man of reaching perfection in the here and now of one's existence, although, practically, he continues to view the movement to perfection as a progressive journey which finds its completion beyond time. To the question, can anyone be without sin in this life? he answers that to deny such a possibility would be offensive to God in his unique power to will perfection in time and space. It would also suggest that free will, aided by the presence of grace in the soul, is incapable of reaching perfection, with the consequence of diminishing the power of grace on the one hand, and frustrating the will's aspiration to reaching its end on the other.<sup>58</sup> In principle, therefore, and only by the work of grace, he gives a positive answer to this question, though acknowledging the Bible's sense of there being no such justification here and now: 'For in your sight shall no man living be justified.'<sup>59</sup> If perfection can be obtained in some specific way – man may indeed be perfect as a student yet not as a teacher – absolute moral perfection can only be attained in the life to come.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> For the doctrine of righteousness in Augustine and its influence upon Luther and the Reformation, A. E. McGrath, "The Righteousness of God" from Augustine to Luther', *Studia Theologica*, 36, 1 (1982), 63-78; idem, *Studies in Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), p. 393; idem, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 188; idem, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, p. 226; D. R. Anderson, 'Augustine's Soteriology', in *Free Grace Soteriology* ([www.xulonpress.com](http://www.xulonpress.com), 2010), pp. 301-07.

<sup>58</sup> *De pecc. mer.* 2. 6. 7: 'Nam qui dicunt esse posse in hac vita hominem sine peccato, noli est eis continuo incauta temeritate obsistendum. Si enim esse posse negaverimus, ut hominis libero arbitrio, qui hoc volendo appetit et Dei virtuti vel misericordiae, qui hoc adiuvando efficit, derogabimus.'

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 7. 8: 'quoniam non iustificabitur in conspectu tuo omnis vivens (Ps. 142. 4).'

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 15. 22: 'utique perfectos auditores volens intellegi -, potest ergo fieri, sicut dixi, ut iam sit aliquis sapientiae perfectus auditor, cuius nondum sit perfectus et doctor; potest perfectus esse iustitiae cognitor, nondum perfectus effector; potest perfectus esse, ut diligit inimicos, qui nondum est perfectus ut sufferat. Et qui perfectus est in eo, quod omnes homines diligit, quippe qui etiam ad inimicorum dilectionem pervenerit, quaeritur utrum iam sit in ipsa quoque dilectione perfectus, id est, utrum quos diligit, tantum diligit, quantum illa incommutabilis regula veritatis diligendos esse praescribit. Cum ergo legitur in Scripturis cuiusque perfectio, qua in re dicatur, non negligenter intuendum est, quoniam non ideo quisque prorsus sine peccato esse intellegitur, quia in aliqua re dicitur esse perfectus.'

In practical terms, nobody can indeed be without sin in this life for man in the here and now is still troubled, even after his justification through baptism, by the consequences of sin in the soul. In spite of its continuous renewal, which begins to take place with baptism, the soul can still retain some of its old habits.<sup>61</sup> However, Augustine claims that even if baptism does not mark the immediate collapse of man's old debilitation it positively begins the process of man's renewal advancing him towards spiritual wisdom.<sup>62</sup> In his wish to corroborate this argument he refers to Paul's words in Corinthians where the apostle speaks of man's temporal progress by the working of grace in the soul: 'Even though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.'<sup>63</sup> It is in this sense that man, when still living his life on earth, is both righteous and unrighteous.<sup>64</sup> He is righteous because he is continuously renewed by the Spirit and lives in the hope of his future sonship; unrighteous because the complete renewal will take place only with the redemption of the body.<sup>65</sup>

As recorded in the *Retractationes*, Marcellinus, to whom the *De peccatorum meritis* was addressed, opposed Augustine's assumption that in theory man could

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 7. 9: 'Etsi exterior homo noster corrumpitur, sed interior renovatur de die in diem. Profecto enim qui de die in diem adhuc renovatur, nondum totus est renovatus; et in quantum nondum est renovatus, in tantum adhuc in vetustate est.'

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 7. 9: 'Non enim ex qua hora quisque baptizatur, omnis vetus infirmitas eius absumitur; sed renovatio incipit a remissione omnium peccatorum et in quantum quisque spiritalia sapit, qui iam sapit, cetera vero in spe facta sunt, donec etiam in re fiant, usque ad ipsius corporis renovationem in meliorem statum immortalitatis et incorruptionis, qua induemur in resurrectione mortuorum.'

<sup>63</sup> II Corinthians 4:16: 'Etsi exterior homo noster corrumpitur, sed interior renovatur de die in diem.'

<sup>64</sup> With respect to the question of the conversion of the believer, Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*, p. 99, speaks not of a single conversion but 'of a ever-renewed turning of the will in the right direction'.

<sup>65</sup> *De pecc. mer.* 2. 8. 10: 'Adoptio ergo plena filiorum in redemptione fiet etiam corporis nostri. Primitias itaque Spiritus nunc habemus, unde iam filii Dei re ipsa facti sumus; in ceteris vero spe sicut salvi, sicut innovati ita et filii Dei, re autem ipsa quia nondum salvi, ideo nondum plene innovati, nondum etiam filii Dei, sed filii saeculi. Proficimus ergo in renovationem iustamque vitam per quod filii Dei sumus et per hoc peccare omnino non possumus, donec totum in hoc transmutetur, etiam illud, quo adhuc filii saeculi sumus; per hoc enim et peccare adhuc possumus.'

attain perfection in his life on earth. Although he recognized the importance of such a statement he did not see how it could be demonstrated given the lack of a genuine example.<sup>66</sup> Augustine's response was the *De spiritu et littera*.<sup>67</sup> The treatise does not depart from the positions of the *De peccatorum meritis*, but is rather a reiteration of some of the ideas regarding the relationship between divine grace and man's freedom against those who advocated man's ability to follow the letter of the Old Covenant without the help of grace.<sup>68</sup> Augustine's point here is that everything that man receives is from God, and that to stand by the belief that moral perfection can be achieved without grace is to void the sacrifice of the cross of any meaning.<sup>69</sup> Faith in Christ as the beginning of righteousness, and grace as operative in the continuation of moral perfection are nothing other than divine gifts. The man, therefore, who lives in righteousness, should never congratulate himself, because God gives everything to him regardless of his merits, which are earned by Christ on the cross and by that faith which is given to him.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Retr.* 2. 37: Ad quem scripseram tres libros, quorum titulus est: *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, ubi diligenter disputatur etiam de baptismo parvulorum, rescripsit mihi se fuisse permotum quod dixerim fieri posse ut sit homo sine peccato, si voluntas eius non desit ope adiuvante divina, quamvis nemo tam perfectae iustitiae in hac vita vel fuerit vel sit vel futurus sit. Quaesivit enim quomodo dixerim posse fieri, cuius rei desit exemplum. Propter hanc eius inquisitionem scripsi librum cuius est titulus: *De spiritu et littera*, pertractans apostolicam sententiam ubi ait: *Littera occidit, Spiritus autem vivificat.*'

<sup>67</sup> For an introductory reading of the *De spiritu et littera*, G. Bonner, '*Spiritu et Littera, De*', in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, pp. 815-16. For the relationship between grace and freedom, the commandment of the law and grace, Burnaby, 'Grace and Freedom', in *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, pp. 226-34.

<sup>68</sup> *De spir. et litt.* 19. 32: 'Nemo ergo christianorum aberret ab hac fide, quae sola christiana est, neque quisquam, cum verecundatus fuerit dicere per nos ipsos fieri nos iustos non hoc in nobis operante gratia Dei, quia videt hoc a fidelibus et piis ferri non posse cum dicitur, ad hoc se convertat, ut dicat ideo sine operatione gratiae Dei nos iustos esse non posse, quia legem dedit, quia doctrinam instituit, quia bona praecepta mandavit. Illa enim sine adiuvante spiritu procul dubio est littera occidens; cum vero adest vivificans spiritus, hoc ipsum intus conscriptum facit diligi, quod foris scriptum lex faciebat timeri.'

<sup>69</sup> *De spir. et litt.* 29. 50: 'Nam si per legem iustitia, ergo Christus gratis mortuus est (*Gal.* 2. 21). Porro autem si non gratis mortuus est, *ascendit in altum, captivavit captivitatem et dedit dona hominibus* (*Ps.* 67. 19; *Eph.* 4. 8).'

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 29. 50: 'Nemo itaque gloriatur ex eo quod videtur habere, tamquam non acceperit.'

The question of the relationship between the letter of Old Covenant and the gift of the Holy Spirit is thus resolved in the recognition that the Spirit delivered by the sacrifice of Christ enables man not only to adhere to the commandment, but also to take delight in the righteousness which results from this adherence. It is by God's grace through Christ that the works of the law cease to be onerous and are lifted up as if on wings, because God's love works in the will of man to make him will what God wills.<sup>71</sup> This is to say that the grace, which progressively refashions the soul to its original God-likeness, makes it possible for man to conform his will to God's will in such a way that the commandment of the law comes to constitute the formal content or substance of God's will for man and of man's will for God. The commandment is thus acknowledged to be the result of love, and loses, accordingly, the legalistic sense of prohibition. 'By the law,' Augustine writes, 'we fear God, by faith we hope in God.'<sup>72</sup> It is by the grace of God that fear of punishment is superseded by the love of righteousness because, inspired by the love of God, man sees in the law those commands which seal his renewed friendship with God rather than a limitation to his will.<sup>73</sup> The transition between the law and grace can be, therefore, described as a movement from an outward knowledge of sin accompanied by the inability to overcome it, to an inward working of grace which enables the will to do the good that would otherwise be impossible to achieve. As Harrison puts it,

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<sup>71</sup> *De perf. iust. hom.* 10. 21: 'Laborant autem in Dei praeceptis, qui ea timendo conantur implere; sed perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem et facit praecepti sarcinam levem ag, non solum non prementem onere ponderum, verum etiam sublevantem vice pinnarum.'

<sup>72</sup> *De spir. et litt.* 29. 51: 'Ex lege timemus Deum, ex fide speramus in Deum.'

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 29. 51: 'sed timentibus poenam absconditur gratia. Sub quo timore anima laborans, quando concupiscentiam malam non vicerit nec timor ille quasi custos severus abscesserit, per fidem confugiat ad misericordiam Dei, ut det quod iubet atque inspirata gratiae suavitate per Spiritum Sanctum faciat plus delectare quod praecipit, quam delectat quod impedit. Ita multa multitudo dulcedinis eius, hoc es, lex fidei, caritas eius conscripta in cordibus atque diffusa perficitur sperantibus in eum, ut anima sanata non timore poenae, sed amore iustitiae operetur bonum.'

This is the case because Christ is not only an ‘example’ and the giver of a new law, but is the One Mediator, a spring of inner grace welling up within man. The Spirit, too, not only informs man of the good, but also moves his will to desire it, love it, and delight in it. Obedience motivated by fear or hope of reward, such as the Pelagians urged, is servile when compared with the obedience which springs from inner delight, desire, and love of God [...] It is in the love that grace inspires that man’s true freedom is found.<sup>74</sup>

It is in keeping with this idea of righteousness as a progress in time that, at the height of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine introduces the doctrine of the grace of perseverance as the gift that enables man to continue in faith. To put it differently, the gift of faith, although necessary, is alone not sufficient for man to progress towards righteousness. Thus, the grace of perseverance becomes a determinant factor for the will to remain steadfast in that faith which is necessary for salvation. Not everyone who believes, therefore, is able to continue to trust in Christ unless they have been offered this gift:

I assert, therefore, that the perseverance by which we persevere in Christ even to the end is the gift of God; and I call that the end by which is finished that life wherein alone there is peril of falling.<sup>75</sup>

As Cary argues, ‘for Augustine even true believers are not necessarily saved’, for their lives on earth allow them plenty of opportunities to fall away from faith.<sup>76</sup> If

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<sup>74</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, pp. 110-11. Also Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*, p. 115: ‘[...] when God inwardly moves our wills it is not coercion, because it is not like an external force moving our bodies against our will. Precisely because God is present deep within us, his power over our wills does not violate our wills. Thus Augustine affirms a kind of compatibilism between human free will and divine power over the human heart.’

<sup>75</sup> *De dono pers.* 1. 1: ‘Asserimus ergo donum Dei esse perseverantiam qua usque in finem perseveratur in Christo. Finem autem dico, quo vita ista finitur, in qua tantummodo periculum est ne cadatur.’

<sup>76</sup> Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*, p. 118.

faith, therefore, marks the start of the process of salvation, perseverance is about its accomplishment – i.e. reaching the end in life after death.<sup>77</sup> Williams writes that,

according to [Augustine's] fully developed teaching the grace of 'justification' is not by itself sufficient to bestow eternal life: for this [nature] needs to be crowned by a further and special grace, that of 'final perseverance'.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, man is unable to know whether God has given him this gift, and it is in this sense that the doctrine of the grace of perseverance relates to the question of predestination.<sup>79</sup> This grace is, in fact, not bestowed equally among all men, leading, consequently, to the fall of some and the salvation of others:

Therefore, of two infants, equally bound by original sin, why the one is taken and the other left; and of two wicked men of already mature years, why this one should be so called as to follow Him that calls, while that one is either not called at all, or is not called in such a manner – the judgments of God are unsearchable. But of two pious men, why to the one should be given perseverance unto the end, and to the other it should not be given, God's judgments are even more unsearchable.<sup>80</sup>

In spite of the hardening of his predestination theory, Augustine never loses sight altogether of man's response to the call of God. He still affirmed that the Spirit's leading does not annul but evokes the activity of man's will. Thus, in the anti-

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<sup>77</sup> *De dono pers.* 6. 11: 'Sed ne forte dicatur, usque in finem perseverantiam non amitti quidem, cum data fuerit, id est, cum perseveratum fuerit usque in finem, sed tunc amitti quodammodo, quando agit homo per contumaciam, ut ad eam pervenire non possit.'

<sup>78</sup> Williams, *The Grace of God*, p. 24.

<sup>79</sup> For the question of predestination in Augustine, Williams, *The Grace of God*, pp. 19-43; J. Wetzel, 'Predestination, Pelagianism and Foreknowledge', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 49-58; A. E. McGrath, 'Augustine on the Nature of Predestination', in *The Christian Theology Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 415; Cary, 'Predestined Grace', in *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*, pp. 99-126.

<sup>80</sup> *De dono pers.* 9. 21: 'Ex duobus itaque parvulis originali peccato pariter obstrictis, cur iste assumatur, ille relinquatur, et ex duobus aetate iam grandibus impiis, cur iste ita vocetur, ut vocentem sequatur, ille autem aut non vocetur, aut non ita vocetur, inscrutabilia sunt iudicia Dei. Ex duobus autem piis, cur huic donetur perseverantia usque in finem, illi non donetur, inscrutabiliora sunt iudicia Dei. Illud tamen fidelibus debet esse certissimum, hunc esse ex praedestinitis, illum non esse.'

Pelagian *De correptione et gratia* 4 he writes, ‘*Aguntur ut agant, non ut ipsi nihil agant*’. In this context the grace of perseverance is just another aspect of God’s providence which rules the issues of all human willing, allowing man to respond freely (because freed by that very grace) to the divine call to salvation.

### **3.4 - Augustine and Dante on Redemption: A Comparison**

Notwithstanding the many similarities between Augustine and Dante as regards God’s redemptive act and man’s response to the divine provision, Dante’s theology of redemption offers a new distribution of emphases which will, ultimately, come to outline a different panorama from Augustine’s. Thus, as I shall argue in the following section, the reasons that led God to choose the cross for man’s redemption are resolved within a discourse of the *modus operandi* of divine goodness. Without ever denying the necessity of the incarnation, Dante speaks of its fittingness in restoring man to a life of integrity – ‘riparar l’omo a sua intera vita’, (*Par.* 7. 104), in making him, that is, ‘sufficiente a rilevarsi’, (l. 116). Loyal to the idea of grace as a principle of man’s sufficiency, Dante stresses the importance of nature as disposed from the outset of its existence – namely, from the moment of its creation – to an intellectual desire of God and a yearning to join itself with God in love. The idea of ‘trasumanar’ (*Par.* 1. 70), of moving beyond the human, therefore, presupposes a sense of nature as moving always towards its proper finality — a finality which is at once connatural to it yet only achievable through a movement of grace. This is because rational nature, as has already been stated in Chapter One, is created in the image of God, where with *imago Dei* Dante understands man’s self-consciousness or self-reflection, his potential, that is, for spiritual self-understanding and moral

growth. Viewed from this perspective grace is understood as the principle which enables man to achieve what he is already set out to achieve from the outset of his existence. It is in keeping with this that I shall look at passages in the three canticles that confirm grace not so much as a principle of transcendence, but of nature's empowerment, and that I shall speak of man's sufficiency in grace over and against Augustine's sense of the insufficiency of graced nature to continue in righteousness without further divine assistance.

### **3.5 - Dante on Redemption: 'ma perché Dio volesse, m'è occulto, / a nostra redenzion pur questo modo', (*Par. 7. 56-57*)**

In this section I shall interrogate *Paradiso 7* and Beatrice's reply to the pilgrim's doubt as regards the mystery of the incarnation. As presented by Beatrice, the doctrinal problem troubling the pilgrim lies in the reason for God's choice of the death of Christ for man's redemption. Lines 55-57, which are quoted below in full, mark the start of an explanation which will take up the most part of the remainder of this canto and constitute, in Foster's words, 'l'enunciazione singola più completa del pensiero di Dante sulla redenzione e l'incarnazione.'<sup>81</sup> As has been pointed out by various scholars the canto here analyzed forms a coherent whole with *Paradiso 6* where the birth and death of Christ are framed within the providential role of the Roman Empire.<sup>82</sup> The historical presence of Christ as implicitly presented in

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<sup>81</sup> K. Foster, 'Cristo', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, vol. 2 (1973), pp. 262-69 (p. 269).

<sup>82</sup> W. T. Elwert, 'Paradiso VII', in *Lecture dantesche*, ed. by Giovanni Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1962), pp. 1457-78 (p. 1461): 'se Dante ora fa seguire a VI canto di Giustiniano il VII con lo stesso accorgimento, affidando la parola quasi unicamente a Beatrice [...], ciò egli fece per sottolineare formalmente lo stretto rapporto che corre tra i due canti.' M. Sansone, 'Il canto VII del *Paradiso*', in *Lecture e studi danteschi* (Bari: De Donato, 1975), pp. 185-206 (p. 185), points out the thematic relationship not only between *Paradiso 6* and *7*, but also between these cantos and *Monarchia 2*: 'Chi legga con attenzione il secondo libro della *Monarchia* troverà a grandi linee lo schema dei canto VI e

*Paradiso* 6 (through the mention of Augustus's, Tiberius's and Titus's reigns in which Christ, respectively, was born, died, and was revenged)<sup>83</sup> is completed and resolved, in *Paradiso* 7, within a theological discourse which, as Chiavacci Leonardi has pointed out, confers upon history its full meaning.<sup>84</sup> It is in the latter canto, in fact, that Christ's incarnation and his death are explained within the context of God's infinite goodness or 'larghezza' (*Par.* 7. 115) with a view to man's redemption and it is, precisely, in the speech introduced by the following tercet that Beatrice will start

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VII del *Paradiso*.' G. Rati, 'L'alto e magnifico processo (canto VII del *Paradiso*)', in *Saggi danteschi e altri studi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1988), p. 57, referring to *Paradiso* 6 and 7 specifically, speaks of Dante's tendency to create 'nuclei narrativi' between different cantos of the *Commedia*. See also, Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Paradiso 7*, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, p. 183 (Introduction to the Canto 7): 'Al canto VI, interamente politico, segue questo che può dirsi interamente teologico, con un'alternanza che non ha soltanto una funzione di sapiente avvicendamento retorico, ma che denuncia una stretta, e importante, connessione tematica.' This inextricable tie between the temporal and the eternal, which informs the relationship between *Paradiso* 6 and 7, is at the centre of Dante's discourse of Christ's incarnation in *Mon.* 1. 16. 1. Here Dante speaks of the peace of Augustus's Rome as a perfect state of temporal affairs which was divinely willed for the incarnation of the Son: 'Rationibus omnibus supra positis experientia memorabilis attestatur: status videlicet illius mortalium quem Dei Filius, in salutem hominis hominem assumpturus, vel expectavit vel cum voluit ipse disposuit. Nam si a lapsu primorum parentum, qui diverticulum fuit totius nostre deviationis, dispositiones hominum et tempora recolamus, non inveniemus nisi sub divo Augusto monarcha, existente Monarchia perfecta, mundum undique fuisse quietum.'

<sup>83</sup> As already seen as regards *Mon.* 1. 16. 1, in *Par.* 6. 55-57 Dante sees in the universal peace established during Augustus's reign the Pauline 'fulness of time', that moment in the history of mankind which was providentially willed for the birth of the Son of God: 'Poi, presso al tempo che tutto 'l ciel volle / redur lo mondo a suo modo sereno, / Cesare per voler di Roma il tolle.' Later in the same canto (ll. 82-90), the death of Christ, during Tiberius's reign, is seen as the time at which God revenged the crime committed by Adam: 'Ma ciò che 'l segno che parlar mi face / fatto avea prima e poi era fatturo / per lo regno mortal ch'a lui soggiace, / diventa in apparenza poco e scuro, / se in mani al terzo Cesare si mira / con occhio chiaro e con affetto puro; / ché la viva giustizia che mi spira, / li concedette, in mano a quel ch'i' dico, / gloria di far vendetta a la sua ira.' Finally, in *Par.* 6. 92-93, Dante recounts the time at which God revenged the death of Christ with the destruction of Jerusalem during Titus's reign in 70 CE: 'poscia con Tito a far vendetta corse / de la vendetta del peccato antico.' Dante uses the same historical reference in *Purg.* 21. 82-84, when Statius, speaking of his life on earth, says: 'Nel tempo che 'l buon Tito, con l'aiuto / del sommo rege, vendicò le fóra / ond'uscì 'l sangue per Giuda venduto, / col nome che più dura e più onora / era io di là [...].'

<sup>84</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia: Paradiso VII*, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, p. 183 (Introduction to the Canto), writes that for Dante, and Christianity as a whole, history is explainable only in its relationship with the divine, because it is from the divine that history takes its full meaning and significance: 'Che la storia umana si spieghi soltanto con la storia divina è del resto l'idea che sostiene tutta la *Divina Commedia*, quella teologia della storia che fu il pensiero dominante di tutta l'opera dantesca degli anni posteriori all'esilio [...].'

looking at the reason for this exalted and magnificent process – ‘sì alto e sì magnifico processo’, (*Par. 7. 113*):

Tu dici: “Ben discerno ciò ch’i’ odo;  
ma perché Dio volesse, m’è occulto,  
a nostra redenzion pur questo modo”. (*Par. 7. 55-57*)<sup>85</sup>

For the second time in the space of one canto it is Beatrice who discerns in Dante the fundamental nature of his concern.<sup>86</sup> This rhetorical construction, which uses the pilgrim’s doubt to introduce questions of a certain level of difficulty, has a twofold purpose.<sup>87</sup> First, it builds up expectation with respect to the question in hand, and secondly and in a way that is specific to this case, it points, precisely, to the doctrinal arduousness of the explanation that Beatrice is about to give. It is in keeping with the difficulty of the subject matter that Beatrice, in the lines that immediately follow, will speak of its meaning being hidden (‘occulto’, ‘sepulto’, ll. 56 and 58) from those who have not yet matured in the flame of love. This is a tercet that, in my opinion, points to the deep substance of the question before it is even articulated:

Questo decreto, frate, sta sepulto  
a li occhi di ciascuno il cui ingegno  
ne la fiamma d’amor non è adulto. (*Par. 7. 58-60*)

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<sup>85</sup> With respect to the narrative structure of the *Commedia* and the progression of the doctrinal discourse that has occupied part of the previous canto and occupies all of *Paradiso 7*, the function of *Par. 7. 55-57* is twofold: on the one hand it forces the reader to look back and pause on the meaning of ‘questo modo’, (*Par. 7. 57*); on the other it propels the narrative forward towards a new speech which unfolds the answer to Dante’s unspoken doubt.

<sup>86</sup> Earlier in the same canto (ll. 19-21) Beatrice reveals the content of Dante’s first doubt: ‘Secondo mio infallibile avviso, / come giusta vendetta giustamente punita fosse, t’ha in pensier miso’; In *Par. 11. 19-21*, we learn that Beatrice sees Dante’s thoughts looking directly in God’s light: ‘Così com’io del suo raggio resplendo, / sì, riguardando nella luce eterna, / li tuoi pensieri onde cagioni apprendo.’

<sup>87</sup> For a study of the use of the notion of doubt in the *Commedia*, L. Onder, ‘Dubbio’, in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, 2 (1973), pp. 602-03; For an analysis of ‘dubbio’ within the context of the semantic of knowledge, L. Pertile, *La punta del disio: semantica del desiderio nella Commedia* (Florence: Cadmo, 2005), pp. 23-26.

Ryan is, to the best of my knowledge, one of the two scholars who has recognized the true value of this tercet within the wider atonement context of this canto.<sup>88</sup> He writes that what Dante means to say is that ‘to have one’s life and mind (*ingegno*, not *cuore*) not just touched but shaped by love, is to grow up’, and he adds that,

Dante is [...] now bringing to bear the meaning of love on the relationship of *God* to human beings, as he had in the first two *cantiche*, spoken principally of human beings’ love for each other (or lack thereof) and *their* love for God.<sup>89</sup>

In the case of this tercet, love is the generous energy, God’s grace through Christ, which reaffirms man in his original God-likeness. In other words love is the principle that empowers and liberates man and, ultimately, reaffirms him in his freedom. It is the power which redirects man’s love to its right destination allowing it to measure the proximate good over against the final. What Beatrice is saying here is that to understand love correctly means, precisely, to understand that the reason for the incarnation is to be found in God’s love for the most noble of his creatures. The answer that Beatrice offers to the pilgrim is, therefore, framed within this context, where by love we understand the notion of God’s endless self-giving for a reactivity that has man as its terminus, a reactivity which is made possible by Christ. It is in Christ that the absolute character of divine love is readily discernible because it is through the grace of Christ that man is made sufficient (and the

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<sup>88</sup> Besides Ryan only Sansone, ‘Il canto VII del *Paradiso*’, p. 58, has identified (if only in passing) the ‘fiamma d’amore’ with ‘la pienezza della fede’, linking the idea of love of this tercet to the atonement content of this canto.

<sup>89</sup> Ryan, ‘*Paradiso* VII: Marking the Difference between Dante and Anselm’, p. 126.

operative powers of his soul enabled) to respond, or actualize, the ecstatic finality of his existence. Here, with Took and Ryan, I understand ecstatic finality to mean man's intellectual longing for the ultimate truth and his yearning for participation in God's divinity to which he is connaturally disposed at the outset of his temporal existence and by virtue of his being a likeness to God.<sup>90</sup>

What follows from this tercet is Beatrice's unfolding of the history of man in the three moments which define his relationship with God: creation, sin and redemption. If man's direct creation, Beatrice claims, marks man's dignity over and against the other beings of creation (*Par. 7. 67-69*), the fall, points to the loss of man's conformity to God. Man's proud disobedience ('quando disobediendo intese ir susu', *Par. 7. 100*) resulted in his inability to make amends for his sin ('e questa è la cagion per che l'uom fue / da poter sodisfar per sé dischiuso', *Par. 7. 101-02*); it lay, therefore, with God alone to make reparation for man ('riparar l'omo', *Par. 7. 104*).<sup>91</sup> God, Beatrice claims, could have acted out of either justice or mercy, or both. But it was, precisely, in choosing to act according to both that he showed forth the depths of his goodness. It is when explaining the modes of operation of God's goodness with respect to the incarnation that the emphases specific to Dante's theology of redemption begin to emerge:

Non potea l'uomo ne' termini suoi  
mai sodisfar, per non potere ir giuso  
con umiltate obediendo poi,  
quanto disobediendo intese ir suso;

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<sup>90</sup> J. Took, "'Dante's Incarnationalism": An Essay in Theological Wisdom', *Italian Studies*, 61, 1 (2006), 3-17, especially p. 12. Ryan, 'The Theology of Dante', p. 149: 'What the Incarnation does, then, is restore to humankind the possibility of fulfilling its own deepest urge, to attain immediate knowledge and love of the God who has directly created it.'

<sup>91</sup> For the articulation of this thought in Dante with respect to the theological tradition of which he was part, Ryan, 'The Theology of Dante', p. 149.

e questa è la cagion per che l'uom fue  
da poter sodisfar per sé dischiuso.  
Dunque a Dio convenia con le vie sue  
riparar l'omo a sua intera vita,  
dico con l'una, o ver con amendue.  
Ma perché l'ovra tanto è più gradita  
da l'operante, quanto più appresenta  
de la bontà del core ond'ell'è uscita,  
la divina bontà che 'l mondo imprenta,  
di proceder per tutte le sue vie,  
a rilevarvi suso, fu contenta.  
Né tra l'ultima notte e 'l primo die  
sì alto o sì magnifico processo,  
o per l'una o per l'altra, fu o fie:  
ché più largo fu Dio a dar sé stesso  
per far l'uom sufficiente a rilevarsi.  
che s'elli avesse sol da sé dimesso;  
e tutti li altri modi erano scarsi  
a la giustizia, se 'l Figliuol di Dio  
non fosse umiliato ad incarnarsi. (*Par. 7. 97-120*)

That God's goodness is the central aspect of the incarnation is indicated by the repetition of both 'bontà' and 'larghezza'. However, in Ryan's analysis of Dante's account of the incarnation over and against Anselm's, he observes that these lines are central to the canto because they describe, in characteristically Dantean fashion, the way in which God's goodness operates.<sup>92</sup> 'True and gracious pleasure', he claims, 'is the criterion for good action', and pleasure (to be understood here in the context of God's love for man in the specific act of redemption) was the reason

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<sup>92</sup> Ryan, 'Paradiso VII: Marking the Difference between Dante and Anselm', pp. 117-37, tries to dispel the notion, upheld by the majority of Dantean scholarship, that Dante's doctrine of redemption, as presented in *Paradiso 7*, is mostly borrowed from Anselm's *Cur Deus homo?*. Against this he argues mainly two points. First, that when Anselm speaks of the necessity of the incarnation Dante, by contrast, speaks of its fittingness or convenience. Secondly, the question of redemption as satisfaction of God's justice is not uppermost in Dante's mind, what takes priority in his argument is the idea of redemption as the supreme manifestation of God's goodness. G. Murescu, in *Il richiamo dell'antica strega: altri saggi di semantica dantesca* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1993), especially pp. 203-24, also speaks of the originality of Dante's doctrine of redemption lying, precisely, in his analysis on the two ways 'le due vie' in which he defines God's salvific intervention. Murescu recognizes Dante's closeness to Anselm's and Thomas's view on redemption, but claims that Dante's use of 'larghezza' to describe God's help to mankind is distinctively Dantean.

that led God to show forth in the incarnation of his Son both his justice and mercy, ‘because of the general “law” that a work is the more pleasing to the doer the more it presents of the goodness of his heart.’<sup>93</sup> Dante claims that God could have acted out of justice or mercy alone; he could have pardoned man by way of his omnipotence rescuing him without the mediation of his Son, or he could have let man alone make satisfaction for his sin (ll. 91-93). But if the latter was impossible given the infinity of the offence perpetrated against the divinity (ll. 97-100), the former would have come short of God’s goodness or generosity – or ‘larghezza’ as Dante himself calls it – defying what Ryan calls ‘the logic governing this general law of action’, that the pleasure of an act is proportional to its transparency to the goodness of the agent: ‘Ma perché l’ovra tanto è più gradita / da l’operante, quanto più appresenta / de la bontà del core ond’ell’è uscita’, (ll. 106-08). In other words, in wishing to highlight the pleasure and the goodness of the agent Dante is establishing a proportional relation between the pleasure of an act and the goodness of the agent; the more an act reveals the goodness of the agent, the more the agent finds pleasure or rejoices in the act itself.

The logical conclusion with respect to the incarnation is that this act was all the more pleasing to God because it originated from and revealed the full extent of his goodness, consisting of both his mercy and justice. As a result we have a startling picture, which is, in my opinion, exquisitely Dantean, of a God who rejoices in his own activity because in it he sees the revelation of his infinite goodness – a goodness which is both creative ‘La divina bontà [...] dispiega le bellezze etterne’, (ll. 64 and 66), and recreative, ‘la divina bontà [...] / a rilevarvi suso, fu contenta’, (ll. 109 and

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<sup>93</sup> Ryan, ‘*Paradiso* VII: Marking the Difference between Dante and Anselm’, pp. 130-31.

111). It is in this sense that, in Dante, redemption theology can be seen as an extension of creation theology.<sup>94</sup> The goodness that God reveals in the act of creation is the same goodness in which God rejoices in his choice for man's redemption.

### 3.6 - God's Grace and Man's Sufficiency

The positive assertion of God's generosity as expressed by the cross reaches its high point in the representation of its effects within the human domain.<sup>95</sup> In *Paradiso* 7 the restoration of man's original likeness to God is presented in the following terms, 'ché più largo fu Dio a dar sé stesso / per far l'uom sufficiente a rilevarsi', (ll. 116-17).<sup>96</sup> The meaning of these lines is, in my view, twofold. If on the one hand, Dante is saying that the *Deus homo* – comprising of both the incarnation and the cross – was in itself the only sufficient way to make satisfaction for the infinity of the offence caused by Adam's sin, and to reveal the extent of God's mercy for man, on

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<sup>94</sup> The centrality of God's happiness or joy as principle of action is confirmed by the way Dante uses the theme in doctrinally significant places of the *Commedia*. As seen in the analysis of love in Chapter Two of my thesis, we find the term 'letizia' in *Purg.* 16. 85-90 understood as the desire that God instils in the human soul, which naturally leads man back to the ground of his being. Here God is described as the joyful goodness which not only informs the soul but also moves it into action. The soul, which is 'vagheggia[ta]' (l. 85) and 'mossa da lieto fattore' (l. 89), returns 'volentieri' (l. 90) – wilfully, and also happily or joyfully – to his creator. Statius speaks of God's joyfulness in the exposition he makes of the creation of the human soul in *Purgatorio* 25. After speaking of the various stages of the embryo's development, he states that at the moment at which the embryo is mature ('perfetto' l. 69) God (the 'motor primo [...] lieto' l. 70) creates the human soul, which gathers up within itself the lower or sensitive powers (ll. 67-75). Here the stress is upon God's ('lo motor primo') joyful 'turning' (which recalls the turning of the soul to God in *Purg.* 16. 89-90) upon the natural perfection of the human embryo, described as 'tant'arte di natura' (l. 71). The joyful movement of the creator, as we have learnt from the analysis of *Purgatorio* 18, is reciprocated by the new soul which, resembling the innocent happiness of an infant girl, is 'creato ad amar presto' (l. 19).

<sup>95</sup> Studies on Christ in the *Commedia* include, G. Baglivi and G. McCutchan, 'Dante, Christ, and the Fallen Bridges', *Italica*, 54, 2 (1977), 250-62; R. M. Durling, 'Farinata and the Body of Christ', *Stanford Italian Review*, 2, 1 (1981), 5-35; C. H. Miller, 'Hercules and His Labors as Allegories of Christ and His Victory over Sin in Dante's *Inferno*', *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 5, 1 (1984), 1-17; J. F. Cotter, 'Dante and Christ: The Pilgrim as "Beatus Vir"', *Italian Quarterly*, 28 107 (1987), 5-19.

<sup>96</sup> With respect to the idea of man's lost likeness to God and its restoration by an act of immeasurable divine goodness, in *Con.* 4. 5. 3 Dante writes: 'Volendo la 'nmensurabile bontà divina l'umana creatura a sé riconfermare, che per il peccato de la prevaricazione del primo uomo da Dio era partita e disformata, eletto fu in quello altissimo e congiuntissimo consistorio de la Trinitate, che 'l Figliuolo di Dio in terra discendesse a fare questa concordia.'

the other, Dante is placing the notion of sufficiency within a moral as well as an eschatological context. As regards the latter sense, he is, in other words, concerned with both the renewal of man's God-likeness (or the capacitation of man's operational powers and his freedom primarily), and with the regaining of his immortality as a direct consequence of this. It is in this sense that the question of man's sufficiency in Christ is directly related with the restoration of man's *imago Dei* – i.e. the original conformity to God that man possessed in Eden by virtue of the 'dote' (*Par.* 7. 76) and 'dignitadi' (*Par.* 7. 86) with which he was created.

The idea of man's regaining of 'sufficiency' is one that perfectly coheres with the importance that Dante lends to man's activity for the achievement of righteousness. Recalling some of the points made in Chapter One with respect to man's goodness before the fall might help to bring this idea home more clearly. As already noted, the main emphasis of Dante's representation of prelapsarian man is his likeness to God. Made in the image of his creator, man was able 'to attain [...] knowledge and love of the God who ha[d] directly created [him]'.<sup>97</sup> It was by virtue of this likeness ('somiglianza', *Par.* 7. 75), and the freedom that he possessed in its unadulterated form, that man, who was created 'buono e a bene' (*Purg.* 28. 92), could, in other words, continue to be righteous. Here, by the term 'righteousness' I mean that man, who was created good and for an ultimately good end, was able not only to see what was good for him, but was also able to act to that purpose. This is, I believe, what it means for man to be like God, and this is, in my opinion, what Dante means here when he speaks of man's newly found sufficiency in Christ. Chiming

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<sup>97</sup> Ryan, 'The Theology of Dante', p. 149. For an account of how the question of the *imago Dei* relates to the theological life of the believer, Cessario, 'In the Image of God: The Anthropology of the Theological Life', in *Christian Faith and the Theological Life*, pp. 38-48.

with Dante's generally positive sense of man's moral nature, in Christ man's sufficiency – his ability to act freely for the achievement of an ultimately good end – is confirmed, unambiguously, once and for all.

It is necessary at this point to place the notion of sufficiency within the context of the doctrine of justification, understood as the moment in time at which man is reconfirmed in his status as a son of God through Christ's sacrifice, a doctrine to which the lines above refer. For both Augustine and Dante fallen man is, in fact, insufficient without the grace of the Son. We have seen this idea repeatedly advanced by Augustine from the time at which – after his acquaintance with Simplicianus and as a result of his reading of Romans 9:10-29 – he began to reflect on the nature of man's election and on man's response to the call of faith.<sup>98</sup> We know in fact that when Augustine speaks of the necessity of Christ's mediatorship, his emphasis falls primarily on Christ as the revelation of God's love for man.<sup>99</sup> In Augustine's view it is through this love that man's sins are forgiven and that the process by which man is perfected – i.e. he is made just or righteous – begins. Thus put, the doctrine of justification includes two moments: Christ's incarnation or mediatorship, what McGrath calls 'the *act* of justification', which opens up mankind to the possibility of salvation, and 'the *process* of justification', which entails man's assent to the works of Christ in faith and which is, in this sense, deeply personal.<sup>100</sup>

This is the point at which the meaning of atonement comes fully into view as that of

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<sup>98</sup> McGrath, 'Augustine of Hippo', in *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, pp. 23-36 (p. 25).

<sup>99</sup> In keeping with Burnaby's understanding of Christ in Augustine's theology, McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Doctrine of Justification*, p. 29, writes: 'How is it possible for God, being just, to justify the ungodly? Augustine shows relatively little interest in this question, giving no systematic account of the work of Christ. Instead, he employs a series of images and metaphors to illustrate the purpose of Christ's mission. Of these, the most important is generally agreed to be his demonstration of the divine love for man, *ad demonstrandum erga nos dilectionem Dei*.'

<sup>100</sup> McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Doctrine of Justification*, p. 31.

*at-one-ment*, of the conjoining, that is, of man with God through the universal revelation of Christ and the individual presence of the Son in the soul.<sup>101</sup> If to be universally justified means to become God's children, to be individually justified means to embrace in faith and charity the life of Christ and to be renewed and ultimately empowered by this presence in one's life.<sup>102</sup> Giuseppe Baglivi and Garrett McCutchan explain the relationship between the universal and the personal meaning of the incarnation in what follows: 'Although it is within history, the First Advent is nonetheless characterized by a certain eternal quality: for Divine Grace must always descend into the heart of the individual sinner converted to Christ.'<sup>103</sup> It is through

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<sup>101</sup> With respect to this idea W. Porcher Du Bose, *Soteriology of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 33, writes: 'In the New Testament conception of the matter Jesus Christ not only bears a very near and necessary relation to our Salvation, but He is our Salvation. And he is so in no merely representative and figurative, but in a very material and real way. This can have but one meaning, viz. that our Lord is in Himself, that he is to and for us, and that he is to be in us – and that constitutes or would constitute our Salvation. Thus, if our previous representation of the facts of the case are correct, he is first of all our reconciliation, or at-one-ment.'

<sup>102</sup> Augustine speaks of mankind being made into a new creation in Christ in the *De natura et gratia*. Within the context of Adam's sin and the regeneration of man's nature through grace, he writes, 'Si enim iam sumus in Christo nova creatura', (3. 3). Later in the same treatise Augustine speaks of the grace of God as the way in which man is restored, opposing the grace of restoration to the grace of creation: 'Gratia ergo Dei, non qua instituitur, sed qua restituitur, quaeratur' (53. 62). Although Augustine speaks of new creation in Christ, he is not committed to the idea of justification as an ontological change, which involves a real change in his object. For this latter understanding of the process of justification we have to turn to Thomas and the concept of created grace which entails a distinction between the virtue of justice and the supernatural habit of justice. In justification, according to Thomas, man is translated (entitatively transformed), from a state of corrupt nature to one of habitual grace, from a state of sin to one of justice. In the words of McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, p. 49: 'The *Summa* conceives a special presence of God in the justified, such that an ontological change occurs in the soul. The presence of God in the justified sinner necessarily results in *created* grace – created grace which can be conceived as a conformity of the soul to God.' Studies on Thomas's theology and mainly on the question of justification include, N. Kretzmann and E. Stump (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); E. Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003); R. V. Nieuwehove, "'Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion": Aquinas' Soteriology', in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by Rik Van Nieuwehove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 277-302. Dante's sense of grace's activity in the soul does not show a strong commitment to the Thomistic idea of created grace as an ontological change occurring in the individual. In my opinion, Dante is instead more inclined to see the activity of grace with respect to the strengthening of the powers of the soul rather than an entitative transformation of the same. For this idea of grace as empowerment, J. Took, "'Dante's Incarnationalism": An Essay in Theological Wisdom', pp. 3-17.

<sup>103</sup> Baglivi and McCutchan, 'Dante, Christ and the Fallen Bridges', p. 259.

Christ that humanity regains confidence to approach God and it is through him and through faith in his intercession that man is made sufficient in his earthly journey.

This is the doctrinal context within which the notion of sufficiency of *Par. 7. 116-17* needs to be understood. When Dante speaks of man's sufficiency as regained by and in Christ, he is speaking, precisely, of the effects of justification – effects which, in the case of this canto, he understands to be both universal and personal.<sup>104</sup> By making satisfaction for an offence that man could not repay out of his own strength, and by revealing God's humility in the act of partaking of man's fallen flesh, Christ restored mankind 'a sua intera vita' (*Par. 7. 104*). Christ is, in this first sense, the way home to the Father for everyone who assents to the truth of his life and death. However, within the context of a canto which is interested in establishing man's nobility as derived by his direct creation, and his conformity to God as a consequence of this, with the phrase 'sufficiente a rilevarsi' Dante wishes, in my opinion, to go further. As I have already anticipated, this sentence reveals Dante's sense of redemption as aimed at both justifying and capacitating human nature in and through an act of grace. For him these two aspects of grace go always hand in hand. It is in this sense that for Dante grace enters the soul with a view to accomplishing the potential inherent in it as an *imago Dei*. It is, in other words, through grace that

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<sup>104</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the most detailed analysis of the relationship between individual grace and universal grace in Dante remains that of C. Singleton, 'La giustificazione nella storia', in *La poesia della Divina Commedia* (Bologna: Mulino, 1978), pp. 213-43. On Dante and grace, G. Getto, 'L'epos della grazia in *Paradiso*', in *Scrittori e idee in Italia: antologia della critica (dalle origini al Trecento)*, ed. by Paolo Pullega (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1982), pp. 209-14; B. Panvini, 'La concezione tomistica della grazia nella *Divina Commedia*', *Lecture Classensi*, 17 (1988), 64-85; C. Ryan, "'Natura dividitur contra gratiam': concetti diversi della natura in Dante e nella cultura filosofico-teologica medievale", in *Dante e la scienza*, ed. by Vittorio Russo and Patrick Boyde (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 363-73; S. Rossi, 'Il trionfo della grazia nell'episodio di Bonconte da Montefeltro', *L'Alighieri*, n.s. 3-4 (1994), 83-93; L. Scorrano, 'La legge e la grazia (*Par. 32*)', *L'Alighieri*, n.s. 7 (1996), 19-36; I. Biffi, *La poesia e la grazia nella Commedia di Dante* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1999); J. T. Chiampì, 'The Role of Freely Bestowed Grace in Dante's Journey of Legitimation', *Rivista di Studi Italiani*, 17, 1 (1999), 89-111; P. Cherchi, 'Da me stesso non vegno' (*Inf. X, 61*), *Rassegna Europea di Letteratura Italiana*, 18 (2001), 103-106.

man is enabled, empowered, or quickened from within, and that his love ordered as in a pyramid with God as base or measure for all other loves.<sup>105</sup> Seen thus, grace is a principle of restoration working from within the soul with a view to re-establishing the order by which man was originally subject to God, and by which his natural inclination to the world about is always measured against the love for the Supreme Good. Ultimately for man to be rendered sufficient by Christ is to be reconfirmed in his original freedom and love: that freedom which allows creatures made in the image of God to order their natural desires with a view to eternity. Hence, As Took puts it,

To be renewed in grace [...] is to be confirmed, not in the otherness, but in the sameness of self as called from beforehand to an act of ecstatic existence, to being over and beyond self – ‘transhumanly’ in the terminology of *Paradiso* I. 70 – on the planes of knowing and loving.<sup>106</sup>

Canto 1 of the *Paradiso* is significant in this respect because it focuses, precisely, on this twofold effect of grace upon man. At the outset of the third canticle the scenario is of both the pilgrim’s elevation and the capacitation of his nature, described here, as I have already stated in Chapter Two as regards the notion of love anthropology, as possessing from the moment of creation the potential for transcendence. Dante is here perplexed by the novelty of the sounds and light of heaven and he is unaware of his ‘trasumanar’ (l. 70), which is here described metaphorically through the use of light (l. 82).<sup>107</sup> As Beatrice will reveal, the

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<sup>105</sup> The image of the pyramid with God – the supreme love – as forming the base (or measure) for all other loves is in *Con.* 4. 12. 17: ‘Per che vedere si può che l’uno desiderabile sta dinanzi a l’altro a li occhi de la nostra anima per modo quasi piramidale, che ’l minimo li cuopre prima tutti, ed è quasi punta de l’ultimo desiderabile, che è Dio, quasi base di tutti.’

<sup>106</sup> Took, ‘Dante’s Incarnationalism: An Essay in Theological Wisdom’, p. 12.

<sup>107</sup> *Par.* 1. 82-84: ‘La novità del suono e ’l grande lume / di lor cagion m’accesero un disio / mai non sentito di cotanto acume.’ The symbolism of light pervades the *Divina Commedia* in its entirety and

landscape he sees is no longer earthly but belongs to the heavens to which he is now conjoined.<sup>108</sup> Dante's doubt as to how his body could transcend the heavenly spheres elicits a theological explanation which is also relevant in the context of the current discussion because it is based on the idea of man's natural inclination to God, of his innate yearning, that is, to move to the end term of his desire ('la concreata e perpetua sete / del deiforme regno cen portava', *Par.* 2. 19-21).<sup>109</sup> As I have stated before in the course of my study, this is a desire which is part of the universal order and lies at the heart of man's likeness to God, and of all creatures' likeness to their creator.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, if on the one hand, in ll. 67-69 the reference to the myth of Glaucus's transformation into a deity of the sea points to Dante's own elevation (or 'transhumanization') and to an understanding of grace in terms of man's participation in God's otherness ('Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei, / qual si fé Glauco nel gustar

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has been the subject of interest of many scholars. A good starting point is A. Mellone, "Luce: La 'metafica della luce'", in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, 3 (1973), pp. 712-13. Other studies include, G. Di Pino, *La figurazione della luce nella Divina Commedia* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1952); D. Radcliff-Umstead, 'Dante on Light', *Italian Quarterly*, 9, 33 (1965), 30-43; M. Rutledge, 'Dante, the Body and Light', *Dante Studies*, 113 (1995), 151-65; J. Schnapp, 'Injured by the Light: Violence and *Paideia* in Dante's *Purgatorio*', *Dante Studies*, 111 (1993), 107-18; D. E. Stewart, 'Light', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 562-65.

<sup>108</sup> *Par.* 1. 85-93: 'Ond'ella, che vedea me sì com'io, / a quietarmi l'animo commosso, / pria ch'io a dimandar, la bocca aprio / e cominciò: "Tu stesso ti fai grosso / col falso imaginar, sì che non vedi / ciò che vedresti se l'avessi scosso. / Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi; / ma folgore, fuggendo il proprio sito, / non corse come tu ch'ad esso riedi.'"

<sup>109</sup> Two of the most comprehensive contributions with respect to the semantics of desire in Dante are, L. Pertile, *La punta del disio: semantica del desiderio della Commedia* (Florence: Cadmo, 2005); E. Lombardi, *Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae and Dante* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), where she explores the theme of syntax and desire in medieval theology, grammar and poetry.

<sup>110</sup> It is useful here to recall the lines of *Par.* 1. 103-20: 'e cominciò: "Le cose tutte quante / hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma / che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante. / Qui veggion l'alte creature l'orma / de l'eterno valore, il qual è fine / al quale è fatta la toccata norma. / Ne l'ordine ch'io dico sono accline / tutte nature, per diverse sorti, / più al principio loro e men vicine; / onde si muovono a diversi porti / per lo gran mar de l'essere, e ciascuna / con istinto a lei dato che la porti. / Questi ne porta il foco inver' la luna; / questi ne' cor mortali è per motore; / questi la terra in sé stringe e aduna; / né pur le creature che son fore / d'intelligenza quest'arco saetta, / ma quelle c'hanno intelletto e amore.'

de l'erba / che 'l fé consorto in mar de li altri dèi'), on the other, Beatrice's theological discourse centres on the understanding of man's innate potential for this very elevation. Her speech is based on the notion that grace allows man, in other words, to carry out the potential to elevation which is proper to his nature. When she says that everything (rational and irrational beings) in the universe is ordered so that it can reach its final goal ('onde si muovono a diversi porti', l. 112), her attention falls on the natural movement to perfection of all beings as belonging to their nature by virtue of their original likeness to God, a movement that in human beings has God as a terminus. If man naturally desires God, man can return to him once the impediments of his fallen nature are removed by grace: 'Maraviglia sarebbe in te se, privo / d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso, / com'a terra quiete in foco vivo', (ll. 139-41). Within the economy of the *Commedia*, the pilgrim Dante is able to enter the last realm of the other world because he has been liberated from sin. Dante describes this process in the last cantos of the *Purgatorio* after his passage through the wall of fire in Canto 27 and upon his encounter with Beatrice in Cantos 30 and 31, where he confesses his sins and is baptized respectively. In *Purg.* 27. 131 and again in lines 139-42 Virgil proclaims Dante master of himself. The words 'lo tuo piacere omai prendi per duce', (l. 131), and 'libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio', (l. 140) are expression of a process of purification that has culminated in moral rectitude and that leads the soul to her 'porto [...] con l'istinto a lei dato che la porti', (*Par.* 1. 112 and 114). It is only at this point that Dante 'privo / d'impedimento', (*Par.* 1. 139-40) – freed from the stain of sin – can accomplish the potential to attain full knowledge and love of God, a potential that belongs to him by nature and is fully realized in eternity.

Chiavacci Leonardi writes that this intimate relationship between ‘il mondo delle idee e la vita della storia’ is based on the incarnational nature of the Christian dogma.<sup>111</sup> That is to say that heaven and earth ‘appartengono [all’uomo] allo stesso titolo, anzi il primo [...] è il suo proprio sito’.<sup>112</sup> Dante’s emphasis here is, therefore, on both grace and nature, and, specifically, on grace as the principle upon which nature is made capable of reaching out its finality, a finality which is both beyond self yet present to the self confirmed in grace. This is, ultimately, what it means for man to be like God. In his soul endowed from the outset with powers of self-reflectivity or self-conscience lies the potential of moral and spiritual growth. That is to say that, if through grace nature is empowered from out of itself to its proper finality it rejoices, as indeed God rejoices, in its special kind of sufficiency.

### **3.7 - Empowerment and Faith**

To say, therefore, that for Dante grace is a principle of nature’s capacitation is also to say that in and through grace man is progressively confirmed in his original condition as free determinant in respect to his potential as a creature living in time and longing for eternity. It is not surprising that the poem is rich in sequences that point directly to the will’s courageous and prompt response to the initiative of grace, and it is within this context that the notion of continuation in goodness must be understood. With respect to this idea of moral and spiritual growth in grace, *Inferno* 2 has recently been understood to point to grace as ‘encouragement, as that whereby

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<sup>111</sup> Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Paradiso 1*, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, p. 9 (Introduction to Canto 1).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

the soul is summoned afresh to its own leading project'.<sup>113</sup> Virgil's words – prompted by the three blessed women's care for the lost wayfarer – motivate Dante to cast away the fear and drowsiness caused by sin and redirect his will towards the accomplishment of the journey he has been summoned for.<sup>114</sup> Terms such as 'ardire', 'franchezza', 'virtute', 'franca' all point to grace as a principle of operation which works within the soul to restore it to right-loving. Furthermore, the introduction of the notion of desire in line 136, and its realignment with the pilgrim's original intention ('ch'i' son tornato nel primo proposto'), is propeadeutic to the discussions regarding the relationship between love and freedom that will be undertaken in the course of the journey, and anticipates the last lines of the poem where the pilgrim's will and the desire ('il mio disio e 'l velle', *Par.* 33. 143) are described in their harmonious convergence (a convergence to which Dante refers with the neologism 'inluarsi', *Par.* 9. 73) with 'l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle', (*Par.* 33. 145). This noted, the emphasis of the following lines from *Inferno* 2 is primarily on the operation of the will (and its liberation) with a view to the pilgrim's progress:

'Dunque: che è? perché, perché restai,  
perché tanta viltà nel core allette,  
perché ardire e franchezza non hai,  
poscia che tai tre donne benedette

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<sup>113</sup> Took, "'Dante's Incarnationalism": an Essay in Theological Wisdom', p. 12.

<sup>114</sup> The women I refer to are, of course, St. Lucy, Mary and Beatrice. We learn from Beatrice that in a chain of heavenly grace, Mary descended to Lucy and Lucy to Beatrice to ask succour for Dante (*Inf.* 2. 94-104). Studies on Lucy in Dante include, A. K. Cassell, 'Santa Lucia as Patroness of Sight: Hagiography, Iconography, and Dante', *Dante Studies*, 109 (1991), 71-88. Studies on Dante and Mary include, E. Auerbach, 'Dante's Prayer to the Virgin (*Paradiso*, XXXIII) and Earlier Eulogies', *Romance Philology*, 3, 1 (1949), 1-26; and S. Botterill, *Dante and the Mystical Tradition: Bernard of Clairvaux in the Commedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), especially pp. 148-93. A good introductory study on the importance of Beatrice in the works of Dante is, J. M. Ferrante, 'Beatrice', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard H. Lansing (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 89-95; idem, *Dante's Beatrice: Priest of an Androgynous God. CEMERS Occasional Papers*, 2 (Binghamton: N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992). Other literature on the subject includes the works of C. Singleton, *The Figure of Beatrice* (London: Faber, 1943); idem, *Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958).

curan di te ne la corte del cielo,  
 e 'l mio parlar tanto ben ti promette?  
 Quali fioretti dal notturno gelo  
 chinati e chiusi, poi che 'l sol li 'mbianca,  
 si drizzan tutti aperti in loro stelo,  
 tal mi fec'io di mia virtude stanca,  
 e tanto buono ardire al cor mi corse,  
 ch'i' cominciai come persona franca:  
 'Oh pietosa colei che mi soccorse!  
 e te cortese ch'ubidisti tosto  
 a le vere parole che ti porse!  
 Tu m'hai con disiderio il cor disposto  
 sì al venir con le parole tue,  
 ch'i' son tornato nel primo proposto.  
 Or va, ch'un sol volere è d'ambidue:  
 tu duca, tu signore e tu maestro'.  
 Così li dissi; e poi che mosso fue,  
 intrai per lo cammino alto e silvestro. (*Inf.* 2. 121-42)

Likewise, in the *Purgatorio* grace is understood always as a principle of efficacious progress, and it is in keeping with this that Virgil's constant incitement to the pilgrim must be read. Thus, in *Purg.* 9. 46-48 Virgil spurs Dante to rest assured on the success of the journey and put aside his fear of failure: "Non aver tema" disse il mio signore; / "fatti sicur, ché noi semo a buon punto; / non stringer, ma rallarga ogne vigore [...]". And in *Purg.* 13. 24 the reference to Virgil's and Dante's fast and steady progress, 'con poco tempo, per la voglia pronta', comes immediately after Virgil's address to the sun (ll. 16-21) which, in the second realm, always points to grace as facilitating the pilgrim's progress.

"O dolce lume a cui fidanza i' entro  
 per lo novo cammin, tu ne conduci",  
 dicea, "come condur si vuol quinc'entro.  
 Tu scaldi il mondo, tu sovr'esso luci;  
 s'altra ragione in contrario non punta,  
 esser dien sempre li tuoi raggi duci".  
 Quanto di qua per un migliaio si conta,  
 tanto di là eravam già iti,

con poco tempo, per la voglia pronta. (*Purg.* 13. 16-24)

Again, as has been already pointed out, in *Purg.* 27. 140-42 – be it the moment at which the pilgrim is justified (as argued by Charles Singleton) or that by which the stain of sin is finally removed from his soul (as argued by Antonio Mastrobuono) – the stress is not only on the restoration of man in his original freedom, but, once again, on man’s encouragement to move forward and to proceed steadily by virtue of his grace-given sufficiency: “Non aspettar mio dir più né mio cenno; / libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio, / e fallo fora non fare a suo senno: / per ch’io te sovra te corono e mitrio.”<sup>115</sup> With respect to the *Paradiso*, we have seen at some length that in Canto 1 the process of ‘transhumanization’ (l. 70), which relates to the elevation of nature

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<sup>115</sup> For the question of justification of Dante the pilgrim within the narrative structure of the *Commedia*, C. Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), especially Chapter Four, ‘Justification’, pp. 57-71, and Chapter Six, ‘Justification in History’, pp. 86-99. Singleton claims that in Dante justification on an individual scale follows the same pattern as justification on a universal scale. In both cases there is preparation for justification, leading to a state of natural justice, and justification proper which makes man’s actions meritorious (p. 88). In the first case the individual is prepared to receive sanctifying grace, or to use the Aristotelian terminology, the matter is prepared to receive a form, namely the soul is prepared to receive sanctifying grace. In the second case, in the context of the historical coming of Christ, Singleton speaks of preparation in the context of that justice brought about by the Roman Empire (symbolized by Virgil) which, for Dante, prepared history and mankind as a whole for the coming of Christ (p. 89). The main thrust of his argument is that in the narrative structure of the *Commedia* the pilgrim’s preparation for which Virgil is, indeed, responsible leads him to a state of natural order which will, in turn, ready him for the infusion of grace upon his encounter with Beatrice, an infusion which will raise him to the supernatural order. In keeping with this, he argues that the pilgrim’s justification takes place in the Garden of Eden, at the end, that is, of his journey through the first and second realm. Thus the journey up until this moment would have constituted the pilgrim’s preparation for the infusion of sanctifying grace. He also argues that the existence of the first and second realm is utterly depended on this interpretation. If there is no preparation, he argues, there is no need, consequently, for Dante’s journey through hell and purgatory. This interpretation has remained unchallenged until the publication in 1990 of A. Mastrobuono’s, *Dante’s Journey of Sanctification* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990). In the First Chapter, ‘Sanctifying Grace: Justification and Merit’, pp. 1-129, Mastrobuono sets out to show what he believes to be the flawed nature of Singleton’s argument by painstakingly pointing out those moments in *Journey to Beatrice* where he thinks that the scholar has either misunderstood or misquoted Aquinas. His first criticism is that Singleton is wrong in claiming Thomas’s authority for his reading of the relationship in Dante between nature and grace. Within a post-lapsarian context, for Thomas man’s attainment of original justice is due to actual or transitory grace. Only thus can man receive sanctifying grace which makes him meritorious. The second point that Mastrobuono wishes to make is that the reception of sanctifying grace by the pilgrim does not take place, as Singleton had suggested, in the Garden of Eden but in the Prologue scene before the pilgrim enters the first realm of other world. For a critical response to Mastrobuono’s thesis see C. Ryan, ‘Review Article’, *Italian Studies*, 46 (1991), 110-14.

into a state which confirms man's power of transcendence by virtue of grace, is nonetheless grounded on the potential of nature to move beyond self which it possesses upon creation. It is in this sense that the activity of grace in Dante's *Commedia* can be understood as a principle of both nobilitation and empowerment. Where there is grace, nature is not destroyed, or superseded, but enabled from within for the achievement of its full potential both in time and eternity.

It is interesting to note, therefore, that the importance that Dante gives to moral endeavour and nature's nobility coincides, in doctrinally significant moments of the poem, with Dante's focus on man's response to God's grace channelled finitely through the Scriptures and the Church.<sup>116</sup> Here it is a question of stressing, once again, the importance of human response to the movement of grace, rather than limiting the role of grace with respect to nature's activity. This idea is clearly expressed in *Paradiso* 24, a canto that reveals, in my opinion, Dante's personal sense of the relationship between nature and grace. In what follows, I shall present some of the points made by Ryan in "'*Natura dividitur contra gratiam*': concetti diversi della natura in Dante e nella cultura filosofico-teologica medievale".<sup>117</sup> In this article Ryan touches specifically on the doctrine of faith acquisition in Thomas (and, indirectly, in Augustine), exploring the different stages in which grace enters human activity to

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<sup>116</sup> Studies on the relationship between Dante (and the *Commedia* especially) and the Bible include, P. E. Hawkins, 'Dante and the Bible', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 120-35; C. Kleinhenz, 'Autorità biblica e citazione poetica: osservazioni su Dante e la Bibbia', *Filologia e Critica*, 20, 2-3 (1995), 353-64; L. Cardellino, *Dante e la Bibbia*, Series Bibbia e Oriente: La Bibbia (Bornato: Sardini, 2007). Recent studies on the role of the Church in the poem and Dante's theological experience include, S. Botterill, 'Ideals of the Institutional Church in Dante and Bernard de Clairvaux', *Italica*, 78, 3 (2001), 297-313 (later publ. in *Dante: The Critical Complex*, ed. by Richard H. Lansing, 4 (2003), pp. 405-21); A. Cassell, '*Lunas est Ecclesia*': Dante and the 'Two Great Lights', in *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 69 (2001), 1-26; *Dante and the Church: Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. by Paolo Acquaviva and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press – The Foundation for Italian Studies, 2007).

<sup>117</sup> Ryan, "'*Natura dividitur contra gratiam*': concetti diversi della natura in Dante e nella cultura filosofico-teologica medievale', pp. 363-73.

prepare it to assent to the content of faith. He then compares this Thomist doctrine of faith acquisition (a doctrine that he claims Thomas derived from Augustine) to the answer that Dante gives Peter in *Paradiso* 24 with respect to the beginning of his own belief. By drawing a distinction between Thomas's understanding of faith acquisition and Dante's sense of the same, he then confirms some of his earlier assumptions regarding Dante's reverence for the activity of nature over and against grace.

By way of introduction and with respect to way in which (and the reasons for which) grace enters nature, Ryan writes:

[...] quando un'operazione appartiene alla natura, Dio non vi è presente se non indirettamente, cioè come autore della natura, che coopera con le potenze naturali; queste possono esercitarsi senza nessuna determinazione nuova ricevuta da Dio; quando dall'altra parte l'operazione appartiene alla grazia, Dio è direttamente coinvolto, sia come l'autore della nuova potenza da lui data oltre le potenze umane, sia come autore o co-autore dell'operazione stessa realizzata da questa nuova potenza [...] la grazia, e dunque l'intervento diretto di Dio, comincia a farsi presente precisamente là dove la natura si dimostra inadeguata; dunque, si parla della necessità della grazia quando la natura si dimostra incapace di raggiungere un certo fine, un certo scopo. "Natura dividitur contra gratiam", perché la grazia indica debolezza o incapacità da parte della natura.<sup>118</sup>

Ryan's argument is based on the conviction that Christian theologians have been inclined to 'magnificare la novità del Vangelo svalutando la natura: per dirlo crudamente, tanto meno vale la natura, tanto più vale la grazia'.<sup>119</sup> With this in mind he sets out to look at the relationship between nature and grace *vis-à-vis* Thomas (and Augustine to a lesser extent), in order to identify when and how Dante insists

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 2 p. 363.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* p. 364.

on the presence of grace within the human realm. It is within this context that, for Ryan, Dante's respect (or reverence, as he puts it) for nature will become clear.<sup>120</sup>

Looking at the *Summa Theologiae* he argues that Thomas, as regards the origin of faith, writes that two things are needed for the attainment of faith, first that some propositions are presented to man and, secondly, that man gives his assent to them.<sup>121</sup> He then adds a third moment by which man is moved inwardly to assent and be elevated to the supernatural content of faith.<sup>122</sup> To sum up, for Thomas faith requires: first, some propositions of faith; secondly, man's assent to these; thirdly, the preparation for assent by way of the prevenient work of grace. With respect to the aim of my thesis, it is useful to note that according to Ryan Thomas's mature understanding of grace always follows in Augustine's footsteps. This is clearly summarized in what follows:

Se torniamo [...] a quella relazione tra natura e grazia, San Tommaso rimase risolutamente agostiniano [...] Anzi, la teologia della grazia d'Agostino, elaborata negli ultimi decenni della sua vita contro Pelagio e i suoi seguaci, si rivela come la radice di quella di Tommaso.<sup>123</sup>

This quotation stands, in fact, to confirm my earlier investigation into the question of the origin of faith in Augustine. However, although it is true that Augustine's sense of the prevenient work of grace in faith is crystallized during the

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* p. 363.

<sup>121</sup> *ST.* 2a 2ae q. 6 1r.: 'Respondeo dicendum quod ad fidem duo requiruntur. Quorum unum est ut homini credibilia proponantur: quod requiritur ad hoc quod homo aliquid explicite credat. Aliud autem quod ad fidem requiritur est assensus credentis ad ea quae proponuntur.'

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* 2a 2ae q. 6 1r.: '[...] oportet ponere aliam causam interiorem quae movet hominem interius ad assentiendum his quae sunt fidei [...] Quia cum homo, assentiendo his quae sunt fidei, elevetur supra naturam suam, oportet quod hoc insit ei ex supernaturali principio interius movente, quod est Deus. Et ideo fides quantum ad assentum, qui est principalis actus fidei, est a Deo interius movente per gratiam.'

<sup>123</sup> Ryan, "'Natura dividitur contra gratiam': concetti diversi della natura in Dante e nella cultura filosofico-teologica medievale', p. 370.

anti-Pelagian controversy, it is important to note that the genesis of this notion lies outside a polemical context, when in 396 CE – some twenty years before his first direct confrontation with Pelagius – he begins to reflect on the Pauline letter to the Romans.<sup>124</sup> Augustine’s teaching on faith, linked as it is to questions of divine foreknowledge and man’s predestination, asserts once and for all the prevenience of God in all matters regarding man’s salvation. Man cannot start to believe if God does not call him from beforehand. Be it an inward or external call, man’s will has to be prepared and moved in order to respond the divine intervention.

Now, when looked at against this theological context, what we have in Dante is a rather different sense of the issue. Dante’s account of the origin of faith in *Paradiso* 24 lacks, in fact, the reference to the inward movement of grace as understood by both Thomas and Augustine. Let us see what Dante has to say about the content of faith and the acquisition of the same:

Appresso uscì de la luce profonda  
che lì splendeva: “Questa cara gioia  
sopra la quale ogne virtù si fonda,  
onde ti venne?”. E io: “La larga ploia  
de lo Spirito Santo, ch’è diffusa  
in su le vecchie e ’n su le nuove cuoia,  
è silogismo che la m’ha conchiusa  
acutamente sì, che ’nverso d’ella  
ogne dimostrazion mi pare ottusa”.  
Io udi’ poi: “L’antica e la novella  
proposizion che così ti conchiude,  
perché l’hai tu per divina favella?”.  
E io: “La prova che ’l ver mi dischiude,  
son l’opere seguite, a che natura  
non scalda ferro mai né batte incude”.  
Risposto fummi: “Dì, chi t’assicura  
che quell’opere fosser? Quel medesimo  
che vuol provarsi, non altri, il ti giura”.  
“Se ’l mondo si rivolse al cristianesimo”,

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<sup>124</sup> McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, pp. 24-25.

diss'io, "sanza miracoli, quest'uno  
è tal, che gli altri non sono il centesimo:  
ché tu intrasti povero e digiuno  
in campo, a seminar la buona pianta  
che fu già vite e ora è fatta pruno". (*Par.* 24. 88-111)

The lines above follow immediately from Dante's answer to Peter's question as to the content of faith: "Dì, buon Cristiano, fatti manifesto: / fede che è?", (*Par.* 24. 52-53). His reply, 'fede è sustanza di cose sperate / e argomento delle non parventi', (*Par.* 24. 64) reproduces the text of Hebrew 11:1, '*Est autem fides sperandorum substantia rerum, argumentum non parentum*' and – with the addition of ll. 70-78 – describes faith as a kind of knowing. In other words, by faith man accepts at the outset the things that he wishes to prove: faith is awakened in man by the breathing of the Spirit in the Old and New Testament in what Dante refers to as a kind of prior syllogism, a syllogism which precedes any kind of rationalism and reasoning and which, at one and the same time, overrides any kind of rational investigation ('ogne dimostrazion mi pare ottusa').<sup>125</sup> However, put thus, for Dante faith is not a matter of direct divine inspiration in man, it is, by contrast, the awakening of the mind to the truth of revelation as breathed in the Old and New Testament by the Holy Spirit. As Peter presses Dante even further, we learn that the pilgrim holds the Scriptures as revelatory of the Word of God on the basis of the miracles that followed from its divulgation. To believe is, ultimately, to accept that the Scriptures contain the Word

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<sup>125</sup> With respect to the question of faith and the response that Dante gives Peter in *Paradiso* 24 as regards the form of his faith, Ryan, 'The Theology of Dante', p. 150-51, writes: 'It is indicative of the theological temper of his time that Dante, in responding to questions regarding the form of his faith and the direction of his supreme love, cites not just Christian sources, not just authority, but also philosophy and reason (24, 127-47; 26, 23-48). Indeed, he accords the latter a certain priority, a greater obviousness [...] It is perhaps difficult in an age such as ours to realize that for Dante, mind as well as heart, intellect as well as will, indubitably point towards the correctness of faith in, and love of, God. Not to set one's heart on God as the supreme good is for Dante an intellectual as well as a moral failure.'

of God, an acceptance which is grounded on the biggest miracle of all – i.e. the worldwide spreading of Christianity. In other words to have faith is, for Dante, to recognize in the historical occurrence of the Revelation the manifestation of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. Ryan concludes his article by claiming that in the process of faith acquisition ‘la grazia interiore sembra superflua per Dante: bastano la rivelazione esteriore e la natura umana’, and this is certainly true in the context of *Paradiso* 24.<sup>126</sup> But what is interesting to note in this context, is not so much the limitation imposed on the activity of grace, but the responsibility that Dante lends to the individual man, born within the dispensation, to accept and respond to the call of faith revealed in the Scriptures and, most of all, in the life and death of Christ.

### **3.8 - Conclusion**

To speak of the Christ event is to speak of the way in which God chooses to save man from sin. Christ constitutes, in this sense, the way back to the Father: he is the bridge between man and God. In the words of Augustine he is the mediator who stands midway between God and man so that by participating in man’s humanity, he allows man to participate in God’s divinity. In the words of David V. Meconi, ‘The Christ Augustine seeks is both man and God: participating downward to save and returning to redeem.’<sup>127</sup> Understood thus, the fullness of Christ lies precisely in the way in which the Father sent the only-begotten Son to partake in the human condition in order to bring fallen humanity back to the perfection of their life. The question here is one of upward and downward ‘participation’ and of humility. The

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<sup>126</sup> Ryan, “‘*Natura dividitur contra gratiam*’”: concetti diversi della natura in Dante e nella cultura filosofico-teologica medievale’, p. 367.

<sup>127</sup> Meconi, ‘The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine’s *Confessions*’, p. 71.

condescending of the Father, which is revealed by the taking on the human flesh and the nailing of the same on the cross is, ultimately, an act of humility willed by the Father and carried out by the Son. In the humility of Christ is the undoing of the hubris of Adam's sin. It is in this sense that Lamberigts writes that 'Augustine's whole view of history could be reduced to the stories of two individuals: Adam and Christ. As *dramatis personae*, they are perfect foils for each other'.<sup>128</sup>

When in *Paradiso 7* Beatrice reveals Dante's concern over the contradiction that God *justly* punished (with the destruction of Jerusalem) the *just* revenge of the cross (ll. 20-21), the answer given to the pilgrim is contextualized within the doctrine of the *Deus homo*. That the sacrifice of Christ was at once just and justly punished is thus discussed with respect to the union in Christ of two natures: the human and the divine. Even though Christ's humanity was, according to Beatrice's explanation, free from the stain of original sin, his virgin birth from a woman made his flesh partake in Adam's sin. Looking therefore at his humanity, nothing, Beatrice claims, was more just than his sacrifice on the cross. By the same token, looking at his divine nature, nothing was more justly carried out than the providentially willed destruction of Jerusalem, which resulted in revenge for the innocent death of God's child. In *Paradiso 6* and *7* Dante engages the reader in a dialectic between time and eternity, grounding the Christ event in the history of the world, and more precisely, in the history of the Roman Empire, providentially chosen to bring about the miraculous Christianization of all people. The theological discussion which reveals the reasons for the incarnation in the infinity of God's 'larghezza' (*Par. 7. 115*), is thus part of a wider discussion which seeks to establish an enduring link between man's presence

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<sup>128</sup> Lamberigts, 'Competing Christologies: Julian and Augustine on Jesus Christ', p. 174.

in the world and his eternal destiny. The *Deus homo* is, for Dante, a question of both justice and mercy understood as mutually dependent aspects of God's goodness (or love) for man who lives in time and longs for eternity.

When it comes, then, to drawing a comparison between Augustine and Dante, the first thing to say is that they share much of the substance and the terminology relating to the incarnation. The incarnation is, as I have just pointed out, the union in the one person of Christ of two natures; it is the binding by the eternal love of God of the human and divine nature; it is the mediation, or meeting ground, for the work of reconciliation; it is the downcoming of the divinity with a view to man's redemption, and it is the ultimate example of God's humility. At the heart of all this is God's love for the noblest of his creatures, a love that heals out of its own gratuitousness. The question of divine love as being at the heart of man's restoration is, in this sense, common to both Augustine and Dante. Notwithstanding the importance they place on the doctrine of satisfaction – which, as Ryan writes, established that an offence against God required 'the offender to make recompense comparable to the offence given' – it is not on the question of the appeasing of God's justice via the cross, but on the cross as manifestation of God's love or goodness for man that their interest lies.<sup>129</sup> Understood thus, the Christ event opens up for man the possibility for salvation for all those who believe. However, it is precisely when the universal event of salvation becomes individualized in man's response to the divine call that the differences between Augustine and Dante begin to emerge, because at the heart of this is their sense of the relationship between grace and nature.

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<sup>129</sup> Ryan, 'The Theology of Dante', p. 149.

The emphases that Augustine places on the question of man's response to God's call changed during his first years as a bishop in Hippo around 396 CE. As I have pointed out, in the *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* Augustine begins to ponder on questions of God's election and man's predestination, a reflection which is informed by his renewed reading of Paul's letter to the Romans. It is during these years (and long before the Pelagian controversy began) that Augustine starts to rethink his original idea of faith. As TeSelle puts it, in the years preceding his appointment in Hippo and, more precisely, in the *Expositio ad Romanos* Augustine claimed that God chooses the elect according to their merit. Seen thus divine election rests on the foreknowledge of man's belief, and 'the merit of faith is simply man's response to the preaching of grace, accepting the divine offer of aid and renouncing independent effort of his own'.<sup>130</sup> In the *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* Augustine's idea of predestination begins to shift towards a renewed understanding of merit and God's prevenience, and a renewed reading of the biblical story of Esau and Jacob. What God rewards by electing someone is not what he foresees will be his faith, but what he foresees will be the gift of grace that God himself will place upon the elect. The original idea of a universal grace, which is dispensed in keeping with God's foreknowledge of man's merit, is therefore superseded by the notion of a selective call which is efficacious insofar as it elicits man's free response. In this sense man is called from beforehand efficaciously in order to believe. The grace of perseverance – the grace that allows the faithful to continue in faith – is thus but another aspect of Augustine's sense of fallen nature's insufficiency with respect to its moral and supernatural task. To say

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<sup>130</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 177.

that man needs to persevere in goodness is to acknowledge that man lives in time and is therefore constantly presented with plenty of opportunities to fall back into sin. Those who are elect to persevere are those who will be saved by God's rewarding of his own gifts upon them.

Dante's understanding of the question of redemption and the origin of faith in man could not be more different from Augustine's. The question of man's regained sufficiency in Christ is treated in *Paradiso 7* within the broader context of man's direct creation and man's likeness to God by virtue of this. If to be like God is to participate in God's life, the incarnation, in the words of Ryan, 'restore[s] to humankind the possibility of fulfilling its own deepest urge, to attain immediate knowledge and love of the God who has directly created it.'<sup>131</sup> Thus contextualized, the question of man's sufficiency in Christ revolves primarily on the capacitation of human nature, and of man's freedom with respect to its function in enabling man to reach his proper finality. It is within this context of man's likeness to God that I have discussed the relationship between love and freedom of *Paradiso 1*. The order inherent in creation entails that everything that exists, animate and inanimate, is in possession of a tendency, inclination or love that moves them towards the destination proper to their nature. In man, this love is rational and directed, when the natural order is respected, towards his ultimate good, i.e. towards God. Sin comes to impinge precisely on that order by corrupting the right operation of the will, thus luring the soul into proximate pleasures. It is in this sense that the likeness of God is obscured in man, and it is this aspect of man's corruption that the incarnation comes to restore. But as we have seen for Augustine, for Dante too, the effect of the

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<sup>131</sup> Ryan, 'The Theology of Dante', p. 149.

incarnation has to be internalized by the individual with a personal response which entails man's assent to the truth of Christ's life and death in an act of faith. It is precisely in the notion of faith that the question of the universality of the incarnation meets that of man's response. In Dante, faith is synonymous with having a good will liberated by grace, those who believe are freed from the obstacle of a corrupt will and released towards the accomplishment of their true call of return to God. We have also seen that in Dante the question of faith acquisition is deeply rooted in the notion of man's historicity and the responsibility he holds to assent to a message that God has revealed to those living within the dispensation. Moreover, I believe (and *Paradiso 24* is a case in point here) that Dante was alive to the fact that the redemptive work of Christ was mediated to him by the Scriptures and the Church, and it is in this sense that we must understand the commitment of the individual believer to respond to a work of redemption that God unfolds in history through the incarnation.

## Conclusion

In an attempt to place my research within the context of Dante and Augustine scholarship, in the beginning of this study I identified three different methodological approaches by which critics have explored the way Augustine has entered Dante's experience as a writer. I argued that, contrary to the tendency of early scholarship to interpret Augustine's absence from the poem as evidence of Dante's refusal to have anything to do with him, since Calcaterra in 1931 critics have begun to suggest that Augustine has a deeply informing presence in Dante. In this new context, scholars have spoken of Augustine as one of Dante's *auctores*, focusing on his occasional presence subject variously to acknowledgement and repudiation (Calcaterra, Chioccioni, Hawkins), or of Dante's Augustinianism, in the sense of a set of preoccupations woven more or less systematically into the text (Freccero, Took).

It is precisely from the vantage point of past research that I set out to describe my methodology and revealed the reasons for my choice. I claimed that my intention was not to read Augustine into Dante – i.e. to find, in the words of Moore, 'fresh points of resemblance' between the one and the other – thus advancing a new theory for Dante's Augustinianism, neither did I wish to engage in further discussions and speculations as to the absence of Augustine from the *Commedia*.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, in describing my approach as doctrinal, I distanced myself from the works of Calcaterra and Chioccioni, arguing that I did not aim at establishing Augustine as one of Dante's *auctores* by isolating moments in the *Commedia* that can be traced back to

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<sup>1</sup> E. Moore, *Studies in Dante*, First Series: Scripture and Classical Authors in Dante (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 294.

Augustine's texts. Instead, having noted and assimilated the wealth of resources that scholarship has produced since Moore's study in 1896, I committed myself to a different approach involving a reading of Dante alongside Augustine so as to offer an account of salvation theology in the one and the other under three main aspects: prelapsarianism, the fall, and the redemptive work of God in Christ. Basing my argument on a strict reading of the text, I conducted a doctrinal-historical analysis of their works leaving scope for the two theological systems to emerge independently. But I have also arranged my thesis in such a way as to allow for the patterns of thought advanced by Augustine and Dante to enter into a dialogue with each other, a dialogue at every point informed, for all its distribution and re-distribution of emphases, by a common existential intensity, a shared preoccupation with what it might mean for man *to be* both for self and for God. Conscious at all times of their belonging to a common profession of faith, I have spoken of differences within the context of sameness which make for a relationship between Augustine and Dante as one of endless continuity and contrast. I shall now turn my attention to the individual chapters summarizing their content with a view to focusing attention on my findings.

In Chapter One I explored the notion of man's original righteousness in Augustine and Dante. In Christian terms we cannot speak of righteousness without presupposing a relationship between man and God. In other words, man is not righteous in and of himself; his righteousness depends on the way in which he relates to his creator. Created in the image of God, man was in possession of a rational soul by virtue of which he could enter into a self-conscious relationship with God. It is in this sense that Adam's life in Eden constituted a good life in a religious sense,

inasmuch as by the right exercise of his freedom he could live both peacefully and creatively with God.

These are all important aspects of Augustine's understanding of man's righteousness before the fall which my analysis of the *De civitate Dei*, the *De natura et gratia* and the *De correptione et gratia* has confirmed within the context of grace. In keeping with Gilson's brief but enlightening analysis of man's prelapsarian perfection, my main contention with respect to Augustine's sense of the same issue has been that all that man possessed in Eden he attributes to a gift of grace.<sup>2</sup> Thus, man was created good, but his goodness depended on the communication of that goodness from God.<sup>3</sup> By the same token, the state of rectitude by which his body was subjected to his soul and his soul to God was granted to him by virtue of a generous and free divine dispensation. Finally, the gift of immortality was available to him if he persisted in this state, a perseverance that was made possible by a further gift of God.

What I set out to demonstrate in this section of Chapter One was that for Augustine man's prelapsarian righteousness does not proceed from the state of original justice in which he was created. Be it because, as Gilson puts it, Augustine neglects to give a definition of what man's 'metaphysical essence' is by nature, or, as TeSelle argues, he 'pays no much attention' to the situation in which man was first created, the result is a blurring of the line between nature and grace, and at the same time a tragic picture of prelapsarian nature before the fall: incapable of

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<sup>2</sup> E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. by L. E. M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961), p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> *De civ. Dei* 14. 26: 'Vivebat itaque homo in paradiso sicut volebat, quamdiu hoc volebat quod Deus iusserat; vivebat fruens Deo, ex quo bono erat bonus.'

continuing in goodness without grace, nature was nonetheless free to turn against God – a freedom that man in fact used to this effect.<sup>4</sup>

Dante's sense of prelapsarian righteousness is very different from Augustine. If Augustine's reasoning is always *ex gratia*, what we have in Dante is primarily a celebration of nature in its uncorrupted state: ultimately, Dante's is a celebration of man being made in the image of God in his capacity for moral determination and thus for a species of righteousness properly his own. It seems apparent to me that for Augustine grace is directly involved in actualizing the operational potency of man's powers; in this sense, even in Eden, grace is both operational and co-operational. By contrast, for Dante man's proper operation as a man is a property of his being the way he is, the way he was made. In this sense God is only present as author of that nature which is created with the power to actualize its moral potential from out of itself. Grace, then, functions here not as a principle of facilitation or co-operation, but as an immanent principle of activity.

In *Paradiso 7* the doctrine of creation is central to Dante's celebration of unfallen nature and its uncorrupted powers. It is because man is created 'sanza mezzo' (*Par. 7. 67*) and without the intervention of secondary causes, that he is like God, and it is precisely because of this likeness that he enjoys a privileged position in the scheme of things. Seen thus, the notion of creation 'sanza mezzo' serves two functions: first, it confirms man's ontological dependence on God only; secondly, it confirms man's freedom to maintain himself in that subordination which is central to his goodness. Man's likeness to God is therefore identified with respect to both his potential to enter in a relationship with God, and his ability to do so by virtue of his

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<sup>4</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, p. 149; E. TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), p. 314.

untainted freedom without God's further assistance. This is, ultimately, what it means for man to be created 'buono e a bene' (*Purg.* 28. 92): by virtue of his direct creation man is given the power (and responsibility) to actualize the goodness of which he was capable with a view to an immortality which was in his grasp if he thus wished to continue in goodness.

In Chapter Two I moved onto the question of original and actual sin. The difficulty of explaining the reason for original sin comes primarily from recognizing the paradoxical implication inherent in the corruption of a perfect being. If man was created good, in the likeness of his creator and (in the case of Augustine) in possession of the gifts of grace which enabled him to continue in this state of goodness, why did he sin? In this chapter I argued that both Augustine and Dante share the view that Adam's sin resided in man's wilfulness: Adam was created free to be for God or for himself and he willingly decided to be for himself. However, if freedom was a condition of man's sinning it does not in itself explain – and Augustine and Dante were fully aware of the nature of this problem – why man sinned. In this chapter I, therefore, endeavoured to find Augustine's and Dante's solution to this problem, a solution that, as I argued, the former finds in man's creation *ex nihilo* and the latter in the potentially deviational nature of human loving.

In my analysis of the *De libero arbitrio* I argued that Augustine conceived his account of original sin for purposes of theodicy. His dismissal of the materialistic explanation of sin advanced by the Manichees informs much of his defence of God's omnipotence and absolute sovereignty and his understanding of the goodness of creation. In Scott MacDonald's words,

According to Augustine, every reality other than God owes its existence to the perfectly good creator who is the source of all being. He recognizes, of course, that these two claims – that everything that comes from God is good and that all reality other than God comes from God – have the seemingly paradoxical implication that all reality, everything that exists, is good. When trying to account for the the origin of evil, then, Augustine was presented with the logical problem of showing that it is not inconsistent to hold both that there is evil in the world and that everything that exists is good.<sup>5</sup>

The solution he gives to this problem is that evil is no substance or nature but only a corruption or privation, a solution that he uses for the explanation of original sin and sin in general. A defect in the will, i.e. a vice or sinful act, is an act that comes short of what it should be. In a specifically religious context, an act is sinful when it comes short of the love of God. If we understand morality as man's embracing of the divine order, by which he loves God above all else and uses the world about as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself, to act defectively is to disrupt this order.

But the problem persists. Adam was created within that order and loved, at least up to the moment of sin, God above all else: so why did he sin? Augustine's answer is in two parts: first, he claims that inherent in the will is the power to choose, if man is not free to select among alternatives and make a decision with respect to his life, his actions cannot be called voluntary and he is not accountable for them; secondly, man was created *ex nihilo*, a creation which rooted the potential to participate in the life of God as well as in nothingness in the very structure of his being. Adam's will – the intermediate good between God and *no-thing* – moved between these two alternatives, and tragically swung towards the latter. Love enters Augustine's discussion of sin as the flip side of the coin. Negatively sin is a falling

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<sup>5</sup> S. MacDonald, 'Primal Sin', in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. by Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp.110-39 (p.114).

away from the perfection of the created order – i.e. a privation of good – positively it reveals itself in a disorderly love for things other than God.

The consequences of this falling away are enormous for Augustine: having used his choice to turn away from God, Adam has forfeited for himself and his offspring the freedom to make morally sound choices. This should not be surprising. As I pointed out in Chapter One, grace in Eden has both an operative and co-operative function: if creation makes man a likeness to God, the continuing work of grace enables and conserves the operational character of this likeness. Once grace is forfeited, man's likeness is defaced and his proper operation as man incapacitated. The result is a bondage to sin that can only be undone by grace. This is, I argued, one of the most distinctive characteristics of Augustinian moral pessimism, a pessimism that, at least at some level, motivates the distinction between the 'use' and 'enjoyment' of things of the *De doctrina christiana*, and grounds his generally negative sense of man's moral presence in the world from the moment of birth. Hence the description in the first two books of the *Confessions* of life as a progressive and steady advancement in wickedness: from infancy, where envy defines nothing more than instinctual survival, to adolescence where the choice involved in the evil act entails personal responsibility and culpability.

The question in Dante is a more complex one. As mentioned already, like Augustine, Dante speaks of original sin in terms of wilfulness, or man's stepping over the boundaries of divine constraint. The implication of this is that man acted in defiance of the commandment and he did so freely and voluntarily. The difficulty in determining the genesis of man's refusal of God's authority is compounded by the fact that Dante never speaks of it, at least not in any obvious way. This is the reason

why the Dante section of Chapter Two has followed a different structure from the Augustine section. My intention here was to gauge the reasons for man's first aversion from the analysis of love in its relationship with freedom that Marco Lombardo and Virgil carry out in the central cantos of the *Purgatorio*. Although no mention is made in these cantos of original sin, it is my conviction that Dante's sense of the soul as inclining to the world in love and the potential for deviation inherent in what he refers to as 'amore d'animo' (*Purg.* 17. 92-93), can provide a solution for original sin and sin in general.

Once again, the question of creation is fundamental to understand the relationship between God and his creature. Created by a loving God, the soul shares in the loving nature of his creator. Essential to this is the idea that love abides in all creatures as a principle of operation leading everything that exists to its ultimate finality. Thus, in *Paradiso* 1 Dante writes that if the fire always rises upwards towards the heavens, and the stone always falls downwards towards the ground, the love that resides in man's soul will incline him necessarily towards the perfection of his being, namely God. This Dante calls 'amore naturale', a love that is neutral – or not culpable – for the very fact of its belonging to the act of existence itself and thus preceding the specifically moral moment of human experience. Culpability, Dante claims (and in this he is as committed as Augustine), exists only when there is a choice and it is precisely because of this that a distinction must be made between natural and elective (or rational) love – what Dante calls 'amore d'animo'. One of the most distinctive elements of Dante's descriptions of this latter love is its quasi-deterministic inclination to the world about. The soul inclines to all things that it perceives as desirable insofar as love belongs to its very essence, in other words, it is

in the nature of the soul to seek satisfaction in the love for the things of the world. However, and this is the point of ‘amore d’animo’, the rational soul possesses in the will the power to order the love for the world in keeping with the measure provided by the soul’s natural love for God. Seen thus, sin occurs when the soul fails to make this order by either loving the things of the world too much (lust, gluttony, greed), loving God too little (sloth), or loving the evil of their neighbours (pride, anger, envy). Adam’s sin is, in this sense, nothing other than an excessive love of self, which the first man failed to check, and which culminates in Adam’s choice of self over and against God. It is in this sense that original sin (and sin in general) can be defined in terms of love deviation – a deviation that is present *in potentia* in all rational beings, which possess in their freedom the power to deviate.

In Chapter Three I did two things: first, I analyzed Augustine’s and Dante’s sense of the reasons for the incarnation. Why, in other words, with the Christ event, God saw fit to participate in the human flesh and die on the cross to save mankind. Secondly, I described the effects of God’s grace in Christ both with respect to what McGrath refers to as the universal *act* of justification, and the *process* of justification, which entails man’s response to the life and work of Christ in a personal act of faith.<sup>6</sup>

As regards the first point, I argued that Augustine and Dante share the sense of the Christ event as the clearest manifestation of God’s love for mankind. In spite of this obvious similarity between the two, I contended that one of the chief emphases of Dante’s discourse in *Paradiso 7* is his understanding of the event of the incarnation as proceeding from a good and generous God who rejoices (or takes

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<sup>6</sup> A. E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 28.

pleasure) in his own goodness. The relevance of this notion becomes clear if we extend it to other aspects of Dante's theology. We have seen how the joy in the right act of loving that God reveals at the time of the incarnation is the same 'che menò Cristo lieto a dire "Eli"', (*Purg.* 23. 74), and the same again that God unveils in the act of creation – a pleasure or joy that God's creatures share with their creator. The semantics of joy pervades, in fact, much of Dante's discourse on the soul's return to God. Not only is 'letizia' one of the main attributes that the soul shares with the 'lieto fattore' at the moment of its inception, but delight is also what defines the soul's inclination to the world, and the modality of the soul's return to God.

If Augustine shares with Dante the understanding that love motivates God's choice of the incarnation for man's redemption, his main concern is never unrelated to the effects that the manifestation of this love has upon mankind. Understood thus, God's love as revealed in the Word Incarnate – in the mediation that Christ establishes between God and fallen man – 'has the same creative power as when through the Word Eternal it brought heaven and earth into being.'<sup>7</sup> Seen thus, Christ's mediation becomes not just suitable, but necessary, for man's redemption because it is through this love that man is restored and enabled to respond to the love of God in kind. Once again in Burnaby's words, 'Redemption is in the fullest sense a new creation, restoring in sinful man the love toward God which he had lost.'<sup>8</sup> The question of grace is here at the forefront of Augustine's discourse. In the cross is the dispensation of that medicine that heals man from the wounds of sin – a grace that Christ makes universally available, but that must also be received and accepted by the individual through an act of faith. It is at the point at which the universal *act* of

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<sup>7</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of Saint Augustine*, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171.

justification brought about by the incarnation and the personal *process* of justification in faith meet that the differences between Augustine and Dante begin to emerge more forcefully, because it is at this meeting point that the various implications of the relationship between grace and nature becomes more apparent.

As I argued in Chapter One, Augustine's discourse is always *ex gratia*. In a state of postlapsarian moral dereliction God's grace is the only way to progressively reform man to moral integrity. From his first acquiring faith, which marks the beginning of man's righteousness, through to the perseverance in righteousness, Augustine's analysis serves as confirmation of the insufficiency of human nature with respect to any moral achievement whatsoever. The notion of the insufficiency of nature was used primarily in the anti-Pelagian writings to insist on the prevenient character of God's call to faith, on the doctrine of faith, that is, as a divine gift which is gratuitously offered to man but that requires man's response to become effective. As I argued, it is with respect to the notion of faith acquisition that Augustine's thought underwent its most radical change upon his acquaintance with Simplicianus in Milan. What changes here is not the notion of faith as gift, or the antecedent nature of the divine call, but the idea that the call to faith is selective, involving, thus, the election of some and the damnation of others. In other words, God's election ceases to be in keeping with what he foresees will be someone's faith, becoming nothing more than God's rewarding of his own gift of faith upon the elect. Seen within this context, the doctrine of the grace of perseverance is nothing other than the extreme outcome of Augustine's sense of man's insufficiency with respect to the moral task he has been called to. In Augustine (and especially in the later Augustine)

it is always, in other words, a question of nature as moved by grace to its proper good.

Evoking the Augustinian sense of man's insufficiency, in *Paradiso 7* Dante claims that Christ makes man sufficient to the moral and eschatological task he is called to by virtue of his likeness to God. As I argued in the course of the chapter, the complex narrative of *Paradiso 7* makes for a twofold meaning of the notion of sufficiency: first, and from a solely juridical perspective, Christ makes man sufficient by paying back the debt that Adam incurred for himself and humanity with his sin; secondly, from a moral and eschatological perspective, to be made sufficient by the grace of Christ is to regain the deformity that man had lost with sin. The implications of this latter point are far reaching in the *Commedia*. If we take the idea of man's likeness to God seriously, and in it we see the ontological grounding of man's urge 'to attain immediate knowledge and love of the God who has directly created [him]', then the grace of Christ is what makes this attainment possible.<sup>9</sup> By the same token, if we take the idea of man's likeness to God seriously, and we understand by it that nature is created with the potential to enter a relationship of understanding and love with God, then grace enters nature in order to empower it from out of its own self with a view to reaching the task it was created for. Thus, far from confirming nature in its 'insufficiency' for its moral and eschatological task, grace is in Dante a boundless source of empowerment and capacitation. By the grace of Christ nature is confirmed in its integrity and enabled from out of itself to accomplish the ecstatic potential which belongs to nature by virtue of its proceeding from God in the likeness of God.

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<sup>9</sup> Ryan, 'The Theology of Dante', p. 149.

When it comes, then, to identifying my contribution to the field, my answer must focus primarily on my methodology. Based, as I mentioned above, on a precise and at all times attentive reading of the text, my thesis has unfolded Augustine's and Dante's positions as regards topics of central interest in Christian doctrine. With respect to this, my account of historical and contemporary approaches to the question of the relationship between Augustine and Dante has served to secure at every stage a properly scholarly perspective of my thesis. But it has also provided the foundation for what I have referred to as a dialogue between Augustine and Dante, a dialogue that is at every point informed, for all the differences and similarities that it reveals between the two writers, by a shared existential preoccupation with what it might mean for man *to be* both for self or for God.

It is in this sense that, as I argued in the course of my study, we must understand the relationship between Augustine and Dante as one of endless continuity and contrast. To speak of continuity is to recognize that even at his most unAugustinian Dante remains at other levels of awareness deeply Augustinian. In other words, to speak of the *Commedia* as confessional is to recognize, with Freccero and Took, that Dante was alive to the sense of what it means, in the here and now of temporal experience, to lose oneself in the transient reality of the world about – the Augustinian 'region of unlikeness' – or, conversely, to find peace in the stability of God. But Dante was also his own man, belonging to a culture shaped by the new cultural forces of scholasticism and contemporary Peripateticism, and by the basic exigencies of his personality – cultural forces and personal exigencies that transpire everywhere in the text to reveal Dante's energetic commitment to the human project as such.

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