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Why “*Tolle Lege*”?

The title of this journal is a reference to an extraordinary moment of conversion in the life of St. Augustine, the great philosopher and theologian of the early medieval period. The story begins with St. Augustine sitting beneath a fig tree, weeping in distress over his inability to leave behind his life of sin and follow God faithfully. Amidst his tears he hears the distant voice of a child chanting the words “*Tolle, lege!*” or “Take up and read!” Aroused from his pitiable state and taking this as a sign from God, he goes to his house, picks up the first book he finds, and reads the first chapter. The book contained the letters of St. Paul, and the verse that Augustine read spoke to his heart with such force that he was convinced beyond any doubt of the truth of God; he was converted on the spot.

This journal of philosophy and theology is meant to embody a spirit of truth-seeking—on the part of both the contributors and you, the reader. Like St. Augustine, we are all faced with the choice between complacency and continual conversion toward truth. We hope that this journal will serve as an aid in the discovery of truth, and thus we exhort you in all earnestness to “Take up and read!”

Editors' Note

Two words—in the case of St. Augustine, the call of two words became the catalyst for his belief and conversion toward God's truth. At our journal, these two words have been our inspiration to bring outstanding essays in philosophy and theology into print each year. As we celebrate our sixth year, we continue to hope that our readers will discover truth as they read what we present in our pages. Whether by learning something new about marital practices in the Middle East or by studying an in-depth analysis of St. Augustine's mystical thought, those who take up and read our journal, it is hoped, will gain a renewed sense of truth through the words of others.

We would like to thank our undergraduate editors for the time and dedication they put into selecting the essays published here. We especially thank our advisors, Drs. David Cloutier and Thane Naberhaus, for continuing to sponsor and guide us. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to Ms. Katie Soter in the philosophy department for the considerable work she does each year to help make our journal a reality. We are further indebted—literally and figuratively—to the university provost, Dr. David Rehm, the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Joshua Hochschild, and the chairs of the Departments of Theology and Philosophy, Fr. James Donohue and Dr. Richard Buck, for supporting us financially.

Finally, we wish to thank the fifty-eight Mount St. Mary's students who submitted their essays to us, and we congratulate those whose essays were selected for publication, especially the author of our prizewinning essay, Richard Creek. We hope that those who study at Mount St. Mary's will continue to submit their excellent work in philosophy and theology for future issues.

Sarah George and Sara Reams
Co-Editors-in-Chief

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Inconsistency Problems with Blackburn's Higher-Order Attitude Account

Richard Creek

Since the rise of the Frege–Geach problem, several attempts have been made by people working within the expressivist tradition to develop semantic theories capable of accounting for moral argument in such a way as to avoid the problem altogether. Simon Blackburn's approach from his 1984 book *Spreading the Word* is the first one to legitimately attempt to solve the problem. In this paper I will lay out three important features of truth-conditional semantics that must be preserved for any semantic theory to successfully solve the Frege–Geach problem, and I will try to sketch out what such a theory would have to look like. Once I have done this, I will argue that Blackburn's project fails because it cannot adequately account for consistency between sentences, which in turn makes it difficult to see how conclusions necessarily follow from premises.

The Frege–Geach Problem

In his 1965 paper "Assertion," Peter Geach came up with a potentially damning objection to expressivist theories of moral language. Borrowing an idea of Frege's, Geach pointed out that a sentence can be asserted or it can occur unasserted while embedded in a larger sentence. The "Frege point" is that the sentence means the exact same thing in both situations.¹ While this may seem obvious to most, it is directly opposed to the various noncognitive theories of moral language, each of which claims that moral language performs some function other than asserting beliefs that are true or false.

The most common example used to illustrate this point comes from Blackburn's *Spreading the Word*. Take the following sentence: "It is wrong to tell lies." This sentence can be asserted by itself, or it can be part of a larger sentence in which it is merely expressed. In the

¹ Peter T. Geach, "Assertion," *The Philosophical Review* 74.4 (1965): 449.

following *modus ponens* argument, the sentence occurs in both asserted and unasserted contexts:

- (1) It is wrong to tell lies.
- (2) If it is wrong to tell lies, it is wrong to get your little brother to lie.
- (3) Therefore, it is wrong to get your little brother to lie.

The sentence “It is wrong to tell lies” is asserted in (1) but not in (2). As the antecedent to a conditional, the sentence is only expressed within (2). Regardless of whether or not the sentence is asserted, however, it still holds the same meaning. If the sentence did not mean the same thing in both contexts, the argument would be an equivocation, and its conclusion would not follow from its premises.²

The various noncognitive theories would interpret (1) so that it would perform some function other than to express belief. There could be many noncognitivist translations of (1), such as:

- (1a) “Telling lies!” said in a “peculiar tone of horror.”³
- (1b) I disapprove of telling lies—do so as well!⁴
- (1c) “Boo telling lies!”⁵

What is common to each of these translations of (1) is that the sentence “It is wrong to tell lies” becomes quite different when it is asserted by itself; it no longer means the same thing as it does when embedded into a more complex conditional sentence such as (2). As a result, the valid *modus ponens* argument given above loses all validity when “It is wrong to tell lies” is translated to mean something else in (1) than it does in (2). This prevents the premises from being able to entail (3) as a conclusion. If Geach is right, these theories leave us unable to use simple arguments like *modus ponens* in our moral discourse.

The Need for a New Semantic Theory

Since the Frege–Geach problem is effectively a roadblock for any form of expressivism, it requires anyone maintaining such a position to find a new semantic theory that can account for moral argument. It must be able to preserve many of the beneficial features of truth-conditional semantics if it is to leave moral argument intact.

² Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 190.

³ Alfred J. Ayer, “Critique of Ethics and Theology” in *Foundations of Ethics*, ed. R. Shafer-Landau and T. Cuneo (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 42.

⁴ Mark Schroeder, *Noncognitivism in Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 25.

⁵ *Spreading the Word*, 193.

To see what a new semantic theory would have to be like, it is necessary to see what features of truth-conditional semantics need to be preserved in such a theory so that it could adequately account for moral argument.

Truth-conditional semantics, as a semantic theory, allows us to do three very important things. First, it allows us to understand complex sentences by understanding their parts and the arrangement of those parts. By simply knowing a few words and some logical connectives, we can construct and understand a potentially infinite number of complex sentences that we have never encountered before.⁶ Just by having the truth value of a simple sentence, we can figure out the truth value of more complex sentences that involve that sentence.⁷ A good semantic theory should be able to account for how complex sentences get their meaning from their parts.

Second, it allows us to define what it means for sentences to be consistent with each other. Under this theory, it is quite clear that P and $\sim P$ cannot have the same truth value, no matter what P represents. We can define a set of sentences as “semantically consistent” if and only if there is a structure (particular assignment of truth values to each sentence) where each sentence is true. This would simultaneously give us a definition for “semantic inconsistency,” which is simply the status of not being semantically consistent: there is not a structure where all of the sentences are true.⁸ The ability to so clearly define what it means for sentences to be “consistent” is of particular importance because, as we shall see, this is not always easy to do with every semantic theory.

The third feature of truth-conditional semantics is directly tied into the notion of consistency, and it is perhaps the most important of the three. By being able to define a notion of semantic consistency, we are able to define entailment semantically. When we have a valid argument with true premises, the conclusion is “entailed” by the premises; it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false. A set containing the premises and the negation of the conclusion would be semantically inconsistent in the case of a valid argument.⁹ This allows us to clearly see how someone asserting true premises is committed to the conclusion that logically follows from them.

⁶ *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸ Volker Halbach, *The Logic Manual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Any semantic theory created to solve the Frege–Geach problem will have to have these properties. The first feature will be the easiest to incorporate into a new semantic theory; all that is required is that the theory provide us with “recipes” for constructing new sentences out of simpler parts in such a way that we can understand what they mean.¹⁰ The second feature is the toughest to incorporate into a semantic theory, and the third feature is dependent upon it. It is absolutely necessary that any semantic theory hoping to solve this problem be able to define “consistency” and “inconsistency” in such a way as to show exactly when sentences fall under each category. If this cannot be done, it will be extremely difficult to say that conclusions follow from premises in arguments.

Without a notion of consistency, we cannot say that a conclusion follows from its premises. Without a notion of inconsistency, we cannot say that a conclusion is incompatible with certain premises. The purpose of moral argument is to show that certain moral views are correct, whereas others are mistaken. If a semantic theory cannot successfully define consistency and inconsistency in such a way as to allow moral argument to do this, it will be unsuccessful.

Blackburn’s Higher-Order Attitude Solution

To dodge the Frege–Geach problem, Blackburn gives us a new semantic theory consistent with expressivism to account for what we are doing when we make arguments like the one above. He asks us to imagine a language without evaluative predicates. Such a language “wears the expressive nature of value-judgments on its sleeve.”¹¹ He gives us the “hooray!” (H!) and “boo!” (B!) operators to indicate our approval or disapproval of things. We can represent the pairing of attitudes with a semicolon. When applied to the attitudes expressed in the argument earlier, we have the following:

B!(lying)

H!(| B!(lying) |; | B!(getting little brother to lie) |)

The first line is the disapproval of lying. The second line is the approval of the combination of disapproval of lying and disapproval of getting one’s little brother to lie. Someone who shares these sensibilities has to disapprove of getting one’s little brother to lie. If such a person does not disapprove of getting his little brother to lie, he suffers from a “fractured sensibility.”¹² Someone who still

¹⁰ *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, 107.

¹¹ *Spreading the Word*, 193.

¹² *Ibid.*, 195.

approves of having his little brother lie will have a set of inconsistent attitudes.

This expressive language still needs a way to express that someone is making the mistake of having such inconsistent attitudes, however. It will need a way to express that it is a “logical mistake that is made, if someone holds the first two commitments, and not the commitment to disapproval of getting your little brother to lie.”¹³ Blackburn argues that the best way for expressive language to do this is to become exactly like “ordinary English.”¹⁴ He would create predicates to match attitudes and treat commitments to attitudes as judgments. This would allow us to argue with each other using “all the natural devices for debating truth.”¹⁵ When we argue in our moral discourse, what we are actually doing is trying to show that our opponent’s attitudes are inconsistent. We have simply adopted our standard means of arguing with people because they are the best way to accomplish this. Blackburn’s account shows us how we are justified in using assertoric moral discourse, even though what underlies it is simply the task of showing sets of attitudes to be inconsistent.¹⁶

Blackburn’s solution has the advantage of being specifically designed to account for how someone holding the attitudes expressed in the two premises has to disapprove of getting your little brother to lie. Someone who disapproves of lying and approves of the pairing of a disapproval of lying with the disapproval of getting your little brother to lie should, quite obviously, disapprove of getting your little brother to lie. His theory is successful in accommodating the need to show how complex sentences get their meaning from simple sentences, which is done quite successfully in the second sentence with the joining of attitudes. More importantly, Blackburn’s expressive language appears to have a way of accounting for the necessity of a conclusion following from premises. Someone accepting these premises has to disapprove of getting your little brother to lie, or else that person has inconsistent attitudes. At first glance, it seems that Blackburn has found a possible solution to the Frege–Geach problem.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 197.

The Inconsistency Objections to Blackburn's Higher-Order Attitude Solution

As noted above, someone who holds the attitudes expressed in the two premises of the argument we are considering has to disapprove of getting your little brother to lie, or else the person must suffer from a “fractured sensibility” and have inconsistent attitudes.¹⁷ But what exactly does it mean for someone to hold inconsistent attitudes, according to this theory? To rephrase this question in perhaps a more relevant way: how can we say that having inconsistent attitudes is a logical mistake?

Crispin Wright and G. F. Schueler have both argued that the notion of “inconsistency” used in Blackburn’s solution is mysterious. Wright acknowledges that under Blackburn’s account, a “clash of attitudes” arises when someone accepts the premises of a *modus ponens* argument and then fails to accept the conclusion.¹⁸ Wright argues that this clash of attitudes is not truly worthy of being labeled “inconsistent.” Wright points out that people who hold these clashing attitudes “merely fail to have every combination of attitudes of which they themselves approve.”¹⁹ This failing “is a moral failing, not a logical one.”²⁰

G. F. Schueler points to basically the same the problem in his paper “Moral Modus Ponens and Moral Realism.” Imagine if someone were to hold three attitudes: a disapproval of lying, an approval of the pairing of a disapproval of lying with a disapproval of getting your little brother to lie, and an approval of getting your brother to lie. These attitudes are simply the attitudes expressed by the premises along with the opposite of the conclusion that should follow. Schueler does not think that we can appeal to a clash of attitudes here.²¹ We cannot simply say that B!(lying) clashes with H!(getting little brother to lie); it is not at all clear how this is the case. The hypothetical premise has to show the link between these attitudes, but as Schueler points out, the connection between these attitudes is neither psychological nor physical: “as if anyone who had

¹⁷ Ibid., 195.

¹⁸ Crispin Wright, “Realism, Antirealism, Irrealism, Quasi-realism,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 23 (1988): 33.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ G. F. Schueler, “Moral Modus Ponens and Moral Realism” in *Arguing About Metaethics*, ed. A. Fisher and S. Kirchin (New York: Routledge, 2006), 366.

the one attitude couldn't help but have the other."²² People have clashing attitudes all the time without making logical mistakes:

Almost every time I walk past the cookie jar, for instance, I experience such a conflict of attitudes. On the one hand, I approve of my eating a cookie since, from long experience, I know I will enjoy it. On the other hand, I also disapprove of eating one since, from equally long experience, I know what it does to my waistline. So here is a clash of attitudes, but where is the "mistake" (or "fractured sensibility") that is supposed to be involved? The fact that I cannot act on or satisfy both attitudes just means that I have to figure out what to do here, not that there is anything untoward or fishy about having both attitudes. Yet without some account of how there is something untoward or mistaken in a mere clash of attitudes of this sort, Blackburn cannot claim even to have shown that, on the antirealism theory he is advocating, a person who asserts the premises and denies the conclusion of the argument above has made any mistake at all, let alone any sort of logical mistake in the usual sense.²³

Another way to frame this problem is in terms of negation. In *Spreading the Word*, Blackburn does not offer any explanation of how the word "not" might function in his theory.²⁴ In the case of truth-conditional semantics, there is simply a negation operator that accomplishes this task, and it does not take very much to see that a true statement and its negation cannot both be true. If I were to assert some sentence and its negation as well, you could easily show that I had contradicted myself. But this is not the case with attitudes since they are not truth-apt. It is not at all clear why I cannot approve and disapprove of lying at the same time, and Blackburn does not really give a clear logical account of why not.

Van Roojen's Objection to Blackburn's Higher-Order Attitude Solution

In his 1996 paper "Expressivism and Irrationality," Mark Van Roojen develops another objection to Blackburn's solution to the Frege–Geach problem. Blackburn's notion of inconsistency, which turns out to be somewhat different than logical inconsistency, runs

²² *Ibid.*, 367.

²³ *Ibid.*, 367–68.

²⁴ *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, 117.

into problems when deductively valid arguments are translated into the expressive language of his account. In order to make sure that conclusions follow from premises, his theory has the unwanted effect of rendering the premises of some valid arguments inconsistent; his notion of inconsistency happens to be too strong.²⁵ Van Roojen illustrates this with the following argument:

- P1. It would be wrong for me to believe ill of my friends.
- P2. My parents, father and mother alike, are my friends.
- P3. It would be believing ill of a friend to believe that he would be duplicitous with another of one's friends.
- P4. If the coded valentine is not a joke, my father is being unfaithful to my mother.
- P5. The coded valentine is not a joke.
- C1. It is wrong for me to believe that my father is unfaithful to my mother (From P1, P2, and P3).
- C2. My father is unfaithful to my mother (from P4 and P5).²⁶

The argument is valid, and the premises are all consistent. Blackburn's theory would have to rule conclusions C1 and C2 as inconsistent with each other. Conclusion C1 would be translated as B!(Believing that my father is unfaithful to my mother), whereas C2 simply expresses the belief without the "Boo!" attached. Since the translated version of C1 cannot be true or false, it cannot be consistent with C2, which is a belief that is truth-apt.²⁷

Blackburn's theory requires conclusions to follow from premises because it is supposedly inconsistent to have a negative attitude while having that attitude at the same time. In the example of getting my little brother to lie, I am stuck with a negative attitude towards getting my little brother to lie because I disapprove of lying and hold the attitude that disapproval of lying is joined with disapproval of getting my little brother to lie. If I hold a positive attitude toward getting my little brother to lie, I end up holding the belief that lying and getting my little brother to lie are not joined together, and I am effectively disapproving of a state of which I am also approving. This is irrational on Blackburn's account; it is the "clash of attitudes" and the "fractured sensibility" from *Spreading the Word*.²⁸

²⁵ Mark Van Roojen, "Expressivism and Irrationality," *The Philosophical Review* 105.3 (1996): 312.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 320.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Spreading the Word*, 195.

Since Blackburn's theory renders logically consistent sentences inconsistent when they are translated into expressive language, his notion of consistency cannot be called logical consistency. As Van Roojen points out, there is not a logical problem with someone believing that it is wrong to believe something, and yet believing it anyway. Blackburn's solution creates its own unique problem, which is that it is committed to "finding logical inconsistency where there is none."²⁹

Just as Blackburn's theory has problems recognizing the validity of certain arguments, it also has trouble distinguishing certain valid arguments from invalid arguments. In a very short section in *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, Mark Schroeder advances Van Roojen's objection in a slightly different way. Any sort of higher-order attitude account "will attribute to obviously non-valid arguments exactly the same properties that it attributes to valid arguments."³⁰ Take the standard example of a moral *modus ponens* argument:

- (1) It is wrong to tell lies.
- (2) If it is wrong to tell lies, it is wrong to get your little brother to lie.
- (3) Therefore, it is wrong to get your little brother to lie.

Now look at a similar argument that is clearly invalid.

- (1) It is wrong to tell lies.
- (2) It is wrong to think that murder is wrong but not think that getting your little brother to lie is wrong.
- (3) Therefore, it is wrong to get your little brother to lie.³¹

These arguments are clearly different, but Blackburn's theory would translate them in the exact same way. Since his theory translates them both as valid arguments, he either cannot give an account of what makes the first one valid, or he is stuck explaining why the second argument is valid. This is a particularly terrible position to be in; accepting either option renders his entire project a complete failure.³²

Conclusion

As we have seen, the Frege–Geach problem has proven to be an extremely formidable obstacle that expressivists need to overcome if they want to give a successful account of the nature of moral

²⁹ "Expressivism and Irrationality," 321.

³⁰ *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, 120.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

language. Since the various forms of expressivism have departed from truth-conditional semantics, a successful version of expressivism requires another semantic theory that can do many of the same things effectively. It must be able to do three things very well if it is to be successful in avoiding the problem. First, it must be able to show how we can determine the meaning of complex sentences from the meaning and positioning of their simpler parts. Second, it must be able to define what it is for sentences to be “consistent” and what it is for sentences to be “inconsistent.” Third, through this definition of consistency, it must be able to show how conclusions follow from the premises of arguments. If any of these things are not accounted for properly, the semantic theory will run into serious problems when it tries to slide past the Frege–Geach problem.

Simon Blackburn’s theory of higher order attitudes attempts to accomplish all three of these things, but it runs into problems with its definition of consistency. It is quite clear that inconsistency under this theory is something other than logical inconsistency, and this is its greatest flaw. Although we might call someone irrational for holding certain sets of attitudes, we are unable to justly call this a logical mistake, which is something our moral argument has to be able to do. The objections over consistency from Wright and Schueler make it clear that Blackburn’s theory cannot logically account for our being forced to accept conclusions from premises. Mark Van Roojen’s objections make it clear that Blackburn’s definition of consistency can render valid arguments inconsistent. Schroeder’s advancement of this idea shows that Blackburn’s definition of consistency allows for some invalid arguments to be seen as valid. While Blackburn’s attempt at a solution is brilliant in many ways, it simply cannot escape the force of Geach’s argument.

Moral Realism and the Authentic Self

Daniel Barroga

Without much nuance or precision, one can give a rough definition of authenticity as an adherence to a certain set of values. However, there is a certain problem of ideals surrounding the concept of authenticity today. There seems to be a discrepancy between the function that authenticity is supposed to provide and its current use in language. I say that this is an idealistic problem because the particular values that promote and account for the authentic self seem to be at odds with one another. On the one hand, the modern notion of authenticity demands that one live in constant conformity with accepted values. On the other hand, authenticity demands that values be chosen without external influence or regard for other standards. The problem, in brief, is a lack of moral realist thought. Without belief in real values, authenticity cannot possibly amount to anything objectively meaningful. As we will observe, the accepted definition and use of “authenticity” as a term has changed along with attitudes regarding the self and value. A change in both of these aspects of authenticity (definition and attitude) will be necessary for the fulfillment of the human self. What I am suggesting is that moral realism is a necessary condition for authenticity. The problem is that the current formulation of authenticity lacks such a condition, and therefore fails to bring about meaning.

The method that follows, then, will look first at the definition of authenticity as well as its development among important thinkers. The first section will attempt a starting definition by examining the current use of the term. The next section will observe how changes in moral thought influenced the changing conception of authenticity. From there, those aspects necessary to the authentic self will be made apparent in section three. Section four will examine how these conditions fail to account for meaning. The necessary connection between moral realism and the authentic self will be covered in section five. A closer examination of moral realism will be carried

out in section six. This will demonstrate those aspects necessary for moral realism beyond individual thought and objectivity.

1. The Function of Authenticity

People undeniably have a desire for meaningful existence. Modern society has identified authenticity as a crucial component to a meaningful existence. Presumably this is because the thoughts and actions that are thought to contribute to authenticity are those that are rightly called meaningful. Therefore, it can be seen that there is a certain idealistic function of authenticity to bring about meaningful existence. Of course, this can only be done by meeting those conditions necessary to authenticity. Ideally, by fulfilling these necessary conditions, authenticity will be able to perform its task—that is, to yield meaningful existence by bringing meaning to certain thoughts and actions.

As a modern notion, however, authenticity seems to have lost some of its clarity. In its current articulation, the correlation between authenticity and meaningful existence has diminished. The modern conception of authenticity does not explicitly require any sort of meaningful values or actions. Therefore, as it stands, living authentically does not necessarily imply living a meaningful life. This is because authenticity's current articulation lacks any conditions by which to call an act meaningful. As such, the term itself has become problematic, no longer able to do what it is intended to do. I propose, then, that a reexamination of the ideal of authenticity is in order. I will explore the current definition of authenticity in comparison with its intended purpose. By making this modern definition clear, one will be able to discern the conditions that this current conception of authenticity requires. What we will find, however, is that these necessary conditions by themselves fail to bring about the function or ideal of authenticity.

From this, then, there are three questions that must be asked. First, how is authenticity defined in its current articulation? Second, what does this conception of authenticity require as necessary conditions? Third, how do these conditions allow authenticity to bring about meaningful existence? By answering these questions, one will find that the conditions that modern authenticity requires fail to contribute to meaningful existence. Therefore, a reexamination of authenticity's necessary conditions is needed.

2. What Is Authenticity? Its Developing Formulation

The first question to be answered, then, is *how is authenticity defined in its current articulation?* To answer this question, let us observe the intellectual context that brings about these modern notions of authenticity. For instance, John Stuart Mill, in his work *On Liberty*, points to a permissive form of authenticity that allows for any chosen way of living to lay claim to the title *meaningful*. This is because, for Mill, value is not contained in the acts themselves, but rather in the very act of choosing. Mill presents this point in the following statement: “If any person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode.”¹ With this perspective, “meaningful existence” implies nothing more than an adherence to certain self-determined values. If Mill is correct, then what generates meaning for particular thoughts and actions is their being chosen or freely adopted. By this standard, the only condition that a meaningful life (or authenticity) requires is that a given thought or action be freely chosen. Still, this standard does not originate from Mill alone.

In his work *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Charles Taylor presents a historical analysis of eighteenth-century thought to see where the modern notion of authenticity came from. Taylor explores the development of authenticity as it relates to the developing thoughts on individuality at the time. Taylor notes a certain “conflict” between the notions of individualism and authenticity here. For instance, Descartes encourages a certain “disengaged rationality” that promotes self-responsibility of thought.² Yet at the same time, moral thought rejected the concept of morality as merely “calculating consequences.”³ The Romantic period was speaking out against this instrumental view of the human person. There was, instead, a desire to give moral understanding its own individual voice in the human identity. The change that is occurring at this time is that the sources of morality no longer come from without (from God, the Good, etc.), but from a certain “moral sense.” There is an intuitive feeling of right and wrong. Not only that, but this moral sense is necessary for being authentic. This is because along with an ability to discern moral meaning in thoughts and actions (which is commonly

¹ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1978), 64.

² Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 25.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

associated with authenticity) came a moral obligation to be “in touch” with this moral sense.⁴ The worry here is that the self ought not to be alienated from itself. In separating the self from its own moral determinations (which Descartes’ disengaged rationality seems to suggest) there is a loss of authenticity. From this, it can be concluded that the conditions of authenticity at the time required a certain sensitivity to one’s own moral perception, or, put simply, being in touch with one’s self. If we are to understand authenticity as giving meaning to thoughts and actions, then the concept of a moral sense certainly accomplishes this. The moral sense discerns meaning from thoughts and actions and can distinguish them as good or bad, right or wrong, etc. Another way to think about this is that there is a conscious consent to particular thoughts and actions as moral or meaningful. This is not too far off from Mill’s idea of choice bringing meaning. Still, this model differs from Mill’s in one crucial way: value is still discovered rather than invented. Even with a notion of moral sense, the self is only discerning what is already present. For Mill, however, meaning is bestowed on something upon its being chosen. In other words, for Mill, value is no longer prior to the self. Meaning is created rather than discovered. In answering where this modern conception of authenticity came from, we must now ask the question, how did authenticity make such a transition from *inherent meaning* to *freely adopted meaning*?

Taylor continues his historical analysis with Rousseau, who introduces what Taylor identifies as “self-determining freedom.”⁵ In this model, the obligation to recover authentic moral contact with ourselves (i.e., to be “in touch” with our moral sense) is only hampered by external influences. In other words, only I can rightly determine what ought to concern me. In this way, only the self can determine meaning for itself. Looking at this from the perspective of the seventeenth-century writers, Rousseau presents a new, more isolated version of the moral sense. Whereas previously, the moral sense merely discovered existing meaning in things, Rousseau’s model demands that this be done alone. The self is free to determine its own meaningful values, but no other external influences can determine meaning for it. To allow external influences to determine meaning for oneself would be to be guilty of being inauthentic. The major distinction here is that, for Rousseau, society can present a

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 27.

certain corrupting effect on the human person. In the same way that disengaged rationality was thought to separate the self from its moral determinations, external influence, as described here, presents the same sort of self-alienation. The individual's own unique response to the world is valuable, as only the self can properly discern meaning for itself. This is why external influences present such an impediment to self-determining freedom: only the self can really know what is properly meaningful to it. Therefore, the authentic self is no longer one that can discover meaning existing prior to the individual. Rather, to be authentic is to be able to determine meaning for oneself. This process of "deciding for oneself" seems to be getting even closer to Mill's modern conception of freely chosen authenticity.

The final link to Mill's conception of meaning lies in Herder's notion of "my way" of living.⁶ Taylor sees Herder as taking the idea of individualism even further away from an "instrumental stance" towards the self.⁷ Herder introduces a "certain way" in which an individual comes into contact with his own moral sense. This departs a bit from Rousseau because there is a particular way in which I go about understanding myself, one that differs from the way in which another individual understands himself. Whereas Rousseau and the Romantics only emphasize a general sense of being in touch with one's self, Herder implies that the way this is done is unique for each individual. It should be noted that Taylor does not seem to be connecting Herder to Mill the way I have done here. In some ways, Taylor might see this as an improvement on self-determining freedom since, on this scheme, authenticity indeed requires a connection with the self, but a unique kind of self-understanding.

However, I call Herder a final link to Mill because of his emphasis on originality. In Rousseau's conception, one can have influences so long as meaning is realized within the self. External influences only become an impediment to one's authenticity when they stop the self from determining meaning for itself. But that is not to say that my neighbor's way of living may not be a good way for me to live, so long as I realize it in myself after observing my neighbor's behavior. But for Herder, self-determination makes a vital distinction between originality and conformity. In this model, meaning must be unique for each individual. Authenticity demands

⁶ Ibid., 28–29.

⁷ Ibid., 29.

originality. As Taylor puts it, “I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s. But this gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*.”⁸ On this account, when we use others as models for our own lives, we lose our authenticity. Meaning, then, can only be a self-determined value for the individual self, starkly different from what anyone else determines to be meaningful. “Self-determined” thereby becomes nearly synonymous with “chosen” or even “invented.” (I’ll have more to say on this in section four, below). Therefore, we can see a clear transition from the moral sense theory of the eighteenth century to the self-determined meaning of Rousseau and Herder to the freely chosen meaning of Mill.

As stated before, authenticity’s modern formulation is regrettably vague. Authenticity has become a rather permissive term, allowing for many interpretations and thereby losing some distinctness. As it stands, *authenticity means simply to live one’s life in conformity with a set of freely adopted values*. According to this definition, one need only choose certain actions and perform them in order to attain authenticity and, in turn, meaningful existence. And yet, it does not seem that *freely adopted* choices can perform the function of providing choices with meaning. One could easily adopt absurd or even harmful choices, but doing so does not make these choices meaningful. Meaningful existence seems, rather, to follow from meaningful choices. In other words, “freely chosen” does not necessarily mean “meaningful”; autonomy does not necessarily yield value.

3. What Does Authenticity Require? Its Necessary Conditions

This brings us to our second question: *What does authenticity require as the necessary conditions for its realization?* As concluded in the last section, the modern conception of authenticity merely implies living one’s life in conformity with a set of freely adopted values. The above articulation of authenticity seems to accept this point. Therefore, it can be said that authenticity, at the very least, must require some set of values, whatever they may be. This is easy to see when one considers that the “authentic person” is someone who necessarily does *something* in order to lay claim to authenticity, as

⁸ Ibid.

opposed to an inauthentic individual who adheres to no particular set of values.

But aside from just having values, another necessary condition of authenticity, according to the modern construal, is that the values in question be indeed *chosen*. That is, they must be freely adopted by an individual. It certainly does not seem that society calls an individual who has values imparted to him (from his parents, for instance) authentic, unless of course, the individual adopts these values as his own. This aspect of “freely adopted” values can be seen in Rousseau’s “self-determining freedom.” Here, one’s conscious consent must be the deciding factor in choosing the values that one lives by. If one adheres to a set of values that one does not consciously consent to, then one has no proper claim to authenticity. Therefore, choice is another necessary condition of authenticity. Still, this is not enough by itself to attain authenticity.

We may recall that the ideal function of authenticity is to bring about a meaningful existence. This occurs by somehow bringing meaning to particular thoughts and actions. However, it does not seem that these two conditions (an adherence to some set of values and freely adopting them) necessarily bring about meaning. It is in this way that we arrived at our initial problem: the current articulation of authenticity, despite its function of bringing about meaning, lacks a condition of meaning.

Therefore, in addition to adhering to certain freely adopted values, there seems to be a need for meaning behind the particular values in question. This can be accounted for in one of two ways. The first way one can account for meaning in values is to say that meaning is bestowed upon thoughts and actions upon their being adopted. This is seen clearly in Mill’s articulation of authenticity. In this model, it seems that the only inauthentic individual is he who does not choose some value, for all choices are automatically given meaning. On the second account, one may hold that there is inherent meaning behind certain thoughts and actions, while other thoughts and actions lack such meaning or perhaps have less meaning. In this model, society commends the authentic individual for choosing those particular values that are deemed meaningful, while the inauthentic individual is condemned for either choosing values that somehow lack meaning or for not choosing values at all (as previously observed). In either of these accounts, though, meaning is stressed as a necessary component of the chosen values. Therefore, it can be said that authenticity requires meaning.

This final condition of authenticity becomes particularly important if one assumes that meaningful choices lead to meaningful existence. As discussed, modern society generally understands the function of authenticity as discerning or bestowing meaning on thoughts and actions, thus contributing to a meaningful existence. The authentic person, as the history of philosophical thought discussed above has shown, is someone who can properly discern and make meaningful choices (whether this is done through a moral sense, self-determined meaning, or the like.). What is being suggested here is that authentic existence requires these meaningful actions or choices, whether they are meaningful prior to being adopted or not. This is precisely why authenticity is considered to be so crucial to meaningful existence. Without the ability to call a given value meaningful, no one could lay claim to meaningful existence in the first place. Therefore, it becomes vital to determine *how the conditions in these given accounts of authenticity can properly contribute to meaningful existence*. If a given account is found not to contribute to meaningful existence, then it can easily be disregarded as illegitimate.

4. How Do the Conditions of Authenticity Contribute to Meaningful Existence?

Of the three given conditions of authenticity (values, choice, and meaning), the first two seem obvious in how they are obtained. Authenticity requires, first, that one adopt a particular value and, second, that the value be freely chosen. However, it seems that nearly anything could satisfy these two conditions. Yet it does not seem that by satisfying these two conditions, one has contributed to one's own meaningful existence. Rather, there are some freely adopted values which society deems capable of contributing to meaningful existence, and others which it does not. For instance, it seems to be generally accepted that being kind to one's neighbors in a time of need is a meaningful act. Napping on one's couch, however, does not seem so significant. In this way, society, along with the history of philosophy, seems to deem some actions authentic and others inauthentic. In other words, *values* and *choices* by themselves cannot account for authentic living.

If one is to understand authentic values and individuals, as opposed to inauthentic values and individuals, then it does not seem that choice alone could possibly account for meaning. This is because in this model, value or meaning occurs after the choosing. But the account which holds that choice alone brings about meaning

gives no other condition by which to call an act meaningful. In other words, there would be no inauthentic choices. Yet we still bring the value of particular choices into question, after they have been adopted. In this way, the property *meaningful* does not always obviously follow from choice (in the way Mill's account seems to suggest). Further, if every adopted thought or action were legitimately authentic, then the question of meaningful existence would be a moot one. What this proves is that Mill's conception of meaning is inaccurate. Meaning cannot properly be bestowed on a value after it has been chosen.

We get an example of the sort of absurdities Mill's line of thinking can produce in Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity*. There Taylor articulates what he calls a "general presumption of subjectivism about value" in the following way:

Things have significance not of themselves but because people deem them to have it—as though people could determine what is significant, either by decision, or perhaps unwittingly and unwillingly by just feeling that way.

But, Taylor, says,

This is crazy. I couldn't just *decide* that the most significant action is wiggling my toes in warm mud. Without a special explanation, this is not an intelligible claim.⁹

The problem, then, is that the modern conception of authenticity results in a loss of meaning altogether. Charles Taylor observes that the theory that authenticity can be achieved through choice alone ultimately undermines meaning. It lacks what he identifies as some "special explanation" for meaning.

This would imply that meaning is something separate from choice. As stated above, it appears that values could be called meaningful on one of two accounts: either meaning is bestowed on a value upon its being chosen or meaning is inherent in the value itself. In the first account, a value need only be chosen in order to be called "meaningful" or "authentic." But as just observed, it appears as though choice alone cannot, in fact, endow meaning. On the second account, however, there seems to be some other property necessary in order to make a given choice meaningful. If meaning is inherent, then there exists something beyond choice that makes a given value meaningful (or fails to). Charles Taylor identifies this as some

⁹ Ibid., 36.

“special explanation.” This theory is supported further by David Wiggins and Richard Taylor.

To determine what properties can bring about this meaning, David Wiggins suggests taking a theoretical “meaningless life” and then observing what would be required for meaning to arise. To this end, Wiggins refers to a book by Richard Taylor entitled *Good and Evil*. In this work, Richard Taylor uses the myth of Sisyphus as a thought experiment on a meaningless existence:

Sisyphus, it will be remembered, betrayed divine secrets to mortals, and for this he was condemned by the gods to roll a stone to the top of the hill, the stone then immediately to roll back down, again to be pushed to the top by Sisyphus, to roll down once more, and so on again and again, *forever*.¹⁰

The method Wiggins employs, using this example, is to determine how the “meaninglessness could be alleviated or removed.”¹¹ Taylor considers two potential explanations of Sisyphus’ scenario that would bring meaning into the otherwise meaningless picture. One is that Sisyphus could possibly have a task set before him, such as to use the stones in order to build a temple. In another explanation, the gods could implant an impulse or desire in Sisyphus to accomplish this task, thereby showing him mercy. Ultimately, neither of these explanations satisfies Wiggins. Nevertheless, he points to a vital implication of Taylor’s explanations: “But the descriptions so far also provide something else; namely the suggestion of how an existence that is objectively meaningless, in this sense, can nevertheless acquire meaning for him whose existence it is.”¹² In other words, these explanations themselves provide a certain “something else” that brings about meaning. A perceived significance in the actions performed, according to Taylor, suffices to bring meaning to the act. This can easily be compared to Charles Taylor’s account of a “special explanation.” The question that now faces us is whether these “special explanations” succeed in bringing about the meaning that authenticity requires.

¹⁰ David Wiggins, “Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life,” in *Twentieth Century Ethical Theory*, ed. Steven M. Cahn and Joram G. Haber (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 544.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 545.

5. The Need for Moral Realism

The failure to account for meaning has momentous ramifications for the way in which value is assessed and discussed. C. S. Lewis identifies this problem in his work *The Abolition of Man*, where he presents a diagnosis of modern society in the form of a critique of a certain grammar book for school children. Lewis accuses the authors of this book of dismissing the notion that statements containing a value predicate are truth-apt. The statement in question comes from a story of Coleridge at a waterfall, in which a certain tourist called the waterfall “sublime” and another called it “pretty.” After hearing this, Coleridge concluded that the first speaker was correct.¹³ Gaius and Titius, the names Lewis gives to authors of the grammar book, claim that this sentence (that the waterfall is sublime) merely asserts that the speaker has sublime feelings towards the waterfall. The assumption here is that all statements of value only express emotional states of their speakers. Lewis worries that this assumption, being taught to children, will instill in them the idea that all such statements are trivial.¹⁴

Charles Taylor further addresses this problem as it relates to the modern notion of authenticity. He identifies individualism as the first of three “malaises” of society, in that it entails a certain “facile relativism.”¹⁵ In other words, an extreme individualism lends itself to an overly relative morality, where one does not need a nuanced explanation for his chosen values. There is an ethics in which “one ought not to challenge another’s values.”¹⁶ As a result, the “special explanation” that meaning demands is no longer required of us. This is certainly seen in society’s modern ethics of “to each his own.” Taylor is observing an overly permissive culture in which the value of one’s mode of living cannot be determined. The consequences of this are the loss of meaning in any action and the loss of accountability for one’s actions. Since a person does not need to have an explanation for his values, he cannot be required to explain himself if his values are called into question or criticized.

With both of these writers, there is a concern for the meaning of value statements. For Charles Taylor, there is a fear that value will be seen as all-permitting and attributed to things too arbitrarily. For Lewis, the fear is that nothing will be seen as meaningful at all. In

¹³ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵ *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

either case, adherence to any sort of values loses all meaning. Authenticity, then, becomes a matter of simply acting without regard to the actual meaning of one's acts. The modern formulation of the authentic self seems to require nothing more than decision without justification. There is no demand for a "special explanation." Therefore, there seems to be a need for a condition of authenticity that allows for meaning *prior to* choice. In this way, meaning will be apparent in values. As a result, there will be a clear transition between meaningful choices, bringing about meaningful existence. Thus, authenticity will be able to perform this function.

Meaning must therefore be dependent on some intrinsic value, not arbitrary choice. This would imply that the value of an act exists prior to the choosing of it. If we can rightly ask whether a chosen act is good or meaningful, then we cannot very well admit that the choosing of them brings about this property. Therefore, it would seem that authenticity, if it is to bring about meaningful existence successfully, requires meaningful or valuable choices, where "valuable" implies a property of the value itself, not the act of choosing. This notion of meaning existing regardless of human choice or opinion can be properly identified as moral realism.

If we view value, then, as an inherent property of particular acts, then these values must exist independently of our choosing of them. The kinds of values that authenticity requires are those which are recognized as independent of human opinion, or, briefly, as morally real. By appealing to such values, it becomes far easier to see how such an articulation of authenticity leads to meaningful existence. By acting in conformity with transcendent values that we view as objective truths, we can assess our actions as to the inherent value they possess. If we can rightly call these valuable choices meaningful, then authenticity has performed its task of bringing about meaningful existence. Therefore, moral realism is a necessary condition of authenticity. The meaning of freely adopted values must transcend human opinion. And yet, even Charles Taylor's account of authenticity fails to establish this as a necessary condition.

6. Steps of Transcendence: The Conditions of Moral Realism

At its most basic level, authenticity requires that one freely adopt one's moral values. A decision must be made to adhere to some value for one to even begin considering authenticity. If someone does not choose the actions he takes, we cannot properly praise or blame him for those actions. In this way, the value of accountability

is lost. As a result, the actions of this individual, whether inherently valuable or not, cannot be attributed to his authenticity. The acts may be morally sound, but without choice, the self remains inauthentic. Mill, despite basing value solely in the will of the agent, rightly affirms the importance of choice. The problem is that Mill stops at this level and attributes value to the act of choosing, rather than to the value chosen. As discussed, this alone cannot bring value to moral convictions. The self cannot invent values and call them valuable on the grounds that they are merely chosen.

Another trait that authenticity requires, then, is that the values attributed to it are transcendent of the self. By giving values the property of transcendence, they can no longer be justified in solitude. Rather than being invented, values must be recognized as morally real, which means that they must exist beyond the self. This is the contribution writers like Taylor bring to the definition of authenticity. Since value must come from beyond the self, our moral choices can be properly argued for and justified according to a standard. By appealing to reasons beyond self-determination, we can now qualify and evaluate moral choices. Thus, authenticity is made possible in that a special explanation is demanded. There is a need to appeal to some standard that others will understand. In Taylor's words:

To come together on a mutual recognition of difference . . . requires that we share more than a belief in this principle; we have to share also some standards of value on which the identities concerned check out as equal. There must be some substantive agreement on value¹⁷

Still, this is not enough for true authenticity. The latter requires moral realism on a level that even Charles Taylor ignores. Taylor is suggesting what he calls a "need for recognition," but he fails to move beyond this into moral realism.¹⁸ Insisting that values transcend the self does not by itself imply that those values are not arbitrarily fabricated. "Beyond the self" does not mean objectively real. For instance, I may uphold the tenets of my religion as personal values. While it is true that these values originated beyond my own mind, I still may not recognize them as objectively real or valuable, but merely as "valuable to my religious community." But there is an obvious problem that arises in justification and accountability. If

¹⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁸ Ibid., 43.

values are not considered as transcendent of human opinion (that is, as existing independently of the opinions of any and all individuals), then even self-transcendent values are subject to the same problems of mere choice. Communal approval is subject to the same potential problems as individual choice (such as absurdity), because communally-accepted value is not necessarily discovered; it can be invented. In order to have a moral reality that is not subject to these problems, it must exist independently of communal approval. It must be discovered. Therefore, authenticity requires that values are morally real as well as transcendent in order to achieve the objectivity that authenticity requires.

7. Conclusion

It is understood that the ideal function of authenticity is to bring about meaningful existence. The task set before us in this paper is to determine what we need for an authentic, meaningful existence. In this pursuit, we identified the necessary conditions of authenticity's current articulation: adherence to some set of values, and freely adopting those values. We have found that those conditions lack what is required for meaning. Consequently, there is a worry that the *freely adopted* values that modern authenticity requires will be chosen arbitrarily. As a result, the modern conception of authenticity fails to fulfill its function of bringing about meaningful existence. Therefore, we look to values that somehow transcend the self and individual opinion. A need for some "special explanation" and recognition of that explanation in others is required for authentic existence. However, the worries about arbitrariness and lack of meaning still apply to any chosen value, even those that are chosen on the grounds of communal approval. Therefore, there is a need for moral realism, or values that transcend human opinion entirely. Without this, there can be no legitimate claim to meaning in our choices. Since we need meaning in order to lay claim to an authentic life, moral realism is a necessary condition of authenticity.

Arranged Marriage: First Comes Marriage, Then Comes Love

Kathryn Franke

This paper discusses the practice of arranged marriage, and whether this practice is moral or immoral. The paper will explore identifying information about the practice, why it is done, and my moral judgment about a tradition that is a defining aspect of cultures around the world.

1. Descriptive Account: What is the Practice of Arranged Marriage?

Because we are raised within a given culture with a certain set of general practices and beliefs, we are often under the impression that there is only one view of the definition of marriage. However, there are actually multiple views about how this practice should be carried out. The two general forms of marriage are love marriages, which consist of partners selecting each other independently, based on feelings of love for each other, and arranged marriages. An arranged marriage is “one where parents, rather than prospective spouses themselves, choose marital partners for their children.”¹ Marriages are typically arranged by parents in the countries of China, India, and Indonesia, countries that collectively contribute 40% of the world’s population, and also in Pakistan, Bangladesh, the trans-Ural parts of Russia, and Nigeria.² Arranged marriages are also common in Turkey, specifically in rural areas.³ In 1995, it was reported that “around half of Turkish couples were involved in an arranged marriage: the most widespread form involving an arrangement made after an initial viewing of the bride by the groom and his family.”⁴ This practice is “a feature of some rural areas within the former-

¹ Roger Penn, “Arranged Marriages in Western Europe: Media Representations and Social Reality,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42.5 (2011): 637.

² Del Jones, “One of the USA’s Exports: Love, American Style,” *USA Today*, Feb. 14, 2006; Bill E. Peterson, et al., “Authoritarianism and Arranged Marriage in Bangladesh and Korea.” *Journal of Research in Personality* (2011): 637.

³ “Arranged Marriages in Western Europe,” 642.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Yugoslavia, particularly amongst Moslems in Bosnia and Kosovo,” yet there is not a recognizable presence of the practice “amongst various Christian nationalities of the former Yugoslavia: Slovenes, Croats or Serbs.”⁵

Arranged marriages are also common within the Maghreb, the region of Northwest Africa that is west of Egypt, but the evidence suggests that “they are disappearing amongst children of Maghrebian immigrants who have grown up in France.”⁶ Traditional Portuguese society does not utilize the practice of arranged marriage.⁷ This is because Portugal is linked with a “Mediterranean” social pattern that is often associated with “strict gender roles but not with arranged marriages *per se*.”⁸ Generally, social scientists agree that arranged marriages are “central to the South Asian populations in Britain.”⁹ The tradition of arranged marriage has remained quite common “amongst children of international migrants from the Indian sub-continent in contemporary Britain.”¹⁰ They “are no longer the norm amongst children of international migrants in France and Germany,” yet they are customary for the “children of Pakistani and Indian migrants to Britain.”¹¹

Arranged marriages remain common for about half of the world’s population, and they are especially prevalent among cultures that practice Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, and those that contain substantial Moslem minorities.¹² The custom of arranged marriage occurs in a variety of cultures, “despite demographic, economic, political, and religious differences” between them.¹³ These countries have “ancient traditions governing the arrangement of marriage between sons and daughters by family elders,” which are usually parents.¹⁴

The journalist Del Jones goes into detail about this practice of arranged marriage, and what it entails. According to Jones, couples usually do not date while partaking in this tradition. They might have a brief meeting, followed by a wedding in just a few months. Due to the fact that the choice of spouse is not up to the individual, some

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 646.

¹¹ Ibid., 647.

¹² “Authoritarianism and Arranged Marriage,” 637; “One of USA’s Exports.”

¹³ “Authoritarianism and Arranged Marriage,” 623.

¹⁴ Ibid.

cultures that are very traditional use a “variety of devices” such as chaperones or burkhas, a loose garment covering all but the eyes, to “keep the young men and women apart to prevent sexual temptation from wreaking havoc.”¹⁵ Jones explains that those who practice this tradition associate love with a feeling that evolves over time. In arranged marriages, the man is often about three to six years older than the woman, but if the woman is considered unattractive or has a tarnished reputation, the man can be decades older.¹⁶ A dowry is often used in this practice, where some sort of exchange of money, land, or goods is made between the spouses upon the arrangement to wed. Jones explains that it is now illegal in India for dowries to be paid by the brides’ families, but it is still common in the other countries that employ this practice, and daughters who are attractive often help “save their parents a lot of money.” Some traditional cultures consider marriage an “economic agreement,” which is often looked down upon by Western cultures, but these traditional cultures also frowned upon and strongly discourage divorce.¹⁷

As previously stated, it is a common misconception that one’s own cultural traditions and practices are the only way to carry out marriages. However, two types of marriage systems now “co-exist within Western Europe and North America”: love marriages and arranged marriages.¹⁸ Love marriages allow for the freedom to choose one’s spouse, and this practice is generally associated with Western culture. Based on a thorough study of arranged marriage in Western Europe done by Roger Penn and Paul Lambert, it is believed that, in time, the practice of arranged marriages will become even more common among the cultures that currently practice it because it is “predominate in countries with high rates of population growth.”¹⁹ As the population continues to grow, the practice continues to be passed down from generation to generation.

Although arranged marriage is very much a traditional custom, it has evolved with the passage of time to reflect more modern concepts and attitudes. Even under the general umbrella of arranged marriages, there are subdivisions of the practice that reflect the changing times and cultures. Modern arranged marriages tend to

¹⁵ Jefferson Fish, “Looking in the Cultural Mirror: Arranged Marriages,” *Psychology Today*, April 27, 2010, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/looking-in-the-cultural-mirror/201004/arranged-marriages>.

¹⁶ “One of the USA’s Exports.”

¹⁷ “Looking in the Cultural Mirror.”

¹⁸ “Arranged Marriages in Western Europe,” 637.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

involve “a negotiation between the parents of a bride or groom and the parents of multiple prospective spouses.”²⁰ The parents then create a list of potential spouses who they believe would be good matches for their child, and the child is introduced “to each spouse individually, sometimes allowing them to have some time alone to talk.”²¹ The children ultimately choose the spouse themselves, but the parents approve of the choices prior to the selection, and if either party involved is “not receptive to the idea of a marriage, negotiations are called off.”²² Some parents do not take an active role in the final decision-making process, which is often seen as a compromise between the two general ideas of marriage styles seen in the present day.

2. Explanation of the Practice: Why Do People Participate in Arranged Marriages?

In the *Journal of Research in Personality*, Hazel Rose Markus makes a distinction which lends support to arranged marriage. He explains the difference between the European–American model and the East Asian model of what a standard person is, thereby differentiating one school of thought from the other. The European–American model considers a person as “a bundle of attributes, preferences, etc.” that “actively controls and influences others,” is “independent from others,” and “expresses and affirms an independent self.”²³ One’s actions are “‘freely’ chosen contingent on one’s own preferences, goals, and intentions,” and they are also “diagnostic of the self,” which further stresses one’s individuality when it comes to decision making and actions.²⁴ The very definition of a person according to the European–American model suggests a sense of independence and free choice based on the person himself or herself. This is directly reflected in the tendency for people in these regions to select love marriages as the preferred marriage style, because their values of freedom, individuality, and will are major factors in that custom.

The contrasting thought is the East Asian model, which defines a normative person as “a mode in a set of relations” that “maintains relations with others,” “affirms an interdependent self and one’s own

²⁰ “What Are Arranged Marriages?” <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-arranged-marriages.htm>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Hazel R. Markus, “Culture and Personality: Brief for an Arranged Marriage,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 38.1 (2004): 79.

²⁴ Ibid.

social position,” and “actively references and adjusts to others.”²⁵ The normative person’s actions are “responsive to obligations and expectations of others,” and his or her “preferences, goals, and interactions are interpersonally anchored.”²⁶ His or her actions are “diagnostic of the nature of relationships.”²⁷ The East Asian model is much more focused on a person’s relations and reliance on others. The stress is not on the individual, but rather on the responsibilities and expectations of the individual. The term “anchored” is a direct representation of the ties that those who participate in the custom feel in terms of familial and societal bonds. The normative person exists among many other normative people, and because of this, the perception is that it is extremely important to consider these people throughout one’s life, and this belief is the foundation of the support of arranged marriage.

Whereas a typical Western citizen chooses a single partner to “fulfill” himself or herself, many of those from “non-Western collectivist cultures,” even when living in Western cultures, remain loyal to their parents, ancestors, and kin, allowing them to select their future spouses for them.²⁸ Generally, those who practice arranged marriages have no borders to their loyalty and continue the practice no matter where they reside. The idea is that these relatives and friends are their foundation; they helped get them where they are today, so they are obligated to repay that service. In these cultures, “love is seen as something that develops over time and through shared experiences.”²⁹ According to a study in Jaipur, India, “people in love marriages were more in love for the first five years, while those in arranged marriages were more in love for the next 30 years.”³⁰ Defenders of the practice of arranged marriages argue that the matches are “often more successful than self-made marriages.”³¹ For centuries, most cultures only had arranged marriage as an option, “and it was believed to ensure stronger, happier marriages which also took the form of economic, social, and political alliances.”³² It is practiced by many different cultures as a typical means of shaping the next generation, and it is a defining aspect of these cultures.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Looking in the Cultural Mirror.”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Aisha Labi, “Muslims in Modern Europe: The Runaway Bride,” *Time*, May 5, 2003.

³² “What Are Arranged Marriages?”

There are many positive elements within the value system associated with arranged marriage that make it such a widely accepted practice. It is believed to “promote strong families,” “maintain familial links,” “conserve property,” and “maintain strong discipline over children.”³³ An arranged marriage “honors tradition and highlights the importance of extended family in the married person’s life, while acknowledging the expectation that love grows over time within the context of a marriage.”³⁴ Arranged marriages can also “serve to identify the relative standing of both families within a social class hierarchy.”³⁵ In some extreme cases, this tradition is so strong that “refusal to comply with an arranged marriage has led to death” because cultures believe in the practice so strongly.³⁶ It focuses on the importance of family and custom while working toward the goals of domestic and economic stability.

The practice of arranged marriage is often justified by the idea that “young people are too immature and impulsive to make a wise choice, and experienced elders are likely to do better.”³⁷ In addition to this, a study done by professors from the Psychology Departments of Smith College and Yonsei University states, “More authoritarian participants were more likely to indicate that they endorsed an arranged marriage for themselves . . . and they downplayed the importance of love and emotional compatibility in selecting a spouse.”³⁸ There seems to be a link between the form of government in the area in question and the viewpoint about arranged marriage. The governments of the areas that support arranged marriages strongly emphasize their advocacy of the practice. Western culture tends to stress democracy and free choice, or at least personal input when it comes to major decisions, whether they are personal or governmental. On the other hand, authoritarian governments are more imposing when it comes to laws, regulations, and procedures, and this is mirrored in the typical attitude about marriage in regions under authoritarian rule. There is less free choice, if any at all, but there is a strong sense of loyalty to one’s authority figures.

The relationship that is formed through arranged marriages is thought to be for the mutual betterment of both parties, because

³³ “Arranged Marriages in Western Europe,” 638.

³⁴ “Authoritarianism and Arranged Marriage,” 628.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Muslims in Modern Europe.”

³⁷ “Looking in the Cultural Mirror.”

³⁸ “Authoritarianism and Arranged Marriage,” 626.

they “help each other emotionally and financially, and accept a functional division of responsibilities in the house to make the relationship successful.”³⁹ Much thought goes into the decision as to which suitor is the right choice, and there is “a conscious attempt to match the two families as well as the bride and groom on the parameters of social status, financial strength, background, educational opportunities and similar lifestyle,” which in turn increases the “likelihood of the marriage succeeding.”⁴⁰ Arranged marriage is a practice that is a crucial aspect of these cultures, and it is a tradition that has remained steadfast while still allowing for adjustments due to the changing times and customs.

3. Normative Claim (Moral Judgment) and Supporting Arguments

As someone who has been raised in an environment where love marriages are the norm, I am accustomed to the idea of dating and selecting my future spouse. That is what is familiar to me, and that is what I will eventually face in coming years. This practice is a part of my culture, and it is therefore a part of my everyday life. However, after researching the practice of arranged marriage and its philosophies, I can determine that arranged marriages are indeed moral.

Our values and principles are ingrained in us based on our own culture. The traditions with which we are raised are typically the ones that we see as correct or valid, because they are the things that we know and to which we are accustomed. Assuming one follows the cultural expectations placed on him or her, one could be uninformed about other cultural beliefs, or one could be aware of them and told that they are incorrect or wrong. It is important to recall the concept of perspective, where things can seem right or wrong to different groups based on demographical factors and other external influences. The concept directly applies to the tradition and practice of arranged marriage in comparison to love marriages.

One of the biggest arguments against the morality of arranged marriages is the belief that there is no free will involved if the marriage is “forced” upon someone. As stated earlier, however, there are differing definitions as to what a person truly is, which ultimately leads to conflicting ideas about the role of free will. To those who

³⁹ James Walsh, “Arranged Marriages versus Love Marriages,” <http://www.everyonesarticles.com/Article/Arranged-Marriages-versus-Love-Marriages/6042>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

practice love marriage, the idea of free will is the concept that one can freely choose whomever he or she wishes to marry. Family and friends have little to no influence on the decision because the person is “independent from others” and “expresses and affirms an independent self.”⁴¹ One’s actions are “‘freely’ chosen contingent on one’s own preferences, goals, and intentions,” providing a more literal sense of free will.⁴² The East Asian model, on the other hand, considers a person to be something entirely different. In this model, a person “maintains relations with others,” “affirms an interdependent self and . . . actively references and adjusts to others.”⁴³ One is “responsive to obligations and expectations of others,” and one’s “preferences, goals, and interactions are interpersonally anchored.”⁴⁴ In this case, free will is used, but not in the way in which Western society typically views it. Free will is used in terms of choosing to respect and follow one’s own religion, culture, authority figures, etc. Just as the definition of a person differs between cultures, the application of free will changes between cultures as well. There is no way to say that one application is more correct or moral than the other, because both allow for the individual to carry out his or her role as a “person” in that society while still acting on some sort of individual basis, whether directly or indirectly.

Aristotle’s account of voluntary versus involuntary action, which he explains in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is directly related to the practice of arranged marriage. According to him, a voluntary action can “receive praise or blame” because the person who acts is aware of his or her actions and of the consequences or effects that may result from them, but involuntary actions exclude praise and blame because they come about “by force or because of ignorance.”⁴⁵ While many might assume that arranged marriages involve involuntary action, this is not necessarily the case. Just as free will can be considered in multiple ways, the idea of what is voluntary can be altered based on culture and perspective as well. Those who take part in an arranged marriage choose to follow tradition rather than choosing their spouses. The voluntary actions and involuntary

⁴¹ Markus, “Culture and Personality,” 79.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 1.109b1–3.

actions involved in arranged marriages work together, because the individual chooses to take part in his or her culture, yet there is not necessarily a choice when it comes to the spouse he or she will end up with. The type of free will that is involved in the practice of arranged marriage can be seen as consent. Although it is not complete and total free will, there is free will involved in the process nonetheless because the individual agrees to partake in the tradition and agrees to the terms of the marriage that is arranged for him or her. There are obviously varying levels of free will involved in marriages in different cultures, but there is a definite application of free will regardless of the type of marriage in which one participates.

Going along with this, there may even be multiple perceptions of what it means to have a marriage that is “arranged.” There is the view that was explained previously, where an individual’s parents, relatives, etc. select his or her future spouse, but there is also another way to look at the term “arranged.” Depending on one’s religious beliefs, one could claim that one’s marriage is arranged by God or some higher being by means of His plan for all of us. Through the Providence and intervention of a higher being, it could be seen that a marriage is arranged in a non-traditional sense. One can look at love marriages as if they are arranged in some divine manner, and they could be seen as a different way to accomplish the same goal of an arranged marriage. There are, of course, different religions for different cultures, and this in itself is proof that there will be many varied opinions and morals throughout the world and between the diverse cultures. The idea that a marriage could be arranged in this non-earthly way shows that it is the same end that is ultimately reached; it is just a different set of means by which to reach that end.

In his *Treatise on Law*, Aquinas explains, “Law signifies a plan directing acts to an end . . . and so all laws are derived from the eternal law insofar as they partake of right reason.”⁴⁶ If the law is for good reason, and has good intentions, being “ordained for the common good,” it is derived from the eternal law, which is God’s plan for us.⁴⁷ Those who employ the practice of arranged marriage do not so in order to limit their freedoms; they do so in order to form happier, longer-lasting marriages in their communities. The ultimate goal is a prosperous society full of well-functioning, happy couples. The intentions of this tradition have been misconstrued by

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law*, trans. Richard J. Regan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), q. 93, art. 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, q. 96, art. 3.

those who oppose the practice. There are many honorable philosophies that contribute to the prevalence of this practice, as described in Section 2, and for this reason, the practice is indeed moral even if it goes against the preferences of other cultures. Human law is our way of trying to understand and carry out the natural law, and it is our interpretation to the best of our abilities. Different cultures will inevitably arrive at different interpretations of the natural law, and therefore different human laws.

The idea of a love that develops over time rather than being the basis for a marriage is a difficult concept for many people in cultures that do not practice arranged marriage to grasp. To understand the long-term benefits of this practice, let us compare life to a marathon. The term “marathon” in itself suggests something that is long and enduring. When people train for a marathon, they must gradually build up their mileage as they prepare for the long distance they will be running during the race. However, it is important that they pace themselves throughout their training, because overworking and not taking care of themselves would ultimately be detrimental to their performance. When race day is upon them, the same concept holds true. As they become more accustomed to the race and more comfortable with the pace, they can gradually build up speed as they see fit. When the finish line is within sight, they will give an extra burst of speed as they complete the race, putting in as much effort as they can to leave nothing behind. Putting in everything they have will leave them feeling accomplished and successful in their effort. This is exactly how to explain love in an arranged marriage. It may not start out being extremely significant in the relationship, but as time goes on and those involved become more comfortable with the arrangement and with each other, they develop love for each other that grows continually throughout their lives.

This is not to say that love marriages are immoral or that they will not be successful in the long run. However, there are aspects of arranged marriages from which love marriages could benefit. The strong sense of value that comes with arranged marriages is a result of the goal of ultimate love and happiness with one’s partner over time. With this attitude, there is no risk of the love that brings forth love marriages drying up or running out. A marriage will certainly be faced with many obstacles and hardships. In order to successfully overcome these barriers, married couples must learn to work together as a unit and find solutions, which is a learning process for individuals within the couples and the couples as a whole. Because

the practice of arranged marriage has the goal of developing the couple throughout their partners' lifetimes, the focus on the long term rather than the short term would most likely prepare the couple for what they will inevitably face in the future as a married couple.

In the third article of question 91 in his *Treatise on Law*, Aquinas explains that human law "is a dictate of practical reason." We discover conclusions by "exercising reason," and with time, our use of reason develops and we become wiser. As a wise person, we are able to understand the results of our actions and our choices, and our understanding of things changes as we become more rational. Law ties in with reason, and there is a very strong use of reason that is used in selecting spouses for arranged marriages. Aristotle said that the youth, because of a lack of reason, tend to act with pleasure as the driving factor, which "causes us to do base actions" and clouds our judgment.⁴⁸ Young people "lack experience in the actions of life," and they tend to act instinctively on feeling rather than reason, which explains the practice of love marriages.⁴⁹ Arranged marriages simply reverse that approach, focusing on reason and the long term rather than the impulsive decision making that can be brought forth by love marriages.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that we learn through testimony and experience; that is, we learn through the knowledge and advice of authority figures, or those more experienced than ourselves, and we learn from experiencing things personally. The nature of arranged marriage is directly in line with this concept. The arrangement itself is the testimony of the individual's parents, relatives, friends, etc., and that is what makes the marriage more rational, because it is put together by people who fully understand the concept of marriage and have taken the time to evaluate all options and select the one that they believe to be most beneficial to the individual, and, in turn, to their family and society as a whole. Learning from experience comes from the growth and development of the marriage that was explained previously. As love grows with time, so do the relationships and bonds that those involved share with each other. Collectively, the marriage arrangement and the journey the couple shares together throughout their marriage is aimed at creating a well-rounded, complete learning experience that makes life more fulfilling.

⁴⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1104b10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1095a5.

Aristotle's distinction between virtue of thought and virtue of character also applies to the practice of arranged marriage. According to Aristotle, virtue of thought "grows . . . from teaching" and "needs experience and time," whereas virtue of character "results from habit."⁵⁰ This is similar to his idea of testimony versus experience. The virtue of thought corresponds to testimony, and the virtue of character corresponds to habit and experience. Through the testimony of others, those who are involved in arranged marriages develop virtue by understanding what type of relationship is most beneficial to them. Through the experience of the marriage itself, and the habit that inevitably results from starting a new life with someone, they are able to develop virtue as they encounter new hardships and successes in life, and learn what types of actions would make their lives more driven toward the ultimate end of happiness.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle identifies happiness as the "end of the things achievable in action."⁵¹ We can achieve this happiness by acting rationally and performing our human function of reason well.⁵² We can find goods even without reaching others. Arranged marriage may not be everyone's preference, but in an arranged marriage, those involved are on a continuous journey that evolves with the passing of time, building upon the relationship and love to develop a strong and lasting marriage.

4. Conclusion

The practice of arranged marriage has its roots in the concept of love as something that develops over time. Those who partake in arranged marriages see their relatives and friends as their foundation, and, since they are the people who helped them get where they are today, they see it as their obligation to repay that service to their kin through the acceptance of an arranged marriage. Although this practice is not adopted by all cultures, it is quite popular in a variety of countries, as mentioned in section 1. Though individuals within a given culture often see their own practices as the only way to go about doing something, there are no set guidelines when it comes to the way in which marriage should be carried out, whether it be love marriages or arranged marriages. Arranged marriages differ greatly from the concept of love marriages in that arranged marriages tend to focus on the long-term love that develops and results from a

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1103a15.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1097b20.

⁵² Ibid., 1098a15.

marriage. Love marriages, although they of course consider the long term as well, tend to focus more on the short-term emotions that guide the decision-making process when choosing a spouse. Though arranged marriages do not necessarily always end up the way they were planned, the same holds true for love marriages. Despite the differing opinions that exist about arranged marriages, especially those due to cultural differences, the practice is not morally wrong. It is a tradition that is based on the respect and wisdom of one's elders and the foundation of one's cultural traditions, and these are ultimately the guiding factors that contribute to marriages in these societies.

Humbled Before the Tabernacle: Holy Moses and St. Joseph

Thomas Scheibelhut

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”¹ These verses from the last chapter of the book of Exodus are held to be the culminating conclusion of the second book of the Pentateuch. The construction and consecration of the tabernacle having been completed, the *Shechinah* cloud covers the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle. With the Lord now present, Moses is unable to approach the tabernacle.

1. Biblical Exegesis

It has been said that the book of Exodus is to the Old Testament “[w]hat the incarnation is to Christianity,” for “without it, we cannot understand the history and religion of the Hebrews.”² Exodus, the second book of the Pentateuch, recounts the journey of Moses with the Israelite people from their time of slavery under Pharaoh to their time of wandering in the desert. These real historical events of Israel are said to have occurred during the thirteenth century B.C.³ The dating of the book’s composition, on the other hand, is a much different story. Those who hold to the Documentary Hypothesis say that the book’s final form was not completed until the fifth century B.C.⁴ Traditionally, however, it is held to have been written by Moses, a tradition to which some still hold.⁵

¹ Exodus 40:34-35. Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

² Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (JBC) (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 47.

³ University of Navarre’s *The Navarre Bible, The Pentateuch* (New York: Scepter Press, 2008), 238.

⁴ JBC, 47.

⁵ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, ed. Gary Lee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 4–6, 23.

Historically within the tradition of Israel, the great events in the book of Exodus “were retained in the folk-memory of the people and celebrated on the great feast-days; they were sung about in hymns and generally passed on as being an essential element of their faith.”⁶ As the significance of the event described in this passage was great for the people of Israel, it does not seem implausible to hold that this very passage was handed on in such a way.

The book of Exodus records both the events guiding the people of Israel from slavery towards the Promised Land and the regulations given by God and Moses regarding worship and conduct in the greater context of the covenant. The events cover almost all of Israel’s history “from the time the incipient tribes settled in Egypt (thus it dovetails with the end of Genesis: cf. Ex 1:1–22) to their extended sojourn at the foot of Mount Sinai (which is where the book of Numbers finds them).”⁷ The division of the book varies among scholars. Some divide it into ten sections, and others into six.⁸ Still others have said that the book is “usually divided into two main parts in line with the two key events it covers”: The departure from Egypt (1:1–18:27) and The People of Israel in the Sinai (19:1–40:38).⁹ The purpose of the book is summarized by the following:

The whole book is designed to exalt the greatness of God who has done so many wondrous deeds, and to stress the special nature of the people of Israel, the beneficiary of so many blessings. The choice of Israel, the Covenant and worship are the three things which constitute the structure of the people’s faith and religious life.¹⁰

The book of Exodus, aside from its traditional and liturgical uses in the history of Israel (as described above), has also been seen allegorically and typologically by the Catholic Church in many ways. Throughout the book there are events and figures which are seen by the Fathers of the Church as types of events or figures in the New Testament. In addition to the tabernacle, another well-known type used by the Fathers is that of Moses. He is often interpreted as a type of Christ.¹¹

⁶ *The Navarre Bible*, 240.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁸ *Pentateuch*, 317; JBC, 48, respectively.

⁹ *The Navarre Bible*, 235–38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹¹ JBC, 47–48; see also *The Navarre Bible*, 240.

The historical context of the book itself having been discussed, next to be prayerfully analyzed is the text itself: both in its form and in its detail. As far as its context is concerned, this passage comes at the end of the book of Exodus. It is generally held to be under the pericope of “The Cloud and the Glory of the Lord,” which is the book’s conclusion (40:34-38). It occurs immediately after the erection and consecration of the tabernacle, serving as the book’s “climax.”¹² It is “a careful recapitulation of the primary theme of Exodus, appropriately restated both as a summary and also by way of a preparation for what is to follow.”¹³ Within the context of the whole of the Pentateuch it can be seen “as an effective summary and conclusion of one part of this larger narrative and an equally effective anticipation and beginning of its next part.”¹⁴ “Exodus,” it should be noted, “is the title the Greek translators gave to the second book of the Pentateuch”; it means “‘leaving’, ‘going out.’”¹⁵ The genre seems to be a largely historical narrative, with the sacred writer “dressing events in a language of worship, theology and epic poetry.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, some have posited that it is “not so much narrative history, as is commonly supposed in biblical scholarship, but rather *biography*, specifically, a biography of Moses.”¹⁷ Although not typically noted, the present writer has seen a kind of chiasm within the two verses selected.¹⁸ The bookends of the chiasm are the repetition of two described events: the cloud covering the tent and the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle. In the middle of the chiasm is Moses’ reaction to these great events: it is said that he is unable to approach the tabernacle. This seems to underscore the reason for Moses’ inability to approach: the Lord Himself is present!¹⁹

We shall now turn to a detailed analysis of the text. Verse 34 follows the previous verse, which says, “So Moses finished the work.” The “work” here referred to is the construction and consecration of the tabernacle. The occurrence of the events of the

¹² Scott W. *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 885.

¹³ John I. Durham, vol. 3, *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus* (WBC) (Dallas: Word, 2002), 497–501.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *The Navarre Bible*, 235.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁷ Sallhamer, *Pentateuch*, 62; this position is held by Rolf Knierim.

¹⁸ The lack of comments is probably largely due to the fact that these two verses are only a part of a larger pericope. They have rarely been isolated from the text for a full exegesis. The only reference I have been able to find is in WBC, but even this text does not label it as a chiasm.

¹⁹ More on this later: see the following section of this paper.

cloud and glory immediately after the tabernacle's completion seems to suggest that the Lord was "waiting with impatience for the completion of the symbolic place of his Presence," thus "descending upon it the moment it is finally ready."²⁰ It has been said that this language is "semipoetic, almost hymnic."²¹ By seeing the paragraph which begins with this verse as a kind of epilogue to Exodus, this verse has been considered as "a short recapitulation about the protective function of the cloud that covered the tent of meeting; it is a sign that God is with his people and it is he who is leading them on their pilgrimage through the desert."²² Indeed, this cloud—in Hebrew, *Shechinah*—has already come up a number of times previously in Exodus, and it is almost always coupled with "the glory of the Lord" (cf. 13:21–22; 14:19, 24; 16:10; 24:16–18; 33:9–10, 22; 34:5).²³ As they are mentioned here, they serve as "a particular allusion to the narrative of Yahweh's descent onto Mount Sinai in the sight of Israel in 24:16–18."²⁴ "The Fathers also saw this cloud as a figure of Christ."²⁵

The tabernacle (Heb. *miškān*, *ʾobel mō'ēd*; Gk. *skēnē*) was a great symbol for the ancient Jews. After the Lord makes His Presence abide within the tabernacle, it is cherished as "the Lord's tented dwelling place in the midst of Israel as they traveled from Sinai to Canaan."²⁶ The book of Exodus recounts the construction of the tabernacle by Moses at the order of the Lord (cf. 26:1–14; 36:1–35; 39:32–40:33).²⁷ There is much that can be said about the tabernacle. To be sure, the greatest significance of the tabernacle was that it was a sure sign of the Lord's dwelling with Israel. The Hebrew word for tabernacle, *miškān*, "shifts our attention from the holiness and transcendence of God" to "the presence and immanence of the Lord."²⁸ The tabernacle is spoken of in the New Testament in a number of places, but in particular it is spoken of in the Letter to the Hebrews (cf. 8:5; 9:11), where Christ is seen as a new Moses and *the*

²⁰ WBC, 497–501.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *The Navarre Bible*, 238.

²³ Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles Augustus Briggs, eds., *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 24; WBC:E, 497–501.

²⁴ WBC, 497–501.

²⁵ *The Navarre Bible*, 409.

²⁶ T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 807.

²⁷ *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 979.

²⁸ *Dictionary of OT*, 809.

High Priest, who enters not the old tabernacle, “which is symbolic of the present age” and is “made with hands,” but “the greater and more perfect tent.” The tabernacle (Gk.: *σκηνή*) “prefigures God’s dwelling in the midst of his people in the Person of Jesus Christ,” who “*dwelt* among us” (John1:14) (Gk.: from the verb *σκηνώω*—literally, “to pitch a tent or tabernacle”).²⁹ For this reason, it is not difficult to see why the tabernacle is also often seen as a type of Mary, who by her fiat and the power of the Holy Spirit conceived Immanuel (God-with-us) within her.³⁰ The next verse gives a greater basis for such a connection.

Verse 35 describes how Moses was unable to enter the tent of the meeting. He could not approach due to the presence and glory of the Lord. “As in the approach to Sinai following the covering of the cloud and the settling of the Glory (24:15–18), Moses must await Yahweh’s invitation before he can draw nearer to the Presence.”³¹ Cassuto suggests that an invitation, like the one in Exodus 24:17, had to come in order for Moses to be permitted to enter the tent of meeting. He suggests that this invitation came in Leviticus 1:1.³² The cause for Moses’ inability to enter is fear or awe: “God’s presence was so awe-inspiring in its holiness, that even Moses could not enter the sanctuary.”³³ Fear of the Lord, or awe, is the normal response to the presence and glory of the Lord, both in the Old Testament and in the New, which causes people to hide their faces or fall on the ground.³⁴

The verse continues to reiterate the contents of verse 34 almost verbatim. However, the difference lies in the way the cloud’s coming is described. Instead of using the phrase “the cloud covered the tent of meeting” (in v. 34: in the Greek, “covered” is “ἐκάλυφεν”), the phrase “the cloud abode upon it” is used (v. 35: in Gk., “abode upon” is “ἐπεσκέαζεν”). This is very significant, allegorically speaking, since the same Greek verb for “overshadow” is used in the New

²⁹ *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 886. See also *Dictionary of OT*, 825; Gary A. Anderson, “Mary in the Old Testament,” *Pro Ecclesia* 16 (2007): 40; Mark P. Shea, *Mary Mother of the Son I: Modern Myths and Ancient Truth* (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 2009), 110.

³⁰ E.g., Theophanes has Mary calling herself “a divinely adorned tabernacle” (Arthur A. Just, Jr., ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament III: Luke* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003], 19); see also “Mary in the Old Testament,” 50.

³¹ WBC, 497–501.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Ronald E Clements, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: Exodus* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 243.

³⁴ Cf. Ex. 3:6; 33:20; 34:8; Lev. 9:24; Num. 16:45; 2 Chron. 5:13–14; 7:1–3; Is. 6:5; Ez. 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; 44:4; Lk. 1:11–12; 2:9; Mt. 17:6; Acts 22:7; Rev. 1:17; 4:10; 5:8.

Testament. In particular, Gabriel uses it to describe how Mary will conceive Jesus Christ: “ἐπισκιάσει” (Lk. 1:35). “It is the idea of the Shechinah which is suggested here. The cloud of glory signified the Divine presence and power, and it is under such influence that Mary is to become a mother,” or, one might say, become a tabernacle.³⁵

The purpose of this passage from the book of Exodus is to serve as the culmination of the construction of the tabernacle. God wanted the tabernacle built that he might have a “dwelling place among the people (Ex. 25:8).”³⁶ Once it was completed, God indeed came and dwelt among the people in the tabernacle. His presence and glory prevents Moses from entering. As has been shown, the tabernacle also foreshadows Mary as the new tabernacle who, being overshadowed by the power of the Most High, conceives in her pure womb the Son of God: “and the Word became flesh and ἐσκήνωσεν [“dwelt” or “tabernacled”] among us” (John 1:14).

2. Biblical Theology

With the pre-figuration of Mary in the tabernacle of the Old Testament having been made clear, another connection can now be shown between (1) Moses and his reaction to the tabernacle having been overshadowed and filled by God, and (2) Joseph and his reaction to the new tabernacle having been overshadowed and filled by God.

As has been said, the Fathers of the Church have seen the Blessed Virgin Mary as being foreshadowed by the tabernacle of the Old Testament. She became the new tabernacle of the New Testament. Ratzinger says that at the Annunciation, Mary “gives herself over wholly to the Father’s will and thus places her body [*Leib*] at his disposal as the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit.”³⁷ This has been shown to be all the more intended by St. Luke, who, knowing the Sacred Scriptures, used the same word (from the Greek verb ἐπισκιάζω) to describe how Mary would conceive Jesus in the same way Moses described how the cloud abode upon the tabernacle. This must remain our context as we continue: Mary, having been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, is the new tabernacle, now filled with the presence and glory of God.

³⁵ *International Critical Commentary*, 24; see also John Nolland, vol. 35B, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21–18:34* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 54; CCC, 697; Shea, *Mary I*, 110.

³⁶ Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 301; also see WBC, 497–501.

³⁷ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 84.

Something else that must be discussed before we proceed to make the theological connection between Moses and Joseph is the further use of the same verb by Luke to describe what occurred on Mt. Tabor at the Transfiguration. Luke uses the same verb that was used to describe both the cloud's action over the tabernacle (Ex. 40:35) and the Holy Spirit's action over Mary (Lk. 1:35) to describe the cloud's overshadowing over the three apostles at the Transfiguration (Lk. 9:34). Here we must see the relationship between the verb ἐπισκιάζω and the fear of the one present before the Lord's glory. As was said before, those who encounter the Lord's presence and glory are filled with awe and fear. The apostles, then, act appropriately. At the Transfiguration, "[t]he fear the disciples' experience is fear of the divine presence": "The scene evokes the terror of the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Ex 20:19–20)."³⁸ The reaction of the apostles to the "overshadowing" of the cloud is quite similar to Moses' reaction at the cloud's overshadowing the tabernacle, for it "made it impossible for Moses to enter."³⁹ While the scene does not explicitly say that Moses was afraid (as Lk. 9:34 says of the apostles: "ἐφοβήθησαν"—"they were afraid"), nevertheless, by his action (that of not entering) and his previous actions before the presence of the Lord,⁴⁰ it seems quite plausible to say that Moses was overcome by awe and fear of the Lord in this last scene of Exodus. If in both of the places where the verb ἐπισκιάζω is used in describing the Lord's presence (that of Exodus and that of the Transfiguration), the characters who are present respond with fear and awe, could (or should) it not be so in a third instance?

Now we turn to the Matthean text describing Joseph's role post-Annunciation, i.e., after Mary had become the new tabernacle. Remember, this is the context. In Matthew 1:18–25, the Gospel writer describes Joseph's experience of the mystery of the Annunciation. First, keep in mind that "Matthew writes his Gospel with the Jewish and Judeo-Christian worlds in mind. Thus, his concern is to underline the continuity between the Old and New Covenants."⁴¹ What concerns us most for the purposes of this discussion are verses 18–20, which read as follows:

³⁸ Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21–18:34*, 501.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Especially note his reaction to the burning bush in Ex. 3:6: "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."

⁴¹ *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 84–85.

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; ¹⁹and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. ²⁰But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit”

A question which often comes up from this passage is: What did Joseph think was the origin of Mary’s pregnancy? To be sure, the answer to this question is very important because it will shed light on Joseph’s plan of action. While “[m]any if not most of the Fathers of the Church favored the hypothesis that in Joseph’s opinion Mary had become pregnant through adultery or rape,”⁴² it must be said that *not all* of them thought this way. Indeed, Suarez has commented that there is another interpretation held by some of the Church Fathers: “swayed . . . by the exalted sanctity of the Virgin as he knew it from experience, he withheld all judgment because he was overwhelmed by a kind of stupefaction and great wonder.”⁴³ Jerome and Origen are two that come to mind who share this view.⁴⁴ This interpretation holds to the idea that St. Joseph, while acting in a favorable way towards Mary due to her purity and holiness, nevertheless remained completely ignorant regarding the mystery before him. While it seems very plausible to affirm that Joseph remained in the dark, it does not seem implausible to propose that Joseph at least knew the origin of the mystery before him: namely, that it was *of God*. As purity is necessary for seeing God,⁴⁵ and Joseph is considered the “perfect model of purity,”⁴⁶ so it may be said that, being so pure, Joseph must at least have sensed God’s presence. This presents a third view on

⁴² Francis L. Filas, S.J., *Joseph: The Man Closest to Jesus* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1962), 139.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴⁴ Jerome says, “Or this may be considered a testimony to Mary, that Joseph, confident in her purity, and wondering at what had happened, covered in silence that mystery which he could not explain” (Mark P. Shea, *Mary Mother of the Son II: First Guardian of the Faith* (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 2009), 62, n. 6; cf. Michel Gasnier, O.P., *Joseph the Silent* (England: Scepter (U.K.) Ltd., 2009), 65. Origen says, “He sought to put her away, because he saw in her a great sacrament, to approach which he thought himself unworthy” (Shea, *Mary II*, 63 n.).

⁴⁵ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8).

⁴⁶ St. Peter Julian Eymard, Eymard Library, vol. 8, *Month of St. Joseph* (New York: The Sentinel Press, 1948), 63.

Joseph's predicament: that he knew, at least to some degree, that the great mystery before him was of God.⁴⁷

"Joseph, son of David, do not *fear* to take Mary your wife" (Mt. 1:20). The angel tells Joseph not to fear. The cause of Joseph's fear is a great issue here. First, since the sacred text implies that he did indeed fear to take Mary as his wife, it is on this basis that the first position, which holds Joseph to be doubtful of Mary's purity, can be denied: "If Joseph the just knew for certain that Mary was guilty of adultery, he would have had no fear nor cause for fear in denouncing her," since to denounce or divorce her would have been the just thing to do.⁴⁸ Second, one might ask: What, then, is the cause for his fear? What kind of fear is this? Here, the work of Giorgio Buccellati is to be considered (and praised).⁴⁹ Buccellati holds that Joseph's fear was "*phóbos* in the sense of *trómos* and *thámbos* and *ékstasis* and *kbará* i.e., an instinctive astonished yet joyful distancing from a perceived mysterious event that signals a divine intervention above and beyond the subject's capacity of normal human control."⁵⁰ He sees this as "fear of the Lord" and as being akin to the experience of not only the apostles at the Transfiguration, but also of Moses before the burning bush.⁵¹ Thus, as the apostles and Moses reacted before the glory and presence of the Lord before them, so too does Joseph.

While Buccellati's comparison between Joseph and Moses rests upon the scene of the burning bush, it is not too difficult to end with the same conclusion here. Based upon the exegesis above, we see that Joseph, like Moses before the overshadowed tabernacle, is now

⁴⁷ Filas, *Joseph*, 144. Filas' treatment here does not seem to allow for degrees of knowledge. In other words, it is possible to be of this third opinion yet not to the point of holding that Joseph knew all that had taken place at the Annunciation: there still could have remained some mystery for Joseph, and thus the dilemma, and the need for the angel to speak to him. See also Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 18, footnote for v. 1:19. Hahn analyzes the case into two views: the "Suspicion Theory" and the "Reverence Theory." He seems to favor the Reverence Theory.

⁴⁸ *Joseph*, 143. St. Basil comments, "[I]t would not be the action of a just man to pass over sins in silence" Quoted in Luigi Gambero, S.M., *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 150.

⁴⁹ Giorgio Buccellati, "The Prophetic Dimension of Joseph," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 33 (2006), 76–93. I agree with Buccellati's opinion on what Joseph's fear was (namely, *awe*), but I do not agree with his opinion that Mary "feels it is her responsibility to disclose immediately to Joseph, her legal husband, what she accepts on faith to be a very real pregnancy" (52). I rather lean towards the understanding of Fr. Marie-Dominique Philippe, O.P.: "She is able to keep God's secret in silence, for she does not doubt Joseph's faithfulness both to God and to herself. . . . It is a secret of love; it is the gift of the beloved Son." See his *The Mystery of Joseph* (Bethesda: Zaccheus Press, 2009), 10–11. See also Adrienne von Speyr, *Handmaid of the Lord*, trans. E. A. Nelson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 58.

⁵⁰ "The Prophetic Dimension of Joseph," 77–78.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 76–77.

before the overshadowed Mary (the new tabernacle). She is enwrapped with a divine mystery which Joseph does not fully understand. He simply “finds himself faced with the fact that God, without asking what he thinks about it, has been at work in Mary.”⁵² Based upon the proper understanding of the kind of fear the angel is trying to calm for Joseph (i.e., fear of the Lord), it can be said that Joseph is overcome with awe at the divine mystery before him. Because of his purity, he “managed to discern the presence of an inscrutable mystery, a divine intervention”⁵³ And because of his reverence for the Lord and for the Virgin before him, he, like Moses, “acts out of fear of God”⁵⁴ and is thus “not able to enter” this mystery, this “garden locked” (Ex. 40:35; Songs 4:12). He has “decided to remove himself from the scene as unworthy to be publicly associated with the unfathomable.”⁵⁵ One thinks of the humility of the psalmist before God: “O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me” (131:1). Yet the angel comes to calm his fear and to give him the invitation from God, which was needed for him to be a part of such a marvelous event: “He is not to distance himself from her.”⁵⁶ In his reverence for the divine and for her who has been overshadowed and filled with the divine, Joseph, having humbly decided to back away quietly, is given back the very gift that he cherished most: his bride, but also now Christ Himself, who dwells within her. He is given more than he has justly and humbly given back over to the Lord. He once received Mary from Him; now He receives her and Him. Such is the reward of his humility and faith.

3. Catechetical Reflection

“Fear of the Lord” is a gift not often spoken about. What does it mean? It is one of the gifts of the Spirit which are listed by Isaiah as being given to Christ: “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him . . . the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord” (Is. 11:2). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* names it as “[o]ne of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit

⁵² *Mystery of Joseph*, 12.

⁵³ *Mary and Fathers*, 296.

⁵⁴ Rene Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas: Beyond the Myths: The Gospels of the Infancy of Christ*, trans. Michael J. Wrenn. Petersham: St. Bede’s Publications, 1986), 267.

⁵⁵ “The Prophetic Dimension of Joseph,” 93.

⁵⁶ *Mystery of Joseph*, 13.

which ensures our awe and reverence before God.”⁵⁷ These gifts “complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.”⁵⁸ This “making docile” due to fear of the Lord can be seen in many of the saints throughout the Bible. Today, we have focused on two of them: Moses (in the OT) and St. Joseph (in the NT).

At the end of the book of Exodus, Moses has just finished constructing and consecrating the tabernacle, which was to be the dwelling place of God for the Israelites. Then the Lord comes in the form of a cloud, known as the *Shechinah* glory cloud, and overshadows the tabernacle, filling it with his glory and presence. Moses’ humble reaction: “And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex 40:35). Being filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord, he humbly stays back, knowing that he is not worthy to approach so great a Presence.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we see a similar reaction in St. Joseph. Joseph is confronted with Mary after her Annunciation. She, like the tabernacle in the OT, was “overshadow[ed]” by the “power of the Most High” (Lk. 1:35). And thus “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:14). Although Joseph may not know exactly what has occurred, he is nevertheless confronted with his bride having miraculously come to be with child, and, because of his purity, he knows it to be of the Lord. His reaction: he wishes to put Mary away quietly, but an angel comes to him and says, “Joseph, son of David, *do not fear* to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 1:20). The angel allays his fear of the Lord, which is both moving him to stay back, like Moses, and keeping him docile to the Holy Spirit. He wants only to do the Lord’s will and to reverence Him. This is what we should take from this: to ask for the gift of fear of the Lord (for it can only be given), that we may be reverent before the Lord and His dwelling place. This is the reverent approach that we should have when we entreat Our Lord, or Our Lady who is the new tabernacle. In closing, let us listen to the words of Bl. John Henry Cardinal Newman:

Are these feelings of fear and awe Christian feelings or not?
... I say this, then, which I think no one can reasonably
dispute. They are the class of feelings we should have—yes,

⁵⁷ CCC, glossary, 879.

⁵⁸ CCC, 1831.

have to an intense degree—if we literally had the sight of Almighty God; therefore they are the class of feelings which we shall have, if we realize His presence. In proportion as we believe that He is present, we shall have them; and not to have them, is not to realize, not to believe that He is present.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ CCC, 2144.

Allah, the Lord of Mercy, Must Resurrect His People

Timothy Eyrich

For centuries the dialogue between faith and reason has evolved within the Islamic tradition. That tradition has been witness to discussions of the boundaries of reason and the extent to which the revealed knowledge of the Quran should be accepted as literal truth. Islamic philosophers and theologians at times sparred over the question of whether philosophy should be permitted within Islamic religious discussions. Al-Ghazali, a theologian, praised most of the Islamic philosophers' work, but he pointed out an inconsistency in their metaphysics regarding the resurrection of the body.¹ While the philosophers claimed to be faithful, Al-Ghazali realized they were in conflict with the revelation of Islam. Arguing against the metaphysical claims of the Islamic philosophers, he maintained that reason demands belief in the resurrection of the body, or Allah cannot claim to be the Lord of Mercy.

Allah's existence was proved by Ibn-Sina in his work *The Salvation*. In this text, Ibn-Sina says, "The necessarily existent is the existence that *must be . . .*"² Although Ibn-Sina does not outright say that Allah is the necessary existent, one can deduce this from his statement, "nor is there multiplicity in the necessary existent."³ In a word, he is saying that reason demands belief in the necessary existent. The necessary existent is one, and every faithful Muslim knows that Allah is the one Lord praised in the Islamic tradition.

The Islamic faith tradition teaches that Muhammad, peace be upon him, was sent by Allah, the Lord of Mercy, and that the Quran was given to him to show Allah's mercy to the people. The Quran is Allah's word, spoken to the Prophet, and it teaches that Allah is

¹ Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error*, trans. R. J. McCarthy, S.J. (Louisville, Fons Vitae, 2000).

² J. McGinnis and D. Reisman, trans., *Classical Arabic Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2007), 211.

³ *Ibid.*, 213.

“most forgiving and merciful.”⁴ Ibn-Rushd, a philosopher, also recognized Muhammad as Allah’s “chosen servant.”⁵ Faith and reason connect here inasmuch as the philosophers and theologians agree that Muhammad, peace be upon him, as Allah’s servant, was given the task to spread the truth of the Quran in order for all people to believe in Allah through the Prophet. And the Quran would “put [the people’s] hearts at rest.”⁶

The Quran is Allah’s word, which is “the truth from the Lord.”⁷ Both theologians and philosophers agree with this statement in the Quran. Ibn-Rushd says that the Law is “the door of theoretical study that leads to the truest knowledge of Him [and] this religion is true.”⁸ Neither philosophers nor theologians question the truth of Allah’s revelation in the Quran. They accept the Quran as the truth and believe it contains the word of the Lord. However, they do not actually accept everything.

The Quran teaches that the resurrection of the body will occur at the end of time.⁹ It also describes the physical experiences of the Garden and Fire in the afterlife.¹⁰ While theologians accept Allah’s revelation regarding the resurrection, many philosophers do not accept it. As Al-Ghazali says in *Deliverance from Error*, the philosophers “denied the afterlife and rejected the Garden and the Fire.”¹¹ This, again, is the point that must be proven: that without the resurrection, as promised in the Quran, Allah is not merciful.

In addition to naming Allah the Lord of Mercy, many surahs in the Quran speak of the endless mercy of Allah. Muslims believe he is merciful, and that his mercy is made evident through his act of creation. Ibn-Sina says, “there is only one necessary existent—Allah.”¹² This means that all creation, including humanity, is not necessary. Out of his mercy, Allah gives individuality to every human person. He is the only necessary being, yet he wills to create mankind and share life with every individual.

There are no two persons who are the same, but, rather, each person is a particular whom Allah has numbered exactly.¹³ After he

⁴ Quran 3:129.

⁵ *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, 309.

⁶ Quran 47:2.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Classic Arabic Philosophy*, 312–13.

⁹ Quran 16:27, 75:40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4:56, 47:15.

¹¹ *Deliverance from Error*, 62.

¹² *Classic Arabic Philosophy*, 211.

¹³ Quran 19:94.

created us, some humans turned away from Allah through sin and did not follow him. They became evildoers.¹⁴ Allah sent the Quran through his Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and he provided revelation to bring mankind back to him. He desired to make all men aware of their wrongdoings and teach them the earthly blessings they could have through his mercy if they changed their ways and followed the Prophet. Finally, Allah has prepared the afterlife for men so they can spend eternity with him, and “he will give love to those who believe.”¹⁵ For all of these reasons, Allah is the Lord of Mercy.

Evaluation and reflection on one of Allah’s gifts of mercy, the individual creation of each person, reveals reasonable proof of the resurrection of the body. The Quran teaches Allah’s creation of all things.¹⁶ In his work on *The Soul*, Ibn-Sina says, “The soul does not suffer destruction as the body does because the soul is coexistent with the body.”¹⁷ One thing only suffers destruction with another thing if it is an accident of that thing.¹⁸ However, the soul is coexistent rather than accidental. It is the principle of life for the body. When the body has life, it is because the body has a soul. When the body dies, however, the soul still lives as a principle of life within it. The soul is independent from the body, and this is paramount to understanding the nature of the incorruptible soul.

Ibn-Sina goes on to say, “[souls] could be distinct from one another only on account of what receives the essence, and this is the body. So, it is false to maintain that before arriving in bodies, the souls are numerically many things.”¹⁹ This is one of the most important philosophical claims in relation to the idea of the resurrection of the body. Ibn-Sina’s idea here is that before Allah creates a body, the soul is not a distinguishable individual. The created body is what provides the recognizable difference for the soul, while the soul is the life-giving principle. Without a body, one soul is not recognizably distinct from any other soul. This philosophical principle would then extend into the afterlife. If this is the case, souls are joined to created bodies, but when the body is corrupted and dies, the soul enters the afterlife without any

¹⁴ Ibid., 39:35.

¹⁵ Ibid., 19:96.

¹⁶ Ibid., 35:1.

¹⁷ *Classic Arabic Philosophy*, 195.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 193.

distinction from the other souls. This seems to be against reason, however, because if Allah is the perfect creator, with infinite wisdom, then he must have created distinctive bodies to connect with souls for a specific purpose. Allah knew of the afterlife before he created any person, and it is unreasonable to think that he created the bodies solely for an earthly life. Rather, Allah knew the last day would come and that all persons would enter the afterlife. As such, in his wisdom, he created differentiable bodies to be connected with souls in the earthly life, and he planned to resurrect these bodies in the afterlife. Therefore, in both lives all individuals would be unique, just as Allah created them. Allah knew that the afterlife would be a much richer life, and for that reason the physical life in the Garden would be an even greater kind of life than the physical life on earth. This more reasonably explains the infinite mercy and love of Allah, who desires all men to be happy.

Additionally, the Quran explicitly speaks of a physical afterlife with “flowing streams and pure spouses.”²⁰ These physical blessings in the Garden cannot occur without the presence of a body. And it would be impossible to differentiate this person from that person, since one soul is only distinguishable from another insofar as it is connected with a body. Allah has said through his word in the Quran that he knows each particular,²¹ and “on that day Allah will raise everyone.”²² Allah would not create man with a physical body in the earthly life where one experiences physical pleasures, then promise an eternity of physical pleasures in the afterlife, and finally fail to resurrect the body on the last day. In effect, such a position claims that Allah will not fulfill his promises. For Allah to do something against his word in the Quran defies reason, and Allah does not contradict reason, but rather does what is most reasonable. Since Allah has promised in the afterlife a resurrected body, and since, as the philosopher Ibn-Rushd says, “this religion is true,”²³ it is reasonable to believe that he will fulfill his promise on the last day.

If a philosopher accepts Allah as the Lord of Mercy, the necessary existent who created and who sent his true word, the Quran, through his Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, then this philosopher must also believe in the resurrection of the body. Everything that Allah does is out of mercy, since he is the Lord of

²⁰ Quran 4:56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19:94.

²² *Ibid.*, 58:6.

²³ *Classic Arabic Philosophy*, 312–13.

Mercy. That being the case, Allah created out of mercy. Allah sent Muhammad, peace be upon him, out of mercy. Allah sent the Holy Quran out of mercy. And Allah resurrects the body and accepts it into the afterlife full of physical pleasures out of mercy. Allah does not do these things because he must. Instead, the philosophers have already told us that Allah need not do anything except exist as himself.²⁴

If, however, any philosopher does not accept the teaching on the resurrection of the body because it is said to be unreasonable, there are only two possible conclusions: either such a philosopher is not a faithful Muslim because he does not follow the teachings of the Quran, or Allah is a liar and is not the Lord of Mercy. The philosopher Ibn-Rushd says: “Demonstrative truth and spiritual truth cannot conflict.”²⁵ The Holy Quran says that Allah will resurrect the dead on the last day. However, if this is against reason, Allah must be a liar because his word would violate reason.

There must be a reconciliation of faith and reason on this question. Since the truth of reason and the truth of faith conflict concerning the resurrection of the body, and two conflicting truths cannot exist, according to Ibn-Rushd, one “truth” must be in error. If the truth of revelation, the word of Allah, is in error, then Allah is a deceiver and cannot be the Lord of Mercy. If the truth of human reason is in error, then the philosophers must adjust their understanding of the resurrection of the body and align it with the Islamic faith found in the Holy Quran.

I argue that the truth of reason, given by the philosophers in argument against the resurrection of the body, is in error and must be realigned with the truth of the Holy Quran. Reason demands such realignment because the philosophers tell us—and the prophets agree—that Allah is the only necessary existent, and the Lord of Mercy. Since he is Lord, his word in revelation is infallible and cannot be changed, for Allah is unchangeable. The divine text must be revered above human reason. Thus, the error must exist in the conclusions of human reasoning, which can be changed.

Philosophy is a beautiful thing when it is used properly. And as Al-Ghazali says, it is used properly when it proves things demonstratively through mathematics and logic.²⁶ Again, Ibn-Rushd claims that *demonstrative truth* cannot conflict with revelation. But the

²⁴ Ibid., 211.

²⁵ *Classic Arabic Philosophy*, 313.

²⁶ *Deliverance from Error*.

teaching concerning the resurrection of the body, which comes from the Quran, cannot be proven through demonstration. Moreover, the resurrection of the body is a metaphysical idea that cannot be studied through mathematics or logic. For this reason, it is not to be treated in the same way as those truths that can be understood through demonstration. Since the work of the philosophers cannot prove whether resurrection is possible or not, the truth in the teaching of the Quran must be accepted because it leads to the “truest knowledge of Him.”²⁷ Therefore, Allah is the Lord of Mercy, and the philosophers must accept the teaching of the resurrection found in the divine revelation of the Quran or cease to be recognized as faithful Muslims.

In conclusion, philosophers and theologians both agree that Allah exists, that the Quran is the word of Allah, that the Quran is truth, and that Allah creates human beings. The philosophers do not accept that the resurrection of the body will occur on the last day. This paper has provided evidence, found in both reason and revelation, why reason demands that the resurrection teaching be considered true, or else Allah is not the Lord of Mercy. Taking as a foundation the principles that are accepted by both philosophers and theologians, and extending reason into the realm of why Allah created the world—for our happiness and out of his mercy—it is evident that the philosophers’ reason, which led them to reject the resurrection, must be realigned with the truth of revelation. Allah’s word in the Quran is infallible, while human reason can err. Allah is the Lord of Mercy, and reason demands that all faithful Muslims believe in the resurrection of the dead on the last day, as taught by the Holy Quran.

²⁷ *Classic Arabic Philosophy*, 312–13.

*Crede ut intelligas: Augustine's Mystical Ascent and *conversio* through the Discipline of Reading in the *Confessions**

Briggs Hurley

We climb "the ascents in our heart" (Ps. 83:6), and sing "the song of steps" (Ps. 119:1). Lit by your fire, your good fire, we grow red-hot and ascend, as we move upwards "to the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 121:6).

—*Confessions*, XIII.ix

You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.

—*Confessions*, I.i

After journeying many long years in search of inner peace and his distinct purpose in life, the man Augustine, who would come to be known as both one of the greatest saints of the patristic age and “incomparably the most powerful influence upon the history of Western religion during the thousand years which followed his death,” encapsulates with austere clarity his profound realization of the fundamental nature of religion: God and the individual soul’s relationship with God.¹ “I desire to know God and the soul,” he writes in the *Soliloquies*, a dialogue on the soul which aspires to self-knowledge. “And nothing more?” “Nothing whatever.”² That Augustine’s theology derives from his own mystical encounters is seldom questioned, though disagreement emerges among scholars as to exactly which events in his life were “mystical.”³

¹ Quoted in Robert E. Wright, “Mysticism,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 576; cf. E. I. Watkin, “The Mysticism of St. Augustine,” in *A Monument to Saint Augustine*, ed. M.C. D’Arcy, et al. (London: The Dial Press, 1930), 105.

² Augustine, *Soliloquies*, trans. Rose Elizabeth Cleveland (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1910), I.2.7.

³ “Mysticism,” 577.

To better appreciate Augustine's role as a mystic, this essay will employ Jean Gerson's understanding of mystical theology as "knowledge of God by experience, arrived at through the embrace of unifying love."⁴ Whereas certain scholars dismiss his visions as "primarily intellectual," Dom Cuthbert Butler's description of Augustine as "Prince of Mystics" elucidates the relationship between his intellectual and spiritual faculties; instead of realizing a separation between these two faculties, Butler notes that Augustine "[unites] in himself . . . the two elements of mystical experience, viz., the most penetrating intellectual vision into things divine, and a love of God that was a consuming passion."⁵

The vision at Ostia in book IX as described in the *Confessions* marks the first of Augustine's Christian mystical encounters and should be viewed as distinct from his previous Neo-Platonic vision at Milan in book VII. In light of Gerson's understanding of mystical theology, we will thus propose that Augustine's mystical path culminates with his Christian encounter at Ostia rather than in his Neo-Platonic ascent at Milan. In the first part of this thesis, we shall elucidate the Neo-Platonic concept of a mystical "return to the Origin" in order to then differentiate this "fulfillment" through Plotinian hierarchy from enlightenment by means of God's grace. Subsequently, we shall trace the role of Augustine's philosophical and mystical ascents throughout his *conversio* in the *Confessions*, with particular emphasis on the parallels between the literary structure of his autobiography and his mystical journey, viz., progression toward God. Indeed, true happiness for Augustine can only be found in the morally superior end product of confession before the Creator. Lastly—recalling Augustine's own *Retractationes* of his life's works—we shall include our own "reconsiderations" of the intellectual implications of Augustine's understanding of mysticism.

I. Understanding the Mystical Ascent in Augustine's *Confessions*

*Quantum in te crescit amor, tantum crescit pulchritudo; quia ipsa caritas est animae pulchritudo.*⁶

—Augustine, *In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos, tractatus decem*

⁴ Ibid., 576.

⁵ Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teaching of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 20.

⁶ "To the extent that love grows in you, beauty grows, because charity itself is the soul's beauty."

*Sicut vita corporis anima, sic vita animae Deus.*⁷

—Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*

Augustine was certainly “the most acute of Christian Platonists,” as Henry Chadwick notes, and is perhaps best known for his introduction of “the synthesis between Christianity and classical theism stemming from Plato and Aristotle” to the Western world.⁸ In fact, his search for “the happy life” in *De beata vita* had its origins in the transcendence of worldly things, as presented in Plotinus’ *Ennead* “On Beauty.” He adopted the Plotinian concept of beauty as the “greatness of soul, a righteous life, a pure morality, courage with its noble look, and dignity and modesty advancing in a fearless calm and unperturbed disposition,” noting that such great beauty is exclusive to the intelligible realm.⁹ According to Plotinus, the reason the soul “[delights]” in seeing beauty in the physical realm is because it “returns to itself and remembers itself and its own possessions,” that is, it recognizes the physical beauty which “comes into being by sharing in a formative power which comes from the divine forms.”¹⁰ Plotinus employs the myth of Narcissus to demonstrate the destructive power of life based in the flesh: “If a man runs to [his] image and wants to seize it as if it was the reality (like a beautiful reflection playing on the water, which some story somewhere . . . said a riddling man wanted to catch and sank down into the stream and disappeared) then this man who clings to beautiful bodies and will not let them go, will, like the man in the story, but in soul, not in body, sink down into the dark depths.”¹¹ Recalling the example of Odysseus, Plotinus offers “truer” advice: “Let us fly to our dear country.”¹²

This Neo-Platonic concept of a return to the Origin is without a doubt the *telos* of both the vision at Milan in book VII and the one he will experience at Ostia in book IX. Robert McMahon suggests that the idea of a “return to the Origin” expresses both an epistemological and a moral principle: “The cosmic order can be rightly comprehended only by a person who returns, through reason

⁷ “As the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul.”

⁸ Henry Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.

⁹ Plotinus, *Ennead* I.6.5; trans. David Rehm, Mount St. Mary’s University (2010).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I.6.2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I.6.8.

¹² *Ibid.*

at least, to its Origin . . . [but] one's life should be directed toward, and disciplined for, that journey of return."¹³ Neo-Platonists (or simply the "natural man") and Christians heretofore shared both the same notion of God and the understanding of the "proper goal of the human soul as consisting in the direct vision of God."¹⁴ However, upon reflection and study of Augustine's text, it becomes distinctly clear that Christianity not only "comprehends" but, indeed, "exceeds Neo-Platonism."¹⁵

In the description of his vision at Milan, Augustine viewed mystical union with God as something man can attain through his own will. He writes,

By the Platonic books I was admonished to return into myself . . . I entered and with my soul's eye, such as it was, saw above that same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind—not the light of every day, obvious to anyone, nor a larger version of the same kind which would, as it were, have given out a much brighter light and filled everything with its magnitude . . . It transcended my mind, not in the way that oil floats on water, nor as heaven is above earth. It was superior because it made me, and I was inferior because I was made by it.¹⁶

Written consistently in first person singular, the account underscores the solitude inherent to this particular intellectual ascent (e.g., "I was admonished," "I entered"); moreover, Augustine situates the vision midway through his discourse on pride and vanity. He opens book VII with the confession, "But the older I became, the more shameful it was that I retained so much vanity,"¹⁷ and throughout the book he admits how "gross[ness],"¹⁸ "arrogance,"¹⁹ and "conceit separated me from you."²⁰ He adds that he first received the books of the Platonists from "a man puffed up with monstrous pride," suggesting the self-glorifying beliefs and theories held by these philosophers.²¹

¹³ Robert McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent: An Essay on the Literary Form of the Confessions* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 119.

¹⁴ Colin Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of Confessions I-IX* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), 261.

¹⁵ *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 119.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), VII.x (16).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, VII.i (1).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, VII.i (2); from Matt 13:15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, VII.vii (2); from Job 15:26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, VII.viii (13).

Augustine warns against the “temptation” to be “feared or loved by people for no reason other than the joy derived from such power”;²² indeed, he writes that men who fall into this trap “sought a mediator to purify them, and it was not the true one,” the starting point for his discussion of “the *true* Mediator,” “the man Christ Jesus.”²³ Citing Virgil in the *City of God*, he adds that pride is “the origin and head” of the works of the flesh. Pride ultimately revisits the fall of the first couple, recalling Adam and Eve’s desire to mediate the human *and* the divine by their own effort; as Augustine notes, “the devil too, wished to live according to himself when he did not abide in the truth; so that when he lied, this was not of God, but of himself, who is not only a liar, but the father of lies, he being the first who lied, and the originator of lying as sin.”²⁴

With the vision at Ostia, Augustine has become more familiar with the writings of Paul, who admonishes “not [to] boast as if he had not received’ both what he sees and also the power to see.”²⁵ Following his conversion in a Milan garden—which Augustine would later come to accept as a grace offered him by God—his greatest obstacle becomes, as he writes, “to reject my own will and to desire yours.”²⁶ He decides “in [God’s] sight”²⁷ to withdraw from his “public position,” his pride yielding to the humility for which Paul beckons, and the subsequent necessity of reliance on God.²⁸ Augustine clearly shifts from an emphasis on the ability of the will to an emphasis on God’s gift of grace—from unmediated, philosophical ascent to mediation through the Word made flesh; indeed, “Wretched man that I was, who would deliver me from this body of death other than your grace through Jesus Christ our Lord?”²⁹ His spiritual journey becomes “at once an account of a personal experience, and yet not a purely solitary one,” as Louth writes, highlighting the “social nature of final beatitude.”³⁰

The vision at Ostia differs notably from the one at Milan in its communal nature; the vision is experienced by both Augustine and his mother, Monica. Numerous times throughout the *Confessions*,

²² *Ibid.*, X.xxxvi (59).

²³ *Ibid.*, X.xlii (67–70). Emphasis added.

²⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Digireads.com Publishing, 2009), XIV.3.

²⁵ *Confessions*, VII.xxi (27); from 1 Cor 4:7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, IX.i (1).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, IX.ii (2).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, IX.ii (3).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, VIII.vi (12); from Rom 7:24–25.

³⁰ A. Louth, quoted in Wright, “Mysticism,” 578.

Monica serves to represent the Church and her Magisterium; as McMahan writes, she “stands properly above her son in familial authority,” “stands above him also in moral authority and intelligence,” and is analogous to “God’s firmament of Scripture.”³¹ Augustine asks God as early as in book II, “Whose words but yours were those that you sang in my ears by means of my mother, your faithful servant?”³² Her noted presence is all but insignificant at Ostia; Augustine understands her role and now realizes that full union with God can only be achieved through the Church and her authority. Indeed, just as we see the truth manifest in creation through the plurality of persons in the Church—as the mystical Body of Christ—we may better understand the juxtaposition of the experience at Ostia with that of the vision at Milan. He describes this experience in the following way:

Our minds were lifted up by an ardent affection towards eternal being itself, where sun, moon, and stars shed light on the earth. We ascended even further by internal reflection and dialogue and wonder at your works, and we entered into our own minds. We moved beyond them so as to attain to the region of inexhaustible abundance where you feed Israel eternally with truth for food And while we talked and panted after it, we touched it in some small degree by a moment of total concentration of the heart. And we sighed and left behind us ‘the first fruits of the Spirit.’³³

Immediately, we recognize a shift from the first person singular used to describe the vision at Milan to the plural at Ostia, noting Augustine’s change in attitude from one of arrogance to a decidedly subservient acquiescence to Church and God. Neo-Platonist ideology continues to permeate Augustine’s language, particularly in regard to the notion of an intellectual return (e.g., “we entered into our own minds”); now, however, the experience assumes a radically different—and certainly loftier—realization of fulfillment.

In the vision at Milan, Augustine initiated an ascent (“*I* entered . . .”) through “the Platonic books,” which focused primarily on the present. He realized profound truths: “When I first came to know you, you raised me up to make me see that what I saw is Being”; “And you gave a shock to the weakness of my sight”; “And I found myself far from you”; “And I recognized that ‘because of iniquity

³¹ *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent*, 52.

³² *Confessions*, II iii (7).

³³ *Ibid.*, IX.x (24).

you discipline man”³⁴ The vision at Ostia, on the other hand, presents itself as distinctly Christian in that Augustine and Monica experienced a “foretaste of the joys of heaven”;³⁵ they “were lifted up” in a feeling of timelessness “towards eternal being itself.”³⁶ Recognizing this shared experience as a type of intellectual ascent, he writes, “So too eternal life is of the quality of that moment of understanding (*momentum intelligentiae*) after which we sighed.”³⁷ Augustine now realizes that neither Neo-Platonism nor any other of the natural philosophies can offer this same sense of hope, longing, and incomprehensible joy that manifests itself through reliable, permanent mediation. While the vision at Milan exposes Augustine’s distance from the Lord “in the region of dissimilarity” and leads to a discussion of “things liable for corruption,”³⁸ the vision at Ostia leaves Augustine begging for more of the “eternal wisdom which abides beyond all things.”³⁹ Its “summit” is eschatological, “a transitory experience of rapture or ecstasy”⁴⁰ in which Augustine ostensibly tastes the promise of a heretofore unimagined and unattainable fulfillment of body, mind, and soul.

Augustine spent his life in search of “a permanent ecstasy, of life, love and joy.”⁴¹ In the saint’s own words, “I sought an object for my love; I was in love with love”⁴² “Our heart is restless until it rests in you” begins the *Confessions*, and rightfully so; it becomes “the guiding principle of Augustine’s mystical theology.”⁴³ His philosophical ascent failed to realize a true and full return to the Origin; Augustine was left asking, “Who could be found to reconcile me to you?”⁴⁴ In the end, Christ would be his answer: the “true Mediator,” the link between individual souls and God, between time and eternity itself.⁴⁵ Seeking the object of his heart, Augustine will ultimately turn to Christ as Word, to “God who is with you God,” who bridges the gap between time and eternity in ethereal paradox.⁴⁶

³⁴ *Confessions*, VII.x (16).

³⁵ Louth, in “Mysticism,” 578.

³⁶ *Confessions*, IX.x (24); Lat. “*in id ipsum*” (Ps. 4, 9).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, IX.x (25).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VII.x–xvii (16–23).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, IX.x (25).

⁴⁰ Louth, in “Mysticism,” 578.

⁴¹ Watkin, “The Mysticism of St. Augustine,” 106.

⁴² *Confessions*, III.i (1).

⁴³ Louth, in “Mysticism,” 577.

⁴⁴ *Confessions*, X.xlii (67).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, X.xliii (68).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XL.vii (9); from John 1:1.

II. Augustine's *conversio* through the Discipline of Reading As Told in the *Confessions*

*Tolle lege, tolle lege.*⁴⁷

—*Confessionum libri tredecim*, VIII.xii

*Cum legerem, per me ipse cognoui. Itane est?*⁴⁸

—Augustine, *De utilitate credendi ad honoratum*

Often hailed by scholars as the first autobiography of Western civilization, Augustine's timeless *Confessions* establishes a central connection between "reading, the search for self-knowledge, and the writing of autobiography."⁴⁹ Augustine as a "reader" begins his work, most appropriately, with an invocation,⁵⁰ followed in the next three chapters by a reconstruction of how he learned to speak.⁵¹ Of course, when considering the genre of autobiography the reader must use some degree of discretionary caution, since the author is presenting a wholly one-sided version of his or her life. With the *Confessions*, one must also consider Augustine's prowess as a rhetorician when evaluating the authenticity and genuineness of his humility; he is not only recounting details of his faith journey but also using his life story "as a concrete example of how an isolated individual soul can extricate itself from this state and Neo-Platonically ascend to a unity that overcomes this isolation and attains to rest in God."⁵² In our studies of Augustine, we assume the reliability (that is, truthfulness) of Augustine's account. Just as Augustine concludes in *De beata vita*, "ipsa est igitur plenitudo, quam egestati contrariam posueramus, multo melius quam si abundantiam poneremus,"⁵³ so "a form of discourse and a form of life had to make a harmonious whole"—a plenitude (*plenitudo*) that was "not

⁴⁷ "Take up, read; take up, read."

⁴⁸ "Whenever I read, I have recognized myself. Is it really so?"

⁴⁹ Brian Stock, *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 8.

⁵⁰ *Confessions*, I.i–vi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I.vi–viii; Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1996), 23.

⁵² Michael Mendelson, "Saint Augustine," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (24 March 2000), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>.

⁵³ Augustine, *De beata vita*, <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/felicita/index.htm>, 4.32;

"Therefore, that word 'fullness' which we proposed as the opposite of 'need' is a much better choice than 'abundance,'" in *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings*, trans. Mary T. Clark (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1984), 190–91.

simply a mass of circumstantial detail” (*abundantia*).⁵⁴ Still, the unity of the *Confessions* as a work is often questioned, given the obvious distinction between books I–IX and books X–XIII. Notably, Augustine himself writes in *Retractationes* that books I–X are *de me* and XI–XIII are *de Scripturis sanctis*.⁵⁵ The resonant theme that binds the *Confessions* lies not in the apparent *lack* of unity between the autobiographical books (I–IX) and the final four (X–XIII), but in Augustine’s hierarchical conversion by means of divinely inspired interpretation and his subsequent understanding of the written word. In this section, we will argue that Augustine’s aforementioned mystical journey—from its origins in Neo-Platonic ascent to the vision he shares with Monica at Ostia—is manifested in the actual literary structure of the *Confessions*; beginning with the very term *confessio*, Augustine unfolds for his readers the “edification” or “conversion” that they are “ideally intended to experience in following the story of his own conversion.”⁵⁶

Augustine begins his narrative in book I by asking God to “allow me to speak before your mercy” and offering his dilemma over the gift of language.⁵⁷ On the one hand, he writes, “I acquired this power of speech with the intelligence which you gave me, my God”⁵⁸ in order “to understand oneself [through language] by analogy with others”;⁵⁹ on the other, “using [his] tongue” gave him the ability to “gain access to human honours and to acquire deceitful riches.”⁶⁰ Before the latter would even present itself as a prospect in Augustine’s future as a rhetorician, he recounts the time when he had “no love for reading books” and “learnt nothing unless compelled.”⁶¹ Nonetheless, he would blame only himself for his neglect of “writing or reading or using our minds about our books”;⁶² his resulting “punishment” was a “disordered mind.”⁶³

⁵⁴ *After Augustine*, 10.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Retractationum libri duo* [*Retractationes*], <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/ritrattazioni/index2.htm> (accessed 20 November 2010), II.6.1.

⁵⁶ Robert J. O’Connell, *St. Augustine’s Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1969), 7.

⁵⁷ *Confessions*, I. vi (7).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I.viii (13).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I.vi (10).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I.ix (14).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, I.xii (19).

⁶² *Ibid.*, I.ix (15).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I.xii (19).

At the age of nineteen, Augustine recalls his life-changing encounter with Cicero's *Hortensius*: he would later admit that God "secretly made use of . . . my perversity" in order to "correct my 'steps.'"⁶⁴ In retrospect, he claims it "altered my prayers, Lord, to be towards you yourself" because it inspired him to pursue the "immortality of wisdom" (an image Augustine will later use for God Himself, e.g., at XII.xv (20)).⁶⁵ Robert O'Connell claims that Augustine's introduction to the *Hortensius* can be viewed as his "first conversion" on at least two levels: "not only did it temporally precede, but in significant ways it also set the pattern for those subsequent twinned conversions that occurred in Milan some thirteen years afterward."⁶⁶ Case in point: Augustine recalls that while reading Cicero, he "began to rise up to return to you";⁶⁷ he "burned with longing to leave earthly things and fly back to you"; and, in the philosopher's own words, he was emboldened to "hold fast and strongly embrace wisdom itself, wherever found."⁶⁸ A closer look at the original Latin, however, suggests "a conversion by means of a book in which there is a designated reader but no reading in the accepted sense."⁶⁹ While the Latin *liber* appears repeatedly—likened to a "tolling bell (3.4.4, 5, 6, and 14), drawing our attention to the effect as well as to its suddenness and permanence"⁷⁰—and, most notably, in the critical declaration in III.iv (7) (*Ille vero liber mutavit affectum meum*), the verb *legere*, as Brian Stock notes, does not appear in the text at all.⁷¹ In the context of Augustine's "first conversion," the terms concerned with inner change, i.e., those referring to *pectus*, *vota*, and *desideria*, become operative.⁷² Reading at this point in his conversion is not a *cause* but rather a *symbol*. Of particular note following his positive exposure to Cicero, Augustine "decided to give attention to the holy scriptures and to find out what they were like"; however, he writes that his "inflated conceit shunned the Bible's restraint, and my gaze never penetrated to its inwardness."⁷³ It was not until book VII—following his Neo-Platonic ascent in Milan—

⁶⁴ Ibid., V.viii (14).

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, III.iv (7).

⁶⁶ Robert J. O'Connell, *Images of Conversion in St. Augustine's Confessions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 4.

⁶⁷ *Confessions*, III. iv (7).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁹ *Augustine the Reader*, 39.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷² *Confessiones*, III.iv (7).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, III.v (9).

that Augustine would again return to reading the “sacred writings of your Spirit.”⁷⁴

He often returns to the problem of language which began his narrative in book I. As Stock explains, “the manner in which we understand our mental activities is seen to be a function of our ability to frame our thoughts in speech,” and the “literary approach to consciousness takes shape as a direct result of his theory of narrative and self-knowledge.”⁷⁵ Our thoughts become the words that form the stories of our lives which, in turn, make up the substance of our being. Indeed, every understanding is therefore a “reading of ourselves, every genuine insight, a rereading, until, progressing upwards by revisions, we have inwardly in view the essential source of knowledge, which is God.”⁷⁶ It follows, then, that reading can serve to illuminate the pathway toward enlightenment, most profoundly through sensory conceptualization attained by hearing and seeing.

If Augustine’s “first conversion” occurs in book III, his “conversion of the mind” occurs with the intellectual climax and keystone of the *Confessions* in book VII, and his “conversion of the will” occurs at the spiritual climax of the work in book VIII (the reason it is called the book of *voluntas*).⁷⁷ Augustine most stresses the role of the senses of sight and hearing in the experience of reading in books VII and VIII, with the exception of his narration of Ambrose reading silently in book VI. As previously mentioned, Augustine had been deeply influenced by Plotinus during his study of the Neo-Platonists, particularly by the Plotinian notion of hierarchy, which reinforced Augustine’s own belief in the need for escape from the flesh. In his own life, Augustine recalls how he had “become deafened by the clanking chain of my mortal condition,” namely, those “bubbling impulses [which] befogged and obscured my heart so that it could not see the difference between love’s serenity and lust’s darkness.”⁷⁸ Again, the myth of Narcissus that Plotinus employs comes to mind, paired with the “truer” advice given by the example of Odysseus: “Let us fly to our dear country.”⁷⁹ He adds

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, VII.xxi (27).

⁷⁵ *Augustine the Reader*, 111.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 3, *Commentary on Books 8–13, Indexes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 30.

⁷⁸ *Confessions*, II.ii (2).

⁷⁹ *Ennead* I.6.8.

that the soul's transcendence to the "bodiless and intellectual" is the only way to achieve that which is "entirely belonging to the divine."⁸⁰

The visions at Milan and Ostia are unmistakably and unquestionably centered on this Neo-Platonist concept of a return to the Origin. As McMahon writes, such a "return" has both an ontological and a metaphysical (i.e., spiritual) aspect: the cosmic order "can be rightly comprehended only by a person who returns, through reason at least, to its Origin"; hence, it follows that "one's life should be directed toward, and disciplined for, that journey of return."⁸¹ Augustine recognizes, however, that such an ascent can only be accomplished through assistance from a "helper," as "configured in the text by metaphors of light, which are to be understood as a Platonist commonplace (the inner light in the mind) and a symbol of progressive enlightenment through the understanding of scripture."⁸² Careful to preserve the integrity of the metaphors to which he makes comparison, Augustine regards light as "Eternal *truth* and true *love* and beloved *eternity*," both a symbol of the Christian trinity and a precursor of the final three books of the *Confessions*.⁸³ Moreover, he employs Plotinian phraseology to elucidate the progression from physical to spiritual vision: "I was admonished to return into myself," and "I entered with my soul's eye."⁸⁴

In book VII, God is comprehended by the *intellect as light*, and Augustine *reads* and *sees* the *eternal* word; in book VIII, God is at work in the *will as grace*, and Augustine *bears a call* and *reads* in Scripture about the *incarnate* word.⁸⁵ In perhaps his most famous recollection, Augustine "heard a voice from the nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl . . . saying and repeating over and over again 'Pick up and read, pick up and read'"; he interprets this "divine command" as a sign to "open [Sacred Scriptures] and read the first chapter I might find."⁸⁶ Subsequently, he opens to Romans 13 and reads, "Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts."⁸⁷ Indeed, he accepts

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, I.6.6.

⁸¹ *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 119.

⁸² *Augustine the Reader*, 72.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Confessions*, VII.x (16).

⁸⁵ Dr. William Collinge, Mount St. Mary's University, lecture notes, 27 October 2010.

⁸⁶ *Confessions*, VIII. xii (29).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*; Rom 13:13–14 (as cited by Augustine).

the words as divinely inspired and regards them as a call from God to enter the religious life.

Book VIII ends abruptly after the *tolle, lege* passage, and the autobiographical portion of the *Confessions* culminates with Augustine's entrance into the Church through baptism, "no doubt" in the spring of 387.⁸⁸ James O'Donnell notes in his commentary that "nowhere in [book VIII] does [Augustine] offer the slightest suggestion that he had any remaining intellectual doubts about Christianity"; indeed, "continence and baptism came together for him in a single crisis," the former serving as more or less a "test" of his worthiness for the latter.⁸⁹ His realization of newfound "freedom of will," freedom from the "chains" of his "biting cares" of place-seeking, of desire for gain, of wallowing in self-indulgence, of scratching the itch of lust" offers a foretaste of the tone of his final four books.⁹⁰ *Convertisti luctum eius in gaudium* brings to a close book VIII;⁹¹ the Church is indeed "built" by baptism, ending the book "on a note that generalizes its message beyond [Augustine]."⁹²

Book IX offers solutions to many of the problems introduced in book I; hence, certain scholars consider book IX both the "anticlimax" of the *Confessions* and the book of "death and rebirth."⁹³ Augustine begins his schooling (I.xii–xx) and resigns from his post as teacher (IX.ii–iv); he recounts his physical birth (I.vi) and, subsequently, his rebirth (baptism, IX.vi); most notably, perhaps, he learns not only to read (I.ix) but to read *rightly*. Indeed, his spiritual growth and maturity are profoundly influenced by his "learning to speak, to read, and to write," his "mastery of a variety of interpretive methods under such influences as the *grammatici*, the Manichaeans, Ambrose, and the *libri Platoniorum*," and—in books VII and VIII—the "transformation of reading from an outside to an inside force in his life."⁹⁴ Augustine describes his rebirth in Christ as a "resurrection," a term selected for its literary significance; in fact, the word is used only three times in all of the thirteen books of the *Confessions*, the culmination of which occurs, appropriately, at Ostia.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 60.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹⁰ *Confessions*, IX.i (1).

⁹¹ Augustine, quoting Ps. 29:12, in *Confessiones*, VIII.xii (30). "You changed her grief into joy."

⁹² *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 71.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 72. O'Donnell notes that "baptism stands at its centre, and baptism is both death in Christ (Rom. 6:3) and rebirth."

⁹⁴ *Augustine the Reader*, 125.

⁹⁵ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 72.

Few, if any of us, can begin to comprehend the spiritual *ascensus* shared by mother and son:

If only it could last, and other visions of a vastly inferior kind could be withdrawn! Then this alone could ravish and absorb and enfold in inward joys the person granted the vision. So too eternal life is of the quality of that moment of understanding after which we sighed. Is not this the meaning of “Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matt. 25:21)? And when is that to be? Surely it is when “we all rise again, but are not all changed” (1 Cor. 15:51).⁹⁶

McMahon notes, however, that like Monica, we may come to share an “ineffable moment of ‘understanding,’ come to ‘see,’ and on the strength of that vision pass, for all intents and purposes, from human life to life of soul ‘returned.’”⁹⁷ A large part of the experience depends on the individual’s ability and desire to delve into the realm of memory, which leads to Augustine’s discussion in book X. Quoting the Apostle, he describes his ascent of the mind at Ostia as *praeterita obliviscentes in ea quae ante sunt extenti quaerebamus inter nos apud praesentem veritatem, quod tu es*.⁹⁸ Upon closer examination we see, as O’Connell notes, that he means the expressions “behind” (*praeterita*) and “before” (*ante*) “neither spatially nor temporally, but as Plotinus uses them, to indicate the ontological superiority and inferiority of the realities involved,”⁹⁹ i.e., the “pleasure of bodily senses” compared with the “life of eternity” Augustine discusses a moment later.¹⁰⁰ Augustine makes a conscious decision to choose the “superior” reality of his soul’s yearning for the Lord, for a return to his origin.

While the *Confessions* may not seem a unified work to the modern reader, Stock notes that the disunity between *Confessions* I–IX and X–XIII is “more apparent than real.”¹⁰¹ Kenneth Burke notes in book X of the *Confessions* a turn “from a narrative of memories to the principles of Memory.”¹⁰² McMahon further distinguishes this shift as one from philosophy to theology, nonetheless acknowledging the continuation

⁹⁶ *Confessions*, IX.x (25).

⁹⁷ *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent*, 118.

⁹⁸ Augustine, quoting Phil 3:13, in *Confessiones*, IX.x (23). Chadwick renders this as follows: “Forgetting the past and reaching forward to what lies ahead” (Phil. 3:13), we were searching together in the presence of the truth which is you yourself.”

⁹⁹ *St. Augustine’s Confessions*, 118.

¹⁰⁰ *Confessions*, IX.x (24).

¹⁰¹ *Augustine the Reader*, 210.

¹⁰² Kenneth Burke, *Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 124.

of the philosophical rigor that influences Augustine's theological discoveries.¹⁰³ Simply put, "Augustine moves between narrative and . . . remembering his past in confession to God, but with a human audience, which he gradually acknowledges," to reflection "on the reasons for doing this (to arouse love for God in himself and others) and on the activity of remembering"; in essence, "he continues to confess, but the content of his confession is now his faith."¹⁰⁴ Reinforcing the importance of unity in the structure of the *Confessions*, Charles Mathewes—borrowing from Winston Churchill—comments that "book 9 is not the end, or even the beginning of the end; it is, rather, the end of the beginning. Or, rather, and more properly, it is really the *beginning* of the beginning, that place where the book actually starts, the entry into the essentials of Augustine's present condition."¹⁰⁵

This sudden shift should be viewed simply as the employment of a different literary strategy designed to both inform and inspire the reader; additionally, this deliberate change in style suggests the literary notions of both "author" and "authority."¹⁰⁶ As Basil Studer notes, throughout the first nine books, there is a clear distinction between Augustine the narrator (*Agostino narrante*) and Augustine the character in the story (*Agostino narrato*).¹⁰⁷ The former indeed considers himself the "author (that is, the cause) of the life that he lives," realizing over time that his life "contains a meaning that is known to God but not apparent to him."¹⁰⁸ In the last four books, however, the "two Augustines" become one, and the viewpoint clearly one of authority—the bishop and leader of his flock—who "identifies himself as the inventor of the autobiographical books."¹⁰⁹ In Pauline fashion, Augustine puts "off the old man that belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts . . . and [puts] on the new man, created after the likeness of God."¹¹⁰

O'Connell notes that the "single unifying point" of book X is "one with the point of the *Confessions*: Augustine would bring his

¹⁰³ *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 117.

¹⁰⁴ Gillian Clark, *Augustine: The Confessions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 36.

¹⁰⁵ Charles T. Mathewes, "The Liberation of Questioning in Augustine's *Confessions*," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70, 3 (2002): 550.

¹⁰⁶ *Augustine the Reader*, 210–11.

¹⁰⁷ Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 78. (Italian phrases in original.)

¹⁰⁸ *Augustine the Reader*, 211.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Eph 4:22–24, RSVB.

reader to the self-knowledge he claims to possess on himself.”¹¹¹ Indeed, Augustine opens his discussion of memory in book X by praying, “May I know you, who know me. May ‘I know as I also am known’ (1 Cor 13:12).”¹¹² To know oneself “means to know God, and know the self as God knows it,”¹¹³ for from the Creator “what could be hidden within me?”¹¹⁴ Self-knowledge is no longer “confessed” by “physical words and sounds, but by words from my soul and a cry from my mind”; “in love it cries aloud” to the Creator.¹¹⁵ As previously mentioned, Augustine does not employ the word *memoria* in the contemporary vernacular sense—“calling to mind our past”—but, rather, in the sense of the Platonic *anamnesis*, i.e., recollection not contained in the conscious present. In chapter seventeen, he speaks of transcending memory on his journey to return to the Origin:

So great is the power of memory, so great is the force of life in a human being whose life is mortal. What then ought I to do, my God? You are my true life. I will transcend even this my power which is called memory. I will rise beyond it to move towards you, sweet light.¹¹⁶

His stirrings prompt the question, “Where then did I find you to be able to learn of you?”¹¹⁷ In one of his most famous passages, Augustine exclaims the answer:

Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you.¹¹⁸

God is *in* memory, His love framing our entire life’s ascent. Augustine uses Luke’s narrative of the woman who lost her drachma to illustrate the way which mediation between God and man is possible: “When she found it, how could she know that it was the one she lost, if she had failed to remember it?”¹¹⁹ The quest for going “beyond memory to God” is quite evidently central to the

¹¹¹ *St. Augustine’s Confessions*, 121.

¹¹² *Confessions*, X.i (1).

¹¹³ *St. Augustine’s Confessions*, 121.

¹¹⁴ *Confessions*, X.ii (2).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, X.xvii (26).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, X.xxvi (37).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, X.xxvii (38).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, X.xviii (27).

author who opens his work seeking God and questioning whether God can be found if He is not already known.¹²⁰ By book X, Augustine makes clear that God lies *in* the memory, and he will find not only his Creator—the fount of all knowledge—but also himself within his memory: “This power of memory is great, very great, my God. It is a vast and infinite profundity. Who has plumbed its bottom? This power is that of my mind and is a natural endowment, but I myself cannot grasp the totality of what I am.”¹²¹ When God is found, He “is recognized from the image within,” as illustrated by the case of the woman who lost her drachma; “the object was lost to the eyes, but held in the memory.”¹²²

Book X continues with a discussion of the origin of Augustine’s work, which ultimately provides the framework for his ascent in love; it concludes with an examination of memory, particularly with respect to the senses, forming the ultimate “origin of the autobiography he has just completed.”¹²³ He transitions from inquiry to a lengthy examination of conscience, which at first seems only to take the reader on a journey through Augustine’s own memory but later reveals the true fruits of his ascent: “In doing what he learned to do at Ostia, he comes sometimes (*aliquando*) to a similar fleeting contact with God.”¹²⁴ In these five chapters, the Doctor of Grace offers hope for his readers to attain for themselves that which he was able to achieve from his vision in book IX. Book X concludes, most significantly, with a discussion of the Eucharist, that “price of my redemption,” that which “I eat and drink,”¹²⁵ that veritable Second Person of the Trinity whose function “has been clear throughout the book to those with eyes to see” and “now in succeeding chapters [will] be made explicit.”¹²⁶ For “if we were not burdened by sin, we would ascend uninterruptedly and unaidedly towards God”;¹²⁷ here, Augustine reveals the true key to mystical ascent: the Eucharistic presence of the Divine Mediator. In addition to this singular reference to the Eucharist in the whole of the *Confessions*, Augustine reveals its exclusivity to the Catholic Church; indeed, Augustine’s first words of book XI—*Ut dicamus omnes ‘magnus dominus et laudabilis*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, I.i (1).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, X.viii (15).

¹²² *Ibid.*, X.xviii (27).

¹²³ *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent*, 144.

¹²⁴ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 238.

¹²⁵ *Confessions*, X.xliii (70).

¹²⁶ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 238.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

valde—echo those that open the *Confessions*, although now they are written in the first person *plural*, speaking communally.¹²⁸ As Mathewes notes, “Now we are in the Church.”¹²⁹ “He will not have God as his father who does not wish to have the Church as his mother,” an expression from St. Cyprian, was found “frequently on his pen.”¹³⁰ Moreover, not only does Augustine approve the famous dictum of St. Cyprian *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—the lens through which he examines Sacred Scriptures in the remainder of the *Confessions*—but “he teaches us that this was the unanimous belief even of the separated sects.”¹³¹

Other scholars note a different shift in the *Confessions* between books I–X and XI–XIII, likewise denying that it is a unified work. Though the autobiographical section largely concludes in book IX with Augustine’s entrance into the Church through baptism, book X appears to some an “update,” a “response to enquiries about what Augustine is like [at the time he is writing]”; the last three books of the *Confessions* demonstrate or contain Augustine’s exegesis of Scripture, something altogether different.¹³² As previously mentioned, however, the key to understanding Augustine’s mystical ascent *literarily* lies not in the apparent distinction between books I–X and XI–XIII but, rather, in the change in style. In books I–X Augustine views himself as a creature, while in books XI–XIII he ponders and discusses creation at large. In book XI, he begins with the “origin of the faith at the origin of his writing”; quite fittingly, he begins at the beginning, “with the text on origins.”¹³³ He considers first how the “word of God” would have sounded when He “made heaven and earth (Gen 1:1).”¹³⁴ He then transitions through meditation to *the* “Word, God who is with you God (John 1:1).”¹³⁵ The last three books have a markedly Trinitarian structure, book XI centered on Eternity (God the Father), book XII on the Word (God the Son), and book XIII on the Spirit Who Is God. He discusses at length God’s Word and Breath/Spirit to dispel any doubts about the Son and Spirit having existed with the Father *ante omnia saecula*: “You

¹²⁸ *Confessiones* XI.i (1); cf. I.i (1).

¹²⁹ “The Liberation of Questioning,” 554.

¹³⁰ Eugène Portalié, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*, trans. Ralph J. Bastian (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), 232.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Augustine: The Confessions*, 36.

¹³³ *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent*, 144.

¹³⁴ *Confessiones*, XI.iii–vi.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, XI.vii–ix.

call us, therefore, to understand the Word, God who is with you God (John 1:1). That word is spoken eternally, and by it all things are uttered eternally.”¹³⁶

Augustine continues to employ sensory images throughout his exegesis, exclaiming, “I see it, but how to express it I do not know.”¹³⁷ Scripture unfolds in the “Word, which is also the Beginning in that it also speaks to us”; this consideration of “the Beginning” prompts Augustine to discuss not only the nature of time (the topic of book XI) but also the concept of time before time (i.e., the matter of Creation and God’s “heaven of heaven” in book XII), including the noted progression of time which continues to call the Church to its origin, to Eternity Itself (book XIII). Indeed, the Eucharistic language of book X extends, enlivens, enriches, imbues, and completes the liturgical setting of book IX in preparation for an exegesis of Scripture, which is, “properly speaking, a liturgical practice.”¹³⁸ Liturgy, “the ‘work of the people’ in which God and humanity unite, is the locus for all Christian thought and action.”¹³⁹ O’Donnell adds that Augustine’s “true readership” consists of “those who are joined with him in the *caritas* of his church”; it would seem, therefore, that Augustine “has presented us here with discourse that does not *represent* liturgical prayer, but rather accompanies or, more venturesomely, embodies it.”¹⁴⁰

Quite fittingly, then, Augustine not only begins book XI with prayer, but also continues to pray throughout his exegesis. Augustine structurally makes manifest his ideas on the importance of reading (as previously discussed), as well as the mystical journey in which his readers might also orient themselves by changing the genre of the *Confessions* from primarily autobiographical to essentially exegetical; indeed, the last three books consist of Scriptural reading with his audience. He first examines the various methods in which God has spoken and continues to speak to man throughout time with considerable reflection. He begins with the prophet Moses,¹⁴¹ then considers God’s delight with Creation,¹⁴² and, finally, rests on God’s Coeternal Word—the *principium* through Whom all things were

¹³⁶ Ibid., XI.ix (11).

¹³⁷ Ibid., XI.viii (10).

¹³⁸ Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 241.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 245.

¹⁴¹ *Confessions*, XI.iii (5).

¹⁴² Ibid., XI.v–vi.

made.¹⁴³ In essence, Augustine’s meditation on the subject “moves progressively ‘backward’ in time and ‘higher’ in ontological categories: from Scripture to Creation to the eternal Logos.”¹⁴⁴ From the discussion of the “eternal *principium*,” Augustine ultimately arrives at the central focus of book XI: the nature of time. In search of true understanding, Augustine discerns his way through prayer, espousing the notion that every misunderstanding is simply a distortion of a truth that existed “prior in time and higher in dignity.”¹⁴⁵ Notably, the progression he follows in seeking the truth closely resembles that of the Neo-Platonist “return to the Origin,” thus proving an “ascent to truth.”¹⁴⁶ The culmination of his discussion of the distention of time is likened to the recitation of a psalm:

Suppose I am about to recite a psalm which I know. Before I begin, my expectation is directed towards the whole. But when I have begun, the verses from it which I take into the past become the object of my memory. The life of this act of mine is stretched (*distenditur*) two ways, into my memory because of the words I have already said and into my expectation because of those which I am about to say. But my attention is on what is present: by that the future is transferred to become the past.¹⁴⁷

Appropriately, Augustine follows with a *gradatio* (a term, interestingly enough, meaning “climax”), a rhetorical device that emphasizes the analogy’s relevance to Augustine’s discussion on the nature of time:

*Et quod in toto cantico, hoc in singulis particulis eius fit atque in singulis syllabis eius, hoc in actione longiore, cuius forte particula est illud canticum, hoc in tota vita hominis, cuius partes sunt omnes actiones hominis, hoc in toto saeculo filiorum hominum, cuius partes sunt omnes vitae hominum.*¹⁴⁸

As O’Donnell notes, “This *gradatio* of synecdoches proves a synecdoche for the greater, more indirect ascent toward understanding of the nature of time, which the speaker is

¹⁴³ Ibid., XI.vii–ix.

¹⁴⁴ *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent*, 129.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 130.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ *Confessions*, XI.xxviii (38).

¹⁴⁸ *Confessiones*, XI.xxviii (38), emphasis added. Chadwick renders this as follows: “What occurs in the psalm as a whole occurs in its particular pieces and its individual syllables. The same is true of a longer action in which perhaps that psalm is a part. It is also valid of the entire life of an individual person, where all actions are parts of a whole, and of the total history of ‘the sons of men’ (Ps. 30:20) where all human lives are but parts.”

completing.”¹⁴⁹ It should be noted that his model of ascension does not exclude exploration of Scripture as freely and as deeply as one might desire; in fact, the words of his opening prayer in book XI liken Scripture to forests which “are not without deer which recover their strength in them and restore themselves by walking and feeding, by resting and ruminating (Ps. 28:9).”¹⁵⁰

Following careful consideration of “In the beginning,” Augustine moves next to the opening paragraphs of book XII and a discussion of “God made heaven and earth.” To begin, he reaffirms the irrevocable equality of the three Persons of the Trinity; having devoted book XI to Eternity (the Father), he now dedicates book XII to the Second Person. The verse-by-verse exegesis of Genesis in the last three books structurally manifests the exegetical purpose of his mystical journey. O’Donnell’s commentary illustrates this notion: “as Bk. 11 balanced the eternity of God and the temporality of humankind, so Bk. 12 sets the unity and clarity of the Word side by side with the plurality and ambiguity of the words through which we approach the Word.”¹⁵¹ Together, books XI and XII reveal the growing mystical union between God and mankind. Book XIII, then, demonstrates the embodiment of man’s dynamic union with God by means of His gift of the Spirit within man.

Perhaps the greatest value of book XII lies not in the straightforward exegesis Augustine himself conducts in the first part of the book but rather in his methodological considerations of the exegetical process itself. Indeed, Augustine’s polysemic interpretation of Scripture is in many ways quite charitable.¹⁵² For instance, he reads “God made heaven and earth” in the context of two seemingly unrelated passages: the “heaven” (speaking of the “heaven of heaven”) referred to in Psalm 113:16 and the “earth” (speaking of the “unformed matter”) described in Wisdom 11:18. Whereas most contemporary scholars might caution against exegesis of two seemingly unrelated verses, Augustine viewed the whole of the Bible as an interwoven, that is, interconnected, tapestry. O’Donnell explains, “His principles were a mixture of Christianity and philosophy, his practice a mixture of Christianity and his own professional training as a student of classical literature.”¹⁵³ As such,

¹⁴⁹ *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent*, 130.

¹⁵⁰ *Confessions*, XI.ii (3).

¹⁵¹ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 300.

¹⁵² See Augustine, *Confessions*, XII.xviii (27).

¹⁵³ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 300–01.

he recognized the inevitability of duplicitous interpretation and determined to author a handbook of exegetical practice, *De doctrina christiana*.

The crux of Augustine's *modus operandi* of Scriptural exegesis rests upon two distinctions noted by O'Connell. The first of these is "between the truth of the matter and the intention of the one who presumably would, being truthful, report the truth to us."¹⁵⁴ Augustine asks, "Which of us can discover [God's] will with such assurance that he can confidently say 'This is what Moses meant and this was his meaning in that narrative' as confidently as he can say, 'Whether Moses meant this or something else, this is true?'"¹⁵⁵ The second distinction is repeated throughout the remainder of the *Confessions*, not only for the benefit of his students, but also for other readers of his work: *Res, non verba*—"not words, but the realities words are meant to point us toward."¹⁵⁶ The latter implies a potential for mediation between words and the apparent truths to which they lead; thus Augustine understands the insoluble nature of pure exegesis. (Even if Moses were present to us today, we could not presume to know the full intention of his spoken word; we should, however, be able to reach an agreement on the truth. Words, then, serve as conduits for the truths that are seemingly out of reach and awaiting discovery.) For Augustine, the words of Sacred Scripture assist with discernment of the truths that "Truth" Itself has already revealed to him. In the words of the Doctor himself, "how stupid it is, among so large a mass of entirely correct interpretations which can be elicited from those words, rashly to assert that a particular one has the best claim to be Moses' view, and by destructive disputes to offend against charity itself, which is the principle of everything he said in the texts we are attempting to expound."¹⁵⁷

The heart of individual interpretation of Scripture lies in seeking God's *voluntas*, the "intention or desire that stands at the origin of his words, as of all communication"; this demands a return to the Origin. True mystical ascent originates entirely from within and is inflamed, nurtured, and entrusted to the Holy Spirit, the bond of the Church, to Whom the last book of the *Confessions* is devoted, the response to *how* God ultimately creates, and Augustine's primary focus from ii (2) to xi (12). That man is called *through* the Word (cf.

¹⁵⁴ *St. Augustine's Confessions*, 155.

¹⁵⁵ *Confessions*, XII.xxv (34).

¹⁵⁶ *St. Augustine's Confessions*, 155.

¹⁵⁷ *Confessions*, XII.xxv (35).

book XII) *by* the Spirit reveals the intrinsic connection between God’s act of creation and *vocatio*, the individual’s call to grace. As books XI and XII together reveal the kindred nature of God and man, book XIII “therefore embodies the dynamic union with God under the action of the Spirit in the world.”¹⁵⁸ The Holy Spirit (Heb. *Ruach Elohim*) is the agent by which God’s creation is called to be fully conformed to the Word, that is, to be “happy.” Augustine brings his reader ever closer to an understanding of the Trinity by explaining the Triune Love as “being (*esse*),” “knowing (*nosse*),” and “willing (*velle*).”¹⁵⁹ The three, he notes, are distinct but not separate; indeed, they are “inseparable in life”: “one life, one mind, and one essence, yet ultimately there is distinction, for they are inseparable, yet distinct.”¹⁶⁰ Resignedly, Augustine admits to remaining “baffled” by the mystery of the Trinity; nonetheless, he upholds the assertion that by growing closer in unity to the Trinity, we likewise grow in conformity to God’s will.¹⁶¹

Augustine realizes his own return and fulfills his mystical ascent through allegorical completion of Genesis in chapters 12–30. Indeed, *inspeximus etiam, propter quorum figurationem ista vel tali ordine fieri vel tali ordine scribi voluisti*.¹⁶² In the case of Augustine, divinely inspired insight (*inspeximus*) was allowed a glimpse of the divine will (*voluisti*), effecting “a comprehensive vision of Scripture and of human history” as preserved by “salvation in Christ through his Church,” for ultimately, “all human history [is], as it were, providentially present in the divine *voluntas* to create the universe.”¹⁶³

As Augustine describes the completion of his return through exegesis—the Alpha with the Omega—he closes his *Confessions* with a literary reference that unites with perfection the last book of his work with the first. He opens the first chapter with the timeless, “our heart is restless until it rests in you” and ends book XIII, rather fittingly, with a prayer for peace that “we also may rest in you for the sabbath of eternal life.”¹⁶⁴ He speaks of the hope and promise of the future where “there also you will rest in us, just as now you work in

¹⁵⁸ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 343.

¹⁵⁹ *Confessions*, XIII.xi (12).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Confessiones*, XIII.xxxiv (49). Chadwick renders this as follows: “We have also considered the reasons for the symbolism in the fact that you willed created things to be made in a particular order or to be recorded in a particular order.”

¹⁶³ *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent*, 134.

¹⁶⁴ *Confessions*, I.i (1); XIII.xxxvi (51).

us” and “your rest will be through us, just as now your works are done through us.”¹⁶⁵ However, our understanding of this notion of “rest” and “peace” after review of the last three books must be “reworked,” as Mathewes realizes: “Understanding the *Confessions* as a liberation of questioning ultimately entails a radical reshaping of our eschatological expectations and through them an alteration in our understanding of the nature and meaning of time and eternity.”¹⁶⁶ Indeed, it is important to note the fact that Augustine’s work ends not with the image of finding after seeking but of entering after knocking. Augustine recalls two quotations from the Old Testament that in previous chapters support his exegesis of Genesis: heaven “will fold up like a book (Isa. 34:4)” and now “‘like a skin it is stretched out’ above us (Ps. 103:2).”¹⁶⁷ As Stock notes, the symbolism of the skin “is also the affirmation of God’s enduring will in readership: he extends ‘the firmament of the book,’ that is, ‘brings harmony to his words,’ which he places in a position of authority over us ‘through the ministry of mortals,’ that is, through his interpreters and preachers.”¹⁶⁸ In much the same way, the Doctor of Grace “folds up” his own work: he paraphrases a favorite passage from Scripture in order to bring his *Confessions* full circle.¹⁶⁹ Ever the skilled rhetorician, Augustine displays the beauty of free word order in his native Latin tongue: *a te petatur, in te quaeratur, ad te pulsetur: sic, sic accipietur, sic invenietur, sic aperietur.*¹⁷⁰ Strictly speaking, as O’Donnell notes, the manner in which the door “is opened” is “a *response*: the reader’s first word after [Augustine’s] last.”¹⁷¹

And so, in the words of Robert O’Connell,

A churning poetic imagination, a stunning gift of artistic conception and organization, a wide-ranging and thoroughly human sensibility, all operating within a theoretical frame which would radically relativize those very endowments— here we have the paradox of the *Confessions*, a paradox which also discloses its peculiar power. For like any poetic masterpiece it can “communicate” before it is “understood;”

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XIII.xxxvi (51).

¹⁶⁶ “The Liberation of Questioning,” 555.

¹⁶⁷ *Confessions*, XIII.xv (16).

¹⁶⁸ *Augustine the Reader*, 242.

¹⁶⁹ Matt. 7:7–8. “Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (NAB).

¹⁷⁰ *Confessiones*, XIII.xxxviii (53). “From you it is begged, in you it is sought, [on your door] it is knocked: yes, thus it is received, thus it is found, thus it is opened.”

¹⁷¹ *Commentary on Books 8–13*, 421.

its feel for life invades our sensibilities even—perhaps especially in passages where we cannot confidently conceptualize what Augustine is driving at. It forms our vision, keys our evaluations, leads our affectivity along unsuspected pathways¹⁷²

III. Our own *Retractationes*

But there is our true love, with whom also we can be united, having a part in him and truly possessing him, not embracing him in the flesh from outside. But “whoever has seen, knows what I am saying,” that the soul then has another life and draws near, and has already come near and has a part in him, and so is in a state to know that the giver of true life is present and we need nothing more. But quite otherwise, we must put away other things and take our stand only in this, and become this alone, cutting away all the other things in which we are encased; so we must be eager to go out from here and be impatient at being bound to other things, that we may embrace him with the whole of ourselves and have no part with which we do not touch God. There one can see both him and oneself as it is right to see: the self glorified, full of intelligible light

—Plotinus, *Ennead* VI.9.9

He who makes the truth comes to the light (John 3:21).

—*Confessions*, X.i

In Augustine, we find the quintessential balance of profound intellectualism and enlightened mysticism: “Truth for him is not just a sight to be looked at; it is a good which must be made one’s own. We must love and live from truth.”¹⁷³ In his own words, “Truth, truth: how in my inmost being the very marrow of my mind sighed for you!”¹⁷⁴ Indeed, Augustine’s genius lies not only in his discovery of the divine Wisdom which he seeks—the Creator of his soul—but also in his embrace of the same eternal Truth which dwells in both the heart *and* mind of man. In short, Augustine seeks the Living Truth.

Like the Ancients, Augustine believed philosophy should be a way of life, but he deviates from them thereafter, as is evidenced by

¹⁷² *St. Augustine’s Confessions*, 190.

¹⁷³ *A Guide to the Thought of St. Augustine*, 306.

¹⁷⁴ *Confessions*, III.vi (10).

his determined and detailed accounting of his life's story. Where most ancient beliefs attributed to reason alone the attainment of an ethically pleasing life, Augustine rejected this assertion. He argued that the individual must possess an improbable number of consequential outcomes in order to effect an objective determination. As Stock notes, "The beginning and the end of the story are unknown to us, since they go respectively beyond the individual's memory and experience"; thus, Augustine chose to tell his life story.¹⁷⁵ Stock continues, noting that Augustine's "contribution to the longstanding debate between rhetorical and philosophical approaches to self-knowledge" lies in his belief that "the questions of self-knowledge and self-representation cannot be separated"; moreover, "in a single masterpiece, Augustine effectively transformed an ancient contemplative practice into a new type of mental exercise that had both literary and spiritual dimensions."¹⁷⁶

The Benedictine scholar Basil Studer recognizes three steps in Augustine's intellectual *and* spiritual journey. The first, he writes, "is to describe the events and experiences of his life that led him to the point of recognizing and accepting God, not only academically but existentially, as 'Being itself' (*ipsum esse*)";¹⁷⁷ Augustine does so in a deliberate attempt to model for others. The second step is to enter into dialogue with God: "Any description of Augustine the narrator will include a formal aspect and an aspect concerned more with content."¹⁷⁸ The former largely comprises the literary structure of the *Confessions*; Augustine's conversations with God are likened to those of the psalmist—he seeks a deeper, more relational understanding through both invocation and praise, revealing a God of dialogue. The final step is Augustine's almost poetic accounting of the God with Whom he is speaking, the God he longs to share with his readers: the God who is, in divine paradox "most high, utterly good, utterly powerful, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just, deeply hidden yet most intimately present, perfection of both beauty and strength, stable and incomprehensible, immutable and yet changing all things, never new, never old, making everything new . . ." ¹⁷⁹ This is the God Who transcends all time yet remains fully present both ontologically and historically, the manifestation of an

¹⁷⁵ *After Augustine*, 12.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷⁷ *The Grace of Christ*, 78.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Confessions*, I.iv (4).

equally omniscient and omnipotent divine presence throughout man's history of sin and reconciliation. As Studer notes, "This implies that human beings know God not only because God enlightens them (*illuminatio Dei*) but also and above all because God is constantly mindful of them (*memoria Dei*)."¹⁸⁰

Augustine and Monica together at Ostia contemplate a God altogether distinct from their own souls, yet at once directly relational *to* them. Undeniably, the Source of their souls *is* unmistakably distinct from them, but is not to be likened to the Plotinian "One," "distinct from its products, but never significantly removed from them."¹⁸¹ Rather, the pilgrim souls at Ostia find a "personal One who calls from the eternity in which he abides," Who invites the soul to not only "grasp the nobility of its creation, but also to recognize the enormity of its spiritual estrangement."¹⁸² Augustine's *Confessions*, the interior journey of such a pilgrim soul, speaks volumes in terms of its influence on the subjectivity of Western Christianity. Its transcendent message does for the universal Church what few others have—"to elaborate its mighty images, articulate its religious moods, express its instinctive feeling for life, for man, and for man's historical adventure."¹⁸³ Might each of us continue to seek this eternal Wisdom through every personal encounter with the Creator of our souls, the life stories of which have yet to be penned, have yet to be revealed, have yet to be fully *opened*.

¹⁸⁰ *The Grace of Christ*, 79.

¹⁸¹ Watkin, "The Mysticism of Saint Augustine," 83.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁸³ *St. Augustine's Confessions*, 190.