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Augustine's Unfinished Work Against Julian:
The Ancient and Contemporary Dispute Over Concupiscence

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Augustine's Unfinished Work Against Julian:
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Augustine of Hippo's account of sexuality and concupiscence (*concupiscentia*; *libido*) has long been both praised and vilified. Even so, scholars often cannot agree about what positions Augustine holds on fundamental issues within his account of concupiscence. The first issue is whether Augustine thinks concupiscence is caused exclusively or primarily by the soul, or whether concupiscence is often caused by the body. The second issue is whether Augustine thinks concupiscence in the form of sexual desire is wholly an effect of the fall or was present and good before the fall. Within these interpretive debates, Augustine's final book, *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* (Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian), has been relatively neglected, especially in moral theology and ethics.

Focusing on Augustine's later works and drawing significantly on *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, I argue that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's mature theology of sexuality and is central to understanding Augustine's final position on Edenic concupiscence.

Chapter one shows that rival interpretations of Augustine's claims about bodily desire and sexual desire in Eden often underlie rival evaluative claims about Augustine's views on sexuality and concupiscence. Chapter two examines Augustine's dispute with Julian of Eclanum and shows how Augustine's views on concupiscence and the fallen body emerge from Augustine's broader theological commitments regarding God, creation, and God's original plan for human nature. Chapter three shows that Augustine's mature theology holds that concupiscence is very often a desire of the body distinct from desires of the will. Here I show how Augustine's theory of bodily desire fits well with his broader anthropological commitments regarding sensation and embodiment. Chapter four applies Augustine's account of bodily desire to his development on the issue of sexual desire in Eden. I show that Augustine develops significantly on the issue, with his final position in *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* being that sexual concupiscence might or might not have been present in Eden. I show how Augustine's final ambivalent position results from tensions within Augustine's account of bodily desire. Overall, the project is in conversation with scholarship in theology, philosophy, history, and gender and sexuality studies.

This dissertation by Joshua M. Evans fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Moral Theology/Ethics approved by Joseph E. Capizzi, Ph.D., as director, and by John S. Grabowski, Ph.D., and Chad C. Pecknold, Ph.D. as Readers.

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To all my teachers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTE ON CITATIONS	v
ABBREVIATIONS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
AUGUSTINE ON TRIAL	15
CHAPTER TWO	
AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE	72
CHAPTER THREE	
DESIRES OF THE BODY	126
CHAPTER FOUR	
EDENIC SEXUAL DESIRE	210
CONCLUSION	299
BIBLIOGRAPHY	318

NOTE ON CITATIONS

I cite Augustine's works within the text of the dissertation, rather than the footnotes, primarily because the footnotes would otherwise become unwieldy. My method of citation is generally the following: (*op.* I.2,3 [4]) indicates the work (*op.*), book (I), chapter (2), and paragraph (3) standard to any English or Latin printing of a work of Augustine's, and the brackets include the page number ([4]) of the central English translation I use for that work. When I use an alternative English translation, I indicate which one in the citation.

For simplicity's sake, I refer to Augustine's works by their Latin names or abbreviations and assume that the reader, if uncertain, will refer back to the list of works here in order to see which English text corresponds to the Latin name.

In recent literature there is some inconsistency in styles of abbreviation of Augustine's works. I follow the guide in *Augustine Through the Ages*, p. xxxv-xlii, though I follow others in using *I* rather than *J* (*c. Iul.* rather than *c. Jul.*).

ABBREVIATIONS

LATIN TEXTS

<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>	CCSL
<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>	CSEL
<i>Patrologia Latina</i>	PL

SERIES

<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i>	FC
<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>	NPNF
<i>The Works of Saint Augustine</i>	WSA

WORK, ABBREVIATION, MAIN ENGLISH TRANSLATION USED IN THE DISSERTATION

<i>Contra Iulianum</i>	<i>c. Iul.</i>	WSA I/24
<i>Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum</i>	<i>c. Iul. imp.</i>	WSA I/25
<i>De bono coniugali</i>	<i>b. coniug.</i>	Walsh
<i>De civitate Dei</i>	<i>civ. Dei</i>	Dyson
<i>De continentia</i>	<i>cont.</i>	WSA I/9
<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i>	<i>Gn. litt.</i>	WSA I/13
<i>De Genesi adversus Manichaeos</i>	<i>Gn. adv. Man.</i>	WSA I/13
<i>De gratia christi et de peccato originali</i>	<i>gr. et pecc. or.</i>	WSA I/23
<i>De nuptiis et concupiscentia</i>	<i>nupt. et conc.</i>	WSA I/24

<i>De perfectione iustitiae hominis</i>	<i>perf. iust.</i>	WSA I/23
<i>De Trinitate</i>	<i>trin.</i>	WSA I/3
<i>Retractiones</i>	<i>retr.</i>	FC 60

INTRODUCTION

The thesis of this dissertation is the following claim: Augustine's later works, with particular emphasis on the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, show that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's final account of sexual desire and is central to adjudicating disputes over the proper interpretation of Augustine's views on other topics in the theology of sexuality, including Augustine's final position on Edenic sexual desire. If we understand just how central the bodily element of sexual desire is to Augustine's mature views on human sexuality, we can also better understand his views on related topics, such as whether sexual desire would have been present in Eden. In order to make this argument, I must first show there is in fact a problem that needs engaging. In fact there are three interrelated interpretive problems and one textual problem that prompt the dissertation. In this introduction I identify these problems and outline the dissertation.

THE INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

Scholarship on Augustine of Hippo's views on human sexuality has been long been marked by significant disagreement over the merits of Augustine's claims. Yet, as I show in chapter one, the evaluative disputes are often premised on interpretive disputes of a distinctive kind.¹ If one scholar thinks Augustine's thought on an element of sexuality fails because Augustine says X, another scholar will often respond in the following way: "Augustine does not say X. Augustine says -X."

¹ By "interpretive" I simply mean what Augustine actually said. By "evaluative" I mean whether what Augustine actually said is something good or evil to say.

Augustine's interlocutors very often cannot even agree on which position Augustine holds, let alone whether he should hold it.

Often the evaluative disputes can be traced back to divergent interpretations of Augustine's account of sexual concupiscence. A widespread and important interpretive disagreement of the "X or -X" kind concerns Augustine's position on the relationship of concupiscence to the human body.² Everyone agrees that for Augustine concupiscence is not merely a desire of the body, since Augustine regularly uses the concept of concupiscence to refer to desires of the soul or will. Yet there is significant, and sometimes unrecognized, disagreement about whether Augustine thinks some forms of concupiscence—especially sexual desire—are in some way desires of the body. One scholar might say Augustine thinks sexual concupiscence is fundamentally caused by the body, while another scholar might say Augustine thinks sexual concupiscence has absolutely nothing to do with the body.³ Since these scholars cannot even agree on exactly what concupiscence is in Augustine's

² The concept of concupiscence is inclusive of sexual desire, but broader than sexual desire. For Augustine, all sexual desire is concupiscence, but not all concupiscence is sexual desire. Furthermore, it is very clear to interpreters that not all concupiscence is evil for Augustine, but it is not clear (as I show) whether all sexual desire is evil for Augustine. I use the terms concupiscence, lust, and sexual desire interchangeably, as did Augustine. I discuss Augustine's use of those terms and their Latin equivalents in chapter three.

³ Chapter three takes up this issue in full, but for the moment consider the following two fundamentally different interpretive accounts of the relationship of concupiscence to the human body. According to David Hunter, "What went wrong [in the Fall], according to Augustine, was precisely a fracture of the original unity and harmony between body and soul that characterized the first human beings....This split within the person—that is, the soul's loss of control over the body in [sexuality]—was, for Augustine, a just punishment....Although the sin of Adam and Eve did not involve sexual relations, the effects of this sin were felt directly in the 'animal instinct' (*bestiale motum*) now present in their bodies." See Hunter, "Augustine on the Body" in *A Companion to Augustine* ed. Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012), 353-364 (emphasis in original). Hunter says elsewhere that Augustine holds the view that "human beings are born with the same 'bestial motion' in their members, which operates independently of rational control by the human mind or will." See Hunter, "Marriage," in *Augustine Through the Ages* (ATTA), 536. In sum, according to Hunter, Augustine thinks sexual concupiscence is in large part a desire of the body distinct from desires of the will. Paul Rigby, on the other hand, offers a very different account of concupiscence in Augustine. Rigby is adamant that Augustine thinks concupiscence is in no way a desire of the body: "Augustine did not condemn the body....The notion of the body as in conflict with the soul, or as the means by which the soul is either dragged down, or once down is held down, are notions repugnant to Augustine. The division is in the will, not in the nature. It is always the same soul willing different ends, whether eternal or ephemeral or both. It is the will that wills carnally, just as it is the will that wills spiritually. The will is not bound by the body. It binds itself, and being habituated so to will, it cannot stop willing and unbind itself." Rigby implicitly suggests Hunter's kind of reading would be "repugnant to Augustine" because, according to Rigby, Augustine thinks the will alone is the cause of human desires, including concupiscence. See Paul Rigby, "Original Sin," ATTA,

thought, it is no surprise that they cannot agree on how to evaluate Augustine's account of concupiscence.⁴ I will refer to this interpretive dispute as one over the nature of concupiscence.

There is also a related and widespread interpretive dispute about whether Augustine thinks sexual desire would have been present in Eden before the fall. How one understands Augustine's account of the nature of concupiscence significantly impacts how one understands Augustine's claims about sexual desire in Eden. According to some scholars Augustine thinks sexual desire would have been totally absent from Eden. According to other scholars, however, Augustine thinks sexual desire would have been present and virtuous in Eden. This is not merely an issue for historical theology, for moral theologians and ethicists rightly recognize that whether Augustine did or did not think sexual desire was original to human nature significantly impacts his location in contemporary discussions of the ethical value of sexual desire. As Cristina Traina rightly points out, whether Augustine thinks sexual desire would have been present or absent in Eden has significant

611. Thus, according to one scholar, Augustine thinks sexual concupiscence is in an important way a desire of the human body, and according to another scholar, Augustine thinks sexual concupiscence is absolutely in no way a desire of the human body and is instead a division within the will. Surprisingly, these two very different interpretations come in part from the same book, the encyclopedia *Augustine Through The Ages*, and other entries in that book offer further evidence of the interpretive dispute over the question of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's thought. Peter Burnell, in the entry on "Concupiscence" in *ATTA*, writes: "[Augustine] is certain that the seat of concupiscence is both the soul and the body (*Gn. litt.* 10.12.20)...His particular concern is to show that the biblical text does not exempt the soul from being a seat of concupiscence, whereas he takes it as obvious from the text that the body is. Thus the seat of concupiscence is the entire person." David Hunter also argues, regarding the work *de continentia* that "Augustine insists that both the flesh and the spirit are created by a good God and are therefore good in themselves....The flesh itself is no enemy, although the spirit must resist the vices of the flesh that are a wound or imperfection in its nature....Against the Manichees Augustine presents continence not as a hostile assault on the body, but as a healthy chastisement." See Hunter, "*Continentia, De*," in *ATTA*, 248. On the other hand, Stephen Duffy argues that "Augustine departs from classical theory and views the cardinal passions, desire and delight, fear and grief, not as eruptions into the mind from the irrational part of the soul or from the body but as affective modalities of will. The biblical category 'flesh' denotes for Augustine not mere sensual indulgence, a case of the inferior seducing the superior, but a fault within the mind itself....[T]o charge Augustine with Manicheism is to wrongly take his existential descriptions of the ambiguity pervading conflicted human being as definitions of what constitutes the metaphysical essence of a human being. Like Paul, whose spirit/flesh antithesis is a moral and not a metaphysical distinction, Augustine asserts a radical moral conflict within human being, not a clash of opposing, independent substances." See Duffy, "Anthropology," in *ATTA*, 29-30.

⁴ As we will see in chapter three, and as the previous footnote indicates, looming over the discussion of Augustine's position on desires of the body is the issue of Augustine's alleged latent Manichaeism.

implications for Augustine's legacy and relevance to contemporary sexual ethics: "Which of these speculative possibilities one chooses makes every difference for the way in which one interprets androcentric sexual desire and pleasure."⁵ If Augustine thinks sexual desire was part of God's original creation, his thought might be amenable to recent developments in sexual ethics that place a heightened emphasis on the importance of sexual desire and pleasure within marriage. If, however, Augustine thinks all sexual desire is a result of the fall, his thought would clearly be in significant tension with those recent developments. I will refer to the interpretive dispute over whether Augustine thinks sexual desire would or would not have been present in Eden as a dispute over the origin of concupiscence.

There is still a third, more basic interpretive issue disputed among scholars, though this one is more a matter of emphasis than opposing readings of Augustine. As we will see in chapter one, a number of Augustine's interpreters see three of Augustine's personal idiosyncrasies as having significantly shaped Augustine's views on sexuality. That is, Augustine's sexual experiences, pessimistic personality, and predilection for pseudo-scientific observations of the human sexual response seem to some interpreters to have significantly influenced Augustine's theology. Other interpreters, however, see these as marginal issues. How much significance one attributes to these factors seems to significantly influence how one interprets exactly what Augustine is up to in his reflections on concupiscence and sexuality.

The three issues identified above—whether sexual desire does or does not have a bodily element, whether sexual desire was or was not original to human nature, and what factors significantly shape Augustine's views on sexuality—are central issues for both interpreting and

⁵ Cristina L. H. Traina, *Erotic Attunement: Parenthood and the Ethics of Sensuality Between Unequals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 87.

evaluating Augustine's thought on human sexuality. As I will show, the three issues are interrelated, and this dissertation brings the three issues together into one coherent and progressive account of Augustine's account of concupiscence, focusing on the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence as the central issue and thread that ties the chapters together.

I outline my argument below, but the short version is the following: understanding where Augustine gets his views on sexuality—that is, how his fundamental theological commitments crucially shape his views on sexuality—helps to show why the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's theology, and his account of the bodily element of concupiscence is crucial for properly understanding his views on Edenic sexual desire. Thus by the end of the dissertation I will have advanced the significant interpretive disputes underlying the evaluative disputes so prevalent in scholarship on Augustine today, and at the same time I will have offered an account of the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's thought and I will have shown how appreciation for the bodily element of concupiscence illuminates the disputed issue of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire.

THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM

The obvious way to adjudicate the interpretive disagreements over Augustine's views on sexual concupiscence is to return to Augustine's texts. Yet an immediate question arises: which texts? Augustine wrote on questions related to sexuality and desire over the course of four decades, and the number and length of those texts is daunting. It is not clear which texts we should return to in order to further our understanding of Augustine's views. Furthermore, Augustine's works have been read and disputed for over sixteen hundred years, and that dispute has included his works on

sexuality and human nature. One might wonder whether there is much left to say or anywhere else to turn for new insights into Augustine's thought.

There is, however, one text that holds intriguing possibilities for new insights into Augustine's views on human sexuality. Augustine's final work, *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* (*c. Iul. imp.*), is Augustine's lengthy reply to Julian of Eclanum's book *Ad Florum*. Augustine describes the unique method of this book: "Julian with his excessive wordiness wrote another eight books. I am now replying to these, first quoting his words and then adding my reply to them for the individual passages, as I thought that I should refute them."⁶ The book is literally a record of the final round of the twelve-year fight between the two authors, since it contains most of the two final books between them.

The *c. Iul. imp.* has long been left on the margins in comparison to Augustine's other texts. Jesse Couenhoven sums up the marginalization of the text, suggesting that it has been "much maligned, yet also often ignored."⁷ Some of the ignoring of the text is due to circumstances: manuscripts of the text were never in abundance, and there was some confusion caused by the fact that the work shares a similar title with the more commonly read *contra Iulianum*.⁸ Furthermore, the only English translation of the *c. Iul. imp.* was published in 1999, and the Spanish and Italian texts were published just a short time earlier.⁹ The text in Latin spans two volumes of nearly 1000 pages

⁶ From the preface to *c. Iul. imp.* (WSA I/25, p. 55).

⁷ Couenhoven, "St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin," *Augustinian Studies* 36:2 (2005), 359.

⁸ On the manuscript history and confusion over the shared name of the two texts, see Michaela Zelzer, "*Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*" in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* vol. 1 (New York: Oxford, 2013), 210-11. Zelzer is the editor of the CSEL Latin manuscript for *c. Iul. imp.* Since nearly the entirety of this dissertation has been written on campus at Georgetown University, I must include a personally amusing detail pointed out by Zelzer regarding the maligning of the *c. Iul. imp.*: "in the midst of the controversy over Jansen's ideas...some Jesuits denounced the text as a Jansenist forgery." See Zelzer, "*Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*," 212.

⁹ From the introduction to the WSA translation of *c. Iul. imp.* (WSA I/25, p. 50). Two major projects translating the works of Augustine into English—the NPNF and New Translation—simply did not translate *c. Iul. imp.*

in total, and, while the first half of the two-volume critical edition was published in 1974, the second was not published until 2004. In the absence of translation and a critical Latin text, it is no surprise that this lengthy work remained on the margins of the scholarly discussion.¹⁰

The marginalization of the *c. Iul. imp.* has not been merely circumstantial, however. When the text has been discussed in scholarship, it has often been, as Couenhoven says, “maligned.” The text allegedly reveals an Augustine who fell from the intellectual heights of his earlier career. John Burnaby, writing in the 1930s, claims, “nearly all that Augustine wrote after his seventieth year is the work of a man whose energy has burnt itself out, whose love has grown cold,” and Burnaby refers explicitly to the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*.¹¹ For Burnaby, the argument with Julian is “lamentable” and, consequently, “the *Opus Imperfectum* makes melancholy reading.”¹² Other scholars concur in this evaluation of the text.¹³ One reason for the harsh judgment of the *c. Iul. imp.* is that its contents seem superfluous. As Gerald Bonner puts it, the work simply “re-emphasize[s] what had already been stated earlier,” although there is an “added bitterness” not found in Augustine’s earlier

¹⁰ As an example of the neglect of the text, one can turn to David F. Kelly’s 1983 article “Sexuality and Concupiscence in Augustine.” Kelly says his article engages the texts “which Augustine wrote in the context of the Pelagian controversy from 411 to his death in 430.” Yet Kelly never once mentions the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, not even in the footnotes. See David F. Kelly, “Sexuality and Concupiscence in Augustine,” *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1983), 82. In addition, a recent book on the reception of Augustine also contains no references to the *c. Iul. imp.* in the index. See *T & T Clark Companion to Augustine and Modern Theology* ed. C.C. Pecknold and Tarmo Toom (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 277. The absence of references to *c. Iul. imp.* in these texts is symptomatic of the relative marginalization of the *c. Iul. imp.* in scholarship.

¹¹ John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study in the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947), 231.

¹² Ibid., 209 & 209 n. 1

¹³ Peter Brown, in his classic biography of Augustine, characterizes Augustine’s engagement with Julian on the issues of human nature and human sexuality as “an unintelligent slogging match,” which would seem to suggest there is no good reason to delve deeply into the unintelligence manifested in *c. Iul. imp.* According to Brown, the dispute with Julian reveals an Augustine who was no longer thinking rightly: “There is an element of tragedy in this encounter [between Augustine & Julian]. Seldom in the history of ideas has a man as great as Augustine or as very human, ended his life so much at the mercy of his own blind spots.” See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, New Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 389. Garry Wills echoes the earlier Brown, suggesting that “in this slugging match, both Julian and Augustine ended up rather punch-drunk.... There is a tragic hopelessness in their dreary round of repeated arguments.” See Wills, *Saint Augustine: A Penguin Life* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 137.

works.¹⁴ If one thinks what has already been said is not intellectually compelling anyway, then there would seem to be very good reasons to leave the *c. Iul. imp.* on the shelf.¹⁵

More recent work, however, has suggested that the *c. Iul. imp.* might have some important intellectual content worth examining.¹⁶ Even without examining the text, however, there is a very significant factor that suggests the *c. Iul. imp.* is uniquely important for understanding Augustine's thought. It is, after all, the last book Augustine wrote. Although some recent scholarship has sought to downplay the ways in which aspects of Augustine's thought developed over the course of his career, there is certainly a stronger tradition that emphasizes the importance of Augustine's constant intellectual development from the beginning to the end of his writing career.¹⁷

¹⁴ Gerald Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine's Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), ix. Ultimately, Bonner says elsewhere, "in all this productivity [of his works against Julian], Augustine was essentially restating the arguments which he had employed at the very beginning of the controversy." See Bonner, "Augustine and Pelagianism," *Augustinian Studies* 24 (1993), 43.

¹⁵ According to Robert Markus, the dispute between Augustine and Julian was a "depressing dialogue of the deaf" precisely because each disputant shouted, again and again, the rival positions that the other was seemingly incapable of hearing. See Markus, "Augustine's *Confessions* and the Controversy with Julian of Eclanum: Manichaeism Revisited," in *Collectanea Augustiniana. Mélanges T.J. Van Bavel*. Edited by B. Bruning, M. Lamberigts, and J. Van Houtem. Vol. 2 (Louvain: Louvain University and Peeters Press, 1990), 918.

¹⁶ Despite the often cold reception of the *c. Iul. imp.*, it has been examined more frequently in the years since the translation into English and the publication of the second volume of the critical Latin edition. Some scholars have even suggested the text might be worth investigating at length because of its contents. Jesse Couenhoven suggests that the *c. Iul. imp.* is "especially illuminating" as "the most lucid and helpful of [Augustine's] anti-Pelagian works." See Couenhoven, "St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin," *op. cit.*, 359 & 364 n. 10. Roland Teske, the English translator of the *c. Iul. imp.*, claims the text shows that Augustine's "argumentative powers and rhetorical eloquence in defense of the grace of God had not...diminished." See Teske's "Introduction" in WSA I/25, p. 13. Furthermore, two recent dissertations published as books incorporate the *c. Iul. imp.* in part into their accounts of issues in Augustine's thought, and other books and scholarly articles have examined the text with sympathy. Timo Nisula's book *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence* addresses, although only partially, the place of the *c. Iul. imp.* in Augustine's developing views on concupiscence. See Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 116. (Leiden: Brill, 2012). Dominic Keech's book, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo, 396-430* significantly deals with the *c. Iul. imp.*, and Keech devotes a chapter to Augustine and Julian's dispute over the human nature of Christ in *c. Iul. imp.* See Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo, 396-430* (New York: Oxford, 2012). Thus the incorporation of the *c. Iul. imp.* into recent scholarship would seem to suggest the text might have more significance than earlier scholarship admitted.

¹⁷ Carol Harrison is the most noteworthy champion of the view that readers of Augustine should see a fundamental consistency on major themes treated across Augustine's writing career. See Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (New York: Oxford, 2006). Keech (*op. cit.*, 20-25) offers a helpful review of Harrison's thesis and its context as a reaction to Peter Brown.

Furthermore, Augustine himself indicates in *Retractiones* that the chronology of his works holds some significance: “For, perhaps, one who reads my works in the order in which they were written will find out how I progressed while writing” (*Ret.*, prologue).¹⁸ A charitable reading of Augustine’s career, then, would suggest there is a *prima facie* argument for thinking the *c. Iul. imp.* reveals what Augustine would have considered to be his better views on certain topics.

While this dissertation is not devoted exclusively to the *c. Iul. imp.*, one essential piece of my argument is that Augustine’s final text is very helpful for advancing our understanding of the three disputed topics identified above. As I show in chapter two, Augustine’s claims in the *c. Iul. imp.* are very helpful for illuminating the significant factors that shape his views on human nature and human desire. As I show in chapter three, Augustine’s claims about the relationship between desire and the body in the *c. Iul. imp.* confirm and illuminate the same views he holds throughout his anti-Pelagian period. And, as I show in chapter four, Augustine’s claims about Edenic sexual desire in the *c. Iul. imp.* are absolutely essential for understanding his development and final position on that issue. So the *c. Iul. imp.* will prove to be a crucial text for advancing the argument of the dissertation.

OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

I think the three disputed topics identified above—what factors shape Augustine’s views on concupiscence, whether concupiscence has anything to do with the body, and whether sexual desire would have been present in Eden—are very closely connected. An account of the first helps us understand the second, understanding the second helps us understand the third, and the *c. Iul. imp.* helps us understand all three. The thesis of this dissertation is that Augustine’s later works, with

¹⁸ I do realize *c. Iul. imp.* is not included in *Retractiones*, but I think Augustine’s hermeneutic principle still applies.

particular emphasis on the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, show that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's final account of sexual desire and is central to adjudicating disputes over the proper interpretation of Augustine's views on other topics in the theology of sexuality, including Augustine's final position on Edenic sexual desire.

Although I have outlined the problems above, in chapter one I fill out my account of the evaluative and interpretive disputes over Augustine's thought on marriage and sexuality. I show both that Augustine's thought is subject to starkly contrasting evaluative judgments—Augustine is villain or hero—and that the evaluative judgments are often premised on very different interpretive claims about what Augustine actually said. Because the evaluative disputes are often premised on three significant but sometimes unrecognized interpretive disagreements—what factors significantly shaped Augustine's views on sexuality, whether he thinks sexual desire is in any way a desire of the body, and whether he thinks sexual desire was part of original human nature—I suggest that there is a need to return to Augustine's texts in order to advance our understanding of Augustine's claims.

Chapter two advances my argument by showing that the necessary reference points for Augustine's views on sexuality are his claims about God as creator, the human being as creature, and God's original plan for creation. In short, I argue that Augustine's views on sexual desire are shaped fundamentally by his broader theological views, or what I call Augustine's theological landscape. Although I hope my account of that landscape is not controversial, I offer my account for two reasons. First, some scholars overemphasize the significance of Augustine's personal experience of sex, Augustine's pessimistic personality, and Augustine's explorations in the workings of the human sexual response. Whatever the influence of these factors, the influence is marginal in comparison to Augustine's broader theological commitments regarding God, creation, God's original plan for creation, and the impact of the fall from grace on human nature. Second, it is crucial to my later argument that I establish Augustine's account of the nature of the human body before and after the

fall, because Augustine's claims about the bodily element of concupiscence make sense only within his understanding of the distinction between Edenic and fallen bodies. This chapter draws heavily on Augustine's dispute with Julian, especially their exchanges in the *c. Iul. imp.*, and shows why that dispute is crucial to our understanding of the connections between Augustine's broader theological landscape and his views on sexuality and the bodily element of concupiscence.

In chapter three I build upon the work of chapter two and take a position in a widespread disagreement among scholars of Augustine that is at the heart of this dissertation: the issue of the bodily element of concupiscence. While the disagreement among scholars is complex, I identify three kinds of positions. Some scholars suggest that Augustine thinks the body cannot, in principle, be a cause of desires. For these scholars, the concept "concupiscence of the flesh" is strictly a metaphor for the worldly or vitiated desires of the soul. Other scholars do admit that Augustine does think sexual desire has something to do with bodily desire, but these scholars suggest the bodily element of sexual desire is of marginal importance to Augustine. Still others, however, argue that the bodily element of sexual desire is at the heart of Augustine's account of concupiscence. Through a close reading of Augustine's later texts I argue that Augustine does indeed think concupiscence is very often a desire of the body, and I argue that this claim is central to Augustine's account of concupiscence, human nature, and marriage. I furthermore show how Augustine's views on the bodily element of concupiscence fit well with his other anthropological commitments regarding the interaction of soul and body. Additionally, while many scholars suggest anyone who says the body has desires is guilty of Manichaeism, I show that Augustine rejects Manichaeism while at the same time holding fast to his view that concupiscence is very often a bodily desire. In fact, Augustine thinks he can reject Manichaeism only because he sees concupiscence as, in large part, a fundamentally problematic bodily desire.

In chapter four I show how the account of the bodily element of concupiscence I laid out in chapter three is crucial for understanding Augustine's development on the issue of Edenic sexual desire. Chapter four is a kind of "test-case" for the relevance of my account of bodily desire in Augustine's thought. Scholars offer widely divergent interpretive claims about Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire, and virtually all of these claims do not account for the ambivalence of Augustine's final position on the issue. Many scholars suggest that Augustine thinks sexual desire would have been totally absent from Eden, while others suggest that Augustine thinks sexual desire would have been present and totally virtuous in Eden. By tracing how Augustine's thought on this issue substantially develops over the course of his career, I show that Augustine's final position expressed in the *c. Iul. imp.* is fundamentally ambivalent, and the ambivalence is due to tensions in Augustine's account of bodily desire.

In the *c. Iul. imp.* Augustine consistently and frequently expresses an either-or position on Edenic sexual desire: either there would have been no sexual desire in Eden, or there would have been good sexual desire in Eden. In Augustine's words, sexual desire after the fall is either a defect, or it has become defective in comparison to what it would have been in Eden. The fact that Augustine says either of two mutually exclusive positions could be the right one reveals Augustine's uncertainty about the topic. I argue that Augustine's ambivalence is only intelligible if we recognize the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's thought on sexual desire. Furthermore, if we do recognize the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence, we find that Augustine's final ambivalence was almost inevitable, because in the end he runs into tensions at the heart of his account of bodily sexual desire and the nature of the human body. After identifying these tensions, I offer an argument for how Augustine can move beyond his ambivalence while remaining consistent with his account of the bodily element of concupiscence. In the conclusion of

the dissertation I suggest how our recognition of the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence might impact our understanding of other elements of Augustine's theology.

So, in sum, the dissertation argues that the concept of bodily desire is at the center of Augustine's account of concupiscence. My argument is interesting only because there are rival readings of Augustine on this point, and those rival readings are set within the broader evaluative and interpretive disputes over Augustine's account of human nature, sexuality, and marriage (hence chapter one). Furthermore, I am able to make my argument only after laying out my understanding of the significant theological factors that shape Augustine's account of concupiscence (hence chapter two). After showing that Augustine does indeed think the body causes some desires and that this claim fits well with Augustine's broader anthropology (chapter three), I apply my reading of Augustine's claims about bodily desires to the disputed issue of Augustine's views of Edenic sexual desire (chapter four). So chapter one identifies the issue, chapter two begins to address the issue by describing the bigger picture in which the issue is set, chapter three offers my account of the issue, and chapter four shows how my account of the issue illuminates a related and disputed issue in the interpretation of Augustine.

I want to say very clearly that this dissertation seeks to interpret Augustine's views on concupiscence on his own terms, and I generally refrain from taking a position on the evaluative implications of what Augustine says. I can adopt the words of Mathijs Lamberigts as my own: "it is not my intention to present an apology on behalf of the bishop of Hippo, I simply offer the accused a chance to say a word in his own defence."¹⁹ I am certainly interested in the implications of Augustine's claims about human nature and human desire, yet I assume we must first understand

¹⁹ Lamberigts, "A Critical Evaluation of Critiques of Augustine's View of Sexuality," in *Augustine and His Critics* ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2000), 178.

what Augustine has to say before we can respond with a claim about whether or not he should say it. There is still significant interpretive disagreement about central issues in Augustine's account of concupiscence, and the burden of this dissertation is to advance our understanding of what Augustine actually says. Augustine's work against Julian is indeed unfinished, not simply because the last book was never completed, but also because Augustine's views continue to be disputed not only on their merits, but more fundamentally on their contents. I hope this dissertation does, in some small way, allow Augustine to speak up and say what he wants to say. Whether we should respond with cheers or jeers is a topic for the future.

CHAPTER ONE

AUGUSTINE ON TRIAL

The wise will inherit honor,
but fools get disgrace.

Proverbs 3:35

INTRODUCTION

The thesis of this dissertation is that Augustine's later works, particularly the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, show that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's final account of sexual desire and is central to adjudicating disputes over the proper interpretation of Augustine's final views on other topics in the theology of sexuality, including Augustine's ambivalent final position on Edenic sexual desire. This chapter shows how that thesis emerges out of debates in recent literature on Augustine's thought.

This chapter argues that the widespread disagreement over the value of Augustine's thought on human sexuality is often premised on disputes over how to interpret some of Augustine's most fundamental claims about concupiscence. In short, scholars often cannot agree on what Augustine says about concupiscence, let alone whether what he says is admirable or regrettable. As I show in this chapter, three consistently disputed interpretive issues emerge from the scholarly evaluative dispute: what factors significantly shape Augustine's views on concupiscence, whether concupiscence is caused by the body, and whether concupiscence was present in Eden. By showing that the evaluative disputes are premised on interpretive disputes that often focus on the three topics mentioned above, I establish the need to return to Augustine's texts in order to advance our understanding of Augustine's account of concupiscence.

Perhaps it would be helpful to set the present chapter in the context of the whole dissertation. Chapter one shows the need to clarify and thus advance our interpretation of Augustine's views on concupiscence. Scholars often disagree about what factors significantly shape Augustine's views, whether Augustine thinks concupiscence has anything to do with the body, and whether Augustine thinks concupiscence was original to human nature. Chapter two shows what factors significantly shape Augustine's views: that is, his views are fundamentally shaped by his broader theological commitments, or what I call Augustine's theological landscape. Attention to the details of this landscape provides the proper context for Augustine's views on human nature, and specifically the nature of the human body before and after the fall. Chapter three shows that Augustine's account of the bodily element of concupiscence is at the center of his account of human nature. Chapter four shows how Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire changed over his career, what Augustine's final position was on Edenic sexual desire, and why the bodily element of concupiscence is essential in explaining both how and why Augustine's position changes. Attention to the bodily element of concupiscence is especially crucial for explaining Augustine's final position on Edenic sexual desire. In sum, the thesis of the dissertation is that Augustine's later works, especially the *c. Iul. imp.*, show that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's theology of sexuality, and attention to the bodily element of concupiscence is central to adjudicating disputes over the interpretation of other specific topics in Augustine's theology of sexuality, with the issue of Edenic sexual desire being a test case for my account of the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's thought. The necessity of pursuing that thesis emerges out of the evaluative and interpretive disputes outlined in this chapter.

METHOD OF CHAPTER ONE

While the literature on Augustine's claims about human sexuality is voluminous and complex, much of the work can be helpfully divided into two fundamentally different camps. On one side are those who see Augustine's work on sex as neither successful on its own terms nor helpful for contemporary theology. From the perspective of this camp, Augustine's thought on sex makes him at best an admirable figure with a fatal flaw, and at worst a canonized villain. These thinkers argue strongly that Augustine's thought on sexuality and human nature contains significant intellectual problems. And, regarding the usefulness of Augustine's thought on sex for contemporary theology, these thinkers often tend to suggest that a theology of sexuality fails insofar as it is truly Augustinian. In my view this approach has come to dominate theological engagement with Augustine's thought on human sexuality.

At the same time, however, there is another, smaller camp that sees Augustine as someone whose work has been unduly dismissed or wrongly interpreted. Scholars who take this approach find Augustine's thought on human sexuality to be intellectually compelling and very fruitful for positive advancements in theology, and they seek to rescue Augustine from his critics. There is, then, no consensus on how scholars should evaluate Augustine's thought on sexuality.

What makes the ongoing debate over Augustine's legacy all the more interesting is that much of the disagreement between Augustine's critics and defenders turns on rival claims about what Augustine actually said about human nature and sexuality. Thus the debate is not only over the value of Augustine's thought on human nature and sexuality. The debate is often more fundamentally about the actual content of Augustine's theology, and very often the debate is about the content of his claims about concupiscence.

This chapter gives the reader a sense of the two camps discussed above by engaging essential or illustrative approaches to the interpretation of Augustine on human nature and sexuality. Of

course the division of scholars into critics and defenders of Augustine is a heuristic employed for the purposes of organization. I certainly understand that most of the scholarship I discuss does not fit tidily into the categories I identify. Even so, the heuristic is helpful for identifying the more general problem of the divergent interpretations and evaluations of Augustine. Through seeing how scholars interpret Augustine differently and evaluate Augustine differently, I am able to show that the three interpretive issues identified above must be addressed in order to better understand and judge Augustine's thought. My hope is that by the end of this chapter the reader will agree that the very different evaluative claims about Augustine's thought on human nature and sexuality are premised on different readings of Augustine's claims about concupiscence. Thus I will have established the need to go back to Augustine's texts, in order to advance our understanding of Augustine's account of concupiscence.

As anyone familiar with the field of Augustinian scholarship will know, the literature on Augustine's thought on human sexuality is both exceedingly large in volume and broad in scope. As a result, this chapter cannot be exhaustive. It would be practically impossible to incorporate into this chapter every thinker—even every modern thinker—who has evaluated Augustine's thought on human sexuality. And because the literature does not develop in an organic chronological way, I do not attempt to tell a history of the interpretation. Instead, this chapter follows the outlines of the contemporary debate over Augustine's legacy for sexual ethics and organizes thinkers into the two main camps suggested above: critics of Augustine and defenders of Augustine. For both the critics and defenders, I specify distinctive approaches and choose thinkers who best represent those approaches. This method best serves the overall purpose of this chapter while keeping the scope of the chapter within reasonable bounds.

Another challenge for this chapter, related to the volume and scope of theological engagement with Augustine's thought on sexuality, is that Augustine's thought has been investigated at length in

virtually every period in the history of Western theology since Augustine's death in 430. Thus a literature review could justifiably begin in the fifth century and run through all the important theological contributions over the past seventeen centuries. That kind of literature review, however, would distract from the purposes of this chapter. While Cassian and Aquinas and others engage Augustine's thought in important ways, more recent literature either builds upon the same issues addressed by Augustine's major interlocutors from the past, or recent literature moves off in new directions precisely because of uniquely modern concerns. Thus to show why Augustine's thought on concupiscence and sexuality needs reexamination and what topics most need reexamination, it is best to get a sense for the more recent literature in the field.

MAJOR CRITICISMS OF AUGUSTINE ON SEX

Looking out the window as a plane circles for landing orients one to the basic contours of a city. After setting foot on the ground, one can go in any number of directions to explore. The criticisms of Augustine's thought are as varied as a metropolis, and as a result the subsequent literature review takes on the character of individual excursions out into a city. The criticisms of Augustine are diverse and sometimes in tension with one another, so there is no way to harmonize them all into one linear narrative. Instead, by treating the criticisms by type one can build an appreciation for the whole. Just as the neighborhoods of Rome are incredibly varied, yet still intelligibly all Roman, the diverse criticisms of Augustine are all part of the same landscape in which the Augustinian is a foreigner.

AUGUSTINE'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF SEXUALITY TAINTS HIS THEOLOGY

One widespread criticism is that Augustine's own bad experiences of sexuality unduly influenced his theology. In the 1960s John Noonan could justifiably make the following claim: "an almost universal reticence has prevented [Augustine's] readers from seeing the vital roots in personal experience of the ideas he set out."¹ Soon after Noonan, this reticence disappeared. For instance, in the 1970s, the authors of *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* place Augustine's thought on sexuality under suspicion for its connection to his "personal experience of sinfulness in his own sexuality."² Two decades later Uta Ranke-Heinemann claims that "[t]he man who fused Christianity together with hatred of sex and pleasure into a systematic unity was the greatest of the Church Fathers, St. Augustine," and she suggests Augustine's personal experience was at the root of this hatred.³ According to Ranke-Heinemann, while Augustine drew on the previous tradition, he "added a new factor: a personal and theological sexual anxiety."⁴ As a result, "Augustine was the father of a fifteen-hundred-year-long anxiety about sex and an enduring hostility to it. He dramatizes the fear of sexual pleasure, equating pleasure with perdition in such a way that anyone who tries to follow his train of thought will have the sense of being trapped in a nightmare."⁵ Augustine's experience of sex would seem to make him a bad source for thinking about questions related to sexuality.

¹ John T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge,

² Anthony Kosnik, et. al., *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* (New York: Paulist, 1977), 37.

³ Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality and the Catholic Church*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 75-76.

⁴ Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*, 76.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

For critics who appeal to Augustine's experience, the relevance of Augustine's sexual experience is that it prejudiced his theological work on the same topic. Noonan offers a clear example of this argument. Augustine's views on concupiscence were "rooted in his own experience."⁶ Augustine's candid descriptions of the problems of sexual desire "[r]eflect[ed] his own conflict."⁷ The "naturalism" of Pelagius directly "challenged the personal experience" of Augustine.⁸ It was not only Augustine's experience of sex that informed his views, but also his experience of marriage more generally. While Augustine had a common-law wife who bore him his only son and who seemed devoted to him, according to Noonan Augustine himself was cold-hearted: "His love for her is not so clear."⁹ Augustine allowed his mother to break them apart in order to fix him up with someone of better social standing, and "[t]he idea of marrying his companion of eleven years seems not to have been considered."¹⁰ Augustine was a bad partner who admitted he was addicted to sex, and it was this experience that unduly influenced Augustine's account of sex and marriage: "It is from this close sexual union, in which selfless love seems to have had little part, that Augustine drew both positive and negative elements of his idea of marriage."¹¹ Noonan continues the allegation: "It is the relation [with his common-law wife] which guides his approach to marriage.... Having had this guilt-ridden experience of sexual intercourse in a quasi-permanent union, Augustine believed there was nothing rational, spiritual, sacramental in the act of intercourse

⁶ Noonan, *Contraception*, 133.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

itself.”¹² And, again, “Augustine’s own experience molds his view of marriage and gives vitality to his formulas.”¹³ A cold-hearted Augustine led to a cold-hearted theology, and this had devastating consequences for the subsequent developments in theology.¹⁴

Noonan argues that John Chrysostom would have been a better source for the Church to draw its later developments in the theology of marriage, precisely because Chrysostom had a better life experience. Chrysostom stands in contrast with Augustine because Chrysostom “had no experience of concubinage, no initiation into Manichaeism, no battle with Pelagius.”¹⁵ Noonan’s argument is not that drawing on one’s experience necessarily invalidates one’s theology, but that Augustine’s experience was so idiosyncratic that it contaminated his theology.

Elaine Pagels also argues that Augustine’s experience of sexuality unduly influenced his theology, and not simply his theology of sexuality. According to Pagels, Augustine’s entire account of society was rooted in his sexual experience. For Augustine, society expressed the same problems faced by the individual, since neither the individual nor society is capable of “self-government.”¹⁶ Pagels attributes Augustine’s views on society to Augustine’s sexual history: “Augustine begins his reflections on government, characteristically, with introspection....Augustine instinctively identifies the question of self-government with rational control over sexual impulses.”¹⁷ Part of the problem with Augustine’s approach, Pagels suggests, is that Augustine took “his own experience as

¹² Ibid., 126.

¹³ Ibid., 138.

¹⁴ Ibid., 139.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 105.

¹⁷ Ibid., 105.

paradigmatic for all human experience.”¹⁸ Augustine’s conclusion, according to Pagels, is that no one has free will, because all are struck by the sickness of original sin.¹⁹ Thus Augustine’s concept of concupiscence “leads directly” to “coercive government.”²⁰ Since no one can be trusted to do good on his own, the state must step in to maintain order.²¹

Robert Obach also accuses Augustine of rooting his thought on sexuality in his own experience. Obach’s position is summed up quite nicely in one sentence: “Augustine’s rejection of his own sexual experience and his doctrinal debates with the Manichees, Pelagius, and others, as well as his skewed interpretations of the book of Genesis, all combined to produce a distorted perspective on marital sexuality.”²² Obach claims Augustine’s thought is unduly pessimistic, and this pessimism is rooted in Augustine’s experience of sexuality with his common-law wife.²³ Augustine’s major sin is that “marriage as a partnership in which sexual tenderness played a role is totally absent from Augustine’s writings.”²⁴ Due to his lack of experience of good sexuality, he “became the father of the attitude of pelvic anxiety in western Christianity.”²⁵

¹⁸ Ibid., 106. Additionally: “For Augustine, the truth of his own experience (and so, he believes, of everyone’s) involves, above all, human helplessness” (ibid., 140). And: “Augustine misreads and mistranslates [the Latin phrase *in quo*]...presumably because his own version makes intuitive sense of his own experience” (ibid., 143).

¹⁹ Ibid., 107-108 and 111-112.

²⁰ Ibid., 116.

²¹ Pagels quotes Augustine to prove this point: “God allowed us to sin in order to prove to us from our own experience that ‘our true good is free slavery’—slavery to God in the first place, and, in the second, to his agent, the emperor” (ibid., 120).

²² Robert Obach, *The Catholic Church on Marital Intercourse: From St. Paul to Pope John Paul II* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 29.

²³ Ibid., 32.

²⁴ Ibid., 40.

²⁵ Ibid., 46.

AUGUSTINE IS TOO PESSIMISTIC

Related to the problem of Augustine's experience is Augustine's personality. Some scholars claim that Augustine was too pessimistic, and this pessimism unduly influenced Augustine's theology. John Mahoney suggests that Augustine's thought on sexuality is tainted by "the dark strain in Augustine."²⁶ This strain is an overwhelming "*moral* pessimism" which is "a major part, if not the preponderant part, of the legacy which was inherited from Augustine by moral theology as the subject developed."²⁷ Not all of Augustine's works are tainted by this pessimism, "[b]ut if one is concentrating precisely on his moral teaching, it is there that the darkness and the sombre pessimism are most in evidence and, it must be said, at their most dogmatic and devastating."²⁸ What Augustine bequeaths to the ages is "his almost lifelong preoccupation with human sin and frailty."²⁹ For Mahoney, this element of Augustine's thought is lamentable: "It is saddening to note how the works of this great and loving man...are often flawed by this note of melancholy, of disgust, and even of brutality, towards man in his sinfulness and weakness resulting from his initial fall from God's grace."³⁰ Augustine is guilty of "a violence, not only of language, but also...of thinking" that undermines his "tenderness and mystic yearning."³¹ From Mahoney's perspective there is a tension between a pessimistic focus on sin and a hope for union with God.

²⁶ John Mahoney, S.J., *The Making of Moral Theology: a Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (New York: Oxford, 1987), 44.

²⁷ Ibid., 45 (italics in original).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 46.

³¹ Ibid., 68.

Mahoney uses Pius XI's deeply Augustinian *Casti connubii* as the paradigmatic example of the influence of Augustine's dark strain on contemporary theology. *Casti connubii* is "the outstanding modern instance in recent moral theology of the legacy of Augustine."³² From Mahoney's perspective, this legacy is not one to rejoice over. Mahoney reports that in the view of Pius, "Augustine...provides salutary teaching that life is a struggle against evils, calling for the continual need of self-control against sin."³³ This focus on evil and sin is the "*moral* pessimism" mentioned above, and, as evidence that Pius suffered from this pessimism, Mahoney refers to Pius' 1930 "Christmas eve address to the Cardinals and Roman Curia" which included an "extremely gloomy review of the past year and a reference to 'sorrows such as have never before been experienced in history'."³⁴ The objects of Pius' gloom were "the world economic recession, unemployment, anti-religious propaganda, natural disasters in Italy, persecution in Mexico, Russia, and China, difficulties for the Church, and the Pope in Italy."³⁵ It is precisely this review of sorrows that reveals "the depressed tone of this papal teaching."³⁶ For Mahoney, this "depressed tone" is significant because it speaks clearly to "the setting in which the famous encyclical *Casti Connubii* was to appear."³⁷ The implication is that the deeply Augustinian *Casti connubii* has a depressive, gloomy character, thus placing both Augustine's and *Casti connubii*'s teachings in question.

³² Mahoney writes: "In so faithfully following Augustine in logic, sentiment, and even tone of language, this twentieth-century Church teaching on Christian marriage may be seen as the outstanding modern instance in recent moral theology of the legacy of Augustine" (ibid., 60).

³³ Ibid., 58.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

AUGUSTINE DISPARAGES THE BODY

Another prevalent criticism of Augustine's thought on sexuality is that it never quite escaped the Manichaeism that Augustine was so desperate to jettison after his conversion. This argument against Augustine traces its roots back to Julian, who constantly accused Augustine of remaining Manichaean, despite Augustine's protestations. In recent literature this criticism is akin to the claim that Augustine's theology of sexuality denigrates the body. Some critics do claim explicitly that Augustine remained Manichaean, while others leave that claim only implicit in their conclusions.

Paul Ramsey argues that Augustine's understanding of sexuality is problematic because it is fundamentally dualistic.³⁸ It separates body and will in such a way as to denigrate the body. Ramsey sums up Augustine's views: "What he finds shameful is the operation of sexuality without the personal presence of the man and the woman in it. And he finds the involuntary, passion aspects of the sex relation, as it is now, shameful, because he cannot imagine any other form of personal presence in the body than rationally deliberate or voluntary presence."³⁹ In other words, what Augustine wants is sex that is totally willed and chosen, rather than sex in which sexual desire comes upon the person prior to an act of the will.

Ramsey is not sympathetic to Augustine's account of the relationship between body and will, and Ramsey offers the following criticism:

There will be no overcoming of Augustine (and no overcoming of contemporary dualism) until it is said forthrightly that *precisely because* sexual love is *not* directly subject to reason or will it is specially apt to serve the function for which God appointed it, namely, to be the field in which men and women may be personally present in their bodies and consequently accessible to one another from the heart. This would be to understand personal presence in a quite different fashion from that to which Augustine's rational voluntarism drove him.⁴⁰

³⁸ Paul Ramsey, "Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 no. 1 (Spring 1988), 56- 86.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

Ramsey's main problem with Augustine's voluntarism is that it seems to reject part of God's good creation: "It was Augustine's rational, voluntaristic understanding of a person's presence in his or her body (i. e., only when in command of it) that stood in the way of his acceptance of the passional side of sexuality as belonging also to the created order."⁴¹ From Ramsey's perspective, Augustine was "profoundly mistaken about the spontaneity of sexuality."⁴² Augustine's emphasis on concupiscence as a lack "of the original submissive ordering of sexuality under the control of rational will" was based on a mistaken assumption that "personal appearance" implied "command performance."⁴³ Ramsey argues that Augustine "can be overcome only by an internal criticism, by denying that the body is (under conditions of maximum health and integrity) in every function subject to the soul's commands."⁴⁴ Thus "[i]f sexuality is a significantly human matter, the person is present all the more because human beings do not command themselves to be there."⁴⁵ A command performance of sex—a totally willful, non-spontaneous sex—would be deeply inhuman. Augustine seems to reject the goodness of the body as it exists in history by claiming that the spontaneous elements of sexuality are a result of the fall.

David Kelly also claims that Augustine's views on concupiscence denigrate the body: "Augustine's stress on the evil of sexual appetites disparages human nature and with it the goodness of the creator."⁴⁶ Kelly argues that Augustine unjustifiably singles out concupiscence among all of life's problems: "If he had spoken of the sex acts [*sic*] as tainted in the same way as walking, singing,

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 68.

⁴³ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁶ Kelly, "Sexuality and Concupiscence in Augustine," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* vol. 3 (1983), 87.

eating, thinking, praying” then Kelly would not find Augustine’s thought so problematic.⁴⁷

However, “the fact that Augustine links concupiscence in a special way with sexuality taints it with a special shamefulness.”⁴⁸ In other words: “It is precisely by giving such an inordinate role to concupiscence in sexual activities that Augustine taints human sexuality.”⁴⁹

Exactly how does Augustine overemphasize the shamefulness of sexuality? Kelly’s main charge against Augustine is that Augustine locates the problem of concupiscence precisely in the body itself, thereby rendering the body created by God something partially evil. Kelly laments that Augustine has no room at all for a post-lapsarian sexual desire that has anything good in it, since Augustine thinks even pre-lapsarian Adam would not have experienced sexual desire. We see in Kelly’s argument the clear moral implications of Augustine’s views on sexual desire in Eden:

[I]t is hard to see any practical remnant allowable to sexual pleasure which would exist in a state free of sin. In other words, Augustine does not locate the disordering force of original sin only in the inclination to abuse sex, to destroy self or other, though concupiscence is also found here. Rather the evil of concupiscence is located essentially so close to the heart of the human sexual drive as it now is that little or nothing of the bodily excitement is left as ‘good,’ as allowable to pre-lapsarian Adam.⁵⁰

If unfallen Adam could not have had any good “bodily excitement,” then of course it would be impossible for anyone after the fall to have the same. Augustine even says that in a good marriage act, concupiscence remains evil.⁵¹ Concupiscence is not evil only when it is “a desire for abuse, rape, or degradation of self or other. It is intimately linked to each marriage act,” even good ones.⁵² For

⁴⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁵¹ Ibid., 97.

⁵² Ibid.

Augustine, “evil concupiscence is so intimately linked to the marriage act that even there the direct willing of pleasure is sinful.”⁵³

From Kelly’s perspective, Augustine fails to distinguish between sexual desire and sexual concupiscence, not allowing for the possibility of good sexual desire.⁵⁴ Since Augustine thinks one cannot ever avoid concupiscence in sex, Kelly concludes that concupiscence must be essentially rooted in the body: “Augustine locates ‘concupiscentia carnis’ in sexual potency and excitement. Julian’s charge is accurate: Augustine affirms an evil quality in sexual pleasure itself.”⁵⁵ Sexual desire and pleasure are results of the fall.⁵⁶ Thus “Augustine attacks the sexual goodness of creation itself” and “unnecessarily disparages human sexuality.”⁵⁷ Augustine has taken a theory about evil sexual desire and rooted it precisely in the body itself, thus sounding quite Manichaean in the process.

Louis Bouyer also suggests that Augustine’s thought is unsuccessful insofar as it denigrates the body. While Bouyer applauds Augustine’s attention to the presence of sin in sexuality, he argues that Augustine roots this problem in “our material nature [rather] than in our weakness of will.”⁵⁸ Because he roots sexual sin in the body, “St. Augustine himself failed, in spite of the sincere attempts he made, to arrive at a vindication of the sanctity of marriage.”⁵⁹ While Bouyer agrees with Augustine that concupiscence is a real problem, he attributes Augustine’s failure to the fact that “he was always unable to admit, as a fact, the possibility of a use [of sex] which was not intrinsically

⁵³ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 102.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 109-110.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

wrong.”⁶⁰ Essentially Augustine made no allowance for the possibility of good sexual concupiscence. As a result, “it seems impossible, on his own premises, to avoid the conclusion that, if sexual intercourse is not to be sinful, it must cease to be attractive and pleasurable to man.”⁶¹ The problem with Augustine’s theology of sex is precisely what Augustine has to say about the way in which disordered desire is rooted in the body.⁶²

John Mahoney offers a similar criticism based on the allegedly bodily nature of concupiscence. According to Mahoney, Augustine taught that sex is impossible without disordered desire, and that this desire is expressive of human guilt before God. Thus the need for St. Paul’s concession that marital sex is acceptable even though it is always tainted by lust. Mahoney sums up Augustine’s position: “It was only when sexuality was exercised within marriage with the express purpose of producing offspring, as God had commanded, that the lust and the disorder which now inevitably accompanied even its proper exercise might be considered pardonable.”⁶³ According to Mahoney, even sex for procreation is sinful and needs to be pardoned because it uses disordered desires. For Mahoney, this Augustinian teaching on the necessity of the Pauline concession sounds a lot like what Augustine would otherwise call very bad moral thinking. Augustine seems to be saying that the good end of procreative sex seems to justify the use of the evil means of disordered desires.⁶⁴ Mahoney calls this moral inconsistency “the paradox of procreation” in Augustine’s thought: humanity is commanded to be fruitful and multiply, but this is impossible without using evil

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 75.

⁶³ Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, 61.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 64.

disordered desires.⁶⁵ Augustine's account of the body, then, seems to suggest that God has given humanity a command to do something evil: "[T]his aspect of the charge of teaching that the end justifies the means is one to which Augustine does not appear to have given much consideration."⁶⁶ This is a very serious charge, for it says that Augustine's views on the way disordered desire is ineradicable from human life are fundamentally incompatible with one of his, and the Christian tradition's, most fundamental moral principles.

AUGUSTINE DISPARAGES MARRIAGE

Closely related to the claim that Augustine denigrates the body is the claim that Augustine failed to see that spousal union or sexual pleasure is an essential part of marriage. While this criticism of Augustine is closely connected to claims that he denigrated the body, the argument primarily draws on more general claims about the goodness of spousal love. Augustine is said to have absolutely no room in his theology for an account of spousal love that sees sexual union as an essential expression of that love. Lawler, Boyle & May, for example, claim that "[w]here Augustine can be faulted is in his failure to consider that spouses can choose to have marital relations for the precise purpose of expressing their fidelity, their love."⁶⁷ In a similar way, John Rist claims that Augustine is a "sexual Calvinist" because "he seems to think of our proper *libido* as wholly corrupt."⁶⁸ Augustine's rejection of the possibility of virtuous sexual desire is at the root of his

⁶⁵ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle, Jr., & William E. May, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation, & Defense*. Second edition (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1998), 53-54.

⁶⁸ John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (New York: Cambridge, 1994), 324 n. 15. From Rist's perspective, this was an overstatement on Augustine's part because "a reply to Julian, who says that [concupiscence] is morally neutral, need only claim that such desire is 'damaged,' not that it is an evil" (Ibid., 324).

rejection of the possibility that sex itself is a means toward spousal union. Thus, writes Rist, “Augustine hardly notices that sexual activity within marriage as the setting for procreation can have a beneficial unitive effect and develop marital affection.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, “[m]arital acts are not in Augustine’s normal view an aid in the development of affection.”⁷⁰ Sex is had for “two, and only two, reasons...for the generation of children...and for the selfish enjoyment by one party of the other.”⁷¹ Union itself is not an intelligible goal of sex in Augustine’s theory.

While a number of theologians argue that Augustine’s thought on marriage and sexuality fails because it does not adequately account for spousal love, these theologians do so by making a number of different kinds of arguments. Some thinkers claim Augustine fails insofar as he does not quite understand the true purposes of sex. Gilbert Meilaender, for example, argues that Augustine fails to recognize that sex has dual purposes: procreation and spousal union. To show Augustine’s error, Meilaender draws an analogy between Augustine’s writings on sex and Augustine’s writings on eating food. According to Meilaender, Augustine thinks both eating and sex have only single purposes.⁷² Augustine claims that “the *good* of food, its end or purpose, is that it serves health.”⁷³ Sex also has an overriding purpose—procreation—and in both eating and in sex the purpose becomes lost amidst the pleasure. Thus, for Augustine, good sex and good eating should always be governed by moral concerns that place the true purpose of the activity at the center of action.

Meilaender argues that Augustine fails to recognize that eating and sex each have two distinctive purposes. Meilaender agrees with Augustine that health is one purpose of food, but he

⁶⁹ Ibid., 249.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 197.

⁷¹ Ibid., 249.

⁷² Gilbert Meilaender, “Sweet Necessities: Food, Sex and Saint Augustine,” *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 29.1: 3-18.

⁷³ Ibid., 6.

suggests that “[t]he point of eating is not—or not only—gulping down food because we are hungry and must eat to live.”⁷⁴ Rather, eating is also about the good of community: “Thus, eating serves two purposes: It nourishes our bodily life, and it incarnates conversation and community.”⁷⁵ Yet the goods of eating can be separated: “I may eat by myself, simply because I am hungry and need nourishment. I may share a meal with others for the sake of their company even when I am not hungry and have no need of nourishment.”⁷⁶ The separation of these goods could be immoral, as when someone eats too much simply in order to share a meal with others, but that separation need not be immoral.⁷⁷ One can eat solely for the purpose of community, with no concern for the health benefits of the act.

Analogous to eating, sex also has two separable purposes. The purpose of sex is not simply procreation, but also the unity of the spouses: “[P]rocreation is an important good or purpose of sexual union. But sexual desire also embodies, nurtures, and enriches the good of carnal conversation and community—the complete sharing of life—between husband and wife.”⁷⁸ Because sexual pleasure (Meilander identifies union with pleasure) is a distinctive good, pursuing sexual pleasure is possibly virtuous:

To seek such community, therefore, even when children are not planned, wanted, or desired, is not mere grasping for a repeated pleasure separated from the good of marriage. On the contrary, it is one of the goods of marriage. Thus, contraceptive intercourse for the expression and enjoyment of such community cannot separate the pleasure from the good of marriage, for it is one of the goods of marriage.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 13.

In other words, the couple can pursue pleasure apart from procreation and still serve the goods of marriage. Augustine fails to draw this conclusion because he wrongly assumes that good sex has only a single purpose, when he should have recognized that sex is also about spousal union.

Louis Dupré also criticizes Augustine's account of sex in marriage by offering an alternative account of the purposes of sex. Dupré argues that Augustine's thought is problematic because it leaves no room for spousal union as an intrinsic purpose of sex. For Augustine, the communion central to marriage has nothing to do with sex.⁸⁰ This is because, according to Dupré, Augustine thinks "all sexual pleasure and desire are intrinsically evil."⁸¹ Sex "can convert this evil [i. e. concupiscence] into a good by subjugating it to a moral end."⁸² Thus sex can only be good when had for the purpose of procreation or preventing adultery, but not for union itself. It is only because desire is problematic that sex must be subjected to a good end in order to render it good. Dupré approvingly cites the work of Joseph Kearns, and in that work Kearns concludes that for Augustine and many theologians following him:

Sexual intercourse is permitted between husband and wife because the three assets of marriage, offspring, fidelity, and the sacred pledge, give it a distinctive quality which makes it morally good. But it is not good in itself; it is good only in this setting. The sex instinct is an effect of original sin and indelibly tainted by its origin. To allow such an evil force to express itself would be to perpetuate the primal rebellion. Sexual intercourse needs some excuse. The pleasure it involves may be tolerated but never desired.⁸³

Both Kearns and Dupré lament the fact that sex must be subordinated to moral ends in order to be morally good. Augustine's thought is problematic, then, because it does not see desire for sex as "good in itself." As an alternative to Augustine, Dupré holds up Louis Janssens' account of

⁸⁰ Louis Dupré, *Contraception and Catholics: A New Appraisal* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964), 25.

⁸¹ Ibid., 26.

⁸² Ibid., 27.

⁸³ Joseph Kearns, S.J., *The Theology of Marriage: The Historical Development of Christian Attitudes Toward Sex and Sanctity in Marriage* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 59-60.

marriage, in which the “*specific* character” of marriage just is sexual desire: “it is distinguished by all other love by the sexual attraction between persons of the opposite sex.”⁸⁴ Thus Janssens can say that sexual desire brings union in as an “*intrinsic* and *objective* meaning of the marital act.”⁸⁵ Desire need not be subject to anything, but rather is the good to which other aspects of the relationship are subject, and Augustine’s thought fails insofar as it does not recognize this about desire.

Cormac Burke shares Meilaender’s and Dupré’s concerns about Augustine’s rejection of the importance of spousal union in sex. Burke argues that Augustine’s presumption that virtuous sexual desire is impossible renders Augustine’s thought on sexuality antithetical to true spousal chastity. Augustine thinks “intercourse is good, but the carnal concupiscence or lust that accompanies it is not. Nevertheless spouses in their intercourse use this evil well.”⁸⁶ Because sex always involves concupiscence, Augustine “holds that married intercourse is ‘excusable’ (and wholly conjugal) only when it is carried out for the conscious purpose of having children.”⁸⁷ Because sex necessarily puts an evil to good use, Augustine concludes that it would be better to adopt abstinence in marriage. Burke, however, rejects both the premise and the conclusion of Augustine’s argument. Burke argues that sex does not require an “excuse” (in the form of the “pardon” of St. Paul) and he argues that sex is not something to avoid.⁸⁸ Rather, sex in marriage is “a matter of sanctification” and thus

⁸⁴ Ibid.; emphasis in original.

⁸⁵ Ibid.; emphasis in original.

⁸⁶ Cormac Burke, “A Postscript to the ‘*Remedium Concupiscentiae*’” *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 490.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 491. In the footnote referenced by Burke (n. 26), Burke offers two passages to support this reading of Augustine. However, as Burke indicates in the notes, Augustine does not use the term “excusable” but rather “free from blame [*inculpabilis*].” That, however, seems to suggest something much different than “excusable,” since excusable seems to suggest that blame has been preemptively forgiven.

⁸⁸ Because marital sex always involves concupiscence, it “necessarily involves a fault that qualifies as a sin” (ibid., 493). This sin is forgiven in advance by Paul’s apostolic pardon (ibid., 493). Burke claims that Augustine seems to be misreading Paul here, and as a result, Augustine’s “whole argument can of course be questioned” (ibid., 493). What Paul means “is surely not that concession can be made to people so as to sin, but rather that allowance can be made to follow a less perfect way” (ibid., 493; The more perfect way, of course, is virginity). Paul’s point is just that celibacy is

“total *abstinence from* such relations cannot be proposed as an ideal or ascetical goal for married people.”⁸⁹ For married people, “[t]he goal...is that spouses *humanize* their intimate relations, rather than abstain from them.”⁹⁰ While Augustine celebrates abstinence from sex as an important ideal for married couples, Burke, on the other hand, wants a robust account of “a positive and dynamic notion of marital chastity” which Augustine is not prepared to offer.⁹¹ On Burke’s reading, Augustine would not seem to be a friend to those who would have spouses “*humanize* their intimate relations.”⁹²

A different kind of criticism is less invested in arguing for a rival account of the purposes of sex in marriage, and is rather concerned with the implications of Augustine’s thought for the broader topic of spousal friendship. According to Germain Grisez, “St. Augustine explicitly denied that marriage is good in itself” because Augustine calls marriage an instrumental good.⁹³ Grisez’s collaborators John Finnis and William E. May expand the point: “St. Augustine held that marriage is only an *instrumental* good, in the service of the procreation and education of children,” and procreation and education of children are good because they serve the “intrinsic, noninstrumental

better than marriage, but that marriage is a legitimate though “less perfect” state of life (ibid., 493-494). As Burke reads Augustine, Augustine thinks that Paul is claiming even marital intercourse for the sake of procreation needs pardon: “[Augustine] holds that married intercourse is ‘excusable’ (and wholly conjugal) only when it is carried out for the conscious purpose of having children” (ibid., 491). Whether this is a good reading of Augustine is an issue I take up in chapter 5.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 521.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 528; italics in original.

⁹¹ Ibid., 482.

⁹² Ibid., 528; italics in original.

⁹³ Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 2, ch. 9, q. A, 1b. Available at: <http://www.twotlj.org/G-2-9-A.html>

good of friendship” between parents and children.⁹⁴ Thus Augustine fails to consider adequately that marriage is about spousal friendship as well.

Theodore Mackin offers a similar criticism. Because Augustine thinks sex and marriage are fundamentally about procreation, Augustine views marriage as a purely instrumental relationship rather than a good in itself. Augustine claims that marriage is instrumental for friendship because, by creating children, it produces more potential friends.⁹⁵ Marriage “is a good that is a necessary means for something else. Marriage’s relationship to friendship is just this, that it is needed to provide children who may grow up to form friendships.”⁹⁶ But, Mackin claims, “Augustine never takes the one more step, in developing this thought, of saying that what marriage is, is a form of friendship.”⁹⁷ Thus Augustine’s thought is out of step with twentieth-century developments in the theology of marriage that attempt to account for the loving friendship at the heart of marriage.⁹⁸

Peter Brown, in his classic biography of Augustine, laments Augustine’s inattention to both sexual union and spousal friendship. His argument focuses on the claim that Augustine’s views on sexuality were inextricably bound up with the social world in which Augustine lived.⁹⁹ Rather than seeing in Augustine’s claims about concupiscence a deep and heartfelt engagement with a fundamental problem of human existence, Brown suggests that Augustine is a kind of “sorcerer’s

⁹⁴ The quote is from May, who attributes the sentiment to Finnis. William E. May, “On the Impossibility of Same-Sex Marriage: A Review of Catholic Teaching,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* vol. 4 no. 2 (Summer 2004), 310. For Finnis’ article, see John M. Finnis, “Law, Morality, and Sexual Orientation,” *Notre Dame Law Review* 69 no. 5 (1994), 1064.

⁹⁵ Theodore Mackin, S.J., *What is Marriage?* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), 140.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ For Mackin’s reading of more recent developments, see *ibid.*, 283-350.

⁹⁹ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, New Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

apprentice.”¹⁰⁰ That is, Augustine appeals to “the fears and prejudices that the average man accepts unconsciously.”¹⁰¹ In the dispute with Julian, Augustine’s arguments “will fall back on firmly entrenched positions, will appeal to dangerously primitive levels of feeling.”¹⁰² Brown claims that too much of Augustine’s account of sexuality was built on the unexamined assumptions of Roman society: “Augustine will come to erect a highly sophisticated view of the psychological tension between reason and instinct in sexuality, upon the murky foundations of traditional Roman attitudes to intercourse in marriage,” which includes “the appalling insensitivity of some ancient Romans, who treated sexual passion in a wife with contempt.”¹⁰³ Augustine cannot escape the influence of his social world, and as a result he can find no place for the good of spousal friendship or sexual union in his theology.

AUGUSTINE IS DEFEATED BY JULIAN

Another trend in the literature critical of Augustine is the suggestion that Augustine was defeated by Julian on questions of sexuality.¹⁰⁴ This trend is especially relevant for this dissertation. Ranke-Heinemann, for instance, argues that Augustine “was largely wrong in his struggle against the Pelagian bishop of Eclanum. The Pelagians had a positive attitude toward sexual pleasure. They looked upon it as natural, in no way as sinful, rather as a special advantage of marriage.”¹⁰⁵ For

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 392.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 387.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 392.

¹⁰⁴ Many thinkers claim that Julian defeats Augustine on other questions in their wide-ranging dispute, but this literature review is focused just on those theorists who make claims about the comparative success of Augustine and Julian’s thought on sexuality and marriage.

¹⁰⁵ Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*, 86.

Julian, “sexual desire was the body’s sixth sense, and a neutral energy, which could be used well or ill.”¹⁰⁶ For Augustine, however, sexual desire was always tainted and sinful: “The person who feels nothing at all is the most deserving in the eyes of God.”¹⁰⁷ Augustine had a “hatred of pleasure.”¹⁰⁸

April DeConick offers a similar analysis, claiming that, compared to Augustine, “Julian’s picture of humanity was utterly different. He believed that creation was essentially good. He understood that every human being, like Adam and Eve, had to make their own choices not to sin...Adam’s sin did not injure the entire human race, passed on through the sex act as Augustine imagined. Adam’s sin injured only Adam.”¹⁰⁹ Julian brings this “positivist” theology to bear on his account of marriage, and it leads him to “ferociously engag[e]” Augustine’s arguments.¹¹⁰ Everything Augustine saw as consequences of the fall, Julian rather saw as “natural experiences.”¹¹¹ Thus Augustine tried to “walk the razor’s edge” between, on the one hand, “Jerome’s glorification of asceticism” and, on the other hand, “Julian’s positivist view of marriage.”¹¹² For both Ranke-Heinemann and DeConick, Julian wins the dispute primarily because his opponent so clearly failed.

Elaine Pagels offers a more detailed defense of Julian. Julian is a proponent of the kind of “scientific naturalism” opposed to all that Augustine endorsed.¹¹³ Augustine, following Genesis,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 93.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰⁹ April D. DeConick, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 126.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. I do not think DeConick intends the contemporary legal-philosophical meaning of positivism here, but rather that Julian’s thought was positive or optimistic.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 130; 148.

“makes the empirically absurd claim that death does not constitute the natural end of all lives,” and he also claims that sexual desire itself is a consequence of original sin.¹¹⁴ But Julian responded that “Augustine’s enormous error...was to regard the present state of nature as punishment.”¹¹⁵ For Pagels, Augustine’s views are “antinaturalistic:” “Augustine thus denies the existence of nature *per se*—of nature as natural scientists have taught us to perceive it—for he cannot think of the natural world except as a reflection of human desire and will.”¹¹⁶ Julian, however, anticipates the modern movement toward naturalism.¹¹⁷ In fact, Julian institutes a “Copernican revolution in religious perspective.”¹¹⁸ Pagels claims that, while Augustine thought humanity had the power to change human nature (since Adam’s sin brought death and sexual desire), “Julian’s [revolution] threatens to dislodge humanity, psychologically and spiritually, from the center of the universe, reducing it to one natural species among others.”¹¹⁹ The connection between this and contemporary scientific approaches to understanding nature leaves the reader with the only conclusion possible: Julian is the victor who gives a fruitful and intelligent account of the human situation that is compatible with contemporary knowledge.

Elizabeth Clark argues that Julian defeated Augustine by unmasking the reality that Augustine’s thought became “*more* ‘Manichaean’” over the course of their dispute.¹²⁰ In the back-

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 130.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 132.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 134.

¹¹⁷ Pagels writes: “Julian’s alternative, although more consonant with a scientific view of nature, is not itself scientific but religious” (ibid., 149).

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 144.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Elizabeth Clark, “Vitiating Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine’s Manichaean Past,” in *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 394; italics in original.

and-forth between Augustine and Julian over the question of the connection between original sin and sexuality (specifically the transmission of original sin through the seeds of generation), “[Augustine] managed only to offer his opponent unwitting support. To the end, Augustine foundered on the ‘scientific’ points raised by Julian.”¹²¹ Julian “resolved to force Augustine to explicate the biological underpinnings of his theory” of original sin, and Augustine had to do so in response to Julian’s claims about biology.¹²² As a result, “Julian...forced Augustine to make plain the anti-sexual and anti-scientific roots of his theology of sin.”¹²³ Because Augustine does not adequately respond to Julian’s criticisms, Augustine actually ends up locating original sin more indefensibly in the nature of the body itself than he had prior to the dispute with Julian.¹²⁴ Since it is the Manichaeans who think the body is evil, Augustine unwittingly remains Manichaean until the end. Thus Clark concludes that Julian won the debate.¹²⁵

Richard Sorabji also concludes that Julian won the debate: “I believe Julian won the philosophical argument and showed that Augustine’s objections failed. But he lost the political battle.”¹²⁶ However, Sorabji, more than any other thinker, claims that Julian offers an important philosophical idea that advances the discussion of sexuality, and for that reason he defeats Augustine. Julian wins essentially because he can make more sense of the reality that a movement like sexual desire need not be vicious simply because it precedes the will. A review of Sorabji’s broader argument is essential to understanding his proclamation of Julian’s victory.

¹²¹ Ibid., 292.

¹²² Ibid., 296.

¹²³ Ibid., 313.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 292.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 314.

¹²⁶ Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 400.

Sorabji champions the Stoic account of the emotions.¹²⁷ He thinks the Stoic distinction between first movements and emotions is crucial to a successful account of the morality of emotions: that is, the person's first movements prior to an emotion are things that do not necessarily cause emotions, and so those first movements are not necessarily morally problematic even if those first movements are not ordered to a virtuous emotion. One must consent to those movements for them to become full-blown emotions. Thus, the fact that one becomes pale at the sight of an impending threat need not cause one to feel true fear.¹²⁸ Becoming pale is not an emotion one is responsible for, but is rather simply an unavoidable first movement. The point is that emotions, unlike first movements, are something one is responsible for. Augustine's main problem is that he obscures this distinction, for Augustine thinks those first movements sometimes constitute true emotions, especially in the case of concupiscence.¹²⁹

According to Sorabji, Augustine's ignorance of the importance of the distinction between first movements and emotions taints Augustine's account of sexual desire. Augustine is willing to admit that virtually all emotions require the consent of the will to enter the order of morality, but sexual desire is a kind of emotion that "bypasses the will."¹³⁰ The will is not involved at all in sexual desire: "it is the emotion itself, not the will...that moves the male member."¹³¹ The essential problem with sexual desire is that it is independent of the will and is so often opposed to the will.¹³² For Augustine, all sexual desire is like first movements since the will is not involved. Had Augustine

¹²⁷ "I believe...that Stoicism can be very helpful in dealing with counter-productive emotion" (ibid., 1).

¹²⁸ Ibid., 377.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 381-382.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 381-382.

¹³¹ Ibid., 382.

¹³² Ibid., 412.

understood the distinction between first movements and emotions, he might have been able to recognize that first movements are not yet morally good or bad. Furthermore, he may have recognized that the fact that sexual desire is independent of the will need not entail that it is opposed to the will: “For it is against one’s will only if one thinks it bad for *other* reasons.”¹³³ Desire could be in harmony with the will even while independent of it.

To support his argument in Julian’s favor, Sorabji turns to Julian’s distinction between “command” and “consent” of the will.¹³⁴ Julian argues that the will certainly cannot command the movements of sexual desire, but it can consent to those movements. If this is true, then the first movements of sexual desire take on the moral status of “salivation:” an unwilled movement to be sure, but one the person could consent to and follow upon with a corresponding action.¹³⁵ Thus, because consent is required and one could withhold consent, an initial desire is not necessarily morally problematic. It is consent or withholding consent that makes desire virtuous; desire need not be commanded to be virtuous.¹³⁶ This distinction between command and consent is what Sorabji claims is Julian’s important and victory-determining contribution to the discussion.¹³⁷

A final entry on Augustine and Julian’s dispute shares with the others the presumption that Augustine’s thought on concupiscence and sexuality was a failure.¹³⁸ John Rist argues in his book *What is Truth?* that Augustine failed even while Julian failed to live up to his potential. While Rist thinks Julian’s objections to Augustine have gone under appreciated, he nevertheless argues that

¹³³ Ibid.; italics in original.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 409.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ John Rist, *What is Truth? From the Academy to the Vatican* (New York: Cambridge, 2008), 104-142.

Julian failed to see the true weaknesses of Augustine's system, and so Julian can in no way be proclaimed the victor in the dispute.¹³⁹ According to Rist, Julian failed for methodological reasons: "Julian ignored many of the precise details of Augustine's argument while failing to attack the genuine weaknesses of his opponent's position: not least Augustine's inadequate account of pleasure, his explanation of the goodness of sexual intercourse solely in terms of the continuance of the human race, and his consequent inability to relate genital activity to the development of marital trust and affection."¹⁴⁰ Julian fails to attack these things, in large part, because "Julian shared many of Augustine's cultural prejudices."¹⁴¹

Rist considers the claim that Julian was an Aristotelian and so came to his conclusions about marriage and sexuality for deeply held philosophical reasons. But, Rist claims, Julian was not as Aristotelian as many have assumed, for if he had been a good Aristotelian he would have been a much more successful theologian than he was.¹⁴² While Augustine had a faulty understanding of the human person, Julian "fails to come to grips with the weaknesses of Augustine's more general account of the relationship between soul and body" because, as only an occasional Aristotelian, "he lacked the conceptual resources" to mount that kind of critique.¹⁴³ Rist thinks that if Julian had been

¹³⁹ Ibid., 106-107; 110.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 125.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Rist claims the same in *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 327: "Interestingly, Julian appealed to Aristotle in the course of his attack on Augustine's treatment of the relationship between 'will' and the seeds; uninterestingly he failed to develop an Aristotelian-style alternative to Augustine's account of man as a whole. Julian's failure was precisely as a philosopher."

¹⁴³ Rist, *What is Truth?*, 128.

truly Aristotelian, his criticisms of Augustine may have had more force.¹⁴⁴ In any case, Julian's failure is so lamentable because it would have been so easy to press his advantage over Augustine.¹⁴⁵

MAJOR DEFENSES OF AUGUSTINE ON SEX

Clearly Augustine has many critics. Their objections are varied, but they are all aimed at the heart of Augustine's thought on concupiscence and sexuality. Augustine's thought is said to be theologically problematic, so his thought is relevant to contemporary moral theology only as an example of how not to think about desire, sex and marriage. Other theologians, however, claim that Augustine's thought on marriage and sexuality is both theologically coherent and essential for contemporary moral thought.

John Hugo helpfully sums up both the fundamental question addressed by Augustine's defenders and sums up their general methodological approach. All the thinkers examined below respond, either explicitly or implicitly, to the following question posed by Hugo: "What difference does it make for us today what Augustine taught in the fifth century?"¹⁴⁶ To answer this question, Augustine's defenders adopt the method that Hugo calls a "return to the Augustinianism of Augustine."¹⁴⁷ In other words, virtually all the thinkers below seek to show the contemporary relevance of Augustine by re-reading his original texts and searching for the true Augustine in the midst of too many allegedly distorted readings of Augustine's thought.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 129.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 141.

¹⁴⁶ John Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage* (Princeton: Scepter, 1969), 17.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 26.

AUGUSTINE DESERVES A FAIR TRIAL

To bridge the gulf between critics and defenders of Augustine's thought on sexuality, it would be helpful to examine a kind of middle approach. Rather than criticizing Augustine or mounting a full-on defense of Augustine's thought, this approach insists that Augustine deserves a fair trial, whatever the verdict. This is the approach of Peter Brown subsequent to his famous biography. While his biography of Augustine dismissed Augustine's thought on sexuality (as Brown himself admits), Brown's later work attends to the complexities of Augustine's thought and also challenges some of Augustine's critics.

In a new epilogue to the 2000 edition of the biography, Brown suggests that in the first edition of the biography he had been dismissive of Augustine's thought on sexuality: "Agreeably high-minded and of liberal temperament (or so I liked to appear, as many young scholars do), I was not a little disturbed by the remorseless physicality of Augustine's insistence that Adam's fall had resulted, instantly and visibly, in a loss of sexual control. I shrugged it off in a few pages."¹⁴⁸ His work from the 1980s on is not so dismissive of Augustine's thought, even while Brown does not endorse anything like an Augustinian approach to issues of marriage and sexuality. Rather, Brown's work exhibits an even-handed quality that is aimed at seeing Augustine's thought in its complexity and only evaluating it once it is understood properly. What Brown concludes is that Augustine's thought on sex is more moderate than some have admitted, and that Julian's thought on sex is not as promising as many would hope.

In his work on Augustine in the 1980s, Brown found an Augustine whose views became more moderate over time in response to the excesses of a thinker like Jerome: "the very vehemence of Augustine's later defence of his views on sexuality and original sin, against Julian of Eclanum, was

¹⁴⁸ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 501.

the direct result of that moderation.”¹⁴⁹ Augustine’s views are best understood as the development of Augustine’s attempt to humanize the Garden of Eden, in contrast to the kind of ““angelic”” reading of the garden offered by someone like Gregory of Nyssa.¹⁵⁰ Rather than seeing sexuality and marriage as a kind of consequence of the fall, “[s]ex was tragic for Augustine because it could have been so very different.”¹⁵¹ Brown argues that Augustine “had come to envision, in a manner far more consequential than many of his Christian contemporaries, Adam and Eve as fully sexual beings, capable of intercourse in the Garden of Eden—a glorious intercourse, unriven by conflicting desires, without the shadow of sin upon it.”¹⁵² From Brown’s perspective, Augustine looks like a progressive figure when set in his historical context.

Brown also takes a position on the question of the legacy of Augustine’s thought on sexuality. Richard Sorabji, who proclaims Julian the victor in the dispute, suggests that a world in which the Pelagians had been the true victor would have looked “very different.”¹⁵³ But, Brown argues, the difference may not have been an improvement. With Pelagianism’s account of the controllability of the will comes a heightened emphasis on moral rectitude and even human perfectibility, and anything less than perfection would be seen as a failure on the Pelagian account. This would have clear implications for sex:

It seems to be almost a sociological law that a sunny attitude to the core experience of licit sex within marriage can lead to harsher measures to protect this licit core from subversion by others....If the Christian morality envisioned by Julian of Eclanum was like that, then we

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Peter Brown, “Book Symposium: Emotion and Peace of Mind,” *Philosophical Books* 43 no. 3 (July 2002), 202.

would not expect the history of sex in Western Europe to be all that much happier than it has been.¹⁵⁴

In other words, the claim that the victory of Julian would have been a victory for truth and goodness is anything but certain. Augustine, at least, “gave a place for human frailty within the Church in a way that the thought of Pelagius could never have done. It was Augustine, not Pelagius, who was the teacher of compassion.”¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, Brown argues, it is questionable whether Augustine’s views really had the influence in later ages that Sorabji and others claim:

Augustine has an uncanny capacity always to seem close to us. This has meant that he is always around for us to blame for anything which we do not like in our own times. It is only too easy to ascribe to Augustine an entire conglomerate of negative ideas on sexuality many of which, in fact, came to be formed in later centuries (often as late as the nineteenth century) due to a variety of causes which had little or nothing to do with Augustine’s own thought. By doing so, we lose what is specific in Augustine.¹⁵⁶

Writing in the epilogue to a new edition of *Augustine of Hippo*, Brown continues to push back against those who suggest that Augustine’s thought is at the root of the sexual confusion in the West:

On the issue of sexuality, we should be very careful not to ‘demonize’ Augustine. To speak of him as the ‘evil genius of Europe’, and to lay at his door alone the ills associated with the handling of sex in Christian circles up to our own time, is to take an easy way out—as if by abandoning Augustine we have freed ourselves, by magic, from a malaise whose tangled roots lie deep in our own history. We have made our own bed over long centuries. Augustine did not make it for us. Denunciations of Augustine usually misrepresent him and, in any case, they get us no further in the serious, slow task of remaking that bed. It is, indeed, an act of egregious cultural narcissism to believe that all our present discontents can be glimpsed in the distant mirror of one man’s thought.¹⁵⁷

Brown is not here defending the positive value of Augustine’s thought, but is rather suggesting that criticisms of Augustine often miss the mark. Augustine at least deserves a fair trial, not a prejudicial

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 203.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 201-202.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 203.

¹⁵⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 502.

and rigged one. Others, however, go beyond Brown's approach and defend the value of Augustine's thought on marriage and sexuality, and I review some of these thinkers in the next section.

AUGUSTINE'S THEORY OF CONCUISCENCE IS ESSENTIAL TO GOOD THEOLOGY

The thought of Pius XI is a fitting starting point for examining modern defenders of Augustine's thought on sexuality. John Mahoney suggests that Pius' *Casti connubii* contains "the outstanding modern instance in recent moral theology of the legacy of Augustine."¹⁵⁸ As I showed above, Mahoney does not offer this claim as a complement, though Mahoney's claim could be expanded far beyond *Casti connubii*. Pius had a very Augustinian series of encyclicals, all promulgated in 1930 in honor of the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of Augustine's death.¹⁵⁹ Pius' contribution to the defense of Augustine lies in two main lines of argument. Pius offers a critical engagement with modern thought rooted in his defense of the necessity of an Augustinian account of original sin and concupiscence. Pius also offers a theology of marriage that draws heavily on Augustine's account of concupiscence.

Pius' critical work is focused primarily on defending the concept of original sin and its consequences against a kind of neo-Pelagianism that explicitly or implicitly denies original sin and its consequences. In *Miserentissimus redemptor* Pius explicitly identifies this neo-Pelagianism: "wise men of this age of ours, who following the ancient error of Pelagius, ascribe to human nature a certain

¹⁵⁸ Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, 60.

¹⁵⁹ Technically, the first of these encyclicals, *Divini illius magistri*, was promulgated on December 31, 1929, but for the sake of simplicity I think it is acceptable to treat it as an encyclical of 1930, given that no one could have read it before 1930.

native virtue by which of its own force it can go onward to higher things.”¹⁶⁰ In *Divini illius magistri*, an encyclical devoted to education, Pius calls this view of human nature “pedagogic naturalism.”¹⁶¹ Pedagogic naturalism denies “the effects of original sin, the chief of which are weakness of will and disorderly inclinations.”¹⁶² Pedagogic naturalists “pretend to draw education out of human nature itself and evolve it by [nature’s] own unaided powers.”¹⁶³ This approach to education is doomed to failure: “Every method of education founded, wholly or in part, on the denial or forgetfulness of original sin and of grace, and relying on the sole powers of human nature, is unsound.”¹⁶⁴ The problem with the pedagogic naturalist’s emphasis on “autonomous nature” is that it leads to a kind of slavery: “they are making [the child] the slave of his own blind pride and of his disorderly affections.”¹⁶⁵ While Pius’ criticism of pedagogic naturalism does not footnote Augustine, in *Ad salutem* the connection to Augustine becomes explicit.

In *Ad salutem*, Pius continues his critique of neo-Pelagianism: “It is obvious that those who read Augustine will not be trapped in that pernicious error...that the instinctive tendencies of the will are, all of them, good, and hence are neither to be feared or checked.”¹⁶⁶ As illustrations of this

¹⁶⁰ *Miserentissimus redemptor*, 8. All references to *Miserentissimus redemptor* are to the paragraph numbers of the Vatican website English translation: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_08051928_miserentissimus-redemptor_en.html

¹⁶¹ *Divini illius magistri*, 60. All references to *Divini illius magistri* are to the paragraph numbers of the Vatican website English translation: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri_en.html

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶⁶ *Ad Salutem*, 35. Published as: *Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XI on “Saint Augustine,”* trans. Vatican Press (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1930). The second printing of this translation contains different pagination. It is available in *Sixteen Encyclicals of His Holiness Pope Pius XI* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1937).

“pernicious error,” he refers back to the list of problems described in *Divini illius magistri*.¹⁶⁷ The reason readers of Augustine will not fall prey to this neo-Pelagianism is that Augustine offers an account of the “instinctive tendencies of the will” that recognizes those tendencies are hardly benign and unproblematic. They are, instead, at the root of so many human problems: “Augustine teaches that man since the fall of our first parents is no longer possessed of the uprightness in which he was created and through which, so long as he enjoyed it, he was easily and readily led to right action. In this present mortal condition, on the contrary, he must withstand and restrain the evil desires, by which he is drawn and driven.”¹⁶⁸ To trust simply in human nature to overcome sin would lead people to “stand still and languish in their natural weakness.”¹⁶⁹

Casti connubii continues Pius’ criticism of neo-Pelagianism and applies it to the realm of sexuality and marriage. At the beginning of the encyclical, Pius calls for a “renewal of matrimony” in response to “the false principles of a new and utterly perverse morality.”¹⁷⁰ Pius spells out the problem explicitly: “[T]he chief obstacle to this study is the power of unbridled lust, which indeed is the most potent cause of sinning against the sacred laws of matrimony.”¹⁷¹ Pius thinks that a purely natural-level ethic of sex and marriage is very similar to the kind of “pedagogic naturalism” he lamented in *Divini illius magistri*. For those who recognize some kind of problem with desire that needs to be overcome, the use of merely natural means as a solution is incredibly shortsighted and

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁷¹ *Casti connubii*, 97. For the reader’s sake I use the Vatican website translation of *Casti connubii* and I refer to the paragraph numbers in the references: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121930_casti-connubii_en.html

impotent.¹⁷² Furthermore, given the ways in which original sin has contaminated reason along with the will, any appeal to merely natural means of ordering marriage is destined to lead to distortion: “the inordinate desire for pleasure can attack frail human nature and easily deceive it and lead it astray.”¹⁷³ A purely natural level diagnosis of the problems in marriage combined with a purely natural level treatment is doomed from both ends.

Pius enumerates the many ways in which neo-Pelagianism has infiltrated thought on marriage, such that marriage is “often scorned and on every side degraded.”¹⁷⁴ Media thrive parasitically on ignorance, malformation and disordered desires, and “the sanctity of marriage is trampled upon and derided” from every angle.¹⁷⁵ Many of these media “are carried to the extremes of unbridled lust.”¹⁷⁶ Other threats, not going to such obvious extremes, peddle a hidden, yet still devastating, vision of human nature. Among these, some seem to think marriage is a merely human institution for the purposes of propagating the species and “of gratifying in one way or another a vehement impulse.”¹⁷⁷ Some assume that “the generative power which is grounded in nature itself is more sacred and has wider range than matrimony.”¹⁷⁸ Thus sexual expression outside of marriage is acceptable, precisely because the nature of desire calls for that expression.¹⁷⁹ This view assumes that some people just cannot be expected to remain faithful to one person: “many (so they consider)

¹⁷² Ibid., 101.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 102.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 44.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 45.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 47.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 49.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

are possessed of an inborn sexual tendency which cannot be satisfied within the narrow limits of monogamous marriage.”¹⁸⁰ Thus marriage can be “temporary” and “experimental.”¹⁸¹ Others are willing to recognize limits to sexual expression, but still use contraception either because they “wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden” or they think they “cannot...remain continent.”¹⁸² The fundamental problem, as he sums it up, is that “lust” is a constant threat to marriage, and the neo-Pelagian turn appears to pour fuel on the fire of lust.¹⁸³ These developments in thought on marriage are, according to Pius, “hateful abominations.”¹⁸⁴

Pius’ constructive defense of Augustine is found in Pius’ application of the preceding account of concupiscence and fallen human nature to the morality of marriage. In his account of marriage, Pius draws heavily on Augustine’s three *bona* of marriage: “offspring [*proles*], conjugal faith [*fides*] and the sacrament [*sacramentum*].”¹⁸⁵ In his account of the *bona*, Pius does not leave behind his criticism of neo-Pelagian, purely natural descriptions of marriage. He instead describes the *bona* in light of the problems of human nature that the *bona* overcome. In Augustine’s own words, quoted at length by Pius, these *bona* have both constructive and proscriptive purposes: the *bona* are “the law of marriage by which the fruitfulness of nature is adorned and the evil of incontinence is restrained.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸² Ibid., 53.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 91.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 52.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

In his explanation of the *bona*, Pius claims that “the child holds first place.”¹⁸⁷ Procreation is so great because the human being “surpasses all other visible creatures by the superiority of his rational nature alone.”¹⁸⁸ *Proles* is a good based on the child’s “dignity” as a creature unique among all of creation.¹⁸⁹ For Pius, however, the good of *proles* refers not only to the good of birthing children, but more importantly to the good of bringing those children to rebirth. This is because “the very natural process of generating life has become the way of death by which original sin is passed on to posterity.”¹⁹⁰ *Proles* is defined by the call to overcome original sin, and marriage is so great precisely because the spouses

share to some extent in the blessings of that primeval marriage of Paradise, since it is theirs to offer their offspring to the Church in order that by this most fruitful Mother of the children of God they may be regenerated through the laver of Baptism unto supernatural justice and finally be made living members of Christ, partakers of immortal life, and heirs of that eternal glory to which we all aspire from our inmost heart.¹⁹¹

In other words, mothers and fathers realize the fullest good of *proles* by becoming midwives for their children’s rebirth into life in the Church.¹⁹² The good of *proles* is the “primary end of marriage” precisely because of its role in overcoming original sin and bringing children to new life in the Church.¹⁹³

It is in the discussion of the second of the *bona* that the connection between marriage and the overcoming of concupiscence and fallen human nature emerges most clearly. As *proles* is a good

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 11

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 14.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Pius writes: “[Marriage] is the means of transmitting life, thus making the parents the ministers, as it were, of the Divine Omnipotence” (*Casti connubii*, 80).

¹⁹³ Ibid., 17.

defined in contrast with the evil of original sin, *fides* is a good defined in contrast with the evil of the expression of concupiscence in any form. Pius defines *fides* as essentially the conquering of concupiscence. The faithfulness of monogamy is a challenge to all desires directed to anyone or anything outside of the marriage. This call to monogamy prohibits not only “any form of polygamy or polyandry,” but it also prohibits “even willful thoughts and desires of such things.”¹⁹⁴ Adulterous desires threaten marriage, and *fides* produces a kind of “faith of chastity,” which is “the deep attachment of the heart which is expressed in action” against “the passing lust of the moment.”¹⁹⁵ This overcoming of lust is oriented not simply to momentary virtue, but toward a whole life of holiness: “This outward expression of love in the home [i. e. chastity] demands not only mutual help but must go further; must have as its primary purpose that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life, so that through their partnership in life they may advance ever more and more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love toward God and neighbor.”¹⁹⁶ The “passing lusts of the moment” are bad not only because they offer an immediate threat to marriage, but more importantly because they place significant obstacles in the way of growth “in true love toward God and neighbor,” which is the ultimate purpose of the *fides* of marriage. Because *fides* is ordered toward leading the couple further on the way to beatitude, *fides* “can in a very real sense...be said to be the chief reason and purpose of marriage.”¹⁹⁷

The third of the *bona* is the “indissolubility” and “hallowing” of marriage found in *sacramentum*. Any marriage—including natural marriage, according to Pius—is ordered toward the good of

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 21.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 23-24.

indissolubility.¹⁹⁸ That indissolubility is further illuminated by what Christian marriage signifies, namely, the relationship between Christ and the Church.¹⁹⁹ However, what is most interesting for this chapter are the “benefits which flow from the indissolubility of matrimony.”²⁰⁰ A certainty of indissolubility is a necessary condition for “the generous yielding” of the spouses and “the intimate fellowship of their hearts.”²⁰¹ This “true love” would not be possible without a “strong bulwark...in defense of a loyal chastity against incitements to infidelity” which threaten throughout the couple’s life.²⁰² Through indissolubility the spouses are constantly reminded that “they entered into the nuptial partnership” for the sake of the family’s good, “not for the sake of perishable things nor that they may serve their passions.”²⁰³ They also need the security of indissolubility to rear their children, since parenting is marked by “grave and long enduring burdens” that would be exacerbated with the threat of the dissolution of the marriage.²⁰⁴

Pius also illuminates the sacramental aspect of *sacramentum*, and in doing so he shows more fully his debt to Augustine. Through marriage the couple “open up for themselves a treasure of sacramental grace.”²⁰⁵ The good of *sacramentum* is realized in the way grace overcomes the limits of an isolated human nature, “by elevating and perfecting the natural powers.”²⁰⁶ Without cooperating

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 34.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 37.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 41.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

with this grace, “the grace of matrimony will remain for the most part an unused talent hidden in the field unless the parties exercise these supernatural powers and cultivate and develop the seeds of grace they have received.”²⁰⁷ Once again, as with *proles* and *fides*, the good of *sacramentum* is defined by Pius essentially over and against the threats to it from the imperfections of fallen human nature.

John Hugo shares Pius’ emphasis on the necessary role of the concept of fallen human nature for any theology of marriage. Hugo’s views on the subject can be summed up in one sentence: “The notion of concupiscence is indispensable to Catholic theology.”²⁰⁸ Hugo argues that Augustine’s account of concupiscence is rooted not simply in Augustine’s anecdotal observations of human sexual practices, but rather in Augustine’s fundamental metaphysical account of creation. For Augustine, creation is marked by “a hierarchy of being, hence also of goods.”²⁰⁹ Corresponding to this hierarchy is the notion of *privatio bono*—the privation of good—which is at the root of all Augustine has to say about concupiscence and sin.²¹⁰ The concept of the hierarchy of being/goods is fundamental for understanding Augustine’s account of concupiscence: “Sexual concupiscence, in Augustine’s thought, is an inordinate turning toward [created] goods.”²¹¹ Drawing on *City of God* XII.8—“[t]his text is decisive”—Hugo argues that the problem with concupiscence is that it “causes us to love that which is good in such wise that we are diverted from a higher good, hence to sin.”²¹²

Hugo points out that, for Augustine, the fall is fundamentally a loss of what Aquinas calls “*gratia elevans*,” the elevating grace that brought Adam beyond the possibilities of human nature

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Hugo, *St. Augustine*, 73-74.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 41.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 44: “There is no teaching of Augustine clearer or more constant than this.”

²¹¹ Ibid., 94.

²¹² Ibid., 96.

alone.²¹³ The problems of human nature that are connected to original sin, such as concupiscence, are present because the grace that would otherwise elevate human nature is missing. From Hugo's perspective, this aspect of Augustine's thought has been under-appreciated: "Much of the misunderstanding of Augustine comes from separating his doctrine of grace from his teaching on concupiscence."²¹⁴ In fact, says Hugo, Augustine's "whole doctrine of the Fall and its consequences" is rooted in Augustine's claims about (what Aquinas calls) *gratia elevans*.²¹⁵ According to Hugo, "[t]his point is absolutely decisive for the correct understanding of [Augustine's] anthropology."²¹⁶ Augustine is no Jansenist, claiming that human nature itself was changed or damaged "intrinsically."²¹⁷ The problem with human nature, rather, is that it is left to its own devices, so that only supernatural elevation can bring it beyond its own capabilities.²¹⁸

Without the concept of concupiscence, according to Hugo, all the essential elements of Catholic morality disappear:

The notion of concupiscence is indispensable to Catholic theology. No other concept casts such a clear, direct, concentrated beam on the cause of sin. Everyone is against 'egotism' and 'selfishness.' Even psychiatrists point out their dangers. But if Christianity can throw no clearer light on the cause of evil, then we do not need Christianity; natural asceticism or psychology will do as well. Little wonder that secular humanists sneer at the doctrine of original sin.

Take concupiscence out of theology and there is no need for detachment, poverty of spirit, or mortification—in a word, for the cross, since mortification is 'dying' with Jesus. Only concupiscence reveals why we should mortify natural desires that are in themselves good. Take away concupiscence and there is no need for remedial grace. There is nothing to

²¹³ Ibid., 53. Gerald Bonner cannot be accused of failing to attend to this aspect of Augustine's thought. See his very clear discussion in *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 358-360.

²¹⁴ Hugo, *St. Augustine*, 56.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 58. Hugo appeals to Aquinas' terminology to illuminate Augustine's idea.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 59.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

remedy; enlightened free will, as the Pelagians maintained, and as psychology presupposes, would be sufficient to overcome evil....Only concupiscence shows therefore why we need the remedial power of God's grace and the purifying action of the cross in order to attain restoration and resurrection.²¹⁹

Clearly, for Hugo, concupiscence is an essential theological topic, and so Augustine's emphasis on concupiscence is prescient.

Peter Burnell argues in a similar way that Augustine's account of concupiscence is not simply a claim about human morality. It is, more fundamentally, a claim about the way in which human moral actions are impotent when unconnected to God. Much like Hugo, Burnell shows that the problem of concupiscence is essentially one highlighting the inherent imperfections of a human nature that lacks the integration made possible only through God's help. In a pithy phrase that sums up the essential point, Burnell writes, "Concupiscence...is a door to salvation, for it makes us accept that we are not morally independent of God."²²⁰ In other words, the fact that human beings suffer from concupiscence shows how deeply they need God to bring them to perfection, for they cannot achieve that perfection on their own. Burnell suggests "[i]t would not be correct, therefore, to describe Augustine's doctrine of concupiscence as simply pessimistic, for that well-known pessimism, at its furthest extent, touches the brink of grace."²²¹ According to both Hugo and Burnell, there is no disjunction between the theorist of concupiscence and the Doctor of Grace.

AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT IS A CORRECTIVE TO CONTEMPORARY SEXUAL ETHICS

Another approach to defending Augustine is to claim that Augustine's thought on concupiscence is a corrective to the excesses of contemporary sexual ethics. John Cavadini, for

²¹⁹ Ibid., 73-74.

²²⁰ Ibid., 60.

²²¹ Ibid.

instance, argues that Augustine's views on sexual desire are not antiquated and irrelevant, but are rather insightful, even in unexpected ways. Drawing connections between Augustine and Andrea Dworkin, Cavadini suggests that the standard approach to sexuality in the West, the approach that sees sexuality as generally unproblematic, is "unreflective and shallow."²²² Dworkin, unexpectedly, has much in common with Augustine: "in some ways Dworkin's radical hermeneutic of suspicion *vis à vis* our own culture gets closer to the approach Augustine takes than the rest of us do, content as we are to isolate 'sexual pleasure' as though it were an unimpeachably fixed quantity innocent of political dynamics, far from being contoured or warped by ideologies of power and domination."²²³ In other words, much like Dworkin, Augustine's thought could be seen as a necessary rejoinder to the shallowness of contemporary approaches to sexuality.

Cavadini argues that many interpreters have misinterpreted Augustine's account of concupiscence as a human emotion. While many interpreters assume that Augustine thinks passions are equivalent with emotions, Cavadini argues that for Augustine, the "passions" that are felt as something suffered independently of the will are only one subset of emotions.²²⁴ That is, the "[p]assions are pathologized versions of...emotions."²²⁵ Passions do not exhaust the possibilities of human emotional life, and to think that they do is to fundamentally misunderstand Augustine's entire account of the emotions.

According to Cavadini's interpretation of Augustine, emotions in general are "motions," and passions are bad versions of those motions of the soul. All emotions—passions included—are

²²² John C. Cavadini, "Feeling Right: Augustine on the Passions and Sexual Desire," *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005), 197.

²²³ Ibid., 198.

²²⁴ Ibid., 198-199.

²²⁵ Ibid., 199.

“acts of the will,” and passions are those acts of the will that are premised on a disordered love that places the person in a position that distorts his true place in creation.²²⁶ In other words, passions are problematic precisely because one does not truly love the right things in the right way. It is one’s disordered love of self that leads to the problem of, for instance, having a fear that overrides reason and leads to bad actions. But, for Augustine, emotion need not in principle be conditioned by self-love. Cavadini concludes that “to conflate ‘emotion’ or ‘affect’ with ‘passion’” is to assume that there is no possible motion of the soul that could not have the character of those movements that are conditioned by self-love.²²⁷ For Augustine, passion does not exhaust the possibilities of emotion.

The purpose of Cavadini’s more precise account of “passions” is to show that Augustine’s views on disordered desires (passions) cannot be understood unless one also understands Augustine’s account of what good emotions should be. In Cavadini’s view, an illuminative place to find Augustine’s account of true human emotions is in Augustine’s account of Christ’s emotions. A common charge against Augustine—one made even by Julian—is that Augustine makes Christ inhuman since Augustine thinks Christ did not experience emotions in the way everyone else experiences them. Augustine thinks that Christ’s emotions were willed in such a way that there was no disharmony between the movements of his soul and his actions: that is, Christ did not experience what Augustine calls passions. But for Julian and those who share his objections, a person who experienced emotions as though they were totally in harmony with his will would not really be a true human being.

²²⁶ Ibid., 200-201.

²²⁷ Ibid., 201.

Cavadini rejects the claim that willed emotions such as Christ's are not true human emotions. For Augustine, Christ's "emotions...are the truest, most real emotions possible."²²⁸ That is because those emotions reveal an integrity in Christ's soul, a rightly ordered love that sees all things and loves all things in their proper way. This is anything but a Stoic account in which one wants freedom from all emotion. The Stoic account is the "the enantiomer of Christ, the mirror image of Christ's emotional life only formatted according to pride instead of love."²²⁹ A life without any emotions would be an inhuman kind of life, because it would suggest a kind of disordered love in which one does not recognize that, for instance, joy should be felt at the appropriate times. Christ, instead, feels emotions in the truest way possible because his will is always rightly ordered, so his emotions are always rightly integrated into the broader context of his life. Cavadini argues that Augustine's account of fallen emotions and Christ's emotions offers a compelling account of why emotions are so often bad and what they should look like when they are good.

While Augustine is criticized for being too pessimistic, Cavadini wonders whether sex in a fallen world can ever escape the problem of self-seeking and the other moral problems Augustine attributes to sex. Cavadini puts the following question to Augustine's critics: "can we say that any act of sexual delight is completely free from smugness, from self-admiration, from the slightest hint at 'self-pleasing' in the mastery of the 'skill sets' of popular magazines, in the thought that one is an accomplished, or at least halfway decent, lover?"²³⁰ In Cavadini's view, the criticism that Augustine is too pessimistic or Augustine does not allow for the reality "that 'sexual pleasure' can enrich a couple's relationship" is "to beg the question."²³¹ Augustine's idea of a willful sex devoid of the

²²⁸ Ibid., 203.

²²⁹ Ibid., 211.

²³⁰ Ibid., 210.

²³¹ Ibid.

“passion” of lust seems so inhuman precisely because after the fall human beings have no “signifiers” apart from those coming from the experience of lust.²³² Because lust is endemic to all sex, the best that can be hoped for, according to Cavadini, is not an uncomplicated and simple experience of a selfless sex, but rather a “mitigat[ion]” of pride that comes through the grace of Christ.²³³ It is only in Christ that one can begin to move toward a life of integrated emotion.²³⁴ In sum, Cavadini suggests that the alleged pessimism of Augustine about the character of sexual desire is a kind of realist’s take on sexuality contrasted with the seductive but unrealistic optimism of so much recent work in sexual ethics.

Geoffrey Rees also comes to Augustine’s defense and uses Augustine’s thought to criticize recent developments in sexual ethics, though he is much less concerned with coming to a clearer view of the “true” Augustine than the other thinkers covered above.²³⁵ What Rees shares with the thinkers discussed above is a commitment to the concept of original sin and its consequences as it emerges out of Augustine’s thought.

Rees’ argument is against thinkers like Paul Ramsey who, says Rees, understand human sexuality to be “an origin and source of one’s personal identity, specifically as human being, as more than animal, as expressed in an orientation toward another meaningfully sexed person in sexual

²³² Ibid., 205.

²³³ Ibid., 217.

²³⁴ Ibid., 203.

²³⁵ Geoffrey Rees, *The Romance of Innocent Sexuality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011). As Rees admits, his book “is not an attempt to discover what Augustine really meant to say about the sexed human body and about sin” (ibid., 148). Rees’ approach “deliberately resists the quixotic and deficient pursuit of some original text or definitive reading, and focuses instead on the texts as loci of ongoing debates and readings, as occasions for reflection and insight in the name of ‘Augustine,’ where that name designates less an historical individual of undeniable influence, and more a tradition of interpretation and orientation” (ibid., 148). I am skeptical about the merits of this kind of approach, as the method of this dissertation would suggest.

relationship.”²³⁶ Ramsey argues that Augustine fails to recognize that “*precisely because* sexual love is *not* directly subject to reason or will it is specially apt to serve the function for which God appointed it, namely, to be the field in which men and women may be personally present in their bodies and consequently accessible to one another from the heart.”²³⁷ In the view of Rees, Ramsey is an advocate of a kind of “innocent sexuality” which “is opposed to sinful sexuality, sexuality that degrades sex and undermines the expressive capacities of innocent sexuality.”²³⁸ This “romance of innocent sexuality is the promise of realization of fullness of identity of one’s sex in marriage.”²³⁹

According to Rees, the very project of finding truth in one’s sexuality is misguided, whatever conclusions one comes to.²⁴⁰ From Rees’ perspective, what Augustine provides as an alternative is a non-negotiable starting point: “The fundamental reference point of an Augustinian theology of sexuality and sin is not male-female difference, or the differentiation of possible sexual orientations according to that difference, but the fact of sin and the necessity of the narration of the before and after of sin in relation to an originary pair of human beings, as revelatory of both the unintelligibility of fallen humanity and the possibility of comprehension of that unintelligibility.”²⁴¹ According to Rees, sexuality is never innocent nor an uncomplicated and fundamental source of personal truth. Rather, sexuality is always bound up with original sin and its consequences, and any adequate theology must account for that reality.

²³⁶ Ibid., 190.

²³⁷ Ramsey, “Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption,” 60; italics in original.

²³⁸ Rees, *The Romance of Innocent Sexuality*, 190.

²³⁹ Ibid., 190-191.

²⁴⁰ Rees’ is equally critical of those who would see sexual orientation as a source of sexual truth. See *The Romance of Innocent Sexuality*, 223-224.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 224.

AUGUSTINE VALUES SPOUSAL UNION

While the thinkers above defend Augustine by arguing that his thought is a necessary corrective to the excesses of modern sexual ethics, other defenders of Augustine argue that his thought on sexuality is more positive and more like recent developments in sexual ethics than has been admitted. David Hunter, for instance, argues that charges of Augustine's pessimism are unsuccessful insofar as they do not take into account the whole picture of Augustine's thought. Hunter claims that "[t]oo much attention has been paid to the final decade of [Augustine's] life and to the bitter debate with Julian of Eclanum."²⁴² If Augustine's earlier works are re-examined in the context of "the ongoing development of Augustine's theological thought," then "we can arrive at a more balanced picture even of his later teaching."²⁴³

Hunter argues that Augustine's emphasis on concupiscence remains in large part in the background of his early discussions of marriage and sexuality. Hunter claims that "*On the Good of Marriage* shows very little concern with the problem of the 'lust of the flesh' or the disruptive effects of sexual desire that so concerned Augustine in the *Confessions*."²⁴⁴ The key to Augustine's account of marriage in *de bono coniugali* is the "social framework" of marriage.²⁴⁵ In fact, the *bona* of marriage are only intelligible when placed in the context of Augustine's concept of marriage as "*societas*—the mutual union, harmony, and companionship of the couple."²⁴⁶ Even concupiscence within marriage is understood best within this social context, for marriage gives concupiscence its proper place for

²⁴² David G. Hunter, "Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage and Celibacy," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 153.

²⁴³ Ibid., 154.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 158.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 160.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

expression: “[t]he intrinsically unstable character of sexual desire (*libido*) is given a certain limit and order within the context of a relationship of fidelity.”²⁴⁷ According to Hunter, Augustine is no simple pessimist, but in some ways Augustine even sees concupiscence as integrally connected to what will later be called the unitive end of marriage.

Hunter further contextualizes Augustine’s views on concupiscence by reminding the reader that Augustine sees concupiscence as a disorder caused by the prior disorder of a prideful human nature that lacks harmony with God: concupiscence is almost a necessary consequence of that prior disobedience.²⁴⁸ Concupiscence is furthermore exhibited not only in sex, but above all in the bad desires that plague all areas of human life.²⁴⁹ By placing Augustine’s thought on marriage and sexuality within the broader context of both his career and his larger theological claims, Hunter argues that Augustine’s thought is much more robust and insightful than many would allow.

Lisa Fullam adopts a similar approach to that of Hunter and argues that, for Augustine, the friendship of spouses is the central and governing consideration in any true Christian marriage.²⁵⁰ Fullam draws heavily on Augustine’s claim that marriage is instrumental to friendship, and Fullam concludes that for Augustine “[m]arriage and its particular goods are instrumental to the larger good of the friendship of spouses.”²⁵¹ In other words, “marriage [is] an instrumental good of [spousal] friendship.”²⁵² For Fullam, the upshot of the instrumentality of marriage is the following claim: “If

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 162.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 168.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 170.

²⁵⁰ Lisa Fullam, “Toward a Virtue Ethics of Marriage: Augustine and Aquinas on Friendship in Marriage,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012), 663-692.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 674.

²⁵² Ibid., 671.

marriage is instrumental, it must be judged not only according to its own goods of *fides*, *proles*, and *sacramentum* but also in the context of what it serves, namely, friendship."²⁵³

Fullam argues that, if marriage is an instrumental good, then there could be “cases in which a good of marriage conflicts with the larger good of friendship of spouses.”²⁵⁴ In these “cases of tension” between marriage and spousal friendship, the good of friendship would “trump” the instrumental goods of marriage.²⁵⁵ Fullam offers examples in which she claims the good of friendship or *societas* “trumps” or “relativizes” the more immediate goods of marriage in Augustine’s thought.²⁵⁶ Although marriage is fundamentally ordered to procreation, a childless couple still remains married due to the “charitable relationship” between them. Fullam claims that here Augustine “relativizes procreation radically to the bond of husband and wife.”²⁵⁷ Thus Augustine both anticipates the recent emphasis on spousal union or friendship, and Augustine seems to anticipate the theology of those who see spousal friendship as potentially in conflict with the traditional marital goods, especially the good of procreation.

Donald X. Burt has made perhaps the strongest claims that Augustine’s theology of sexuality anticipates the recent turn toward the role of friendship in marriage. According to Burt: “Even though he usually puts procreation first in his list of the goods of marriage, Augustine maintained that the essential characteristic of a valid marriage is that it be a union of friends, a friendship

²⁵³ Ibid., 672.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 672.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 674.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 672.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 672. By “bond” Fullam means friendship (not *sacramentum*), since this is meant to be evidence of Augustine’s prioritization of friendship over the goods of marriage.

solidified by” *fides* and *sacramentum*.²⁵⁸ And even though sex is not essential to this friendship, according to Burt it is Augustine’s view that sexual desire and sexual pleasure were original to God’s creation: “God made human beings with a strong desire for coitus....God did not want this creative act to be simply a cold, mechanical union of bodies. It was to be accomplished through an intimate loving act of friends who would reach out to embrace each other and the child they had helped to create.”²⁵⁹ According to Burt, Augustine’s thought is very much in harmony with much recent work in sexual ethics and the theology of marriage.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that the widespread evaluative disputes over Augustine’s thought on concupiscence and sexuality are very often premised on rival interpretive claims about what Augustine actually said. Specifically, rival interpretations of the details of Augustine’s views on sexual concupiscence are consistently at the heart of the debate over the value of Augustine’s broader account of human sexuality. According to some of Augustine’s critics, Augustine’s views on concupiscence and sexuality are rooted in his pessimistic personality, experience of sex, or in Augustine’s failed attempt to draw laws of human nature from pseudo-scientific observations. For other thinkers, however, Augustine’s views on concupiscence are fundamentally rooted in his broader theology. Furthermore, according to some of Augustine’s critics, Augustine’s views on concupiscence denigrate the body and are prejudicial from the outset. Augustine’s defenders, however, suggest that Augustine’s views do not denigrate the body, perhaps because they have very

²⁵⁸ Donald X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine’s Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 83.

²⁵⁹ Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 82. Burt is reflecting on Augustine’s *Letter 6**, a text I discuss in chapter four.

little to do with the body, and perhaps because they are an important corrective to those who see sexual desire as essentially an a-moral or even fundamentally good element of human nature.

Furthermore, according to some thinkers Augustine's denigration of concupiscence is rooted in his claim that all sexual desire is a result of the fall, while according to others Augustine claims that sexual desire is an original and good element of human nature. In sum, the widespread evaluative dispute over Augustine's account of sexuality is often premised on rival interpretations of fundamental elements of Augustine's account of concupiscence.

Given that the rival evaluations of Augustine's views on sexuality are often rooted in rival interpretations of Augustine's account of concupiscence, there is a need to return to Augustine's texts in order to advance our interpretation of Augustine and clarify some of the unresolved issues.

The central interpretive issue in dispute regards the nature of concupiscence. Interpreters cannot agree about whether Augustine thinks concupiscence is caused by the body apart from the will, or whether concupiscence is an emotional element of the will's misplaced love. As we saw above, Augustine is taken to task by a number of interpreters for rooting concupiscence in the body itself and suggesting that concupiscence is fundamentally problematic. Thus Augustine seems to never escape Manichaeism. On the other hand, Augustine's defenders suggest that Augustine does not think concupiscence has much at all to do with the body, and therefore he avoids Manichaeism. We are left wondering whether or not Augustine thinks concupiscence is caused by the body.

The thesis of this dissertation is that Augustine's later works, especially *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, show that Augustine does indeed think concupiscence is caused by the body, and recognition of the centrality of bodily desire in Augustine's thought helps to answer other unresolved questions in the interpretation of Augustine, with the issue of Edenic sexual desire being a test case for the significance of my account of bodily desire in Augustine's thought.

Chapter two advances the thesis by showing how Augustine's views on human sexuality are rooted in his broader account of God's role as creator, the human being's role as creature, and God's original plan for humanity. In the process I take a position on one of the interpretive issues identified above: whether Augustine's views on sexuality are fundamentally bound up with his pessimistic personality, idiosyncratic sexual experience, and fondness for pseudo-scientific observation. I argue that Augustine's thought on concupiscence is shaped not so much by these factors, but rather by his fundamental theological commitments. Augustine's account of concupiscence emerges out of his more fundamental commitments regarding God, creation, grace, and God's original plan for humanity prior to the fall. As I make my argument, I show how Augustine's neglected text *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* is uniquely helpful in showing the connections between Augustine's account of concupiscence and his broader theological claims. Chapter two is crucial to setting up the work of chapter three.

In chapter three I argue the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's account of human sexuality. I show that the debate over how to interpret Augustine on this issue runs even deeper than evaluative disputes I mentioned above. My argument draws on a number of Augustine's later works, and it employs the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* as an illustrative text for Augustine's final account of concupiscence. In addition, I show how Augustine's account of the bodily element of concupiscence fits well with his other anthropological commitments and I show how Augustine thinks he avoids lapsing into Manichaeism precisely *because* he thinks concupiscence has an important bodily element.

Chapter four applies the work of chapters two and three to the disputed issue of Augustine's position on sexual desire in Eden. As I showed above, interpreters cannot agree about whether Augustine thinks sexual concupiscence is entirely a result of the fall, or whether there would have been good sexual concupiscence in Eden. Like the dispute over the bodily element of

concupiscence, the interpretive dispute over Edenic sexual desire also runs deeper than the aforementioned scholars. In chapter four I trace Augustine's development on the issue of Edenic sexual desire, show what his final position is, and explain that final position in light of his views on the bodily element of concupiscence. In this final chapter *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* emerges as an absolutely essential text for our understanding of both Augustine's development on Edenic sexual desire and the tensions within Augustine's account of bodily desire. In the conclusion I indicate how recognition of the centrality of the bodily element of sexual concupiscence can advance our understanding of other topics in Augustine's theology.

CHAPTER TWO

AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

If, then, you want either to avoid or to defeat the Manichees, hold onto this idea; grasp it by understanding it, if you can, or by believing it, if you cannot, namely, that evils have come to be from good things, nor is evil anything but the lack of good.

contra Iulianum opus imperfectum V.44

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I showed that the evaluative disputes over Augustine's views on concupiscence and sexuality are often premised on interpretive disputes over what Augustine actually says. In chapter one I identified three specific topics that need further investigation given their disputed nature. Scholars often disagree about what factors shape Augustine's views on concupiscence. In addition, scholars often disagree about the nature of concupiscence: that is, whether Augustine thinks concupiscence has anything to do with desires of the body. Furthermore, scholars often disagree about the origin of concupiscence: that is, whether Augustine thinks concupiscence was present in Eden before the fall.

The thesis of this dissertation is that Augustine's later works, with particular emphasis on the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, show that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's final account of sexual desire and is central to adjudicating disputes over the proper interpretation of Augustine's views on other topics in the theology of sexuality, including Augustine's final position on Edenic sexual desire. To advance that thesis, I must give some account of my understanding of the broader factors that shape Augustine's views of concupiscence. The purpose of this chapter is to show how Augustine's fundamental theological commitments shape his

account of concupiscence. In the process of making my argument I necessarily take a position in the dispute over the significance of the other factors that allegedly shaped Augustine's views on concupiscence.

As the review of the evaluative disputes in the previous chapter showed, more than a few scholars argue that Augustine's thought on concupiscence and sexuality was significantly shaped by three factors distinctive to Augustine's life history and personality. First, a number of scholars suggest that Augustine's personal experience of sexuality, made famous in *Confessions*, may have significantly, and perhaps prejudicially, shaped Augustine's theological views on the relevant topics. According to John Noonan, Augustine's views on sexuality were "rooted in his own experience"¹ and "[r]eflect[ed] his own conflict."² Augustine's experience influenced not only his views on sexuality, but his views on marriage more generally.³ According to Elaine Pagels, Augustine wrongly took "his own experience as paradigmatic for all human experience."⁴ Additionally, the early Peter Brown suggests that "Augustine will come to erect a highly sophisticated view of the psychological tension between reason and instinct in sexuality, upon the murky foundations of traditional Roman attitudes to intercourse in marriage."⁵ According to this kind of argument, Augustine's thought on

¹ Noonan, *Contraception*, 133.

² Ibid., 133.

³ Noonan writes: "It is the relation [with his common-law wife] which guides his approach to marriage.... Having had this guilt-ridden experience of sexual intercourse in a quasi-permanent union, Augustine believed there was nothing rational, spiritual, sacramental in the act of intercourse itself" (Noonan, *Contraception*, 126). Noonan continues the point: "Augustine's own experience molds his view of marriage and gives vitality to his formulas" (ibid., 138).

⁴ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 106. Pagels continues: "For Augustine, the truth of his own experience (and so, he believes, of everyone's) involves, above all, human helplessness" (ibid., 140). Furthermore, "Augustine misreads and mistranslates [the Latin phrase *in quo*]...presumably because his own version makes intuitive sense of his own experience" (ibid., 143). Pagels takes the argument from Augustine's experience one step further, suggesting that Augustine's view of society was rooted in Augustine's sexual history: "Augustine begins his reflections on government, characteristically, with introspection....Augustine instinctively identifies the question of self-government with rational control over sexual impulses" (ibid., 105).

⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 392.

sexuality was significantly impacted by his reflection on his own or his society's experience of sexuality, and Augustine mistakenly universalized his idiosyncratic experience through his theology.

A second element seems to have significantly shaped Augustine's views on concupiscence and sexuality. Augustine seems to have had a pessimistic personality, and that pessimism may have affected Augustine's views on concupiscence and sexuality. According to John Mahoney, there is a "dark strain in Augustine."⁶ This strain is an overwhelming "*moral* pessimism" which is "a major part, if not the preponderant part, of the legacy which was inherited from Augustine by moral theology as the subject developed."⁷ This dark strain is quite significant for Augustine's claims about sexuality, for, says Mahoney, "if one is concentrating precisely on his moral teaching, it is there that the darkness and the sombre pessimism are most in evidence and, it must be said, at their most dogmatic and devastating."⁸ The authors of *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* see a close connection between the first factor—Augustine's experience of sex—and Augustine's pessimism. According to the authors:

Augustine's personal experience of sinfulness in his own sexuality had a strong bearing on his attitude toward this dimension of human life. Strains of an earlier Manichaeism were reflected in his arguments to combat the errors of the Pelagians, and inevitably filtered into Christian thought. It must be noted, too, that later thinkers made selective use of Augustine's theology, concentrating primarily on his pessimism....At the end of the patristic era, the Christian attitude toward human sexuality was generally pessimistic.⁹

⁶ Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, 44

⁷ Ibid., 45; italics in original.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Anthony Kosnik, William Carroll, Agnes Cunningham, Ronald Modras, James Schulte, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* (Paramus, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 37.

For these authors, Augustine's pessimism is something regrettable. According to others, however, Augustine's pessimism is salutary.¹⁰ Still others suggest that Augustine is not all that pessimistic.¹¹ Whatever degree of pessimism one attributes to Augustine, the issue of pessimism does seem to be of some importance in determining what factors fundamentally shaped Augustine's views.

Still a third factor seems to have significantly shaped Augustine's views on concupiscence and sexuality. Some scholars suggest that Augustine's pseudo-scientific observations about the human sexual response significantly shaped his views on human sexuality. Augustine's sexology anticipates the same kind of work that made Kinsey and Masters & Johnson so famous.¹² Augustine makes a number of claims about the inability of the will to control the sexual organs, the intensity of orgasm, the nature of desire, the manner of conception, and the experience of childbirth, and from

¹⁰ John Cavadini, for instance, argues that Augustine's approach to sexuality is helpful today in large part many contemporary approaches to sexuality are "unreflective and shallow." Cavadini juxtaposes Andrea Dworkin and Augustine and argues that they both interrogate prevailing attitudes to sexuality with their shared pessimism: "in some ways Dworkin's radical hermeneutic of suspicion *vis à vis* our own culture gets closer to the approach Augustine takes than the rest of us do, content as we are to isolate 'sexual pleasure' as though it were an unimpeachably fixed quantity innocent of political dynamics, far from being contoured or warped by ideologies of power and domination." See Cavadini, "Feeling Right," 197-198.

¹¹ David G. Hunter, "Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage and Celibacy," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 154-171. Hunter argues that Augustine is not "pessimistic" when placed in historical context (especially in contrast to someone like Jerome) and Hunter argues that Augustine does indeed have an account of marriage that incorporates the social element of marriage. See also Peter Burnell, "Concupiscence and Moral Freedom in Augustine and Before Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 26 no. 1 (1995) and Burnell's *The Augustinian Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2005), 76. Burnell argues against the views of K.E. Kirk, Peter Brown, and Elaine Pagels, who all make some version of the claim that Augustine was much more pessimistic about the possibilities of moral transformation than were earlier Patristic figures. Their essential claim is that Augustine's pessimism breaks with the previous tradition's optimism about moral transformation. Burnell shows convincingly that the claim that Augustine broke with Christian tradition on the question of the possibilities of moral transformation is false. Fundamentally, Burnell shows that the earlier tradition was anything but monolithic in its claims about the possibility of moral transformation. Burnell also shows that Augustine's views on concupiscence (here meaning the general tendency to sin) are closely related to Augustine's views on grace and the transformation of the human being. "It would not be correct, therefore, to describe Augustine's doctrine of concupiscence as simply pessimistic, for that well-known pessimism, at its furthest extent, touches the brink of grace" (Burnell, "Concupiscence and Moral Freedom," 60).

¹² The term "sexology" is a commonly used term for the study of sexuality in general, though I use it here to refer more specifically to Augustine's work on sexual physiology and functioning, or what Masters & Johnson would call the "Human Sexual Response" (the title of their first major book). Clearly Augustine would have had serious concerns about the work of Kinsey, Masters & Johnson, and others in the field. Even so, Augustine shares their interest in the workings of the human sexual response system. For a brief introduction to the history of the field of sexology, see: <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/resources/sexology.html>

these observations he draws significant theological conclusions. The most famous passage, and most frequently referenced, comes from *civitate Dei* XIV.24, where Augustine highlights the human ability to willfully twitch one's ears or scrunch one's scalp, to swallow and regurgitate unusual objects, to imitate human and animal voices, to flatulate musically, and to depress one's breathing so as to appear dead. All these observations suggest, for Augustine, that the human body in Eden could also have controlled the genital organs "without any lust" (*civ. Dei* XIV.24 [626-627]). Thus the inability to exercise the same control after the fall suggests something has gone wrong with the human sexual response.

Paul Ramsey does not dispute Augustine's observations in sexology (that the will cannot command the sexual members), but Ramsey suggests that Augustine draws the wrong moral conclusion about his observations: "If sexuality is a significantly human matter, the person is present all the more because human beings do not command themselves to be there."¹³ Gerald Bonner, however, does dispute Augustine's conclusions: Augustine's assumption that the will could have controlled the male genital member in Eden is based on a "defective knowledge of physiology."¹⁴ In any case, it seems that Augustine's theory of sexuality and human nature is inextricably bound up with the merits of his sexology.

This chapter does not seek to dismiss the relevance of these elements of Augustine's thought, but this chapter does intend to reduce the importance of these factors by setting them within a

¹³ Paul Ramsey, "Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 no. 1 (Spring 1988), 62. Two pages earlier, Ramsey writes: There will be no overcoming of Augustine (and no overcoming of contemporary dualism) until it is said forthrightly that *precisely because* sexual love is *not* directly subject to reason or will it is specially apt to serve the function for which God appointed it, namely, to be the field in which men and women may be personally present in their bodies and consequently accessible to one another from the heart. This would be to understand personal presence in a quite different fashion from that to which Augustine's rational voluntarism drove him" (*ibid.*, 60; emphasis in original).

¹⁴ Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies. Revised Edition* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 1986), 374.

broader context. While all of these elements have some place in understanding Augustine's thought, the foundations of Augustine's thought on sexuality and human nature go much deeper than his personal experience of sex, his alleged pessimism and alleged overemphasis on evil, and his explorations in sexology. This chapter shows how Augustine's views on concupiscence and sexuality are rooted primarily in his foundational commitments about God, creation, and God's original plan for human nature.

The general purpose of this chapter, in contrast with the above-mentioned approaches, can be illustrated by an analogy. Consider Georges Seurat's painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. In order to understand the painting, one might conduct an intricate study of the woman with the red umbrella, focusing on Seurat's pointillist method, his blending of reds, his shading on the woman's face, his choice of the woman's manner of dress, etc. The fine details would emerge quite clearly, and one would know a lot more about the painting. There is certainly an important place for this kind of study of a central figure in Seurat's painting. Yet one cannot make full sense of the woman with the red umbrella without knowing that she is holding a child's hand as they are walking beside the Seine river in the midst of a number of other happy, relatively wealthy people who are enjoying an entirely serene day of rest in 19th century Paris.

By analogy, Augustine's views on sexuality have sometimes been studied, as in the above-mentioned approaches, as one might study the intricate details of the woman with the red umbrella. Scholars hone in on one factor of Augustine's personality or life history, but this kind of study can obscure the bigger picture. Just as the woman with the red umbrella is set within a larger scene and landscape, Augustine's views on sexuality are best studied by first taking in the relevant aspects of Augustine's broader theological landscape. This chapter shows that it is only within the landscape of

Augustine's theology that the more specific elements, such as his controversial views on sexuality, take on their proper significance.

To set Augustine's views on sexuality within his theological landscape, it is necessary to turn to Augustine's understanding of God's role as creator, the human being's role as creature, and God's plan to take that creature from an original created state to a supernaturally elevated state in the resurrection. Augustine's views on sex are not intelligible without this context. Peter Brown puts the point quite nicely: "It is important to set Augustine's thought on sexuality against this wider background. It is part of the unfolding of an argument upon death and the human condition of almost gnomic intensity, more like the development of a musical theme than a linear philosophical argument."¹⁵

From Augustine's perspective, to attempt to understand human nature and human sexuality without reference to the broader theological landscape would be as foolish as wondering why *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* is so grainy and out of focus. For Augustine, understanding what it means to be a creature and what God originally had in mind for creatures is essential to understanding why human nature after the fall is, one might say, grainy and out of focus. From Augustine's perspective, to understand human nature one must both understand that human nature now is fallen from its original state and one must have some sense of what human nature will look like when it is fully perfected in the resurrection. This chapter shows how Augustine understands that original creation and its intended perfection, and then shows how some of Augustine's central commitments about sexuality and fallen human nature are shaped by his account of God's original plan.

¹⁵ Peter Brown, "Book Symposium: Emotion and Peace of Mind," *Philosophical Books* 43: 198.

Certainly this chapter does not claim to be novel, for there are many important studies that connect Augustine's views on human nature and sexuality to his more fundamental theological commitments. I see my work in this chapter as a supplement to the important studies of John Hugo, Peter Brown, Mathijs Lamberigts, Peter Burnell, and most recently Timo Nisula.¹⁶ Although some of the setting and background I discuss in this chapter have been laid out clearly in other studies of Augustine, some elements I discuss have gone overlooked or underappreciated by other scholars. Two of those overlooked elements of Augustine's theological landscape stand out as particularly important for understanding Augustine's views on sexuality and human nature.

The first is the impact of Augustine's understanding of what it means for human nature to be a created nature, and especially how being a created nature impacts the human body. As a created nature, human nature is susceptible to disintegration and corruption if it is not held together in integrity by God's extra help. The problems in fallen human nature are fundamentally a consequence of human nature's lack of the gifts that human nature needs in order to be an integrated, flourishing human nature. Essentially, for Augustine, concupiscence and other

¹⁶ Hugo's study is notable for its connection of Augustine's views on concupiscence to Augustine's broader understanding of evil as *privatio boni*. See John Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage* (Princeton: Scepter, 1969), 31-64. Brown, as always, is essential reading for the intellectual context from which Augustine's thought emerges. The chapter in *The Body and Society* helpfully gives an overview of Augustine's thought on sexuality, how it connects to broader Roman attitudes, and how Julian and Augustine's thought contrast. See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Twentieth-Anniversary Edition (New York: Columbia, 2008). Lamberigts connects Augustine's views on sexual concupiscence to his broader account of desire and the place of concupiscence within Augustine's broader account of human sinfulness. See Mathijs Lamberigts, "A Critical Evaluation of Critiques of Augustine's View of Sexuality," in *Augustine and His Critics* ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2000), 176-198. Burnell's book is excellent in its contextualization of the problem of concupiscence and sexuality, first treating Augustine's understanding of "soul and body" and then "faculties of personality," and only then getting to concupiscence, which Burnell presents in a chapter titled "The Stages of the Human Condition." Both the title of the chapter and the content of the book as a whole demonstrate Burnell's sensitivity to the importance of Augustine's big-picture views for Augustine's views on concupiscence. See Burnell, *The Augustinian Person*. Nisula's book is the most comprehensive study of the topic of concupiscence in Augustine to date. In terms of Nisula's presentation of how Augustine's broader theological commitments impact his views on concupiscence, of special significance are chapters three, four and six. I should note that Nisula's book is quite different than the present dissertation. Nisula attends to all of Augustine's works, traces the development of the meaning of concupiscence in those works, and does so under broad headings. It is a detailed study of the development of central elements of Augustine's account of concupiscence. See Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

distortions of sexuality are symptoms of human nature being a created nature.¹⁷ In part the result of the lack of grace characteristic of life after the fall is a human body that is subject to corruption and an improper independence from the person's soul, and this corruption and independence affects human sexuality. In my view Augustine's emphasis on how the body has changed from God's original plan has too often been underemphasized, and sometimes even omitted, in much of the scholarly literature, even though his understanding of the original human body is essential to his understanding of human nature. Thus, I draw out some of Augustine's overlooked details about the body's original state. This section will be crucial for setting up chapters three and four, where I offer my reading of Augustine's understanding of the relationship between concupiscence and the body after the fall and before the fall.

The second overlooked detail of Augustine's understanding of sexuality and human nature is also related to Augustine's understanding of the body: Augustine's account of the resurrection.¹⁸ For Augustine, the resurrection was always part of God's plan, even before the fall, and it is only in the resurrection that the corruptible character of human nature is overcome for good.¹⁹ Scholars rarely connect Augustine's views on sexuality to his views on the resurrection, even though the

¹⁷ Hugo's study is attentive to this point, though I would add to Hugo's work a greater emphasis on the changes undergone by the body in the fall.

¹⁸ While earlier literature did not draw strong connections between these topics and the resurrection, more recent literature has begun to see those connections. For helpful treatments of the connections between human nature, sexuality, desire and resurrection, see David G. Hunter, "Augustine on the Body," in *A Companion to Augustine* ed. Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012), 353-364. Morwenna Ludlow reviews some of the more provocative recent literature in "Augustine on the Last Things," in *T & T Clark Companion to Augustine and Modern Theology* ed. C.C. Pecknold and Tarmo Toom (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 101-109. Ludlow engages in part the work of Margaret Miles, and I discuss Miles below. For a helpful account of the connection between Augustine's moral theology and his views on the resurrection, see Henri Marrou, *The Resurrection and Saint Augustine's Theology of Human Values* (Philadelphia: Villanova University, 1966).

¹⁹ A more literal term might be surrection (*surrectio*) since, without the fall, Adam would not have died before he was brought up to the elevated state. I retain the term resurrection in order to highlight Augustine's emphasis on the continuity between God's original plan and the final end human nature even after the fall.

connection permeates Augustine's writings in the later part of his career. Thus this chapter draws those connections and shows why they are crucial to understanding Augustine's thought.

A helpful way to uncover Augustine's more fundamental commitments and their relation to his views on sexuality is to examine his dispute with Julian of Eclanum. In the sixteen-hundred year history of engagement with Augustine's thought, perhaps no one has better articulated the arguments against Augustine's account of sexuality than Julian. Yet, while Julian certainly did not share Augustine's conclusions about sexuality, much of their dispute is not over conclusions, but rather over foundational issues. Their conclusions related to sexuality are the consequences of their more fundamental disagreements. Augustine's dispute with Julian is illuminative, then, not only because it is in those works where Augustine offers his fullest account of sexuality. Perhaps more importantly, it is also in the works against Julian where the connections between Augustine's foundational commitments and his conclusions about sexuality emerge. Furthermore, the dispute with Julian is important because Augustine's views on the foundational issues undergirding his views on sexuality are often not fully intelligible without drawing the contrast with Julian's views.

In sum, the dispute with Julian is important for this chapter insofar as it helps to illuminate the connection between Augustine's fundamental theological views and his views on sexuality and fallen human nature. Along with the other texts against Julian, the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* is crucial in helping us understand both Augustine's broader theological landscape and how that landscape is pruned and manicured through the argument with Julian.

To make my argument, I first offer a basic account of Augustine's dispute with the Pelagians, since Augustine's dispute with Julian is one major element of his broader fight with the Pelagians. The fundamental difference between the Pelagians and Augustine is on the issue of whether creation, and especially human nature, is fundamentally different now than it was in God's

original design of creation. That is, the difference is whether one believes in the fall. Or, as Gerald Bonner has put it, “It is the denial of any doctrine of Original Sin which constituted the one essential article of belief for any would-be Pelagian.”²⁰

Second, because the Pelagian denial of original sin and the fall is premised on claims about God’s role as creator, I engage Julian and Augustine’s disagreement about how to understand God as creator. Here I turn to Julian’s thought specifically, and not Pelagianism in general, because Augustine’s own views are often articulated in response to Julian’s views on God as creator. Augustine often presents his views in contrast to those of Julian, and the differences between the two are essential to understanding the conclusions each thinker draws about human nature, human sexuality, and concupiscence.

Third, to understand Augustine’s views on creation and the fall, I develop an account of Augustine’s understanding of the original character of creation and, especially, the original character of human nature. While the Pelagians claim that human nature still exists, essentially, as it was originally created, Augustine’s views on sexuality and human nature cannot be understood without reference to the specific details of his views on the significant differences between original and fallen human nature.

Fourth, I show how Augustine understands the resurrection to be the final perfection of human nature and the once-and-for-all overcoming of the concupiscence and corruption that plagues fallen human nature. For Augustine, reference to the resurrection is essential to understanding what is wrong with human nature after the fall.

Finally, in the last section I show how Augustine’s views on the relevant fundamental issues lead to his views on fallen human nature and human sexuality. This final section offers only a partial

²⁰ Bonner, “Pelagianism and Augustine,” 35. Later in life Bonner claims that Pelagius essentially withheld any official judgment of the validity of the concept of original sin. See Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity*, 3.

version of Augustine's understanding of fallen human nature and human sexuality, as the rest of the dissertation expands this account and addresses important questions that cannot be engaged in this chapter.

On the whole, the chapter shows how Augustine's fundamental theological commitments, sharpened in the dispute with Julian, shape his views on sexuality. Whereas some have claimed that Augustine's views were significantly shaped by his prior sexual experience, pessimism, or sexology, I show that the major factor shaping Augustine's views on sexuality is Augustine's broader theological landscape: Augustine's understanding of God as creator, human beings as creatures, and Augustine's account of God's original plan.

PELAGIANISM

Augustine's views on sexuality and human nature, and his more fundamental views on God, creation, the fall and resurrection were sharpened in the context of his dispute with the Pelagians.²¹ Thus, understanding Augustine requires understanding the views with which he contrasts his own.

Pelagianism, while not exactly a united theological movement, is a theological approach rooted in one shared fundamental conviction.²² At the core of Pelagian thought is, as Gerald Bonner puts it,

²¹ Especially helpful here is Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, 408-427. Paula Fredriksen traces Augustine's developing views on human nature, sin, and the relationship between body and soul from his early days through his dispute with Julian. See Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul Against the Manichees and the Pelagians," *Recherches Augustiniennes* vol. 23 (1988), 87-114. On the issue of how the Pelagian dispute affected Augustine's Christology, see Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo, 396-430* (New York: Oxford, 2012).

²² Gerald Bonner, "The Nature of the Pelagian Crisis," in *Tolle Lege: Essays on Augustine & on Medieval Philosophy in Honor of Roland J. Teske, S.J.* ed. Richard C Taylor, David Twetten & Michael Wreen (Milwaukee: Marquette, 2011), 75. Bonner has done much to show that Pelagianism was not a singular theological school: "They were not a united group with a commonly formulated theology, except in their assumption of human freedom" (Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity*, 119). See also Bonner, "Pelagianism and Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), 34-39. An emphasis in recent scholarship is on the differences between the individual characters in the Pelagian drama, though these differences do not have significant importance for the concerns of this dissertation (see note 24 below).

“the denial of Original Sin.”²³ Or, if one wants to put it in a less Augustinian-influenced way, the uniting principle of Pelagianism could also be characterized as the affirmation of the possibility of sinlessness.²⁴ Either way, Pelagians claim that human nature lacks nothing God originally intended it to have, and this claim has everything to do with the Pelagian understanding of God’s nature.

Pelagius enters the theological scene in Rome in 380, and his early career overlaps with Augustine’s conversion (386) and Augustine’s ordination as bishop (396).²⁵ The main contribution of Pelagius to the theological discussion was an emphasis on the freedom of the will and the corresponding possibility for growth in virtue. Pelagius was scandalized by the way ordinary Christians lived: from his perspective, these people did not properly respond to the Gospel, but were only putting in a half-effort at holiness. His writings were often aimed at establishing the claim that humans can, through the powers of human nature, avoid sin and pursue holiness.²⁶

Pelagius objected to Augustine’s claim that the will needs the extra help of God in order to be truly free to live a holy life.²⁷ In *Confessions* Augustine prays to God, “On your exceedingly great mercy rests all my hope. Give what you command, and then command whatever you will” (X.29,40 [263]). Pelagius understood Augustine to be saying that human nature contains nothing whatsoever of the power to do good on its own, so God must supply whatever is lacking through extra gifts.

²³ Bonner, “Pelagianism and Augustine,” 35.

²⁴ See Stuart Squires’ dissertation, “Reassessing Pelagianism: Augustine, Cassian, and Jerome on the Possibility of a Sinless Life” (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 2013). Squires extends the work of Michael Rackett, who argues that the possibility of sinlessness was the key to Pelagianism: Michael R. Rackett, “Sexuality and Sinlessness: The Diversity among Pelagian Theologies of Marriage and Virginity” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2002).

²⁵ For a summary of previous scholarship on Pelagius, and a short introduction to the life of Pelagius, see: Mathijs Lamberigts, “Pelagius and Pelagians,” *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (New York: Oxford, 2008), 258-279.

²⁶ The denial of original sin “justified [Pelagianism’s] assertion that holy living was within the natural capacity of the ordinary believer” (Bonner, “The Nature of the Pelagian Crisis,” 63).

²⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 343.

Pelagius thought that, if human nature has within it an inherent deficiency, sin seems inevitable since nothing about human nature can by itself help humans avoid sin. Thus a kind of moral laxity becomes the expected way of life for the average Christian. If sin is unavoidable, there would not seem to be good reason to try to avoid it. In other words, the scandalous living Pelagius saw in Rome seemed to be excused by Augustine's theory of the relation between grace and the will.²⁸

Although the Pelagians emphasized the goodness of human nature, they did not lack their own account of grace. Rather, the Pelagians had an account of grace to match their claims about the fundamentally rightly ordered character of human nature. Above all, created human nature was graced insofar as it was created with the ability to do good: "Pelagius's emphasis on human beings' freedom and responsibility was closely related to his view of God as creator. According to Pelagius, God has given human beings the ability (*posse*) to do what they are expected to do. The gift of the *posse* is the gift *par excellence*."²⁹ This is a substantial theological claim insofar as Pelagius attributes this *posse* to God's creative act: God gives human beings the ability to will the good, and that ability is a kind of grace.³⁰

For Pelagius and Pelagians more generally, grace is essentially found in "the conditions of right action: natural freedom, law and exhortation, the example and promises of Christ, justification of the ungodly through faith, enlightenment through baptism—and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to those

²⁸ Bonner suggests that "the fundamental difference between Pelagian and Augustinian theology turns upon the notion of the will. For the Pelagian, God has endowed, and continues to endow, every human being with free will and the capacity to exercise it. For Augustine, God endowed humanity, in the person of Adam, with free will and the capacity to exercise it; but this capacity was voluntarily lost through the Fall and is restored only through God's intervention" (Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity*, 72).

²⁹ Mathijs Lamberigts, "Pelagius and Pelagians," *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (New York: Oxford, 2008), 265.

³⁰ Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity*, 66. Pelagius' view of free will as grace is acknowledged by Augustine in *Letter 186*, 1.

who seek purity.”³¹ Further showing that the Pelagians did not totally neglect the concept of grace, some interpreters suggest the Pelagian account of grace is insufficient, but not wholly absent: “even accepting that Pelagius did admit grace, it may be maintained that his conception was inadequate, that he conceived of it only in terms of enlightenment, in law and doctrine, and in the remission of sins in baptism.”³² In sum, then, the Pelagians did not neglect to account for the concept of grace, but had an account of grace to match their commitments about the integrity of creation.³³ As I show below, Julian takes up this same Pelagian approach, suggesting that creation has been blessed with an inherent kind of quasi-perfection, insofar as God has created it just how God wanted it to exist.

Despite their best efforts the Pelagians had their views condemned by Pope Zosimus in his *Epistula Tractoria* in the year 418.³⁴ This official condemnation, however, seemed only to pour fuel on the fire of the dispute in the Church. Eighteen Italians felt compelled to make a public protest against the letter by refusing to submit to it.³⁵ Julian would become the most prominent of these

³¹ Eugene TeSelle, “Pelagius, Pelagianism,” *ATTA*, 635.

³² Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity*, 126-127.

³³ On the Pelagian concept of grace, see Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), 90-121. For a general overview of Pelagius on grace, free will, and good works, see John Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (Cambridge, UK: W. Heffer & Sons, 1956), 117-143.

³⁴ Scholars seem to disagree on the exact dating of the *Tractoria*, though the consensus seems to be that it was issued sometime in either June or July of 418. Relevant entries in *Augustine Through the Ages* give differing accounts. Gerald Bonner claims it was issued “at the beginning of the summer of 418” (“Julian of Eclanum,” 478). Robert Dodaro suggests either June or July (“Church and State,” 181). Jane Merdinger suggests it was issued in July (“Roman Bishops,” 729). Eugene TeSelle suggests simply summer 418 (“Pelagius, Pelagianism,” 637).

³⁵ Some sources have it as 19, meaning Julian plus 18 others. For instance, the entry on “Pelagius, Pelagianism” in *ATTA* (p. 637) says: “Julian of Eclanum led a movement to resist subscribing to the *Tractoria*, causing Zosimus to excommunicate him and eighteen other bishops in southern Italy.”

protesters, and it is with his reaction to the *Tractoria* that he enters prominently into the theological discussion.³⁶

Julian and Augustine would battle for over a decade, and the early years were characterized by urgency on either side to see either the repeal or the solidification of the *Tractoria*'s condemnation of Pelagian views. However, as the dispute wears on, things slow down and both Augustine and Julian have the time to write more considered and lengthier replies to one another. That fact in itself should suggest attributing some increased importance to the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*.³⁷

At the root of the dispute were questions about the way human nature was affected by Adam's sin. Everyone in the dispute agreed that human beings tend to do sinful things, but the unresolved question had to do with the ultimate cause of this tendency. For Julian and other Pelagians, human beings sin because of poor choices and inadequate formation. For Julian, the sin of the first parents

³⁶ The essential study on the life and thought of Julian is Josef Lössl, *Julian von Aeclanum: Studien zu seinem Leben, seinem Werk, seiner Lehre und ihrer Überlieferung*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

³⁷ Below is an outline of the major moments in the dispute between Augustine and Julian. This timeline primarily follows Lancel's lucid treatment, though supplements from the introductions to the relevant works in the *New City Press* editions are added. See Serge Lancel, *St. Augustine* trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 415.

30 April 418: Emperor Honorius condemns the Pelagians.
 1 May 418: The Africans condemn the Pelagians in the Council of Carthage.
 Mid-summer 418: Zosimus issues the *Tractoria*, condemning the Pelagians.
 Late summer 418: Julian and his fellow bishops refuse to submit to the *Tractoria* and circulate their letters.
 October 418: Augustine hears from Valerius that Julian has strongly criticized Augustine's views.
 Late fall 418 through winter 419: Augustine composes book I of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* as a reply to the news, not the text, of Julian's challenge.
 Spring 419: *De nuptiis* I finds its way to Julian.
 Mid to late 419: Julian writes *Ad Turbantium* in response to book I of *De nuptiis*.
 Spring 420: Augustine receives the so-called *Two Letters of the Pelagians* and only a partial version of *Ad Turbantium*.
 420-421: Augustine publishes book II of *De nuptiis* in response to the extracts from *Ad Turbantium*.
 420-421: Augustine publishes *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* in response to the *Two Letters*.
 421-422: Augustine publishes *Contra Iulianum* in response to a more complete version of Julian's *Ad Turbantium*.
 423-426 (date uncertain), Julian publishes *Ad Florum*, a response to the two books of *De nuptiis*.
 427: Augustine receives a copy Julian's *Ad Florum*.
 427-430: Augustine spends his nights replying section-by-section to Julian's *Ad Florum*.
 28 August 430: Augustine dies with the unfinished reply to *Ad Florum* on his desk. This work is later given the title *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*.
 455: Julian dies, having outlived Augustine by nearly a quarter-century, though no evidence survives of any reply to either *Contra Iulianum* or *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*.

functions purely as a kind of archetype of sin: other sins are connected to that first sin by way of similarity. Adam's sin affects humanity by providing the first example of disobedience to God: "the transgressors who came later received [sin] by imitation, not by generation" (*c. Iul. imp.* III.85 [323]). For Augustine, on the other hand, original sin denotes above all a kind of "genetic" truth about humanity: "the sin which Christ removes by regeneration entered the world by generation" (*c. Iul. imp.* III.85 [325]).³⁸ According to Augustine, what was once a rightly ordered, integrated, peaceful human nature in Eden has now become a nature that is subject to disordered desires, pain, suffering, and death. It is this fallen nature that is at the root of sin and evil in the world, and Augustine will refer to the entire situation surrounding this fallen nature as original sin.³⁹

Julian had good reason to reject Augustine's claims about original sin. Augustine's theory of original sin entailed the conclusion that even newborn babies are guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness (*c. Iul. imp.* II.30 [175]). But, Julian objected, if sin is something one must be responsible for, it seems impossible that young children could be charged with guilt for a sin they could not have committed (*c. Iul. imp.* II.24 [171-172]; II.29 [175]). To Julian, Augustine's views seemed to suggest that God is unjust and has created human nature in a defective way (*c. ep. pel.* I.2,4 [117]).

In sum, as I have shown above, Pelagianism was above all a theory premised on the claim that God created human nature in a rightly ordered way and that this right order remains even now.

³⁸ Augustine here wonders why, if original sin is merely imitation of the first sin, Eve is not said to be the one through whom sin entered the world, since she is the first one to sin.

³⁹ Here I am following Burnell, who I think rightly argues for a kind of synonymy between original sin and concupiscence: "original sin is one of the modes of concupiscence...Original guilt...is concupiscence in its spiritually catastrophic mode" (Burnell, *The Augustinian Person*, 78). Burnell's entry on "Concupiscence" in *ATTA* hits the same note: "Although when taken in a limited sense, concupiscence is distinguished from original sin, Augustine identifies the two (together with original guilt) when he considers concupiscence in its full, deepest reality....At this fundamental level concupiscence, original sin, and original guilt are all essentially the same thing" (p. 224). Couenhoven seems to be in general agreement, and also identifies the alternative readings of the issue that draw a stricter separation between concupiscence, original sin, and original guilt. See Couenhoven, "St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin," *Augustinian Studies* 36 no. 2 (2005), 372 n. 27.

From that premise flow a number of conclusions that would be disputed by Augustine. Pelagians thought human beings can avoid sin under their own power, baptism and other expressions of grace do not repair human nature because nothing is broken in human nature, and natural elements of human nature, such as sexual desire, must be good precisely because they are part of the good human nature that God has created. Pelagianism is, then, fundamentally based on a distinctive account of God as the creator whose creation still directly manifests God's original creative intentions. Augustine will react to the Pelagians in large part because of the implications of their views for God's role as creator. Since Julian best expresses the view to which Augustine reacts, our next step is to investigate Augustine and Julian's differing understandings of creation and God's role as creator.

JULIAN AND AUGUSTINE ON GOD AND CREATION

This section demonstrates the connections between Julian's views on God and Julian's theological commitments about creation, and then goes on to draw the same connections between Augustine's views on the same topics. The section demonstrates that Julian and Augustine have quite different and often incompatible worldviews that, as I will later show, are at the root of their more specific disagreements about sexuality and human nature. In sum, "[f]or Julian, it was clear that Augustine's God had nothing in common with his own God."⁴⁰

Julian's view of God as creator differs from Augustine's view primarily on the question of how creation expresses something of God's nature. In short, Julian's God is a just God whose creation expresses his justice. As Julian says, "the greatest attribute in God is justice" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.130 [497]). If God were not just, he would not be God (*c. Iul. imp.* II.16 [168-169]).

⁴⁰ Mathijs Lamberigts, "Julian of Eclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator," *Augustiniana* 38 (1988), 15.

Furthermore, an essential part of God's justice, in Julian's view, is God's invitation to understand his justice:

God is so far from stopping his rational creature from a consideration of his judgment that he says to the same prophet [Isaiah], *Stop acting wrongly: learn to do good. Help the oppressed, and come, argue against me, says the Lord* (Is 1:16-18). So too here he graciously discloses the plan of his saving actions in order not to seem to have done anything by sheer power and not by justice (*c. Iul. imp.* I.138 [144]; italics in original).

According to Julian, God's justice must be evident on earth, especially in the way God rewards people for their merits, as Julian's interpretation of the story of Jacob and Esau illustrates (*c. Iul. imp.* I.131 [138]). God never acts randomly or unreasonably since God's "will is inseparably united to justice" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.133 [140]).

Julian sees quite a difference between his view and Augustine's view of God's justice. Julian suggests that Augustine's God is a kind of voluntarist God: "nor should a teacher, who so emphasized God's authority, leave God's justice without defense" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.134 [141]). To overemphasize God's authority, as Augustine does (according to Julian), would lead to tragic theological consequences: "God is known to us by his virtues. Hence we must confess his justice as well as his omnipotence, and if the loss of the former is admitted, his whole majesty will begin to topple" (*c. Iul. imp.* II.16 [168]). For Julian, God's justice is at the heart of God's essence, and God expresses that justice to humanity and wants humanity to clearly understand his justice. According to Julian, a God who obscured his justice would seem to be unjust.

Julian's views on the intelligibility and communicability of God's justice lead directly to his understanding of the character of creation, including human nature. Creation, as Julian sees it, is an expression of God's just nature:

God who made everything very good established no creature such that in that kind which has been made it is shown that it could have been made either more suitably or more in accord with reason. Endowed equally with wisdom and omnipotence, he would, of course, not have created anything that a mere human being could have rightly criticized.

All elements in absolutely all creatures which are found to be natural were made in the very best way so that any supposed improvement in them is found to be stupid and sacrilegious (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530]).⁴¹

In other words, God is a just and benevolent creator whose creation directly expresses his justice and benevolence.

Julian's view of creation has a clear bearing on Julian's views about human nature: "human beings...were formed in every respect so that no one can imagine them made better" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530]).⁴² It would be uncharacteristic of God to create human nature worse than it could be created. This is clear from the great sources of knowledge: "[B]oth reason and scripture, when it cries out that God made all things not merely good, but also very good, bear witness that they could not have been made better than they were made" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530-31]).⁴³ A just God would not have made things worse than he could have made them, and so creation must necessarily express God's benevolent justice by being the best possible version of creation.

Because God is a good and just creator and creation exists in its best possible state, Julian claims that whatever is part of human nature is necessary: "Everything, then, which human beings have as part of their nature they have obtained as necessary, because they could not be other than

⁴¹ Latin: Quaecumque ergo in omnibus omnino creaturis naturalia docentur, ita summe facta sunt, ut affectata in his emendatio stulta et profana doceatur (CSEL 85/2, 190).

⁴² The full quotation follows here, and helps to put the Latin in context: "So too, human beings which were included above in the genus of walking animals were formed in every respect so that no one can imagine them made better. From God's wisdom they received in their bodies beautiful parts and shameful parts so that they might learn in themselves both modesty and confidence lest they should be thought ugly if they were completely clothed or become lazy and negligent if they were always completely unclothed," (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530]). Latin: "ita et homo quem supra iam gradientium generalitas indicavit, sic est per universa formatus, ut melius a nulli fungi posit, qui accept prudent in corpora et locos decoris et locos pudoris, ut in se ipso et verecundiam et confidentiam disceret, ne et deformis videretur, si esset per cuncta velatus et deses rederetur ac neglegens, si semper esset per cuncta vulgatus," CSEL 85/2, 191.

⁴³ Latin: ut ratio ita et scriptura testatur, quae clamat deum non solum bona, sed etiam valde bona fecisse omnia (CSEL 85/2, 191).

they were made to be” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.49 [573]).⁴⁴ Mathijs Lamberigts sums up Julian’s point: “the created reality had to exist in the way which God wanted it to exist....to exist in a particular way was necessary for the created reality.”⁴⁵ Thus, from Julian’s perspective, any allegedly natural imperfections Augustine attributes to the fall are either not actually natural, or they are necessary elements of God’s design and therefore not actually imperfections. This is certainly true of human beings: “From God’s wisdom they received in their bodies beautiful parts and shameful parts so that they might learn in themselves both modesty and confidence” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530]). Only a Manichee would see evil in these “works of divine wisdom” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530]). A just God creates human nature exactly how it should be, so to suggest that something natural is less than it should be is to criticize God.

Julian’s emphasis on the necessity of the natural does not prevent him from accounting for the seeming imperfections in humanity. Here he distinguishes between things that exist “either as necessary or as possible” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.45 [569]).⁴⁶ What is necessary is equivalent to the natural: “What, therefore, came from the possibility of the creator was changed into the necessity of the creature....Whatever, then, creatures have as part of their nature, they have obtained as something necessary” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.46 [570]).⁴⁷ The possible, on the other hand, includes non-natural properties such as birth defects and activities of the will (*c. Iul. imp.* V.45 [571]). The possibility of having these non-natural properties is necessary, but the fact of having them is not necessary: “That they can be wounded, then, they have as necessary, but that they are wounded they have as possible.

⁴⁴ Latin: Omne ergo quod naturaliter habet homo, a necessarii parte sortitus est, quia non potuit aliter esse quam factus est (CSEL 85/2, 254).

⁴⁵ Lamberigts, “Julian of Eclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator,” 10.

⁴⁶ Latin: Omnia quae fiunt, aut a necessario aut a possibili dicuntur existere (CSEL 85/2, 249).

⁴⁷ Latin: Transiit ergo in necessitatem conditi quod venerat de possibilitate condentis....Quicquid ergo habent creaturae naturaliter, a necessarii parte sortitae sunt (CSEL 85/2, 250).

Thus the condition of having things as possible is necessary, though the realization of the possibility is not necessary” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.47 [571]). In other words, it is necessary to be able to be wounded, but actually having a wound is only the realization of a possibility. The point, for Julian, is that God cannot be blamed for directly creating sin and evil, and human beings cannot be said to have altered God’s creation through original sin. Sin and evil are only possible, not necessary.

Although Augustine will object to Julian’s view of the goodness of creation by appealing to natural evils, Julian’s distinction between the necessary and the possible gives him a ready response to the problem of natural evils. God does not create bad things like birth defects or wounds. Rather, God creates the possibility of those, and God does so according to his wisdom. To say that natural “evils” are a sign of the fall from God’s original plan, as Augustine says, is to forget that God has designed the possibility of those “evils” into creation. According to Julian, birth defects and other so-called “natural evils” are in reality part of God’s providential ordering of creation, since God has created the possibility of those evils for some good purpose. Thus, according to Julian, natural evils are no proof of the fall and no accusation against God.

The distinction between necessity and possibility also helps Julian respond to the problem of human sin in a way compatible with Julian’s view that God is a just creator. For Julian, the non-natural and non-necessary enters into creation in a special way through moral actions, and Julian contrasts actions of the will with the necessary things in creation.⁴⁸ The capacity for willing (freedom) is a necessary part of human nature, but any act of willing is only possible, not necessary (*c. Iul. imp.* V.46 [571-572]). Furthermore, an action of the will cannot, by definition, be necessary, and for two reasons. First, the will is defined as “nothing but the act of the mind without anything

⁴⁸ Here he always has in mind Augustine’s claim that original sin is, after the fall, a necessary sin and necessarily leads to other sins through the way it has weakened human nature.

forcing it” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.40 [563]).⁴⁹ To say that something is done out of necessity is to say it was forced, and thus it could not be an act of the will, since by definition an act of the will cannot be forced (*c. Iul. imp.* V.45 [569]).⁵⁰ Second, for a thing to be necessary just is to have a cause greater than the thing itself (*c. Iul. imp.* V.45 [569]).⁵¹ Since willed actions are caused by the person himself and not by something higher, those actions cannot, by definition, be necessary. For Julian, God cannot cause willed actions, because if God caused it, the person did not will it (*c. Iul. imp.* V.46 [572]).

Since one’s will is never determined, Julian claims the potential to sin is an essential element of human freedom: “free choice could not exist unless it had the possibility of sinning” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.47 [572]). Yet sin “is not necessary, because it is not the agent, but the creator who is judged guilty of what is necessary” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.47 [572]). If sin were necessary, as Augustine says about original sin, then God would be the cause of sin. Since God cannot be the cause of sin, sin cannot be a necessary part of human nature. Only the possibility of sin is necessarily part of human nature. Sin itself is not natural, but the necessary possibility of sin is natural, since having a will is natural and one would not seem to have a will, according to Julian, if one could not sin.

In sum, Julian believes that God is by definition just, and God’s expression of his just nature extends to God’s creative act. For Julian, creation is unqualifiedly good because God is a good creator (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530]).⁵² Creation is created in a just and benevolent way precisely because

⁴⁹ Latin: voluntas enim nihil est aliud quam motus animi cogente nullo (CSEL 85/2, 240).

⁵⁰ Latin: necessarium ergo vocamus, non quod in iure sit voluntatis, sed quod patiaturs existendi vim (CSEL 85/2, 249).

⁵¹ Latin: Necessarium autem hic dico, non quod solemus utile nuncupare, sed quod maioribus fuerit causis coactum (CSEL 85/2, 249).

⁵² Latin: Quaecumque ergo in omnibus omnino creaturis naturalia docentur, ita summe facta sunt, ut affectata in his emendatio stulta et profana doceatur (CSEL 85/2, 190).

God created it, so there is no way creation can be said to lack something God wants it to have. To criticize God for creating the possibility of evil or sin, or to say that creation is less good than it should be, is to commit the sin of blasphemy. As Mathijs Lamberigts points out, “[a]ccording to Julian, the idea of *peccatum originale* directly criticizes God Himself, whom [Julian] saw as a good creator. We believe that in this idea there can be found one of the fundamental reasons why Julian could not accept such a doctrine of inherited guilt.”⁵³ To say, as Augustine says, that original sin is necessarily part of human nature, independent of what anyone wills (besides Adam and Eve), is to implicitly suggest that God has caused original sin to be part of human nature, since only God can cause necessary parts of human nature.

Furthermore, to suggest that human nature is fallen from God’s original design is, according to Julian, to suggest either that human beings have thwarted God’s plan, or that God never really created human beings as good in the first place. Either option is blasphemy, as Julian says: “[God] is not omnipotent if he cannot arrange things well” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [530]). If creation is less perfect than it should be, God is either less powerful than he should be, or God is less good than he should be.⁵⁴ In either case, from Julian’s perspective Augustine seems to be quite like the Manichees, since Augustine seems to implicitly attribute sin and evil ultimately to God’s imperfection. It should be clear that it is a very short road from Julian’s commitments about God’s nature to his vehement condemnation of Augustine.

Augustine, as one might expect, is not short on words in response to Julian. Augustine’s reply to Julian’s accusations comes primarily through Augustine’s own account of God as creator. What fundamentally distinguishes Augustine’s views on God and creation from those of Julian is

⁵³ Lamberigts, “Julian of Eclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator,” 8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

Augustine's understanding of creation *ex nihilo*. Certainly Julian and Augustine agree that human nature has been created out of nothing (*c. Iul. imp.* I.94 [117]). However, they disagree about what creation out of nothing means in itself and what it means for human nature. Below I first look at Julian's criticisms of Augustine's views of creation *ex nihilo* and then I show how Augustine responds, in order to show how Augustine's views on creation *ex nihilo* influence his views on the character of creation.⁵⁵

According to Julian, there are two false assumptions in Augustine's account of creation *ex nihilo*. First, Augustine thinks "nothing" had an uncreated quasi-existence prior to creation. Second, Augustine thinks God created "out of nothing" in a way analogous to the way a carpenter creates a table out of wood: nothing is the "material" God used in creation. In sum, Julian thinks that "nothing" in Augustine's thought has a kind of uncreated quasi-existence prior to creation, so that God depleted the stock of "nothing" when God put together creation: "this very nothing, that is, the void, was brought to an end when creatures began to be" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.32 [558]).

From Julian's perspective, Augustine's false assumptions lead to an incredibly bad conclusion. As a result of creation out of the uncreated, quasi-existent nothing, evil has infiltrated creation at the very outset of creation. Augustine holds, says Julian, that "evil arose in man, not because he had been made by God, but because he had been made out of nothing" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.31 [557]). In other words, says Julian to Augustine, "By [nothing's] destructive power...you think that evil arose both in the angel and in the human being" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.33 [558]).

⁵⁵ On Augustine's concept of creation *ex nihilo*, see: Joseph Torchia, O.P., *Creatio ex nihilo and the Theology of St. Augustine: The Anti-Manichaean Polemic and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Peter Lang, 1999), esp. 97-118. For a shorter introduction, see "Creation" in *ATTA*, 251. For a short discussion of creation *ex nihilo* and human evil that also deals with the same text I discuss below (*c. Iul. imp.* V) see Donald A. Cress, "Creation de Nihilo and Augustine's Account of Evil in *Contra secundum Juliani responsionem imperfectum opus*, Book V," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: 'Second Founder of the Faith'* ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt, OSA & Frederick Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 451-458.

In essence, according to Julian, Augustine thinks the defects in creation are due to God's use of faulty raw material. In the following quote Julian explains his understanding of Augustine's views on creation *ex nihilo*:

From eternity, then, there never existed that which did not exist before it was made by God, whose substance alone is without beginning. This void, that is, nothing, before it was brought to an end by the existence of things, always existed. This nothing, then, was not made, but creatures were made, and that nothing ceased to be. In that creature, then, which was made out of nothing, you say that evil arose because the creature was made out of nothing. You, therefore, attributed the evil that arose in man to his origin, and you say that his origin, that is, nothing, was the cause of sin. For, you say, evil arose in man, not because he had been made by God, but because he had been made out of nothing.

If, then, evil arose because the state of the preceding nothing demanded it, and this nothing was eternal, you have by different paths fallen into and are completely trapped in the snare of your teacher [Mani] so that you both say that evil existed from eternity (*c. Iul. imp. V.31* [556-557]).

According to Julian, if Augustine thinks "nothing" has a quasi-substantial existence out of which the substance of creation was somehow made, then Augustine thinks creation is evil because it is created out of the quasi-eternal nothing. In other words, according to Julian, Augustine thinks "the necessity of evil is eternal" (*c. Iul. imp. V.31* [556]).

In Julian's view, Augustine is essentially advancing a form of Manichaeism, since the cause of evil is uncreated and necessarily intrinsic to creation (*c. Iul. imp. V.31* [557]). Thus all of Augustine's views about sexuality and fallen human nature would seem to be based on the faulty premises at the root of Augustine's views of creation *ex nihilo*. Julian does not think Augustine is a Manichee simply because of Augustine's views on sexuality or the body, but because of Augustine's more fundamental commitments about God and creation. If Julian is reading Augustine correctly, Augustine would indeed seem to be a Manichee because of his foundational theological commitments about God's act of creation *ex nihilo*.

From Augustine's perspective, Julian's interpretation of what Augustine means by creation *ex nihilo* is a bit off the mark: "You idiot, that which is nothing cannot be eternal" (*c. Iul. imp. V.36*

[559]). What Augustine means by creation out of nothing is that God “did not make [creation] out of himself” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.31 [556]). Nothing except God existed before creation, so if God did not make creation out of himself, then he did not make it out of anything. Augustine explains his view: “‘Out of nothing’ then means: ‘Not out of something’” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.31 [557]). “Nothing” has neither “substance” nor “destructive power” to cause sin, as Julian suggests (*c. Iul. imp.* V.37 [559]). Nothing is just the absence of anything. Augustine’s response is to simply reject the premises of Julian’s criticism. From Augustine’s perspective, the white-hot flames of Julian’s argument burn up only a straw man of Julian’s own making.

Julian is correct in claiming that creation *ex nihilo* directly informs Augustine’s view of evil, though how Augustine makes that connection is much different than how Julian thinks Augustine makes the connection.⁵⁶ According to Augustine, God’s nature is “unchangeable and immutable,” while creation is “is mutable because it is not the nature of God” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.42 [567]; V.44 [569]; V.25 [549]; V.60 [585]). In other words, “Because every created thing has its origin in non-being, it is mutable.”⁵⁷ The changes in creation can be characterized as “evil” precisely when a change exhibits a lack of something the created thing should have in order to be fully good according to its nature: “evils...are nothing but the privations of good things” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.60 [586]; V.44 [569]).⁵⁸

From Augustine’s perspective, to say that creation *ex nihilo* leads to evil is to say that created things have a tendency to lack good things they should have—what Augustine calls “defects”—and

⁵⁶ On Augustine’s view of evil as privation of good, one helpful text is John Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage* (Princeton: Scepter, 1969), 44-52. I would, however, caution the reader that Hugo places an overemphasis on the distinction between physical and moral evil that, while theologically important, might be anachronistically applied to Augustine’s thought.

⁵⁷ William E. Mann, “Augustine on Evil and Original Sin,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 42.

⁵⁸ Mann writes: “The word ‘evil,’ when predicated of creatures, refers to a *privation*, an absence of goodness where goodness might have been” (*ibid.*, 44).

will fall toward non-existence (nothing) if not sustained in existence by God. As Augustine says, “only a nature created out of nothing could have been perverted by a defect” (*cin. Dei* XIV.13 [609]). Only something that can change can change for the worse, and to be created is to be the kind of thing that can change. To say that something is created *ex nihilo* is to say that it can change and is thus not the nature of God, who cannot change. The possibility of evil, then, is indeed inherent in creation, though not because evil is uncreated or because evil has a substantial existence. As David Meconi puts it, “because all things come from God, all things are good. Evil can no longer be understood as a separate rival but always as a corruption parasitically dependent upon an ontologically good substance.”⁵⁹ Evil is at least possible for anything that is not God, though, as I will show below, Augustine thinks God can even remove the possibility of evil from creation.

Augustine and Julian’s distinctive understandings of the connection between creation *ex nihilo* and the corruptible character of creation become even more clear in their accounts of the concept of nature. Like Julian, Augustine defines nature in part by reference to the shared essential qualities of the things that share that nature. For Augustine “the nature of a thing consists of its essential characteristics without which the thing would not be what it is.”⁶⁰

In stark contrast to Julian, however, Augustine suggests one does not discover the essence of a nature simply by observing creation. Rather, one must look at the ideal form of a nature in order to fully understand that nature, because Augustine thinks natures as observed in creation also express elements of the corruptibility of creation:

The nature of a substance is capable of good and of evil. It is capable of good by participation in the good by which it was made, but it admits of evil, not by participation in evil, but by a privation of good. That is, it is not mingled with a nature which is something

⁵⁹ David Vincent Meconi, SJ, *The One Christ: St. Augustine’s Theology of Deification* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 16.

⁶⁰ Van Fleteren, “Nature,” *ATA*, 586.

evil, because no nature is, insofar as it is a nature, something evil; rather, it falls away from the nature which is the highest and immutable good, because it was not made out of it, but out of nothing (*c. Iul.* I.37 [295]).⁶¹

Thus, for both Augustine and Julian, the concept of nature in itself denotes something necessarily good. For both thinkers, a nature is necessarily good in that it is created by God.

Where Augustine and Julian part ways, however, is over Augustine's claim that any nature is not good (i.e. evil) to the extent that it does not approach the fullness of existence that it could approach if it were perfected according to its ideal participation in the "highest and immutable good." For Julian, anything natural is unqualifiedly good. For Augustine, a nature can be both good and characterized by evil. For Augustine the possibility of evil is inherent in the nature of created things simply in light of the fact that they are created, not uncreated.

Since Augustine and Julian disagree on the general definition of nature, they also disagree substantially about how to define human nature. For Julian, to say that human nature is evil is a contradiction in terms, since to say something is natural is to say it is good. Augustine, on the other hand, suggests that human nature is evil insofar as it has a defect in comparison to its original design:

[B]y the nature, nonetheless, which God makes, [human beings] are certainly good, but they are evil in terms of the defect which the enemy planted against their nature, but in their nature, so that as a result of this there is a bad nature, that is, a bad human being. For an evil can only exist in some good, because it can only exist in a nature, but every nature insofar as it is a nature is something good (*c. Iul. imp.* I.114 [131]).⁶²

⁶¹ Latin: Quoniam natura est ipsa substantia et bonitatis et malitiae capax: bonitatis capax est, participatione boni a quo facta est: malitiam vero capit non participatione mali, sed privatione boni, id est, non cum miscetur naturae quae aliquod malum est, quia nulla natura in quantum natura est, malum est; sed cum deficit a natura quae summum atque incommutabile est bonum; propterea quia non de illa, sed de nihilo facta est (PL 44, 667).

⁶² Latin: Neque enim vasa in contumeliam fierent nisi mali essent, qui tamen per naturam, quam facit deus, utique boni sunt, mali autem secundum vitium, quod contra naturam quidem, sed tamen naturae insevit inimicus, ut ex hoc esset natura mala, hoc est malus homo. Non enim potest esse ullum malum nisi in aliquo bono, quia non potest esse nisi in aliqua natura; omnis autem natura, in quantum natura est, bonum est (CSEL 85/1, 132).

Although Augustine here seems to sound like he is saying evil in human nature has a kind of substance-like quality, Augustine clarifies the point: “I did not say that [human nature] is not evil, but that it is not an evil; that is, to speak more plainly, I said that it was defective, but not a defect” (*c. Iul. imp.* III.190 [375]). Augustine’s point is that human nature is good insofar as it is created, but it is evil insofar as it lacks what it needs to be at its highest state. Human nature “is not mingled with a nature which is something evil, because no nature is, insofar as it is a nature, something evil; rather, it falls away from the nature which is the highest and immutable good, because it was not made out of it, but out of nothing” (*c. Iul.* I.37 [295]). Human nature after the fall is evil insofar as it lacks the ideal perfection that would bring it to full participation in the highest good.

In other words, the evil of fallen human nature is a privation of good.⁶³ This privation “exists in a nature” in the same way a hole exists in a boat: it is a sign of what is missing. To say that a boat has a hole in it is to really say that the boat is missing ten inches of the hull that should be there. To say that human nature is evil or has an evil in it is to really say that human nature is missing elements of its own perfection that should be there. For Augustine, the noun “evil” does not refer to something with substantial existence, but the adjective “evil” describes the imperfect existence of some noun (such as “the person”) with substantial existence. Human nature, then, “is evil” or has “an evil” in it insofar as it lacks what it should have to be whole.

Augustine’s distinctive view of the connection between creation *ex nihilo* and human nature directly affects his view of sin. For Augustine, human and angelic sin is not necessary, but is rather made possible by creation out of nothing (*c. Iul. imp.* V.31 [557]). Creation out of nothing did not

⁶³ Hugo is good on the general point, though his analysis does not sufficiently engage the question of evil associated with the human body. See Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage*, 44-52. Wetzel connects the concept of *privatio boni* to Augustine’s account of the sin of Adam and the angels. See Wetzel, “Augustine on the Origin of Evil: Myth and Metaphysics,” in *Augustine’s City of God: a Critical Guide* ed. James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge, 2012), 167-185.

cause sin, but opened the possibility of sin. This is because creation out of nothing is not creation from God's own nature: "if it were made out of the nature of God, no being could have sinned, nor would [that being] have been made" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.31 [557]).⁶⁴ If humanity somehow shared in God's nature, it would be just as the Son is: "it would not have the possibility of sinning...because the nature of God neither wills to be able nor is able to will to sin" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.31 [557]). If Adam's "nature were made out of God, he would have been unable to sin at all" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.54 [578]). Something that shares in the nature of God cannot sin because it "cannot abandon itself, nor does it have a better to which it ought to cling and by abandoning which it could sin" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.31 [557]). God cannot fall away from his highest good because he is his own highest good and cannot fall away from himself. Human beings, on the other hand, are naturally the kind of thing that can sin because they are made out of nothing.

Despite the claim that human sin is inherently possible to any created nature, Augustine argues that human sin was originally not necessary. Adam "was, of course, made so that he had the possibility of sinning as something necessary, but sinning as something possible....He did not, therefore, sin, but he was able to sin, because he was made out of nothing" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.60 [585]). In other words, Adam's being a creature meant that Adam could sin, not that he would sin. Only a creature can sin, and all human and angelic creatures have (or had, in the case of good angels) the possibility of sinning because of their creaturely nature. A sinful nature is made possible only because anything created has the inherent possibility of falling away from its highest good.

In the resurrection, according to Augustine, God will take away the possibility of sinning, since it is "a lesser good to be able not to sin, but a greater one not to be able to sin" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.58 [581]). Julian seems to deny this last point, for, with his static view of human nature (it exists already

⁶⁴ In other words, that being would be uncreated as God is uncreated, not made.

in its best state), he thinks that the possibility of sin is inherent to human nature and seems to imply that that possibility cannot be taken away if human nature is to remain (*c. Iul. imp.* V.58 [581]).

Augustine, on the other hand, sees human nature as a dynamic nature that is oriented toward the final fulfillment of being unable to sin. Augustine can only say this if he thinks creation does not now express its best state.

For Augustine and Julian, rival claims about the character of creation—whether humanity is fallen or not—lead also to their views on healing. According to Augustine, “Catholics say that human nature was created good by the good God the creator, but that, having been wounded by sin, it needs Christ the physician” (*nupt. et conc.* II.9).⁶⁵ Human nature must be healed from its current state. According to Julian, on the other hand, to say that nature must be healed is to say that God’s original creative work was a kind of “beta” version that, like computer software, requires a significant update. To say that evil is inherent to human nature—that God’s creation is imperfect—is to be a Manichee (*c. Iul. imp.* V.26 [550-551]). In Julian’s view, anything created cannot be evil, but only acts of the will can potentially be evil (*c. Iul. imp.* V.22 [541]). Healing only happens through strengthening one’s self against sin, but not through healing one’s nature.

It should now be clear that Augustine and Julian have two rival worldviews that are incompatible at their very foundations. Gerald Bonner helpfully summarizes the issues: “Augustine believed in the fall, which Julian denied.”⁶⁶ Julian is committed to the view that God is a good and just creator whose creation directly expresses God’s goodness and justice. Whatever exists is wholly good simply because God created it. Nothing could have been made any better than it has been

⁶⁵ Latin: *Catholici dicunt humanam naturam a creatore Deo bono conditam bonam, sed peccato vitiam medico Christo indigere* (PL 44, 441).

⁶⁶ Bonner, “Anti-Pelagian Works,” *ATTA*, 45.

made, and even the possibility of natural evils and sin is part of God's providential original design of creation.

Augustine is also certain that God is a good and just creator, but Augustine thinks creation does not express the fullness of God's goodness and justice in the direct way Julian suggests. Insofar as creation exists, it is good and thereby expresses God's character as good and just. However, insofar as creation is corruptible and lacking its own perfection, creation shows that it is not as good as it could be: "The Catholic faith holds that all the evils of the human race...come only from the good nature that was also well made by the good God, but was damaged by the personal will and transgression of the first human being" (*c. Iul. imp.* III.186 [370]). Furthermore, human nature, according to Augustine, is missing something it needs to bring it to its perfection: "the nature damaged by the same defects needs to be healed by the savior who is the creator by whom it was created" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.181 [367]). In fact, in the resurrection this salvation will find its completion: "the corruption which we now see in flesh and blood...will certainly not possess the kingdom of God, because this corruptible body will be clothed with incorruptibility" (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.40 [715]).

We have thus far seen the broad, metaphysical claims at the root of Augustine's account of fallen human nature. At this point an important question arises: why does Augustine think God allows creation to exist at a fallen state? Augustine might say God created creation this way, which would seem to reflect poorly on God. What Augustine says instead, as I show below, is that God created creation in a tentatively great state, and that if humanity had gone along with God's plan, the perfection God wants for humanity would have shortly followed. Humanity, of course, did not follow God's plan, and as a result human nature changed for the worse. Augustine thinks this fallen human nature is fully intelligible only in light of God's original plan.

The next section constructs a synthetic account of Augustine's views on God's original design of human nature, in order to highlight why Augustine thinks he can show that human nature now is corrupt and imperfect. Since it would be redundant to reflect on Julian's views of original human nature—because, for Julian, human nature now is not fundamentally different than it was originally—we leave Julian behind. The next section draws out Augustine's understanding of God's original plan for creation, which is crucial to Augustine's account of human nature after the fall.

AUGUSTINE ON HUMAN NATURE BEFORE THE FALL

Augustine's views on original human nature—human nature before the fall—are drawn from a complex interplay of Biblical exegesis (primarily Genesis, St. Paul, and the Resurrection narratives), reflection on human experience, and the application of reason to the Bible and experience. This section focuses on Augustine's explication of the original plan in his works against Julian, not only because this chapter contrasts the views of those two, but also because Augustine's views on original human nature develop substantially over the course of his career. The views expressed in his earlier works may not be helpful in understanding his later theological positions.⁶⁷

Augustine's understanding of original human nature is rooted in his literal interpretation of the central details of Genesis 2.⁶⁸ The pre-lapsarian first parents were truly embodied, historical people who lived in a real garden at a specific location on earth:

[T]he man made out of mud...is to be understood as having been placed in a bodily paradise; and so Adam himself, even if he stands for something else in the way the apostle

⁶⁷ I address elements of this development in chapter four.

⁶⁸ On Augustine's slow growth from discomfort with reading Genesis literally to absolute insistence on the literal meaning of Genesis, see Clark, "Heresy, Asceticism, Adam and Eve," 362-373; Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 245-259; and Émile Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien Dans L'Œuvre de Saint Augustin: Une Théologie Baptismale et la Vie Conjugale* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1983), 83-93. See also chapter four of this dissertation, where I cover not so much Augustine's exegetical method, but his judgment on the details of procreation and desire in Paradise.

said he is the form of the one to come, is still to be taken as a human being set before us in his own proper nature, who lived a definite number of years and after producing numerous progeny died just as other human beings die...and so the paradise too, in which God placed him, is to be understood as quite simply a particular place on earth, where the man of earth would live (*Gn. litt.* VIII.1,1 [346]).⁶⁹

In other words, if one had a time machine and God's permission, one could travel back to that moment in history and place in the Middle East and meet Adam and Eve, whose bones are now truly mingled with the dust of the earth.⁷⁰

The claim that the garden and first parents were real is crucial to Augustine's account of the contrast between original human nature and fallen human nature. What one sees in Adam and Eve is God's original model for true human nature. Paradise was the state in which Adam and Eve lived at harmony with themselves and with creation, and the traits that can be attributed to Adam and Eve were traits God originally gave to humanity. The fall, on the other hand, is the state in which humanity has had some of its original created characteristic traits altered for the worse because humanity is missing the grace essential for human integration.

Augustine claims that Adam would have progressed through three states of life if he had not fallen.⁷¹ The first state is what I call original integrity. In this state, Adam's body and soul were in integrated harmony, though not yet in the perfect way. Thus the bodies of Adam and Eve "did not decline into old age, and they were, therefore, not led to the necessity of death" (*civ. Dei* XIII.20 [567]). In the second state, what I call transitional elevation, some human beings may have been

⁶⁹ Augustine goes on in the same book to say two things that are of relevance here. First, that the figurative meaning of Scripture is not exclusive of the literal (VIII.1,4 [348]). Secondly, that in his book *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, he had struggled to see how the details of Genesis could be literal and historical. See also *City of God* XIII.18 for Augustine's claim that the garden was a real place and the first parents were real people.

⁷⁰ On the literal interpretation of Eden, see also *c. Iul. imp.* VI.39 [711] and books XIV and XV of *civ. Dei*.

⁷¹ I primarily refer to Adam here and below, not Adam and Eve, simply for the sake of style: it would be distracting to constantly refer to Adam, Eve, and all others who would have come to life in the garden. What Augustine thinks is true of Adam he also thinks is true of Eve and the subsequent generations.

removed from paradise without death, but without yet receiving the perfected human nature God had planned for them. God planned this transitional state, says Augustine, because God may have wanted paradise to go through “a succession of generations” and because God may have wanted the final state of humanity to be something that happens to all of humanity at the same time (*Gn. litt.* IX.6,10 [380]). That final state is the resurrection, in which the body and soul are in perfect harmony because all of human nature is permeated by God’s spirit in such a way that human nature no longer has even the possibility of sin, corruption or death.⁷² In the resurrected state human nature is brought to a perfection even greater than what was possible in Eden. I discuss the specifics of each of these three states below. Understanding these three states is essential to understanding what Augustine sees as God’s original plan for human nature and what he thinks is so tragic about fallen human nature.

According to Augustine, the most fundamental difference between Adam and fallen humanity is that Adam was originally perfectly obedient to God. Yet it is the causes and effects of that obedience that are most important for understanding the distinctiveness of original human nature. Perhaps the most distinctive difference between Adam and fallen humanity was Adam’s body. While some of the general elements of Augustine’s account of Adam’s body are well known, some of the crucial details have been overlooked in the scholarly literature.⁷³ I show below why those details are crucial to Augustine’s account of original human nature.

⁷² A more literal term might be surrection—*surrectio*—since Augustine thinks Adam would not have died before he was raised up, but I retain the term resurrection in order to highlight Augustine’s emphasis on the continuity between God’s original plan and the final end of fallen human nature.

⁷³ It is, for instance, rare to see scholarly references to the essential role played by the Tree of Life in Augustine’s account of Eden. This fact, I think, is in part explained by the lack of enthusiasm for examining Augustine’s account of the details of Adam’s embodiment. Thomas Aquinas, however, does recognize that for Augustine the Tree of Life is an absolutely crucial element of Eden. See: *Summa Theologica* Ia q. 97 a. 4.

In the state of original integrity, Adam's body and soul were in perfect earthly harmony. This harmony was in large part because the body operated differently: the body was healthier because it did not suffer from corruption and deterioration. What made this bodily health possible was not a different bodily constitution or a different kind of soul, but rather special food from God: "this condition was granted them by the wondrous grace of God, by means of the tree of life which stood in the midst of Paradise along with the forbidden tree" (*civ. Dei* XIII.20 [567]). Augustine thinks this tree was a real tree whose fruit was really eaten by the first parents. Adam did eat other food, which was readily available and prevented him suffering from hunger, but the Tree of Life provided in addition "some hidden infusion of vigorous well-being" that was the source of his special bodily health and the integrated relationship between his body and soul (*Gn. litt.* VIII.5,11 [353]; also *civ. Dei* XIII.20).⁷⁴ The food from the Tree of Life allowed the body to remain "in the flower of youth" (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [570]; also *Gn. litt.* IX.3,6 [379]; XI.32,42 [453]). It was the food from this tree that would have prevented Adam from dying (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [690]; *c. Iul.* IV.69 [419]). This tree and its fruit were the first "sacrament," signifying the life brought by Christ, but also imparting true life for those who ate of it (*Gn. litt.* VIII.4,8 [351]; *c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [690]).

It was also the food from the Tree of Life that distinguished the animal body of Adam from the animal body of animals. Animal bodies do not have desires in conflict with animal souls (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.58 [436]). However, animal bodies are naturally mortal (*c. Iul. imp.* III.147 [350]). Thus an animal body—including Adam's animal body—when left to itself and without the special invigoration from the food from the Tree of Life, will die "naturally." But with the food from the Tree of Life, Adam was able to remain in good health, to have no conflict between his body and

⁷⁴ Augustine also suggests that the manna the Israelites ate in the desert had "something a little extra about it" beyond its qualities as food alone (*Gn. litt.* VIII.5,11 [353]). I capitalize Tree of Life because, as one specific and uniquely important tree in Augustine's account of the history of salvation, it is a proper noun.

soul, and to avoid death because of that lack of conflict (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [691-693]). Eating from this tree was essentially the life-support for Adam's better kind of life.

The consequences of Adam's distinctive body are multiple. In the garden, the body was not corruptible and was thus more able to achieve its proper functions. There were no bodily defects (*c. Iul. imp.* II.123 [217]). Eve would have had no birth pains (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.26 [671]). The only difference between babies and Adam would have been size:

[T]hose little ones in paradise would not weep, nor would they be speechless or unable to use reason for a time; they would not lie weak and unable to act without the use of their members, and they would not be afflicted with diseases or injured by animals, killed by poison, or wounded by any accident. They would not lose any sense or part of the body, nor would they be troubled by demons. When they grow into childhood, they would not be controlled by beatings or educated with labor, nor would any of them be born with so foolish and dull a mind that they would be corrected neither by labor nor by pain. Except for the size of their bodies on account of the capacity of their mothers' wombs, they would be born just as Adam was created (*c. Iul. imp.* III.198 [377-378]).

From Augustine's perspective, the process of human maturation would be unfitting for the garden, since that process seems to entail suffering and deprivation of good qualities and knowledge the person should have. The original human body, along with other elements of the garden, would have meant human nature existed in a higher state than it naturally does now.

The other elements of creation—the circumstances surrounding Adam & Eve—were also different in God's original design. The garden was a special place that lacked the evils of life after the fall: in “a place of such great happiness and beauty...one should not believe that any defect could have existed or could exist, even a defect of a tree, or plant, or fruit, or of any crop or animal” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.16 [641]).⁷⁵ Even the animals were more docile than they are today, and they did not eat each other (*c. Iul. imp.* III.147 [350]). Furthermore, the animals may not have died, or, if they

⁷⁵ Here Augustine says to Julian: “And yet, into a place of such great happiness and beauty where one should not believe that any defect could have existed or could exist, even a defect of a tree, or plant, or fruit, or of any crop or animal, you do not hesitate to introduce all the defects of human minds and bodies.”

were not blessed with everlasting life, they would have gone out of the garden to die “so that no living being met with death in that place of life” (*c. Iul. imp.* III.147 [350]).

The fact that the garden was truly paradise significantly affected the life of the first parents. They had no unrequited desires, not only because their bodies served their souls through the nutrition provided by the Tree of Life, but also because there was no delay or frustration in getting what they wanted: “nothing was absent that a good will might seek” and “what they loved was always at hand for their enjoyment” (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [602]). They also did not suffer bodily pain because nothing was “present that might injure man in flesh or mind” (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [602]). It was precisely these circumstances that made it true that Adam and Eve did not experience anger or sadness: there was nothing about which to be angry or sad (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [603]). Work would have been purely enjoyable, not toilsome (*Gn. litt.* VIII.8,15 [356-357]). Furthermore, Adam and Eve had no domestic disputes, but lived in harmony with each other (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [602]). The place was truly Paradise.

Adam’s original nature was always meant to be temporary. If he had not fallen, Adam would have been taken up into what I call the state of transitional elevation. Augustine’s claims about this state are based on the combination of two factors: Adam would not have died had he not sinned (*civ. Dei* XIII.19 [565]) and the resurrection might properly be a corporate experience rather than an individual one (*Gn. litt.* IX.6,10 [380]). Thus, Augustine says, there is at least the possibility of a transitional state between earthly life and the later full life in the resurrection. Augustine thinks Adam might have been removed from paradise after a set amount of time, in order to allow for “a succession of generations” (*Gn. litt.* IX.6,10 [380]). Like the prophet Elijah, Adam might have been taken up into an elevated state (“transferred to better things”) without death, but Adam would not yet have been fully permeated by the Spirit as will happen at the general resurrection (*Gn. litt.*

IX.6,10 [381]; *c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [692]).⁷⁶ This transitional elevation is “a better condition” than the state of original integrity, though Augustine does not fill in the details about how it is better (*Gn. litt.* IX.6,10 [380]).⁷⁷

AUGUSTINE ON RESURRECTED HUMAN NATURE

The third state of human nature, resurrection, is the best and fullest experience of authentic humanity.⁷⁸ Augustine’s account of human nature, sexuality, and concupiscence—both before and after the fall—cannot be understood without reference to his views on the resurrection.

Adam, if he had not sinned, would have come to possess the same kind of body that is characteristic of resurrected bodies even after humanity’s fall, though Adam would not have needed to die first in order to be raised up (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.39 [710-711]; *Gn. litt.* IX.3,6 [379]). Even after the fall, the resurrection is exponentially better than the kind of avoidance of death Adam would have had in the state of original integrity had he not sinned (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [691]; *civ. Dei* XIII.20 [566]). Thus resurrection is not a return to the state of the garden, but is rather the completion of the original plan of God. Resurrection is the inhabiting of a human nature even Adam did not yet possess.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ In *c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [692], Augustine says that Enoch and Elijah “will, of course, return to these lands for a short time in order that they too may do battle with death and pay the debt with the offspring of the first man owes.” In context, this point is important because Julian has suggested that the immortality of Enoch and Elijah is the same as what Adam would have received (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [689]). Augustine wants to be clear that that the “immortality” of Enoch and Elijah is not the same as Adam’s potential immortality.

⁷⁷ Augustine does not mention the state of transitional elevation in his final works, but I am not sure that omission is enough evidence to suggest that he abandons his earlier view.

⁷⁸ For background on Augustine’s account of resurrected human nature, see the dissertation of Patrick Fletcher, “Resurrection and Platonic Dualism: Joseph Ratzinger’s Augustinianism” (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 2011), esp. 41-98 on Augustine.

⁷⁹ Margaret Miles offers a provocative take on the connections between sexuality, embodiment and the resurrection in Augustine’s thought, attempting to show that Augustine’s account of resurrected experience “described what we would call ‘sexuality’ as a property of resurrected bodies.” Miles does not mean here merely being male and

Resurrection was not originally a remedy for death, but rather an elevation of the human being to his fullest humanity. The soul feels a kind of absence without the body, and so even though the immortality of the soul is good, it is better that souls are united to their bodies (*civ. Dei* XIII.19 [564]; *c. Iul. imp.* VI.31 [696]; II.186 [247]). This is not only because human beings are a union of body and soul and so the two should not be separated. The body united to the soul also adds a kind of “beauty” to the soul (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [692]). Whatever parts the body will have in the resurrection, it will have those on account of their completion of bodily beauty (*Sermon* 243.4-6 [304-305]; *civ. Dei* XII). Beyond beauty, Augustine thinks there are many other benefits to resurrection, which I detail below.

To understand what is different about the resurrected person, we must attend to the concept of the “weight” of the body in Augustine’s account of human nature.⁸⁰ Augustine claims that the resurrected body will “have the substance of flesh, but not its heaviness and corruption” (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [570]). Although Adam was provisionally perfect before the resurrection, his body had a kind of weight that God planned to lighten. Before explaining the concept of the body’s weight, however, it is necessary to turn back to Augustine’s understanding of creation *ex nihilo*.

female, but rather the experience of sexuality, which is a “sharp joy” of human experience.” I doubt whether Augustine would draw such a close connection between sexual pleasure and the joy of resurrected embodiment, but Miles does rightly show that Augustine’s account of the resurrection interrogates human experience of fallen human nature: “Reading sexuality in Augustine’s idea of resurrection bodies begins to sketch a model that can function to correct and shape present ideas of sex and its role in human relationships. The value of imagining ideal sexualities is that only then can one begin to make ‘good sex’ *now*.” See Miles, “Sex and the City (of God),” 325. Miles offers a similar but less provocative argument in “From Rape to Resurrection: Sin, Sexual Difference, and Politics,” in *Augustine’s City of God: a Critical Guide* ed. James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge, 2012), 88-92.

⁸⁰ On the concept of weight and the relationship between body and soul, one should first turn to O’Connell’s much-discussed works, and then Roomb’s adjudication of O’Connell’s thesis regarding “the fall of the soul.” See Robert J. O’Connell, S.J., *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine’s Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987) and Ronnie J. Roomb, *Saint Augustine & the Fall of the Soul: Beyond O’Connell & His Critics* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006). These do not have much to say, however, on the issue of the weight of the body specifically.

From Augustine's perspective, the fact that something was created out of nothing suggests it has a tendency to fall back toward nothing if not sustained by special gifts of God that are not part of the nature of the thing itself. It is God who sustains things in existence and at their proper place in the hierarchy of being (*civ. Dei* XII.26 [537]). Thus, were God to remove some element of this sustaining action, the thing itself would tend toward less being and less goodness (*civ. Dei* XIV.13 [609]). When deprived of some of these gifts the thing will be "corruptible," just as when deprived of the totality of the gift of existence, the thing will no longer exist: "For even in condemning us, God did not take away all that He had given. Otherwise, mankind would have simply ceased to exist" (*civ. Dei* XXII.24 [1159]). The possibility of corruption is inherent in the fact that a thing was created out of nothing. God's nature is "unchangeable and immutable," and thus creation is essentially mutable and changeable since it does not share God's nature (*c. Iul. imp.* V.42 [567]; V.25 [549]; V.60 [585]). Not sharing God's perfect immutable nature entails that creation has the potentiality to change: human nature "is mutable because it is not the nature of God" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.25 [549]; V.44 [569]). Bodily weight and corruption are Augustine's terms that express the body's negative mutability.

Even Adam's body was potentially mutable, in the sense that it could have changed for the worse. This is why the Tree of Life was so crucial to Adam's bodily health: without it, death and the bodily corruption that precedes and foreshadows death are inevitable (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [570-571]). In fact, in a certain sense all of life after the fall is a movement toward death, since the person is always in the process of bodily corruption (*civ. Dei* XIII.10 [550]).⁸¹ Bodily evils are all "precursors of death" (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.40 [717]). Thus the crucial role played by the fruit from the Tree of Life,

⁸¹ For reasons having to do with precision of language, Augustine here says it is not proper to say someone clearly alive is "dying" unless death is in fact imminent.

which prevented Adam's bodily corruption (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30; VI.39 [711]). Immortality is only possible with God's extra help. Human nature in itself, without God's extra help, is mortal.⁸²

Adam's body did not originally weigh down his soul in an undue manner. Whatever weight Adam's body had was appropriate for the state of original integrity. Certainly he had only an animal body enlivened by a soul (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [572]). And, he did need to eat to sustain his health (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [570]). Yet Adam's body and soul had no tensions between them, good evidence of which is the ability of Adam's will to move the genital organs in sex (*Gn. litt.* IX.10,18 [385]). The integrity ensured by the food from the Tree of Life is the explanation for this ability of the soul to properly govern the body.⁸³ The body itself needs special invigoration from God through the food from the Tree of Life in order avoid corruption: "They began to die on that day when they were separated from the tree of life which...surely supplied life to the body" (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [693]).⁸⁴ Adam would not have been immortal independent of the "life-support" from the Tree of Life: "This immortality was supplied to him from the tree of life" (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [690]). Adam, rather, had the potential to be either mortal or immortal, and regrettably his actions led to his mortality because God removed the possibility of eating from the Tree of Life.

⁸² This is not to say that Augustine thinks God created human nature so that it would die, as the Pelagians say. For Augustine, death is not natural in the Pelagian sense of being created by God. Rather, I am here emphasizing that Augustine thinks human nature cannot of its own power be immortal, without God's extra help. Adam was created with the possibility of dying or not dying, whereas resurrected bodies do not have the possibility of dying. In either case, not dying is finally attributed to God, not to the person himself. The claim that human nature in itself is mortal should not be at all controversial: Augustine clearly thinks that God's help is essential for anything to exist at all, and without God sustaining things in existence, those things would simply cease to be.

⁸³ Augustine's claim about the weight of bodies makes sense only within the context of his claims about the mutability of creation. After the fall the body weighs down the soul (*civ. Dei* XIII.16 [557-558]; *c. Iul. imp.* VI.14 [632]; *de utilitate jejunii* 2 [473]). The increased weight of fallen bodies is in part a way to say that the soul does not totally govern the body in the way that it should govern the body. Only "corruptible" bodies feel heavy (*civ. Dei* XIII.16 [558]).

⁸⁴ This lack of the true health provided by the tree of life seems to be what Augustine has in mind when he claims that the seeds of generation have been damaged (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.35 [701]).

Because of Adam, the human body is no longer subject to the soul in the way it should be (*civ. Dei* XIII.13 [555]). In short, “[w]hat went wrong, according to Augustine, was precisely a fracture of the original unity and harmony between body and soul that characterized the first human beings.”⁸⁵ Defects specific to the body itself—illness, missing limbs, etc.—are all a consequence of the fall, and to deny this is to imply that those evils were created by God (*c. Iul. imp.* III.187 [372]). Even human intelligence after the fall is lacking in comparison with Adam, on account of the weight of the body (*c. Iul. imp.* V.11 [524-525]). Death is the most obvious and tragic effect of the corruption of the body (*civ. Dei* XIII.16 [558]).

Resurrected bodies, on the other hand, will have only the proper weight, which, in reality, will “feel” like weightlessness. Resurrected bodies will not be able to change for the worse. Resurrected bodies will not have the potential for mortality (*civ. Dei* XIII.22 [569]). While Adam was able to die, resurrected people will “not be able to die” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.30 [691]). Resurrected bodies will have a new principle of life that enables them to live forever: “they will be sustained by a quickening Spirit” (*civ. Dei* XIII.22 [569]). Human bodies now are enlivened by human souls, but resurrected bodies will take their life primarily from the Spirit. This Spirit is what will allow those bodies to be ruled in the proper way and what will prevent those bodies from feeling heavy and from being corrupted:

For just as those bodies which possess a living soul, though not as yet a quickening spirit, are said to be soul-endowed bodies, but are nonetheless bodies rather than souls, so also those bodies called spiritual (though God forbid that we should believe that they will be spirits rather than bodies) which, possessing a quickening spirit, have the substance of flesh, but not its heaviness and corruption (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [570]).

This true body will truly be different. It will not change its nature, yet it will no longer be merely an animal body (*Gn. litt.* IX.3,7 [379]). It will be a body literally enlivened by God’s spirit and so will be truly “something of a different kind” (*Gn. litt.* IX.3,7 [379]). Even though it will be different, it is

⁸⁵ Hunter, “Augustine on the Body,” 358.

insane to deny that it will be a true body (*civ. Dei* XIII.20 [566]). In other words, “[t]he nature of their flesh will remain the same, but with no fleshly corruption and heaviness remaining” (*civ. Dei* XIII.24 [580]). More generally, “there is to be no deformity, no infirmity, no heaviness, no corruption—nothing of any kind unfit for that kingdom” (*civ. Dei* XXII.20 [1152]). While Adam would not have experienced deformity, sickness, undue heaviness, or corruption in the state of original integrity, his humanity would have been radically perfected in the resurrected state.

The function of the Spirit in the resurrection is directly analogous to the food from the Tree of Life: each sustains the body in the way appropriate to the given state, though, of course, the Spirit does so in a much more effective and elevating way. Augustine draws on Plato to illustrate part of this point, for Plato also says the weight of earthly bodies is what prevents them from arising to the heavens (*civ. Dei* XXII.11 [1137-1138]). For Augustine too, the weight of the body does prevent the soul in some way from arising to its proper place in the hierarchy of being: “For the time being, the natural substance of earthly bodies is able to restrain the soul here below; but will not the soul eventually be able to lift up the earthly body on high” (*civ. Dei* XXII.11 [1138])?⁸⁶ This elevation will happen not of the soul’s own power, of course, but because “Almighty God, Who created all the elements, [is] able to take away the weight of the earthly body, so that the quickened body will dwell in whatever element the quickening Spirit wills” (*civ. Dei* XXII.11 [1138]).

The body will function differently in the resurrection, thanks to the enlivening Spirit. There will be no need for food, though one could eat if a situation calls for it (*civ. Dei* XIII.22 [569]). The absence of bodily weight means the soul will be able to take the body wherever the soul wants to go “with the greatest of ease” (*civ. Dei* XIII.18 [562]; *civ. Dei* XXII.30 [1178]). The eyes will function

⁸⁶ The radical difference between Augustine and Plato, as Augustine points out, is that Plato thinks bodies in principle prevent souls from arising to heaven. Augustine, however, thinks bodies only contingently prevent souls from arising, because when the Spirit enlivens those bodies, they will no longer weigh down souls.

differently, both because they will have “the keenness of sight which serpents or eagles are said to have” and also because “our eyes will then have the power of seeing incorporeal things” (*civ. Dei* XXII.29 [1175]). The bodily eyes may not see God directly, but they will at least certainly “see Him in every body to which the keen vision of the eye of the spiritual body shall extend” (*civ. Dei* XXII.29 [1177]). In short, the sense of sight will be quite different than it is now:

It may well be, then—indeed, this is entirely credible—that, in the world to come, we shall see the bodily forms of the new heaven and the new earth in such a way as to perceive God with total clarity and distinctness, everywhere present and governing all things, both material and spiritual. In this life, we understand the invisible things of God by the things which are made, and we see Him darkly and in part, as in a glass, and by faith rather than by perceiving corporeal appearances with our bodily eyes. In the life to come, however, it may be that we shall see Him by means of the bodies which we shall then wear, and wherever we shall turn our eyes (*civ. Dei* XXII.29 [1177]).

The new power of vision comes about because God’s spirit permeates every aspect of human nature.⁸⁷

It is clear that Augustine thinks the body itself will be different in the resurrection. It will lack the weight it has now, and it will even lack some of the weight it had in the state of original integrity. The soul will rule the body perfectly because both the soul and the body will be empowered by the Spirit.⁸⁸ Even Adam, then, would have eagerly anticipated the resurrection if he had known about it.

The special bodily characteristics in the three stages of God’s original plan for humanity—original integrity, transitional elevation, and resurrection—help to shed light on what it is Augustine

⁸⁷ On the connection between sight and the vision of God in the resurrection, see John Cavadini, “Ideology and Solidarity in Augustine’s City of God,” in *Augustine’s City of God: a Critical Guide* ed. James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge, 2012), 93-101.

⁸⁸ According to Augustine, those who will be resurrected only to be condemned will find embodiment to be a state of eternal torment (*civ. Dei* XIII.2 [542]). This is why eternal punishment is called a second death: it will be a state of “endlessly dying” (*civ. Dei* XIII.11 [554]). The soul will feel the weight of the body, but it will not be able to separate from the body (*civ. Dei* XIII.2 [542]). Presumably the soul would want to separate from the body in this case, because bodily sensation is a source of pain (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.37 [707]; *civ. Dei* XIII.2 [542]). Although Augustine here says the body “is tormented precisely because given life and sensation by” the soul, and that “the soul is not the cause of life, but of pain,” his point is clearly the simple observation that without the soul the body would not sense anything, because it would be a dead body. The soul “torments” the body precisely by informing it and allowing the body to be the means by which sensible pain is eternally perceived. See *civ. Dei* XIII.2 [542].

has in mind when he discusses the fall. The fall is not simply the soul's absence of proper ruling over the body, as though the fall is only the weakening of the power of the soul to rule the body. Rather, the fall is best described as a state of deprivation for both body and soul. The gifts from God that would have maintained human life in its paradisiacal state are no longer offered to humanity, and so human nature—body and soul—is left to whatever state it would be in without those gifts. God's gifts are not totally absent, since creation still exists (*civ. Dei* XXII.24 [1159]). Yet the state of original integrity is one in which God's sustaining of bodily health through the means of the Tree of Life was essential to the person's flourishing. In the resurrection, God increases that sustenance beyond the food from the Tree of Life by enlivening bodies through the Spirit so that bodies themselves are immortal.

To return to the comparison of Augustine and Julian, one can see now just how important it was to Augustine to respond to Julian's claim that human nature as it exists now is just how God planned it to be. Julian seems to say that human nature exists in its pristine original condition, and that death and other bodily ills were part of God's original plan. Augustine abhors that idea, and Augustine often has in his rhetorical crosshairs Julian's claims about the integrity of the body and the pristine nature of creation more generally.

AUGUSTINE ON HUMAN NATURE AFTER THE FALL

As I have shown above, Augustine traces the history of humanity to its origins in Adam and Eve, and from there he draws the conclusion that human nature as it exists now is in important ways lacking what Adam and Eve had. Adam's soul is no longer perfectly obedient to God, and so God has removed the gifts God offered Adam at the beginning: "The effect of their disobedience was to lose the grace that God had given to preserve their bodies from death and to live in peace with

themselves and all the rest of creation.”⁸⁹ As a result, Adam must slowly make his way back to right relationship with God and the full health God wants for Adam. One of the fundamental reasons Adam finds this return to God so laborious and difficult is that Adam’s body is no longer in the healthy and obedient state it was at the beginning. Indeed, while Adam’s relationship with God is repaired eventually through Christ, Adam’s full return to God and full health as a human being are not realized until God brings Adam to new life in the resurrection. Adam’s human nature has fallen from what it once was and must be elevated to what it should be.

The most obvious and tragic consequence of the fall is death: “The sting of death is indeed sin, because sin caused even this death of the body” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.41 [720]). Death, for Augustine, was never part of God’s original plan, but is rather the consequence of Adam’s disobedience:

For the soul, now taking delight in its own freedom to do wickedness, and disdaining to serve God, was itself deprived of the erstwhile subjection of the body to it. Because it had of its own free will forsaken its superior Lord, it no longer held its own inferior servant in obedience to its will. Nor could it in any way keep the flesh in subjection, as it would always have been able to do if it had itself remained subject to God. Then began the flesh to lust against the Spirit, from which conflicts we are born. From the first offence of mankind comes the origin of death in us, and we bear in our members, and in our vitiated nature, the striving of the flesh, or, indeed, its victory (*civ. Dei* XIII.13 [555]).

As I showed above, when Adam’s body was invigorated by the Tree of Life so that it was healthy and in complete harmony with Adam’s soul, there was no death. Death only comes when Adam’s human nature is deprived of the help provided from the Tree of Life. While Julian implicitly suggests that death is a natural part of creation, Augustine sees death as the “last enemy”: “this death which now exists, that is, this last enemy, will be destroyed in the end when the resurrection of the body will cause it to not exist” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.37 [708]).⁹⁰ From Augustine’s perspective, to

⁸⁹ Hunter, “Augustine on the Body,” 358.

⁹⁰ Augustine accuses Julian of the following: “you do not want [death to have been a consequence of sin] in order that you may fill paradise, the memorable place of blessed delights, with the bodies of the dead and, because of

suggest that death was originally part of God's plan is to obscure the meaning of salvation in Jesus and to obscure the importance of the resurrection.⁹¹

Related to the separation of body and soul in death is the slow separation of body and soul that happens throughout one's life. Not only the soul, but the body itself has changed for the worse: "both of them, that is, the spirit and the flesh, must be called back to God by God's mercy" (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.14 [632]). Adam's life is in some way a slow death, for Adam constantly experiences the effects of the dissociation of body and soul:

Why, then, is there a heavy yoke upon them from the day they come forth from the womb of their mother? Why is there such great corruption of the body that their souls are weighed down by it? Why is there such great dullness of the mind that their slowness is educated even by beatings?...If no one had sinned, if human nature had remained in that good state in which it was created, would human beings in paradise be born for such miseries—not to mention the others (*c. Iul. imp.* I.54 [83])?

This is not melodrama or pessimism, but rather Augustine's attempt to take seriously the harsh realities of human existence. All of life is a process of suffering under the effects of Adam's great sin, and Augustine's commitment to God's benevolence will never allow him to conclude, as Julian does, that the miseries of human life are all part of God's wise plan.

One of the effects of the dissociation of body and soul is vitiated concupiscence. Whether or not Augustine thought there would have been good sexual desire in the garden without the fall is a question I will take up in chapter four, but there is no doubt that Augustine certainly thinks vitiated sexual desire is a consequence of the fall. Augustine seems to suggest that the body, because it is often outside the control of the soul, undergoes sexual desire in such a way that the body seems to

these, even with the torments of the dying. This we blame, this we detest; this we judge worthy of anathema" (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.40 [716]).

⁹¹ Augustine writes: "This temporal death, nonetheless, would also not exist if Adam had not lost as punishment for his sin the possibility of not dying....If birth did no harm, rebirth offers no benefit. If nature is not damaged, the little ones do not have Christ as their savior" (*c. Iul. imp.* II.100-101 [203-04]).

have its own desires: “Before the fall “they were naked, as has been said, and were not embarrassed; there was no movement in their bodies of which to be shy; they did not think anything needed to be covered up, because they had not experienced anything needing to be held in check.” After sin, however, “before they died, death already conceived would whip up the disorderly behavior of disobedient members in the bodies of disobedient human beings as eminently just tit for tat” (*Gn. litt.* XI.1,3 [430]).

Whether these desires are truly bodily, and to what extent that claim is important to Augustine, are issues I take up in the next chapter. The important point here is that Augustine draws a direct line between the more general principle that human beings have fallen from an original state in which they were an integrated harmony of body and soul to the conclusion that after the fall human beings are a somewhat disintegrated mess: “This split within the person—that is, the soul’s loss of control over the body in [sexuality]—was, for Augustine, a just punishment.”⁹² All of Augustine’s forays into sexology and his reflections on his own experience of sex are meant to be examples of this more general principle that human nature lacks the integration it should have.

From Augustine’s perspective, it is important to realize that all sexual desire after the fall is vitiated. Julian, with his commitment to the goodness of human nature, argues that “sexual desire which is experienced in both its forbidden and its permitted use as a result of the condition of nature itself is not blameworthy, but its depravity alone is blamed when it runs off to what is not permitted” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.19 [536]). For Julian, natural sexual desire is good, and only excessive or “depraved” sexual desire is not good. Augustine’s response is to say it is not just excess desire that is the problem. All sexual desire is problematic because of the fall:

It is not the depravity of sexual desire alone that is blamed when it runs off to what was not permitted, but yours is a great depravity when you do not blame it when it impels one toward

⁹² Hunter, “Augustine on the Body,” 359.

what is not permitted. For when it impels one toward what is not licit, one immediately runs off to do it unless one fights against its evilness. And this is the concupiscence of the flesh by which the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit, against which the spirit also has desires, precisely so that the spirit does not run off to what the desire impels it. Even that which impels one toward evil is, therefore, something evil (*c. Iul. imp.* V.19 [536-537]).

Augustine goes on to tell Julian that this fight between spirit and flesh is a result of the fall: “If, just as our nature is healed from guilt by rebirth and forgiveness of sins, it were also now in good health without any illness, the spirit would not have desires opposed to the flesh in order that we might do only what is permitted. Rather, the flesh would agree with the spirit so that it would desire nothing forbidden in opposition to the spirit” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.19 [537]). After the fall, however, all sexual desire is in some way vitiated.

This fight between spirit and flesh will disappear in the resurrection. One of the most important differences of resurrected human nature is the lack of disharmony between spirit and flesh that plays out in vitiated concupiscence (what Augustine here calls *libido*):

Nor do I say that *libido* does unpunished, for it will be destroyed along with death when this mortal body is clothed with immortality. For it only exists in the body of this death from which the apostle desired to be set free....Nor will *libido*, like some substance, move to some other place, once we have been set free from and removed from it, but it will perish, like an illness, when our salvation reaches perfection, though it already ceased to exist now after the death of the body. For that desire which can only exist in the body of death cannot still exist in a dead body, but that desire which is destined to perish in the death of the body will not rise when the body is resurrected without death (*c. Iul. imp.* V.13 [526; Latin: CSEL 85/2, 184-185]).

Somehow the fall has effected a change in human desire, and that change will be repaired in the resurrection.

While the next chapter investigates the issue of the fight between spirit and flesh, it is sufficient here to remark that Augustine’s claim about the absence of disharmony in the resurrection reflects his more general commitment to the distinctiveness of that future life. Augustine is at his rhetorical best in his lengthy reflection on the resurrection in the last chapter of *civ. Dei*:

‘And God rested on the seventh day’...We ourselves shall become that seventh day, when we have been filled up and made new by His blessing and sanctification. Then we shall be still, and know that He is God: that he is what we ourselves desired to be when we fell away from him and listened to the words of the tempter, ‘Ye shall be as gods,’ and so forsook God, Who would have made us as gods, not by forsaking him, but by participating in Him. For what have we done without Him, other than perish in His wrath? But when we are restored by Him and perfected by His greater grace, we shall be still for all eternity, and know that He is God, being filled by Him when He shall be all in all (*civ. Dei* XXII.30 [1181]).

For Augustine, the resurrection is so important precisely because it overcomes and extinguishes the conflict between spirit and flesh that is so characteristic of human life after the fall, a conflict that plays out dramatically and consequentially in human desire and human sexuality. Augustine’s views are clearly not merely a consequence of his pessimism, personal experience, and observations in sexology. Augustine’s views on sexuality and concupiscence are deeply rooted in his broader theological claims about God, creation, and God’s plan for human nature.

CONCLUSION

If the thesis of this dissertation is that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine’s later theology, then this chapter serves an essential purpose in establishing that thesis. This chapter has shown how Augustine’s broader theological landscape shapes his understanding of the body and the character of sexuality and concupiscence after the fall. Augustine’s theology of sexuality and desire is not merely a function of his personal experience, pessimistic personality, or explorations in sexology. Rather, Augustine’s views on sexuality and embodiment flow from his bigger commitments regarding God, creation, and God’s original plan for humanity. In addition, this chapter has shown that Augustine’s dispute with Julian clearly brings out the relationship between his theological landscape and his views on sexuality, and the *c. Iul. imp.* proves to be crucial for understanding the contrast between the views of the two thinkers, a contrast which only helps to illuminate Augustine’s views.

As I showed in this chapter, Augustine thinks human beings are creatures whose nature cannot be understood without reference to the Creator. Creatures are mutable and changeable because they do not share God's nature as immutable and unchangeable. God's providence originally accounted for the mutability of human nature by providing human beings with the Tree of Life and by originally intending to elevate human beings from a good state to an even better state in the resurrection. While Adam's body was originally an animal body, his body would have become a spiritual body: that is, a body enlivened not merely by his own soul, but by the Spirit. Human beings rejected God's plan through the sin of Adam and Eve, and as a consequence God removed some of the gifts that sustained human beings in their original state. Human beings no longer enter the world in right relationship with God, and human beings no longer have the opportunity to eat from the Tree of Life in order to have their bodily health sustained by a special gift from God. As a result of the fall and the excommunication from Eden and the Tree of Life, human nature now experiences a dissociation of body and soul. The clearest evidence of this dissociation is death, where the body and soul fully separate from one another. Prior to death, human life is marked by a constant struggle between "spirit and flesh," and one significant piece of evidence testifying to that struggle is sexual desire. When the body and soul are reunited and invigorated by the Spirit in the resurrection, the struggle between spirit and flesh disappears forever and God's original plan finally comes to its intended perfection.

We can now begin to see why Augustine might think the human body is fallen and imperfect and potentially a cause of vitiated desires. The disruption in the life of the body caused by the fall is symptomatic of the broader disruption caused by Adam and Eve's disobedience. It should be no surprise, then, if Augustine thinks the body is a cause of some vitiated desires. My argument in the next chapter is that Augustine does indeed think the body causes desires. This argument would only

be possible after laying the groundwork of the present chapter. I have shown why Augustine might think the body is fallen and why the dispute with Julian helpfully illuminates Augustine's theological argument in favor of the claim that humanity has been affected by the fall, and the next chapter offers my full account for Augustine's understanding of desires of the body in fallen human nature.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIRES OF THE BODY

To be sure, that lustful disobedience which still dwells in our dying members sometimes moves itself as if by its own law, apart from the law of our will.

de civitate Dei I.25

INTRODUCTION

In chapter one I showed that there is an ongoing evaluative dispute over the merits of Augustine's thought on human sexuality. This evaluative dispute is often premised on underlying and sometimes unacknowledged interpretive disputes over what Augustine actually said about specific topics within his thought on sexuality. No topic is more disputed, both in terms of evaluation and interpretation, than Augustine's account of sexual concupiscence.

Chapter two argued that the best way to begin to advance our understanding of Augustine's claims about concupiscence is to set Augustine's account of human nature within his broader theological landscape. There I showed that Augustine's account of human nature is fundamentally shaped by his views on God, creation, and God's original plan for human nature. I placed a special focus was on the distinctiveness of the body in Augustine's understanding of Eden and the Resurrection. While the work of that chapter was hopefully uncontroversial, it was nonetheless necessary for this chapter and the next.

In chapter two I also showed that Augustine's views are very often developed in contrast to the challenges presented by Julian's theology, so attending to Augustine's anti-Julian works is essential in understanding Augustine's thought. Augustine holds, against Julian, that human nature was originally blessed by God with gifts outside of human nature itself, and those gifts provided human beings with a harmonious existence wherein their bodies and souls were integrated within

their harmonious relationship with creation, each other, and God. The fall is what happens when some of God's gifts are removed because human beings have rejected those gifts. Augustine's views on sexuality and concupiscence are, then, a specification of his broader account of this theological landscape.

Now that I have laid out my understanding of Augustine's foundational theological commitments, the present chapter takes up the question at the heart of this dissertation: does Augustine think the human body has its own desires? As I show below, scholars have offered three rival claims in answer to this question, and the stakes are high. Scholars not only want to interpret Augustine accurately, but, as we will see, the issue of whether Augustine ever escaped Manichaeism seems to be determined in large part by whether Augustine thinks the body causes desires.

This chapter argues that Augustine does indeed think the body has desires, that the concept of bodily desire fits well with Augustine's broader anthropology, and that Augustine's claims about bodily desire do not make him a crypto-Manichee. Building on the previous chapter, I think the concept of bodily desire fits well with Augustine's more general principle that "it was the fractured state of the human person—the conflict between body and soul—that was the real 'evil' brought about by sin."¹ That fracturing plays out significantly in the desires of the body.

Because much of Augustine's discussion of bodily desire centers around the concept of *concupiscentia carnis*, that term will feature prominently in this chapter. I will refer to the claim that the body has its own desires as the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis*, in order to contrast that interpretation with what has been called the metaphorical meaning of *concupiscentia carnis*. To be clear, no one could reasonably deny that Augustine sometimes uses *concupiscentia carnis* in the

¹ Hunter, "Augustine on the Body," 359.

metaphorical sense of vitiated or fleshly or worldly desire of the soul. The issue at stake is whether he also thinks *concupiscentia carnis* refers to desires of the body. Augustine thinks that bodily desires that merit the name *concupiscentia carnis* are also vitiated or fleshly or worldly, so the two meanings of *concupiscentia carnis* are not mutually exclusive. Yet, as I showed above, some scholars think that Augustine never uses *concupiscentia carnis* in its literal sense because he thinks that the body, in principle, cannot desire. I argue, however, that the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* is not only used frequently by Augustine, but it is actually central to his anthropology and fits well with his views on the relationship between the body and soul. Furthermore, while some have argued that anyone who says the body has sinful or vitiated desires is essentially guilty of Manichaeism, I argue that this claim is premised on a version of Manichaeism that Augustine would not accept. Augustine does not reject the Manichaean claim that the body has vitiated desires, but he instead rejects the Manichaean explanation for those bodily desires.

In the first section of the chapter I lay out the rival interpretations of Augustine on the issue of desires of the body. Some scholars claim Augustine thinks the body cannot, in principle, cause desires because Augustine's understanding of the relationship between body and soul is such that the body is incapable of desiring. Other scholars, however, do admit that Augustine thinks the body sometimes causes desires, but these scholars suggest this element of Augustine's is of only marginal significance. A third group of scholars, however, argue that the concept of desires of the body is central to Augustine's anthropology. Clearly not all three groups can be correct in their readings of Augustine. All three groups, however, seem to agree that the issue of bodily desire significantly determines how scholars evaluate Augustine's claims that he abandoned Manichaeism.

In the second section of the chapter I offer my own reading of the bodily element of *concupiscentia carnis* in Augustine's thought. I do so by focusing on two representative texts, *de nuptiis et concupiscentia* and *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*. I choose these texts both for their clarity in

revealing what Augustine means by *concupiscentia carnis*, and because the juxtaposition of these texts shows that Augustine holds a generally consistent view of *concupiscentia carnis* throughout his twelve-year dispute with Julian. I show that in these texts Augustine relies heavily on the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis*, and I show that the concept of bodily desire is not merely a footnote, but is instead essential to Augustine's theology of human nature, marriage and sexuality.

In the third section of this chapter I show how my reading of *concupiscentia carnis* fits with Augustine's broader anthropological commitments regarding human nature. Here I focus on two important issues in Augustinian scholarship: 1) whether Augustine thinks the body can desire without the soul; 2) how concupiscence relates to the human emotions in Augustine's thought. According to a number of scholars, Augustine's claim that the body cannot desire without the soul means that the body cannot desire. Thus, according to these scholars, *concupiscentia carnis* cannot, in principle, literally mean desire of the body. Relatedly, some scholars suggest that concupiscence is one of the movements of the soul referred to under the heading of emotions. These scholars suggest that, since concupiscence is a movement of the soul, it cannot be a desire of the body. My reading of *concupiscentia carnis* is in tension with these preceding claims, and in this section I show how my reading of Augustine responds to these issues and fits well with Augustine's broader anthropology.

In the fourth and final section I take up the issue of Augustine's alleged Manichaeism. Many scholars who discuss the issue of Augustine's alleged Manichaeism assume that if a thinker says the body has vitiated desires, then that person is at least a crypto-Manichee. Some scholars suggest that Augustine does not think the body has desires, so Augustine avoids Manichaeism. Other scholars, however, claim that Augustine relies heavily on the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis*, and Augustine likely lapses into Manichaeism. In this section I show that Augustine would

reject both of these claims, because he has a very different account of the fundamental problems with Manichaeism.

In this chapter I do not draw fine distinctions between Augustine's terms for desire, which reflects Augustine's own practice. *Libido*, *concupiscentia*, *concupiscentia carnis*—translated as lust, concupiscence, and concupiscence of the flesh—have overlapping meanings in Augustine's later works.² Which term Augustine uses is often specific to the individual text or even individual section of Augustine's text, and sometimes the variations in usage are due to the argument to which Augustine is responding or to Augustine's stylistic concerns. I generally use the English word concupiscence as my umbrella term, and when I change terms it is because Augustine has done so in the text I am reflecting on in the specific section below. I refer the reader to Timo Nisula's recent study on Augustine's terminology for desire, where Nisula expands on the earlier contributions of Gerald Bonner.³ As we will see, I think Augustine often uses the terms *libido* and *concupiscentia carnis* interchangeably as terms for desires of the body. This claim, however, is essential to the thesis of this chapter, so reflecting on it further here would get ahead of my argument.

THE INTERPRETIVE DISPUTE

As we saw in chapter one, and as I fill out below, there are a few rival interpretations of the nature of concupiscence in Augustine's system. According to some scholars, Augustine thinks the body cannot cause desires, so concupiscence is exclusively caused by the soul or will. According to

² The term "cupiditas" does not seem to come up in the material I engage in this chapter, though this word too is roughly synonymous with *libido* and *concupiscentia* in Augustine's usage.

³ Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, esp. 15-18 and 35-57. For Bonner, see "Concupiscentia" in *Augustinus-Lexikon* vol. 1 ed. Cornelius Mayer (Basel, Germany: Schwabe & Co AG, 1986-1994), 1113-1122 and *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*. Revised Edition (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 1986), 398-401.

others, Augustine thinks the body does cause some desires, but those desires are of marginal importance in Augustine's theology. Still others claim, however, that Augustine thinks desires of the body are at the heart of fallen human life.

Some scholars insist that Augustine's claims about *concupiscentia carnis* are absolutely not a reference to literal desires of the body, because Augustine thinks the body cannot, in principle, desire. William Babcock, for instance, advances this interpretation. For Babcock, a key to understanding Augustine's thoughts on desire is Augustine's claim that the "flesh desires nothing except through the soul," which, to Babcock, means that "desire of the flesh is said to oppose the spirit only because the soul itself strives against the spirit through its own fleshly desire."⁴

According to Babcock, "[Augustine] does not assign the desires of the flesh to an alien nature, to the body, or even to any lesser part of the soul that cannot be fully identified with the self."⁵ Babcock is joined by a number of others in this reading of Augustine.⁶

⁴ Babcock, "Augustine and the Spirituality of Desire," 192.

⁵ Ibid., 193.

⁶ Jesse Couenhoven argues that, according to Augustine, "the flesh cannot desire without the soul, so when [Augustine] speaks of the flesh desiring, he means that the soul desires in a carnal manner." See Jesse Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ: Agency, Necessity, and Culpability in Augustinian Theology* (New York: Oxford, 2013), 32. William Schumacher also argues that the body is not the subject of desire in Augustine. According to Schumacher, the distinction between spirit and flesh is "a moral and not a metaphysical distinction." The term "flesh" (*caro*) in Augustine's usage "might be called a figurative use of the word. It does not signify the human body nor the senses as such...rather, it indicates our perverse will which is unduly influenced by material aspects of our life and experience." See Schumacher, *Spiritus and Spiritualis: A Study in the Sermons of Saint Augustine* (Mundelein: Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary Press, 1957), 120-121. Margaret Miles draws on the work of Schumacher to support her argument: "Concupiscentia is existential. It is the operational condition and emotional evidence of a radical disjunction in human nature, a contradiction, insulting to human reason, between our actions, which are rationally chosen and painstakingly designed to ensure our happiness, and the fact that this happiness does not follow from our actions." (76). See Miles, *Augustine on the Body*, American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series no. 31 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 70-77, esp. 70 on concupiscentia as a problem of the soul. Stephen Duffy also echoes Schumacher: "Augustine departs from classical theory and views the cardinal passions, desire and delight, fear and grief, not as eruptions into the mind from the irrational part of the soul or from the body but as affective modalities of will. The biblical category 'flesh' denotes for Augustine not mere sensual indulgence, a case of the inferior seducing the superior, but a fault within the mind itself....[T]o charge Augustine with Manicheism is to wrongly take his existential descriptions of the ambiguity pervading conflicted human being as definitions of what constitutes the metaphysical essence of a human being. Like Paul, whose spirit/flesh antithesis is a moral and not a metaphysical distinction, Augustine asserts a radical moral conflict within human being, not a clash of opposing, independent substances." See "Anthropology," in *ATTA* 29-30. Peter Burnell's view seems to morph, but in his book *The Augustinian Person* he claims the body does not desire: "What we

Others scholars suggest that Augustine does think the body has its own desires, but these scholars suggest that bodily desire in Augustine's thought is only of marginal importance. Augustine's overwhelming concern is to show that vitiated desires come primarily from the person's soul. In this strand of the literature it is quite common to hear that Augustine has a "psychological" account of desire that is in contrast with Julian's "physiological" account. Perhaps the psychological vs. physiological trope traces its roots to Peter Brown's biography of Augustine, where Brown contrasts Augustine's "strictly psychological" account of concupiscence with Julian's "physiological" account of concupiscence.⁷ Brown writes, "Unlike Julian's *calor genitalis*, Augustine's *concupiscentia carnis* was not a physiological drive, safely confined to the body."⁸ Brown fills out his account of Augustine's emphasis on the psychological element of *concupiscentia carnis* in *The Body and Society*:

The uncontrollable elements in sexual desire revealed the working in the human person of a *concupiscentia carnis*, of a permanent flaw in the soul that tilted it irrevocably towards the flesh....Augustine was exceptionally careful to point out...that *the flesh* was not simply the body: it was all that led the self to prefer its own will to that of God....The *concupiscentia carnis*, indeed, was such a peculiarly tragic affliction to Augustine precisely because it had so little to do with the body. It originated in a lasting distortion of the soul itself.⁹

While Brown certainly recognizes that Augustine thinks the body itself is fallen and does have some role to play in sexual desire, Brown suggests that Augustine tends to place the emphasis on the non-bodily elements of concupiscence. While this emphasis on the "psychological" side of desire does

experience as if it were a disobedience of the body to the soul...is in fact an internal disobedience in the soul (*CD* 14.15). This real disorder gives us the illusion that the trouble emerges along a line of division between soul and body." See Peter Burnell, *The Augustinian Person* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 33-34. According to Paul Rigby, "Augustine did not condemn the body....The notion of the body as in conflict with the soul, or as the means by which the soul is either dragged down, or once down is held down, are notions repugnant to Augustine. The division is in the will, not in the nature. It is always the same soul willing different ends, whether eternal or ephemeral or both. It is the will that wills carnally, just as it is the will that wills spiritually. The will is not bound by the body. It binds itself, and being habituated so to will, it cannot stop willing and unbind itself." See Rigby, "Original Sin," *ATTA*, 611.

⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 391.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁹ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 418.

not deny the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis*, it implicitly suggests that literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* is not very important in Augustine's thought. Other scholars offer similar emphases in their readings of Augustine.¹⁰

Still other scholars, however, suggest that Augustine's claims about the desires of the body are central to his anthropology, because Augustine thinks one of the most significant effects of the fall is the body's ability to desire independently of any rational input from the soul. David G. Hunter is probably the most notable advocate of this interpretation: "What went wrong [in the Fall], according to Augustine, was precisely a fracture of the original unity and harmony between body and soul that characterized the first human beings.... This split within the person—that is, the soul's loss of control over the body in [sexuality]—was, for Augustine, a just punishment.... Although the sin of Adam and Eve did not involve sexual relations, the effects of this sin were felt directly in the 'animal instinct' (*bestiale motum*) now present in their bodies."¹¹ Hunter sums up his view: "human beings

¹⁰ According to John Rist, "Augustine offered a partly psychological and also erotic account of arousal in both males and females, [whereas] Julian's picture is more or less physiological." See Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, 322. Although Rist does mention in passing that concupiscence is related to the body, he does not expand on that aspect of Augustine's thought (ibid., 322-323). In fact, Rist takes Julian to task for being too physiologically focused and not recognizing Augustine's emphasis on the psychological elements of concupiscence (ibid., 96). In addition to Brown and Rist, Paula Fredriksen emphasizes the psychological side of concupiscence. Fredriksen certainly does recognize that the fall affected the body as well as the soul. And she even says explicitly that "[Adam and Eve's] bodies, subjected involuntarily to carnal concupiscence, rebelled against themselves." Yet she does not develop this bodily aspect of concupiscence, but instead reminds the reader that Augustine's views on the body are not Manichaean: "for Augustine, 'spirit' and 'flesh' are primarily moral categories." Fredriksen emphasizes that "flesh" does not simply mean "body" for Augustine. She goes on to suggest that "by so focusing on sexuality, and insisting that as now constituted it was the symptom of the Fall *par excellence*, Augustine, curiously, dignified it, making it an essential, not detachable, aspect of human existence; elevating it from the realm of the purely biological to the conflicted, compulsive, indeed uniquely human world of the psychological. Sex to Julian is reproductive biology; sex to Augustine is eroticism." Fredriksen does not say much about whatever concupiscence has to do with the body itself, instead emphasizing the way concupiscence is an experience of the soul. See Paula Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul Against the Manichees and the Pelagians," in *Recherches Augustiniennes* vol. 23 (1988), 111-112. While John Cavadini does not take up the psychological/physiological trope, he does significantly downplay the bodily elements of concupiscence. Cavadini writes: "Augustine... points out that tendencies to sin do not come from the body, certainly not from the body as originally constituted, and not even primarily from the mortal bodies we have inherited from Adam, but from the soul itself.... Thus the Manichaean and Platonist temptation to theorize that they do in fact come from somewhere else, to wit, the body." See Cavadini, "Feeling Right," 198. As I show below, J. Patout Burns argues that Cavadini fails to attend to the importance of bodily desire in Augustine's thought. See Burns, "Marital Fidelity as a *Remedium Concupiscentiae*," 30 n. 148.

¹¹ Hunter, "Augustine on the Body," 359.

are born with the same ‘bestial motion’ in their members, which operates independently of rational control by the human mind or will.”¹² Hunter is joined by others in this reading of Augustine.¹³

These three kinds of interpretations are in tension with one another, and the first seems incompatible with the other two. Those tensions alone would justify investigation into the topic. Further motivating this chapter is my judgment that the three types of interpretation often function as parallel tracks that do not intersect. The three types of interpretation are rarely placed in significant dialogue with the others.

For a kind of snapshot of the state of scholarship on *concupiscentia carnis*, one can turn to two roughly contemporaneous books, both of which are devoted to Augustine’s anthropology. The two books make incompatible claims about the issue of desires of the body in Augustine’s thought, with one saying the body is the fundamental cause of many vitiated desires, and the other saying that the body in principle cannot cause desires. Yet neither book treats the other kind of interpretation as one demanding significant engagement.

¹² Hunter, “Marriage,” *ATTA*, 536.

¹³ Hunter also argues, regarding the work *de continentia* that “Augustine insists that both the flesh and the spirit are created by a good God and are therefore good in themselves....The flesh itself is no enemy, although the spirit must resist the vices of the flesh that are a wound or imperfection in its nature....Against the Manichees Augustine presents continence not as a hostile assault on the body, but as a healthy chastisement.” See Hunter, “*Continentia, De*,” *ATTA*, 248. Peter Burnell writes: “[Augustine] is certain that the seat of concupiscence is both the soul and the body (*Gn. litt.* 10.12.20)....His particular concern is to show that the biblical text does not exempt the soul from being a seat of concupiscence, whereas he takes it as obvious from the text that the body is. Thus the seat of concupiscence is the entire person” (“Concupiscence,” *ATTA*, 226). William Mann argues that the consequences of the fall are essentially physical: “According to Augustine the condition [of inheriting original sin] includes dispossession from a naturally perfect environment, the loss of natural immortality and the acquisition of susceptibility to physical pain, fatigue, disease, aging, and rebellious bodily disorders, especially sexual lust....Augustine’s view, then, is that our first ancestors squandered their patrimony and our inheritance and—as if that were not bad enough—thereby contracted a suite of infirmities that is passed on to all their progeny....The infirmities are physical: Augustine appears not to think that the penalties of original sin include any intrinsic diminution of the soul’s active abilities, such as the abilities to reason and will....Even so, the physical infirmities have made it harder for humans to exercise their souls’ abilities correctly.” See Mann, “Augustine on Evil and Original Sin,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 47.

In Andrea Nightingale's 2011 book *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body*, the author argues that when Augustine refers to concupiscence of the flesh, he is in fact suggesting the body itself has desires. In the following quote Nightingale makes her case:

In dealing with the Pelagians (and especially Julian of Eclanum), Augustine could not argue, as he did in other texts, that flesh was a moral category. Here the issue was biological....In Augustine's view, Paul indicated that the flesh is permanently infected with sin....In Eden, Adam and Eve had bodies that were perfect and immortal. After they sinned, they and all their descendants were punished with mortal and unruly flesh....The body is not an alien or evil substance by nature, as the Manichaeans suggested. Still, it does have a 'carnal affect' that makes it resistant to full control.¹⁴

Nightingale suggests that a central claim of Augustine's anthropology is that the fall has led to the body having bad desires: "Once Adam and Eve eat the fruit, they experience the 'disease' (*morbus*) of lust, which turns their eyes toward each others' [*sic*] genitals. They feel a 'stirring movement' that is not in accord with their mind or their will. At this point, the body operates in opposition to the will."¹⁵ In other words, "After the fall, the genitals became resistant to the human will" and this is "evidence of the sinful, unruly body."¹⁶

For an example of the desires of the body, Nightingale points to Augustine's account of sexual desire in dreams: "One could argue...that consenting to sexual impulses is entirely a matter of the will. But the bodily impulses are brought upon by visual images that come from the physical realm and are lodged in the memory."¹⁷ Here Nightingale emphasizes the purely passive character of the sexual response mechanism: images of sex in a dream lead immediately to sexual arousal, without any kind of thoughts intervening.

¹⁴ Andrea Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 217.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

Nightingale does not present her account of bodily desire as a controversial reading of Augustine, nor does she engage at length alternative interpretations of the issue of desires of the body, since there are no references nor footnotes admitting that others have offered quite different interpretations of Augustine's account of *concupiscentia carnis*.¹⁸ Nightingale, however, is certainly in good company in her interpretation of Augustine on this issue.

In stark contrast to Nightingale, Sarah Byers offers a totally different reading of the issue of desires of the body in her 2013 book *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*. Byers claims that Augustine thinks all desires, and all emotions more generally, are caused by the inner workings of the soul and are not in any way caused by the workings of the body.¹⁹ On Byers' reading, Augustine's anthropology is such that it would be impossible for the body to be the initial cause of desires. According to Byers, "Augustine typically talks as if all affects are effects of cognitive processes. Even preliminary passions Augustine describes as arising exclusively from a dubitative sayable in an impression, with the feeling being the result of" the doubt (by dubitative sayable, Byers means doubt about the value of an eternal good in comparison to an earthly good).²⁰ Regarding anger and sadness, Byers claims "anger might indeed include the release of adrenaline, and sadness involve chemical changes in the brain; but these processes are caused by thoughts—it is not the other way around."²¹ Byers applies the same principle to the issue of desire, claiming that

¹⁸ For instance, in her initial section on the fall, Nightingale offers no reference to any alternative interpretation of the meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* (ibid., 38-42). In her appendix devoted to the meaning of "flesh" and "body" in Augustine, Nightingale acknowledges awareness of disputes over what *Paul* meant by the terms, but does not acknowledge any significant disagreement in scholarship over what Augustine meant by those terms or whether Augustine thought the body could desire (ibid., 211-217).

¹⁹ Sarah Catherine Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine: A Stoic-Platonic Synthesis* (New York: Cambridge, 2013).

²⁰ Ibid., 79.

²¹ Ibid.

even lust “is caused by thoughts” and not changes in the body.²² Even when Augustine seems to say explicitly that lust is sometimes caused by the body itself, Byers suggests that Augustine’s claim is “anomalous” and not representative of Augustine’s true position.²³

In a line that summarizes the ambivalence one sometimes finds in scholarship about rival interpretations of the issue of bodily desires in Augustine, Byers offers her reading of Augustine on desires of the body and then laconically gestures toward Nightingale’s argument with just four words in a footnote: “Compare and contrast Nightingale.”²⁴ Byers lists the page numbers for Nightingale’s appendix on desires of the body, but Byers offers no other comments on Nightingale or any other scholarly readings in line with Nightingale. Byers, however, like Nightingale, could cite a number of good scholars in defense of her reading of Augustine.

Whatever the explanation for Byers’ and Nightingale’s omission of engagement with rival readings of Augustine, the fact remains that the two authors make fundamentally incompatible claims about how to interpret Augustine. That these two authors offer such starkly different readings of the same Augustinian concept without admitting a significant tension with other types of interpretation of Augustine suggests the need for further study, and hence the need for this chapter.

Two more recent rival interpretations of *concupiscentia carnis* further demonstrate not only the interpretive disagreement, but also the significance of the topic of bodily desires. Jesse Couenhoven, like Byers, argues that Augustine thinks the body cannot not cause desires. According to Couenhoven, “when Augustine calls concupiscence ‘of the flesh,’ he is only using a metaphor.”²⁵ In his 2013 book *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ: Agency, Necessity, and Culpability in Augustinian Theology*,

²² Ibid., 79 n. 118.

²³ Ibid., 79.

²⁴ Ibid., 122 n. 118.

²⁵ Couenhoven, “St. Augustine’s Doctrine of Original Sin,” *Augustinian Studies* 36:2 (2005), 374.

Couenhoven argues that Augustine's anthropology is such that "the flesh cannot desire without the soul, so when [Augustine] speaks of the flesh desiring, he means that the soul desires in a carnal manner."²⁶ In other words, like Byers, Couenhoven thinks *concupiscentia carnis* must be a metaphor because the claim that the body has desires is incompatible with Augustine's understanding of the nature of desire and the human person: "the flesh cannot desire without the soul." Because the body cannot truly desire in Augustine's anthropology, "Augustine has sometimes been misread as, implicitly or explicitly, blaming the body for sin."²⁷ From Couenhoven's perspective, it would be problematic to blame the body for sin, so it is important to recognize that Augustine does not in fact blame the body for sin since Augustine thinks the body cannot desire.

Lenka Karfíková, on the other hand, suggests the concept of concupiscence very often does mean desires of the body in Augustine's thought. In her 2012 book *Grace and the Will According to Augustine*, the author admits that the early Augustine saw concupiscence as essentially "carnal habit" or the divided will.²⁸ However, in his anti-Pelagian works, "Augustine maintains that concupiscence, which remains and persists in the mortal body even after baptism, is the source of ongoing transgressions."²⁹ According to Karfíková concupiscence is often a "conflict of the body and mind."³⁰ Karfíková goes on to suggest that for Augustine "[a]lthough concupiscence is overcome by love poured out in to the hearts of men through the Holy Spirit, it still remains in the

²⁶ Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ*, 32.

²⁷ Ibid., 32.

²⁸ Lenka Karfíková, *Grace and the Will According to Augustine*, trans. Markéta Janebová, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae vol. 115 (Boston: Brill, 2012), 35-40.

²⁹ Ibid., 179; also 194.

³⁰ Ibid., 316.

mortal body and cannot be eradicated completely in this life.”³¹ Furthermore, from Karfíková’s perspective, it is precisely the later Augustine’s claim that the body does desire that leads Augustine into an intellectual problem. According to Karfíková, the fact that concupiscence is bodily, but is not part of the person’s self until he consents to the body’s desires, is “bizarre argumentation.”³²

In sum, the differing interpretations of Augustine lead scholars to very different judgments about the intellectual success of Augustine’s thought on concupiscence.³³ If Augustine says the body does desire, then Augustine seems to cause himself intellectual problems. Thus much is at stake in determining whether Augustine does think the body causes desires.

Further demonstrating the consequences of differing readings of Augustine, still other scholars make the intellectual problem facing Augustine more explicit: the looming shadow of Manichaeism. For the sake of argument, let us stipulate that being a Manichee is a bad thing to be. According to Paula Fredriksen, Augustine, “in order to avoid the charge of Manichaeism, insisted that the seat of sin was in the soul, not the body.”³⁴ William Babcock shares the same judgment. According to Babcock, the claim that Augustine thinks the body has desires that remain throughout one’s life “might be taken as an intimation that Augustine has tacitly embedded [vitiated

³¹ Ibid., 265; 271.

³² Ibid., 301. Timo Nisula draws out a similar criticism from Augustine’s views on bodily concupiscence: “In essence, the reciprocity of *concupiscentia* as a bodily disobedience for a theological disobedience of Adam and Eve was a piece that fit too well” within Augustine’s other theological commitments. See Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, 134-135.

³³ Dominic Keech offers an in-depth accounting of Augustine’s morphing treatment of *concupiscentia carnis*, but Keech does not give the reader much sense of where Augustine stands on the issue of whether concupiscence is a desire of the body. Keech notes that in Augustine’s early works “Augustine’s growing attention to the corporeal language of Scripture to describe sin and the narrative of Adam’s historic Fall result in a blurring of the distinction between the will and the flesh,” but Keech does not pick up this issue in his later treatment of Augustine’s late texts (Keech, *Anti-Pelagian Christology*, 78). Keech no doubt has other concerns, but his account of Augustine and Julian’s Christology would benefit from a clarification of whether Augustine thinks the distinctiveness of Christ’s flesh is in part Christ’s lack of bodily desire. See Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo: 396-430*, esp. 70-105.

³⁴ Paula Fredriksen, “Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul Against the Manichees and the Pelagians,” in *Recherches Augustiniennes* vol. 23 (1988), 107.

desires] in the flesh or in the body as in an alien nature inflicted on the self.”³⁵ This reading would suggest “that Augustine has veered dangerously in the Manichaean direction.”³⁶ Babcock, however, argues that Augustine does not think the body causes desires, so Augustine avoids Manichaeism.

Other interpreters, however, think Augustine was a bit too close for comfort to Manichaeism. According to Nightingale, Augustine’s emphasis on bodily desire shows that “Augustine was walking a fine line between Manichaean and Pelagian doctrines.”³⁷ David Kelly argues that “Augustine locates ‘concupiscentia carnis’ in sexual potency and excitement. Julian’s charge is accurate: Augustine affirms an evil quality in sexual pleasure itself.”³⁸ By doing this, Augustine “opens himself to charges of Manicheism,” and Kelly seems to think these charges stick.³⁹ It seems to a number of scholars that whether or not Augustine thinks the body has desires determines whether or not Augustine was guilty of crypto-Manichaeism.⁴⁰

³⁵ Babcock, “Augustine and the Spirituality of Desire,” 192.

³⁶ Ibid., 192.

³⁷ Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature*, 217.

³⁸ Kelly, “Sexuality and Concupiscence in Augustine,” 95.

³⁹ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁰ In addition to these authors, others articulate the question of Augustine’s Manichaeism in terms of the issue of whether or not Augustine thinks the body can desire. James Wetzel, in *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, seems to suggest Augustine thinks of *concupiscentia carnis* as something internal to the soul and not of the body, and the reason Augustine has to say this is his concerns about Manichaeism: “*prudentia carnis*...does not mean that the flesh judges instead of the mind. Such a suggestion would come perilously close to the Manichaean dualism of souls. Augustine cautions readers of Paul not to conclude that ‘some nature, which God did not create, vents hostility against God’ (ibid., 149). Although here Wetzel rightly recognizes that Augustine’s problem with the Manichees is their suggestion that human beings have two natures, Wetzel at the same time suggests that Augustine also thinks that “[s]ince God created the flesh, the flesh cannot be the source of evil in disobedience” (ibid., 149 n. 60). For Augustine, “Paul serves the law of God with his mind (*mens*), the law of sin with his flesh (*caro*). For Augustine this means that Paul no longer gratifies his misguided desires, but instead overrules their influence in his acting and serves the law of God. The desires nevertheless continue to inhabit his will” (ibid., 173). When Wetzel takes up the Pauline claim about the struggle between the spirit and the flesh, he reads it as “opposition in the will between flesh and spirit” (ibid., 185). See Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge, 1992). Louis Bouyer seems to suggest that Augustine ended up in a kind of implicit Manichaeism: Augustine roots sexual problems “in our material nature [rather] than in our weakness of will.” See Bouyer, *The Seat of Wisdom*, trans. Fr. A. V. Littledale (New York: Pantheon, 1962), 73. Elizabeth Clark suggests that

A few related issues emerge out of this brief review of some of the literature on *concupiscentia carnis* and bodily desire. First and primary is the basic interpretive issue, which centers around the following question: does Augustine think the body can desire? As the works discussed above show, scholars offer very confident answers to this question, and yet those answers are very often incompatible with the answers of other scholars. One could read one book and learn that Augustine absolutely does not think the body can desire, and one could read another book and learn that bodily desire is essential to Augustine's entire concept of fallen human nature. Both claims, of course, cannot be true.

A second and related issue centers around a question about Augustine's broader anthropology: how does Augustine's account of the relationship between body and soul help to answer the question of whether the body can desire? According to some scholars, Augustine seems to say that the soul alone is responsible for all desire, because Augustine's account of the relationship between body and soul entails that the body cannot have its own desires. For other scholars, however, Augustine seems to say the relationship between the body and soul is such that

Julian showed that Augustine became "more 'Manichean'" over the course of their debate. See Clark, "Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichean Past," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 294. Alan Soble seems to broaden the charge: "Augustine writes that lust had an unwanted effect for him, that it 'polluted' love....In this 'pollution of love by lust, is there a trace of residual Manichaeism in Augustine?" (Alan G. Soble, "Correcting Some Misconceptions About St. Augustine's Sex Life," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 11 no. 4 (Oct. 2002), 555 n. 31). Mathijs Lamberigts suggests that Augustine was not Manichean because Augustine rooted *concupiscentia carnis* in both body and soul: "in contrast to the Manichaeans, Augustine did not view the *concupiscentia carnis* as an element of corrupt matter, but rather as affecting the entire person, insofar as he is wounded in both body and soul" (Lamberigts, "A Critical Evaluation of Augustine's View of Sexuality," 181). John Burnaby argues that Augustine "in the main...did avoid the Manichaeism with which Julian so constantly taunted him. The evil of concupiscence is the war in our members, and this war is a fault, a *vitium*, but it is not, properly speaking, sin: it is only 'called' sin because it is both the effect of sin and the occasion, the 'daughter' and the 'mother' of sin" (Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 191). Stephen J. Duffy argues that the distinction between pre and post-lapsarian human nature avoids the implication that Augustine's account of concupiscence is Manichean: "concupiscence, prescinding from the Fall, can be perceived as the natural power of desire and therefore as good, not sinful. But concupiscence can also be seen as the surge of undisciplined appetites running wild after the Fall, a rampant narcissism. This distinction between prelapsarian and postlapsarian concupiscence fends off both the Manichean identification of sin with an evil nature and the Pelagian oversimplification of sin as purely accidental and merely conscious bad choice." See Duffy, "Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988), 605.

the body does indeed cause some temptations and desires in the person. Those two claims, of course, also cannot both be true.

There is yet a third issue that emerges, summed up in the following question: does saying that the body has desires mean that one is a Manichee? Many of Augustine's critics and defenders answer this question with a resounding "yes," and whether or not Augustine ends up being a Manichee depends on the answer to the first question about whether he thinks the body can desire.

In sum, scholars are in significant disagreement about whether Augustine thinks the body can desire, and the rival claims about this issue turn in large part on any given scholar's account of Augustine's broader anthropology. The disagreement matters not only because everyone wants to get Augustine right, but also because the consequences of getting Augustine right seem to determine whether Augustine is a crypto-Manichee. Whether Augustine thinks the body has desires, then, is a significant issue, both for the sake of the proper interpretation of Augustine's account of concupiscence and for Augustine's legacy and contemporary relevance. Answering this question by both engaging Augustine's texts and adjudicating the differing accounts of scholars will advance the scholarly understanding of Augustine. The next section argues that Augustine does indeed think concupiscence is very often a desire of the body.

AUGUSTINE ON *CONCUPISCENTIA CARNIS* AS DESIRE OF THE BODY

A number of scholars suggest either that Augustine holds that the body cannot desire or that the desires of the body are of only marginal significance in Augustine's thought. I think a close reading of Augustine's first and last major anti-Julian works shows that these interpretations of Augustine are not the best way to make sense of Augustine's texts. The purpose of this section is to show that in book I of *de nuptiis et concupiscentia* and in the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, Augustine

argues quite strongly that the body has desires and that any good account of human nature and sexuality must make sense of the desires of the body.

In this section I intend to show two things. First, I intend to show that in the two bookends to Augustine's anti-Julian writings, Augustine does in fact argue that the body has desires. Secondly, I intend to show that Augustine's concept of bodily desire is crucial to his account of human nature and marriage. I do not think that Augustine says the body cannot desire, nor does Augustine think bodily desire is a marginal issue. Bodily desire is at the heart of Augustine's account of human nature and marriage.

As Nisula points out, the emphasis on bodily desire is especially apparent in Augustine's anti-Pelagian works.⁴¹ The first work in Augustine's anti-Julian period is a book aimed at expanding on the claim that concupiscence is often a bodily desire that cannot be eradicated until the resurrection. Book I of *nupt. et conc.*, which was initially published separately from book II, is written "to distinguish...the goodness of marriage from the evil of *concupiscentia carnis* on account of which a human being who is born through it contracts original sin" (*nupt. et conc.* I.1,1 [28]). In this book Augustine is at pains to establish that *concupiscentia carnis* is indeed something that dwells in the body itself, and the recognition of this reality is essential to Augustine's account of good theology.⁴²

As he does in virtually all his works on sexuality, in book I of *nupt. et conc.* Augustine uses speculation on Eden to provide the theological content of an alternative vision of human flourishing

⁴¹ Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, 113-116. Karfíková, also argues that bodily desire is particularly emphasized in Augustine's later works. See Karfíková, *Grace and the Will According to Augustine*, 179.

⁴² Augustine wants to show his reader that *concupiscentia carnis* dwells in the body because he has to explain a few related theological issues that could not be explained without the claim that *concupiscentia carnis* exists in the body and cannot be eradicated in this life. First, he has to explain why infants need baptism even though they have not committed any personal sins (*nupt. et conc.* I.20,22 [43]). He also needs to explain why baptized parents do not produce holy children (*nupt. et conc.* I.19,21 [42]). Thirdly, he needs to explain why marriage and intercourse are still permitted even though they result in condemned children and necessarily require *concupiscentia carnis*. Finally, Augustine needs to explain why the resurrection is so crucial to the story of Christian redemption (*nupt. et conc.* I.18,20 [41]). *Concupiscentia carnis* an essential part of Augustine's explanation of all these issues.

against which to contrast human life in the present age. Eden is central to Augustine's analysis because, through Adam's sin, "there was a great change for the worse in [Adam's] human nature. From that moment he made the whole human race a wild olive tree," meaning that every human, like an olive tree, necessarily requires the pruning and cultivation that fosters the domestication that is the life of virtue and holiness (*nupt. et conc.* I.32,37 [51]).

One central change that came through the fall is the presence of vitiated concupiscence: "this shameful desire, which the impudent impudently praise, would not have existed, even if no one had sinned. Children would have been conceived without this disease in the body of that former life, though they cannot now be conceived without it in the body of this death" (*nupt. et conc.* I.1,1 [28]). While marriage and children would have existed in paradise, the "*carnalis concupiscentiae malum*" would absolutely not have been present (*nupt. et conc.* I.1,1 [Latin: CSEL 42, 211]). When Adam and Eve sinned, "*the eyes of both of them were opened...*, in the sense that their attention was drawn to notice and recognize the new condition that came about in their body" (*nupt. et conc.* I.5,6 [31; italics in original]). This bodily change was a new disobedience of their "members": "It was when human beings transgressed the law that they first began to have another law in their members resisting their mind, and they experienced the evil of their disobedience when they discovered the disobedience of their own flesh as their rightful retribution" (*nupt. et conc.* I.6,7 [32]).

Concupiscentia carnis is the just punishment for a soul that was disobedient to God: "it was unjust that their servants, that is, their bodies, should obey them, when they did not obey their Lord" (*nupt. et conc.* I.6,7 [32]). In a passage echoing book XIV of *civ. Dei*, Augustine observes that the mind can control so many parts of the body, but it cannot control the reproductive organs (*nupt. et conc.* I.6,7 [32]). Augustine seems to think there is a kind of divine wisdom in this punishment: "Where would human nature be more suitably shown that it was corrupted in punishment for its disobedience than in these disobedient parts through which our nature continues to exist through

reproduction” (*nupt. et conc.* I.6,7 [32])? Humans rightly experience shame at this disharmony between their bodies and their souls, since that disharmony is not only an indication of a lack of true humanity, but it is also an ineradicable sign of human sin (*nupt. et conc.* I.6,7 [32]). Somehow the body is now disobedient after the fall. As Nisula rightly says, “Due to their primary disobedience, Adam and Eve were punished by a secondary, bodily disobedience; because they were tempted to desire what was not theirs to desire, they were inflicted with a base, sensual movement of fleshly concupiscence.”⁴³

In *nupt. et conc.* Augustine identifies concupiscence with “the law of sin in the sinful flesh” described by the Apostle in Romans 7:23: “*But I see another law in my members that resists the law of my mind*” (*nupt. et conc.* I.30,34 [49]; italics in original). It is not the “structure of the body” that is the law of sin, since that claim would seem to be Manichaean by making the body evil in its very created nature. Rather, Paul “called the flesh that in which there is found the morbid inclination of the flesh” (*nupt. et conc.* I.31,35 [49]). One might think “morbid inclination” here refers to the metaphorical meaning of *concupiscentia carnis*, but Augustine says explicitly that he is discussing the human body when he speaks of the flesh: while the body of the baptized is “already the temple of God,” it is nonetheless true that “if our flesh were in no way held captive...under the law of sin, that is, under its concupiscence, how could the words of the same apostle be true? He says that we *await the adoption, the redemption of our body* (Rom 8:23)...What are we to understand here but that *the body which is being corrupted weighs down the soul* (Wis 9:15)” (*nupt. et conc.* I.31,35 [49]; italics in original)? In other words, as the temple of God, the body is good, but as something held captive under the law of sin, the body is problematic and requires redemption.

⁴³ Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, 101.

When Augustine says that the body is no longer under the control of the soul, one might think Augustine considers the body to be a kind of defective tool. That is, the body might be something that has no agency of its own and is problematic only because it cannot be manipulated in the desired way. This interpretation, however, is not quite right. Augustine thinks the problem with the body is both that it cannot be fully influenced by the soul and that the body has its own kind of desires. In a reflection on the difference of the resurrected body, Augustine argues that the problem with fallen bodies is that they have desires independent of the soul:

Therefore, when we receive back the body as incorruptible, we will be fully set free from the body of this death....Hence, we understand that it pertains to the body of this death that another law in the members resists the law of the mind, while *the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit*, even though it does not hold the mind in subjection, and *the spirit* also has desires opposed *to the flesh* (Gal 5:17). And so, though the law of sin holds something of our flesh captive so that it resists the law of the mind, it does not reign in our body, even though it is mortal, if we do not obey its desires. After all, enemies against whom one fights are often losers in battle and yet, though defeated, hold something in their power. And though a part of our flesh is held captive under the law of sin, it still has the hope of redemption, because in eternal beatitude nothing at all of sinful concupiscence will remain, but our flesh will remain, after it has been healed of that plague and disease and has been completely clothed with immortality (*nupt. et conc.* I.31,35 [49-50; italics in original]).

The “disease” of *concupiscentia carnis* “remains in the body of this death” and does so “until all our weakness is healed, as the renewal of the interior self progresses from day to day until that day when the exterior self puts on incorruptibility” (*nupt. et conc.* I.25,28 [46]). This disease “holds something of our flesh captive” but “it does not reign in our body...if we do not obey its desires.” Like an enemy one fights in battle, the desires of the body can be defeated even though they do put up a fight. In fact they must be battled precisely because they do put up a fight. Resistance to the body’s desires is needed if bodily desire is not to reign. Only in the resurrection “when we receive back the body as incorruptible” will this fight be fully finished.

For Augustine, bodily concupiscence is experienced as a causal force independent of the soul: “one waits for *libido* to move [the genital organs] as if they were independent, and sometimes it does

not move them, though the mind wills it, and at other times it does, when the mind is against it”

(*nupt. et conc.* I.6,7 [32; Latin: CSEL 42, 218). *Concupiscentia carnis* is able to move the person even if the mind is opposed, because it “has, after all, a certain activity, even when one does not offer it the assent of the heart” (*nupt. et conc.* I.27,30 [47]). This activity is “evil and shameful desires” (*nupt. et conc.* I.27,30 [47]). This desire, “[w]hether it follows upon or precedes the will,” cannot in principle be moved by the will, but rather “has to be moved, not by free choice, but by some seductive stimulus” outside of the person (*nupt. et conc.* I.24,27 [45]). This “morbid inclination of the flesh” threatens the life of virtue and is a kind of defect in the body, though it does not condemn the entirety of the body (*nupt. et conc.* I.31,35 [49]). It seems Augustine thinks concupiscence is a desire of the body independent of the will.

That concupiscence is in large part a bodily desire is confirmed by what Augustine goes on to say about the inevitability of concupiscence, even in the baptized, and even in the holiest people. According to Augustine, “the shameful concupiscence of the flesh...necessarily exists in the body of this death” (*nupt. et conc.* I.16,18 [40]). In fact, sex cannot happen without *concupiscentia carnis*: “The fact that [marriage] now has such desire connected with it is not a matter of will, but of necessity, for in procreating children one cannot without it attain the result that one wills” (*nupt. et conc.* I.8,9 [33]). The emphasis on the necessary existence of concupiscence is no small point: as long as one is embodied, the body will have its own movements independent of one’s control.

Perhaps surprisingly, in book I of *nupt. et conc.* Augustine draws on his account of bodily *concupiscentia carnis* to construct a vision for virtuous sex. Augustine does not say virtuous sex is sex in which *concupiscentia carnis* is absent. He does not think *concupiscentia carnis* can be fully eradicated in this life, even with growth in virtue or the help of God’s grace. Rather, because all sexuality is affected by *concupiscentia carnis*, virtuous sex has to do primarily with how one uses *concupiscentia carnis*.

For Augustine, the fundamental difference between virtuous and vicious sex is the final goal toward which one directs the act of sex. The true final goal in the act of sex should be procreation of new life in order to honor God. For Augustine, this means procreation with a view toward baptism: “In marriages of believers the will is not determined by the goal that children destined to pass away should be born into this world, but that children destined to last should be reborn in Christ” (*nupt. et conc.* I.8,9 [33]).

Although *concupiscentia carnis* is ineradicable from human life because it is tied inextricably to fallen bodily existence, Augustine says *concupiscentia carnis* need not prevent believers from willing the true goal of sex. Here Augustine offers up the example of the patriarchs as the paradigm of virtuous sex. Like the patriarchs, a person who has sex well “makes use of that evil of concupiscence and is not conquered by it....[and] releases and makes use of it only in the interests of propagation in order to beget in the flesh children who are to be reborn in the Spirit....No Christian should have any doubt that the holy patriarchs before and after Abraham...used their wives in that way” (*nupt. et conc.* I.8,9 [34]). The reason Augustine is sure that even Abraham was stricken with concupiscence is that the good of procreation “cannot be attained without” *concupiscentia carnis*, since it is *concupiscentia carnis* that moves the genital organs (*nupt. et conc.* I.8,9 [33]). Since Abraham had children, and having children after the fall is impossible without *concupiscentia carnis*, then Abraham too suffered from *concupiscentia carnis* (*nupt. et conc.* I.7,8 [33]).⁴⁴ Furthermore, Augustine is sure that even for Joseph and Mary, sex “could not occur in sinful flesh without that concupiscence of the flesh which results from sin” (*nupt. et conc.* I.12,13 [37]). Hence the necessity of Christ being conceived of the Holy

⁴⁴ David Hunter shows how much Augustine’s views on the sex lives of the patriarchs developed over the course of his career: “By the early decades of the fifth century, Augustine had become increasingly explicit about the extent to which Abraham and his descendants shared in the universal human condition of sinfulness, and particularly sexual concupiscence.” See David G. Hunter, “Reclaiming Biblical Morality: Sex and Salvation History in Augustine’s Treatment of the Hebrew Saints,” in *In Dominico Eloquentia- In Lordly Eloquence: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert Louis Wilken*, ed. Paul M. Blowers, Angela Russell Christman, David G. Hunter, and Robin Darling Young (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 330.

Spirit and Mary's perpetual virginity. In sum, Augustine thinks that virtuous sex necessarily uses bodily concupiscence well. Virtuous sex cannot be, after the fall, sex without concupiscence, since sex is impossible without bodily concupiscence.

Further illustrating the centrality of the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* in Augustine's account of virtuous sex is Augustine's account of the differences between pagan and Christian sex. Good Christians have children with "the intention of bringing to birth children to be reborn again as children of God," while pagans "do not have children with this intention, this will, this goal" and so "do not have true marital chastity" (*nupt. et conc.* I.4,5 [30]). In Augustine's view, to be truly virtuous one must first be moved by God and then, in response, praise God's gifts by referring one's actions back to God (*nupt. et conc.* I.3,3 [29]). Pagans, by definition, do neither of these.

On the other hand, in virtuous Christian marital sex, although bodily desire is activated independently of the soul's control, "the good will of the mind leads the pleasure which follows rather than follows the lead of bodily pleasure" (*nupt. et conc.* I.12,13 [37]). This is a paradigmatic instance of putting something bad to good use (*nupt. et conc.* I.24,27 [45]). No new sin is added just because concupiscence is fought against or put into the service of procreation (*nupt. et conc.* I.26,29 [46]; I.23,25 [44]). Concupiscence, in good marital sex, "is subservient to the needs of marriage" (*nupt. et conc.* I.12,13 [37]). It is not, however, absent, as one would expect if Augustine thought *concupiscentia carnis* was a reference only to unholy desires of the soul.

Even though *concupiscentia carnis* is inevitably part of human life, that fact does not make *concupiscentia carnis* something benign. Rather, humans "ought, nonetheless, to want those desires not to exist, even if we cannot attain that goal in the body of this death" (*nupt. et conc.* I.27,30 [47]). It is not realistic to expect that one will not experience *concupiscentia carnis* in one form or another: "even if we do not fulfill the words of scripture, *You shall not desire* (Ex 20:17), we at least fulfill what we read in another passage, *Do not go after your desires* (Sir 18:30)" (*nupt. et conc.* I.23,25 [44]; italics in original).

What one should at least want is to not let the desires of the body provoke sin: “Concupiscence itself, after all, is not now a sin in those who have been reborn, provided they do not consent to it for acts that are forbidden and the mind, remaining sovereign, does not hand over the members to carry out those acts” (*nupt. et conc.* I.23,25 [44]).

To further show how Augustine’s emphasis on the ineradicability of bodily concupiscence affects his theology of sexuality, one can turn to his claim that sex purely for pleasure can be a pardonable sin. Augustine identifies two forms of sex purely for pleasure: sex for pleasure that actively prevents procreation and sex for pleasure that respects procreation. The kind that prevents procreation is exponentially worse than sex for pleasure that respects procreation.

According to Augustine, some spouses are so lacking in virtue that they intervene in the act of sex in order to render themselves infertile by some means of contraception (*nupt. et conc.* I.15,17 [39]). Or, worse, they cause an abortion of the child either before or after it has begun living (*nupt. et conc.* I.15,17 [39]).⁴⁵ For Augustine, this kind of sex is separated from the other less-than-virtuous kind across a moral chasm, for in this contraceptive/abortive sex “they are not husband and wife” or, if only one is responsible for the evil actions, she is “the prostitute of her husband” or he is “an adulterer toward his wife” (*nupt. et conc.* I.15,17 [39]). In this kind of sex, bodily pleasure has become such a focus that the procreative purpose of sex is actively rendered impossible.

The other kind of less-than-virtuous sex, sex for pleasure that respects procreation, is regrettable even while it is nowhere near as bad as the contraceptive/abortive sex Augustine condemns. Sex for pleasure that respects procreation is in fact given advance Apostolic pardon by St. Paul based on the principle of toleration: “As [virtuous] qualities should be hoped for and praised

⁴⁵ Augustine, of course, has only the information of ancient biology to inform his views of when the unborn child begins to live. In any case, he clearly thinks that abortion before or after life has begun is a significant moral offense.

in married couples, so other things should be tolerated for fear that one might fall into serious sins worthy of damnation, that is, into fornication or adultery” (*nupt. et conc.* I.14,16 [38]). Because Paul recognized that *concupiscentia carnis* is ineradicable from human life, he “permitted by way of concession” that spouses may without serious blame have sex that has pleasure as its central intended goal (*nupt. et conc.* I.14,16 [38-39]). This kind of sex “involves a pardonable sin,” and this pardon comes from the nature of marriage: “Because of marriage this pleasure is not counted as something blameworthy....Hence, marriage is praiseworthy even on these grounds, for it causes even that which does not belong to it to be pardoned on its account” (*nupt. et conc.* I.14,16 [39]). This kind of sex can be pardoned because it “is not carried out in such a way as to interfere with the conception of a child at which marriage aims” (*nupt. et conc.* I.14,16 [39]). While pleasure determines the couple’s intention, they do not “prevent the procreation of a child for the sake of this sexual passion” and so this kind of sex “involves a pardonable sin” (*nupt. et conc.* I.15,17 [39]). In either case of sex for pleasure, sex is “subservient” to “victorious concupiscence” (*nupt. et conc.* I.14,16 [38]).

More generally, in any kind of sex, virtuous or vicious, “it is only that *ardore libidinis* which arouses, as if by its own command, the members which cannot be aroused by the will,” and so the way to prevent the victory of concupiscence is to intend “what reason directs, not what desire demands” even while accepting that “the heat of sexual desire” is instrumentally necessary for the goal of procreation (*nupt. et conc.* I.24,27 [45]; Latin: PL 44, 429). When one submits to the drive for pleasure in a way that makes pleasure the intended purpose of one’s action, then concupiscence has won a victory. When one puts concupiscence to good use in the service of procreation, one has conformed one’s actions to the realities of fallen human nature, including the defect of bodily desire. In either case, bodily desire is unavoidable and instrumentally necessary.

What should be clear at this point is that book I of *nupt. et conc.* would be unintelligible if Augustine thinks *concupiscentia carnis* has nothing to do with bodily desire. One could not fully

explain why Augustine says *concupiscentia carnis* is ineradicable from human life, even in the holiest people. One could not explain why Augustine says *concupiscentia carnis* is necessary for sex. One could not explain why Augustine says *concupiscentia carnis* can be put to good use but cannot be totally eradicated even through grace in the fallen world. And, one could not explain why Augustine says it is only in the resurrection of the body that *concupiscentia carnis* is fully healed. Although *concupiscentia carnis* absolutely cannot be limited to bodily desire alone in Augustine's usage, he very clearly does use the term to include bodily desire. In fact he thinks that recognition of the bodily character of *concupiscentia carnis* is crucial to properly understanding fallen human nature and the character of virtuous marriage after the fall.

Augustine holds essentially the same views of *concupiscentia carnis* at the end of his life in the *c. Iul. imp.* This text shows that he continues to emphasize the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* as his career progresses, even in the face of Julian's intensified criticisms. What we find in *c. Iul. imp.* is that Augustine is given the chance to clarify once and for all whether he thinks the body has desires, with seemingly very high stakes.

While much of the back-and-forth of *c. Iul. imp.* is about the nature of desire and the body, one section in particular is quite helpful for uncovering Augustine's views. In the first book of *c. Iul. imp.*, Augustine reports that Julian had said "flesh" does not refer to body, but to evil habit.

According to Julian, the Pauline phrase "law in the members" refers to "an evil habit which the learned of the world call a second nature...[The Apostle] called the flesh not this body which has its causes in the seeds, but in a loose sense referred to vices" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [98]; amended).⁴⁶

According to Julian, "flesh" in Paul's terminology is a metaphor for vices of the soul, and not a

⁴⁶ Latin: sed vitia abusive vocaret (CSEL 85/1, 76). Teske translates this clause as "in a loose sense called the flesh its defects," which obscures Julian's point that the problem is not defects of the flesh (as Augustine says), but rather "evil habit," i.e. vices. Thus I substitute vices for defects in the translation.

reference to desires of the body. Julian concludes that if Augustine thinks the body itself is the problem, then Augustine should admit he is a Manichee (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [98]).

It is worth noting that Julian's argument is essentially the same one some scholars—those who suggest *concupiscentia carnis* in Augustine's thought has a purely or primarily metaphorical meaning—attribute to Augustine. For instance, according to James Wetzel, Augustine thinks that because “God created the flesh, the flesh cannot be the source of evil in disobedience.”⁴⁷ Augustine instead “has reworked the law of the flesh as the problem of habit.”⁴⁸ In other words, the “law of sin” contends as habit against the law of the mind.”⁴⁹ If Augustine does indeed think the body cannot desire and the law of sin refers to evil habit, his response to Julian's accusation would be the perfect place to say so. Since Julian accuses Augustine of Manichaeism if Augustine holds that the body has vitiated desires, it would make sense for Augustine to respond by saying that he does not think the body has desires because Paul uses the phrase “flesh” only in a metaphorical fashion.

Augustine tells Julian that Paul's use of “flesh” is without a doubt a reference to the body itself, because the body does indeed have vitiated desires. Drawing on the authority of Gregory Nazianzus, Augustine writes: “[Gregory] clearly and plainly attributed the law of sin which is in our members and that resists the law of the mind to this mortal and earthly body [*corpus*] of ours” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [98; CSEL 85/1, 76]). Gregory wanted “to remind people of what they already knew, namely, the kind and magnitude of the fight with interior defects due to the body [*cum vitiis interioribus propter corpus*] in which the saints find themselves” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [98]; Latin: CSEL 85/1, 77).

⁴⁷ Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge, 1992), 149 n. 60.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

Vitiis interioribus refers back to Julian's appeal to the metaphorical meaning of flesh as habitual vices. Augustine is saying these interior defects or vices are in some way caused by the body (*propter corpus*) itself, which is exactly what Julian had denied. Augustine goes on to say that the spirit / flesh distinction refers to the "wretched discord that took the place of blessed peace between the soul and body" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.72 [104]). In place of this discord, it would be better if the lower part (flesh/body) agreed with higher part (spirit/soul) (*c. Iul. imp.* I.72 [104]). As it is now, the concupiscence of the flesh entices one to consent to its desires and should therefore be blamed, not praised as Julian praises it (*c. Iul. imp.* I.101 [124]; I.106 [126]). This conflict between body and soul caused by bad desires of the body is not done away with until the resurrection of the body (*c. Iul. imp.* I.101 [123]).

Augustine does not back off his claims about the literal meaning of flesh in Paul's use of the term. Rather, Augustine's response to Julian is to highlight the problem of bodily desire. The body would not have this problem if humanity had not sinned in Adam, and Augustine suggests that Julian should admit both the problem and the "reason why our nature, which was originally created in happiness, has fallen into these miseries" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [98]). In other words, Julian should recognize that the fall has changed the body for the worse. Without the fall, "in paradise there would not have been the body of this death, whose corruptibility weighs down the soul, but rather the body of that life in which the flesh would not have desires opposed to the spirit so that the spirit would have to have desires opposed to the flesh. Instead, human nature would rejoice in the happy harmony of the two" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [99]). As it is after the fall, the "law of sin" exists in some way in the body itself, not merely in vices of the soul. In fact, at least sexual desire cannot exist except in someone who is embodied, and only the resurrection will heal this illness (*c. Iul. imp.* V.13 [526]). More generally, concupiscence "cannot fail to exist in mortal flesh" and "will not exist in us when we have an immortal body" (*c. Iul. imp.* II.226 [269-270]). This concupiscence of the flesh cannot

fail to exist in human beings precisely because they have bodies affected by the fall lacking the integration provided by the Tree of Life.⁵⁰

It should be clear now that when Augustine uses the phrase *concupiscentia carnis* he often does have in mind desires of the body, and this literal interpretation is essential to understanding Augustine's broader account of human nature and marriage. The purely metaphorical reading of *concupiscentia carnis* cannot be defended in light of these texts.

It seems to me that those interpreters who have defended the purely metaphorical reading of *concupiscentia carnis* have been misled by two factors. First, there is the difficulty of trying to make sense of a concept—*concupiscentia carnis*—that Augustine uses very frequently and in many different contexts. Perhaps there has been a hope to find a single account that unites all the uses of the concept, and for some interpreters that account seems to necessarily include the non-bodily nature of *concupiscentia carnis*. Secondly, there is the issue of Augustine's Manichaeism. Some interpreters suggest that Augustine would not say *concupiscentia carnis* has anything to do with the body, because someone who suggests that the body has vitiated desires is someone who is too close to the Manichees. I would not say these interpreters have let doctrinal issues drive their readings, but perhaps they have let doctrinal issues set limits on the possibilities of their readings. However, as I show at the end of this chapter, Augustine does not object to the Manichaean claim that the body has desires. He instead rejects the Manichaean explanation for those bodily desires. Perhaps there are other reasons why some interpreters suggest that *concupiscentia carnis* has a purely metaphorical meaning for Augustine, but, in any case, *concupiscentia carnis* clearly does often mean desires of the body.

⁵⁰ See ch. 2 of this dissertation. On Julian's claim that "flesh" refers to vices, and on Augustine's response, see also *c. Iul. imp.* VI.40 [711-717]). Augustine, again, very clearly suggests that flesh does indeed refer to the human body, even if it can also refer to vices.

A problem arises at this point, however. Augustine says *concupiscentia carnis* often means desires of the body, but does his claim fit with his broader anthropology? Or is his claim that the body has desires inconsistent with his other commitments regarding human nature? Some specific points of tension come to mind immediately, the first of which is Augustine's account of the human emotions. Augustine clearly says all emotions are acts of the will, and he has been interpreted to say that emotions are not caused by the body. In the next section I show how some interpreters of Augustine's account of the emotions have overlooked or misinterpreted Augustine's claim that bodily desire is a distinctive kind of movement of the person that is unlike the emotions precisely because it is caused by the body.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF *CONCUPISCENTIA CARNIS*

Some interpreters see concupiscence as an expression of Augustine's more fundamental account of the emotions.⁵¹ Because Augustine thinks the emotions are expressions of the soul or will, and not primarily the body, these interpreters see concupiscence as one of the emotions that is fundamentally a movement of the soul and not the body. In this section, my argument is that the distinctiveness of bodily concupiscence shows that Augustine does not necessarily intend his views on the other emotions to apply to bodily concupiscence. Even if the emotions are caused by the rational part of the soul, Augustine may not think the same is true of bodily concupiscence. Thus

⁵¹ For instance, Simo Knuuttila argues that "[c]oncupiscence as the permanent inherited weakness we have for sinful things inclines us to evil desires." These desires are all expressions of will: "What is new in Augustine's approach is his attempt to relate all impulses and inclinations of the soul to the will as a dynamic center of personality." Because "Augustine's view of emotions was cognitive," Augustine holds that "human emotional patterns are contaminated by original sin." Knuuttila suggests that sexual desire is one of the emotions, but "the control of sexual desire differs from that of the other passions, since in its case not only is the first occurrence of desire autonomous, but also the sexual organs move without a command." Knuuttila seems to think of the initial movements of sexual desire as a "prepassion" of the soul. See Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 172. Knuuttila's interpretation of Augustine is, in general terms at least, similar to that of Byers.

the fact that the emotions are caused by the soul does not entail the conclusion that concupiscence has little or nothing to do with the body, because concupiscence is a distinctive kind of movement.

John Cavadini and Sarah Byers are two scholars who do not see concupiscence as importantly distinctive from the emotions. As a result, they suggest that *concupiscentia carnis* or *libido* has little or nothing to do with the body. They both draw heavily on Augustine's account of the emotions in *civ. Dei* XIV, especially chapters 3 and 5, to establish their interpretations of Augustine's views on concupiscence. Below I engage Cavadini's and Byers' readings of those chapters, and I show why there is reason to think that in those chapters Augustine does not see concupiscence as disconnected from bodily desire.

Cavadini offers a very illuminating analysis of Augustine's views on the emotions, but where Cavadini's reading falters is in his treatment of Augustine's discussion of the bodily element in sexual desire. Cavadini references *civ. dei* XIV.5 and XIV.3 to support the claim that "Augustine is suspicious of claims of any independent volition coming from a source other than the soul or self."⁵² Cavadini further claims that "Augustine...points out that tendencies to sin do not come from the body, certainly not from the body as originally constituted, and not even primarily from the mortal bodies we have inherited from Adam, but from the soul itself....Thus the Manichaean and Platonist temptation to theorize that they do in fact come from somewhere else, to wit, the body."⁵³

While Cavadini does not deny that the body causes sinful desires, his reading of Augustine does seem to give the impression that the body's role in sinful desires is marginal. J. Patout Burns concurs in this reading of Cavadini: "[Augustine] distinguished forms of conflict within the person:

⁵² Cavadini, "Feeling Right," 199-200.

⁵³ Ibid., 198.

those within the will, and those between the will and bodily appetites. This distinction seems to have been overlooked by Cavadini.”⁵⁴ In part here I am filling out the details of Burns’ suggestion.

It is important to observe that XIV.3 and XIV.5, which Cavadini references to show that the body itself is not the problem, actually say that the body is not *always* the problem. In XIV.3 Augustine takes up the question of whether all sins come from the body. Augustine does not object to those who say the body causes sins, but he objects to those—the Platonists and Manichees—who say that the body is the cause of *all* sins: “At present, then, the corruptible body presses down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weighs down the mind that muses upon many things, nevertheless they are in error who suppose that all the evils of the soul [*omnia mala animae*] proceed from the body” (*civ. Dei* XIV.3 [NPNF, 264; amended]).⁵⁵ The error lies in the attribution of *all* sins to the body.

In the same chapter of *civ. Dei* Augustine claims the body does entice one to sin. Augustine says here that the body is indeed the cause of some “vicious desires,” but it is not the cause of “all the vices” as the Platonists and Manichees say:

For the corruption of the body, which weighs down the soul, is not the cause but the punishment of the first sin; and it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible. And though *from this corruption of the flesh there arise certain incitements to vice, and indeed vicious desires*, yet we must not attribute to the flesh *all the vices* of a wicked life, in case we thereby clear the devil of all these, for he has no flesh (*civ. Dei* XIV.3 [NPNF, 264; emphasis mine]).

For Augustine, the body is not bad in substance, but it is problematic for the life of virtue because it is fallen: “We are then burdened with this corruptible body; but knowing that the cause of this burdensomeness is not the nature and substance of the body, but its corruption, we do not desire to

⁵⁴ Burns, “Marital Fidelity as a *Remedium Concupiscentiae*,” 16 n. 79; also 30 n. 148.

⁵⁵ Latin: *verum tamen quia omnia mala animae ex corpore putant accidisse, in errore sunt* (CCSL 48, 417). Dyson’s generally wonderful translation has “those who suppose that the ills of the soul derive from the body are in error,” which misleadingly omits the essential qualifier “omnia:” all ills of the soul (Dyson, 589). I also substitute “evils” for “ills” in the quote.

be deprived of the body, but to be clothed with its immortality” (*civ. Dei* XIV.3 [NPNF, 263]).

Augustine’s point is not at all to say that sinful desires cannot in principle come from the body. In fact Augustine seems to say precisely the opposite.

Augustine also emphasizes that the body does not cause all bad desires in XIV.5, another text referenced by Cavadini to support the claim that sinful desires do not come from the body. In XIV.5 Augustine argues that Platonist anthropology is better than Manichaean anthropology because at least the Platonists do not say the body is a substantial evil nature.⁵⁶ The problem with the Platonists, however, is that they attribute *all* bad movements to the body: “Nevertheless, from the death-infected members and earthly construction of the body they believe the soul is so affected, that there are thus originated in it the diseases of desires, and fears, and joy, and sorrow, under which four perturbations, as Cicero calls them, or passions, as most prefer to name them with the Greeks, is included the whole viciousness of human life” (*civ. Dei* XIV.5 [NPNF, 265]).

Augustine accuses the Platonists of a kind of inconsistency, because, as Virgil shows, souls of the dead have a “dire lust” to return to their bodies (*civ. Dei* XIV.5 [Dyson, 589]). From Augustine’s perspective this “dire lust” proves that even the Platonists have to admit that “it is *not only* under the influence of the flesh that the soul experiences desire, fear, joy and sorrow; it can also be disturbed by such emotions arising from within itself (XIV.5 [590; emphasis mine]).”⁵⁷ His point in referencing the “dire lust” of the soul is to show that the soul, even on the Platonist account, does have its own bad desires. The Platonists explicitly deny that the soul causes bad desires, saying that it is the body that is the sole cause of viciousness. But their claims about dire lust suggest that they

⁵⁶ “The Platonists, indeed, are not so foolish as, with the Manichæans, to detest our present bodies as an evil nature; for they attribute all the elements of which this visible and tangible world is compacted, with all their qualities, to God their Creator” (*civ. Dei* XIV.5 [NPNF, 265]).

⁵⁷ Ibid., XIV.5 (590); emphasis mine. Latin: Unde etiam, illis fatentibus, non ex carne tantum afficitur anima, ut cupiat, metuat, laetetur, aegrescat, verum etiam ex se ipsa his potest motibus agitari (PL 41, 409).

implicitly affirm that the soul too has a role in viciousness. In his response to the Platonists, Augustine does not conclude that the body is in no way implicated in sinful desires. Augustine's emphasis is that the soul itself can be the cause of its own bad movements, but he is in no way denying, as Cavadini suggests, that the body too can cause those movements.

Augustine again says later in book XIV that bad desires do sometimes come from the body itself: lust sometimes refers to "a kind of appetite which is felt in the body as its own desire" and the examples he gives are hunger, thirst, and the "lust" felt in the sexual organs (*cin. Dei* XIV.15 [613]). He does not say that hunger and thirst are desires of the soul; they are rather appetites of the body. Sexual lust is just like hunger and thirst in being (sometimes) an appetite of the body, and on that he seems to agree with the Platonist claim about the body's role in bad desires. Sexual lust, then, since it is in part a bodily desire, is distinctive from the emotions that are internal to the soul.

Sarah Byers interprets XIV.5 much differently than does Cavadini. According to Byers, in general in Augustine's works "Augustine does seem to think that affective sensibility is related to the soul's being associated with some kind of body," yet "he does not devote much attention to this claim or dwell on its implications."⁵⁸ Rather, in all his other works, "Augustine typically talks as if all affects are effects of cognitive processes."⁵⁹ Here Byers claims in a footnote that even lust "is caused by thoughts" and not changes in the body.⁶⁰ Byers applies this cognitive account of emotions to anger and sadness: "anger might indeed include the release of adrenaline, and sadness

⁵⁸ Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 78.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

involve chemical changes in the brain; but these processes are caused by thoughts—it is not the other way around.”⁶¹

Byers rightly admits that Augustine does say something in *civ. Dei* XIV.5 that presents a challenge to her account of Augustine’s cognitive explanation of emotions. Byers writes, “Augustine at one point [claims] that the body and raw sensation are the cause, or at least a contributing cause, of some affects, while reason is the cause of others” and the reference is to *CD* XIV.5.⁶² In the referenced line, Augustine claims “it is not only under the influence of the flesh that the soul experiences desire, fear, joy and sorrow; it can also be disturbed by such emotions arising from within itself” (XIV.5 [590]).⁶³ Byers recognizes that this line is in significant tension with her reading of Augustine. However, rather than attempting to reconcile her reading with Augustine’s text, Byers claims that the line from XIV.5 is “anomalous” and rhetorically “convenient” in the context of the passage.⁶⁴ Byers claims Augustine “never develops the ‘affected by the flesh’ side of the story.”⁶⁵

Byers’ appeal to rhetorical convenience to explain a text that does not fit with her interpretation is unconvincing, since it suggests Augustine undermines his entire anthropology simply for the sake of momentary rhetorical convenience. In fact the broader passage of XIV.5, from which Byers draws the “anomalous” line, shows that Augustine wants to affirm that desires sometimes do, but do not always, come from the body, which is exactly what the supposedly “anomalous” line says, as I demonstrated above.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Latin: Unde etiam, illis fatentibus, non ex carne tantum afficitur anima, ut cupiat, metuat, laetetur, aegrescat, verum etiam ex se ipsa his potest motibus agitari (PL 41, 409).

⁶⁴ Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 79.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Cavadini and Byers do not seem to recognize that Augustine thinks concupiscence or lust is a kind of movement that is distinctive from the other emotions precisely because it issues sometimes initially from the body. To further appreciate the distinctiveness of concupiscence/lust in Augustine's scheme of human desire, it would be helpful to further engage Byers' argument, because she offers a reading of another crucial passage of Augustine in which Augustine claims that lust is a distinctive kind of desire.

Byers does suggest that lust is in a way distinctive, but she does not recognize why it is distinctive in Augustine's classification of the movements of the person. Byers considers the distinction between hunger/thirst and lust: "Unlike raw hunger or thirst, which is the sensate soul's awareness of a physical need, lust is a love (*amor*) of sensual pleasure caused by the erroneous idea that it [i.e. pleasure] is to be sought as an end in itself, rather than viewing it [i.e. pleasure] as a by-product of right actions done as components in a life aimed at wisdom."⁶⁶ In the corresponding footnote she references a section of Augustine's *contra Iulianum*, where Augustine reflects on the differences between desires for food/drink and lust.

According to Augustine, natural bodily desires for food are good when ordered to the good of health. Hunger becomes lust only when it is directed to pleasure rather than health, as when one goes beyond what is needed for health (*c. Iul.* IV.14,67 [418]). As Byers rightly points out, desire for pleasure is not good because pleasure itself is not, according to Augustine, a true good toward which one should direct one's actions (*c. Iul.* IV.14,65 [417-18]). Desire for food for one's health is not necessarily ordered to pleasure, however, even though it easily becomes so ordered.⁶⁷ Despite the risks of desire for food descending into lust, desire for food is good if ordered to the proper end of

⁶⁶ Ibid., 122.

⁶⁷ Augustine writes: "What sober-minded person would not prefer, if it were possible, to take food or drink as sustenance without any gnawing carnal pleasure" (*c. Iul.* IV.14,68 [419]).

eating and so need not be considered lust. And, in any case, one needs to eat, so the possibility of hunger becoming lust is worth the risk. Lust for food comes about, Byers rightly says, only when it is a desire for pleasure, since not all bodily desire for food is bodily desire for pleasure.

What Byers' does not seem to recognize is that, according to Augustine, bodily sexual desire is the kind of desire that in principle is always a desire for pleasure, irrespective of what one thinks about the pleasure or how one has been "habituated." It is the intrinsic ordering of sexual lust to pleasure that makes sexual lust a distinctive kind of movement in Augustine's thought. In Augustine's view, sexual desire itself can never be a desire for a true good:

[I]t is impossible to desire a human good with carnal concupiscence, for even a child is not desired by the lust of the body, but by the will of the mind, though it is not conceived without the lust of the body. We are, of course, speaking of that concupiscence by which the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit, not of that good concupiscence by which the spirit has desires opposed to the flesh (Gal 5:17). By this concupiscence of the flesh, then, no human good is ever desired, if carnal pleasure is not a human good (*c. Inl.* VI.16.50 [509-510]).

For Augustine, *concupiscentia carnis* in its sexual form is inherently ordered only to pleasure. It is a "lust of the body," and it is certainly not exclusively a lust "of the mind." Were it a lust of the mind, it would be the kind of desire that becomes bad only when one makes pleasure the goal of one's action and that could be good if one had the right goal for the action. However, as a lust of the body that in principle is only a desire for pleasure, "no human good is ever desired" with bodily sexual desire.

Byers suggests that the lust of eating or sex is "*caused by the erroneous idea* that [pleasure] is to be sought as an end in itself, rather than viewing [pleasure] as a by-product of right actions done as components in a life aimed at wisdom."⁶⁸ This would seem to suggest that one could have a different idea about pleasure that would make the desire for pleasure good. Procreation is good,

⁶⁸ Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 122; emphasis mine.

according to Augustine, so perhaps one could desire procreation and interpret the pleasure as a “byproduct.” Byers’ interpretation seems to suggest that Augustine thinks a moderate amount of desire for sex could be virtuous, since the pleasure would be extrinsic to the desire.

In fact, the argument that one should moderate one’s sexual desire is Julian’s, not Augustine’s. Julian is the one who builds his claim on the viciousness of “excess” desire, and Augustine’s response is to say, “An excess of desire, then, is sinful, but its impulse is also a defect.” As Augustine asks Julian in the same section of *c. Iul. imp.*, “How is [sexual desire], then, called something good when it urges and compels human beings to sin if they do not resist it” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.41 [420])? As Augustine says, “the desire for bodily pleasure is a vice. The sexual desire which you [i.e. Julian] praise is, therefore, a vice” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.64 [90]). The problem with sexual desire is not precisely bad thinking, but rather that this kind of desire can never be anything but a desire for pleasure, no matter what one thinks. It is never anything but a desire for pleasure.

An important point in Augustine’s treatment of hunger/thirst together with sexual lust is the distinctiveness of sexual lust. Sexual *libido* is analogous to hunger and thirst because it is initially caused by a bodily desire (*civ. Dei* XIV.15). The whole point of treating lust together with hunger and thirst is to say that lust is sometimes a desire of the body (*civ. Dei* XIV.5; *c. Iul.* IV.14,67 [418]). However, sexual *libido* is unlike hunger and thirst precisely because sexual lust is never, ever, in any case after the fall, “the sensate soul’s awareness of physical need” as is true of hunger or thirst.⁶⁹ Hunger and thirst become vicious only when they become a desire for the pleasure attached to food irrespective of the health benefits. Bodily sexual desire, on the other hand, is not merely an overvaluation of pleasure that could become good if rightly ordered toward the end of sex. Bodily sexual desire is nothing but a desire for pleasure, so bodily sexual desire is always and in every case

⁶⁹ Ibid.

lust. The inherent pathological character of lust is what sets it apart from hunger or thirst. All three are desires of the body, yet bodily sexual desire is unique in that it cannot, in principle, be a desire for a good end.

If Byers were correct that lust is always caused by a cognitive mistake about the value of temporal goods, then one would have to wonder why Augustine thinks sexual *libido* is always inherently a desire only for pleasure. Byers claims that Augustine thinks lust is “a tendency to think...that enough is not enough.”⁷⁰ But, as we have seen, Augustine thinks any *libido* is too much *libido*. To be clear, Augustine is not saying that sexual *libido* is an excess of desire, as is the desire for the pleasures of food. Rather, sexual *libido* is evil even in its moderate and “natural” expression.

Certainly Augustine often uses concupiscence to refer to the experience of cognitively wanting more than one needs. My claim is not that sexual lust is exclusively non-cognitive. Augustine clearly thinks sexual lust is often also cognitive: one of the major problems with bodily sexual desire is that it tempts the mind to consent to bodily desires. My point is that Augustine does not think lust is exclusively cognitive or exclusively internal to the soul. Augustine seems to think, in his later works at least, that there are inherently disordered desires of the body that cannot be reordered by proper thinking about the value of eternal goods. Whether or not Augustine thinks that a prepassion of anger is caused by an erroneous evaluation of temporal goods, he clearly seems to think sexual *libido* is something very different that comes somehow from the nature of the desire itself, independent of anything one thinks. As Gerard O'Daly warns Augustine's readers, “Our sexual mechanism serves as a warning not to understand the interaction of feeling, mind and body too simplistically.”⁷¹ Byers' account is obviously anything but simplistic, but O'Daly's point is that sexual *libido* is something

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 53.

unique in Augustine's thought. It is distinct from the emotions in that it is a movement of the body itself, and it is distinct from the other movements of the body in that it is always ordered to pleasure.

WHETHER THE FLESH CAN DESIRE WITHOUT THE SOUL

So far I have shown that the concept of bodily desire is central to Augustine's account of human nature and human sexuality from *nupt. et conc.* through *c. Iul. imp.*, and I have shown that he thinks sexual desire is a distinctive kind of desire that is unlike the emotions precisely in that sexual desire is rooted in the workings of the body.

At this point I must address another challenge to my reading of Augustine. There is good reason to wonder whether Augustine's claims about bodily desire are consistent with his broader anthropology. Consider the following quotes wherein he seems to explicitly deny that the flesh can desire on its own:

"[T]he flesh does not desire without the soul, though we say that the flesh desires, because the soul desires in a carnal manner" (*de perfectione iustitiae hominis* 8,19 [297]).

"[E]veryone, I think, would agree, educated and uneducated, that the flesh cannot lust after anything without the soul" (*Gn. litt.* X.12,20 [409]).

"There can, after all, be no desire of the flesh without the soul" (*c. Iul.* VI.14,41 [502]).

"For the flesh lusts after nothing save through the soul, but the flesh is said to lust against the spirit, when the soul with fleshly lust wrestles against the spirit" (*cont.* 8,19 [NPNF, 386-87])

Augustine says very clearly that the flesh cannot desire without the soul. Recent interpreters have taken this claim to mean that *concupiscentia carnis* has a purely metaphorical meaning in Augustine's thought.

Jesse Couenhoven takes perhaps the strongest position in favor of the metaphorical reading. Couenhoven suggests Augustine's anthropology is such that the body cannot desire. Couenhoven

claims that “the flesh cannot desire without the soul, so when [Augustine] speaks of the flesh desiring, he means that the soul desires in a carnal manner.”⁷² Thus, “[w]hen Augustine calls concupiscence “of the flesh,” he is appropriating a Pauline metaphor. The flesh is said to have desires because the soul desires in a carnal way.”⁷³

William Babcock offers a very similar argument. According to Babcock, Augustine’s emphasis on carnal desires is not Manichaean because Augustine claims that the “flesh desires nothing except through the soul,” which, to Babcock, means, “desire of the flesh is said to oppose the spirit only because the soul itself strives against the spirit through its own fleshly desire.”⁷⁴ Babcock is clear that this *concupiscentia carnis* is not a desire of the body: “The soul would need no healing if it had not infected itself by its own sinning with the result that its own flesh’s desire turned against it—or, better, with the result that it turned against itself from the side of its own diseased and weakened flesh (*cont.* 7.18). Thus the pull of fleshly desire is the soul’s own pull against itself, a disease from which it needs to be healed, not a foreign power from which it needs to be set free.”⁷⁵

One might add here as well Cavadini’s claim that “Augustine is suspicious of claims of any independent volition coming from a source other than the soul or self.”⁷⁶ Peter Burnell seems to say the same: “What we experience as if it were a disobedience of the body to the soul...is in fact an internal disobedience in the soul (*CD* 14.15). This real disorder gives us the illusion that the trouble

⁷² Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ*, 32.

⁷³ Ibid., 33. See also Couenhoven, “Not Every Wrong is Done With Pride,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61 no. 1 (2008), 45 n. 20, where Couenhoven writes, “When Augustine speaks of the ‘flesh’, he does not mean the body as such, but (following St Paul) rather the entire person when the person is sinful.”

⁷⁴ Babcock, “Augustine and the Spirituality of Desire,” *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 192.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 192. I will return to Babcock’s interpretation of *cont.* 7.18 later in this chapter.

⁷⁶ Cavadini, “Feeling Right,” 199-200.

emerges along a line of division between soul and body.”⁷⁷ Thus, according to some scholars, there seems to be a contradiction between saying the body has its own desires and saying the flesh cannot desire without the soul.

Below I explain what Augustine means when he says the flesh cannot desire without the soul. Each of the texts in which he makes this claim must be placed in the context from which it comes in order to see what Augustine means. He does not seem to mean that the flesh does not desire at all.⁷⁸

Babcock and Couenhoven offer *de perfectione iustitiae hominis* 8,19 [297] as evidence that the flesh cannot desire. However, when the quote from this text is placed in context, it seems that Augustine is making a more circumscribed point rather than stating a general claim about the possibility of the body to desire. Augustine’s claim comes in the midst of a reflection on the nature of desire and love in the resurrection:

In that fullness of love, this commandment will attain its perfection, *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind* (Dt 6:5 and Mt 22:37). For as long as there is still some element of carnal concupiscence, even though it is held in check by continence, God is not completely loved with one’s whole soul. After all, the flesh does not desire without the soul, though we say that the flesh desires, because the soul desires in a carnal manner. Then righteous persons will be without any sin at all, because there will be no law in their members rebelling against the law of their mind. Rather, with their whole heart, whole soul, and whole mind, they will love God, and that is the first and highest commandment (*perf. iust.* 8,19 [297; emphasis in original]).

⁷⁷ Burnell, *The Augustinian Person*, 33-34.

⁷⁸ Although my argument below focuses on the context of Augustine’s claims about the flesh not desiring without the soul, I do have a more basic line of argument that pushes back against interpretations like those of Couenhoven and Babcock. When Augustine says that the flesh cannot desire without the soul, the conclusion that the flesh cannot desire does not follow. In fact, that conclusion—the flesh cannot desire—would seem to be prohibited by the premise that the flesh cannot desire without the soul. In other words, Augustine’s claim that the flesh cannot desire without the soul includes the implicit claim that the flesh can and does desire: if the negatives in the clause are removed, then Augustine’s claim is that the flesh can desire with the soul. What would be the point of saying the flesh cannot desire without the soul when Augustine could simply say the flesh cannot desire? Augustine never says that the flesh does not desire at all. It is absolutely true that the flesh cannot desire on its own, absent the soul, for the very simple reason that a body without a soul is a dead body (as Augustine points out below). But the fact that the flesh needs the soul in order for the flesh to desire seems to prohibit the conclusion that the flesh does not desire: the presence of the soul is what enables the flesh to desire.

Augustine's point seems to be that the soul is not free to totally love God if it still experiences the desires of the flesh. Whatever the desires of the flesh are, they prevent the soul from fully loving God. The soul thus cannot totally love God because it is constantly on guard against the desires of the flesh. Even if *concupiscentia carnis* is here used as a metaphor, it is clear that Augustine is not making a general claim about the nature of all desire. He is rather saying why the soul is not perfectly blessed until one's soul totally loves God in an undivided way: *concupiscentia carnis* distracts the soul from loving God undividedly. Thus, this text does not seem to support a broad claim about Augustine's views on the relationship between body and soul.⁷⁹

Later on in the same text, however, Augustine connects the desires of the flesh more closely to a problem issuing from the body. Here he suggests that one cannot achieve the full love of God in this life because humans "are filled with desire, even though they do not follow their desires" (*perf. iust.* 11,28 [302]). They are filled with desire precisely because of "the sin which dwells in their members" (*perf. iust.* 11,28 [303]). Augustine continues: "when they do not allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies [*in suo mortali corpore*] so as to obey its desires and do not offer their members to sin as weapons of wickedness, there is indeed sin in their members, but it does not reign, because its desires are not obeyed....For they know that goodness does not dwell in their flesh [*carne*] where sin dwells" (*perf. iust.* 11,28 [303]; PL 44, 305-306).

Something having to do with the "sin in the members" is one important reason people cannot fully love God in this life:

They do not lack the power to do good, but to realize it completely.... [T]hey do not have the power to realize the good completely, because that will come about when the concupiscence which dwells in their members no longer exists. Therefore, their heart does

⁷⁹ Augustine makes this point more clearly in *de Genesii ad litteram*: "Now clearly, if the body is such that the administration of it is burdensome, like this flesh of ours which mars and weighs down the soul (Wis 9:15), deriving as it does from the handing on of the first transgression, the mind will be even more completely distracted from that vision of the highest heaven" (*de Genesii ad litteram* XII.35,68 [505]).

not reproach them, when it reproaches the sin which dwells in their members and when their heart does not have any infidelity to reproach (*perf. iust.* 11,28 [303]).

Augustine goes on in the conclusion of the work to say “this concupiscence” is the “sin which resides *in our mortal flesh* [*habitat in carne mortali nostra*]” (*perf. iust.* 21,44 [314; emphasis in original]; Latin: PL 44, 316). Here he does not specify exactly what he means by sin dwelling in flesh, but it seems he sees the body itself (“members”) as somehow a locus of sinful desire.

In this work Augustine also remarks that, if this sin were not present in everyone, one could say that “there has been or is one or more human beings...who did not need the forgiveness of sins” (*perf. iust.* 21,44 [314]). This “sin,” however, is in everyone. Although one might think that concupiscence is not truly sin since one can resist it, it is still “called sin in a different sense, because it would be a sin to consent to it, and its stirrings are against our will” (*perf. iust.* 21,44 [314-315]). This concupiscence is universally present because it “resides in our flesh” and, at the very least, leads human beings to necessarily pray, “*Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*” (*perf. iust.* 21,44 [315; emphasis in original]).

The presence of concupiscence explains why it cannot be true that “the human will is sufficient, once the law has been received” (*perf. iust.* 21,44 [315]). Somehow, because of the “sin which resides in our mortal flesh,” it is impossible to attain perfection in this life without God’s constant help. Even if one did always resist this concupiscence, “it is one thing to be a blessed person without sin and another to be a blessed person to whom God does not impute any sin” (*perf. iust.* 21,44 [315]).⁸⁰ One could be “without sin” in a certain sense, but not in the perfect sense of possessing the blessedness for which human nature longs. This “sin which resides in our mortal flesh” is no longer counted as sin, but it is anything but benign, as he tells Julian elsewhere:

⁸⁰ Thus concupiscence need not necessarily cause a sin of the will, but it necessarily deprives one of true blessedness.

We, however, say that [concupiscence] is evil and that it remains, nonetheless, in the baptized, even though its guilt has been forgiven and wiped away. I do not mean the guilt by which it was guilty, for it is not a person, but the guilt by which it made human beings sinful from their origin. Heaven forbid that we should say that it is made holy since, if they have not received the grace of God in vain, the reborn must fight with it as though with an enemy in a civil war, and they must desire and pray to be healed of that plague (*c. Iul.* VI.17,51 [511]).

Augustine clearly thinks that *concupiscentia carnis* is ineradicable from human life, even with the help of grace, and it seems that the ineradicability is importantly bound up with embodiment.

Couenhoven also offers *de Genesi ad litteram* X.12,20 [409-410] as evidence that Augustine thinks the body cannot be the proper subject of desire. Couenhoven cites Augustine's claim that the ears cannot truly "hear," but rather "the soul hears by means of the ear."⁸¹ Couenhoven offers the following quote from *Gn. litt.* to illustrate that saying the body "desires" is like saying the ears "hear" (i.e. both are metaphors):

[T]he cause of carnal concupiscence is not in the soul alone, much less in the flesh alone. It comes from both sources: from the soul, because without it no pleasure is felt; from the flesh, because without it carnal pleasure is not felt. Hence, when St. Paul speaks of the desires of the flesh against the spirit, he undoubtedly means the carnal pleasure which the spirit experiences from the flesh and with the flesh as opposed to the pleasures which the spirit alone experiences (*Gn. litt.* X.12,20).⁸²

For Couenhoven, the analogy with hearing suggests, by extension, that "when [Augustine] speaks of the flesh desiring, he means that the soul desires in a carnal manner."⁸³

A closer look at the text suggests that Augustine is not saying the soul alone is the subject of desire in the case of *concupiscentia carnis*. In the context of Augustine's argument, Augustine is responding to the claim that if only the flesh comes from Adam, then the soul is not implicated in Adam's sin. Augustine remarks that someone might say Adam's sin affected the flesh alone, but not

⁸¹ Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ*, 32.

⁸² Ibid., 33, quoting the ACW translation.

⁸³ Ibid., 32.

the soul, and therefore baptism heals the flesh alone and not the soul (*Gn. litt.* X.11,19 [408]).

Augustine thinks the flesh alone is not the only thing in need of healing, and this is why he claims “the cause of carnal concupiscence is not in the soul alone, much less in the flesh alone.” Instead, body and soul both need healing: “every single tot is nothing but Adam in both body and soul, and for that reason in need of the grace of Christ” (*Gn. litt.* X.11,19 [409]). Peter Burnell concurs with this reading of the passage: “[Augustine] is certain that the seat of concupiscence is both the soul and the body (*Gn. litt.* X.12.20)....His particular concern is to show that the biblical text does not exempt the soul from being a seat of concupiscence, whereas he takes it as obvious from the text that the body is. Thus the seat of concupiscence is the entire person.”⁸⁴ Augustine’s analogy with hearing emphasizes that the soul does have a role in desire. In order to undermine the idea that the flesh alone needs healing because the flesh alone causes sin, Augustine suggests that the soul is also implicated in sin and must be healed.⁸⁵

The context of the quote from *Gn. litt.* helps explain what Augustine means when he references “carnal pleasure” as a key to what the Apostle is thinking about when he mentions “desires of the flesh.” After the quote provided by Couenhoven, Augustine goes on to distinguish between bodily pleasure/desire and spiritual pleasure/desire. Augustine says that the soul’s desire without the flesh can be the good kind of desire “with which *the soul is longing and fainting for the courts of the Lord* (Ps 84:2),” or desiring to read, think, or serve the poor (*Gn. litt.* X.12,20 [409; emphasis in

⁸⁴ Burnell, “Concupiscence,” *ATTA*, 226.

⁸⁵ Nisula’s reading of this passage from Augustine is subtly different than mine. Nisula does not deny that the body is in some way essential for desire in this scenario. However, he suggests that “fleshly concupiscence... is generated by the soul (*anima*) but necessarily needs the body (*caro*) for its material.” Yet nowhere in the passage does Augustine say the body plays a passive role in the scenario; in fact, Augustine seems to say “carnal concupiscence...comes from both.” I do not see anything in the Latin that suggests the body is merely “material” upon which the soul acts. See Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, 233-234 n. 135.

original)). This is the “kind of desire which [the soul] is stirred by on its own” and in this case the soul can move the body without the flesh “stirring up lust” (*Gn. litt.* X.12,20 [409]).

There are, however, more complicated moments in the relation between soul and body. Sometimes the soul is attempting to take delight in something good, but “it confronts something in which the selfsame soul takes delight in the wake of the flesh” (*Gn. litt.* X.12,20 [409-410]). In those instances when the soul wants something good but also feels the incitement of lust, “that is when the flesh is said to lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh” (*Gn. litt.* X.12,20 [410]). Clearly Augustine here says the soul itself is what is taking delight, so the soul is the proper subject of the desire in this instance. Yet the phrase “in the wake of the flesh”—*secundum carnem*—or “according to the flesh” does not preclude the body itself from producing movements that entice the soul to follow and take delight (ACW trans., 112; Latin: PL 34, 416).

In fact, it seems that the body itself is what is causing the soul to turn away from the good thing it is delighting in in this passage. Because the flesh has the ability to “stir up” desire, “[i]t is not in [the soul’s] power not to lust or covet like this as long as sin is there in the members, that is to say, a certain violent allurement of the flesh *in the body of this death* (Rom 7:24)” (*Gn. litt.* X.12,21 [410; emphasis in original]). This allurement exists precisely in the body: “It is against this sin that those who ‘are constituted under grace’ do battle, not in order to eliminate it from their bodies, as long as they are mortal in such a way as by rights to be called dead, but to prevent it from reigning in them” (*Gn. litt.* X.12,20 [410]). In the next sentence he writes, “[a]nd sin does not reign when its desires—that is, the cravings by which it [i.e. sin] lusts after allurements according to the flesh against the spirit—are not obeyed” (ACW, 112, modified).⁸⁶ Augustine goes on to point out that Paul does not say “Do not let sin be there in your mortal bodies” but rather Paul says “*Do not let sin reign*” because

⁸⁶ The ACW translation reads: “And sin does not reign when its desires are not obeyed, that is, the cravings by which it lusts after allurements according to the flesh against the spirit.”

“he knew well enough that the attraction of sin, which he calls sin, is there as the result of our nature being distorted by that first transgression” (*Gn. litt.* X.12,21 [410]; emphasis in original). This attraction of sin seems to be something rooted in the body itself, so this text does not support the claim that *concupiscentia carnis* is merely a metaphor.

Augustine also addresses the claim that the flesh cannot desire without the soul in *c. Iul.* It is noteworthy that here Augustine attributes the claim that the flesh cannot desire to Julian. Augustine writes, mockingly, “Who does not know that you, outstanding teacher that you are, teach us that ‘the flesh is said to have desires because the soul desires in a carnal way’” (*c. Iul.* VI.14,41 [502])?⁸⁷ The context of this quote would be helpful in order to explain Augustine’s response to it.

In the section prior to the quote from Julian, Augustine claims that baptism does renew people, but not in a perfect way. For Julian, this is equivalent to the allegedly heretical claim that “the baptized are purified in part” (*c. Iul.* VI.13,40 [500]). This is heretical, according to Julian, because Augustine says the purification does not remove concupiscence of the flesh, and so the perfection of that purification is incomplete. In other words, from Julian’s perspective, Augustine thinks baptism only partially purifies people. Augustine’s response is the following: “Grace makes human beings completely new when it brings them to the immortality of the body and to full happiness. Now [i.e. in earthly life] it completely renews human beings in setting them free from absolutely all their sins, but not in setting them free from all their evils and from the corruption of mortality with which the body now weighs down the mind” (*c. Iul.* VI.13,40 [501]).

⁸⁷ Augustine’s Latin here in the alleged quote from Julian is almost exactly the same as Augustine’s own words from *perf. inst.* 8,19: Non enim caro sine anima concupiscit, quamvis caro concupiscere dicatur, quia carnaliter anima concupiscit (PL 44, 301). And here is Julian, or what Augustine says is Julian, in the *contra Iulianum* VI.14,41: "ideo dici carnem concupiscere, quia carnaliter anima concupiscit" (PL 44, 845). Maybe it is just a coincidence, but the similarity seems worth noting.

Augustine goes on to further specify the role the body plays in the delayed perfection of the life of grace:

Hence, even now baptism also bestows sanctification on the body, but it does not remove its corruption which also weighs down the soul. And so bodies are chaste, when their members do not serve the desires of sin, and for this reason they have begun to belong to the temple of God. But there remains that which grace must make perfect in this whole structure, as long as the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit so that it arouses sinful impulses which must be reined in (*c. Iul.* VI.13,40 [502]).

In other words, baptism does not fully heal the body, and as a result the baptized flesh still has desires opposed to the spirit. It is just after this quote that Augustine offers Julian's claim that "the flesh is said to have desires because the soul desires in a carnal way."

Augustine responds to Julian's claim that "the flesh is said to have desires because the soul desires in a carnal way" by first stating the obvious: "There can, after all, be no desire of the flesh without the soul. To have desires, after all, is a property of a living and sentient nature" (*c. Iul.* VI.14,41 [502]). In other words, a body without a soul is a dead body. He illustrates this point with the example of a eunuch: "even in eunuchs concupiscence is still present and chastity must rein it in" (*c. Iul.* VI.14,41 [502]). The point of the reference to eunuchs seems to be that concupiscence of the flesh is so fundamental to fallen human nature that even when concupiscence cannot achieve its goals, it nonetheless remains.

In his response to Julian, Augustine goes on to classify the "movements" (*motibus*) of the soul: "in movements according to the spirit [*secundum spiritum*] the soul opposes other movements of itself according to the flesh [*secundum carnem*]" (*c. Iul.* VI.14,41 [FC, 348; Latin: PL 44, 845]). Exactly what *secundum carnem* means is not explained here by Augustine, but what he goes on to say suggests that movements according to the flesh are more than just bad or sinful desires of the soul, but are rather somehow desires bound up with the body itself: "For, although we have died to sin and live for God, there is still something in ourselves that we should put to death so that sin does not reign in

our mortal body and we obey its desires” (*c. Iul.* VI.14,42 [503]). Among these desires of the mortal body is “that desire which chaste spouses put to good use” (*c. Iul.* VI.14,42 [503]).

Augustine will call this “the desire of the reproductive organs [*genitalium concupiscentiam*] with which we are born as a result of original sin” (*c. Iul.* VI.18,55 [513; PL 44, 855]). While this desire gets stronger or weaker depending on habituation, it is nevertheless “inborn in human beings as a result of our corrupted origin” and cannot be done away with completely until the resurrection (*c. Iul.* VI.18,55 [513]). In this text he seems to think the claim that the body cannot desire without the soul does not undermine the claim that the body has its own desires.

There is at least one more place in which Augustine claims that the flesh cannot desire without the soul. In *de continentia* Augustine argues against a Manichaean interpretation of continence.⁸⁸ A Manichee would suggest that it is only the desires of the body that one needs to fight in order to be virtuous (*cont.* 1,1 [192]). According to Augustine, however, continence is the virtue by which human beings fight against either sinful thoughts or sinful desires. Augustine, following the Psalmist, uses the image of a gate (*ostium*) in order to highlight what continence is: one who has the virtue of continence keeps the gate shut on the livestock of one’s initial bad thoughts or bad desires, never allowing those bad things to escape and run wild (*cont.* 1,2 [192]; CSEL 41, 142).⁸⁹ The livestock are pushing against the fences and threatening to break through unless one keeps the gate shut. Consent is the act of opening the gate. Even if one does not successfully carry out the action, the very fact that one consented to the bad thought or desire is itself a sin (*cont.* 2,3 [193]).

⁸⁸ For some of the issues related to dating and purpose of *de continentia*, see David G. Hunter, “The Date and Purpose of Augustine’s *De Continentia*,” *Augustinian Studies* 26 no. 2 (1995), 7-24. Hunter argues for a date somewhere in the range of 418-420, which is much later than the previously accepted date of 395-396. Michael R. Rackett also offers an argument for a later dating, and emphasizes the similarities between *de continentia* and Augustine’s works against Julian. See Michael R. Rackett, “Anti-Pelagian Polemic in Augustine’s *De Continentia*,” *Augustinian Studies* 26 no. 2 (1995), 25-50.

⁸⁹ The livestock image is mine, but it illustrates nicely what Augustine is thinking of here by using the image of a gate or door. When the gate is opened, the initial bad thoughts or desires get out of the corral and get out of control. Anyone who has been on a cattle farm can understand the importance of keeping the gate shut.

Because *cont.* is in part an anti-Manichaean text, Augustine is clear to not blame only the body for incitements to sin. Yet he nowhere denies that the body can incite one to sin, even though that denial would certainly make sense in the context of an anti-Manichaean argument. Hunter agrees that bodily desire is an issue in this text: “*De continentia* does contain some passages that speak of concupiscence in the sense of sexual desire and of continence as that virtue which ‘moderates and limits’ the concupiscence of the flesh and directs its ‘restless and disordered motion’ within proper limits.”⁹⁰ Hunter’s claim is perhaps understated, as we will see below.

Augustine writes that when one hears about the war between spirit and flesh, one could “accept the insane belief of the Manichees that this shows that there are two kinds of [natures; *naturas*] warring against each other, one good and the other evil, coming from two opposing sources” (*cont.* 7,18 [203]; PL 40, 360). Augustine vehemently denies that there are two natures in human beings, but he agrees with the Manichees that “there is at present a war being waged” between body and soul:

Absolutely those two things are both good; the spirit is good and the flesh is also good; and man, who is made up of both, one in control and the other subordinate, is certainly good, but a good that is subject to change....[I]n this human nature that is good, and made and set up in a good way by the one who is good, there is at present a war being waged, because health has not yet been achieved. Let the illness be cured, and there will be peace. That illness was incurred because of guilt; it was not natural. Certainly God’s grace has already wiped away that guilt for the faithful through the cleansing of rebirth, but under the hands of that doctor nature continues to battle with its infirmity....As the apostle James says, *Everyone is tempted, pulled and attracted by his own concupiscence*... We pray for help and a cure for this defect from the one who is able to heal all such infirmities, not by removing from us an alien nature, but by repairing our own nature within us (*cont.* 7,18 [203-204, amended; italics in original]).

Augustine does not deny that the war being waged includes the body. He instead highlights that both body and soul are involved in the war.

⁹⁰ Hunter, “The Date and Purpose of Augustine’s *De Continentia*,” 17-18. Hunter suggests Augustine’s emphasis is on “the desires of the heart.” Nightingale, however, suggests that in *cont.* Augustine is actually emphasizing that the body itself is a cause of bad desires. See Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature*, 214-215.

Augustine then specifies what he means by the non-Manichaean healing of human nature:

“[The soul] would not have needed healing, if it had not corrupted itself by sinning, so that its own flesh lusts against it; that is, its own self, in that part by which it is weakened in the flesh, is opposed to it (*cont.* 7,18; my translation).⁹¹ Although this phrase is not clear, Augustine goes on in the next sentence to say more specifically what he means by his claim “its own flesh lusts against it.” In his next sentence, he suggests something about the flesh not desiring without the soul. I leave the Latin terms where appropriate, so that the reader can get a better sense for what Augustine is up to:

Now the *caro* does not desire anything except *per animam*; but the *caro* is said to desire against the *spiritus*, when *anima carnali concupiscentia* [the soul through fleshly desires] resists the *spiritus*. We are this whole, and the *caro* itself, which dies when the *anima* departs, is our weakest part, not left behind to be escaped from, but laid aside as what we are to receive back and never relinquish. “An animal *corpus* is sown, a spiritual *corpus* will rise.” Then the *caro* will desire nothing opposed to the *spiritus*, when it will also be called spiritual, because [it will be] without a single thing in it resisting [the *spiritus*], and will truly be sustained in eternal life even without any need for bodily nourishment. Thus we pray and yearn that the two—which are now mutually opposed in us ([that is,] “in us” since we are both)⁹²—be harmonized. For we ought not think that the one is an enemy, but a defect, since the *caro* desires against the *spiritus*: thus [in the resurrection], not only will health be restored to it and both substances will be healthy, but there will also be no conflict between them (*cont.* 8,19; my translation).⁹³

⁹¹ My translation, working with FC, 210 and NPNF, 386-387. Latin: Non enim sanatione indiguisset, nisi se ipsa peccando vitias et, ut adversus eam caro sua concupisceret, id est, ipsa sibimetipsi ex ea parte qua in carne infirmata est repugnaret (CSEL 41, 163). The WSA translation is inadequate, turning *carne* into an adjective when it is clearly a noun. “Its own self” does not seem to mean that the soul is divided against itself. “Its own self” rather seems to refer to the idea that the body is the soul’s own, and not an evil nature opposed to the soul. The phrase “if it had not corrupted itself by sinning” is most likely a reference to Adam’s sin, not the later person’s individual sins.

⁹² In other words, not “in us” in the Manichean way (as though one of the two is an alien nature).

⁹³ My translation. The full text of the Latin for both quoted paragraphs: Caro enim nihil nisi per animam concupiscit; sed concupiscere caro aduersus spiritum dicitur, quando anima carnali concupiscentia spiritui reluctatur. Totum hoc nos sumus, et caro ipsa, quae discedente anima moritur, nostra pars infima est.... Tunc iam caro nihil concupiscet aduersus spiritum, quando et ipsa spiritalis uocabitur, quoniam spiritui non solum sine ulla repugnantia, uerum etiam sine ulla corporalis alimenti indigentia in aeternum uiuificanda subdetur. Haec igitur duo, quae nunc invicem adversantur in nobis, quoniam in utroque nos sumus, ut concordent oremus et agamus. Non enim alterum eorum putare debemus inimicum, sed uitium, quo caro concupiscit aduersus spiritum: quod sanatum nec ipsum erit et substantia utraque salua erit, et in utraque nulla pugna erit (CSEL 41, 163).

This is a difficult section to interpret, because Augustine at the same time says that the *caro* does not desire anything except *per animam*, yet he also says that the healing of the *caro* is essential to the healing of desire in the resurrection. He clearly means “body” when he says *caro*, since it is the *caro* that is left behind when the soul departs and it is the *corpus* that both dies and rises.

Why would Augustine say the *caro* does not desire anything except *per animam*, and then go on to immediately say that in the resurrection the *caro* will desire nothing opposed to the *spiritus* because the two substances will be harmonized? If the body is not crucial to these fleshly desires, then why emphasize the healing of the both substances? If the flesh is impotent to desire—if only the soul desires—then the whole reflection on resurrection seems out of place.

The key phrase to understand here is “Caro enim nihil nisi per animam concupiscit; sed concupiscere caro adversus spiritum dicitur, quando anima carnali concupiscentia spiritui reluctatur.” The first clause is pretty clearly expressing that “the flesh desires nothing except through the soul.” This, in itself, is obvious, since flesh without a soul is just a dead body. In the next clause, “but the *caro* is said to desire against the *spiritus*,” it should be noted that he has shifted from an emphasis on *anima* to an emphasis on *spiritus*. When is the *caro* said to desire against the *spiritus*? “[Q]uando anima carnali concupiscentia spiritui reluctatur.” The NPNF translates this clause as “when the soul with fleshly lust wrestles against the spirit.”⁹⁴ The NCP translates this clause as “when the soul struggles against the spirit because of carnal desires.”⁹⁵ The FC translates this as “when the soul through carnal concupiscence wrestles with the spirit.”⁹⁶ The common denominator of these translations is

⁹⁴ NPNF, 386.

⁹⁵ WSA, 204.

⁹⁶ FC, 211.

that the soul struggles against the spirit “with” or “because of” or “through” carnal desires. This last phrase seems to be the key to the passage.

Augustine is here drawing on a more technical account of how body, soul and spirit are related in desires of the flesh. Earlier he had said, after criticizing the Manichean interpretation of “spirit vs. flesh,” that “[t]hose two things are certainly both good; the spirit is good and the flesh is also good; and human nature, which is made up of both, one in control and the other subordinate, is certainly good” (*cont.* 7,18 [203]). There he was using spirit to refer to anything in the person that is not the body. However, when he gets to his analysis of how the *caro* desires *per animam*, he distinguishes between *anima* and *spiritus*. His point is that the body itself cannot struggle with the *spiritus* when *spiritus* is understood as the higher part of the soul. As I show below, Augustine does consistently distinguish between higher and lower parts of the soul, although his terminology changes.⁹⁷ The lower, non-rational part is consistently bound up with the workings of the body. The struggle between spirit and flesh happens when the *anima*, understood as distinct from the higher *spiritus*, is involved in bodily desires. That is, the *anima* is sometimes moved in bodily desires and thereby struggles with the *spiritus* itself. Without the *anima* being influenced by the desires of the flesh, there simply could be no struggle with the *spiritus* because it is the lower *anima*, not the *spiritus*, that is the part of the soul that more directly interacts with the body.⁹⁸

This reading is confirmed by what Augustine goes on to say in the paragraph quoted above, and in the rest of *cont.* If the body (animated by the *anima*) itself were not an agent in desires, then the entire reflection on the Manichaean two natures and the healing of the *caro* in the resurrection

⁹⁷ Augustine writes: “[God] gave also to flesh its origin, beauty, health, fruitfulness in propagation, and the disposition and wholesome concord of its members. Also, to the irrational soul He has given memory, sensation and appetite; and to the rational soul He has in addition given mind, intelligence and will” (*civ. Dei* V.11 [206]).

⁹⁸ I expand below in a later section on Augustine’s understanding of the “parts” or elements of the soul.

would be nonsensical. The flesh does indeed need healing in the resurrection, and prior to that healing human beings experience a deep conflict within their nature. Augustine says later in *cont.* that the role of the virtue of continence is in large part to “restrain and curb the lowest part of us, that is, the *corpus*, from immoderate and unlawful pleasures” (*cont.* 12,26 [NPNF, 390, amended; CSEL 41, 175]).⁹⁹ Even so, continence is not simply about restraining “*libidines corporis*” since one must also restrain any “pleasurable desires which conflict with the pleasure of wisdom” (*cont.* 13,28 [my trans.; CSEL 41, 178]). In other words, continence is about restraining both desires of the body and desires of the soul. Continence has this more general meaning of restraining both desires of the body and desires of the soul because the “desire involved in sinning is not only bodily desire, but also that of the soul” (*cont.* 13,28 [212]).¹⁰⁰

Augustine’s example of a woman who avoids sex with her husband simply out of bodily self-control and with no thought of honoring God shows the complexity of Augustine’s theory here. A woman like this is still incontinent even though she can avoid the bodily desires (*corporis appetitum*), since her pseudo-continence is undertaken for the wrong reason (*cont.* 12,26 [CSEL 41, 176]). People like this can have “marvelous control over the *libidines* of the *carnis* or *animi*,” yet they are still not truly continent without ordering their continence toward the right goals (*cont.* 12,26 [211; CSEL 41, 175]). Augustine’s concern in this text is not to say that the body does not desire, but that continence is about both desires of the body and desires of the soul, in contrast to the Manichees who suggest it is the desires of the body alone that cause trouble to humanity: “Against the

⁹⁹ I have added in the Latin term *corpus* to the translation to emphasize that Augustine is referring to the body.

¹⁰⁰ Latin: Quae cupiditas in uitio ponitur, nec tantum est corporis, uerum et animi (CSEL 41, 178).

Manichees Augustine presents continence not as a hostile assault on the body, but as a healthy chastisement."¹⁰¹

This section has shown that when Augustine says “the flesh cannot desire without the soul” he is not saying that the flesh does not desire, as some interpreters have taken him to say. When he mentions that the flesh cannot desire without the soul, he never suggests the flesh has no desires, and he never suggests *concupiscentia carnis* is merely a metaphor for sinful desires of the soul. In fact, he very clearly thinks the body does have desires that the person must take account of for growth in virtue.

CONCUPISCENCE, SENSATION, SOUL AND BODY

Thus far I have shown that Augustine does indeed think *concupiscentia carnis* is a desire of the body. His entire theology of marriage seems to be built upon the presumption that *concupiscentia carnis* is ineradicable precisely because it is bodily, and when Julian gives him the chance to back off the suggestion that *concupiscentia carnis* is a bodily desire, Augustine stridently claims it is essential to Christian anthropology and good biblical interpretation to think *concupiscentia carnis* is a bodily desire.

Furthermore, thus far I have responded to two major objections against the literal interpretation of *concupiscentia carnis*. Whatever views one holds about Augustine’s account of the emotions, his account of *concupiscentia carnis* or bodily desire is distinctive from his account of the emotions. If emotions are movements of the soul and not the body, what is true of the emotions does not necessarily apply to *concupiscentia carnis*, since *concupiscentia carnis* is in large part a bodily desire. Furthermore, when Augustine says the flesh cannot desire without the soul, he does not mean the flesh has no desires.

¹⁰¹ David G. Hunter, “*Continentia, De*,” in *ATTA*, 238.

A more basic problem for my reading of Augustine arises at this point, however. How does the literal interpretation of *concupiscentia carnis* fit with Augustine's other anthropological commitments? Perhaps *concupiscentia carnis* just an idiosyncrasy of Augustine's anthropology unduly influenced by the language of Paul, while his other commitments do not give the body the kind of agency he gives the body in sexual desire. One wonders whether Augustine's claims about *concupiscentia carnis* are in tension with his broader understanding of the relationship between body and soul.

In this section I offer an account of how Augustine's more general anthropology incorporates Augustine's claim that the body can desire. Of primary importance is accounting for the role of the soul in the desires of the body. As I will show, Augustine does indeed think the soul has a vital role in the desires of the body. However, the role of the soul in those desires is not such that the body cannot be said to desire. Rather, the role of the soul in bodily desire is to inform the body's members, just as the soul informs all the body's workings. The soul in these cases has an essentially non-rational role: the soul is essential to the workings of the body primarily because, as Augustine says, "there is no sensation in a dead body" (*cin. Dei* I.12 [20]). As I will show, Augustine thinks the body does have a kind of causal role in sensation and desire that is independent of any rational input from the soul. Thus Augustine does not think the body works independently of the soul, but he also does not think the body is merely a kind of passive vehicle for the soul with no agency of the body's own.

To better understand how the body can produce desires without any rational input of the soul, it is necessary to examine Augustine's views on bodily sensation. It is through sensation that the body is moved to desire, and Augustine explicitly connects sensation to *concupiscentia carnis*. Below I offer some background on Augustine's account of human sensation, and then I connect that account to his views on *concupiscentia carnis*.

Senses are first and foremost bodily experiences: “the basis of Augustine’s theory of sense-perception is physiological in character.”¹⁰² Even so, sensations do also require the soul to receive the information from the senses and turn it into a sense impression. The senses perceive information by means of the coordinating action of the brain and transmit it to the soul:

From [the highest area of the brain] the eyes flash their rays, and from the brain’s mid-point, from a kind of North Pole, other fine tubes lead not only to the eyes but also to the other senses: to ears, to nostrils, to palate for hearing, smelling and tasting. And [doctors] show that the sense of touch, which is spread through the whole body, is likewise governed by the same section of the brain through the marrow of the neck and that contained in the little bones out of which the backbone is stitched together, so that from there tiny rivulets of the finest sort, which activate the sense of touch, may spread out through all the limbs of the body (*Gn. litt.* VII.13,20 [333]).

It is through the workings of these bodily elements that “[t]he soul therefore receives from these quasi-messengers information about any bodily things that are not hidden from it” (*Gn. litt.* VII.14,20 [333]). Imperfections in the body can affect sensation, as is obvious in the case of those who are blind (*Gn. litt.* VII.18,24 [335]). In sensation there is a symbiotic relationship between body and soul, with the body being first affected and the soul then receiving information from the body.

To demonstrate the distinction between the soul’s rational and non-rational involvement in sensation, In the case of the sense of sight, Augustine distinguishes between three kinds of “vision,” only one of which involves reason. The first kind of vision is the vision of the eyes (for example, seeing words on a computer screen). The eyes send out rays that bounce back and hit the eyes (*Gn. litt.* XII.16,32 [481]). The beams returning to the eyes somehow immediately cause an impression of an image in the part of the soul responsible for receiving sense impressions (*Gn. litt.* XII.23,49 [490]). For our purposes here, let this receiving element of the soul be called spirit.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 81. O’Daly’s book is essential reading for Augustine’s account of sensation, especially chapter 3.

¹⁰³ Hill distinguishes between spirit and mind/intellect in his translation of *Gn. litt.*. See *Gn. litt.* XII.11,12 [474-475]. Augustine’s point is that the spirit is the middle part between the body and the intellect.

Spiritual vision is the second kind of vision. Augustine calls this second kind of vision “spiritual” (*spiritalis*) because, as he says, the word spirit can refer to the lower part of the soul that is distinguished from the mind (*Gn. litt.* XII.8,19 [472]). The spirit is “a power of the soul lower than the mind in which likenesses of bodily things are imprinted” (*Gn. litt.* XII.9,20 [473]).¹⁰⁴ The impression upon the spirit is made immediately when the eyes and the corresponding internal body parts are working well (*Gn. litt.* XII.24,49 [490]). Spiritual vision is the kind of vision upon which the impression of an external object is imprinted when seeing it with the eyes and in which one internally sees something that is not present. The vision of the eyes requires spiritual vision because the spirit forms the impression of what is received by the eyes: “It is not the body, you see, that senses, but the soul through the body, using it as a kind of messenger in order to form in itself the message being brought in from outside. And so no bodily vision can occur unless spiritual vision also occurs simultaneously” (*Gn. litt.* XII.24,51 [492]).

The third kind of vision is called intellectual vision. This is the mind’s judgment about the truth or falsity or quality of the impression in the spirit. It is impossible for the spirit to make a judgment about the impression in the spirit: “spiritual vision is in need of the intellectual kind in order to have a judgment or assessment made of it” (*Gn. litt.* XII.24,51 [492]). Animals have spiritual vision, but in principle they cannot have intellectual vision since animals are not rational (*Gn. litt.* XII.11,22 [475]). The intellect is an analytically distinct part of the soul from the spirit, and the two work in coordination to produce human sensation. In sum, the soul is involved in all these parts of sensation, but only in the third is reason present since the soul’s role in the first two kinds of visions is exactly like the soul’s role in animal sensation.

¹⁰⁴ The terminology is admittedly confusing, as Augustine in later works will sometimes refer to the *spiritus* as the higher part of the soul.

In *de trinitate* Augustine further compares the non-rational part of the soul in humans to the soul in animals, showing again that the soul plays an essential but non-rational role in sensation (*trin.* X.7 [293]).¹⁰⁵ Animals have senses and memory and the ability to move toward what is “advantageous and shun whatever is harmful” (*trin.* XII.2 [322]). Yet animals do not have the ability to reason (*trin.* XII.2 [322]). Animals naturally retain things in their memories, but they cannot do this “on purpose” (*cogitatione firmetur*) (*trin.* XII.2 [322; CCSL 50, 357]). Animals cannot imagine things that are not already in their memories, nor can they judge between truth and falsity (*trin.* XII.2 [323]). While the human mind directs deliberate sensations (turning the eyes from the computer screen to the clock), the human mind is not actively involved in basic sensation. Rather, the parts of the soul involved in basic sensation are common to humans and animals (*trin.* X.7 [293]).

Because animals do not have reason and yet do many things that look like deliberate actions, Augustine must account for what is distinctive about the soul’s role in human actions. Here he says that “something rational of ours” (*quiddam rationale nostrum*) is responsible for the distinctively human process of moving oneself into action (*trin.* XII.3 [323; CCSL 50, 358]). Drawing an analogy with Adam and Eve, Augustine suggests the higher part of the soul, the mind specified as reason (*ratio*), is concerned with unchangeable truths, while the “spouse” of that higher part, the rational appetite (*appetitum rationalem*), is subordinate to the mind, and yet the two are still “Two in one mind [*Duo in mente una*]” as Adam and Eve were two in one flesh (*trin.* XII.3 [323; Latin: CCSL 50, 358]). In other words, humans have not only reason, but they also have a distinct aspect of the soul responsible for

¹⁰⁵ Here I include book and paragraph numbers and page number for the Hill translation (WSA I/5). I do not include the chapter numbers because Hill does not include the standard chapter numbers, but rather introduces his own chapters. For Hill’s explanation of why he does not include the standard chapter numbers, see p. 60 of WSA I/5.

carrying out actions in accord with reason.¹⁰⁶ Augustine says there are many possible names for this part of the soul, but he seems to prefer rational appetite in this text.

What Augustine says in book XII of *trin.* about the distinction between the higher, rational parts of the soul (*ratio* and *appetitus rationalem*) and the lower, non-rational part shows further that he thinks it is the lower part of the soul that is primarily involved in sensation and bodily desire. It is the lower, non-rational part of the soul that empowers sensation and the initial desire that ensues from some kinds of sensation. Augustine makes a clear distinction between the rational appetite and the “carnal” or “animal” sense: “So this channel of the mind [i.e. the rational appetite] is busy reasoning in a lively fashion about temporal and bodily things in its task of activity, and along comes that carnal or animal sense with a tempting suggestion for self-enjoyment” (*trin.* XII.17 [332]).¹⁰⁷ This carnal sense is like the serpent, enticing the person to sin in a way that seems as though it is coming from the outside. This temptation comes from what humans have “in common to us and the beasts” (*trin.* XII.17 [331]). It is a temptation outside of reason: “*seclusus est a ratione sapientiae*” (CCSL 50, 371). It is not the case that the higher part of the soul is what desires when the carnal sense arises. Rather, the initial desire comes from the interplay between the lower, non-rational part of the soul and the body. There is no question here of the carnal sense being an expression of the rational appetite: the point of Augustine bringing up the carnal sense is to say that it is not rational and so is what humans have in common with the animals. It is the carnal sense, enlivened by the non-rational element of the soul, that provides the temptation to the rational appetite (*trin.* XII.17 [332]).

¹⁰⁶ Analytically distinct because the soul is in reality indivisible.

¹⁰⁷ This passage from *trin.* is reminiscent of *Gn. litt* X.11-12, discussed above in the section on Couenhoven’s views on the possibility of the body having its own desires.

When Augustine discusses the sense of sight in this text, he further shows that sensation involves the soul in a non-rational way. The sense of sight involves three elements: the external object, the form of the object, and the *animi intentio* (*trin.* XI.2 [304; Latin: CCSL 50, 334]).¹⁰⁸ The external object is the thing that is sensed. The form is another name for the impression of the image of the object in the spirit (in the case of seeing, the form is the impression produced after the rays bouncing off the thing being seen have returned to the eyes and made the impression). Once this form is impressed upon the spirit, the sense becomes an activated sense such as sight, taste, touch, smell or hearing, since before the sense was activated it was a latent sense. The *animi intentio* is the aspect of the soul that empowers the sense and “holds our sense on the thing we are seeing and joins the two together” (*trin.* XI.2 [305; CCSL 50, 335]).¹⁰⁹ When the *animi intentio* is actually informing the sense, this is what Augustine calls “*sensus informatus*” (*trin.* XI.3; CCSL 50, 336]). It is the job of the *animi intentio* to join together the external object and the sense. The active sense of sight requires both the external object and the *animi intentio*, but this involves the soul in its non-rational capacity.

Augustine goes on to distinguish between *animi intentio* and *voluntas animi*, and this distinction is crucial to Augustine’s account of the non-rational and rational aspects of the soul’s role in sensation. The *animi intentio* is essentially non-rational and is distinguished from the higher, rational part of the

¹⁰⁸ Hill (WSA I/5, 304) and Hochschild translate *animi intentio* as “conscious intention” and the FC translators and O’Daly translate it as “attention of the mind” but these translations obscure Augustine’s point in this section of *trin.* Augustine’s point is to say that there is a kind of lower-level trinity in the three parts of sense: external object, bodily sense, and the soul’s informing of the sense (*animi intentio*). O’Daly points out that often “*Intentio* refers primarily to mental concentration” (*Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 84-85). However, in this section, *animi intentio* is not a rationally intentional thing since it is an element of the soul that humans and animals have in common. As I show in the body of the dissertation, Augustine will go on to distinguish between the rational human intention of sensation and the animal, non-rational “intention” used in animal sensation. See Paige E. Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine’s Theological Anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 202.

¹⁰⁹ The *animi intentio* is different from sense of the body in part because “*iste animus, illud corpus est, sed ab ipso quoque sensu atque uisione quoniam solius animi est haec intentio.*” That is, the *animi intentio* differs from the sense not only because it is soul, while sense is body, but “it also differs from the sense itself and the sight since” only *animi* has *intentio* (*trin.* XI.2 [305; CCSL L.335]).

soul called the will (*uoluntas animi*) (*trin.* XI.5 [CCSL 50, 338]). Augustine incorporates the distinction between *animi intentio* and *uoluntas animi* in a section discussing seeing double when looking at a candle. In the act of opening and closing one or both eyes to see or not see two candles, it is the *uoluntas animi* “which moves the sense to the sensed thing” and “keeps the vision fixed on the thing” (*trin.* XI.5).¹¹⁰ When he mentions the *uoluntas animi*, he seems to have in mind the kind of rational, intentional action of looking at a candle to see how one can see double by first having one eye shut and then by opening both eyes.

However, Augustine returns to the phrase *animi intentio* when discussing the way in which the bodies of animals are affected by what they are looking at, which further demonstrates that *animi intentio* in its basic role of empowering sensation is something not precisely rational or intentional in a distinctively human way. Here Augustine mentions that external objects can affect the germinating seeds in the womb of an animal mother simply by the “*intentionem maternae animae*” being fixed on some special kind of external object, and, as an example, he mentions Jacob holding up different rods in order to produce different colored offspring of the lambs and goats (*trin.* XI.5 [307; CCSL 50, 339]). This is clearly not a kind of rationally-willed sensation since animals are not rational on Augustine’s account. It is the non-rational *animi intentio* that empowers sensation, while the *uoluntas animi* directs deliberate sensations.

To further show that the *animi intentio* is non-rational, Augustine highlights the way in which the *uoluntas animi* is involved only in deliberate sensations, while the *animi intentio* is necessarily involved in every sensation. When Augustine mentions the will’s role in sensation, he is thinking of purposeful sensation, as when one is looking at a candle in order to see one, and then two, candles by opening and shutting an eye. When the will is doing this kind of purposeful sensation, it can do

¹¹⁰ In the two quotes, the first is my translation, the second comes from FC 45, 321. Latin: et uoluntas animi quae rei sensibili sensum admouet, in eoque ipsam uisionem tenet (CCSL 50, 338).

it in morally better and morally worse ways, depending on how it refers the immediate sensation to the ultimate goal of happiness (*trin.* XI.8 [310]). To make any sensation the ultimate goal of one's actions would be a base and ignoble way to go about actively sensing something, since the experience of sensation is not one's true goal in life. Thus the role of the *uoluntas animi* is crucial to a virtuous life, for it is the will that determines the ardor of sensations and the way those sensations are placed within one's broader life context.

However, it cannot be only the *uoluntas animi* that is involved in connecting the external object to the eyes, and this becomes clear when one realizes that the will is not able to shut off all sensation. One can close one's eyes, but of course the other four senses will remain active: "Thus it is by moving the body that the will avoids coupling the senses of the body to sensible things. And it does this as far as it can. When it suffers difficulty in this respect because of our condition of servile mortality, the result is torment, and nothing is left to the will but endurance" (*trin.* XI.15 [315]). The senses do operate in a semi-independent way from the will. For instance, one can go for a walk and not remember seeing anything, even though one's eyes were open the whole time. It would not be correct to say that the person walking had not seen anything; his memory had not retained what he had seen (*trin.* XI.15 [316]). Thus the soul is always operative in sensation, but in most sensations it is the non-rational *animi intentio* that is active.

For Augustine, the human person does nothing without her soul. Sensations are impossible without the soul. Yet the role of the soul in most sensations is to enliven the body and to provide animation to the senses, so that the senses work how they should. The aspects or parts of the soul are such that what empowers and enables the senses are the non-rational elements of the soul. The body and soul work in a symbiotic relationship in sensation, but the soul is important to sensation primarily because "there is no sensation in a dead body" (*civ. Dei* I.12 [20]). Much of what the soul does in sensation is simply outside of thought and reason.

I have not shown yet how the issue of the soul's role in sensation illuminates Augustine's account of desire. To connect the non-rational role of the soul in sensation to the issue of desire, it would be helpful to again turn to Augustine's dispute with Julian. The issue of sensation and its relation to desire is an important one in the dispute between Julian and Augustine, since Julian thinks concupiscence is essentially connected with the issue of sensation: for Julian, concupiscence either is a sense or is informed by the soul in the same way the senses are (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.29 [410-411]). For Augustine, on the other hand, there is a strong distinction between sensation itself and concupiscence of the flesh: "the senses of the flesh are one thing; concupiscence of the flesh is another" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.69 [441]).¹¹¹ Furthermore, "desires are what are sensed by certain persons, rather than what senses anything" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.49 [428]).

Augustine identifies three aspects of sensation that are distinct from desire: "in every bodily sense the liveliness or usefulness or necessity of sensation is something other than sensual desire" (*c. Iul.* IV.14,65 [417]). Those aspects are:

sentiendi vivacitatem: "The liveliness of the senses accounts for the fact that one person perceives more and another less of the truth in bodily things in accord with their limit and nature and distinguishes it more and less from falsity."¹¹²

sentiendi utilitatem: "The usefulness of sensation allows us to take care of the bodily life we live in approving or disapproving, taking or rejecting, seeking or avoiding something."¹¹³

sentiendi necessitatem: "The necessity of sensation is found when even things which we do not want are impressed upon our senses."¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Augustine is responding to Julian's claim that concupiscence of the flesh is necessary for all sensation because concupiscence of the flesh is a kind of intentionality informing the senses. Julian thinks that to claim that Christ had no concupiscence is to deny that Christ had the possibility of any bodily sensation.

¹¹² Latin: Vivacitas sentiendi est, qua magis alius, alius minus in ipsis corporalibus rebus pro earum modo atque natura quod verum est percipit, atque id a falso magis minusve discernit (PL 44, 770).

¹¹³ Latin: Utilitas sentiendi est, per quam corpori vitaeque quam gerimus, ad aliquid approbandum vel improbandum, sumendum vel reiciendum, appetendum vitandumve consulimus (PL 44, 770).

¹¹⁴ Necessitas sentiendi est, quando sensibus nostris etiam quae nolumus ingeruntur (PL 44, 770).

The fact that sensation has these three aspects distinct from desire does not mean, however, that there is no connection between sensation and desire. Sensual desire (*libido sentiendi*) “is what drives us to have sensations out of a love of carnal pleasure, whether we consent with our mind or fight against it” (*c. Iul. IV.14,65 [417]*). Augustine’s point here is to deny Julian’s claim that concupiscence is necessary for, or equivalent to, the senses of the body. *Libido sentiendi* is, rather, distinct from but connected to the senses.

The *libido sentiendi* is not only “involved in the union of the two sexes,” it also affects all the bodily senses (*c. Iul. IV.14,65 [417]*). Senses work well when “we avoid what is displeasing, such as foul odors, bitterness, heat, cold, certain harsh, hard, and heavy things” (*c. Iul. IV.14,65 [417]*). In these instances, “we look out for our advantage rather than desire pleasure” (*c. Iul. IV.14,65 [417]*). However, one cannot totally rid oneself of the *libido sentiendi*: “For, no matter how much they discipline their carnal desire, who can enter a place perfumed with incense and not smell the sweet scent, unless they hold their nostrils closed or are alienated from their bodily senses by the strength of their will” (*c. Iul. IV.14,67 [418]*)? These almost inevitable desirous sensations might lead a person to “delight” in what is sensed, which seems morally unproblematic in the case of initially delighting in a pleasurable smell. However, if the person “yearn[s] for them with any desire when they are absent...it is not good. After all, in things of any kind such an appetite must be conquered and healed” (*c. Iul. IV.14,65 [417-418]*).¹¹⁵ In other words, the *libido sentiendi* drives and in turn is driven by some sensations in a way distinct from the will.

Augustine offers the desire for food as a second example of *libido sentiendi*. The desire for food for the purpose of health “is not called *libido*, but hunger or thirst” (*c. Iul. IV.14,67 [418]*). However,

¹¹⁵ Augustine does not tell the reader how these desires arise later on when the smell is absent, though below in a section on sexual desire in dreams I show that he does think *libido sentiendi* can be aroused by sense impressions arising outside of the will and causing one to desire automatically.

the desire for more food than one needs is “an evil to which one must not yield, but resist” (*c. Iul.* IV.14,67 [418]). The problem with the desire for food is that it is connected to pleasure, and pleasure can draw the person toward food in an undue way (*c. Iul.* IV.14,67 [418]). The desire for the pleasure of food is tolerable because it can lead to health and “because it does not have such strength to tear us away and cast us down from thoughts pertaining to wisdom” (*c. Iul.* IV.14,71 [421]). However, desire for the pleasure of food “entices the mind” and is therefore at least regrettable (*c. Iul.* IV.14,66 [418]; IV.14,68 [419]). It would be better to eat without the “tempting sweetness of taste” that is so characteristic of the life of sensation after the fall (*c. Iul.* IV.14,68 [419]). In the case of food, the *libido sentiendi* seems to operate outside of the will, as though it is an independent causal agent that brings temptation to the person.

Augustine’s third example of *libido sentiendi*, sexual desire, does inevitably entice the mind. Whereas the pleasure of food does not always overcome the mind, Augustine asks whether sexual pleasure can ever “permit anyone in the act itself to have some thought, I will not say, of wisdom, but of anything at all” (*c. Iul.* 14,71 [421])? After sex “the mind surfaces from it and draws in breaths of thought after its plunge into this whirlpool” (*c. Iul.* IV.14,71 [421]). Augustine seems to agree with Balbus, who says “[g]reat bodily pleasure, after all, cannot be combined with thought” (*c. Iul.* IV.14,72 [421]). The “arousal of desire” is not something rational, but must rather “be reined in by reason” (*c. Iul.* 14,73 [422]). This “evil is not present in animals,” not because they do not desire, but because “they do not have reason by which they might subdue their desires by conquering them or wear them down by fighting them” (*c. Iul.* IV.14,73 [422]). Sexual *libido sentiendi* exists outside the will, happening merely through the body’s normal sensation process.

In the *c. Iul. imp.* Augustine connects the *libido sentiendi* explicitly to *concupiscentia carnis*.¹¹⁶

Here Augustine refers back to the fourth book of *c. Iul.* and says that concupiscence of the flesh is different from senses of the flesh: “The senses of the flesh by which the flesh somehow reports to the spirit present bodily things are distinct from the movements of carnal concupiscence by which the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit and rushes into whatever is forbidden and immoral, unless the spirit also has desires opposed to it” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.26-27 [409-410]). Yet this *concupiscentia carnis* is involved in all the body’s senses: “This concupiscence is, of course, recognized in whichever sense of the body the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.28 [410]). This concupiscence is a “defect” and an “evil movement” of which “spouses make good use...provided they do not do anything on account of it” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.29 [411]). The problem with this desire is that by it “we desire indifferently illicit and licit things, which are differentiated, not by desire, but by intellect” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.69 [441]). Bodily sensual desire is not capable of differentiating between good and bad desirous objects and is a non-rational causal force in the person.

The *libido sentiendi/concupiscentia carnis* may have existed in Eden, but would not have preceded the will: “one might believe that the desire of the carnal senses [*carnalium sensuum libidinem*] existed in paradise in such a way that it was completely subject to the rational will. It would have been present only when one had to use it for the health of the body [i.e. desire for food] or for the propagation of offspring” (*c. Iul.* IV.14,69 [420]; PL 44). Augustine goes on in the next few sentences to show that this desire of the carnal senses is something that now exists independently of the will:

But those who fight against [the desire of the carnal senses] experience most of all how different things are now [in comparison to the garden]. It insinuates itself in people who see or hear something, even though they hear it for some other reason, so that, even if one does not derive from it the pleasure of touch, by its surreptitious movement it steals at least a

¹¹⁶ Schmitt recognizes the rough equivalence between *libido sentiendi* and *concupiscentia carnis*. See: Émile Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien Dans L'Œuvre de Saint Augustin: Une Théologie Baptismale et la Vie Conjugale* (Paris: Études Augustinennes, 1983), 103 n. 95.

pleasureful thought amidst necessities which have nothing to do with it. Moreover, in thoughts themselves, even when nothing tempting lies before the eyes or is heard by the ears, what old and sleeping memories does it not try by its restless recollections to arouse with shameful delight! And it breaks in upon chaste and holy intentions with a storm of sordid interruptions (*c. Inl. IV.14,70 [420]*).

This desire of the carnal senses is certainly complex, infiltrating memories and dreams. What unites all these desires is that they are directed immediately to pleasure and they attack the person's soul by "steal[ing] at least a pleasurable thought." It is precisely the ability of desires of the flesh to pull down the mind and cause irrational and vicious thoughts that makes desires of the flesh in humans different from the desires of the flesh in animals (*c. Inl. IV.14,74 [422-423]*). In other words, these desires are problematic for humans precisely because they are distinguished from thought and tempt one's thoughts.

Augustine's reflections on sexual desire in dreams in *Gn. litt. XII.15,31* help to illustrate further the complexity of the relationship between body and soul in desires of the flesh. Here Augustine says that in a dream one can have a full auto-erotic sexual experience simply because one has some kind of sense impression of sex stored in the memory. He uses the example of someone preaching about sex: one hears the preacher, and sense impressions are immediately stored in one's memory. One need not even have given "pleasurable consent" when the impressions were initially stored during waking hours (*Gn. litt. XII.15,31 [480]*). The impressions remain in the sleeping person's memory since hearing about them when awake immediately produces an impression in the spirit/memory, as was shown in the section above on sight.

When these impressions are non-voluntarily brought up during sleep, their presence immediately moves the body to desire: "these things are brought to our notice in dreams and expressed in such a way that the flesh is of its nature moved by them, and emits through the genital channels what by nature it has stored up" (*Gn. litt. XII.15,31 [480]*). Thus someone gives nonconsensual "consent" and ejaculates in a dream because, "when the mental pictures that occur in

his thoughts while he is speaking [when awake] are also imprinted on his [inner] vision while he is dreaming in such a way that he cannot distinguish between them and the real coupling bodies, the flesh is at once stirred into movement, and the result is what usually follows upon this movement” (*Gn. litt.* XII.15,31 [480]). Somehow simply the presence of sense impressions in dreams can cause one to desire with the body almost automatically.

Augustine goes on to more clearly distinguish between the bodily movement itself and the desires of the soul: “But a right disposition of soul, purified by a desire for what is more perfect, kills many desires that have no connection with the natural motions of the flesh, which [motions] chaste people curb and restrain while awake, though in their sleep they are unable to do so because they cannot control the appearance of those corporeal images that are indistinguishable from bodies” (*Gn. litt.* XII.15,31; ACW trans. 199).¹¹⁷ Two points are of interest here. First, Augustine thinks that, even in the case of chaste people, when sense impressions become present in a dream, somehow “the flesh is of its nature moved by them” and this happens “at once” (*Gn. litt.* XII.15,31 [480]).¹¹⁸ Augustine seems to be thinking that when certain kinds of sense impressions are present, the sexual members are moved almost as Pavlov’s dog is moved to drool by the sound of a bell. For other emotions or movements, the normal course of action is something like this: initial sense impression—> prepassion—> will—> movement. In most emotions the will must consent in order for the person to be meaningfully moved. But in the case of sexual desire, “sexual desire activates the sex organs directly, with or without consent” of the will.¹¹⁹ The sequence in sexual

¹¹⁷ Latin: uerum tamen propter animae adfectionem bonam, quae desiderio meliore mundata multas interficit cupiditates, quae ad naturalem carnis motum non pertinent, quem casti uigilantes cohibent et refrenant, dormientes autem ideo non possunt, quia non habent in potestate quae admoveatur expressio corporalis imaginis, quae discerni non possit a corpore (CSEL 28, 400-401).

¹¹⁸ Augustine accuses Julian of holding that Christ also would have suffered from nocturnal emissions, if Christ had concupiscence. See *c. Iul. imp.* IV.58 [436].

¹¹⁹ O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 53.

desire (in dreams at least) looks something like this: sense impression —> movement. Sexual dreams seem to reveal something of the immediacy of this Pavlovian response, since it is merely the presentation of the sense impression that moves the sexual organs toward their natural end.¹²⁰

The second point of interest from the quote in the preceding paragraph is that Augustine gives some indication as to how this Pavlovian response is corralled during waking hours. He thinks that the way to “curb and restrain these motions” during waking hours is in part by controlling the sense impressions (“corporeal images”) that appear in one’s mind. During waking hours, a sense impression can be put aside, filed away, or judged by the mind, and thus one does not have a full sexual response immediately when presented with new sexual impressions. In dreams, however, even a chaste person “cannot control the appearance of” sense impressions or how long they last, which makes it impossible to control the sexual response in a dream (*Gn. Litt.* XII.15,31 [ACW, 199]). Thus one is not responsible for nocturnal emissions because one cannot control how sense impressions arise in a dream. By not being in control of those sense impressions, one cannot curb or restrain the sexual response: “To be sure, that lustful disobedience which still dwells in our dying members sometimes moves itself as if by its own law, apart from the law of our will: when we are asleep, for instance. In this case also, however, there is still no guilt in the body of one who does not consent” (*civ. Dei* I.25 [38]).

In either case, dreaming or awake, the restraining of one’s own motions is not primarily done by mentally reevaluating the content of sense impressions in the moment. There is no question of “doubt” about the value of the sense impression, nor is there need for the soul to consent to the

¹²⁰ Sorabji argues that Augustine fails to understand that “sleep is like a drug. It impairs the will’s ability to reflect and withhold assent....I doubt if Augustine articulates this idea.” Sorabji goes on to say that Aquinas is better on this issue, because Aquinas suggests that “reason is removed in sleep” and therefore one is not responsible for consent in a dream. Sorabji does reference *Gn. Litt.*, but says it is of little help in answering the question about consent in dreams. I have shown, however, that, *contra* Sorabji, this passage of *Gn. litt.* is in large part about the ways sleep “impairs the will’s ability to reflect and withhold assent.” See Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 414-415.

value of the impression. While awake, one may need to call up new sense impressions.¹²¹ While dreaming, however, the body is simply immediately moved upon the presentation of the impression, and which impressions arise in a dream is outside the control of the person's soul. The motions related to sexual desire are not primarily controlled through reevaluation of the value of a sense impression. Because sense impressions seem to immediately move the person, one needs rather to bring in new sense impressions in order to control one's movements. The body's sexual response mechanism is essentially automatic and only controllable when the mind gives the soul some other image to focus on.

There is, however, another way for the mind to influence the body's sexual response. Certainly Augustine thinks, at least in *Gn. litt.*, that one is not morally responsible for what happens in the dream itself, since one cannot control how sense impressions arise in a dream.¹²² However, one is responsible for giving pleasurable consent during waking hours when the initial sense impression is made. When a preacher preaches about sexuality, one should avoid giving "pleasurable consent" to the content of the homily (*Gn. litt.* XII.15,31 [480]). By introducing the idea of "pleasurable consent" into how the memory stores impressions, Augustine seems to imply that a sense impression is not always just a sense impression. By giving pleasurable consent, one seems to store an "evaluated" sense impression.

One might think here of Rachman's famous study of showing subjects an image of black boots paired with images of nude women. Initially, subjects had an immediate response to images

¹²¹ Hochschild offers a helpful summary of how this re-direction by the mind should happen when awake: "The memory, as recipient of sense experience, needs to be 'averted from' when necessary; the memory also needs to be 'converted', habituated away from this proper role, and made subject to the training of the will." Hochschild quotes *trin.* 11.8.15, where Augustine says, "The way the will averts the conscious attention from what is in the memory is simply by not thinking about it." See: Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine's Theological Anthropology*, 206.

¹²² Couenhoven has a thought-provoking take on Augustine's views of moral responsibility in dreams, though I do not think the concept of "mental junk" quite describes the way Augustine understands the images formed in the mind of the preacher who is preaching about sexuality. See Couenhoven, "Dreams of Responsibility," 115-118.

of nude women and virtually no response to the black boots. However, after enough conditioning, when the black boots alone were shown, a sexual response was produced in subjects.¹²³ With his concept of “pleasurable consent,” Augustine seems to recognize that a pair of black boots is not always just a pair of black boots. A sense impression stored in the memory may be something that has a certain value to it. Yet this is quite different than the thesis advanced by Byers, who says that in the moment of prepassion, one has doubts about the value of the immediate sensible object in comparison to eternal goods. For Augustine, there is no doubt in the moment, because the sense impression has already been impressed upon the person’s memory with a value-laden quality that produces the movement the person should want to avoid.¹²⁴

To bring the preceding discussion back around to the topic of *concupiscentia carnis*, it becomes clear that “thought,” “doubt,” and movements internal to the soul are not the only causes of lust, as Byers and others argue. In the case of desires of the body, the initial movement is not caused by uncertainty about the value of the good that is sensed, as Byers says, nor is it caused by “thinking” the wrong thing about the sensed good. On Byers’ cognitivist reading of lust, all preliminary passions take on the following form: sense impression—> doubt/thought—> movement. What I have shown above is that, in some cases of sexual *libido*, the relation between doubt/thought and movement is switched: sense impression—>movement—>doubt/thought. The initial carnal desire is sometimes caused by the sense impression itself, even before the impression has the chance to

¹²³ Rachman, “Sexual fetishism: An experimental analogue,” *Psychological Record* 16: 293-296.

¹²⁴ One might wonder whether Augustine thinks some sense impressions have an essentially value-laden character due to the very nature of the thing sensed. He might explain the initial response to images of naked women in Rachman’s study as revealing that the sense impressions of those women have natural evaluative content. He does not say this explicitly, but it may be implicit in his claim that even refraining from pleasurable consent during the initial sense impression is not adequate to prevent later nocturnal emissions. Furthermore, the virtuous do seem to store better evaluated sense impressions. Augustine mentions in *Gn. litt.* XII.15,31 that Solomon was wise even in his dreams. Thus Augustine might say that if Solomon was dreaming about his characters from the Song of Solomon, the sense impressions called up would already have a “wise” character to them, and Solomon might not suffer from nocturnal emissions because those sense impressions may have an already wise character to them.

cause doubt. Even when the person does not consent, the person is still moved by the sense impression, and cannot fail to be moved precisely because the workings of the body's sexual response mechanism are outside the control of the soul's rational governance of the body: "it is not his consenting mind, but his desiring flesh that does it. The flesh, of course, acts through desiring, even if it does not pull the mind to consent" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.59 [584]).

Furthermore, Augustine claims that "[t]his appetite does not have any moderation of its arousal in the choice of our will, and it is itself not moderated in its act, though the morally good spirit imposes a moderation upon it by its watchful struggle" (*c. Iul.* III.13, 27 [354]). The work of chastity is not only a kind of cognitive reevaluation of the value of sensed objects, but is as much—or even more—the constant work of controlling which sense impressions are at the forefront of one's mind and which sensible experiences are allowed to linger so that they do not activate the body's automatic sexual response mechanism.

In sum, this section has shown that Augustine's views on the bodily element of *concupiscentia carnis* are set firmly within his broader account of the nature of human sensation and his broader theory of the relation between body and soul. The process of sensation is such that the lower elements of the soul interact with the body in such a way that the will or mind often simply cannot influence the movements of the body. Not all desires are a matter of a divided will, misplaced priorities, or cognitive mistakes. For Augustine, many desires are produced simply through the workings of the fallen human body. The workings of the soul-informed body seem to produce many desires and temptations that are simply outside the control of reason and outside of the will. In fact, one of the major problems with the bodily element of *concupiscentia carnis* is that it tempts the will, often successfully, to consent to regrettable thoughts or actions.

AUGUSTINE'S ALLEGED MANICHAEANISM

My constructive account of Augustine's understanding of the bodily character of concupiscence in this chapter is finished. There is, however, a final issue to address. Many of Augustine's interpreters suggest that anyone who says the body is the first causal agent in some desires is a kind of crypto-Manichee. I have argued that Augustine does indeed think the body causes sinful desires. So was Augustine, in the end, guilty of Manichaeism?

The connection between bodily desire and allegations of Manichaeism is an old problem for Augustine: "By describing sexual desire as something 'evil' and as direct result of original sin, Augustine appeared to some of his contemporaries to have lapsed back into a kind of Manichean pessimism regarding the body and sexuality. This was the charge first raised against Augustine by Bishop Julian of Eclanum, and it has been echoed by critics ever since."¹²⁵ One of Augustine's most forceful defenders, John Hugo, feels compelled to defend Augustine against this criticism: "By locating moral evil in the will and regarding it as a kind of nothingness, Augustine was prevented from attributing any inherent evil to the body or sexuality....To suspect Augustine of 'latent Manichaeism,' as if he continued to believe that there is some intrinsic evil in nature itself, is an outrage."¹²⁶

There may be something "outrageous" about the charge of crypto or latent Manichaeism in Augustine, but not for the reasons Hugo suggests. The fundamental problem with much of the scholarly discussion of Augustine's alleged crypto-Manichaeism is that it is based on an interpretation of Manichaeism that Augustine himself would not recognize. Augustine would find

¹²⁵ Hunter, "Augustine on the Body," 359.

¹²⁶ Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage*, 45-46. Hugo's argument here trades on an ambiguity, for it is certainly true that Augustine did not think moral evil was inherent to the body as created. But Augustine did certainly think that evil was inherent to the fallen body.

the whole discussion misconceived, for he does not think the difference between a Catholic and a Manichee has much at all to do with the question of whether the body has desires, or even whether the body itself can contribute to sins.

Augustine's problem with the Manichees is not simply that they root "sin" in the body itself rather than the will. Rather, the Manichean attribution of sin to the body is a symptom of the more fundamental Manichaeian belief in the dual natures present in the human being. As Nightingale points out, for Augustine "[t]he body is not an alien or evil substance by nature, as the Manichaeans suggested."¹²⁷ From Augustine's perspective, the problem with the Manichees is they think the sinful body is evidence of a more fundamental substantial evil nature.

In response to Julian, Augustine offers his understanding of the true claims and problems with Manichaeism:

Mani, therefore, maintained that in one human being there are two souls or spirits or minds, one proper to the flesh, and that this same soul is not evil because of a defect that comes upon it, but is evil and coeternal with God by nature, while the other is good by nature as a particle of God, but defiled by the mixture with the evil soul. And for this reason he wants the flesh, because of its evil soul, to have desires opposed to the spirit which is, of course, good, in order to hold the spirit in bonds, while the spirit has desires opposed to the flesh in order to be set free from that mixture....[The Manichees] think that two natures, that is, of good and of evil, were opposed to each other from eternity and mingled by a subsequent war (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.6 [611]).

Augustine's problem with the Manichees is not simply that they claim the body has evil desires, but rather with their blasphemous claim that human bodies are evidence of an eternal principle that is not God and that is the source of all evil. It is that false cosmology upon which the Manichaeian account of sin and desire is based, and it is that false cosmology that is at the heart of Augustine's rejection of Manichaeism.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 217.

Augustine openly admits agreement with the Manichees about the fact of bodily desire, even if he rejects the Manichaean explanation for bodily desire. Because Julian frequently charges Augustine with Manichaeism, one might expect Augustine to respond in the way Augustine's modern defenders have responded, by saying that Augustine does not think the body causes desires or sins. But Augustine does not reject the Manichean claim that the body is problematic, and so he does not respond to Julian by saying the body cannot desire. Rather, he reminds Julian that

the Manichees as well as the Catholics admit the evils of this life which is a temptation upon earth....But it is clear that about the source of these evils they do not both say the same thing and that there is a great difference between them. For the Manichees attribute them to an alien evil nature, *while the Catholics attribute them to our own good nature, but a nature damaged by sin and deservedly punished*....[A]fter all, the Catholic bishops have taught amply and clearly that *the flesh does not have an alien evil nature, but a defect*, and when this defect is healed, the flesh returns to the state in which, just as it was originally created, it will not weigh down the soul with any of its corruption and will have no discord with the spirit because it has desires opposed to it. For Mani was deceived by this discord so that he imagined that an alien evil substance was mixed in with us (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.14 [632]; emphasis mine).

If Augustine thought the problem with the Manichees was simply that they denigrate the body, he could very easily say there is no discord between desires of the body and the soul. He could say that the “fleshly desires” of the soul alone are the problem. Yet he does not say this, even though saying the soul alone is the problem would rid him of charges of Manichaeism. Rather, he suggests that “the Catholic bishops have taught amply and clearly that the flesh does not have an alien evil nature, but a defect” that is the source of the division between spirit and flesh. He very clearly here uses “flesh” to refer to the body, since he suggests that discord between the body and soul is expressed in the idea that the flesh weighs down the soul and has desires opposed to the spirit.

Furthermore, as I showed in chapter two, Augustine is quite comfortable with saying the body itself is fallen: he regularly quotes the Pauline axiom, “*The body is indeed dead on account of sin*” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.7 [613]; emphasis in original). The body is dead precisely because of the sin of Adam: “the first human being sinned so greatly that by that sin the nature, not of the one human being, but of

the whole human race, was changed and, having fallen from the possibility of immortality, it was hurled down into the necessity of death” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.7 [613]). Augustine does not claim to be free of Manichaeism because he thinks the body is not problematic. He very clearly does think the body is a huge problem, not because it was created problematic, but because it is no longer in the state in which it was originally created.¹²⁸

Critics who worry about or criticize Augustine’s alleged Manichaeism actually closely follow Julian’s own accusations against Augustine. Julian accuses Augustine of being a Manichee because Augustine says the body itself is connected to sin. As Augustine points out, the only way this charge sticks is if one adopts Julian’s definition of sin. For Julian, sin is purely an act of the will from which one could refrain (*c. Iul. imp.* I.47 [73]).¹²⁹ Many of Augustine’s critics and defenders either implicitly or explicitly adopt the truth of Julian’s view of sin. The critics claim that Augustine is Manichaean because he blames the body for sin, whereas the defenders of Augustine claim he is not Manichaean because he does not blame the body for sin. For these thinkers, and for Julian, sin is purely an act of the will from which one could refrain. Sin, on this account, could never be a non-willed action or thought caused by the body. From the perspective of Julian and those who, often unintentionally, follow him, someone who blames the body for sin is a crypto-Manichee.

Augustine, on the other hand, does not accept the terms of the argument. Sin, for Augustine, is not restricted to acts of the will from which one could refrain. In his view, the claim that the body is connected to sin does not make one a Manichee. Certainly for Augustine the body cannot be the source of fully-willed sin, because in Augustine’s theology one must consent with the will in order to sin in the most proper sense. But Augustine claims that “sin” is possible without an act of one’s

¹²⁸ See chapter 2.

¹²⁹ As Julian ironically reminds his readers, this is Augustine’s former definition of sin.

own will: original sin was willed only by Adam and Eve, yet everyone is born guilty of it (*c. Iul.*

imp. IV.91 [457]).

Furthermore, “sin” (*peccatum*) for Augustine has a few meanings, as he lays out in *c. Iul. imp.*

I.47 [73-74; Latin: CSEL 85/1, 34-36]:

1) *Peccatum*: Willed sin: a bad act of the will from which one could refrain. Adam’s sin was this kind of sin, and humans now can also sin in this way, though they are not as free to refrain as was Adam.

2) *Poena peccati*: Punishment of sin: “An example of the second kind in which there is only the punishment of sin is found in that evil which one in no sense does, but only suffers.” As an example, Augustine lists the torture or death undergone by criminals. They do not “do” the punishment, but they deserve it on account of their sins. Death more generally is an example of this kind of sin: death itself is not a “sin” since the will abhors it, but death is clearly a punishment for the sin of Adam. Punishment is sin living beyond the completion of the sinful act itself, though punishment is not precisely sin itself.

3) *Utrumque = peccatum ipsum et poena peccati*: Sin as punishment: “The third kind in which there is the sin and the punishment of sin can be found in the one who says, I do the evil that I do not want.” Examples of this kind of sin are sins out of ignorance, or what Augustine calls “blindness of heart,” and original sin: “Original sin belongs to this third kind in which there is sin that is itself also the punishment of sin. It is present in the newborn, but it begins to be seen in them as they grow up when the foolish need wisdom and those with evil desires need self-control.” This sin does not come from the individual’s will, but it does come “from the will of a sinner: ‘For Adam existed, and we all existed in him; Adam perished, and all perished in him’.” These are true sins, but they are the result of the punishment merited by Adam and communicated to the rest of humanity.

Sin, for Augustine, is much more than simply an act of the will from which one could refrain (*c. Iul.*

imp. I.47 [73]).

For Augustine, there can even be “non-voluntary sin” as when Paul writes, “*But if I do what I do not will, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me* (Rom 7:19)” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.93 [458; emphasis in original]). This sin “remains absolutely without the will” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.100 [461]). Even acts of ignorance or bad desires of children are rightly called sin, even if they are not *peccatum* in the first sense of 1) above (*c. Iul. imp.* I.105 [125]). Augustine is quite prepared to call something sin which exists outside the choice of the will (“I do what I do not want”). Concupiscence falls under 3)

above and is called sin “because it takes its origin from the first sin, and whoever consents to its desires for what is forbidden commits sin” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.226 [269]). The stirrings of concupiscence may not lead to a new sin of the will, but they are not simply a-moral: concupiscence is sin in an extended sense of being intrinsically bad.

Augustine does not accept Julian’s restricted definition of sin, which is the same definition of sin that recent interpreters have used to either call Augustine a crypto-Manichee or to deny that charge. One is not a Manichee simply because one says the body is sometimes the cause of sinful desires. What makes one a Manichee is the claim that the body’s sinfulness is the result of a co-eternal evil that is responsible for the alien evil nature that makes up the bodily element of human beings.

Ironically, even Augustine’s defenders would be chastised by Augustine for suggesting the body is in no way a cause of, or contributor to, sin. Augustine thinks it is essential to recognize that the body is fallen and corrupt and a cause of sin. To ignore this reality is to assist the Manichees, as Augustine regularly points out to Julian. Julian thinks creation exists exactly as God has intended it to exist from the beginning. Augustine, in response, wonders, “do you not see that in that way you support Mani, not knowingly, of course, but persistently, nonetheless” since Mani asks “where evil comes from” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.9 [616])?

The essential problem with Julian’s argument, from Augustine’s perspective, is that Julian cannot explain evil in any coherent way: “by denying the evils which newborn human beings contract from their damaged origin, you do not make us believe that there are no natural evils, because they are much too obvious, but you rather cause people to think that these evils come from an alien evil nature which, as the madness of the Manichean myth pretends, has been mixed in with us” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.14 [632]). Since one cannot deny the presence of evil even in human bodies—bad desires, birth defects, lame limbs, illness, death—and in the world more generally, one must say God

intended things to turn out this way (Julian's view), or that something that is not God has created evil human bodies (the Manichaean view), or that human nature has changed from God's original plan (Augustine's view) (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.6 [611]).

By not explaining where evil comes from, Julian actually clears the ground for the Manichees to swoop in with their odd cosmology since the Manichees at least give an explanation of "where evil comes from" (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.9 [616]). For Augustine, the claim that there are natural evils even in the human body is essential to a proper theology. To deny those bodily evils, to suggest that the body in principle cannot be a cause of sin or evil, is to open the door to Manichaeism, since the denial of bodily evil is simply burying one's head in the sand.

In sum, it should be clear that much of the debate over Augustine's Manichaeism takes the following form:

- P1: Someone who says the body is a cause of sin is a Manichee
- P2: Augustine does/does not say the body is a cause of sin
- C: Augustine is/is not a Manichee

As I have shown, much of the scholarly debate is focused on the veracity of the minor premise.

Augustine, however, simply rejects the major premise. He does not accept the claim that one who says the body causes sin is by definition a Manichee. In fact, he seems to think those who deny that the body is a cause of sin give unwitting support to the Manichees by failing to explain the nature of evil. Whether it is good or evil to say the body has desires is another question. According to Augustine, however, the Manichees are not heretical simply because they claim the body has bad desires.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* is essential to Augustine's later theology. To suggest that *concupiscentia carnis* is exclusively a metaphor for sinful desires of the soul is untenable. Augustine clearly says otherwise. Furthermore, to suggest or imply that the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* is a minor footnote in Augustine's thought is unconvincing. As I showed, *nupt. et conc.* takes the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* as central to the Christian understanding of human nature and sexuality, and Augustine retains that emphasis on the literal meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* up to the very end of his life. While some thinkers have said the soul is the main agent in desires of the flesh, Augustine thinks the soul's role in bodily desire is akin to the soul's role in the desires of animals: it is essentially non-rational. Furthermore, I have also shown that claims about Augustine's latent Manichaeism subject Augustine to criteria he does not accept. Manichaeism is not simply a claim about the body, but is rather a cosmology that has anthropological consequences. Augustine does not share the cosmology even if he does share some of the descriptive claims about human nature.

This chapter is at the center of the overall argument of this dissertation. As chapter one showed, there is significant disagreement about the value of Augustine's thought on human nature, marriage and sexuality, and that disagreement often turns on differing interpretations of what Augustine actually said. Nothing is more disputed than Augustine's views on concupiscence, so there is a need for a return to Augustine's texts in order to clarify what he says about concupiscence. Within the discussion of concupiscence, the topic of bodily desire has been interpreted in very different ways that lead to very different conclusions about the value of Augustine's thought. As chapter two showed, much of Augustine's analysis of fallen human nature centers around the differences of embodiment before and after the fall. Thus, it should be no surprise that Augustine

thinks the body after the fall has its own vitiated desires that are a challenge to virtue. My interpretation of Augustine's account of bodily desire fits well with his broader account of fallen human nature, and helps to show why the literal interpretation of *concupiscentia carnis* is crucial to understanding Augustine's thought on concupiscence and human sexuality.

One unresolved question from this chapter points to the final chapter of this dissertation: does Augustine think bodily concupiscence was part of God's original design of human nature? Interpreters have disagreed strongly about Augustine's views on concupiscence in the garden of Eden, with some suggesting that Augustine thought there would have been good sexual desire in Eden and others suggesting that Augustine thought there would have been no sexual desire in Eden. Both claims, of course, cannot be true. And the implications of the differing claims are significant. If Augustine thinks sexual desire is a consequence of the fall, then he seems to suggest sexual desire was not part of God's original plan and thus cannot ever be virtuous after the fall. If, however, he thinks sexual desire would have been present before the fall, then he seems to think sexual desire was part of God's original plan, and this might commit him to saying something more positive about sexual desire after the fall. Thus the issue is not only historically interesting, but it is also relevant for assessing Augustine's place in contemporary moral theology and sexual ethics. The next chapter shows how Augustine's views on this topic developed substantially over his career, and it shows why attention to the bodily element of concupiscence is essential to understanding Augustine's development.

CHAPTER FOUR

EDENIC SEXUAL DESIRE

For if shameful sexual desire had not either arisen from sin or been damaged by sin, it would not be shameful. Either it would not exist at all, and without it the sexual organs would obey the couple begetting a child, just as the hands obey the workers, or it would follow upon the will so that it could never tempt anyone who is unwilling.

contra Iulianum opus imperfectum II.42

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

The topic of this chapter grows out of a question begged by the work of the previous chapter: if Augustine thinks human beings experience desires of the body, does Augustine think bodily desires were part of God's original design of creation, or are bodily desires entirely a result of the fall? In this chapter I will refer to this question as one about the origin of concupiscence. As I showed in chapter two, Augustine thinks all vitiated bodily desires are a result of the fall, so there could not have been vitiated bodily desires in Eden. And, as I showed in chapter three, Augustine thinks all bodily desires after the fall are vitiated. However, Augustine might think there could have been non-vitiated, i.e. good, bodily desires in Eden. That is, he might think concupiscence was not introduced to human nature through the fall, but was rather corrupted by the fall.

One way to specify the topic of this chapter and to tap into an extensive body of interpretive literature is to ask the following question: does Augustine think Adam and Eve would have had good sexual desire in Eden? Although bodily desire is not limited to sexual desire in Augustine's thought, the primary way in which Augustine discusses the issue of bodily desire in Eden is through the more narrow topic of Edenic sexual desire. As we will see, there is much disagreement among

scholars about what position Augustine holds regarding the role of sexual desire in Eden.

According to some scholars Augustine thinks there would have been absolutely no sexual desire in Eden, while according to others Augustine thinks there would have been virtuous and good sexual desire in Eden. So, as with the previous chapter, there is significant interpretive disagreement about Augustine's basic position, and one purpose of this chapter is to advance our understanding of Augustine's views. As I show below, Augustine holds four distinct positions on the issue of Edenic sexual desire throughout his career, and his development through these four positions has not yet been adequately traced.

The central argument of this chapter, however, is not merely that Augustine changes his position on Edenic sexual desire. Rather, the central argument of this chapter is that Augustine's development on the issue of Edenic sexual desire is ultimately unintelligible without attending to the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence within that development. Thus this chapter is a kind of test case for the significance of the argument of chapter three. Augustine thinks concupiscence is very often caused by the body, and understanding that aspect of his thought is crucial for understanding other elements of Augustine's theology. Augustine's developing position on Edenic sexual desire is one of those other important elements, and this chapter intends to show why attention to the bodily element of concupiscence uniquely illuminates Augustine's development on the issue of Edenic sexual desire.

Perhaps it would be helpful to set this chapter in the context of the dissertation as a whole. The thesis of this dissertation is that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's account of sexual desire in his later works, especially in the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, and recognition of the bodily element of concupiscence is crucial for adjudicating disputed interpretations of other elements of Augustine's thought. The first chapter of this dissertation showed that my thesis emerges out of unresolved questions underlying the larger evaluative and

interpretive disputes over Augustine's thought on sexuality and concupiscence. Interpreters cannot agree on the value of Augustine's thought in large part because they cannot agree on exactly what Augustine says about the bodily nature of concupiscence and the role of concupiscence in God's original plan. Chapter two began my account of the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence by painting a broad picture of Augustine's theological landscape and setting his views on embodiment, the fall, concupiscence and the resurrection of the body within his more fundamental theological commitments as they are sharpened in his dispute with Julian. In the third chapter I fully laid out my case for the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's thought, showing both what Augustine says about the bodily element of concupiscence, and why his claims about bodily concupiscence fit with his broader anthropology. Bodily concupiscence is at the center of Augustine's account of human desire and human morality.

Part of my thesis is that the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's thought is crucial for understanding *other* disputed issues in the interpretation of Augustine's views on sex and human nature. It has also been part of my argument that Augustine's anti-Julian texts, and specifically the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, provide important insights into Augustine's final views on the disputed topics of this dissertation. The present chapter shows not only why recognition of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's theory is crucial to understanding Augustine's views on other issues, but also how those final works uniquely illuminate Augustine's views on the disputed issue of the origin of concupiscence.¹ As we will see, the *c. Iul. imp.* is

¹ With this claim I seem to be in disagreement with David Hunter, who suggests that one need not get into Augustine's dispute with Julian in order to understand Augustine's views on sexual desire. Hunter writes: "We are here at the heart of what has troubled so many critics of Augustine's theology, both ancient and modern. Is sexual desire, as it is now experienced in the human person, an evil, a penalty for the disobedience of Adam and Eve? Augustine's prolonged debate with the Pelagian bishop Julian of Eclanum during the last decade of his life focused on just this question. I do not wish now to tread into that 'depressing dialogue of the deaf,' as Robert Markus has called it. Nor is there any pressing need to, since all of the fundamental views of Augustine were already fixed by the writing of the *Literal Commentary on Genesis*." Hunter goes on to suggest some very important elements of Augustine's thought that indeed are present by the time of *Gn. litt.*, but I do think the "depressing dialogue" between Augustine and Julian is still

absolutely essential for understanding Augustine's final views on the issue of concupiscence in God's original plan for human nature, and the text reveals Augustine struggling with the question about the origin of concupiscence.

The goal of this chapter is to show that the bodily element of concupiscence is crucial for understanding Augustine's final view on sexual desire in Eden, or what I call the origin of concupiscence. To achieve that goal, I must do three things. First, building on an interpretive dispute I mentioned in chapter one, I show that scholars offer rival and incompatible readings of Augustine's claims about the origin of concupiscence. That is, some scholars suggest that Augustine thinks concupiscence would have been totally absent from the garden, while others suggest that Augustine thinks concupiscence would have been present and good in the garden. Peter Brown, for instance, suggests that the following is Augustine's view: "For Adam and Eve, will and sexual delight had run together in perfect concord. The sweet attractive power of physical beauty and the delicious onset and sharp climax of physical delight, traditionally associated with the act of conception, may not have been absent in Paradise; but, in Paradise, such delight would have coincided entirely with the will."² Andrea Nightingale, on the other hand, takes the totally opposite view: "Sex was not fun in Eden....The will—not the 'turbulent heat' of the genitals—would have enabled Adam to inseminate the abidingly virginal Eve. Adam and Eve had been commanded to 'increase and multiply': they were designed to have sex, but without sexual desire or sexual pleasure."³ These rival

uniquely important for understanding the distinctiveness of Augustine's views at the end of his life. His views do seem to change significantly between *Gn. litt.* and *c. Iul. imp.* See Hunter, "Augustinian Pessimism," 168.

² Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, 407. Although Brown suggests sexual desire "may not have been absent"—which suggests some hesitancy to affirm one certain reading of Augustine—he has been interpreted as holding that Augustine thought there would certainly have been good sexual desire in Eden, as both Meilaender's and Cahill's interpretations of Brown show (see below).

³ Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature*, 30-31. Nightingale relies primarily on *civ. Dei* XIV to establish her claims about Edenic sexual desire.

readings have significance not only for historical theology, but also for contemporary moral theology as well. Whether or not Augustine thinks concupiscence was part of God's original plan has a significant impact on Augustine's location within contemporary debates over the nature and moral status of sexual desire, as I show below.

Second, after showing what is at stake in the disputed issue of Augustine's views on the origin of concupiscence, I trace the development of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire over the course of his writings. Some scholars do not seem to recognize that Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire developed substantially throughout his career. And while others do recognize the development, the full story of that development has not been told, but the full story is crucial to understanding why Augustine ends up at his final position on the issue. While there has been much written on the development of Augustine's views of Edenic procreation—whether and how new human beings would have been created in Eden—not much has been written on the development of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire.⁴ In this chapter I trace that development, not only because it is interesting in its own right, but also because appreciation for the causes of that development is crucial for understanding Augustine's final position on Edenic sexual desire.

Third, by tracing Augustine's development, I am able to show both what Augustine's final position on Edenic sexual desire is and why he holds it. That final position is neither, as Brown says, that “will and sexual delight had run together in perfect concord,” nor is it, as Nightingale says, that “they were designed to have sex, but without sexual desire or sexual pleasure.” Augustine's final position is fundamentally ambivalent: Augustine, in the end, is simply not sure whether there was no sexual desire in Eden or whether there would have been good sexual desire in Eden.⁵ As Augustine

⁴ I review this literature below.

⁵ Here is a representative example of his final position: in Eden “the body would have been subject to the soul so that, for the sake of begetting children, even the genital organs would have been aroused at a sign from the will, just

consistently puts it in the *c. Iul. imp.*, sexual desire (*concupiscentia carnis/libido*) “is either a defect, or it has been corrupted” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.218 [263]). He is simply not sure what to think about Edenic sexual desire. As I show, Augustine’s ambivalence is rooted in tensions within his account of the desires of the body and his account of the original goodness of creation. I argue that Augustine’s ambivalence was almost inevitable given these tensions. Overall the chapter shows that Augustine moved from certainty to uncertainty about the question of whether bodily desires were original to human nature, and this uncertainty is explained by tensions coming from Augustine’s account of the bodily character of sexual concupiscence. Thus the work of chapter three is crucial for the present chapter.

The plan for the chapter is the following. I first set the significance of the topic of the chapter by showing that, beyond Brown and Nightingale, there is disagreement among scholars over both the content and significance of Augustine’s views on Edenic sexual desire. Scholars read Augustine very differently, and they come to very different conclusions about the significance of those differing readings. After showing that there is indeed continuing disagreement over both what Augustine said and why it matters, I then trace the development of Augustine’s views on Edenic sexual desire. I show that Augustine’s thought moves through four main stages, culminating in his final, ambivalent position that there was either no sexual desire in Eden or there would have been good sexual desire in Eden.⁶ Next, after tracing Augustine’s development, I offer my account of

as the other members by which we do something. Or concupiscence of the flesh would have been such that it would not have arisen unless the soul, that is, the image of God, willed it, and it would not have drowned the mind’s thought by the intensity of its pleasure” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.39 [419]).

⁶ At first Augustine thinks there would have been no new human beings besides Adam and Eve in Eden, so he also thinks there would have been no sex and no sexual desire in Eden. Then he suggests that there would have been human procreation in Eden, but it would have been non-sexual procreation, and so would have been without sexual desire. Then he suggests that there would in fact have been sexual procreation in Eden, but he is certain that there would have been absolutely no sexual desire in Eden. Finally, somewhere in the early stages of his dispute with Julian, Augustine comes to the ambivalent position that there either would have been sexual procreation without any sexual desire in Eden, or there would have been sexual procreation with wholly good sexual desire in Eden.

why Augustine holds his ambivalent view on the topic. I argue that tensions in Augustine's account of the nature of bodily concupiscence lead, almost necessarily, to his ambivalence. In the end I will have shown both what Augustine's positions are and why his final position on the question of Edenic sexual desire is fundamentally ambivalent. I will also suggest how Augustine might have resolved his uncertainty if he had continued to write about the topic.

The issue of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire has been discussed widely in scholarship, and scholars have offered very different readings of Augustine's position on what would seem to be a straightforward issue. Brown and Nightingale's disagreement discussed above is only one example of a more widespread disagreement in scholarship on Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire. Furthermore, the issue of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire is important not only for historical theology, but it remains important for contemporary moral theology as well. As I show below, differing readings of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire have led scholars to very different conclusions about the contemporary significance of Augustine's views on marriage and sexuality. In short, if Augustine thinks there was no sexual desire in Eden, then his thought seems to be in significant tension with any account of sexuality that would see sexual desire as benign or even potentially virtuous. If, however, Augustine does think sexual desire would have been present in Eden, then his thought might potentially be amenable to claims about the goodness of sexual desire in marriage. As Cristina Traina rightly points out, "Which of these speculative possibilities [about Edenic sexual desire] one chooses makes every difference for the way in which one interprets androcentric sexual desire and pleasure."⁷ Thus Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire are of interest to both interpreters of Augustine and moral theologians.⁸

⁷ Cristina L. H. Traina, *Erotic Attunement*, 87.

⁸ A much different question related to concupiscence and original human nature was taken up by Charles Boyer and his interlocutors at the 1954 International Congress celebrating the 1600th anniversary of Augustine's birth. Boyer

THE INTERPRETIVE DISPUTE

Scholars have and continue to offer rival interpretations, or sometimes question-begging ones, of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire. In fact, as I show below, these claims are even often rooted in the same text, book XIV of *cin. Dei*. It is fascinating to observe scholars reading the same text in very different ways, or to even observe the same scholar advocating different readings at different times, and those differing readings show the need to further engage Augustine's own words to see what he is trying to say. In this section I simply show that there is indeed divergence among scholars about what exactly Augustine says about Edenic sexual desire, thus showing why the interpretive work of this chapter—figuring out exactly what Augustine says—is so crucial to the argument of this chapter.

One interesting place to begin to uncover the scholarly dispute over Augustine's position on Edenic sexual desire is in a recent exchange between two moral theologians. Their exchange

argued, quite controversially, that Augustine held, at least in *de libero arbitrio*, that *concupiscentia* in its meaning as moral difficulty was original to human nature even prior to original sin. As I understand it, Boyer's thesis and the ensuing discussion at and beyond the conference was a kind of proxy fight in the twentieth-century theological battle over the issue of "pure nature." According to Boyer, Augustine seems to give support to the concept of "pure nature" when Augustine suggests that concupiscence was original to human nature, and Augustine needed the concept of "pure nature" in order to defeat the Manichees (notably, Fr. de Lubac is one of those in disagreement with Boyer). Much of the debate is centered around *de libero arbitrio*, which is not a text I am interested in here. Nor can I engage here the issue of the state of "pure nature" and its relationship to Augustine's thought. There is, however, a very interesting contribution to the 1954 discussion that is worth mentioning. F-J Thonnard suggests, in a helpful review of the debate, that the debate reveals two models of interpreting Augustine, "*la méthode doctrinale ou systématique*" and "*la méthode historique ou critique*" (italics in original). The doctrinal method, according to Thonnard, seems to assume continuity between Augustine's thought and later theological, magisterial and conciliar thought. The doctrinal method seems relatively unconcerned about historical context or Augustine's development, or at least puts those concerns as subordinate to the doctrinal concerns. The historical method, on the other hand, treats Augustine within his historical context and attends to the changes and even contradictions in Augustine's thought, never assuming doctrinal continuity between Augustine and later Church teaching. As Thonnard points out, for Catholic theologians there are benefits and costs to both approaches. It is my hope that this dissertation primarily follows the historical method, letting Augustine speak for himself before asking whether his thought is in continuity with later Church teaching. The central articles in this debate are contained in *Augustinus Magister* volumes 2 (Communications) & 3 (Actes) (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954). See Charles J. Boyer, S.J., "La concupiscence est-elle impossible dans un état d'innocence?," vol. 2: 737-744 and "Concupiscence et nature innocente (response a des objections)," vol. 3: 309-316. Also see F.-J. Thonnard, A.A., "Les méthodes d'interprétation de la pensée augustinienne," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 5 (1959), 103-120, where Thonnard lists other contributors to the debate.

concerns both the interpretive issue of what Augustine actually said about Edenic sexual desire and the evaluative implications of what Augustine said.

Gilbert Meilaender argues that an amended version of Augustine's understanding of sexuality—thinking “not about, but with” Augustine—should yield a more positive Augustinian vision of sexual desire and pleasure after the fall than Augustine himself admitted.⁹ According to Meilaender, Augustine thought there would have been “sinless, rightly integrated, sexual desire” in Eden, so Augustine was more positive about sexual desire and pleasure than his critics think.¹⁰ Meilaender argues that Augustine should have seen that sexual desire and pleasure after the fall could be good precisely because sexual desire and pleasure were created elements of human nature from the beginning. Meilaender's argument turns on his interpretive claim that Augustine indeed thinks sexual desire and pleasure would have been present in Eden.

Meilaender roots his reading of Augustine's explicit claims about sexual desire almost exclusively in book XIV of *cin. Dei*. Meilaender claims it is “well known” that Augustine thought there would have been “unfallen and properly integrated sexual desire” if the first couple had not fallen.¹¹ According to Meilaender's interpretation of XIV.26, Augustine seems to say that Adam and Eve would have “engaged in sexual intercourse ‘as a deliberate act undisturbed by human passion’ only for the purpose of producing children—and they would have enjoyed, as a kind of bonus, the pleasure the act also gives.”¹²

⁹ Meilaender, “Sweet Necessities,” 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5. Meilaender uses desire and pleasure interchangeably throughout the article

¹¹ Ibid., 8.

¹² Ibid., 11. Meilaender seems to interpret “undisturbed by human passion” as meaning Edenic sex would have lacked bad, sinful desire.

Meilaender builds his ethical case on his reading of Augustine's claims about Edenic sexual desire. If sexual desire/pleasure was original to God's creation, then, Meilaender argues, Augustine should have recognized that sexual desire/pleasure remains a good of marriage even after the fall:

[S]exual desire also embodies, nurtures, and enriches the good of carnal conversation and community—the complete sharing of life—between husband and wife. To seek such community, therefore, even when children are not planned, wanted, or desired, is not mere grasping for a repeated pleasure separated from the good of marriage....On the contrary, it [i.e. desire/pleasure] *is* one of the goods of marriage.¹³

On Meilaender's reading, there is a significant internal contradiction in Augustine's claims about desire/pleasure, and Meilaender argues for an amended Augustinian account of sexual desire/pleasure that follows Augustine's principles.¹⁴ The logic of Meilaender's argument takes the following form: if the goods of marriage are the same before and after the fall, and if desire/pleasure was one of the goods of marriage in Eden, then desire/pleasure remains a good of marriage after the fall. Meilaender thinks Augustine should have recognized this truth about desire/pleasure and thus Augustine should have been more positive about desire/pleasure after the fall. Meilaender's approach, if it is to be Augustinian, stands or falls on Meilaender's claim that Augustine thinks sexual desire and pleasure are original to human nature and therefore fundamentally good.

¹³ Ibid., 13.

¹⁴ To illustrate Augustine's apparently false conclusion, Meilaender draws an analogy between Augustine's account of sexual pleasure and Augustine's claims about food. Food seems to naturally be connected to pleasure, but Augustine says the act of eating goes wrong when one tries to pursue the pleasure apart from the single natural purpose of eating (i.e. health) (Meilaender, "Sweet Necessities," 6). Meilaender pushes back against Augustine's views on both eating and sex. Meilaender argues that, contrary to Augustine's claims, eating and sex in fact each have two purposes, procreation/health on the one hand, and pleasure on the other. If these activities do have two distinct purposes, Meilaender suggests, then a person could reasonably pursue one purpose separately from pursuing the other (ibid., 14). For Meilaender, this reality of the dual purposes of sex entails the conclusion that contraceptive sex need not be in tension with the goods of marriage, because contraceptive sex still pursues the good of pleasure/union (ibid., 14). Meilaender seems to think of this as an internal critique of Augustine (thinking "not about, but with" Augustine), taking Augustine's thought where it should have gone if Augustine had realized the implications of his claims about the created nature of sexual desire and pleasure: "I want to suggest how a kind of Augustinian depiction of contraceptive intercourse has gone wrong and how it might be corrected" (ibid., 4).

Lisa Cahill responds to Meilaender's argument by questioning Meilaender's reading of Augustine's claims about Edenic sexual desire and pleasure in book XIV of *civ. Dei*. According to Cahill, the claim that "Augustine sees sexual desire and pleasure as benign if ordered to a procreative end....is difficult to substantiate textually from Augustine."¹⁵ Cahill's argument relies on a rival interpretation of *civ. Dei* XIV: "In the sections of *City of God*, book 14, in which Augustine imagines Adam's and Eve's prelapsarian sexuality, [Augustine] does not even address the role of sexual desire and pleasure as such."¹⁶ Cahill takes Peter Brown to task (Brown was referenced by Meilaender) for simply asserting, without "any text of Augustine as evidence," that Augustine thought there would have been good Edenic sexual desire.¹⁷

According to Cahill, book XIV of *civ. Dei* seems to say there would have been no sexual desire in the garden: Augustine "posits two opposite sexual conditions (before and after the fall) by contrasting sex as commanded and ruled by the will with sex as driven by lust and passion."¹⁸ Cahill goes on to spend a full paragraph listing multiple quotes from *civ. Dei* that show, in her view, that Augustine thinks sex in Eden would have been devoid of any desire and pleasure. Thus, Cahill concludes, "the notion that sexual desire and pleasure enhance committed love has little or no visibility in [Augustine's] personal or moral picture."¹⁹ On Cahill's reading, Augustine explicitly denies the presence of sexual desire and pleasure in Eden, and so it is a misreading of Augustine to

¹⁵ Cahill, "Using Augustine in Contemporary Sexual Ethics: A Response to Gilbert Meilaender," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29 no. 1: 26.

¹⁶ Ibid., 26.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹ Ibid., 27.

think that he would allow for good desire and pleasure after the fall.²⁰ In sum, for Meilaender and Cahill the central question of whether a neo-Augustinian account of sexuality can find a proper place for good sexual desire and pleasure seems to hang on the merits of rival readings of Augustine's claims about sexual desire in Eden in *civ. Dei* XIV.

The merits of Meilaender's and Cahill's rival readings of a difficult book of *civ. Dei* will be addressed below, where I offer my own reading of book XIV. There are, however, two immediate points to draw out of their debate. The first is that the issue of what Augustine thought about Edenic sexual desire seems to be crucial to understanding Augustine's views on fallen sexuality.²¹ Thus understanding Augustine's true position on Edenic sexual desire seems to have immediate repercussions for the significance of Augustine's thought for contemporary sexual and marital ethics.

The second important point to draw out of Meilaender and Cahill's discussion regards their use of Augustine's texts themselves. The reader of Meilaender and Cahill's debate gets the impression that *civ. Dei* XIV is the only place in which Augustine even considers the issue of Edenic sexual desire and pleasure.²² Cahill seems to think both Meilaender and Peter Brown (referenced by Meilaender) have no source outside of *civ. Dei* that could substantiate their claims about Edenic sexual desire/pleasure. Meilaender, in his response to Cahill, seems to accept that the search has been exhausted once the pages of book XIV have been closed: "The passages from book 14 of *City*

²⁰ According to Cahill's earlier book *Between the Sexes*, Augustine's view of rationally controlled, non-desirous sexual intercourse "may be extreme." See Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 2.

²¹ In his reply to Cahill, Meilaender surprisingly attempts to undermine the importance of the issue of what Augustine said about Edenic sexual desire: "I am not sure this difference [between Meilaender and Cahill] is, finally, of overriding importance." Even so, Meilaender goes on to claim that his reading is substantiated by the text and by other scholars. See: Meilaender, "The Author Replies," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29 no. 1: 44.

²² Meilaender does also briefly reference *Gen. litt.* at one point in order to show that Augustine thinks sex should be had for procreation, though Meilaender does not return to that text. See: "Sweet Necessities," 9.

of God...will never settle this question definitively.”²³ Even so, Meilaender pushes back against Cahill by once again referring to *civ. Dei* XIV and to a section from another author who, in the pages referenced, also points almost exclusively to *civ. Dei* XIV.²⁴

It is quite surprising that neither Cahill nor Meilaender appeals to any other texts beyond book XIV of *civ. Dei* to substantiate their readings of Augustine. Those texts are abundant and would support both views, as I show below.²⁵ When scholars take up only a few paragraphs from one work and use those to draw the broadest of conclusions about both the content and the value of Augustine’s thought, something has gone wrong. Even so, Meilaender and Cahill are not alone in their disputed readings of Augustine’s views on Edenic sexual desire. Both authors could appeal to a number of respectable scholars of Augustine to support their rival readings of Augustine.

A number of scholars suggest that Augustine’s final and considered position was that there would have been no sexual desire in Eden. As I showed above, Andrea Nightingale suggests there would have been no sexual desire in Eden, and when Nightingale discusses Augustine’s dispute with the Pelagians, she suggests that Augustine continues to hold firmly to this account of Edenic sex.²⁶

Margaret Miles offers a very similar reading of what she calls “Augustine’s famous hypothesis about sex *before* the fall” in *civ. Dei* XIV. Miles writes, “Although marriage and procreation existed, there was ‘use’ of the sexual organs, but no lust was involved. Rather, will took the place of lust, arousing the sexual organs ‘at the appropriate time and in the necessary degree’ (CD 14.24). Contemporary physical experience provided the prototype for his speculation, as Augustine

²³ “The Author Replies,” 44.

²⁴ Ibid., 44.

²⁵ The absence of references to any other text is especially problematic for Meilaender, since he stakes so much of his argument on the claim that Augustine thinks desire/pleasure is a created and original part of human sexuality.

²⁶ Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature*, 31-33.

described how various muscles and organs of the body can be managed—set in motion or stilled—by will.”²⁷

Elaine Pagels also refers to book XIV of *civ. Dei* to offer the following reading of Augustine: “At first, the Adam and Eve whom God had created enjoyed mental mastery over the procreative process: the sexual members, like the other parts of the body, enacted the work of procreation by a deliberate act of the will, ‘like a handshake’.”²⁸

Gerald Bonner also argues that Augustine thinks Adam and Eve would have had sex without any kind of desire involved: “If [Adam] had not sinned sexual intercourse would have been the result of a direct decision and command of the will and not have been accompanied by any sensations of passion.”²⁹ Bonner claims that, according to Augustine, in the garden there would have been “freedom from passion” and “in Paradise man had the same control over his sexual organs that he has today over his hand or foot.”³⁰ Bonner thinks Augustine’s position is due to the “defective knowledge of physiology” that was pervasive in Augustine’s world: Augustine thought it would be physiologically possible before the fall for the will to control the sexual organs like the will controls the hands.³¹

Paul Ramsey relies heavily on *civ. Dei* XIV to argue that Augustine denies the possibility of sexual desire before the fall. According to Ramsey, this lack of Edenic desire is a fundamental

²⁷ Margaret Miles, “Sex and the City,” 316. While the use of the term “lust” here and in the claims of others below is seemingly equivocal, since lust could either mean desire or vitiated desire, it seems to me that the authors covered here assume lust means sexual desire of any kind.

²⁸ Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 111-112.

²⁹ By “sensations of passion,” Bonner means *concupiscentia* or *libido carnalis*. See: Bonner, Gerald, “Adam” in *Augustinus-Lexikon* vol. I, ed. Cornelius Mayer (Basel: Schwabe & Co, 1986-1994), 77.

³⁰ Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies. Revised Edition* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 1986), 374. By “passion” Bonner means not just disordered desires but all desire.

³¹ Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, 374-375.

problem with Augustine's account of Edenic sexuality.³² Part of the problem is a lack of clarity about the distinction between sexual desire and sexual pleasure: "He was so concerned to declare that desire did not belong to the nature of original sexual intercourse that he failed to state clearly whether there was any pleasure in it."³³ However, Ramsey argues that Augustine may have been open to sexual pleasure before the fall³⁴

Martha Nussbaum also argues that Augustine thinks there would have been no sexual desire in Eden. According to Nussbaum, it is Augustine's view that after the fall we are "so unlike those automata that procreated in the Garden, using their genitals like gardening tools. These creatures were sexual, but in a deep way nonerotic: they had no passionate attachment to pieces of the world; so long as they were good, they were not curious or striving. We might say that in our sense they were without emotion."³⁵

There are, in sum, a number of respectable scholars who suggest that Augustine thinks there would have been absolutely no sexual desire in Eden. While many of these claims draw heavily on book XIV of *civ. Dei*, these scholars see *civ. Dei* as a representative example of Augustine's thought on the whole.³⁶

³² Ramsey, "Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16, no. 1 (Spr 1988), 57-60.

³³ Ibid., 61.

³⁴ Ramsey writes: "it is ordinarily assumed that, on Augustine's view, no sort of pleasure would have been associated with coitus in the garden....A good case can be made for the contrary interpretation...[Adam and Eve] were enjoying one another in God, and their delight was, in some unimaginable way, a matter of both internal and external sensation" (ibid., 61-62).

³⁵ Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge, 2003), 555. Nussbaum here also draws out what she sees as the moral implications of Augustine's position: "The politics of Eden is this: be ashamed of your longing for objects, your curiosity to know them, and your very wish to originate independent actions. Be so ashamed that you see this as radical evil, and yield your will before the authority of the church."

³⁶ Still other scholars beg the question by saying Augustine thinks there would have been no conflict between sexual desire and the will in Eden. This begs the question because one immediately wonders if the conflict was absent because there was no desire at all, or because desire was in harmony with the will. James Wetzel expresses this

Other scholars, however, point out that Augustine did mention the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden. Some of these scholars treat Augustine's claims about good Edenic sexual desire as either anomalous or inconsequential in light of Augustine's broader body of work. David Kelly, for instance, suggests that on the whole Augustine thought there would have been no sexual desire in Eden, but in *contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* Augustine briefly admits the possibility of something like good sexual desire in Eden. Here Kelly distinguishes between sexual desire and sexual impulse: "Though no sexual desire is permitted to pre-lapsarian human nature, this particular passage [from *c. ep. pel.*]...shows that Augustine is uneasy about a simple identification of sexual pleasure or sexual impulse (*motus*) with the evil lust which results from original sin."³⁷ It is not clear what Kelly means by the distinction between sexual desire and sexual impulse, but in any case Kelly is sure that this passage in Augustine is anomalous and not indicative of a change in Augustine's thinking: "Unfortunately, this opening toward the possibility of untainted sexual impulse created good by God disappears amidst the many passages already cited in [Kelly's] study."³⁸ Kelly does not

ambiguous interpretation quite nicely, suggesting that in book XIV of *civ. Dei* "Augustine ventures his audacious theory that Adam must have been able to command his erections with the facility that most men have now for raising or lowering a finger....The moral he wishes his readers to draw from his excursion into the sex lives of Adam and Eve is that conflict between will and desire entered human life only after sin." See James Wetzel, "Augustine," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (New York: Oxford, 2008), 357. Though, as I show below, Wetzel seems to modify his view later on. Elizabeth Clark offers a similar interpretation of *civ. Dei* XIV: "if Adam and Eve had not sinned, there would have been no unruliness of lust to disturb the peace of mind and blot out mental functioning. Although Adam and Eve would have engaged in sexual intercourse in order to reproduce, their sexual organs would have moved at the command of their wills, tranquility would have prevailed, defloration and labor pains would have been unknown. No quarrel would have existed between lust and the will; rather, the genital organs would have moved at the will's command, as do our other body parts." See Clark, "Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels," 293-294. Clark will admit a few pages later that "in the face of Julian's assault, Augustine grudgingly and belatedly allowed that there *might* have been sexual desire in a sinless Eden" (p. 296). Clark, however, seems to think Augustine did not take this point seriously.

³⁷ David F. Kelly, "Sexuality and Concupiscence in Augustine," 93; underline emphasis removed.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

consider the possibility that Augustine's thought may have been changing or developing at this point in Augustine's life.³⁹

James Weidenaar argues that in book XIV of *civ. Dei*, Augustine holds the position that there would have been no sexual desire in Eden.⁴⁰ And Weidenaar follows Kelly in suggesting that Augustine's remarks on the possibility of good Edenic sexual desire in *c. ep. pel.* in no way suggest a shift in Augustine's thought: "that possibility [i.e. good Edenic sexual desire], though not ruled out by his argument, is beyond Augustine's imaginative powers."⁴¹ Weidenaar does not consider any of Augustine's later speculation on the issue.

Cristina Traina recognizes that Augustine does indeed admit the possibility of Edenic sexual desire: "He hypothesizes that in paradise...either the concupiscence of the flesh did not exist and sex would have been a rational execution of the decision to procreate, or else the desires of the flesh existed but would have aligned themselves with reason, producing no battle in the will." However, Traina thinks Augustine's logic forces him to foreclose on the good desire option as soon as he mentions it: "Which of these speculative possibilities one chooses makes every difference for the way in which one interprets androcentric sexual desire and pleasure. Augustine's own intractable theological connection between sexual desire and original sin supports the no-concupiscence view."⁴²

³⁹ One significant reason Kelly does not consider the question of Augustine's development is that Kelly hardly considers any of Augustine's texts after *c. ep. pel.* Although Kelly claims his article engages "the treatises...which Augustine wrote in the context of the Pelagian controversy from 411 to his death in 430," in fact Kelly offers only one quote from the *Contra Iulianum* (footnote #69), and nothing from the *c. Iul. imp.* See Kelly, "Sexuality and Concupiscence in Augustine," 82.

⁴⁰ James B. Weidenaar, "Augustine's Theory of Concupiscence in *City of God*, Book XIV," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995), 57-58.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴² Cristina L. H. Traina, *Erotic Attunement*, 87.

On the far side of the interpretation of Augustine on Edenic sexual desire, some scholars claim that Augustine certainly thought there would have been good sexual desire in Eden. Peter Brown, quoted above, is interpreted by Meilaender and others to express this view. Perry J. Cahall draws on Brown and claims that *civ. Dei* XIV.23 shows that “Adam and Eve would have experienced sexual desire as completely subject to the control of their reason and will.”⁴³ Gerard O’Daly offers a similar reading of *civ. Dei* XIV: “He envisages a prelapsarian sexuality where desire is obedient to the will.” Because the body can do so many things at the prompting of the will even after the fall, “why cannot we imagine a state in which [the body’s] sexual drives are similarly subject to the will?”⁴⁴ Richard Sorabji suggests that in *civ. Dei* XIV Augustine says there would have been no sexual desire before the fall, but “[t]he evolution of Augustine’s view” shown in his later works demonstrates that Augustine was subsequently open to the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden.⁴⁵ Timo Nisula argues that in *c. ep. pel.*, for instance, “Augustine is here even prepared to allow *concupiscentia* a place in the original human constitution in Paradise,” and Nisula does not, as does Kelly, suggest that this passage is an anomaly in Augustine’s later thought.⁴⁶ Lenka Karfíková also suggests that the later Augustine was open to Edenic sexual desire.⁴⁷ James Wetzel, specifying what he earlier had left unspecified, suggests that “Augustine’s hypothetical Adam and Eve have no need for self-control;

⁴³ Perry J. Cahall, “Saint Augustine on Conjugal Love and Divine Love,” *Thomist* 68 no 3 (Jul 2004), 346.

⁴⁴ Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 158.

⁴⁵ Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 408.

⁴⁶ Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscentia*, 116.

⁴⁷ Karfíková, *Grace and the Will According to Augustine*, 331.

they have, while still without sin, an effortless desire to intertwine themselves into one another's selfhood."⁴⁸

Donald Burt offers perhaps the most strongly stated claims in favor of the view that Augustine thought sexual desire was original to human nature:

God made human beings with a strong desire for coitus. Just as hunger and thirst were given so that humans could maintain their health, so the impulse towards physical intercourse was given to insure the health of the race. And just as the pleasure from satisfied hunger and thirst is made noble by the good end that it accomplishes, so too the passion that accompanies intercourse is made holy by the great good that the act can accomplish, the formation of new human beings in a crucible of love. God did not want this creative act to be simply a cold, mechanical union of bodies. It was to be accomplished through an intimate loving act of friends who would reach out to embrace each other and the child they had helped to create.⁴⁹

Burt continues: "In Eden those first humans would have enjoyed coition in the same way as they would have enjoyed eating and drinking: temperately. They would have been moved by love for the other rather than desire for self-satisfaction. In all senses it would have been an 'ordered' act, passionate but not 'out of control,' dominated by the 'spirited' love that chooses the good of the human lover before one's own, and the good God above all."⁵⁰

It appears that we have three distinct readings of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire. Some scholars argue that Augustine thinks there would have been absolutely no sexual desire in Eden. Some scholars suggest that Augustine briefly but inconsequentially mentioned the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden. And some scholars are quite confident that Augustine thought there would have been good sexual desire in Eden. Clearly these three readings of Augustine are in

⁴⁸ Wetzel, "Augustine on the Will," in *A Companion to Augustine* ed. Mark Vessey (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 344-345. Wetzel is here drawing on Cavadini's claims in "Feeling Right."

⁴⁹ Donald X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 82. Burt is reflecting on Augustine's *Letter 6**, a text I discuss below.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

tension with one another. As I show below, Augustine's views are more complex than many of his interpreters recognize.

Looking at the issue of Edenic sexual desire is one important way to uncover what Augustine thinks about the place of bodily desire in God's original plan. Furthermore, there is significant division among scholars about exactly what Augustine said about Edenic sexual desire, and the issue is relevant to both historical theology and contemporary moral theology. There are, then, good reasons to return to Augustine's texts in order to see what his views on Edenic sexual desire really were.

AUGUSTINE'S DEVELOPMENT ON EDENIC SEXUAL DESIRE

To understand Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire, it is necessary to trace Augustine's development on the issue. This development has not yet been adequately traced in the scholarship on Augustine. So, although the role of this chapter in the dissertation is to provide a test case for the significance of my account of the bodily character of concupiscence in Augustine's thought, an important secondary contribution of this chapter is to provide an account of Augustine's development on the issue of sexual desire in Eden. What we find is that the bodily element of concupiscence is crucial for explaining Augustine's development, and at the same time appreciation for the details of Augustine's development reinforces and expands my account of the bodily element of sexual desire in Augustine's thought.

While not much has been written tracing the development of Augustine's views on sexual desire, the history of the related issue of Augustine's development on Edenic procreation has been discussed at length in scholarship. That is, much has been written on Augustine's change from initially suggesting there would have been no procreation in Eden to his final position that not only

would there have been procreation in Eden, but it would have been sexual procreation. Thus I must justify the need for the account I offer below.⁵¹

While a number of scholars have described elements of Augustine's development on Edenic procreation, my account contributes to the scholarly discussion in at least three ways. First, my account traces the development of Augustine's view of sexual desire in Eden, a development which is often briefly mentioned but not engaged in depth in other scholarship. Second, I offer my own take on Augustine's view of Edenic sexual desire in the important and much contested book XIV of *civ. Dei*. Book XIV is at the heart of the scholarly dispute over Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire, and I think my reading advances that discussion. Third, because much of the study of

⁵¹ Perhaps a review of some of the previous scholarship on Augustine's developing views on Edenic procreation would be helpful. Jeremy Cohen offers accurate readings of Augustine, but his treatment of some texts is only very brief, he stops his analysis with *Gn. litt.*, he offers little comment on any later texts, and he does not treat the issue of Edenic sexual desire in any depth. These are not criticisms of Cohen; he simply wrote with different concerns in mind. Interestingly, Cohen explores whether the changes in Augustine's thought on the issue of Edenic procreation are best described as "the results of a single, continuous process in the maturation of his thought" or whether "one could identify a turning point in Augustine's career, when the bishop of Hippo consciously reversed his approach to this biblical text [*Be fertile and increase*]." Cohen has in mind here the argument of Elizabeth Clark, who suggests that Augustine's change in attitude toward Edenic sexual procreation was due to his dispute with Jovinian, and not due to his dispute with the Pelagians. I will not address this issue in this chapter. See Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It: The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 245-257. Elizabeth Clark also ends her analysis with *Gn. litt.*, and at points I disagree with Clark's interpretations. Clark is not concerned with the question of Edenic sexual desire, but rather with Augustine's more general position on Edenic procreation in the context of the argument with Jovinian. See Elizabeth Clark, "Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve: Interpretations of Genesis 1-3 in the Later Latin Fathers," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 353-373. In my view the best treatment of the development of Augustine's thought on both Edenic procreation and desire comes from Émile Schmitt, even if Schmitt's book has been less widely referenced than it should be, having been written a generation ago and in French. I do disagree with Schmitt on some points, and Schmitt's account is brief in its treatment of the *c. Iul.* and *c. Iul. imp.* See Émile Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien Dans L'Œuvre de Saint Augustin: Une Théologie Baptismale et la Vie Conjugale* (Paris: Études Augustinennes, 1983). Philip Reynolds, like others, discusses the issue of Edenic procreation primarily in reference to Augustine's earlier works and moves quickly through the anti-Pelagian texts, though he does discuss the issue of Edenic sexual desire. His reading of Augustine in the early years is quite good. See Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae vol. XXIV (New York: Brill, 1994), 241-266. J. Patout Burns offers a helpful but abbreviated account of Augustine's views from *Gn. adv. Man.* through *b. coniug.*, but Burns moves very quickly through the texts that come after *Gn. litt.* See J. Patout Burns, "Marital Fidelity as *Remedium Concupiscentiae*," 7-9. David Hunter offers an overview of the changes between Augustine's earliest works and *Gn. litt.* and helpfully shows the interdependence of Augustine's views on Scripture and his views on the relationship between body and soul. See David G. Hunter, "Augustine on the Body," 353-364. Richard Sorabji distills his account into just a few paragraphs, though he does treat Augustine's later texts generally accurately. See Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 406-408. So, in sum, while the story of Augustine's development on Edenic procreation has been written, my account of Augustine's development is more comprehensive, more attentive to the issue of sexual desire, and it also challenges some of the other interpretations at points.

Augustine's development in this area has focused on the issue of procreation rather than desire, and because Augustine's views on Edenic procreation were solidified by the middle of the second decade of the 400s, other accounts do not have much to say about the changes in Augustine's views in his anti-Julian works. My account, however, because it focuses on sexual desire rather than procreation, does attend to how Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire change in those anti-Julian works. Thus, despite a significant amount of previous scholarship on the related topic of Augustine's views of Edenic procreation, I think my account of the development of Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire is warranted.

In what follows I trace four positions in the development of Augustine's thought on the issue of Edenic sexual desire. First, he holds the position that there would have been no new humans besides Adam and Eve in Eden, so there would have been no sex and no sexual desire in Eden. Second, his subsequent view is that there would have been non-sexual procreation in Eden, so there would have been no sex and no sexual desire in Eden. Third, he holds the position that there would have been sexual procreation without sexual desire in Eden. Fourth and finally, in his final works he gradually comes to endorse the position that there was possibly sexual desire in Eden. In this final position, however, he always remains ambivalent, suggesting that there either was or was not sexual desire in God's original design of human nature. In tracing these four positions, I show both how and why his thought develops, and the why is crucial to understanding Augustine's final ambivalent position on the issue of Edenic sexual desire. Essentially the development has everything to do with Augustine's views on the bodily character of sexual desire, and in the final part of the chapter I explain Augustine's ambivalence and attempt to resolve it according to his principles regarding the bodily character of sexual desire.

POSITION 1: NO PROCREATION IN EDEN

In the early part of his career, Augustine seemed to think procreation—whether sexual or non-sexual—might have been a result of the fall.⁵² He does not state this position explicitly, but it is hard to conclude that he holds any other position. Indeed, in *Retractiones* Augustine seems to admit that he previously thought there would have been no procreation in Eden.

The early Augustine thinks procreation might have been a result of the fall in large part because of his early suspicious attitude toward the body.⁵³ He also admits that “at that time it had not yet dawned on me how everything in [the Genesis creation accounts] could be taken in its proper literal sense; it seemed to me rather that this was scarcely possible, if at all, and anyhow extremely difficult” (*Gn. litt.* VIII.2,5 [348]). The combination of a suspicious attitude toward the body and the struggle to understand the literal meaning of Genesis led directly to his early view on Edenic procreation.⁵⁴

The clearest evidence of Augustine’s early view on Edenic sex comes from his book *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, written in 388/389.⁵⁵ In this text Augustine interprets the command “be fruitful and multiply” to mean that Adam and Eve were commanded to multiply spiritual goods, not new human beings. That is, before the fall “there was a chaste coupling of male and female” that

⁵² For an overview of Patristic views on the issue of Edenic procreation that preceded Augustine, see Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 221-245.

⁵³ Alan D. Fitzgerald, “Body,” *ATTA*, 106. See also Hunter, “Augustine on the Body,” 355-356.

⁵⁴ Schmitt attributes Augustine’s early views also to Augustine’s reading of the Greek fathers. See Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 86-87.

⁵⁵ For dating, see J. Kevin Coyle, “*Genesi adversus Manicheos, De*,” *ATTA*, 378. This work also seems to go under the title *de Genesi contra Manichaeos*, and *ATTA* spells the final word *Manicheos*. The PL version of *Retractiones* lists the title in the heading as *De Genesi Adversus Manichaeos*, and in the first sentence of his review, Augustine calls the book *de Genesi contra Manichaeos*. I have no idea how to explain the discrepancy in titles, but I note it here in case the reader is looking for the text or secondary literature related to it. I have seen the book referred to by both titles in the secondary literature.

resulted in “a spiritual brood of intellectual and immortal joys filling the earth” (*Gn. adv. Man.* I.19,30 [58]). Augustine never says in this text that the command was one to literally procreate new human beings. In fact, at this point Augustine seems to think any new human beings were a result of the fall. He claims that the command to be fruitful and multiply “was turned into a blessing of fertility in the flesh after sin” (*Gn. adv. Man.* I.19,30 [58]).

The reason Augustine thinks the command to be fruitful and multiply meant only spiritual multiplication is that Augustine at this time holds the view that Adam and Eve did not inhabit the kind of existence in which people could procreate. Essentially, he thinks that Adam and Eve were in something like the state of heaven before the fall:

A good reason for believing [that “increase and multiply” was a command about spiritual multiplication] is that they were not yet children of this age before they had sinned. For *the children of this age beget and are begotten* (Lk 20:34), as the Lord says, when he is pointing out that in comparison with the future life that is promised to us this business of sexual reproduction is to be held in low esteem (*Gn. adv. Man.* I.19,30 [58]).

Augustine thinks God would not command the sinless couple to do something so low as to reproduce through sex.⁵⁶ Although Augustine does not explain himself fully here, his later works reveal that his rejection of procreation in Eden has everything to do with his understanding of the embodied state of Adam and Eve.

Augustine’s comments in *Retractiones* support the claim that his early view was that there would have been no procreation in Eden without the fall. Commenting on the above-mentioned passage from *Gn. adv. Man.*, he writes, “if this cannot be taken in any other way but as meaning that those two human beings would not have had human children unless they had sinned, I totally repudiate it” (*Ret.* I.10,2 [36]). In *Gn. adv. Man.* there is no speculation about Edenic sexual desire because

⁵⁶ Reynolds supports this reading of *Gn. adv. Man.*: “Before sin entered into the world, Adam and Eve were not yet ‘sons of this age,’ and God did not intend them to generate offspring by means of coitus.” See Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 246.

Augustine seems to hold the position that there would have been no children, and thus no sex, without the fall.⁵⁷

Confessions supports this reading of the early Augustine. In *Confessions* XIII, written sometime between 397-401 (a decade after *Gn. adv. Man.*), Augustine struggles to understand the meaning of God's command "increase and multiply." In this part of *Confessions* he is emphasizing the allegorical and spiritual reading of Genesis, and he introduces the section where he interprets "increase and multiply" by wondering, "But now to something puzzling: what sort of mystery do we have here" (*Conf.* XIII.24,35 [368])? The mystery is that God gives the command "increase and multiply" only to sea creatures (Gen 1:22) and to human beings (Gen 1:28). Augustine thinks the command cannot be as simplistic as a directive to produce offspring, since it "is not addressed to vegetation or trees, or to beasts or reptiles, although these keep up their numbers and conserve their species by giving birth, as do fish and birds and humans" (*Conf.* XIII.24,35 [368]). Augustine does not explicitly deny that the command relates to procreation, but he emphasizes that "scripture intended" a figurative meaning for the command. If it were merely a command to reproduce, it would apply to all things that reproduce, and in the context of the Biblical passage the command is restricted to sea creatures and humans (*Conf.* XIII.37 [369]).

As a result of his emphasis on the "mystery" of the command "increase and multiply," Augustine offers a very figurative reading of the passage from Genesis 1:

Deep-seated carnality and its needs suggest that we take the offspring of the waters to represent signs displayed materially; but the fecundity of our human reason leads us to interpret the breeding of humans as a symbol of truths processed by the intelligence. And we believe that this, Lord, is why your command, *Increase and multiply*, was issued to each of these two (*Conf.* XIII.37 [369]).

⁵⁷ Cohen rightly observes that Augustine's subsequent work, *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus* (c. 393) ends at reflection on Genesis 1:26, just before Augustine would have gotten to the passage "increase and multiply." See Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 248 n. 85.

Here Augustine is very hesitant to make any meaningful claims about the literal meaning of the command to be fruitful and multiply.⁵⁸ Although this passage does not directly address the issue of Edenic procreation, it does show that even around the year 400 Augustine was still hesitant to say there would have been human procreation in Eden in his interpretation of the very passage where it would make sense to do so.⁵⁹ Furthermore, this reading of *Confessions* is strengthened because, as I show in the next section, Augustine will claim in *de bono coniugali* that the non-procreative interpretation of Eden is still on the table.

POSITION 2: NON-SEXUAL PROCREATION IN EDEN

Over the course of the decade between 400-410, Augustine's thought on the issue of Edenic procreation develops slowly but substantially.

Augustine's *de bono coniugali*, written at some point between 401-404, exhibits an Augustine who is thinking out loud about what "increase and multiply" might mean.⁶⁰ As Schmitt puts it, in *b. coniug.* "Augustine manifests some hesitation."⁶¹ In *b. coniug.* 2.2, Augustine says he is not quite sure

⁵⁸ Even if his emphasis in book XIII is on the figurative meaning of scripture, he does not refrain from other literal claims in that book: he says that bodily sexual characteristics are an original part of creation, and not a consequence of the fall (*Conf.* XIII.32,47 [377]). Yet he does not suggest that these bodily sexual characteristics were present so that humans would procreate.

⁵⁹ Reynolds supports this reading of book XIII. See Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 244. Burns supports the same reading. See Burns, "Marital Fidelity as a *Remedium Concupiscentiae*," 7 n. 30. Cohen is very confident that Augustine is here sure that there would have been no procreation in Eden. See Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 247-249. Schmitt agrees with this reading of *Confessions*, but only devotes one sentence to book XIII. See Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 87.

⁶⁰ David Hunter suggests the best date for *b. coniug.* is more likely 404 than the generally accepted date of 401. See Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 269 n. 111.

⁶¹ Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 89 (my translation).

whether procreation would have taken place in Eden, and he is not sure how procreation would have taken place if it would have happened.⁶²

In *b. coning.* 2.2 Augustine suggests three possibilities for what “increase and multiply” might have meant in Eden:

- 1) God would have created more people in a way similar to how he created Adam and Eve and similar to the way God creates more bees. That is, without sexual intercourse.
- 2) God might not have intended Adam and Eve to have children. Rather, when God said “increase and multiply,” God might have meant them to multiply spiritual goods like joy. Under this option, human children were a response to sin and not part of God’s original plan.
- 3) Adam and Eve might not have had spiritual bodies, but might have had “animal” and “mortal” bodies that would have become spiritual later on. The immortality of their bodies would have come later on, though death would not have been necessary to change bodies into immortal bodies. Procreation would have happened through sex, and the community would have grown until God saw fit to elevate the community into the immortal bodies of heavenly existence.

Augustine does not endorse any of the three options since “[i]t would involve long investigation and discussion to establish which of these suggestions is true, or whether one or more different explanations can even now be derived from those words of scripture” (*b. coning.* 2.2 [Walsh, 3-7]). In other words, he thinks it is a very difficult matter of exegesis. Option (1) allows for the possibility of procreation without sex in Eden. Option (2) is essentially the same as that of *Gn. adv. Man.*, that there would have been no new human beings in Eden after Adam and Eve. Option (3) expresses the rough outlines of what will be Augustine’s mature position later on, though he does not speculate about the place of sexual desire within Edenic procreation. It is important to note that at this point he thinks the answer to the question of Edenic procreation is a very difficult one. Only a few years later he will shed all uncertainty and suggest that it is plainly obvious that (3) is the right reading of Scripture.

⁶² Burns seems to think Augustine was more sure about Edenic procreation in this text than I think Augustine was. See Burns, “Marital Fidelity as a *Remedium Concupiscentiae*,” 7.

What helps to explain Augustine's hesitation to provide an answer to the question of Edenic procreation is his uncertainty at this point in his life about the bodies of Adam and Eve. In this section of *b. coniug.* there is a very short but crucial comment made by Augustine that helps to frame his developing views on Edenic sexuality. He writes, "sexual intercourse can take place only between mortal bodies" (*b. coniug.* 2,2 [3]).⁶³ It is this principle that requires him in option (3) to suggest that Adam and Eve had initially mortal bodies. Although in this text he does not explain what the difference is between mortal and immortal bodies, he does seem to think the issue is central to resolving the question of Edenic procreation. He is certain that immortal bodies do not have sex. Here he relies on Matthew 22:30 where Jesus reveals, "they will neither marry nor be given in marriage in heaven." Here Augustine is suggesting the same interpretive principle at work in *Gn. adv. Man.*: if Adam and Eve were in something like the state of Heaven and thus had immortal bodies in Eden, then they could not have been commanded by God to reproduce sexually, since heavenly or immortal bodies do not reproduce through sex.⁶⁴ It is only when Augustine figures out what kind of bodies Adam and Eve had in Eden that he can answer the question of Edenic procreation. Within a decade he will have answered the question about Edenic bodies.⁶⁵

Augustine's *de Genesi ad litteram* is the first place in which he attempts a "long investigation and discussion" of the issue of Edenic sexual procreation. The dating of the work is contested and complex, but it was certainly written in stages, begun around the time of *b. coniug.* and finished well

⁶³ Latin: nec esse concubitus nisi mortalium corporum possit (Walsh, 2).

⁶⁴ Walsh suggests a similar interpretation of Augustine's appeal to scripture here. See Walsh, *b. coniug.*, 3 n. 6. Augustine also thinks Adam and Eve might not have needed more companions since they were immortal and perfectly happy: thus option 2.

⁶⁵ Cohen's treatment of *b. coniug.* is accurate but very short. See Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 249.

after *b. coniug.*⁶⁶ What is fascinating about this text is that the reader finds evidence of two distinct stages in Augustine's thought on the issue of Edenic procreation. Early on in the book he says there would likely have been non-sexual procreation in Eden, and later on in the book he says there certainly would have been sexual procreation without any desire in Eden.⁶⁷

In book III Augustine again reveals his uncertainty about whether Adam and Eve were in mortal bodies or immortal bodies in Eden. There are two curious Biblical details that Augustine has trouble making sense of in his account of Edenic embodiment. The first is the claim that Adam was directed by God to eat food (Gen 1:29-30; 2:16). Augustine wonders why Adam would be told to eat food: does the detail about Adam's eating suggest that he was in a mortal body from the beginning, since only mortal bodies need to eat (*Gen. litt.* III.21,33 [236])? Augustine is not quite sure, and seems to be thinking of two possible ways to explain this detail. Maybe Adam was mortal and ate out of necessity, or maybe he ate for another unspecified reason but not out of necessity, because he was in an immortal body and would not have needed food.⁶⁸

A similar uncertainty is present in Augustine's reflection on Edenic procreation. In book III, Augustine engages the command "increase and multiply." When he mentions the biblical passage, he again says the distinction between mortal and immortal bodies is crucial to the answer to the

⁶⁶ Hill offers the following timeline for the dates of the work in the WSA edition of *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 164-165: *Gn. litt.* was begun in either 399, 401, or 404, and published in 416. Augustine seems to have written books I-IX before 410 and then taken a break and resumed the text a couple years later. Richard Sorabji claims (mistakenly) that "the first nine books were written last" and he also refers to a non-existent book 13 of *Gn. litt.* (*Gn. litt.* has 12 books). See Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 406-407 n. 39.

⁶⁷ Reynolds traces some of this history, and there is no doubt that many have shown that Augustine's views on Edenic procreation changed significantly over the course of *Gn. litt.* Reynolds, however, does not trace the history in significant detail, and omits reference to Augustine's crucial appeal to Paul (see below). See Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 248-251.

⁶⁸ Augustine identifies these two options in *c. Iul.* IV.69 [420]: "How much more ought we to believe that in that noble state there was an honorable moderation in taking nourishment so that the needs of the animal body would be supplied by it....And yet some commentators on the words of God, who are by no means people to be ignored, tend rather to believe that they had no need of this sort of nourishment."

question of Edenic procreation (III.12,20 [228]). He suggests that God gave humanity the command “increase and multiply” “in case anybody should say that there is any sin in the business of procreating children” (III.13,21[228]). That claim does not necessarily mean that procreation would have happened sexually, but rather only entails the conclusion that bringing new human beings into the world, whether sexually or non-sexually, is not a sin. Procreation could have happened non-sexually in Eden, as Augustine had pointed out in *de bono coniugali*.

Later on Augustine returns to the question of Edenic procreation. There he says “it hardly seems that [procreation] could have been done without the intercourse of male and female—and here too we have a clear indication that our bodies are mortal—still it can be said that with immortal bodies there could have been another way, so that children would be born solely through the devout affection of charity [*piae caritatis affectu*] without any disfigurement of lust” (*Gen. litt.* III.21,33 [236; WSA translation amended from ACW, 98]; Latin in WSA I/13, 236 n. 32). Here he clearly distinguishes between the types of procreation that would have been possible depending on whether Adam and Eve were in mortal or immortal bodies. Yet Augustine does not here explain what “devout affection of charity” means.

Some scholars have read Augustine’s claim about procreation through the “devout affection of charity” as a claim that there would have been procreation through sexual intercourse but without lust. Referring to this passage from *Gn. litt.*, Elizabeth Clark interprets Augustine to be making a claim about non-lustful sexual procreation. According to Clark, Augustine offers the possibility “that their manner of sexual union was not motivated by lust,” though Clark says Augustine does not endorse this position as his own.⁶⁹ In fact, Clark suggests that the idea of sexual procreation

⁶⁹ Clark, “Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve,” 369.

without lust in Eden “clearly puzzles him.”⁷⁰ Edmund Hill reads the reference to “the devout affection of charity” as a claim about sexual procreation: “What he is suggesting by this qualification, I think, is that he would not agree that sexual intercourse would be unnecessary in a ‘non-lapsarian society’ and that all births would be virginal, brought about purely by ‘family affection,’ *pietatis affectu*. For him this *pietatis affectus* would take the place of the ‘disfigurement of lust,’ *corruptionis concupiscentia*, in the generative sexual act.”⁷¹ So, perhaps we have here Augustine’s first suggestion that immortal bodies would have procreated through sex without lust.

Neither Clark nor Hill’s readings, however, make sense of Augustine’s claims, for both Clark and Hill miss the important point that Augustine is reflecting on how procreation in immortal bodies would have been different. When Augustine suggests “there could have been another way” of procreating, he is drawing the contrast to sexual procreation in mortal bodies. Immortal bodies would have procreated in “another way.” There is no reason to think Augustine abandons his earlier principle that immortal bodies do not have sex. In fact, the point of introducing the speculation on immortal bodies in this passage seems to be precisely to show how procreation could have happened without sex. What Augustine seems to mean by “devout affection of charity” is something like what he suggested in *b. coning.*, that humans may have multiplied in the way bees multiply: that is, with God’s help and without sex. This reading is the only way to make sense of his insistence that immortal bodies do not have sex: he is, after all, referring to immortal bodies when he mentions procreation through the “devout affection of charity.”⁷² So at this point in *Gn. adv. Man.*,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 369.

⁷¹ WSA I/13, 236 n. 32.

⁷² John Rist seems to read Augustine’s claim about “the devout affection of charity” in the same way I read it. Rist writes, “whereas at the beginning of the *Literal Commentary*...he ponders whether *caritas* alone might have sufficed for reproduction in paradise, by the time he reaches book 6 he is sure that sexual activity would have been necessary.” See John M. Rist, *What is Truth? From the Academy to the Vatican* (New York: Cambridge, 2008), 70. Schmitt, on the other hand, sees Augustine here moving in the direction of admitting that there would have been sexual procreation in Eden,

his main claim about procreation in Eden is to say again that the issue depends entirely on whether Adam and Eve had mortal or immortal bodies in Eden. At this point he seems to still be unsure about those mortal or immortal bodies.

POSITION III: SEXUAL PROCREATION WITHOUT SEXUAL DESIRE IN EDEN

Through book III of *Gn. litt.*, Augustine never once endorses the view that there certainly would have been sexual procreation in Eden, let alone sexual procreation with sexual desire. By book VI his view has begun to change, and by book IX his view has solidified into his later position that Adam and Eve had mortal bodies that would have procreated through non-desirous sexual procreation.

Book VI shows Augustine working through the issue of whether Adam and Eve had mortal or immortal bodies in the beginning. Early on in book VI Augustine returns to the issue of Edenic bodily sex characteristics, where he rejects the claim that “what was made on the sixth day was their souls” and not their bodies (*Gn. litt.* VI.7,12 [307]). According to Augustine, the claim that only souls were created on the sixth day is not compatible with the text of Genesis.⁷³ Tellingly, however, Augustine does not appeal to the claim “increase and multiply” as a reason to think Adam and Eve were embodied on the sixth day. If he did think they were commanded to procreate through sex, then appealing to “increase and multiply” would be an obvious way to show that they were embodied on the sixth day. So he may still be entertaining the idea that they were in immortal bodies and would have procreated in a non-sexual way.

though Schmitt does not reflect on the line about the “devout affection of charity.” See Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 90. Cohen devotes only one sentence to book III of *Gn. litt.* See Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 250.

⁷³ Augustine gives two reasons for thinking this claim about only souls being created on the sixth day is non-biblical. First, the text says they were created male and female and “the difference of sex between male and female can only be verified in bodies.” Second, the text also says that God gave them food to eat on the sixth day “which of course would only be suitable for human beings with bodies” (*Gn. litt.* VI.7,12 [307-08]).

However, later in book VI Augustine finally takes a clear position on the issue of mortal/immortal Edenic bodies. He begins by specifying the distinction between a mortal and an immortal body, a distinction he had left unspecified in earlier works: a mortal body is one in which the soul enlivens the body (ensouled body), and an immortal body is one in which the spirit enlivens the body (enspirited body).⁷⁴ Augustine then suggests that, although the question of which kind of body Adam had is a contested one, he has found the key to answering the question. It is the apostle Paul who clarifies the issue: “But why should we spend any more time discussing the point? After all, there is not a shadow of a doubt about the apostle’s judgment on this matter” (*Gn. litt.* VI.19,30 [318-319]). When Paul wanted to show what an ensouled body was, he appealed to Adam in Eden (1 Cor. 15). Thus, Augustine concludes, Adam had an ensouled, mortal body from the very beginning: “we have worn the image of the earthly man from the very starting point of the human race” (*Gn. litt.* VI.19,30 [318-319]). Adam, if he had not sinned, could have become immortal later on, so death was not part of God’s original plan for Adam, even if Adam originally had a mortal body (*Gn. litt.* VI.25,36 [321]).⁷⁵ From this point forward in Augustine’s career, there will be no question that Adam was in a mortal body from the beginning.

Augustine’s certainty about Adam’s body lays the necessary groundwork for his later claims about procreation in Eden. Gone from Augustine’s thought forever is any suggestion that Adam, because he originally had an immortal body, would have procreated either only in the highly

⁷⁴ Hill offers the terms ensouled and enspirited as ways to express Augustine’s terms *animalis* and *spiritalis*. Although Hill suggests that Hill “felt constrained to invent these two terms” because other English terms would not express Augustine’s idea well, the Oxford English Dictionary has entries prior to Hill for both “ensoul” and “enspiritualize.” See WSA I/13, 319 n. 27. I think “ensouled” and “enspirited” are very helpful terms to express what Augustine is trying to say, whether or not they were “invented” by Hill.

⁷⁵ Clark says Augustine “is still contemplating the matter of human bodies in book VI” and trying to figure out whether they were in mortal or immortal bodies, but Clark does not note that Augustine comes to a clear position on the issue in the later part of book VI. See Clark, “Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve,” 369. Cohen, however, rightly recognizes that by chapter 25 of book VI Augustine has decided definitively on the matter. See Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 250.

figurative spiritual way or in a non-sexual way like bees. Sexual procreation will from this point on be crucial to Augustine's understanding of the mortal, transitional character of the garden, precisely because Adam was always in a mortal body.

It is in book IX where Augustine fully takes up the question of Edenic procreation.⁷⁶ In book VIII he begins his interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve by emphasizing that a literal reading of Genesis 2-3 is essential to the proper understanding of the text (*Gn. litt.* VIII.1,1-2,5 [346-349]). So when he gets to book IX, he has already laid the groundwork for a literal interpretation of Adam and Eve's sexuality.

In book IX Augustine says explicitly that Adam and Eve would have procreated through sex in Eden: "without any restless fever of lust...offspring would be brought forth from their sowing the seed" (IX.3,6 [379]). Adam and Eve would have procreated because God wanted to fill out the community of paradise, not because Adam and Eve were going to die and needed to be replaced (IX.9,14 [383]). They did not actually have sex before the fall, because it was as short amount of time between Eve's creation and the original sin (IX.4,8 [380]).⁷⁷ But, Augustine points out, it was not because sex is inherently bad that they did not have sex in the garden (IX.7,12-8,13 [382-383]).

Augustine also reflects here on what Edenic sex would have been like if it had happened. It would have been "without any restless fever of lust" (*Gn. litt.* IX.3,5 [378-379]). That claim, of course, only begs the question of whether there would have been non-restless lust. Here Augustine

⁷⁶ Hunter dates this book to "sometime before the year 410." See David G. Hunter, "Reclaiming Biblical Morality," 330.

⁷⁷ It is quite clear that Augustine thinks the first couple did not have sex simply because the time between Eve's creation and Eve's temptation was very short. This reading of Augustine is in contrast to Cormac Burke's speculation on Augustine's views on the issue: "If they did not have intercourse in paradise, however, this was no doubt because they were not yet 'ready for it'; they were still, we might say, in a period of courtship, in the process of getting to know each other personally. The act of intercourse—as involving the fullness of spousal donation, self-revelation, and knowledge—would, at that stage, not yet have made sense." See Cormac Burke, *The Theology of Marriage: Personalism, Doctrine, and Canon Law* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 157.

says explicitly that there would have been no sexual desire in Eden: “why should we not suppose that before sin those two human beings were able to control and command their genital organs for the procreation of children in the same way as their other limbs, which the soul moves for all kinds of action without any trouble or any sort of prurient itch for pleasure” (*Gn. litt.* IX.10,18 [385])? Like one moves one’s feet to walk, “they could have commanded at will the organs that bring the fetus into being, so that it would have been neither sown in palpitating heat nor brought forth in piteous pain [i.e. painful labor]” (*Gn. litt.* IX.10,18 [385]). They must have been capable of this kind of procreation, because the only alternative Augustine imagines at this point is one in which the desires of the flesh drive the person: after the fall “they found the movement of that law fighting back against the law of the mind in the members of the body of that death” (*Gn. litt.* IX.10,18 [386]). That kind of disassociation of body and soul is not proper to unfallen people, and so there would have been no desire in Edenic sex (*Gn. litt.* IX.10,18 [386]).

What emerges from this engagement with Augustine’s views on Edenic procreation and desire in *Gn. litt.* is that he very clearly and substantially develops over the course of the decade between 400-410 during the writing of *Gn. litt.* Because he now interprets the Genesis story literally, and because he thinks Adam and Eve were in mortal bodies, he must positively affirm that sexual procreation was part of God’s original plan. Yet he is certain that there would have been no sexual desire in Eden. David Hunter sums up the significance of the change of Augustine’s views on sexual procreation:

The shift in Augustine’s interpretation of Genesis was to have a notable influence on his views of sex and marriage. By acknowledging that sex was essential to God’s original creation, Augustine had grounded marital life firmly within the positive will of the Creator. Augustine now had solid grounds on which to argue that procreation was one of the genuine goods of marriage and the object of God’s original blessing. However, once he had rooted

the body and human sexuality in the pre-lapsarian world, Augustine began to envision original sin as damaging human nature precisely in its procreative urges.⁷⁸

The question of procreative urges will reemerge in Augustine's next major engagement with the Adam and Eve story, book XIV of *civ. Dei*.⁷⁹ There he emphasizes again that there would likely have been no sexual desire in Eden, but he also hints briefly at the possibility that there could have been good sexual desire in Eden.

Augustine's most famous treatment of the issue of sexual desire in Eden comes in *De civitate Dei* XIV, which was probably composed some time between 418-19.⁸⁰ As was shown in the review of previous literature on Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire at the beginning of this chapter, book XIV of *civ. Dei* has been read in very different ways regarding the question of Edenic sexual desire. Interpreters are confident that they understand Augustine, even though two interpreters could have equal confidence about two fundamentally incompatible readings of Augustine. Augustine either says there was absolutely no sexual desire in Eden because the body was controlled totally by the will, or Augustine says there was good sexual desire in Eden that was harmonious with the will. These readings of book XIV are obviously in tension with one another, so it seems important to examine Augustine's views in this book.

There are two factors that make this text difficult to interpret. Augustine spends a lot of time in book XIV discussing motions of the soul (emotions). Because Augustine discusses the motions of the soul at length in this book, interpreters have argued (or assumed) that he applies his views on

⁷⁸ David G. Hunter, "Sexuality, Marriage and the Family," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: vol. 2: Constantine to c. 600* ed. Augustine Cassiday & Frederick W. Norris (New York: Cambridge, 2007), 597.

⁷⁹ Although Augustine does deal with the issue of sexual desire in Eden in some of his anti-Pelagian works preceding book XIV of *civ. Dei*, I discuss those works below in the section on his anti-Pelagian works. His position in those works is no different than his position in *Gn. litt.* IX or *civ. Dei*.

⁸⁰ For issues related to dating of the book, see O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 35; also see O'Daly, "Ciuitate dei (De -)," in *Augustinus-Lexikon* I: 974. O'Daly comes to no definite conclusions.

the motions of the soul to sexual desire. But, as the previous chapter of this dissertation showed, Augustine thinks *concupiscentia carnis* or *libido* is in important ways a desire of the body and is unlike the motions of the soul precisely in that sexual desire is a desire of the body. He holds the same view in book XIV, though many interpreters do not recognize this and instead read his claims about sexual desire as claims about one of the motions of the soul.

The second factor that makes book XIV difficult to interpret on the issue of Edenic sexual desire is that Augustine says something in this book that he has not said yet in any of his writings: he briefly suggests at least the theoretical possibility that there may have been a good kind of sexual desire in Edenic sex. He mentions this possibility near the end of book XIV, even though the rest of book XIV argues that there would not have been any sexual desire before the fall. His position on pre-lapsarian sexual desire in this book seems in some way ambiguous or confusing because he confidently argues for one position, but then admits that he is open to another position. Furthermore, as Couenhoven rightly observes, “Augustine modifies his position on prelapsarian sexuality only after he writes the portion of *City of God*” that deals with that issue.⁸¹ The fact that later on in his career he admits there may have been good sexual desire in Eden has likely led some scholars to read that later position back into book XIV, even though, as I show, his final position on Edenic sexual desire only fully emerges after book XIV.

The context of book XIV is crucial to understanding Augustine’s argument in book XIV.⁸² Augustine himself indicates that book XIV is closely connected with his work in book XIII, almost

⁸¹ Couenhoven, “Dreams of Responsibility,” 109.

⁸² Books XI and XII address the general question of creation, including the creation and fall of the angels and the original goodness of human creation. Book XI.1-3 emphasizes that the scriptures are trustworthy and crucial to growing in wise understanding of creation. Origenism is explicitly blamed for claiming the body is a result of the fall (civ. Dei XI.23 [479]). In XII.22 [533], Augustine clarifies that Adam, in his original condition, was not yet immortal, but would have obtained immortality if he had remained obedient. This claim is in harmony with the way his thought had developed over the course of writing *Gn. litt.*, and this claim will be crucial to his engagement with Edenic sexuality in book XIV.

as a kind of inseparable pair. In book XIII, Augustine offers a long treatment of the issues of death, resurrection, and the nature of the body in light of God's salvific plan, and he intends this discussion to lead to book XIV. As I show below, he explicitly draws the connection between the two books, suggesting that his reflections on the body lead specifically to a discussion of Edenic procreation.

In XIII Augustine argues that Adam was allowed to die as just punishment for his disobedience, and death is the most extreme symptom of Adam's lack of the grace he needs for integration between body and soul. After the fall the body of Adam was no longer subject to his soul, but rather "[t]hen began the flesh to lust against the Spirit" (*civ. Dei* XIII.13 [555]). Adam's body became to him a source of shame, precisely because it became disobedient (*civ. Dei* XIII.13 [555]).

While the disobedience of the body affects all of humanity after the fall, Augustine is quick to distance himself from the Platonists and others who see the body as being a problem in principle. Augustine clarifies that it is "not the body, but the body's corruptibility, which is a burden to the soul" (*civ. Dei* XIII.16 [557]). Although all bodies die, bodies will be brought to life in the resurrection (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [570-571]). That new life will perfect what was begun in baptism (*civ. Dei* XIII.23 [572-573]). The concept of regeneration through baptism and resurrection avoids the Platonic denigration of the body, and it does not succumb to the Epicurean over-emphasis on bodily pleasure (*civ. Dei* XIV.2 [582]). Embodiment is essential to happiness, but one needs a regenerated body and not a corruptible body in order to be truly happy (*civ. Dei* XIII.24 [579]). The resurrected body is unique in that it is permeated by spirit, not merely by soul, and so it is a body of a different kind even while being truly human: "The nature of their flesh will remain the same, but with no fleshly corruption and heaviness remaining" (*civ. Dei* XIII.24 [578]). In sum, Augustine spends much of book XIII reflecting on the difference between fallen and resurrected embodiment.

It is immediately after this reflection on the resurrection and the difference of the bodies of the resurrected that Augustine identifies the issue of lust in the garden (*civ. Dei* XIII.24 [580]). He suggests there is a very important question brought up by his reflections on fallen and regenerated bodies: “how...would [Adam & Eve] have begotten offspring if they had remained as they were created, without sin” (*civ. Dei* XIII.24 [580])? This question brings book XIII to a close and immediately sets the agenda for book XIV. In the interpretation of book XIV, it will be crucial to remember that it was reflection on the difference between the bodies of the fallen and the bodies of the resurrected that prompted Augustine to ask the question about Edenic procreation. An essential premise for his argument in book XIV is that the bodies of Adam and Eve before the fall operated much differently than bodies after the fall.

Early on in book XIV Augustine distances himself from the view that the body alone is the cause of sin and evil. Augustine is quite sure that the body alone is not the cause of all sins and evil: “those who suppose that all the evils of the soul proceed from the body are in error” (*civ. Dei* XIV.3 [585, modified]).⁸³ Augustine’s point is that if one thinks *all* evils of the soul (*omnia mala animae*) come from the body, as the Manichaeans and Platonists think, then one is in error. Certainly not all bad movements of the soul are caused by the body (*civ. Dei* XIV.4 [589]).

He goes on to say essentially the same thing in chapter 6 in his discussion of Platonist views of sin and evil. The Platonists say the body is the cause of all the evils of the soul, and Augustine’s response is that “it cannot be truthfully said that all the culpable and vicious motions of such souls arise simply from their earthly bodies” (*civ. Dei* XIV.5 [589]). He points out that even the Platonists, in their better moments, admit that “it is not only under the influence of the flesh that the soul

⁸³ Latin: Verum tamen quia omnia mala animae ex corpore putant accidisse, in errore sunt (CCSL 48, 417). Dyson’s generally wonderful translation has “those who suppose that the ills of the soul derive from the body are in error,” which misleadingly omits the essential qualifier “omnia:” all ills of the soul (Dyson, 589). I also substitute “evils” for “ills” in the quote.

experiences desire, fear, joy and sorrow; it can also be disturbed by such emotions [*motibus*] arising from within itself” (*civ. Dei* XIV.5 [590]).⁸⁴ Even so, it is certainly Augustine’s view that some evils of the soul come from the body: “this corruption of the flesh results in some incitements to sin and in sinful desires themselves” (*civ. Dei* XIV.3 [585]). It would be Manichean and Platonist to suppose that all sins come from the body, but it would not be Catholic to suppose that no sins are incited by the body, since that supposition would be based on the premise that the body is not fallen and not corruptible. Augustine in no way wants to deny that the body is fallen and corruptible and a contributor to sin.⁸⁵

In chapter 6 he begins his positive account of the nature of the movements of the soul: “What is important here is the quality of a man’s will” (*civ. Dei* XIV.6 [590]). It is the will that determines the quality of the movements of the soul: “If the will is perverse, the *motus* will be perverse; but if it is *recta*, they will be not only blameless, but even praiseworthy” (*civ. Dei* XIV.6 [590; CCSL 48]). Why does the will determine the moral quality of these movements of the soul? Because the “will is engaged in all of them; indeed, they are all no more than acts of the will. For what is desire and joy but an act of will in agreement with what we wish for? And what is fear and grief but an act of will in disagreement with what we do not wish for” (*civ. Dei* XIV.6 [590])? Augustine suggests these movements of the soul can be either good or bad, using scripture to demonstrate that Catholics are

⁸⁴ Latin: Unde colligitur, etiamsi ita se haberet, quod est omnino uanissimum, uicissim alternans incessabiliter euntium atque redeuntium animarum mundatio et inquinatio, non potuisse ueraciter dici omnes culpabiles atque uitiosos motus animarum eis ex terrenis corporibus inolescere, si quidem secundum ipsos illa, ut locutor nobilis ait, dira cupido usque adeo non est ex corpore, ut ab omni corporea peste purgatam et extra omne corpus animam constitutam ipsa esse compellat in corpore. Vnde etiam illis fatentibus non ex carne tantum afficitur anima, ut cupiat metuat, laetetur aegrescat, uerum etiam ex se ipsa his potest motibus agitari (CCSL 48, 420).

⁸⁵ See the previous chapter of this dissertation on Augustine’s views of vitiated bodily desire.

not opposed to good movements of the soul (*civ. Dei* XIV.7 [591-593]).⁸⁶ Augustine then comes to his definition of the four classic movements of the soul:

A right will, therefore, is a good love, and a perverse will is an evil love. Thus, love longing for what it loves is desire, and love actually possessing and enjoying what it loves is joy. Love seeking to escape what opposes it is fear, and love experiencing what opposes it, when it actually happens, is grief. These feelings are all bad, then, when the love is bad, and they are all good when the love is good (*civ. Dei* XIV.7 [WSA I/7, 107]).

In sum, thus far in this book Augustine has said the body itself is sometimes, but not always, the cause of sin or enticements to sin, and the movements of the soul, including desire, are expressions of the moral quality of the will and thus must be either good or bad, not absent.

Augustine then moves on to a discussion of Edenic movements of body and soul. At the very beginning of his discussion of Adam and Eve's movements, Augustine simply asserts that before sin Adam and Eve had animal bodies (*corpore animalī*) (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [602; CCSL 48, 430]). This assertion is in stark contrast to his difficulty earlier in his career deciding whether Adam and Eve were originally in mortal/animal or in immortal/spiritual bodies. Here he does not even mention the possibility that they were in immortal/spiritual bodies from the beginning.

Furthermore, Augustine is here absolutely sure that Adam and Eve did not experience any bad movements before the fall: "For if they did, how could they have been blessed in that memorable place of blessedness" (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [602])? Under absolutely no circumstance could Adam and Eve have felt sinful urges or bad emotions before they were disobedient. To say that they were

⁸⁶ It is crucial for Augustine to show his reader that the movements of the soul are not all bad. According to Augustine's understanding of human nature and his reading of scripture, it would be inhuman not to experience emotions, since St. Paul and Christ both experienced emotions (*civ. Dei* XIV.9 [598-599]). Were Augustine to say all emotions were sinful or lapses in virtue (as the Stoics say, according to Augustine), then he would have to accuse Christ of failing in this area. For Augustine, however, the argument works the other way around: Christ experienced emotions, and so emotions can certainly be good. Because motions of the soul can be good, he distances himself from the Stoics, who (he thinks) advocate a kind of absence of all movements of the soul in the wise man. Full *apatheia*—the absence of all emotions—would be inhuman and "the worst of all vices" (*civ. Dei* XIV.9 [600]). To say that all emotions are bad is to suggest that the will can never, in principle, be oriented toward righteousness. Augustine will have none of that: "Some of these, with a vanity as monstrous as it is rare, are so entranced by their own self-restraint that they are not stirred or excited or swayed or influenced by any emotions at all. But these rather suffer an entire loss of their humanity than achieve a true tranquility" (XIV.9 [602]).

enticed to sin by their emotions or their bodies is to say that God is the ultimate cause of their sin since God gave them emotions and bodies (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [603]). God would of course not do that, so they had neither bad emotions nor corruptible bodies (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [603]). What they had instead was “a faithful and sincere fellowship which brought great gladness to them, for what they loved was always at hand for their enjoyment” (*civ. Dei* XIV.10 [602]). They lived in a way in which whatever could be licitly desired would be enjoyed with the fullest joy possible on earth. Eden was a corporeal and spiritual paradise in which all good things were abundant and were enjoyed properly (*civ. Dei* XIV.11 [605]). Until the disobedience, that is.

After the fall, “man came to be distracted by turbulent and conflicting *affectibus*, and so became very different from what he had been when he dwelt in Paradise before his sin; though, even then, he lived in an animal body” (*civ. Dei* XIV.12 [607]; Latin: CCSL XLVIII, 433). How the fall happens is the following:

- 1) Adam and Eve are created as corruptible beings because they are created *ex nihilo*. Thus, not sharing in God’s uncreated and unchangeable nature, they have the potential of falling away from the highest good (XIV.13).
- 2) The wills of Adam and Eve adopt, for an inexplicable reason, an “appetite for a perverse kind of elevation” that attempts to place them above God. In other words, their wills turn toward a lower good than God. They do not, however, turn toward a lower good because their wills were already perverted. Rather, their perverse prideful act of will had no prior cause. Their pride is the first evil, which came in secret (XIV.13-14).
- 3) They eat the fruit and each perversely blames someone else (Eve blaming the serpent, Adam blaming Eve), further revealing their pride and bringing their hidden sin into the open (XIV.14).
- 4) God issues a perfectly just punishment for their disobedience. Their sin was abandoning their place in the hierarchy of creation and refusing to be obedient to God. As a result, God grants them their independence and removes the grace that had been holding Adam’s lower part in subjection to his higher part. As a result, the flesh no longer serves the soul or will as it once did (XIV.15). Rather, the flesh [*caro*] and even the soul [*animus*] do not obey [*non obtemperat*] the will [*uoluntati*] (XIV.15; CCSL XLVIII, 437).
- 5) It is the disharmony between the parts of human nature that constitutes the cause of disordered movements that characterize life after the fall. What was once a rightly

integrated, hierarchically ordered nature has become a disintegrated, disordered nature in which the higher is no longer easily served by the lower. All the consequences of the fall are a result of the absence of the integrating grace that originally held Adam and Eve's bodily and spiritual nature together in harmony (XIV.15).

It is only with this anthropological context that Augustine gets to his analysis of disordered movements in book XIV. It is crucial to note that it is both Adam's soul and body that are no longer subject to his will. This claim will be central to Augustine's complex treatment of disordered movements of the person in the rest of the book.

In chapter 15, Augustine places his account of disordered movements in contrast to the philosophical views he has covered earlier in book XIV. What he says here makes it sound as though the problem is that the soul is disordered, not that the body is corrupt: "the pains which are called fleshly are really pains of the soul which arise in the flesh and from the flesh. For what desire or pain can flesh feel in itself, apart from the soul" (*civ. Dei* XIV.15 [613])? It could sound as though he is saying that the flesh itself is not responsible for those things attributed to it. Emotions are, after all, a reflection of the will, so saying something happens to the flesh might be simply a figure of speech or metaphor. He goes on to suggest that sensations and emotions are experiences of the soul, not of the body:

When the flesh is said to feel desire or suffer pain, it is either the [whole] man himself [*ipse homo est*]...or something [*aliquid*] of his soul, which is affected by what the flesh undergoes: either a harsh experience, producing pain, or a gentle experience, producing pleasure [*voluptatem*]. The pain of the flesh is nothing but a distress of the soul arising from the flesh, and a kind of disagreement with what the body is suffering. So too, the pain of the mind, which is called grief, is a disagreement with what has befallen us against our will. Again, grief is usually preceded by fear, which is also something in the soul, not in the flesh; for the pain of the flesh is not preceded by anything that we can call fleshly apprehension, felt in the flesh before the pain comes (*civ. Dei* XIV.15 [613]).⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Latin: sed quod concupiscere caro dicitur uel dolere, aut ipse homo est, sicut disseruimus, aut aliquid animae, quod carnis afficit passio, uel aspera, ut faciat dolorem, uel lenis, ut uoluptatem. sed dolor carnis tantum modo offensio est animae ex carne et quaedam ab eius passione dissensio, sicut animi dolor, quae tristitia nuncupatur, dissensio est ab his rebus, quae nobis nolentibus acciderunt. sed tristitiam plerumque praecedat metus, qui et ipse in anima est, non in carne. dolorem autem carnis non praecedat ullus quasi metus carnis, qui ante dolorem in carne sentiatur (CCSL 48, 438).

At this point it seems that Augustine may be distancing himself from the view that the body itself causes vitiated movements of the person.

However, what Augustine next says about pleasure and lust seems to conflict with what he has just said about desire or pain being movements of the entire person or a part of the soul. He does not say that pleasure and lust are only metaphorically attributed to the body. Pleasure and lust, rather, come from the body itself:

Pleasure [*voluptatem*], however, is preceded by a certain appetite [*appetitus*], which is felt in the body as its own desire [*qui sentitur in carnem quasi cupiditas eius*]: for example hunger, and thirst, and *voluptatem*, which in the genitals is usually called lust [*libido*], although this is the general word for all desires [*cupiditates*] (*cin. Dei* XIV.15 [my translation]; Latin: CCSL 48, 438)

This claim initially seems to conflict with what he has said just above about attributing things to the flesh when they are really experiences of the soul. If lust is an equivalent kind of movement to desire, fear and grief, then it is not clear why he would say lust is felt as the body's own desire when he has just said the other movements are "really...of the soul." Does he contradict himself in this paragraph?

Rather than reading Augustine as offering a contradictory account of lust, it is more accurate to think he is offering a specification to his account of the movements of human nature. Lust is like desire, fear and grief in that all are movements of the person that are often regrettable. Desire, fear and grief are really experiences of the soul, but lust is distinctive in that it is felt in the body as the body's own desire. He is drawing a contrast between movements of the soul and movements of the body. Pain is fundamentally an experience internal to the soul: "pain of the flesh is not preceded by anything that we can call fleshly apprehension, felt in the flesh before the pain comes." Pleasure, on the other hand, is fundamentally an experience of the body that then affects the soul: pleasure of the flesh is different from pain of the flesh precisely in that pleasure of the flesh "is preceded by a certain appetite, which is felt in the body as its own desire."

When Augustine earlier says it is “the man himself...or some part of his soul which is affected by what the flesh undergoes,” his point there is to distance himself from the Platonists and Manichees who would say it is the body alone that is the subject of disordered movements. Augustine does not think the body alone is the problem. Even so, Augustine thinks the flesh has its own independent movement in lust, and the movement of the flesh affects the soul: the ability of the flesh to affect the soul is one of the fundamental problems with bodily lust. One’s soul cannot escape the effects caused by the movements of the body but must fight against them. This need to fight is in part because movements of the flesh cannot be easily contained to the body: “This lust not only takes over the whole body externally but also seizes the person inwardly. When it moves the whole man by combining and intermingling the emotion of the mind with the craving of the flesh, there follows a pleasure greater than any other bodily pleasure” (*civ. Dei* XIV.16 [WSA I/17, 123-124]).⁸⁸ Sexual lust is certainly not limited to the body, yet it is something inherently bound up with the desires of the body. Lust simply cannot serve the soul because in lust “almost all mental alertness and cognitive vigilance, so to speak, are obliterated” (*civ. Dei* XIV.16 [WSA I/17, 124]). Furthermore, one cannot even call up this desire when one wants it: impotence is just as much a sign of disintegration as is an excess of desire (*civ. Dei* XIV.16 [614]). Lust is a distinctive movement precisely in that it is a movement of the body, and it is so problematic because the body’s desire arises and affects the soul.⁸⁹

The bodily character of sexual lust is crucial to Augustine’s account of Edenic sexual desire. In Eden, Adam and Eve did not experience any shameful lust and so were completely comfortable

⁸⁸ Latin: Haec autem sibi non solum totum corpus nec solum extrinsecus, uerum etiam intrinsecus uindicat totumque commouet hominem animi simul affectu cum carnis appetitu coniuncto atque permixto, ut ea uoluptas sequatur, qua maior in corporis uoluptatibus nulla est (CCSL 48, 438-439).

⁸⁹ This is essentially the same account of lust/bodily desire I offered in chapter three.

being unclothed. At this point in human history, “their members did not know how to oppose their will” because they had no disorder in their human nature (*civ. Dei* XIV.17 [615]). With the fall, however, they discover a “law of sin” within them. Their nakedness shows them that their flesh is disobedient: “Thus, out of a sense of shame, modesty covered that which was moved by lust to disobey a will which had itself been condemned for the guilt of disobedience” (*civ. Dei* XIV.17 [616]). They were “dismayed by the disobedience of their flesh—by the punishment which bore witness, as it were, to their own disobedience” (*civ. Dei* XIV.17 [616]). In other words, once God’s integrating grace is withdrawn from them, they see a war between body and soul evidenced in the independent movements of their bodies. Their “members” now oppose their wills. It is initially the independent movements of the body that suggest to Adam and Eve that they have changed into something worse.

Augustine is quite sure that lust was not present in the garden: “It was, indeed, only after their sin that such lust arose. It was only after their sin that their nature felt, noticed, blushed at and hid such lust” (*civ. Dei* XIV.21 [620]). He explicitly contrasts his view on the issue of pre-lapsarian lust to the view of someone like Julian: “Even now, however, there certainly are men who, ignorant of the happy state that existed in Paradise, suppose that children could not have been begotten except in the way that they know: that is, through lust, which, as we see, brings shame even in the honourable estate of matrimony” (*civ. Dei* XIV.21 [621]). These people foolishly say that procreation would have been impossible without “carnal lust” even in the garden (*civ. Dei* XIV.21 [621]).

In chapter 22 Augustine says, in stark contrast to the view he held earlier in his life, “it would be a great absurdity to deny that male and female were created for the purpose of begetting children” (*civ. Dei* XIV.22 [622]). When the fact of sexed embodiment is combined with the claim that the human community was meant to expand beyond just Adam and Eve, it becomes obvious that sexual procreation was part of God’s original plan: “If anyone says that there would have been

no intercourse or procreation had Adam and Eve not sinned, is he not saying that it was necessary for man to sin in order to complete the number of saints” (*civ. Dei* XIV.23 [623])?

Procreative sex that builds up the community of saints would have happened “without the shame of lust” (*civ. Dei* XIV.23 [623]). Like a craftsman who uses his tools well, Adam would have used his body effortlessly and effectively in sex (*civ. Dei* XIV.23 [623]). After the fall, however, the soul does not govern itself or the body as it should: “this lust which we are here discussing is something to be blushed at all the more because, when it arises, the soul neither has command of itself so effectively as to be entirely free from it, nor does it rule the body so completely that the shameful members are moved by the will rather than by lust” (*civ. Dei* XIV.23 [624]).

Here Augustine again shows that he understands sexual lust to be different from the movements of the soul. In the disordered movements of the soul the soul conquers itself, whereas in lust the soul is conquered from outside itself:

As it is, the soul is ashamed of the body’s resistance to it; for the body should be subject to it by reason of its inferior nature. When the soul is at odds with itself in respect of the other passions, it is less ashamed, for it is then conquered only by itself, and so is itself still the victor. This victory is, indeed, disordered and vicious, because it arises from those parts which ought to be subject to reason; but it is still a victory won by the soul’s parts, and therefore, as I have said, the soul is conquered only by itself....Nonetheless, the soul is less ashamed when its vicious parts disobey it than when the body does not yield to its will and command; for the body is different from it and inferior to it, and its nature has no life without it (*civ. Dei* XIV.23 [624]).

The problem with lust is that it reveals the inability of the soul to control the body, since the body seems to move independently of the soul. Because the body is inferior to the soul, it is always shameful when the body moves independently. People rightly feel shame over sex because it cannot fail to involve the independent movements of the body.

So far Augustine has said Edenic sex would have happened purely through an act of the will, without any bodily desire. However, in chapter 23 Augustine offers a very curious comment that suggests a subtle twist to his position on Edenic sexual desire. He is absolutely sure that the will

would have been sufficient to control the body in Edenic sex, but that control need not necessarily mean there was to be no bodily sexual desire in Eden. What follows is the key passage and my translation of it:

Hunc renisum, hanc repugnantiam, hanc uoluntatis et libidinis rixam uel certe ad uoluntatis sufficientiam libidinis indigentiam procul dubio, nisi culpabilis inobedientia poenali inobedientia plecteretur, in paradiso nuptiae non haberent, sed uoluntati membra, ut cetera, ita cuncta seruirent (*civ. Dei* XIV.23; Latin: CCSL 48, 446).

Without a doubt, this resistance, this opposition, this conflict between the will and *libido*, or certainly the needs of lust against the sufficiency of the will, [*uel certe ad uoluntatis sufficientiam libidinis indigentiam*], would not have existed in marriage in paradise, if culpable disobedience had not been punished with penal disobedience. Rather, the members and the rest of the body [*ut cetera*] would have served the will in a unified way (*ita cuncta seruirent*) (my translation).

Here Augustine might be admitting very briefly the theoretical possibility of a kind of good sexual desire in the garden. He begins by making his standard claim that there would have been no conflict between will and *libido* in Eden, but then he introduces some kind of alternative possibility (“or”) that seems to suggest there could have been movements of *libido* (“the needs of lust”) that were not at odds with the will. Perhaps the needs of lust would have been present and harmonious with the will in Eden. There does not seem to be a point to the “or” clause in that sentence, other than to admit the possibility of a good *libido* in Eden.

Other English translations seem to agree that Augustine here briefly admits the possibility of a good sexual desire in Eden:

In paradise, there is no doubt, marriage would not have experienced this resistance, this opposition, this conflict between lust and will—or, at least, it would not have felt any needs of lust at odds with the sufficiency of will—if the culpable disobedience of sin had not been punished with the penal disobedience of the sexual organs (WSA, 131).

Beyond doubt, marriage in Paradise would not have known this resistance, this opposition, this conflict between lust and will; or, at least, the will would have been sufficient to control the needs of lust, had there not arisen that guilt of disobedience which, in turn, incurred disobedience as its punishment (Dyson, 624).

Without doubt, the marriage in paradise would not have known this opposition, this resistance, this tussle between lust and will, or at least the contrast between the insatiability

of lust and the self-sufficiency of the will, had there not been that guilt of disobedience which was followed by disobedience as a punishment (Bettenson, 586).⁹⁰

All three translations render “*uel certe ad uoluntatis sufficientiam libidinis indigentiam*” as suggesting an alternative to the “no *libido*” view. Thus it seems that Augustine briefly suggests at least the remote possibility of a good desire in Edenic sex. Even so, in book XIV Augustine does not reflect at all on the possibility of good *libido* in Eden beyond the one clause in the line above.

Even if he does admit very briefly the slim possibility of good *libido* in Eden, he goes on in chapter 24 to emphasize that the body in Eden would have been “moved by the will and not excited by lust” (XIV.24 [626]). In other words, “the members of the human body could have been the servants of the human will without any lust” (XIV.24 [627]). To show that this kind of bodily control would have been possible in that better life, Augustine offers his famous remarks on the amazing things the body can do even after the fall: crying on command, putting one’s body into a semi-coma as a kind of party-trick, and flatulating intentionally to a musical tune (XIV.24 [627]). These are all examples of the ability of the will to control the body without any lust.⁹¹ If humans can do these kinds of things now, in a corruptible body, there is no reason at all to doubt that God could have made Adam “in such a way that what is now set in motion in his flesh only by lust should have

⁹⁰ *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 2003). Here is Schmitt’s French translation of the passage, though Schmitt does not point out any reference to good *libido* in the passage: “Cette opposition, cette résistance, cette lutte entre la volonté et la libido, ou du moins cette défaillance de la libido à l’appel de la volonté n’auraient sûrement pas eu lieu dans le mariage au paradis.” See Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 99.

⁹¹ Cavadini suggests an alternative interpretation of these examples: “The examples are not meant to say anything about whether any feeling or emotion would be involved or not, but simply to be a first attempt at thinking or imagining past lust with examples that could not possibly arouse lust.” This reading, however, cannot be quite right, since Augustine explicitly says that these examples show what the body can do without any lust in order to support his point that bodily desire was unnecessary in Eden. Cavadini, however, does not attend to the reality that Augustine thinks lust is in large part a bodily phenomenon, and this inattention might explain his misinterpretation of the examples of what the will can control after the fall. See Cavadini, “Feeling Right,” 205.

been moved by his will alone” (XIV.24 [626]).⁹² Augustine thinks the ability of the will to control the body without any challenges or frustrations or independent bodily movements is an essential condition of the happy state of paradise. Because humans can do so many great things with their bodies now, no one has any reason to doubt that before the fall they could have done even greater things with their bodies (XIV.24 [627]). He reiterates this position in chapter 26 as he closes out the book.

Book XIV of *cin. Dei* is a difficult text to interpret because Augustine is up to a few ambitious things in that text. He wants to explain why humans suffer evils in this life. He also wants to set the Christian view of evil in conversation with influential philosophical and religious views of evil at the time. He also has to navigate differing accounts of the relation between body and soul. Through all this, his position on the issue of sexual desire is consistent. Adam was characterized by such harmony that he never would have felt tension between his body and soul in the garden. As a result, he would not have needed bodily *libido* in order to move his “members” in the act of sex. Rather, he would have commanded his body to move just as the human person commands his body to do many things even after the fall. This ability to command the body is not necessarily a judgment of sexual desire *per se*, but it is rather a claim about the goodness of the original integral relationship between body and soul. The will should never be impotent to control the body if one is fully happy, so in the garden the will must have had supreme power over the body. In the only line in which he mentions the possibility of good *libido*, he still frames that *libido* as a desire in total harmony with the will, and he does not reflect on good *libido* outside of that line.

In my view, those who read Augustine to be saying in book XIV that there would have been no sexual desire in Eden are correct. However, a bit later in Augustine’s corpus he does indeed

⁹² Latin: Neque enim Deo difficile fuit sic illum condere, ut in eius carne etiam illud non nisi eius uoluntate moueretur, quod nunc nisi libidine non mouetur (CCSL 48, 447).

begin to wonder at length about the possibility of good Edenic sexual desire. As we will see, what Augustine says later on strengthens the reading I have offered of book XIV. As his literary career moves forward, Augustine consistently says there was either no sexual desire in Eden, or there was good sexual desire in Eden. The “either” side of that equation is the position he expresses in book XIV of *cin. Dei*. The “or” side of that equation shows that his thought on the subject was still developing even at the end of his life.

Thus far we have seen Augustine develop substantially on the issue of Edenic sexual desire. In *Gn. adv. Man.* (388/9) and *Confessions* (397-401) Augustine seems to think there would have been no procreation at all in Eden, so there would obviously have been no sexual desire. In *b. coniug.* (401-404) Augustine mentions three options for explaining the command “increase and multiply,” he suggests that the matter is a very difficult one for biblical exegesis, and he suggests that whether Adam was in a mortal or immortal body is perhaps the key to interpreting the passage. In *Gn. litt.* (401-416), he initially seems to prefer the view that Adam was in an immortal body, and so procreation would have happened non-sexually. By the time of book VI of *Gn. litt.* Augustine has recognized that Paul teaches that Adam was in a mortal body from the beginning. Thus, when he reflects on procreation in Eden in book IX, Augustine has changed his view to say procreation in Eden would have happened through sex. He is clear, however, that there would have been no desire in Edenic procreation. In the much-contested book XIV of *civitate Dei*, Augustine holds the view that procreation in Eden would have happened through sex and without any bodily desire. Adam and Eve would have had such command of their bodies that they would not have needed desire in order to procreate. While Augustine briefly mentions the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden, he does not reflect on the merits of this position and he immediately downplays the position by again arguing that Adam could have commanded himself to procreate without any desire.

So around the end of the second decade of the fifth century, Augustine clearly holds the view that sex in Eden would have happened without any bodily desire. He has only very briefly mentioned the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden. Within the next decade, however, Augustine's views will shift substantially through his dispute with Julian.

POSITION 4: POSSIBLY SEXUAL DESIRE IN EDEN

Augustine's thought on Edenic sexual desire develops dramatically over the course of his anti-Pelagian works, in part because those works overlap with the changes in his other works discussed above. His development is especially apparent in the works against Julian.

In books 1-2 of *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum*, written around 412, Augustine does not even mention the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden, but instead focuses on the absence of disharmony in the garden. He is absolutely sure that there was no disharmony between the body and soul of Adam and Eve: "although they had an animal body, they felt nothing in that body stir against them in disobedience" (*pecc. mer.* II.22, 36 [104]). As things go after the fall, "[i]t is as if [the members] are in their own power and as if the reins of virtue have only sufficient control over them... This disobedience of the flesh, which is now found in this stirring, even if it is not permitted to carry out the act, did not exist then in those first human beings, when they were naked and not embarrassed" (*pecc. mer.* II.22, 36 [104]).⁹³

Augustine takes essentially the same position in *de gratia Christi et de peccato originali*, which seems to have been written in 418.⁹⁴ Here Augustine says:

Marriage would undoubtedly have existed, even if sin had not been committed. For there was no other reason why God made for the man, not another man, but a woman, as a help.

⁹³ This "law of concupiscence, then, remains in the members" until one dies (*nupt. et conc.* II.28, 45-46 [110]).

⁹⁴ For dating, see Gerald Bonner, "*Gratia et de Peccato Originali, De*," ATTA, 399-400.

And the words of God, *Increase and multiply* (Gn 1:28), are not a prediction of sins worthy of condemnation, but a blessing upon marital fertility. For by these ineffable words of his, that is, by these divine reasons living in the truth of his wisdom, by which all things were made, he gave the first human beings the power to procreate. But if nature had not lost its dignity, heaven forbid that we should imagine that marriage to come in paradise would have been such that, to begin a child in it, the genital organs would be moved by the heat of passion and not by a sign from the will, as a foot is moved to walk, a hand to work, and the tongue to speak.... Thus in the first marriage the movement of the genital organs, like that of the other members, was peaceful and without the passion of lust, not at the stirring of uncontrolled ardor, but at the choice of the will. Marriage would have remained that way, if the disgrace of sin had not intervened (*gr. et pecc. or.* II.35, 40-41 [455-456]).

Augustine is here absolutely sure that “increase and multiply” is a clear directive to make children through sex, and he is also sure that if it were not for the fall, sex would have happened purely through the will and not through any bodily desire. In *gr. et pecc. or.* he does not mention the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden.

In book I of *nupt. et conc.*, also written in late 418 to early 419, Augustine seems to hold essentially the same position he has held since *Gn. litt.* IX and holds in the contemporaneous book XIV of *civ. Dei*: “Shameful concupiscence of the flesh...did not exist in paradise before the sin” (*nupt. et conc.* I.16,18 [40]). The person’s own desire would not “arouse” him in paradise (*nupt. et conc.* I.21,23 [43]). Rather, before the first sin they had the ability to control their bodies in the way people can control other parts of their bodies even now (*nupt. et conc.* I.5,6 [31-32]). The reason they felt shame after the first sin was because they felt a “motion in their flesh” which was “aroused apart from a choice of their will, and because they were ashamed at their indecent desire, they did what was decent in covering these members” (*nupt. et conc.* I.6,7 [32-33]). In this book as well there is no question about the possibility of good sexual desire before the fall.

Book II of *nupt. et conc.*, written sometime in 420-421 (one to two years after book I) expresses essentially the same position as book I, though with one small twist at the end of the book. As an example of the continuity between book I and II, Augustine writes in book II: “If sin had not first been committed, a human being would be conceived without such concupiscence, and the sexual

organs would calmly obey the will, just as the other members do” (*nupt. et conc.* II.7,17 [64]).⁹⁵

This is his consistent position until the last pages of the book. However, at the very end of the book, Augustine mentions the possibility of a good kind of sexual desire in Eden.

When Augustine does mention the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden, he does so in the context of correcting Julian’s views on the natural character of desire. Julian claims that all things that are natural are good, sexual desire is natural, and therefore sexual desire is good.⁹⁶ Augustine, however, argues that Julian’s views lead to the absurd conclusion that one should always follow one’s desire. Augustine wonders: if sexual desire is fundamentally good, then why would one ever reject or dampen one’s desire? The problem with Julian’s view of desire, from Augustine’s perspective, is that reason and will seem to have nothing to contribute to desire, but rather should follow desire. As an illustration of the absurdity of Julian’s view of desire, Augustine claims that Julian cannot say why concupiscence in Eden would not have desired “that intercourse which is against nature:” nothing seems to prevent that kind of desire, since on Julian’s terms it is the natural status of concupiscence itself, not will or reason, that determines the moral content of desire (*nupt. et conc.* II.35,59 [92]).

Because Augustine knows Julian will find the conclusion about the desire for unnatural intercourse reprehensible, Augustine offers an olive branch. It is here that Augustine suggests the possibility of a good Edenic sexual desire that would have been in harmony with reason and will:

If [Julian] is embarrassed at this [conclusion about desiring unnatural intercourse], he might say that there could be such great peace in this felicity [of Eden] and such great order in these matters that the concupiscence of the flesh would never anticipate the will of those

⁹⁵ Augustine continues: “But, if sin had not first occurred, this seed would have come forth from the man in the tranquil obedience of his members to a sign from his will” (II.8,20 [65]). He write again: “Without that lust the couple could have performed the act of begetting children, just as we perform many actions without such passion by the obedience of our other members which move at a sign from the will and are not aroused by the heat of lust” (II.13, 26 [69]). See also II.14,29; 15,30; 21,36; 22,37; 26,42; 31,53; 32,54; 33,55;

⁹⁶ Julian of course recognizes that sexual desire can become excessive or problematic even while being natural.

human beings. Rather, it would arise when they willed it, and they would will it when it was necessary to conceive children. Then no seed would be ejaculated without effect, and no intercourse would fail to be followed by conception and birth. In all this the flesh would be perfectly obedient, and sexual desire would be perfectly obedient (*nupt. et conc.* II.35,59 [92])

The possibility of Edenic sexual desire is offered by Augustine as a possible way for Julian to maintain Julian's claim that sexual desire is original to human nature. Augustine does not endorse this position, but he thinks it is the best possible resolution to Julian's adherence to the goodness of concupiscence. If Julian "does not want to grant that *libido* is a defect [*vitium esse libidinem*]," which would seem to be Augustine's position at this point, then "let him at least admit that concupiscence of the flesh was itself damaged by the disobedience of those human beings so that what was once aroused in orderly obedience is now aroused in disordered disobedience" (II.35,59 [92]; PL, 318).

As I show below, the distinction between sexual desire being a defect in itself and sexual desire being damaged or defective will become the focal point of Augustine's later uncertainty about Edenic sexual desire. At this point, however, while Augustine admits the theoretical possibility of a good, obedient concupiscence in Eden, he mentions it only in passing at the very end of book II of *nupt. et conc.*, and he uses the theoretical possibility to draw a contrast with Julian's position on the goodness of concupiscence after the fall. The essential point, from Augustine's perspective, is that whether there would have been good concupiscence or no concupiscence in Eden, either option highlights just how distorted concupiscence has become after the fall. Augustine is not here claiming that there indeed would have been good Edenic sexual desire, even if he is slightly open to the theoretical possibility.⁹⁷

In *contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*, which was written roughly parallel to book II of *nupt. et conc.*, Augustine expands his reflection on the either-or position on Edenic sexual desire (either there

⁹⁷ Schmitt sees Augustine here more open to the possibility of Edenic *libido* than I do. See Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 101.

would have been good sexual desire never in conflict with the will, or there would have been no sexual desire).⁹⁸ In book I of *c. ep. pel.* Augustine introduces four options that a theologian might choose from to describe Edenic sexual desire:

- 1) Unrestrained sexual desire
- 2) Desire that would need to be restrained when sex was not rationally wanted
- 3) Desire that was called up “at a sign from the will, when chaste prudence foresaw that intercourse was necessary”
- 4) No desire, with sex being directed by the will alone. (*c. ep. pel.* I.17,34 [133])

Augustine rejects the first two out of hand as obviously impossible in the peaceful and integrated human nature of the garden. It is impossible that an unfallen couple would have had sexual desire that had an unrestrained life of its own, and it is impossible that they would have had to fight against a sexual desire that arose at the wrong times or for the wrong reasons.

Regarding the third and fourth options, Augustine tells his imagined Pelagian interlocutor “we need not tire ourselves out by any argument against you” (*c. ep. pel.* I.17,34 [133]). Augustine thinks the Pelagians would prefer the third option, because “the thrust of [their] arguments has made [them] hostile to” the fourth option (*c. ep. pel.* I.17,34 [133]). Augustine clearly prefers option four, because he is insistent that the body and soul had such a harmonious relationship that the mind could control the body perfectly in Eden. In any case, he is not willing to delve further into the matter, and he seems to accept that option three is at least a theologically coherent and theoretically defensible position. His purpose in mentioning Edenic sexual desire is not to establish a definitive answer to that issue; his purpose is rather to get his opponent to admit that desire after the fall is disordered and corrupt, which is what the Pelagians deny. Augustine considers it obvious that no one experiences sex after the fall in accord with either option three or four, so he is willing to admit that either three or four is a possible description of what life would have been like if no one had

⁹⁸ Gerald Bonner suggests 420 as the date. See Bonner, “*Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum, Contra*,” *ATTA*, 288.

fallen. Both options three and four lead to the conclusion that desire after the fall is problematic, and for Augustine that conclusion is the whole point of mentioning Edenic sexual desire (*c. ep. pel.* I.17,34 [133-134]).

Because *c. ep. pel.* is a broadside against Pelagian teaching in general, Augustine does not spend much time discussing sexual desire. He does not develop his views on Edenic sexual desire beyond backing the Pelagians into a corner. However, his immediately subsequent work *contra Iulianum* is in large part about the issue of sexual desire in marriage.⁹⁹ Again, in this work Augustine mentions the either-or option for Edenic sex: “Why do you not believe that human beings situated in paradise before the sin could have received from God the gift of procreating children with a tranquil arousal and a joining or union of those members without any sexual desire? Or would they not at least have the sort of sexual desire whose arousal would not anticipate reason or go beyond its limits” (*c. Iul.* IV.5,35 [402])? His claims in *c. Iul.* show that he has subtly moved away from absolute certainty that there would have been no desire in Edenic sex. Augustine is always careful in this text to say it is bad sexual desire, not sexual desire *per se*, that would certainly not have existed in Eden (*c. Iul.* IV.16,79 [428]).¹⁰⁰ What was absent in Eden was “the flesh with desires opposed to the spirit” (*c. Iul.* IV.13,62 [415]). Whether the desires of the flesh were in line with the spirit is another issue.

Even though Augustine is no longer adamant about denying the possibility of sexual desire in Eden, when he mentions the either-or option in this text, he frequently adds a sarcastic comment to distance himself from the good desire option. He allows Julian to endorse the possibility of good desire in Edenic sex because, Augustine says, “I do not want to make you too sad over it” (*c. Iul.*

⁹⁹ James B. Weidenaar points out that Augustine “did at least once admit a possibility of chaste lustful sex” and refers to *c. ep. pel.* However, Weidenaar does not mention any of Augustine’s later references. See James B. Weidenaar, “Augustine’s Theory of Concupiscence,” 63-64.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine is sure that women also experience concupiscence: Eve “did not cover a visible arousal, but in those same members she experienced in a more hidden way something like what the man experienced” (*c. Iul.* IV.13,62 [415]).

IV.11,57 [412]). He also says, sarcastically, that he allows the possibility of good desire in Edenic sex “for fear that we should seem to offend too much those who somehow or other defend the pleasure of the body” (*c. Iul.* IV.14,69 [420]). Augustine says to Julian that Augustine does not “challenge the love which we see you owe to” sexual desire; he only wants Julian to “at least subject it to the command of the will in that place of happiness” (*c. Iul.* V.7,29 [453]). He does, however, refrain from sarcasm in two other mentions of the either-or option (*c. Iul.* V.5,22 [447]; V.16,62 [471]). Much like *c. ep. pel.*, the good desire option is on the theological table in *c. Iul.*, but Augustine seems to want to distance himself from it. When he mentions it as an option, he concurrently attempts to undermine it with Augustinian comedy.

There is, however, reason to suspect that the sarcasm of *c. Iul.*’s discussion of Edenic sexual desire may be a product of the rhetorical sparring characteristic of Augustine’s debate with Julian, rather than an indication that Augustine at this point thinks the good desire option is a logically coherent but still fundamentally problematic option. Evidence that Augustine was truly open to the legitimacy of the good desire option at this point in his life is found in his *Letter 6**, which is roughly contemporaneous to *c. ep. pel.* and *c. Iul.*¹⁰¹ This letter shows Augustine spending much effort to defend the validity of the good desire option, and he does so without sarcasm.

*Letter 6** is written to Atticus, bishop of Constantinople. Peter Brown suggests that Augustine was a bit brash in writing to Atticus, because, as Augustine himself points out in the opening lines of the letter, Augustine wrote even though one of Atticus’ priests had come to Hippo without a letter for Augustine.¹⁰² Since Augustine lets his provincial manners show by writing unprompted to a major bishop, the topic of the letter must have been of some importance.

¹⁰¹ The WSA translation suggests a date between 416-421 ([250]).

¹⁰² Peter Brown, “Sexuality and Society in the Fifth Century A.D,” 50-51.

*Letter 6** is devoted almost entirely to the question of Edenic sexual desire and the implications of one's views on Edenic sexual desire for fallen sex and fallen human nature. In this letter Augustine mentions again the four options for theological views on Edenic sexual desire that he had outlined in *c. ep. pel.* Augustine points out the absurdity of thinking either that there would have been unrestrained sexual desire in Eden or that there would have been sexual desire that needed restraint in Eden. After dismissing those two options, Augustine writes:

There remain, then, two alternatives: Either in that place there did not exist this concupiscence of the flesh, which we perceive is aroused by a turbulent and disordered desire against our will, even when there is no need, though marital concupiscence existed there, which preserves the calm love of a husband and wife and which, just as the choice of the mind orders the hands and feet to their appropriate actions, likewise orders the sexual organs to their work of generation. In that way, offspring would be conceived in paradise in a marvelous way without the ardor of the flesh's lust, just as offspring would also be born in a marvelous way without the pains of childbirth. Or, if this concupiscence of the flesh existed there, it certainly was not the burdensome and disagreeable concupiscence that those people who battle against it in the chastity of marriage, widowhood, or virginity now experience (*ep. 6**, 7 [252-253]).

There was either only a rational want for children that moved the body without any bodily desire (marital concupiscence), or there was both marital concupiscence and a corresponding good desire of the body (concupiscence of the flesh).¹⁰³

In comparison to *c. ep. pel.* and *c. Iul.*, it is notable that in *Letter 6** Augustine does not dismiss or mock the good bodily desire option. Instead, in the concluding paragraph of the letter, Augustine actually offers complementary words about the good desire option:

If this concupiscence of the flesh, then, existed in paradise in order that children might be generated to realize the blessings of marriage by the multiplication of human beings, it was

¹⁰³ Donald Burt seems to conflate the rational want for children with the bodily desire that is sexual desire. Burt quotes *Letter 6** and suggests that because Augustine suggests "the desire for procreation and the desire for union of the spouses" can be a good kind of concupiscence, Augustine therefore thinks "that sexual desire is no more shameful than the desire for food and drink. Both are physical tendencies placed in human beings for reasons determined by God." But Augustine's entire point in mentioning the distinction between marital concupiscence and concupiscence of the flesh is to say that the desire of the body is distinct from the desire for children. As I showed in the previous chapter, Augustine clearly thinks bodily desire cannot in principle be a desire for children; it is only a desire for pleasure. See Donald X. Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 114.

certainly not the sort of concupiscence that exists now...But it would have been the sort of concupiscence—if there were any there at all—by which the flesh would not have desires opposed to the spirit. Rather, it would, in a marvelous peace, not exceed the least sign of the will so that it would never be present except when it was needed, would never impose itself upon the thoughts of the mind with a disordered or illicit pleasure, would have nothing deserving reproach that would need to be restrained by the reins of temperance or eliminated by the labor of virtue, but would follow in ready and harmonious obedience the will of the one using it when it was needed (*ep. 6**, 8 [254]).

This is the first time in his works that Augustine describes Edenic sexual desire in a fully positive way. He does not seem to endorse the good desire view, since he is careful to add in the line questioning whether there would have been any desire at all in Eden. Even so, the fact that this unprompted letter, intended to convince a major bishop about the problems of Pelagian theology, is devoted in large part to showing that the good desire option is a legitimate theological position demonstrates just how seriously Augustine takes that option.

By the time of *c. Iul. imp.*, written between 427-430, Augustine has fully shed his sarcastic attitude regarding the good desire option. He has also opened fully to the possibility that the good desire option might be a very good theological explanation of Edenic sexual desire. He does not, however—contrary to the claims of some of his interpreters—endorse the good desire option as his own certain view.¹⁰⁴ Augustine's understanding of the Edenic relationship between body and soul commits him to always affirming the possibility that the will would have been sufficient to move the members in sex without any bodily desire. Even so, in this text he is always open to the good desire option.

Here is a representative sample of Augustine's consistent position on Edenic sexual desire in *c. Iul. imp.*: if no one had sinned, "the body would have been subject to the soul so that, for the sake of begetting children, even the genital organs would have been aroused at a sign from the will, just as

¹⁰⁴ Schmitt rightly points out that Augustine never endorses the good desire option as his own certain view. See Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 104.

the other members by which we do something. Or concupiscence of the flesh would have been such that it would not have arisen unless the soul, that is, the image of God, willed it, and it would not have drowned the mind's thought by the intensity of its pleasure" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.39 [419]).

Augustine contrasts the Edenic situation with fallen human nature: "after [Adam] had sinned, sinful flesh now begot sinful flesh, because it begot sinful flesh through that concupiscence of the flesh, which before the sin either did not exist in him or did not resist the spirit" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.79 [447]).

In *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* Augustine explicitly mentions his either-or position on Edenic sexual desire at least twenty times, always without sarcasm.¹⁰⁵

Augustine's main goal in discussing sexual desire in Eden in this text is, as always, to show that post-lapsarian sexual desire is disordered and corrupt. Augustine is sure that Julian will never submit to the view that the will without corresponding sexual desire was sufficient for sex in Eden. So, in order to show Julian that sexual desire after the fall is disordered and corrupt, Augustine attempts to convince Julian that Julian should at least say sexual desire in Eden "surely would have followed the will when it would be needed" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.70 [100]). If sexual desire would have been present in Eden, "it was subject to the will so that it neither pulled the upright and peaceful mind toward sin nor challenged it to battle and did not compel the spirit that was obeying God and enjoying God either to sin or to fight" (*c. Iul. imp.* I.70 [100]).

Augustine chastises Julian to not "confuse those two lives," Eden and the fallen world, "because of your heretical wrongheadedness. We live in one way in the corruptible body which weighs down the soul; we would live in another way in paradise if the uprightness of Adam in which he was created had lasted" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.16 [533]). That distinctive way of living would have affected

¹⁰⁵ I list here all the places I have found in which Augustine mentions the either-or option in *c. Iul. imp.*: I.68 [97]; I.70 [100]; II.39 [179]; II.42 [181]; II.45 [182]; II.122 [216]; II.218 [263]; III.177 [365]; III.187 [372-73]; IV.19 [404]; IV.38-39 [419]; IV.43 [423]; IV.79 [447]; V.13 [526]; V.14 [528]; V.16 [533]; V.17 [535]; V.20 [538]; VI.22 [659].

marriage: “Spouses would, therefore, also have intercourse in paradise for the sake of having children, but either with the genital organs obeying the mind without any sexual desire or with the urges of desire, if there was any desire, never resisting the will. If desire were such, it would not be a cause for shame” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.16 [533]). To think that bodily desire could have preceded the will would be to think that it was bodily desire, not the will, that led the couple to sin (*c. Iul. imp.* I.71 [101]). The will, then, must have been in control, whether or not there would have also been sexual desire. Thus sexual desire after the fall is very unlike Edenic sexual desire.

In this text Augustine is always careful to say that it is vitiated sexual desire that would not have existed in Eden. This “shameful sexual desire” could not have been present in Paradise: “For if shameful sexual desire had not either arisen from sin or been damaged by sin, it would not be shameful. Either it would not exist at all, and without it the sexual organs would obey the couple begetting a child, just as the hands obey the workers, or it would follow upon the will so that it could never tempt anyone who is unwilling” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.42 [181]). Either sexual desire did not exist in Eden, or it did exist but became damaged in the fall. In other words, sexual desire “is either a defect” and thus did not originally exist, or it did exist but “it has been corrupted” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.218 [263]; VI.22 [659]).¹⁰⁶ He consistently holds this either-or view throughout the entirety of *c. Iul. imp.*, and never once dismisses the good desire option with sarcasm.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine adds a new wrinkle to his argument about sexual desire. He suggests to Julian that sexual desire cannot have been necessary to unite a married couple, since Christ is united to the Church as “two in one flesh” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.59 [189]). Christ obviously does not need sexual desire to be in union with the Church, so “the man and his wife could also, if no one had sinned, have been united, not by shameful desire...but by a love that is rightly to be praised, and they could have been two in one flesh only for the sake of having children” (II.59 [189]). While this is not a very convincing argument, Augustine’s point is to undermine Julian’s claim that sexual desire is necessary to unite a couple. Augustine is not willing to commit to Julian’s absolute claim about the unifying necessity of Edenic sexual desire in part because Augustine still wants to hold on to the claim that the will would have been sufficient to move the members in sex in Eden.

The character of Edenic sexual desire, if it had existed, would have been marked by three distinctive qualities.¹⁰⁷ This concupiscence would not “be shameful [1]) if the flesh wanted only what the mind commanded and [2]) wanted it only when the mind commanded and [3]) as much as it commanded” (V.14 [528]). In other words, Edenic concupiscence would have always been directed toward the proper object, it would never have preceded the will but would rather have followed the will, and it would never have exceeded the will even if it had not preceded it (II.122 [216]; III.187 [373]).¹⁰⁸ As Augustine says, if Edenic concupiscence had these characteristics, “none of us would maintain that married couples in paradise could not have had it” (III.187 [373]; translation amended).¹⁰⁹

What I have shown in the review of Augustine’s development on the issue of Edenic sexual desire is the following. First, Augustine’s thought clearly and substantially develops. Initially he thinks there would have been no sexual desire in Eden because there would have been no sex in Eden, and there would have been no sex because there would have been no procreation at all (sexual

¹⁰⁷ Augustine at one point in *c. Iul. imp.* distinguishes concupiscence of the flesh from “marital concupiscence” (a term mentioned first by Julian in this text). Marital concupiscence “could have existed in paradise, even if no one had sinned, in the desire for fecundity, not in the itch for pleasure” (IV.19 [404]). Marital concupiscence in this text seems to be another way of expressing the will’s desire for children, which is the same meaning of the term in *Letter 6**. Yet, however, here Augustine seems to conflate marital concupiscence and concupiscence of the flesh: “Or at least it would always be subject to the spirit so that it would not be aroused unless the spirit willed it” (IV.19 [404]). I will try to make some sense of this text and the other texts on marital concupiscence in the conclusion.

¹⁰⁸ I cannot agree with Jon Todd Beane’s reading of Augustine on the character of Edenic concupiscence. According to Beane, Augustine “makes very clear that he is admitting only the *possibility* that unholy carnal desires might have existed in our pre-lapsarian parents” and this Edenic concupiscence “was never victorious in its effort to drag prelapsarian man down into sin.” While Beane does recognize that Augustine thinks these “carnal desires” would have been “obedient to the will,” the suggestion that these desires would have been “unholy” or would have been the kind of desires that, if unchecked, would have dragged the first parents into sin is a total misreading of Augustine’s claims. Augustine does not think Edenic bodily desires would have led to the need for self-control or even minor struggle: “in paradise, if no one had sinned, it would not be an act of piety to fight against those defects, because the continuance of happiness would have meant not having defects” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.70 [99]). See Jon Todd Beane, “The Development of the Notion of Concupiscence in Saint Augustine,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993), 149.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine here implies that even Ambrose would not object to the proposal of good Edenic *concupiscentia carnis*: “Nor would Ambrose say that we contracted it from the transgression of the first human being, because he would see that it does not have desires opposed to the spirit” (*c. Iul. imp.* III.187 [373]).

or non-sexual). Then, once he is convinced there would have been procreation in Eden, he suggests that because Adam and Eve were likely (but not certainly) in immortal bodies, they would likely not have procreated through sex. They might, however, have procreated in another way. Next, once he is convinced that Adam and Eve were in mortal bodies, he is sure that sex would have happened purely through the will's command, without any bodily desire at all. He seems absolutely certain of this position and holds it through book XIV of *civ. Dei*.

In *civ. Dei* XIV almost all of Augustine's comments on Edenic sex seek to establish that Edenic sex would have happened through the command of the will without any bodily desire, and this reading is confirmed by his later works where he says exactly the same thing when mentioning the no-desire side of the either-or option on Edenic sexual desire. However, chapter 23 reveals that he is at least aware of the theological position that there could have been good sexual desire in Eden. After book XIV, his works show that he slowly but truly opens to the possibility of good Edenic sexual desire. By the early 420s he seems to think the either-or position on Edenic sexual desire is at least a theologically coherent position. Although he tries hard to distance himself from the good desire position, his *Letter 6** actually offers complimentary words about the good desire position. Then, by the time of the *c. Iul. imp.*, Augustine seems to fully respect the either-or option, and when he mentions sex in Eden he always mentions the either-or option without seeking to distance himself from it. Tellingly, he never argues against the good desire position in *c. Iul. imp.*, which seems to suggest some uncertainty on his part.

By the end of Augustine's life, his lack of sarcasm about the possibility of good Edenic sexual desire and his consistent references to that position when discussing sex in Eden shows that, without a doubt, he understood that position to be legitimate and defensible. Even so, Augustine never, at any point in his career, says there certainly would have been good sexual desire in Eden. He always holds on to the possibility that the will would have been sufficient to control the body

without any desire in Eden, even while also expressing late in his life that there might have been good corresponding bodily sexual desire in Eden. In short, his final position on the issue is fundamentally ambivalent.

EXPLANATION OF AUGUSTINE'S AMBIVALENT FINAL POSITION

It is now clear what Augustine says about Edenic sexual desire. However, I have not explained why Augustine adopts his final, ambivalent position on Edenic sexual desire. That explanation is my purpose in this last part of the chapter. A fundamental challenge in this explanation is that Augustine says either of two mutually exclusive positions are possibly the right one on Edenic sexual desire. What I attempt below is to think through Augustine's views and resolve his uncertainty on his own terms.

In fairness to Augustine, it should be noted that a resolution to his ambivalence over Edenic sexual desire is unnecessary from Augustine's perspective. His consistent point in mentioning prelapsarian sexual desire is to show that, whether or not sexual desire was present in Eden, sexual desire after the fall is fundamentally problematic and a sign of fallen human nature, as he says to Julian:

[I]f the happiness of human beings in paradise had lasted, this darling of yours would not have been there at all, or she would not have produced against the least sign from the will any of her motions which it would be necessary to resist so that the due goodness would match the happiness. But because you have gone so far in its praises that you maintain that such sexual desire as we now experience it to be would have existed in paradise, enticing the hearts of the chaste who struggle against it, who can fail to see that you oppose me not with wisdom, not with eloquence, but with impudence, since you are prevented by a perverse sense of shame from admitting that you have been defeated? (*c. Iul. imp.* III.177 [365])

Augustine is able to let the ambiguity linger while still supporting his more important point about fallen human nature. Nonetheless, the reader of Augustine wants to know why Augustine rests in

the ambiguity rather than fully endorsing one view or the other and why Augustine backs off the position he held earlier in his life, that there was certainly no bodily concupiscence at all in Eden.

It is, after all, quite remarkable that Augustine holds an ambivalent position on Edenic sexual desire after he had come to certainty on the question earlier in his life. In his works against Julian he is rarely ambivalent about anything, and anyone familiar with Augustine's earlier works could have hardly expected Augustine to later say anything even remotely good about sexual desire, let alone that bodily sexual desire might have been an original part of God's design of human nature. There must, then, be important reasons why he consistently admits the possibility of good sexual desire in Eden.

Some scholars have argued that Augustine merely conceded the point about good Edenic sexual desire because of pressure from Julian, as though the concession was a kind of debating tactic. Elizabeth Clark, for instance, writes: "in the face of Julian's assault, Augustine grudgingly and belatedly allowed that there *might* have been sexual desire in a sinless Eden."¹¹⁰ Schmitt also makes similar claims, suggesting that Augustine adopts the good desire option as a "benevolent concession" to Julian in part because Augustine is "more or less constrained in the end to accept" the good desire position as theologically legitimate.¹¹¹ This kind of argument, however, is not a convincing explanation of why Augustine consistently held his final, ambivalent position on Edenic sexual desire. Augustine is not in the practice of conceding even the smallest point to Julian, unless Augustine himself finds the position acceptable. Certainly the dispute with Julian provided the

¹¹⁰ Clark, "Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels," 296.

¹¹¹ My translation. See Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, where Schmitt writes: "[Augustin] accepte, à titre de concession bienveillante à son adversaire..." (102) and "saint Augustin, sans abandonner totalement l'idée d'une libido inexistante au paradis s'est vu plus ou moins contraint d'accepter en définitive que l'inclination sexuelle ait pu exister dans l'état d'innocence de nos premiers parents" (104-105). Gerald Bonner makes a related but slightly different point: while "the demands of controversy constrained A. to allow that there could have existed before the fall a c. <nuptiarum>, devoted to the begetting of children [(ref. *ep.* 6*)], he insisted that this must be distinguished from c. <carnis>." See Bonner, "Concupiscentia," *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 1121.

occasion for Augustine to develop his views on the topic, but Augustine would not “grudgingly” admit something dozens of times throughout his later works if he did not see the merits in the position. There must, then, be important reasons why he mentions the possibility of good Edenic sexual desire.

For the final twenty years of his life, Augustine is quite sure that the will would have been sufficient for Edenic sex. Why, then, does he also admit, for nearly a decade, that there could have been a corresponding good *libido* in Eden? There must be something about his anthropology that leads him to admit the theological legitimacy of good Edenic sexual desire and that explains why he did not maintain his earlier absolute certainty that there would have been no *libido* in Eden.¹¹² There must also be a good reason why he did not hold with absolute certainty that there would have been good *libido* in Eden.

The question about good Edenic *libido* is about whether God created *libido* as a part of human nature or whether *libido* is a result of the fall. In Augustine’s words, the issue is expressed in the claim that concupiscence of the flesh “is either a defect, or it has been corrupted” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.218 [263]). Augustine states his position quite clearly:

The concupiscence of the flesh which causes the ejaculation of the carnal seeds either did not exist at all in Adam before the sin or was damaged in him by the sin. For either without it the sexual organs were able to be appropriately moved and the seed poured into the womb of his wife, if concupiscence did not then exist, or concupiscence was itself also able to obey the least sign from the will, if it did exist. But if it were like that now, the flesh would never have desires opposed to the spirit. Either, then, it is a defect, if it did not exist before the sin, or it undoubtedly was damaged by the sin (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.22 [659]).

In other words, concupiscence of the flesh was either “produced or damaged by sin” (*c. Iul. imp.*

IV.41 [420]). Concupiscence of the flesh is either a defect, or it is defective. Augustine cannot hold

¹¹² As I discussed in chapter three, Augustine generally uses *concupiscentia carnis* and *libido* interchangeably when discussing sexual desire. I use the term *libido* here because it follows Augustine’s usage in many of the texts I discuss below, and because it lacks the biblically loaded and disputed meanings of *concupiscentia carnis*.

both positions, for the claim that something is a defect is fundamentally incompatible with the claim that the same thing is defective. His inability to determine whether concupiscence after the fall is a defect or is defective shows just how uncertain he is about the nature of concupiscence.

The concepts of defect and defective are rooted in Augustine's broader account of the corruptibility of creation.¹¹³ All created things can have defects insofar as they fall away from their ideal nature:

The nature of a substance is capable of good and of evil. It is capable of good by participation in the good by which it was made, but it admits of evil, not by participation in evil, but by a privation of good. That is, it is not mingled with a nature which is something evil, because no nature is, insofar as it is a nature, something evil; rather, it falls away from the nature which is the highest and immutable good, because it was not made out of it, but out of nothing (*c. Iul. I.37* [295]).¹¹⁴

A defect, then, is a privation of good, and the concept of defect is only intelligible in reference to the good, ideal state of the thing with the defect.

Augustine defines the distinction between defect and defective in his response to Julian regarding the character of human nature in general: "I did not say that [human nature] is not evil, but that it is not an evil; that is, to speak more plainly, I said that it was defective, but not a defect" (*c. Iul. imp. III.190* [375]). This distinction is essential because, "[i]f human nature were a defect, it ought not to be saved; if there were no defect in it, it would not need to be saved" (*c. Iul. imp. III.188* [374]). There is quite a difference between these two options: something that is itself a defect must be eradicated since it's a sign of the lack of health of the good thing of which it is a defect, while something that is defective or damaged is good but must be healed of its defects (*c. Iul. imp. III.189* [374]). The two options for Edenic sexual desire are thus mutually exclusive, and Augustine seems

¹¹³ See chapter two of this dissertation.

¹¹⁴ Latin: Quoniam natura est ipsa substantia et bonitatis et malitiae capax: bonitatis capax est, participatione boni a quo facta est: malitiam vero capit non participatione mali, sed privatione boni, id est, non cum miscetur naturae quae aliquod malum est, quia nulla natura in quantum natura est, malum est; sed cum deficit a natura quae summum atque incommutabile est bonum; propterea quia non de illa, sed de nihilo facta est (PL 44, 667).

unsure about which option is the right one. He ultimately cannot hold both positions. The explanation for why Augustine holds his ambivalent final position on Edenic sexual desire lies somewhere in his claim that sexual desire is either a defect or is defective.

While defect and defective mean very different things, defect and defective are at the same time complementary concepts. Consider an example used earlier in the dissertation, a boat with a ten-inch hole in it. The boat is defective, and the hole is the defect. Holes, by their nature, are not necessarily defects, but certain kinds of holes in boats are by definition defects since they are privations of something good (ten-inches of hull). The hole needs to be repaired if the defective boat is to be “healed” of its defect. The question at hand here is essentially whether concupiscence of the flesh is like the boat or like the hole: is concupiscence of the flesh something good that has been made defective, or is concupiscence of the flesh purely a defect that makes something else defective? Or, one might say, is concupiscence of the flesh like a hole in a boat or like a broken motor in a boat? Either the hole needs to disappear, or the motor needs to be fixed. Augustine is not sure whether concupiscence of the flesh is a defect or is defective. He does not give a definite answer to the question, and he expresses his uncertainty both in the quotes where he explicitly says concupiscence of the flesh is either a defect or is defective and where he expresses his ambivalent position on Edenic sexual desire. It is not clear, then, whether there can be a resolution to the issue, since Augustine himself suggests either option is possibly the right explanation.

Augustine’s uncertainty about the original nature of concupiscence has everything to do with the bodily character of concupiscence of the flesh. The problem with concupiscence of the flesh after the fall lies in the fact that the body’s concupiscence of the flesh arises independently of reason and will. As I have shown previously in the dissertation, it is in large part the independent character of concupiscence of the flesh that makes it so problematic.

If concupiscence of the flesh is indeed rooted in the body, then it begins to make sense why Augustine admits the possibility of concupiscence of the flesh being present in Eden. If the body in Eden was better only because it was not corrupt—not because it was a fundamentally different body—then it might make sense to think this one element of the body—concupiscence of the flesh—was present but not defective in the beginning. It is the same body, after all, both before and after the fall.

Yet, on the other hand, it also makes sense to think that concupiscence of the flesh itself is a defect, since concupiscence of the flesh is never good after the fall, whereas defective elements of the body are otherwise good despite their defective qualities. The corruption of the body due to the withdrawal of the integrating grace of the garden and the dissonance between body and soul might have somehow produced bodily concupiscence of the flesh as a consequence of that corruption. Hence concupiscence of the flesh might in fact be a defect. It might be true that the body was never supposed to desire at all, even in harmony with the will. Either option seems defensible from Augustine's perspective. The next step, then, in figuring out why Augustine is not sure whether concupiscence of the flesh is a defect or is defective, is to examine how Augustine understands the changes undergone by the body as a result of the fall.

Augustine is absolutely certain that the structure of the body has not fundamentally changed because of the fall, even if the body is now corruptible. From Julian's perspective, Augustine's position that concupiscence of the flesh is a universal evil rooted in the body leads to the conclusion that either God is the author of evil or the devil has infiltrated and changed God's creation (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.120 [481]). To point out this problem, Julian tries his hand at a comedic *reductio ad absurdum*. Since Augustine thinks procreation would have been different in the garden, done in the way farmers calmly sow their seed, Augustine must think procreation would not have happened through sex in Eden. Julian attributes the following view to Augustine: "in all [Eve's] limbs and through tiny

openings of her body, which doctors call ‘pores,’ shoots of children might burst forth, and thus fruitful in all her parts she might exude offspring like lice” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [529]). Adam “would undoubtedly not use his members, but garden tools, deprived of genital organs he would thrust in plowshares and hoes” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [529]). More generally, because Augustine thinks creation would have been better in the beginning, Julian wonders, “Shall we, then, declare that, because God could have made mortals with two heads, those who have one head and who stand on their feet are, therefore, badly made” (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [529])?

Augustine, in response to accusations like these, reminds Julian that both Julian and Augustine assume that God is the creator of bodies and all the characteristic elements of bodies (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.68 [441]). Augustine “praise[s] the formation of bodies” as do Augustine’s theological heroes (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.70-71 [442]). Augustine agrees that “God formed bodies and instituted marriage and that without intercourse there would not be child-bearing” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.118 [480]; *c. Iul.* III.9,18 [349]). In addition, Augustine points out that he never says Adam lacked “the genital organs” as Julian accuses him of saying, so there is no “question about the function and shape of the members” in Eden (*c. Iul. imp.* V.15 [531]). Augustine does not “blame the members” of the body but rather blames the “defects” that result from sin (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.120 [483]). The “law of sin” is not equivalent with “the structure of the body;” the “law of sin” is rather equivalent with “the morbid inclination of the flesh” (*nupt. et conc.* I.34 [49]). Julian thinks that because concupiscence of the flesh is rooted in the body and is evil on Augustine’s account, Augustine has to attribute this evil either to God or the devil. Augustine’s response is that the body’s structure has not changed, but there is somehow a “defect of discord” between body and soul (*c. Iul.* II.3,6 [309]).

While the body has not fundamentally changed its structure, the body has been universally affected by the fall. One thing that makes concupiscence of the flesh distinctive from other consequences of the fall is that “no one is now born without it” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.72 [103]). Other

consequences of the corruption of human nature are less universal. While everyone has “a certain slowness of mind,” only some have “a body that is deformed;” only some have “poor memories;” many, but not all, are “slow to understand and dull...prone to anger...lustful...completely stupid and feeble-minded” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.9 [617]). These are all “defects” that result from the fall, but they are not universal in the way that concupiscence of the flesh is universal.¹¹⁵

Concupiscence of the flesh after the fall “urges and—so to speak—orders us to sin, and if one obeys it with the mind, one sins without excuse. It is called sin because it was produced by sin and it longs to commit sin” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.71 [102]). This “law of sin” is present in every human being and is a reference to bodily desire: Augustine reminds Julian that the unimpeachable Gregory Nazianzus “clearly and plainly attributed the law of sin which is in our members and that resists the law of the mind to this mortal and earthly body of ours” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [98]). The fight between mind and body “would not, of course, have existed in that place of blessed peace...if no one had sinned” precisely because “in paradise there would not have been the body of this death by the corruptibility of which the soul is weighed down” (*c. Iul. imp.* I.69 [98-99]). Either the desire of the body would not have existed, or it would have been in harmony with the mind/will (*c. Iul. imp.* I.70 [100]).

According to Augustine, the body’s structure has not changed because of the fall, and yet after the fall every single body has desires that it should not have. Augustine clearly thinks these vitiated bodily desires were not present before the fall, so he has to explain how the structure of the body can remain the same while every single body functions differently than it would have in the garden. He can either say that the body was unable to desire in Eden, and so concupiscence of the flesh is a

¹¹⁵ Augustine says to Julian, “At least let the shape of bodies teach you a lesson; though their maker is supremely good and spoiled by no defect, many bodies are born with defects, and surely if no one had sinned, none would have been born that way in paradise” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.123 [217]).

defect. Or he can say that the body was able to desire in Eden, but it now desires in a problematic way, and so concupiscence of the flesh has become defective.

One of the fundamental challenges Augustine has to deal with in explaining whether concupiscence of the flesh is a defect or is defective arises from his claim that human beings have animal bodies. Julian raises the issue that human beings and animals share the same “origin” and “design” of bodies, and for Julian the conclusion entailed by that reality is that sexual desire is not corrupt in either animals or humans (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.38-40 [418-419]). Augustine agrees with Julian that humans do have animal bodies. And he agrees that both human and animal sexual desire is bodily. Augustine, however, is adamant that Julian’s conclusion is based on a faulty unstated premise. While both humans and animals have animal bodies, the relationship between animal souls and animal bodies is much different than the relationship between human souls and human bodies. The human body was “originally created so that, though it was made out of earthly material, it would, if no one had sinned, have remained in eternity and incorruptibility” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.39 [419]). Furthermore, in humans, neither “would the corruptible body have weighed down the soul...rather, the body would have been subject to the soul” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.39 [419]). The soul would have reasonably and willfully moved the body with no resistance from the body, and the body would not have weighed down the soul in sickness, vitiated lust and death.

Animals, on the other hand, have souls that are not weighed down by their bodies in the way that human souls are weighed down, because in animals “the flesh never has desires opposed to the spirit” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.38 [418]). While animal and human bodies have their own sexual movements, those bodily movements are “appropriate for the nature of an animal,” but independent bodily movements have become “punishments for human nature” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.43 [423]). There is no disharmony between animal bodies and animal souls because animal bodies and souls are supposed to work the way they work. Thus, sexual desire in animals “is not an evil, because they do not have

the good of reason, and as a result their flesh does not have desires opposed to the spirit” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.58 [436]). Sexual desire in humans, however, “resists the spirit of a human being” and thus cannot be called good precisely because of that disharmony (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.58 [436]). In other words, “[i]n animals it is not something evil precisely because in them the flesh does not have desires opposed to the spirit; in human beings this evil needs to be healed by the goodness of God, not praised by the vanity of human beings” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.122 [217]).

Augustine seems to think the bodily character of the sexual desire of animals is not a result of the fall. Rather, animal bodies naturally have *libido*. Because humans have animal bodies, it would seem to follow that humans and animals both would have originally had bodily *libido*. Certainly human *libido* would never have been the governing desire in human sex as it is for animals, but that reality does not entail the conclusion that *libido* would have been absent in humans.

Augustine even seems to admit explicitly that the analogy between human and animal bodies leads to the conclusion that humans may originally have had bodily *libido*. According to Julian, “we experience our unity with the animals by the affinity of the flesh. Though the form is different, it is, nonetheless, the same substance with regard to the material of the elements” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.39 [419]). Augustine’s response is in part to admit that Julian is correct to think human similarity to the animals suggests *libido* may have been original to human beings:

[In Eden] the [human] body would have been subject to the soul so that, for the sake of begetting children, even the genital organs would have been aroused at a sign from the will, just as the other members by which we do something. Or concupiscence of the flesh would have been such that it would not have arisen unless the soul, that is, the image of God, willed it, and it would not have drowned the mind’s thought by the intensity of its pleasure (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.39 [419]).

Augustine does not deny Julian’s claim that the human body can desire, but only suggests that bodily desire in humans would have been different than animal desire: “For, if it were at present that sort of desire [i.e. in harmony with the will], scripture would not say of it that it did not come from the

Father, but from the world....It is appropriate to believe that for the bodily material common to us and the other animals there would have been a different beginning due to the merit of the image of God, before sin began to be, just as there is a different end, now that sin has been committed” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.39 [419]).

The regrettable fact of human *libido* is not its bodily character *per se*, but rather its independence from the soul/will. Augustine is quite sure that the tension between human body and soul would not have been present in Eden, but he is not sure whether there would have been complementarity between bodily desire and the soul’s desire:

Why, then, does sexual desire resist the spirit in human beings, something it does not do in animals, if not because it pertains to the nature of an animal, but to the punishment of a human being, either that there exists what would not have existed, or that what would have been obedient, if it were not produced or damaged by sin, offers resistance? (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.41 [420])

If Augustine’s position was that human *libido* had nothing to do with bodily desire, but was rather a reference to misplaced priorities or the divided will, his acceptance of the analogy between human and animal sexual desire would make no sense. But Augustine does accept the analogy, and he seems to think that the bodily character of animal *libido* suggests that *libido* might have been present in humans in Eden precisely because human bodies are also animal bodies.

Augustine would thus seem to have good reason to say that Edenic sex would certainly have been accompanied by a corresponding good bodily desire. But he does not say this. He only mentions good bodily desire as one of two possible, yet mutually exclusive, options. He seems absolutely tied to the claim that the will would have been sufficient for sex without bodily desire, even while he is willing to admit the possibility of good bodily desire into Eden. We must wonder, then, why he is at this stand-still.

Augustine seems to be working through the following tensions in his thought. On the one hand, Augustine thinks that human beings have animal bodies, and animal bodies are the kind of

bodies that have *libido*. The *libido* of animal bodies is not itself a result of the fall, and so Augustine seems to think it might be possible that human-animal bodies were capable of *libido* in Eden. On the other hand, Augustine also clearly thinks that in Eden the will was sufficient to move the human body to do everything the person wanted to do. Animals, of course, do not have human wills, and so this difference between animals and humans may suggest that human bodies in Eden would not have had *libido*. It would seem that *libido* would have been superfluous for humans in Eden, for the will would have been totally sufficient to move the body in sex in Eden. Humans simply would not have needed *libido*. Animals, however, need *libido* in order to procreate, so *libido* must have been present in animals from the beginning. It is not clear how to reconcile these two opposing claims: on the one hand, humans have animal bodies and all animal bodies have *libido*, and, on the other hand, human *libido* in Eden would have been totally superfluous and unnecessary, and so might have been totally absent. Augustine does not resolve this tension.

I think there is a way to work through this problem on Augustine's behalf and to resolve the tension identified above. If *libido* is a bodily desire common to all animals, it does seem necessary for Augustine to hold that human bodies in Eden were capable of *libido*. I think Augustine inchoately recognizes this, and that is why he moves from, earlier in his career, absolutely denying the presence of any *libido* in Eden to his final position wherein he consistently admits the possibility of good *libido* in Eden. To totally deny the possibility of *libido* in Eden is to suggest that the structure of human bodies changed after the fall, and Augustine does not want to say that. Augustine need not suggest that human *libido* is a defect that came only after the fall.

In fact, on Augustine's terms, he should not say *libido* is a defect. Were Augustine to categorically claim that Adam and Eve were in principle incapable of *libido* because they had different bodies, he would have to say that the bodily power of *libido* entered the human body after sin. He seems open to that possibility when he suggests that *libido* may itself be a defect, but I do

not think the claim that *libido* is a defect is consistent with his broader vision of fallen human nature. The change between Edenic human nature and fallen human nature is not a change of addition, but subtraction: the disobedience of *libido* is due to the withdrawal of grace, not to God adding a new and bad power to human nature. Hence it seems Augustine would have to say *libido* must have been somehow present in Eden. On Augustine's own terms, *libido* after the fall must be defective rather than a defect.

To say that *libido* was somehow present in Eden is not necessarily to say that *libido* would have been used in sex in Eden. *Libido* may have remained in a latent state in Eden. To explain the character of latent *libido*, it may be helpful to turn to Augustine's words on hunger in Eden. Augustine seems to think that hunger was possible but never realized in Eden, and Augustine consistently draws a close connection between bodily hunger and bodily sexual desire. In fact he thinks both vitiated hunger and sexual desire are named by the term *libido* (*civ. Dei* XIV.15 [613]; *c. Iul.* IV.69 [420]). He also uses the phrase "desire of the carnal senses" (*carnalium sensuum libidinem*) to describe the desires of the body, including hunger and sexual desire (*c. Iul.* IV.69 [420]; PL 44, 773). And, as the previous chapter showed, there is a close connection between Augustine's views on bodily *libido* and his views on hunger.

Interestingly, on the issue of desire for food in Eden, Augustine again offers a version of his ambivalent position on Edenic *libido*. Augustine admits that he can (theoretically) accept the claim that Adam and Eve might have experienced the "desire of the carnal senses" before the fall (*c. Iul.* IV.69 [420]). There was absolutely no disharmony between body and soul in Eden, so "[t]here remains, then, either that no carnal concupiscence existed there, and that the manner of living was such that everything necessary was done by the suitable functions of the members without the

stirring of any *libido*” (*c. Iul.* IV.69 [420; amended]; PL 44, 772).¹¹⁶ Or, he says, “for fear that we should seem to offend too much those who somehow or other defend the pleasure of the body, one might believe that the desire of the carnal senses [*carnalium sensuum libidinem*] existed in paradise in such a way that it was completely subject to the rational will. It would have been present only when one had to use it either for the health of the body or for the propagation of offspring” (*c. Iul.* IV.69 [420]; PL 44, 773).¹¹⁷ The bodily desire for food would have been rightly ordered toward the person’s good, and would never have been the kind of desire for food that must be reigned in after the fall (*c. Iul.* IV.70 [420]).

Although Augustine admits the theoretical possibility of bodily desire in Eden, Augustine prefers the view that eating would have happened without bodily desire. In Paradise there would have been no need for hunger because of the “kind and extent of the power we would have had...even over these actions by which we take nourishment and digest it” (*c. Iul.* V.22 [448]). Augustine seems to think that Adam and Eve would not have felt hunger in Eden, and they certainly would not have had the desire for the pleasure of food when that desire was disconnected from the health benefits of the food:

¹¹⁶ The WSA translation has the final clause as, “without the stirring of any sexual desire.” The Latin reads “...sine ullius motu libidinis.” I think the WSA translation misses the point that *libido* can refer to any bodily desire, and in this context Augustine is not talking specifically about sexual desire, but rather about hunger and other forms of bodily desire. Hence I substitute the Latin in the quotation.

¹¹⁷ Augustine is not saying that sexual desire might have been used for the health of the body. Sorabji suggests that “here the health of the body, as well as procreation, is allowed as a legitimate purpose” of sexual lust (Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 408). Lamberigts also suggests the same thing: “Prior to the Fall, it was also possible that the *concupiscentia carnis* existed, although it would have been in harmony with the will, a function for the well-being of the body, or an aid to procreation” (Lamberigts, “A Critical Evaluation of Critiques of Augustine’s View of Sexuality,” 186). In the context of his chapter, Lamberigts is clearly referring to sexual desire here, and Lamberigts lists *c. Iul.* IV.69 (the passage to which this present footnote is attached) as the reference for the claim about concupiscence “for the well-being of the body.” In reality, while it might be fun to see Augustine anticipating the twentieth-century claims that one needs to have sex to promote personal health, that is not at all what he is saying in this passage. *Libido* means more than sexual desire in this case: it means the desire of the carnal senses more generally. Augustine is certainly referring to the desire for food when he suggests that bodily desire in Eden could have served “the health of the body.”

How much more blessed it would be if to dispel such discomfort or injury we took food and drink at long intervals, as we do now, or at even longer intervals without any tempting sweetness of taste! In the present life those who take food and drink in moderation are called abstemious and sober and are rightly held in honor....How much more ought we to believe that in that noble state [of Eden] there was an honorable moderation in taking nourishment so that the needs of the animal body would be supplied by it and the nature's limit would never be exceeded in any way (*c. Iul.* IV.68 [419]).

Adam and Eve never felt hungry because the grace from the Tree of Life held their bodies and souls together in harmony, and they always had food at hand: "Heaven forbid that we should believe that in paradise there was anything, whether within or without, because of which sorrow would enter, toil weary, shame embarrass, passion inflame, coldness chill, or horror offend our mind" (*c. Iul.* V.22 [448]). Their bodies were the kind of bodies that could feel hunger, but grace and circumstance prevented that hunger from arising (*Gn. litt.* VIII.5,11 [353]; also *civ. Dei* XIII.20).

Somehow Adam would have been in principle capable of desire for food, but he would not have experienced that desire because of the grace and circumstance of the garden.¹¹⁸ In other words, hunger would have been a latent power of the Edenic person. Hunger would have been present in potentiality, but would never have been actualized because there was no need for it. Augustine never says the body gained the power to become hungry because of the fall. The body could always have become hungry, but hunger would not have been fitting for Eden. While hunger has a purpose in the fallen person, that purpose is inextricably tied to the fallen character of the world: one needs to get hungry "so that the body does not suffer injury or die" (*c. Iul.* V.22 [448]). Ideally one would always eat in such a rational way that one would never need hunger to provoke one to eat, and

¹¹⁸ My reading of whether Augustine thought there would have been hunger in paradise contrasts with Burns' reading. Burns suggests "[Augustine] distinguished sexual desire from the appetites that sustained bodily life and the pleasures of sense operation, both of which he accepted as present in the original condition of humans. The body's needs for food, drink, and air were all reasonable; in paradise, these were satisfied and bodily health was maintained by the tranquil exercise of rationally guided free will." Burns, however, does not give a textual reference for these claims about the Edenic presence of "the appetites that sustained bodily life," and his next reference is not relevant to the claims about bodily desire for food and pleasure. See Burns, "Marital Fidelity as a *Remedium Concupiscentiae*," 11.

Augustine thinks eating would have happened that way in Eden. In the garden the power of hunger would have remained latent, simply because there would have been no need for hunger.

In a way similar to the latent power of hunger, the sexual *libidos* of Adam and Eve could have remained latent *libidos* because the grace from the Tree of Life would have kept their *libidos* in a latent state and their wills would have been sufficient to move their members in the act of sex.¹¹⁹ On this view, *libido* would have been superfluous and thus justifiably inactive. There would simply be no need for *libido* to be activated in Eden, because the first parents would have been capable of willing sex whenever sex was appropriate. As with the power of hunger, the power of sexual desire might have been present in potentiality in the Edenic bodies of Adam and Eve, but that power need not have been activated. On this account, *libido* itself is not a defect, but has become defective after the fall insofar as it is no longer held in control by the will.

Were Augustine to admit that *libido* was a latent power of the Edenic person, he could then maintain his claim that the body has not undergone a fundamental change in its structure with the fall. *Libido* has not entered human nature through the fall, but has rather become activated, whereas before the fall it would have been present but inactive. This line of thinking, however, would run Augustine into a major problem. If *libido* were a created power that remained latent in Eden, Augustine then must explain why God created *libido* in the first place if it was only going to be suppressed from any activity. It seems to be a significant theological problem to say that God created a power of the human person that was pointless according to God's original plan. Augustine

¹¹⁹ Jon Todd Beane also uses the language of "latent" concupiscence when referring to Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire, but Beane is using that language in a way very different than I am using the term "latent" here. For Beane, "carnal concupiscence...did not actually exist before sin, in the sense of overtly existing [i.e. being expressed in action], yet it must have latently existed before there had occurred the originating sin. For otherwise, once again, the first carnally concupiscent action appears out of character in a person formerly in control of his bodily movements." Beane here has in mind vitiated carnal concupiscence as that which existed "latently" in Adam before the "originating sin," which Beane ties closely to pride: "For will not pride, once it comes to bear its actual bad fruit, necessarily lead to the inordinate self-love of one's body"? See Beane, "The Development of the Notion of Concupiscence in Saint Augustine," 156-158.

does not want to admit that God does pointless things, and I doubt Augustine wants to admit that God originally designed a “contingency plan” into human nature to punish any future sin.

Augustine could, however, admit that *libido* was present and active (not latent) in Eden, and then he could move closer to an explanation of the purpose of *libido* in Eden. What holds Augustine back from admitting that *libido* was present and active in Eden are Augustine’s assumptions about the purpose of bodily *libido*. The bodily desire for food has two purposes according to Augustine, health and pleasure (*c. Iul. IV.67* [418]). In Eden, the bodily desire connected to health would have been unnecessary, because the first couple would have rationally eaten in such a way as to maintain perfect health (in addition to the health provided by the Tree of Life). In Eden, the bodily desire for the pleasure of food would have been unfitting, since Augustine assumes pleasure always entails the risk of vicious desiring of the soul (*c. Iul. IV.71* [420-421]). Augustine will never give up his commitment to the pristine rationality of the first parents, so he will not say that *libido* was necessary to maintain health. Thus it seems that the issue of pleasure is what prevents him from fully admitting that *libido* could have been present in Eden.

In order for Augustine to avoid the conclusion that *libido* was a pointless latent power of the Edenic body, he has to adjust his views of bodily pleasure. His fundamental objection to pleasure is that it draws the person toward the wrong end in a given action. In the case of food, “when it comes to the use of the pleasure necessary for restoring the body, who can explain in words how it blinds us to the limit of what we need and conceals and passes beyond the very bounds of maintaining good health by drawing us to whatever delectable items are present” (*c. Iul. IV.70* [420])? The pleasure of eating after the fall is always a temptation to vice, but the pleasure of eating is tolerable because it is at least closely connected to bodily health. The pleasure of sex, however, is of a different magnitude and is even more problematic precisely because “the whole mind and body [are] given over to it” (*c. Iul. IV.70* [421]).

The problem for Augustine, however, is that all of Augustine's objections to bodily pleasure, in the case of both sex and eating, are based on the facts of fallen human nature. There is no reason to think the Edenic person's graced mind would have been overcome by the experience of pleasure. Certainly pleasure would have to be fully harmonious with the purposes of the will and the thoughts of the mind, but on Augustine's own terms there is no reason in principle to suggest that kind of harmony was impossible in Eden.

In fact, Augustine does hint that he was exploring a different account of the place of pleasure in the life of the Edenic person. Unlike Julian, Augustine does not tie his views of pleasure to the claim that pleasure is essential to conception (*c. Iul. imp.* V.11 (523-524)).¹²⁰ So Augustine will not likely rehabilitate pleasure by claiming that it was necessary for the procreative purpose of sex. However, three quotes from Augustine's writings against Julian show that Augustine was opening up to the possibility of good pleasure in Eden.

In *contra Iulianum* Augustine suggests that a virtuous person after the fall would "prefer to procreate children either without this pleasure if they could or without pleasure of such strength....we ought, I think, to believe concerning that life of paradise what holy spouses would prefer in this life, for paradise was far better than this life" (*c. Iul.* IV.71 [421]). Notably he here suggests that holy spouses could reasonably desire less intense pleasure—a pleasure less prone to overcome the mind—and he does not suggest that the only good option would be sex without any

¹²⁰ According to Peter Brown, in ancient medicine (to which Julian appealed), "It was assumed that the *summa voluptas*, the sharp pleasure of orgasm, preceded by a more diffuse <<appetite>> for such pleasure, was a *sine qua non* of successful conception. Physical pleasure, therefore, could never be treated as a mere, excessive accompaniment to an act of intercourse where conception happened through other means, as would be the case in modern theories of conception. Pleasure itself was the *confectrix commixtrixque seminum*, the force that has summoned up and brought the male and female seeds harmoniously together....What Augustine's doctrine of original sin plainly implied, therefore, was that an act thought to be as totally part of human nature, as spontaneous and intimate to the body as a whole as the action of breathing itself, had been inserted into the human person by an extraneous, demonic inspiration." Brown judges that Augustine was comfortable admitting that this pleasure was present in Eden. See Brown, "Sexuality and Society in the Fifth Century A.D.: Augustine and Julian of Eclanum," 56-60.

pleasure. Then, in *c. Iul. imp.*, Augustine suggests to Julian that Edenic pleasure would have been much different, but not necessarily absent: “Do not, I beg you, imagine the union of the spouses in paradise with the sort of pleasure which sexual desire now produces when it does not arise at a sign from the will and entices the minds even of the saints....Heaven forbid that wise believers should think that such was the pleasure of paradise, that such was that peace and happiness” (*c. Iul. imp.* II.39 [179]). Perhaps the pleasure of Paradise would have been amenable to virtue, not a threat to it. Finally, in the clearest quote where Augustine suggests his openness to the presence of bodily pleasure in Eden, he writes, “there was either no desire [in Eden]...or there was not the sort of desire that is found in the animals, but a desire obedient to the least sign from the will and never pulling down the mind from the watchfulness of thought, not even, ultimately, amid the pleasure” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.43 [423]). Here he says that one distinctive element of sex in Eden would have been that sexual pleasure would not have affected the mind negatively. Regrettably Augustine does not expand on the role of pleasure in this hypothetical Edenic sex, but he clearly seems to think bodily pleasure might have been present.¹²¹

Augustine does not develop this account of pleasure, but he does seem to have the resources to do so. If sexual *libido* is a bodily desire for pleasure, as Augustine regularly says, and if *libido* is not to be pointless in God’s original design of creation, then Augustine has to find a way to make sense of the purpose of the bodily desire for pleasure in Eden. If Augustine wants to maintain his view that bodily desire for sex is essentially bodily desire for pleasure, and bodily desire may have been

¹²¹ Here I am closer to the view of Peter Brown than Nightingale. Nightingale argues that “Peter Brown claims that Augustine ‘was quite prepared to include the *summa voluptas*, the supreme, sharp pleasure of orgasm,’ in his edenic scenario. But this was, sadly, not the case. Sex was not fun in Eden. Of course, the mind and body operated in complete harmony in the edenic beings. But Augustine denies Adam and Eve the pleasure of orgasm.” Here Nightingale refers to *civ. Dei* XIV.26. See Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature*, 30.

present in Eden, then he has to find a way to say that bodily desire for pleasure could be harmonious with virtue.

Augustine's objection to sexual pleasure is not directed at pleasure *per se*, but rather at the way pleasure draws one's will away from desiring the right ends or draws one's mind from the heights of rationality. He need not say the Edenic person would have been subject to those risks. He need not say pleasure would have been a threat to virtue in Eden because, on his own terms, Augustine could say that the Edenic mind would not have understood pleasure to be an end in itself. Rather, the Edenic mind would rather have seen pleasure as a sign of the more important joy one should take in procreation.¹²²

¹²² A common suggestion in the literature is that Augustine should have recognized that a desire is not necessarily bad simply because it cannot be commanded. This argument traces its way back to Julian. As Richard Sorabji points out, it seems to be Julian's view that something that is outside one's will is not necessarily evil: "For it is against one's will only if one thinks it bad for *other* reasons" (Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 412). Julian distinguishes between command and consent, suggesting that consent of the will is sufficient to bring a desire in line with the will, even if that desire cannot be commanded (Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 409). Paul Ramsey seems to share the same judgment, arguing that Augustine was wrong to assume that "command performance" (i.e. when the will is in total control) in sex is the best possible kind of sex. For Ramsey, "[i]f sexuality is a significantly human matter, the person is present all the more because human beings do not command themselves to be there" (Paul Ramsey, "Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption," 62). Elaine Pagels wonders something similar: "is it not possible to experience desire in accordance with the will (as, for example, when engaging in intercourse for the purpose of procreation)." See Pagels, "The Politics of Paradise: Augustine's Exegesis of Genesis 1-3 Versus That of John Chrysostom," *Harvard Theological Review* vol. 78 no. 1/2 (Jan.-Apr. 1985), 83. But Augustine will not accept the claim that bodily desire could be good if it was not under the command of the will, even if that bodily desire was accidentally or coincidentally ordered to the right end. There is nothing virtuous, from Augustine's perspective, about bodily desire being coincidentally ordered to the end of the will. Augustine could accept, however, that what the will commands is the body's activation of desire and the body's limitations on desire. This seems to be what he means when he says concupiscence of the flesh would not "be shameful if the flesh wanted only what the mind commanded and wanted it only when the mind commanded and as much as it commanded" (*c. Iul. imp.* V.14 [528]). This kind of bodily desire would be in principle separate from the desire of the will, but would be coordinated with the rational purposes of the will precisely because it is called up at "the least sign from the will" and serves the will's purposes (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.43 [423]). It is true that bodily desire need not be evil simply because it is distinct from the desire of the will. But, for Augustine, bodily desire is evil if it is in principle totally outside the influence of the will. It is evil if it wants the wrong thing, or wants anything at the wrong time, or wants anything with the wrong strength. Furthermore, we might add to Augustine's qualifications for good concupiscence by saying that a bodily desire coincidentally in line with the desires of the will is still an evil, since there should be no dissociation between the body and soul on Augustine's account. But a bodily desire that is called up by the will for the will's purposes would be a good kind of bodily desire. Certainly there are many more issues to engage in this account of why Augustine could legitimately say bodily desire could have been present in Eden if it was harmoniously under the command of the will, but the point is that Augustine's thought does have room for the "or" side of the either-or scenario, and his thought almost demands that he eventually come down on the good sexual desire side.

To illustrate why Augustine can intelligibly hold that bodily desire for pleasure is compatible with virtue in Eden, we can return to the analogy between eating and sex. It seems reasonable to think that Augustine could hold the position that Edenic eating was not without pleasure. While Augustine seems to think that bodily desire for food would have been superfluous in Eden, he need not hold this position in order to remain committed to the view that it was the rational will that directed all eating in Eden. Certainly no one ate when famished in Eden, but when they ate it is reasonable to think that the food would have been tasty and they would have relished the experience. There is no reason to think that the joy of soul experienced in eating abundant and good food was not accompanied also by a bodily desire for food and bodily pleasure from food. There was no risk of gluttony, and no response to hunger. The bodily desire would have complemented the rational desire to eat, in such a way that the two worked harmoniously to produce a full-bodied experience of eating. Augustine might want to say the Edenic mind would have understood this desire as ordered to health, and the joy experienced would have been found not merely in the pleasure of eating tasty food, but in the way pleasure was a sign of nourishing the body God had given to the person. The bodily pleasure that would come with the experience of nourishment would be interpreted by the mind as a sign of the more important end of nourishment. The pleasure would never be, as it is after the fall, an end in itself. The pleasure would always be experienced in light of the more important end.

By analogy, Augustine might also want to say the Edenic person would have understood bodily desire for sex and the pleasure of sex as signs of the person's cooperation in procreation. The bodily desire would be called up at "the least sign from the will" and would always have worked in perfect harmony with the will (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.43 [423]). Bodily desire would have been harmonious with the purpose of sex—procreation—and the bodily pleasure would have been understood by the Edenic mind as a sign of that more important end. The body's desire for pleasure would not have

tempted the mind to desire pleasure for its own sake. The person would rather have understood the pleasure according to its true significance.

Cormac Burke nicely expresses a similar viewpoint on the meaning of sexual pleasure in Augustine's thought, though Burke applies his account to Augustine's views of sex after the fall:

Married chastity is necessarily based on understanding and respecting the procreative orientation of the conjugal act. Augustine points out how concupiscence is moderated by 'parental affection' and says that 'a certain gravity of depth of meaning is given to the intense pleasure of intercourse when husband and wife reflect that their union tends to make them father and mother' [ref. *bon. coniug.* 3.3]. Once again we see that he has nothing to say against pleasure, but insists on the need to reflect on the *meaning* lying behind an act as pleasurable as intercourse.¹²³

Whether or not Augustine has the resources for a positive account of pleasure after the fall, Augustine certainly could suggest that pleasure would have been expressive of the procreative end of sex in Eden. Pleasure would not have overcome the mind, nor would pleasure have been the end of sex for the Edenic person. Pleasure would have been a bodily reminder of the more important reality that the act of sex is the couple's act of co-creation with God.

With an adjusted account of bodily pleasure in Eden, Augustine could then tie up the loose ends of his account of bodily desire in Eden. He could show why *libido* in Eden would not have been a superfluous, suppressed aspect of human nature, but would rather have been an integral part of the total harmony of life infused with grace through the Tree of Life. It seems to me that Augustine's slow but steady development on the issue of Edenic procreation would have, or should have, led him to hold the view that *libido* is not a defect in itself, but was rather an integral element of God's original design of the human body.

¹²³ Burke, *The Theology of Marriage*, 160. I would, however, qualify Burke's claim that "Augustine, if he were alive today...would enlarge his way of expressing himself so as to admit and maintain that the married act and its concomitant pleasure are realized and experienced according to their natural use when what moves the spouses is the desire to reaffirm their spiritual and interpersonal love through this corporal union, without necessarily being accompanied on their part by an actual desire to engender offspring" (160-61).

What I have offered in this section is, I hope, a case of thinking “not about, but with” Augustine.¹²⁴ I have attempted to take Augustine’s thought in the direction it seemed to be headed—or could have been headed—until his untimely death before the completion of the *c. Iul. imp.* and whatever further work(s) would have been prompted by the heated dispute with Julian. Furthermore, I think my account of how Augustine might have continued to develop his views on Edenic sexual desire would in fact support Augustine’s claims about the vitiated character of post-lapsarian sexual desire. Were Edenic sex accompanied by a good *libido*, sexual desire after the fall would be even more obviously flawed, since sexual desire after the fall is a desire for pleasure for its own sake, and it is a desire independent from the will, even if it could be coincidentally in line with the will. Or, as Peter Brown puts it, “Sex was tragic for Augustine because it could have been so very different.”¹²⁵ Were Augustine to clearly hold the position that Edenic sexual desire would have been present and good, he could more easily draw the contrast with sexual desire after the fall.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this chapter has shown that Augustine’s thought on Edenic sexual desire develops substantially over the course of his career, and that development has everything to do with Augustine’s morphing views on the nature of bodies in Eden. While he at first thinks Adam and Eve were in heavenly or immortal bodies, he eventually comes to the view that they were originally in mortal bodies that would have become immortal later on. Since only mortal bodies have sex, Augustine eventually holds the view that procreation would have happened through sex in Eden. His initial position on sexual desire in Eden is that there would absolutely not have been any,

¹²⁴ Meilaender, “Sweet Necessities,” 4.

¹²⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 501.

precisely because the body and soul were in such harmony that bodily sexual desire would have been superfluous. He clearly expresses this position in book XIV of *cin. Dei.*, although one line suggests that he was aware of an alternative position. As his dispute with Julian grows, Augustine slowly but steadily sees the merits of this alternative position, that there may have been good sexual desire in Eden. By the time of the *c. Iul. imp.*, every time he mentions Edenic sexual desire, he expresses his views in an either-or scenario that reveals his ambivalence about the question: either there was no sexual desire in Eden, or there was good sexual desire in Eden.

By looking closely into Augustine's account of the either-or scenario, we find that there is a tension in Augustine's thought. Adam and Eve had animal bodies from the beginning, and animal bodies are the kinds of bodies that have bodily sexual desire. Yet Adam and Eve have human souls, and those souls should have been sufficient to govern the body without the body's desire. As we have seen, Augustine does not resolve this tension, precisely because either side of the either-or scenario supports Augustine's conclusion that sexual desire after the fall is fundamentally flawed. A closer look at Augustine's views on bodily desire and pleasure, however, reveals that, on Augustine's own terms, he should hold the position that there would have been good bodily sexual desire in Eden. If all sexual desire is a defect—if it did not exist at all in Eden—then Augustine has to say the human body has fundamentally and universally changed its structure through the fall. While Augustine does admit that the fall has changed the structure of some bodies, he does not think those changes are universal, while he does think concupiscence of the flesh is universal. So he cannot say that concupiscence of the flesh is a defect.

If concupiscence of the flesh after the fall is defective, however, Augustine can then begin to make sense of what concupiscence of the flesh would have been like in Eden. It would have been a desire under the command of the will and in total harmony with the will. Furthermore, it would have still been a desire for pleasure, but Adam and Eve would have seen that pleasure for what it

really could be according to the logic of his system, a sign that sex is the couple's act of co-creation with God.

Whether Augustine's view on Edenic sexual desire and pleasure has anything to do with contemporary moral theology, with its emphasis on the importance of the unitive dimension of sexuality, is a question I take up in the conclusion. In any case, the evaluation of Augustine's views is only possible after the interpretive work has been done, and I hope this chapter has achieved that interpretive goal by showing what Augustine's positions were and why his view changed.

This chapter fits well with the dissertation as a whole. The thesis of this dissertation is that attention to Augustine's anti-Julian works, especially the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, shows that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's theology of sexuality and central to adjudicating disputes over Augustine's theology of sexuality. While chapter three showed that the bodily element of concupiscence is indeed central to Augustine's theology, this chapter has shown how attention to the bodily element of concupiscence can advance the scholarly discussion of another important issue in Augustine's thought. It would be impossible to accurately interpret Augustine's thought on Edenic sexual desire without attention to the bodily element of concupiscence, and attention to the bodily element of concupiscence significantly contributes to our understanding of why Augustine develops his views on Edenic sexual desire and why he comes to the point of ambivalence about the issue. In the conclusion I explore two other areas of Augustine's thought that would be illuminated by closer attention to the bodily element of concupiscence.

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion I intend to accomplish three tasks. I first offer a review of the argument of the dissertation. I next suggest two ways the dissertation might contribute to our understanding of other areas of Augustine's thought not addressed in the dissertation. Finally, I offer my "evaluative" thoughts on Augustine's views on bodily desire and Edenic sexual desire.

SUMMARY

The thesis of this dissertation has been the following claim. The bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's account of sexuality in his later works, especially the *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*, and recognition of the centrality of the bodily element of concupiscence in Augustine's thought helps to adjudicate rival readings of Augustine on related issues, including Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire.

This dissertation began by showing that the widespread disagreement over the merits of Augustine's views on sexuality and sexual desire is premised on important interpretive disagreements about what Augustine actually said. In the first chapter I identified three related and consistently disputed interpretive issues behind the evaluative debates: what significant factors shape Augustine's views on sexuality, whether Augustine thinks concupiscence is in any way a desire of the body, and whether Augustine thinks sexual desire was original to human nature. I have argued that the issue of the bodily element of concupiscence is at the center of the dispute over Augustine's views. A robust account of the theological influences shaping Augustine's account of concupiscence provides the necessary context for understanding Augustine's claims about bodily desire, and Augustine's claims about Edenic sexual desire are bound up with his account of the bodily element of concupiscence.

The subsequent chapters each progressively built up my account of bodily desire in Augustine's thought, with Augustine's anti-Julian works, and the *c. Iul. imp.* in particular, being consistent focal texts that help to further our understanding of Augustine's views, granting the presumption I made at the beginning of the dissertation that Augustine's later works express what he would have seen as his better views.

In the second chapter I argued that, whatever the influence of Augustine's life history, allegedly pessimistic personality, and penchant for pseudo-scientific observation, it is Augustine's fundamental theological commitments that most significantly shape his views on sexuality and desire. Furthermore, Augustine's mature views on sexuality and desire are not fully intelligible unless they are set in the intellectual context of his dispute with Julian over the fundamental issues of the nature of God and the nature of creation. There I also showed, in anticipation of chapters three and four, that Augustine's views on the distinctiveness of life in Eden and the Resurrection, especially the effects of grace on the human body in those states, are essential to understanding his views on sexuality and desire before and after the fall. Chapter two built the foundation for chapters three and four.

In the third chapter I offered my account of the relationship between concupiscence and the human body in Augustine's thought. There I showed that different interpreters make quite divergent and often fundamentally incompatible claims about whether Augustine thinks concupiscence is sometimes a desire caused by the human body. I argued that Augustine does indeed think concupiscence is very often a desire of the body. I also argued that his claims about bodily desire fit well within his broader anthropology, and I argued that claims about Augustine's "latent Manichaeism" fall flat insofar as they assume a definition of Manichaeism that Augustine would not accept. In short, I showed that the concept of bodily desire is at the heart of

Augustine's mature theory of sexuality and human nature. Fallen concupiscence, for Augustine, is not strictly a matter of misplaced priorities or the divided will, though concupiscence does of course exist beyond bodily desires. Fallen concupiscence is what happens when a body and soul intended to be harmoniously integrated through the grace of God have lost that integrating grace and the person is granted the "autonomy" Adam and Eve desired.

The topic of the fourth chapter grew out of a question raised by the work of the third chapter and provided a test-case for my account of bodily desire in Augustine's thought: if Augustine thinks bodily desire is central to human life after the fall, one wonders whether he thinks bodily desire was original to human nature in Eden. There I narrowed the topic to the issue of Augustine's views on sexual desire in Eden. Not coincidentally, this topic is an important one in the evaluative and interpretive disputes over Augustine today. As is true of the topic of bodily desire, different interpreters also make quite divergent claims about Augustine's views on Edenic sexual desire. Some suggest Augustine thinks there was no desire in Edenic sex, and others suggest Augustine thinks Edenic sex would have included pure and virtuous sexual desire. By tracing Augustine's development on the issue, I showed how his position significantly changed from beginning to end, and I showed that the changes have everything to do with his understanding of human bodies and bodily desire in Eden. Augustine's consistent and ambivalent final position in *ci. Iul. imp.* is that sexual desire in Eden was either totally absent, so sexual desire after the fall is a defect, or sexual desire in Eden would have been present but good, so sexual desire after the fall is defective in comparison to what it would have been in Eden. This ambivalent position is ultimately untenable, since the two sides of the either-or are mutually exclusive. I attempted to think through Augustine's principles and came to the conclusion that, on his own terms, Augustine's commitments

about the nature of the body and bodily desire should lead him to endorse the position that bodily sexual desire would have been present and good in Eden.

In sum, I have tried to let Augustine speak for himself and say more clearly what he wants to say about his theory of the nature and origin of concupiscence. I hope that what I have offered helps to advance our understanding of Augustine's claims, and I hope my work with the *c. Iul. imp.* has demonstrated in practice why that text is important in advancing our understanding of Augustine's later views.

As chapter one indicated, there are other elements of Augustine's thought on sexuality and concupiscence that are disputed by scholars, both in terms of interpretation and evaluation. Below I briefly outline how this dissertation might impact our understanding of two of those issues: Augustine's views on the relationship between sexual pleasure and spousal friendship, and the centrality of Christ's human body for Augustine's Christology.

AUGUSTINE ON SEXUAL PLEASURE AND SPOUSAL FRIENDSHIP

A common criticism of Augustine is that he failed to account for the connections between marriage and spousal friendship. There are, in fact, two distinct criticisms, though they are complementary. The first is that Augustine did not account for the ways in which marriage is a distinctive form of friendship, and the second is that Augustine did not account for the ways in which sex and sexual pleasure are integral to spousal friendship. Regarding the first criticism, recent work has shown that Augustine did have important things to say about marriage as a form of friendship.¹ Regarding the second, less has been written. What I think this dissertation adds to the

¹ For instance, see David G. Hunter, "Augustinian Pessimism?" 160, esp. on marriage as *societas*. Todd Salzman & Michael Lawler also emphasize that Augustine recognized the importance of friendship within marriage: "Alongside the tradition of the threefold good of marriage, Augustine advances yet another good, that of friendship between the

discussion of the second is the necessary background to Augustine's complex account of how sex and sexual pleasure are related to growth in friendship between spouses.

For Augustine, the act of sex is truly, when done well, an act of spousal friendship. Cooperating together in procreation is even, for Augustine, truly a way of rendering worship to God: good Christians "have the intention of bringing to birth children to be reborn again so that those who are born of them as children of the world may be reborn as children of God" (*nupt. et conc.* I.5 [30-31]). Each virtuous Christian spouse has the good intention of having children who will be regenerated, and this is not a superficial desire, nor is it just one desire among many. It is, ideally anyway, the deepest desire of the spouses in the act of sex: what Augustine calls an "intention of the heart" (*nupt. et conc.* I.8,9 [33]). As he says, if children are not conceived from this kind of sex, then at least "the couple will have the peace of their good will." If children are both naturally born and supernaturally reborn in baptism, "the marriage will have the reward of a complete happiness" (*nupt. et conc.* I.8, 9 [33]). In other words, when spouses realize the good of *proles* together, they cooperate to realize each other's deepest desires. It is hard to think of a better definition of friendship than two people desiring the same ultimate good and working together in harmony toward achieving that good. It is, thus, no surprise that Augustine says sex which respects the fullest meaning of *proles* is an act of "*holiness and honor*" of one's spouse (*nupt. et conc.* I.8,9 [33-34]).² I think it is reasonable to say Augustine does see a good act of sex as an act of true friendship between spouses.

sexes....We believe Augustine has....falsified in advance the claim of those modern commentators who say that only in modern times have sexual intercourse and marriage been seen in the context of the relationship of the spouses." See Todd A. Salzman & Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown, 2008), 30-31. Salzman & Lawler are here drawing on John Hugo, who suggests that, for Augustine, "Marriage is...a community of love between spouses" and this community of love is "three-faceted" (i.e. the three goods of marriage). See Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage*, 143

² Here is the full sentence: "Those who possess their own vessels, that is, their spouses, with this [good] intention [i.e. to baptize the children] certainly do not possess them *in the disease of desire, like the pagans who do not know God*, but *in holiness and honor* (1 Thes 4:5.4), like believers who hope in God" (emphasis in original).

However, whether sexual pleasure is beneficial for spousal friendship is another issue. Augustine probably does not have anything good to say about the positive role of sexual pleasure in spousal sex, and perhaps Augustine's critics will continue to lament Augustine's "pessimism" regarding sexual pleasure. Yet, as John Cavadini rightly points out, Augustine's critics have a challenge to answer if they suggest sexual pleasure clearly fosters spousal friendship: "can we say that any act of sexual delight is completely free from smugness, from self-admiration, from the slightest hint at 'self-pleasing' in the mastery of the 'skill sets' of popular magazines, in the thought that one is an accomplished, or at least halfway decent, lover?"³ As Cavadini has already shown, Augustine would have many pointed questions for those who "beg the question" with claims about the goodness of sexual pleasure.⁴

What this dissertation adds to the discussion of Augustine's views on sexual pleasure within marriage is an account of why Augustine's problems with concupiscence and sexual pleasure run much deeper than the problem of self-regard. Augustine's problem with concupiscence is not merely that we are shackled in the chains of carnal habit, which leads us to see the other person as a means for pleasure. For Augustine, the bodily element of sexual desire cannot be re-habituated or conditioned out of human nature, and the very means by which spouses honor God through procreation is the same means through which they are shown just how far they are from being truly permeated by grace. Augustine's claims about the problems of concupiscence and sexual pleasure are not in the first place ethical claims, but are rather the consequence of his larger account of the tragic way fallen human nature lives out its fragile connection to God. The temptation to see another person as a means for pleasure is not just more likely in sex than in other actions after the

³ Cavadini, "Feeling Right," 210.

⁴ Ibid.

fall; that temptation is inherent to the very nature of sex after the fall. Augustine's problem with concupiscence and sexual pleasure in marriage is that the act of sex cannot fail to manifest the person's own fractured state in the relationship with the spouse. Even if it is only a moment of a lack of self-possession, the gravity of the situation seems to make that moment highly significant.

The fact that Augustine says sex between spouses is both an act of friendship while it is at the same time a sad manifestation of fallen human nature might seem inconsistent. However, there is intelligibility to Augustine's distinction between procreative sex as an act of friendship and the problem of sexual pleasure. This distinction is summed up in Augustine's reflections in *Sermon* 51, where Augustine offers a very characteristic thought experiment: "[I]f men who only have wives for the purpose of getting children, if they could be shown a way of having children without sexual intercourse, wouldn't they embrace such a blessing with unspeakable joy?" (s. 51.23 [72-73]). His point is not that sex itself is bad. The thought experiment is directed at those who would not rejoice if procreation were possible without sex. According to Augustine, a person's lament over the prospect of sexless procreation shows that he is more attached to satisfying concupiscence than to honoring his spouse by realizing the goods of marriage (s. 51.26 [75]). Alternatively, someone who would rejoice if procreation were possible without sex reveals a deep love for his spouse. For a good husband, a wife is superior to a mistress because of the wife's "sense of fidelity, her sense of the marriage bond, her sense of a more genuine and chaster love" (s. 51.26 [75]). If the husband "could get children of his wife without intercourse, should he not do so all the more joyfully, the more pure she is whom he loves the more dearly" (s. 51.26 [75]). Thus Augustine exhorts his audience, "Love your wives, but love them chastely" (s. 51.26 [75]). A non-sexual act of *proles* would be a heightening of spousal love and friendship, because it treasures the wife's virtue above the husband's personal pleasure.

Augustine's references to marital concupiscence in his later works also help to show why he can intelligibly distinguish between procreative sex as an act of friendship and the problem of sexual pleasure. In *Letter 6**, Augustine draws a strong distinction between "marital concupiscence" and "concupiscence of the flesh," defining the former as the will's desire for children, and the latter as the bodily desire for pleasure. He claims "marital concupiscence" certainly would have existed in Eden since it "preserves the calm love of a husband and wife and which, just as the choice of the mind orders the hands and feet to their appropriate actions, likewise orders the sexual organs to their work of generation" (*ep. 6**, 7 [252-253]). Concupiscence of the flesh, as we have seen, may or not have accompanied this willful desire for children. What is important from Augustine's perspective is that the moral uprightness of concupiscence of the flesh depends entirely on its ordering to the end wanted through marital concupiscence.

In *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* Augustine briefly blurs the distinction between marital concupiscence and concupiscence of the flesh. Julian first brings in the term "marital concupiscence," and Augustine writes in his response:

Why do you add, "marital," and speak of "marital concupiscence," in order to cloth[e] your shameful darling with the honorable name of marriage? [The apostle] John spoke of concupiscence of the flesh, not of marital concupiscence. The latter could have existed in paradise, even if no one had sinned, in the desire for fecundity, not in the itch of pleasure. Or at least it would always be subject to the spirit so that it would not be aroused unless the spirit willed it. It would never have desires opposed to the spirit so that the spirit would also be forced to have desires opposed to it. (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.19 [404]).

Perhaps this is just a moment of imprecision on Augustine's part, since he so clearly distinguishes elsewhere between the will's desire for children and the bodily desire of Eden. Yet, as the previous chapter showed, Augustine does have room in his thought to incorporate the claim that bodily desire could have been perfectly harmonious with the willful desire for children. In any case, once again the thought experiment about what sex in Eden might have been like shows, for Augustine,

just how problematic sexual desire has become after the fall. After the fall, Augustine thinks, concupiscence of the flesh and sexual pleasure are in principle impossible to order toward procreation. One could not understand this distinction between the willful desire for children and the desire for pleasure without understanding Augustine's account of bodily desire.

I think Augustine's distinction between bodily desires and desires of the will brings an important insight to the contemporary discussion of the relationship between sexual pleasure and spousal friendship. Contemporary work might insist that good "marital concupiscence" includes more than desires for procreation, but it would have to account for Augustine's attention to the inherently pleasure-oriented character of bodily desires. Any rejoinder to Augustine would have to show why non-rational, "bodily" desires are either not inherently oriented to one's own pleasure, or why desires that are inherently oriented only to one's own pleasure are a benefit to marriage and spousal friendship. Augustine's claims about bodily desire do seem to challenge the presumption that sexual pleasure is fundamentally an aid to spousal friendship, and I hope this dissertation has made those claims more intelligible.

AUGUSTINE ON THE BODY OF CHRIST

Perhaps another, less expected way this dissertation might contribute to further research has to do with Augustine's understanding of the relationship between the human body of Christ and Augustine's Christology. Augustine's views on embodiment, desires of the flesh, and God's plan for human nature seem to significantly shape his understanding of Christ's human nature.

Augustine's understanding of Christ's human nature is at odds with some recent work in Christology. In the prologue to Robert Hugh Benson's 1907 novel *Lord of the World*, the character Old Mr. Templeton reflects back on the twentieth century and, in a long list of lamentations, briefly

remarks that “the Divinity of our Lord, some think, had gone all but in name by the beginning of the century. The Kenotic theory had provided for that.”⁵ The theory that the Word-made-flesh divested himself of the effects of his divinity in order to unite himself to humanity has been an important but contentious claim in twentieth and twenty-first century Christology. Within this discussion, a number of scholars claim that Christ could not have been truly human if he did not experience the struggles of human life, including true temptations to sin. According to one scholar, although Christ did not experience concupiscence, Christ’s temptations “confronted him with a sharpness and force we do not experience.”⁶ In fact, on this view it seems that “only [because] the Son inherited an enfeebled humanity does his sinless life possess any soteriological value.”⁷

Augustine himself has come under criticism for failing to attend to the “enfeebled” aspects of Christ’s human nature. Augustine, so the allegation goes, separates Christ’s human nature from the rest of humanity precisely by emphasizing the way Christ’s divinity influenced Christ’s human nature. Julian first raised this charge against Augustine, and it has been furthered in recent years.⁸ James Wetzel writes in Julian’s defense: “It makes a certain amount of home-spun sense to imagine Christ as a moral exemplar, someone who, in his humanity, has the same basic nature as other human beings, but who has worked that basic nature heroically. Augustine, by contrast, seems to

⁵ Benson, *Lord of the World* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1907), xiv.

⁶ Thomas G. Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (New York: T & T Clark, 1993), 99. Weinandy does argue that his account is not advocating “kenosis,” but his claims about Christ’s human nature do seem to emphasize the divesting of any impact of the divine nature on Jesus’ human nature.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸ Because Augustine thinks Christ did not experience concupiscence or the desire for sins, Julian wonders “why would it have been worthy of praise to scorn the enticements of the senses if by a gift of nature he was incapable of them?...[A]s someone more fortunate by birth, not by virtue, he would have lost not only trophies won by his actions, but would have also been pressed with charges of fraud if he said to mortals: Strive for the patience of him who feels nothing, and come through true crosses to the virtues of a false body that suffers nothing....Certainly nothing more irreligious, nothing more wicked can be thought up than these lies” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.49-50 [427-429]).

insist perversely on an unintelligible difference in humanities: Christ has a human nature, but not a human nature that any other human being can hope to share fully.”⁹ Roland Teske offers a similar defense of Julian and criticism of Augustine: “Julian certainly seems to have a strong argument when he claims that the Augustinian Christ cannot be a credible teacher or model of chastity if he had none of the urges and inclinations of other males. Hence, Julian presents us with a Christ who is, in some ways, a much more attractive teacher and example of the virtues, and especially of chastity, than the Christ of Augustine.”¹⁰ It seems that if Christ’s human nature is importantly different because of his unique status as God-man, then Christ is not someone the rest of humanity can imitate.

What I hope this dissertation adds to the discussion is a clearer picture of why Augustine so adamantly suggests that Christ absolutely did not share in the human temptation to sin, insofar as temptations come from concupiscence of the flesh. Perhaps, once again, it would be helpful to set Augustine’s views in contrast to Julian’s. Julian lodges the following accusations against Augustine: “You separate the nature of Christ from the community of human beings, in accord with the Manichees. You bring accusations against the concupiscence of the flesh, in accord with the statements of your teacher, Mani. You say that the concupiscence of the senses was not present in the body of Christ, either in accord with the Manichees or in accord with the Apollinarists” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.50 [429]). According to Julian, if Christ lacked concupiscence of the flesh, then Christ was “without senses of both the eyes and of inner organs” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.46 [425]). Without concupiscence, Christ could not have felt pain or desire (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.50 [429]). However,

⁹ James Wetzel, “Response III- The Humanity of God,” *Augustinian Studies* 36:1 (2005): 221. It is not clear whether Wetzel would endorse Julian’s views.

¹⁰ Roland Teske, SJ, “St. Augustine on the Humanity of Christ and Temptation,” in *Augustine of Hippo: Philosopher, Exegete, and Theologian: A Second Collection of Essays* (Milwaukee: Marquette, 2009), 233.

according to Julian, Christ's "sleep, food, beard, sweat, toil and the cross and lance testify that concupiscence of the flesh was present in the senses of the whole body and that he had the reality and healthy condition of his members" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.53 [431]). Julian thinks that without concupiscence of the flesh, Christ would have lacked a truly human nature.

Augustine's response is to treat Julian's argument as a *non sequitur*. Julian says the absence of concupiscence means Christ could not have felt pain, "as if," Augustine says, "it follows that one will not feel pains that have been inflicted if one wills not to have and is able not to have evil desires" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.52 [430]). For Augustine, there is no connection between lacking concupiscence and being truly human. In fact, for Augustine, one is more human the less one struggles with concupiscence: if it is good to conquer one's bad desires, it is even better to not have bad desires and to not even have the impulse toward those desires (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.49 [428]). Because those temptations often come from the body, the Resurrection must be the state in which those temptations and impulses are finally eradicated.

For Augustine, the suggestion that Christ is not truly human if he did not have "desires of the flesh" obscures the purpose of the Incarnation. For both Julian and Augustine, the Incarnation provides the supreme moral exemplar for humanity. From Augustine's perspective, to say that Christ is the paragon of virtue and that virtue requires struggle, as Julian and others say, is to suggest "Christ ought to have been most filled with desires in his flesh, just as he was the greatest of all human beings in his virtue" (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.49 [428]). According to Augustine, Julian's principles lead to an abhorrent conclusion: "See what you insanely try to impose upon Christ, namely, that he should be by nature the most filled with desires of all, because he could in that way be the most chaste of all by the virtue of his will. As you argue, the spirit of continence would, of course, be greater in him to the extent that he held in check greater concupiscence of the flesh. Your darling,

whom you love too much, has led you to this destruction” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.52 [430]). Julian’s claims about Christ’s human nature also marginalize Christ’s significance: to suggest that Christ was differentiated from the rest of humanity merely by his greater will power is to suggest that that there could be many Christs, and Jesus of Nazareth “turns out to be the only one because of the laziness of the human will” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.84 [450]). The suggestion that Christ shares in every aspect of human nature, including the temptation to sin coming from concupiscence of the flesh, leads to these absurd conclusions. For Augustine, it is precisely because of Christ’s true and grace-filled human nature that Christ is the moral exemplar for the rest of humanity.

In his account of the distinctive Christ, Augustine does not flinch at the claim that the human body of Christ, even prior to Christ’s resurrection, was importantly different than the bodies of the rest of humanity: “Let whoever believes that the flesh of Christ had desires opposed to the spirit be anathema” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.47 [426]). Responding directly to Julian, Augustine writes: “You say that the mind of Christ subdued all his senses, but it is something that resists which needs to be subdued. The flesh of Christ, however, had nothing that was unsubdued, nor did it in any way resist the spirit so that the spirit had to subdue it” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.57 [435]). According to Augustine, the flesh of Christ must necessarily be in some way unlike the flesh of the rest of humanity:

For we do not exclude his flesh from participation in the substance and nature of our flesh, but from participation in sin. Our flesh, after all, is sinful flesh; on this account his flesh was called, not the likeness of flesh, because it was true flesh, but the likeness of sinful flesh, because it is not sinful flesh. If, then, our flesh were not sinful flesh, how, I ask, could the flesh of Christ be the likeness of sinful flesh? (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.33 [698]).

Further drawing out his claims about the flesh of Christ, Augustine suggests that someone might say Christ’s different body means only Christ rises from the dead. Augustine’s response is to say, “it does not follow that, because in each flesh there are not the same merits from their origin, there is, therefore, not the same earthly and mortal substance....It is not true, then, that we cannot imitate

Christ because he was in the likeness of sinful flesh, while we are in sinful flesh” (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.34 [699-700]). In other words, just because Christ’s flesh was different does not mean it was not true flesh. In fact, it seems that good Biblical exegesis insists that Christ’s flesh must have been distinctive. The “likeness of sinful flesh” includes both similarity and dissimilarity: Christ was in the flesh, but not in sinful flesh (*c. Iul. imp.* VI.35 [700]). To deny the distinction between flesh and sinful flesh is, according to Augustine, to either say that human beings are not “in sinful flesh” or that Christ was “in sinful flesh” also. Neither option is possible on Augustine’s terms, so he must maintain a distinction between the flesh of Christ and the flesh of the rest of humanity.

Thus, for Augustine, Christ’s conception by the Holy Spirit was more than just “fitting.” Christ’s conception by the Holy Spirit was in part what enabled him to be the model of virtue for humanity: “Christ, then, who most perfectly fulfilled the law, desired nothing that was forbidden, because he certainly did not have the discord between the flesh and the spirit which was turned into the nature of human beings by the transgression of the first human being, for he was born of the Spirit and the Virgin, not through the concupiscence of the flesh” (*c. Iul. imp.* IV.57 [435]). Somehow Christ’s distinctive origin made it possible for him to lack the concupiscence of the flesh that tempts people to sin, and lacking concupiscence of the flesh is in part what enabled Christ to live in his distinctive way. The Word-made-flesh willed to take up some effects of the corruptible body, but, according to Augustine, the Word-made-flesh did not will to take up the temptation to sin coming from the human body. To be without sin, on Augustine’s account, seems to also include being in a body that does not suffer from at least the elements of bodily corruptibility that tempt one to sin.

Some will suggest that Augustine borders closely on the edges of heresy with his suggestion that Christ’s human body was distinctive from the rest of humanity. Certainly the important

Patristic axiom “what is not assumed is not saved” must always be kept in mind when discussing the human nature of Christ. Yet it seems that Augustine’s claims about the distinctive human nature of Christ operate on a related axiom: “what is not saved is not assumed.” For Augustine, salvation is healing, and healing presumes an illness. That illness will be eradicated, not saved. Restricting that illness merely to bad acts of the will and leaving the healing of the body entirely out of the discussion would be, from Augustine’s perspective, both a faulty diagnosis and an impotent treatment. To say that Christ does not suffer from the full effects of the illness afflicting human nature might not be a denigration of Christ’s true humanity, but rather an affirmation of the importance of the Incarnation and the necessity of the Resurrection. What I hope this dissertation helps to provide is the background for a discussion of Augustine’s understanding of how and why Christ’s body might be distinctive from the rest of humanity.

EVALUATION

At this point, the reader might be wondering about my “evaluation” of Augustine’s views on bodily desire and Edenic sexual desire. Given that the evaluative disputes I identified in the first chapter have often occluded the underlying interpretive disputes, I have primarily been interested in wiping the dust off the theological picture painted by Augustine. I have tried to avoid stepping back to say whether Augustine’s final product should inspire reverence, revulsion, or a shrug of the shoulders. Perhaps a few brief evaluative comments are warranted.

On the matter of Edenic sexual desire, the words of Mark Twain’s Adam & Eve might be helpful to express my evaluative conclusions. I must confess that, unlike Augustine, I do not read Genesis 2 and think, as Eve writes in her diary, “these details are going to be important to the

historian some day.”¹¹ Whether or not human origins can be traced back to an original pair or original village, it is doubtful they can be traced to a bucolic setting somewhere near the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers just a few thousand years ago, where human nature was truly more closely united to God and therefore better than human nature today. So Augustine and I get off on the wrong foot from the beginning.

On the other hand, however, the issue of Edenic sexual desire is not merely a consequence of Augustine’s assumptions about the historical reality of the Garden. Augustine and I would agree that Twain’s Eve expresses something deeply important in her reflection on what might have been: “When I look back, the Garden is a dream to me. It was beautiful, surpassingly beautiful, enchantingly beautiful; and now it is lost, and I shall not see it any more.”¹² Augustine’s speculation on sexual desire in the garden is a theological thought experiment in contrasting, on the one hand, what sexual desire would look like if God’s grace were fully infused into every element of human nature, with, on the other hand, what sexual desire looks like in a nature lacking the full harmony grace would provide. There is something very telling about that contrast, and Augustine and I can certainly agree that sexual desire “after the fall” makes it difficult for human beings to imitate life in the garden. Consider the “chastity” of Twain’s Adam, who says of Eve in the garden: “I am coming to realize that she is a quite remarkably comely creature—lithe, slender, trim, rounded, shapely, nimble, graceful; and once when she was standing marble-white and sun-drenched on a boulder, with her young head tilted back and her hand shading her eyes, watching the flight of a bird in the

¹¹ Mark Twain, “Eve’s Diary: Translated From the Original,” in *The Bible According to Mark Twain: Writings on Heaven, Eden, and the Flood*, ed. Howard G. Baetzhold and Joseph B. McCullough (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), 20. The text is also available online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/8525/8525-h/8525-h.htm>

¹² *Ibid.*, 31.

sky, I recognized that she was beautiful.”¹³ Augustine’s thought experiment about Adam and Eve’s experience of sexuality rightly points to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of today encountering someone “standing marble-white” and drawing the pure-hearted conclusion “beautiful,” without any thoughts or desires reflecting a less noble side of human nature. With Augustine, I certainly agree that speculation about Edenic sexual desire does provide a helpful contrast to the problems of sexual desire in fallen human nature.

On the issue of the bodily element of concupiscence, one only needs to pick up a textbook on human biology or human sexuality, or watch commercials aimed at a target demographic of middle-aged men, to find that Augustine is right to say sexual desires are often deeply affected by elements of the body independent of reason and will. So Augustine is in good company with his claims about the bodily element of concupiscence.

Augustine is also in good company in his suggestion that the non-rational elements of sexual desire are a significant challenge to living a happy human life. For instance, an atheist philosopher has recently offered a very Augustinian account of the deeply non-rational and ineradicably problematic causes of sexual desire. In his 2013 book *How to Think More About Sex*, Alain de Botton offers surprisingly Augustinian criticisms of the sexual conversation today, a conversation in which the prevailing assumption is that we “belong to a liberated age—and ought by now, as a result, to be finding sex a straightforward and untroubling matter.”¹⁴ De Botton pushes back against this assumption in a way that sounds a lot like Augustine:

Sex is not something we can ever expect to feel easily liberated from. It was not by mere coincidence that sex so disturbed us for thousands of years: repressive religious dictates and social taboos grew out of aspects of our nature that cannot now just be wished away. We were bothered by sex because it is a fundamentally disruptive, overwhelming and demented

¹³ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴ Alain de Botton, *How to Think More About Sex* (New York: Picador, 2013), 5.

force, strongly at odds with the majority of our ambitions and all but incapable of being discretely integrated within civilized society.¹⁵

This descriptive account affects de Botton's ethical thesis: "We should accept that sex is inherently rather weird instead of blaming ourselves for not responding in more normal ways to its confusing impulses....Our best hope should be for a respectful accommodation with an anarchic and reckless power."¹⁶ Like Augustine, de Botton thinks sexual desire is not simply something benign, unproblematic and easily put in service of noble goals: "A portion of our libido has to be forced underground for our own good....[W]e cannot allow our sexual urges to express themselves without limit...left to run free, they destroy us."¹⁷ Because of the inherently "reckless" qualities of sexual desire, de Botton suggests that "sex remains in absurd, and perhaps irreconcilable, conflict with some of our highest commitments and values."¹⁸ What de Botton does not provide is an account of the "highest commitments and values" toward which sexual "virtue" should be conducive.

Augustine's account of sexuality and concupiscence, however, is indeed set within a developed account of where human beings have been and where they should be headed. This theological setting is perhaps what is most compelling about Augustine's account of bodily desire and human sexuality. Augustine's theology demonstrates that any account of human sexuality and desire is only ultimately morally significant when set within a broader account of the larger theological issues at the center of the human quest for happiness. Augustine and I would agree that the contemporary conversation about sexual ethics would be strengthened by attention to Cormac

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁷ Ibid., 138.

¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

McCarthy's evaluative principle: "If it doesn't concern life and death, it's not interesting."¹⁹

However one evaluates Augustine's specific claims, any theology of sexuality would do well to imitate Augustine's attention to the connections between sexual desire and the nature of God, the contingency of creation, the tragedy of death, and the hope of resurrection.

In sum, I hope this dissertation has shown that the bodily element of concupiscence is central to Augustine's final account of sexuality and human nature. I have set this account within Augustine's broader theological landscape, and I have shown how understanding the bodily element of sexual desire in Augustine's thought illuminates Augustine's reflections on Edenic sexual desire. However we judge the intellectual merits of Augustine's claims, I hope this dissertation has contributed to our understanding of what Augustine says about concupiscence.

¹⁹ From an interview with Cormac McCarthy. See David Kushner, "Cormac McCarthy's Apocalypse," *Rolling Stone*, December 27, 2007, 43-53.

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