POLITICAL MANICHAEISM AND PROGRESSIVISM: A STUDY OF AUGUSTINIAN AND MILLIAN FREEDOM

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For Kiera and Josiah with love

Abstract

This thesis compares John Stuart Mill and Saint Augustine and their handling of Manichaeism. This comparison reveals how each philosopher understands human freedom and its relationship to politics. Mill, a progressive, thought Manichaeism motivated the individual to take initiative and overcome "evil." However, conformity occurs as society progresses and the smallest of differences between citizens are exaggerated. Society begins to take up arms against obstacles to progress. This problem is seen in progressive movements of the 20th century, like Marxism and the residential schools, and modern day identity politics. Conversely, Augustine understood that the problem of politics is human nature. Evil is not an irredeemable externality but a corruption of a created good. Augustine believed that human beings are unable to "will" themselves towards the eternal good, resulting in a divided will. Augustine understood that the problem of progressivism was an oversimplified understanding of freedom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Following the 2012 American Presidential Election, Frank Luntz—perhaps the most well-known American pollster—fell into a depression, due to his understanding of a distressing development in the American psyche during the 2012 presidential election. His realization was that Americans have become divided across every line, "one against the other, black vs. white, men vs. women, young vs. old, rich vs. poor."[1] The divisions have become so deep that people no longer care to attempt to persuade each other; perhaps even worse, they are no longer even willing to listen to each other. [2] Instead of allowing their fellow citizens the freedom to choose, they want that choice made for them. Persuasion is one of the most important principles in a free and open society. John Locke notes that it is love and reasoned arguments that win converts to a cause. [3] But as Luntz points out, many now see dissent as a character flaw—i.e. those who disagree do so because they embody "evil". The problem is how we understand human nature and human freedom.

In this thesis, I will deal with rivaling conceptions of freedom and evil and the political implications that arise. There are essentially two broad ways that one can think about freedom and evil. First, one can understand freedom as the overcoming of outward oppressive forces—i.e. man can overcome his nature and transcend his limitations. Second, man has a flawed nature, but is free and responsible for his choices—i.e. evil is the result of man desiring lower goods. The first way is represented by John Stuart Mill's

[1] Molly Ball, "The Agony of Frank Luntz" in *The Atlantic*, last modified January 6, 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/01/the-agony-of-frank-luntz/282766/
[2] Molly Ball, "The Agony of Frank Luntz"
[3] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, (New York, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990), 15.

political philosophy. Mill believes that human beings can transcend nature (both in the external and internal sense) and reach perfectibility. The second is represented by the philosophy of Saint Augustine. Augustine argues that evil is caused by a wayward will—i.e. the willing towards lower goods—and freedom can only be had through a realignment of the will towards the highest good and the receiving of God's grace. All levels of human society are prone to suffering, due to a fallen human nature. However, Augustine argues that politics is a good that can limit some suffering. As John von Heyking states, "Politics is the establishment and maintenance of a little world of order."[4] The important difference is that the Augustinian understanding argues that evil is the corruption of a created good and a fallen human nature prevents "heaven on earth". Mill argues that human beings can transcend, or overcome, an imperfect nature and they can then reach their "proper condition."

The Millian view of freedom is greatly influenced by Manichaeism—an ancient gnostic religion. As John Gray observes, "Gnosticism turns on two articles of faith. First there is the conviction that humans are sparks of consciousness confined in the material world…the second formative idea: humans can escape slavery by acquiring a special kind of knowledge…for Gnostics knowledge is the key to freedom."[5] In my thesis, I claim that Mill flirts with the same Manichean tendencies that progressive movements have—especially in the belief that one is pure and the other is stained. I will discuss this further in the fourth chapter. Gray makes the claim that Gnosticism, more generally, is the dominant religion in the western world; as many believe that "human beings can be fully

[4] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 50.
[5] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* (New York, NY, U.S.A: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015) 15-16

understood in the terms of free will…they have come to believe that science will somehow enable the human mind to escape the limitations that shape its natural condition."[6]

To shed light on the two conceptions of the relationship of freedom and evil, my thesis will discuss how Augustine and Mill handle Manichaeism—a dualistic religion founded by Mani in the third century—with regard to how they understand human freedom. Mill thought Manichaeism was useful in motivating man to take his freedom in his own hands and overcome oppressive nature. Mill's philosophy (particularly the gnostic form in his philosophy) leads to political Manichaeism. I define political Manichaeism (or Manichean activism) as a political movement aimed at the destruction of what is deemed to be an outward, oppressive, and irredeemable force that is preventing humanity's progression. This Manichean activism aims at the creation of a "just society." Mill's version of Manichaeism promotes political activism. But I should note that the Manicheans of Augustine's time were more reclusive and less revolutionary. Augustine criticized Manichaeism because he argued that it gave an oversimplified account of human freedom.

Manichaeism and Gnosticism

Before we move on to discuss Mill and Augustine's understanding of human freedom, it would be beneficial to further explain Manichaeism. Manicheans believe that man must overcome an external evil that is preventing progress. Manichaeism is a dualist religion that believes humanity is caught in a struggle between spiritual good and material

[6] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette*, 9.

evil. Mani (born in Mesopotamia in 216 A.D.) saw himself as the spiritual heir to Jesus, Zoroaster, and Buddha (Seal of the Profits); the Seal of Profits allowed Mani to create a world religion.[7] Johannes van Oort points out that Manichaeism was one of the first major gnostic religions, with a Church hierarchy, scriptures, rites, etc.[8] It had a liturgy based on the events of Mani's life: "Mani's birth, the call of the angel, the dispatch of the prophet, his passion and death, and the martyrdom of the first apostles."[9] Manichaeism was practiced in Europe, Northern Africa and Asia (from the Roman Empire to China).[10]

Manicheans believe that there are two opposing forces: one good (the kingdom of light) and one evil (the kingdom of darkness).[11] The kingdom of light is made up of the spirit, while darkness is material. Manicheans also believe that the world is characterized as having good and evil intermingled.[12] However, this becomes problematic as they perceive the spirit in a materialistic way, believing it acts in the same manner and is trapped within material objects—which the Elect would free.[13] There were two divisions of "Manichean believers: Hearers and the more elite Elect. As a Hearer Augustine would have had to pick figs for the Elect and serve it to them so that their digestive tracts could release the divine particles contained there in."[14] To a Manichean, evil is an existential

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[7] Michel Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 17.
[8] Johannes van Oort, "Manichaeism: Its Sources and Influences on Western Christianity," in *Verbum et Ecclesia* (2009) DOI: 10.4102/ve.v30i2.362, 126.
[9] Michel Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, 71.
[10] Andrew Welburn, *Mani, the Angel and the Column of Glory*: *an Anthology of Manichean Texts*, (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2000), 68.
[11] Henry Neumann, "Manichean Tendencies in the History of Philosophy" in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 28, No. 5. (September 1919), 491
[12] Henry Neumann, "Manichean Tendencies in the History of Philosophy", 491
[13] Michael P. Foley, "Notes", *Confessions*, trans. F.J. Sheed, Michael P. Foley, ed., 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 330-31.
[14] Augustine, *Confessions*, fn 48, pg. 49

threat that needs to be overcome. Van Oort notes that Mani believed that "True purity…can only be achieved through special knowledge (Greek: *gnosis*). This *gnosis* is not obtained by outward observances, but rather by inner revelation. It is only through gnosis that we know the difference between good and bad."[15]

Manicheans conceive the human being as split between body and soul, where the body (characterized as evil) fights the soul (absolute goodness).[16] In other words, they believe that man has two wills (one evil and one good). Augustine uses an example of a man choosing to go either to a Manichean meeting or the theatre, where the good will brings them to the meeting and the bad to the theatre, as an illustration of the Manichean two will doctrine.[17] It is an evil will that causes man to do bad things, while his spirit causes him to do good. Guy G. Stroumsa notes that the two will doctrine, forwarded by the Manicheans, originates in Iran, but is also seen in strains of Platonic teaching and in gnostic Jewish and Christian sects, and other gnostic texts.[18]

As was mentioned above, Manichaeism is an ancient form of Gnosticism. Lee Trepanier claims, "Gnostics believed the created world was evil as a result of a divine catastrophe: a transcendent god either became entrapped in pre-existing matter or gave birth to an evil god, the Demiurge, who proceeded to fashion an evil realm of materiality. The Gnostic believer's attitude towards his body and the material universe therefore is

[15] Johannes van Oort, "Manichaeism: Its Sources and Influences on Western Christianity," 128.
[16] Augustine, *Confessions,* 72
[17] Augustine, *Confessions,* 156; Augustine will later refute this division, but observing the ability to want two things deemed evil.
[18] G.G. Stroumsa and Paula Fredriksen, "The Two Souls and the Divided Will", in *Self, Soul And Body In Religious Experience,* A.I Baumgarten, J. Assmann, and G.G. Stroumsa, ed., (Boston, Ma: Koninklijke Brill, 1998), 208.

one of hostility and resentment."[19] Trepanier notes, "Philosophers such as Eric Voegelin, Hans Jonas, and Thomas J.J Altizer have compared the secularism and revolutionary messanism of modern intellectual and political movements with the fundamental features of ancient Gnosticism."[20] For a Gnostic, salvation requires *gnosis* (knowledge of the divine).

John Gray argues, "Many people today hold to a Gnostic view of things without realizing the fact. Believing that human beings can be understood in the terms of scientific materialism, they reject any idea of free will."[21] He claims that in "[m]ystical traditions throughout history, freedom has meant an inner condition in which normal consciousness has been transcended;" The scientific revolution is deeply connected to mysticism.[22] Many of those who live in modern times believe that "human beings can be fully understood in the terms of scientific materialism."[23] Gray claims, "[i]n the most ambitious versions of scientific materialism, human beings are marionettes: puppets on genetic strings, which by accident of evolution have become self-aware."[24]

In John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion,* he argues that Manichaeism, when partnered with the Religion of Humanity, can aid man's pursuit of his "proper condition"—i.e. he believes that Manichaeism is useful in motivating man's political progression where he is able to use his higher faculties and interpret his own experience. The "proper condition" will be discussed further later in this thesis. Mill is often

[19] Lee Trepanier, "Gnosticism", in *VoeglinView,* date accessed August 31, 2016, para. 2, https://voegelinview.com/gnosticism/
[20] Lee Trepanier, "Gnosticism", para. 1.
[21] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 9.
[22] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 5-11.
[23] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 9.
[24] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 10.

considered one of the great defenders of liberal political thought. Capaldi reads *On Liberty* as the great defence of moral libertarianism, which is an argument against any type of restriction on one's freedom. Conversely, William D. Gairdner makes an argument that Mill's philosophy has led to progressivism. Maurice Cowling claims that it was not Mill's intention to further individual freedom; instead, his liberalism was dogmatic and, in a sense, religious. [25]

There are two main aspects to Mill's philosophy: 1) Mill the utilitarian and 2) Mill the romantic. In his philosophy, there is no direct appeal to the transcendent. For Mill, all "good" comes from individual initiative. Therefore, the standard of morality is utility. He states, "I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being."[26] Mill as the romantic argues in favour of Manichaeism and progressive philosophy. Both the utilitarian and romantic in Mill lead him to believe that Manichaeism offers utility in overcoming evil. Mill's Gnosticism is perfectly summarized by Linda Raeder when she says, "Mill's god, like Hegel's, 'really needs' man."[27] Mill's god is a limited god that is unable to create a just world. Instead, it is up to humanity to amend creation and solve the problem of suffering (this will be discussed in Chapter 2).

Mill, an agnostic, turned towards a type of religion, as he understood that if the "integration of individual freedom and the common good was to be effective," it needed a

[25] Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism,* (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1963), xiii.
[26] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill,* intro. J.B. Schneewind, ed. Dale E. Milner, (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2002) 13.
[27] Linda Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity,* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 105.

spiritual underpinning.[28] Walsh claims, "Mill's 'principle of liberty' continues to be a touchstone in liberal debates, a principle of such self-evidence that it can stand as the measure by which all other proposals are to be judged."[29] Mill envisioned liberty as a step towards community, as liberty is based on mutual recognition. Like Locke, Mill appeals to the sense of righteousness in liberalism. Mill's issue is that "universal altruism has no place within the secular order [he] constructed."[30] Progress is best attained through the exercise of individual freedom. All that is good is the result of human action. Walsh claims, "The value of Mill as a thinker is that he brings the inner tensions of the liberal tradition to the light of self-consciousness… [Mill] makes us aware that the liberal order of mutual respect…requires an existential order that is not simply given within the ordinary range of human experiences."[31]

After suffering a mental breakdown and falling into a depression, Mill began to experiment with Gnosticism. He says in his *Autobiography,* "I, for the first time, gave its proper place, among the prime necessities of human well-being, to the internal culture of the individual. I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action."[32] Mill claims that the political thinkers that showed him a different view of politics were from the St. Simonian School. During this time of his life, Mill developed a relationship with positivist Auguste Comte. Comte argued in favor of a doctrine of three stages of human

[28] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997) 158.
[29] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 137.
[30] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 146.
[31]David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 147.
[32] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Currin V. Schields (New York, NY: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 93.

knowledge: "first, the theological, next the metaphysical, and lastly, the positive stage."[33] Mill argues that this "doctrine harmonized well with [his] existing notions, to which it seemed to give a scientific shape."[34]

Auguste Comte first pushed the positivist Religion of Humanity as a replacement of traditional religions. Comte made the argument that "we are asked to recognize the equal worth of all human beings, and to acknowledge that a broader sympathy is more advanced, more mature, than the narrow sympathy with family and kin by which most people are animated."[35] For Comte, this would not only entail replacing traditional religion, but also the founding of an all-powerful government that would control the economy to provide its citizens "bodily security and well-being".[36] Mill argued that the Religion of Humanity offered utility and is necessary if humanity is to move from "individual self-interest to general utility."[37] Martha Nussbaum argues that Mill thought Religion of Humanity is better than theistic religions because: (1) "it has a finer object (since the aim is to benefit others, not to achieve immortality for oneself);" (2) "for that reason, it cultivates motives that are disinterested rather than egoistic;" (3) "it does not contain morally objectionable elements, such as the punishment of sinners in hell; and, finally," (4) "it does not ask people to twist and pervert their intellectual faculties by believing things that are false or even absurd."[38]

[33] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, 106.
[34] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, 106.
[35] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Reinventing the Civil Religion: Comte, Mill, Tagore," in *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 54, No. 01, (Autumn 2011), 8.
[36] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Reinventing the Civil Religion: Comte, Mill, Tagore," 8.
[37] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Reinventing the Civil Religion: Comte, Mill, Tagore," 14.
[38] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Reinventing the Civil Religion," 14.

The greatest influence on John Stuart Mill's intellectual and moral development was his father, James Mill, an ardent utilitarian. In John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, he says his father thought it impossible to reconcile the reality of the world with a belief in an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God—such as the God of Christianity. God cannot be perfect and responsible for creation where suffering is endemic. However, Mill states of his father, "The…Manichean theory of a Good and Evil principle, struggling against each other for the government of the universe, he would not have equally condemned; and I have heard him express surprise, that no one revived it in our time."[39] Mill and his father both appreciated Manichaeism as it motivated human freedom and promoted political activism. That will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

On the other hand, St. Augustine, who once practiced Manichaeism, converted to Christianity because Manichaeism did not account for the complexities of human freedom and it undermined their responsibility for their actions. From the ages nineteen to twenty-eight, Augustine was a Hearer in the Manichean Church.[40] It was the Neo-Platonists that inspired Augustine to think of his relationship with God as the creator of the created. This allowed Augustine to think of creation as a hierarchy of goods. Augustine initially converted to Manichaeism as it allowed him to continue to freely pursue his bodily desires, while also offering grand statements of truth. It was his reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* that caused Augustine to pursue "immortal wisdom."[41] But instead, he fell for what he later calls the Manicheans "high sounding nonsense".[42] Augustine hungered for

[39] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, 27.
[40] H. van Oort, "Augustine and Manichaeism: New Discoveries, New Perspectives", in *Verbum Et Ecclesia JRG*, (2006), 710.
[41] Augustine, *Confessions*, 41
[42] Augustine, *Confessions*, 6

truth and Manicheans blinded him with the beautiful works of God all while giving him "falsities of God and creation", with a focus on material creation and not spiritual truth.[43] Manichaeism influenced much of Augustine's criticism of Christianity. This criticism was not appeased until Augustine took a teaching position in Milan, where he met St. Ambrose and came into contact with some of the works of the Neo-Platonists—who were individuals that built upon the teaching of Plato.

Ambrose showed Augustine that there were intelligent arguments that could be made to defend Christianity from some of his criticisms; however, Augustine was still not willing to proclaim Christianity as truth. While in Rome, Augustine saw an ad for a professor of rhetoric position in Milan, where public funds would pay for the candidate's move.[44] It was in Milan that Augustine met St. Ambrose. St. Ambrose quickly won Augustine over, not only by his kindness, but also by his speaking ability.[45] As Augustine states, "I listened to [his words] with the greatest care; his matter I held quite unworthy of attention".[46] Augustine long since believed Catholic doctrine to be fallacious, but it was the personality of Ambrose that caused Augustine to attend his lectures out of respect. However, after attending Ambrose's lectures, he began to pay attention to the content, or as he states, "[While] I was opening-my heart to learn how eloquently he spoke, I came to feel, though only gradually, how truly he spoke."[47] It became a turning point for how he came to see truth and Catholicism in general.[48] It is an interesting juxtaposition when

[43] Augustine, *Confessions,* 6
[44] Augustine, *Confessions,* 90; Augustine moves from teaching positions in Carthage, Rome and Milan, for many reasons (such as money, prestige better students, etc.)
[45] Augustine, *Confessions,* 90
[46] Augustine, *Confessions,* 90
[47] Augustine, *Confessions,* 91
[48] Augustine, *Confessions,* 91

compared to Faustus' speeches. It was Ambrose who taught Augustine to read the Old Testament figuratively instead of literally, which had caused him much trouble in the past. Augustine would come to realize that God reveals himself in ways that are appropriate to the time; justice is a fixed principle, but what is fitting is dependent to a particular time.[49]

Neo-Platonists had arguably the greatest effect on Augustine's philosophy and his understanding of freedom. It was from them that Augustine learned to understand God as a "spiritual being" who imposed a harmonious ordering over creation.[50] The fundamental problem that Augustine had with Christianity was the problem of evil.[51] God created all things *ex nihilo* (from nothing) and it is all good; however, as William E. Mann claims, there are somethings that are created better than others.[52] Evil is the corruption of good caused by a "swerving of the will which is turned towards lower things and away from [God]."[53] As Mann points out, the free will is counted amongst the good things; however, if it is moved by "mutable" goods then it is responsible for evil.[54] Focusing on lower goods creates a habit of disruption—i.e. it creates a disordering that affects other aspects of a person's life. Augustine states, "I lacked the strength to hold my gaze fixed and my weakness was beaten back again so that I returned to my old habits, bearing nothing with

[49] Augustine, *Confessions,* 45-46; consistent with John 16:12-13 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth."
[50]Augustine, *Confessions,* 130
[51] The problem of evil that Augustine had, is also the problem that John Stuart Mill would later have. How does a God that is all-good and all-powerful exist, when there is so much evil in the world? Essentially why is the world unjust?
[52] William E. Mann, "Augustine on Evil and Original Sin", in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* 2nd ed., David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 103
[53] Augustine, *Confessions,* 132
[54] William E. Mann, "Augustine on Evil and Original Sin", in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* 2nd ed., David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 104

me but a memory of delight."[55] For Augustine, evil was the corruption of something that was created good, caused by a divided will. As Stroumsa points out, "[T]hough [Augustine] rejected the [Manichean] solution as unphilosophical, Augustine continued to be preoccupied by the problem of the divided will…no one analyzed the divided will so well as did Augustine."[56]

Political Manichaeism in Modern Politics

The problem of political Manichaeism is most clearly illustrated on college campuses. On North American campuses, public backlash has followed the arrival of guest speakers (ranging from Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Ben Shapiro, Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, to Sam Harris) whose opinions do not fall within the echo chamber that students have surrounded themselves with. Because these speakers do not conform to the prevailing opinion they are looked at with disgust. Protests have become violent at times as protestors identify these speakers as being preachers of hatred and evil. In 2010, Ann Coulter's (an American conservative pundit) event was met with protests as University of Ottawa students did not want Coulter's "views exposed on [their] campus."[57] Protestors don't see the need to persuade those with whom they disagree. Instead, they silence them. Dissenting opinion is believed to be a stain on society and should not be indulged.

Unsubstantiated accusations of racism, homophobia, islamophobia, sexism, etc. (essentially calling them evil) are screamed out towards the speakers by the audience. It effectively dehumanizes the other, justifying the violence that has become common in

[55] Augustine, *Confessions*, 133
[56] G.G. Stroumsa and Paula Fredriksen, "The Two Souls and the Divided Will", 208.
[57] Jennifer Pagliaro, "Ann Coulter Went Home", in *Maclean's*, last modified March 23, 2010, http://www.macleans.ca/education/uniandcollege/coulters-u-of-o-event-canceled/

universities and at political events. When one side calls the "other" one of these names, what they are really saying is that "you have a stained or evil will; while I am on the side of righteousness." When you view others as evil and not as dignified beings, it becomes easier to become violent and mistreat them. This has been true for many progressive movements (Marxism, or the residential schools). The overreaching of political correctness and identity politics has attributed to the reactionary movement that has fueled Donald Trump's campaign as well as the rise of right-wing populism. What is left is a society where tribalism is rampant and where rational arguments no longer matter. In *The Soul of the Marionette*, John Gray argues that the essence of modernity is Gnosticism (which he includes scientism and transhumanism). He says, "What those who follow [gnostic] traditions want most is not any kind of freedom of choice. Instead, what they long for is freedom *from* choice,"[58] as it is perceived that this is a freer state.

Cass Sunstein has researched the divisions within American politics. Sunstein notes that political prejudice now trumps racial prejudice—i.e. political ideology is now the deepest division within society.[59] Individuals no longer approve, trust or associate with those of another political party like they once did. Sunstein calls this Partyism—the "immediate, visceral negative reactions to members of the opposing political party. The reactions operate a lot like racism, in the sense that they affect decisions in multiple areas

[58] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette*, 7.
[59] Cass R. Sunstein, "'Partyism' Now Trumps Racism," in *Bloomberg View*, last modified September 22, 2014, https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2014-09-22/partyism-now-trumps-racism

of life, including friendship, dating, marriage, hiring, and contracting."[60] Sunstein notes that Republicans now hate Democrats more than all else and vice versa.[61]

Modern tribalism is the consequence of a progressive philosophy that argues that evil is an outward oppressive force—as Mill argued. In Kenneth Minogue's *Liberal Mind,* he tells the story of liberalism—illustrating the Manichean tendency in the modern understanding of freedom—through the legend of St. George, the dragon slayer. He says the first dragon that needed to be slayed was despotism, and when this deed was done an evil was removed from society. After this dragon was slayed, there were still evils left in the world and he had to move on to slaying dragons in the form of poverty and slavery.[62] "But…he did not know when to retire. The more he succeeded, the more he became bewitched with the thought of a world free of dragons, and the less capable he became of ever returning to private life."[63]

This Manichean Progressivism desires to destroy all of society's injustices and create a world of equality. The point is that Liberals cannot live without dragons to slay, but all the big injustices of society (slavery, despotism, etc.) have been slayed. Progressives like Mill are compelled to fight all perceived injustices. However, eventually the smallest of differences are exaggerated and a new dragon is created that needs to be slayed. The problem with liberty is that it eventually cannibalizes itself. In this story of

[60] Cass R. Sunstein, "Cass Sunstein: We've Entered the Age of Partyism—It Might Get Worse Than Racism," in *Heat Street,* last modified May, 13, 2006, http://heatst.com/culture-wars/cass-sunstein-weve-entered-the-age-of-partyism-its-going-to-be-worse-than-racism/
[61] Cass R. Sunstein, "Cass Sunstein: We've Entered the Age of Partyism—It Might Get Worse Than Racism"
[62] Kenneth Minogue, *The Liberal Mind,* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund, Inc., 2000), 1.
[63] Kenneth Minogue, *The Liberal Mind,* 1.

Liberalism, Kenneth Minogue reveals this Manichean tendency in the modern understanding of freedom.

Like Minogue, David Walsh understood the existential crisis of liberalism. Liberalism has led to the modern desire for material security and progress. The basic principle of democracy is that human beings are self-governing, but liberalism lacks a common good. Liberal neutrality has caused it to be neutral towards itself, which undermines it. As Walsh states, "[t]here is nothing approaching a shared worldview, because to be a liberal means precisely that we do not have to share a world view."[64] However, economic growth has been at the heart of liberal political philosophy: "But, growth always includes decline and instability, which translates into real human dislocation and suffering." [65] Walsh claims that the government has not yet mastered self-governing or educating its citizenry of "the principles of action required to confront economic uncertainty."[66]

The problem that Walsh diagnoses is that liberals "find [themselves] lacking the necessary resoluteness of will that would enable us to overcome the problem before us. It is not that the solutions are unavailable, but we are unable to avail of them." [67] We are unwilling to "undergo the painful reorientation" that is needed. Walsh invokes the image of liberals being like an "alcoholic who is ready to quit after 'one more drink'."[68] The problem of liberalism is not unique to today. In the face of totalitarian movements of the

[64] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 16.
[65] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 14.
[66] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 14.
[67] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 14-15.
[68] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 14-15.

past, Western civilization began to buy into T.S Eliot's idea that a "Christian Society [is] the only adequate spiritual support for the superstructure of a liberal political order." [69] Walsh argues that "only the spiritual truth of Christ is sufficient to withstand the assault" of the "nihilistic overturning of values."[70] However, modernity's removal of transcendent ideals has revealed a nihilistic underpinning. Gnosticism has filled the emptiness at the root of liberalism.

My thesis will be structured as follows: Chapter 2, on John Stuart Mill and his philosophy of freedom and evil; Chapter 3, on Augustine and his philosophy of freedom and evil; and finally, Chapter 4, a conclusion where I will examine political Manichaeism's relation to modern progressivism. I argue that the Augustinian understanding of freedom and evil is the answer to the Millian (and Progressive) problems that result from an understanding of freedom that is influenced by Manichaeism. A key point of difference in the philosophy of Augustine and Mill is how they understand the will. Mill's philosophy of freedom argues that human beings can reach their "proper condition" and attain self-knowledge and self-control. Conversely, Augustine argues that the will is divided and Mill's "proper condition" is unattainable.

[69] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 19 & 31.
[70] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 19 & 31.

Chapter 2: Millian Freedom

Mill argues that humanity progresses through individual freedom. Examining Mill's philosophy of human freedom reveals the political problems that arise from the progressive understanding of freedom. One of the great evils (which Mill acknowledges) is tyranny of custom, where even the smallest of differences become exaggerated and are treated with disgust. In the next chapter, I will discuss the Augustinian alternative to the problem of progressivism that this discussion of Mill's freedom brings to light.

The greatest intellectual and moral influences on John Stuart Mill (particularly in his youth) were James Mill (his father) and Jeremy Bentham (a friend of his father and utilitarian philosopher). James Mill was an advocate for Benthamism and raised his son in the utilitarian tradition. However, in 1826 (at the age of 20), Mill fell into a depression, and upon his realization of the limitations of his father's thought, Mill began to embrace Romanticism. John Gray argues: "The Romantic Movement also asserted that humankind can remake the world…It was human will that would enable humankind to prevail over its natural condition."[71] It should be noted that Romanticism is a form of Gnosticism (Mill's Gnosticism will be a major part of this chapter and discussed in depth). Romanticism had an emotional appeal to Mill, but it also taught a proper understanding of the free will. It attracted Mill because it gave direction to the "will" and it empowered humanity to overcome nature. In the section on Mill's essays on religion, I will discuss how he argues that Manichaeism offered utility to humanity and that it was the most rational of all religions.

[71] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 37.

In his *Autobiography*, John Stuart Mill reveals his irregular education—he was taught Greek by the age of three, Latin by the age of eight, studied classics and history, and, with the aid of his father, learned superior analytical skills.[72] But his education in cold calculating utilitarianism and analytics led to a distressed mental state and eventually contributed to his mental breakdown. Mill turned towards poetry as a means of finding internal freedom.

Nicholas Capaldi notes: "During the early 1830s, Mill became disaffected with Benthamism, or classical liberalism."[73] Eventually, Mill would turn to positivism and the Religion of Humanity to rule the sentiments and motivate the will. Progress can only happen when both the heart and the mind are working together in concert to reach a common end. For Mill, his individual philosophy was political in nature. He wanted to undermine supernatural religion (Christianity). In his correspondence with Auguste Comte, Mill tells him, "I would be filled with hope if I believed the time had come when we could frankly hoist the flag of positivism and succeed…and refuse all concessions, even tacit, to theories of the supernatural."[74]

Nicholas Capaldi argues that Mill can generally be interpreted in one of three ways: (1) as a committed classical liberal who made far "too many concessions to modern liberalism"; (2) as one who was committed to "modern liberalism but [retained] too many vestigial traces of classical liberalism"; (3) lastly, Capaldi claims, "[T]o Mill, we might be

[72] Mill, *Autobiography*, Chapter 1.
[73] Nicholas Capaldi, "The Libertarian Philosophy of John Stuart Mill", in *Reason Papers*, No. 9, (Winter, 1983), 11.
[74] Mill, "Letter 63," in *The Correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte*, trans. and ed. Oscar A. Haac (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 288.

tempted to interpret him as an incipient totalitarian…or, however reluctantly, as the forerunner of the licentious society and the cult of self-gratification."[75] This interpretation of Mill being a forerunner to totalitarianism comes from the Manichean belief that humanity should remove or overcome externalities that prevent individuals from acting in accordance with their will—i.e. man is free when there are no restraints in their pursuit of self-gratification. What Capaldi refers to as Modern Liberalism is often called Reform Liberalism. Reform and Classical Liberalism can be distinguished from one another as Classical Liberalism is the belief that each individual should be largely left to his own devices and able to pursue his desires. Classical Liberalism is a belief in equality of opportunity; that is, everyone should be free to act in accordance of one's interests. Classical liberalism believes in negative rights (freedom from interference). Reform liberalism believes external obstacles should be removed so everyone is able to reach what each individual decides their ends to be.

Following his mental breakdown, Mill linked his conception of freedom with his new understanding of the ideal religion—we see at the end of "Theism" (written late in his life, around 1868-1870 and published posthumous in 1874) that he believes Manichaeism is the best and truest religion. It is this religious belief that motivates his philosophy of freedom. Maurice Cowling claims that it was not Mill's intention to further individual freedom; instead, his liberalism was dogmatic and, in a sense, religious. He states, "Mill's object was not to free men, but to convert them, and convert them to a peculiarly exclusive, peculiarly insinuating moral doctrine. Mill wished to moralize all

[75] Nicholas Capaldi, "The Libertarian Philosophy of John Stuart Mill", 5.

social activity."[76] Mill believes that individual freedom is the best way for humanity to reach their "proper condition." Mill says in regards to man's "proper condition": "But it is the privilege and proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, to use and interpret experience in his own way. It is for him to find out what part of recorded experience is properly applicable to his own circumstances and character."[77] Mill's progress ends when all who live in society have reached their "proper condition."

Mill accepts Manichaeism as offering utility to each individual's liberty, as it teaches them to take initiative. Mill shares this belief with modern progressives who desire to construct a just society. Part of what makes Manichaeism useful is that it teaches a "rational" understanding of creation. It claims that man is caught in a cosmic battle between good and evil and it is up to him to overcome "evil." But a problem arises from an endless need to fight all forms of oppression (similar to Minogue's image of the St. George, the dragon slayer). In all forms of progressivism lies an urgent pursuit of "utopia", or heaven on earth. This is where religion becomes important, as it rules the sentiments (while also giving man an end to life), which in turn gives direction to the intellect. As Eric Voegelin says in regards to Comte's philosophy, the heart should pose the questions that the intellect pursues, otherwise the intellect will pursue "futile and chimerical questions."[78]

[76] Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism,* xiii.
[77] Mill, "On Liberty," 60.
[78] Eric Voegelin, "The Apocalypse of Man: Comte," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 26: History of Political Ideas, Volume VIII, Crisis and the Apocalypse of Man,* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1999.), 187.

The focus of this chapter will be on Mill's "On Liberty", his *Three Essays on Religion*, his *Autobiography* and his correspondence with Comte. These works will be supplemented with secondary sources and other Mill writings in order to gain a fuller and more detailed picture of Mill's philosophy of freedom and the utility of religion. I explore Mill's evolution from Benthamism to an embrace of Manichaeism and the political problems that arise from his progressivism. At the end of this chapter, readers should be able to understand the high regard Mill had for Manichaeism and the usefulness he believed it had in motivating mankind to take initiative and solve social injustice. This stems from the belief that humanity is caught in a struggle between good and evil. In a sense, Mill's philosophy of human freedom can be summed up in John Gray's statement on Gnosticism: the "human animal can use its growing knowledge to recreate itself in a higher form."[79] Progress occurs because of human initiative. Mill argues that the best society is one where all can exercise their individual freedom. But as I will discuss, as progress occurs, human beings begin to conform, and differences between citizens become exaggerated.

Mill's Mental Breakdown and its Effects

In Mill's *Autobiography* (published posthumous, 1873), we see his evolution (which began in 1826, when he fell into depression) from cold-calculating utilitarian to a romantic (Gnostic). John Gray notes that "In Gnosticism, the world is the plaything of a demiurge."[80] Gnostics "[believe] that freedom [is] achieved by the possession of a special type of knowledge."[81] This becomes a significant section, as it shows his turn towards

[79] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 23.
[80] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 164-165.
[81] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 164-165.

poetry as a means of gaining knowledge of the divine. John Stuart Mill developed analytical skills as a result of his early education at the hands of his father, James Mill. J.S Mill says that his happiness was tied to his belief that he was a "reformer of the world"—i.e. he was a soldier for progress.[82] He was, in a sense, happy to continue working and striving to complete an impossible task. For Mill, the progress towards completion was something to be desired in itself—I will discuss later in this chapter how Mill understood the dangers of his philosophy. He states, "I enjoyed, through placing my happiness in something durable and distant, in which some progress might be always making, while it could never be exhausted by complete attainment."[83] Mill was motivated by a utilitarian philosophy that taught him to strive to produce the most amount of "good" for the greatest number; in effect, a progression towards a perfectly just society. It was the understanding that humanity represents the ultimate moral standard that would later ease Mill's transition to adopting Religion of Humanity and Manichaeism.

However, a time came when Mill asked himself: "Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely affected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?" The question was answered in the most traumatizing fashion, "No".[84] In Minogue's terms, Mill realized that even if he were to somehow slay all the world's dragons, happiness would remain unattainable. It was the understanding that the "end" that Mill had organized his entire life in the pursuit of was empty that caused him to fall into a depression. Walsh claims that Mill would eventually come "out of his dejection, as

[82] Mill, *Autobiography*, 86.
[83] Mill, *Autobiography*, 86. This quote shows that Mill, like the Liberal that Kenneth Minogue articulates, tied his happiness (or sense of worth) to his ability to slay dragons.
[84] Mill, *Autobiography*, 87.

any other human being might, when he came to realize that, for all his conviction that he was working to abolish the mystery of transcendence in human life, he had not in fact done so and that there was little danger of such success."[85]Mill was embarrassed by his mental distress, to the point that he would not turn to his father for help. Although, Mill would later claim that his father would be open to his new belief in the divine that John Stuart Mill would come to believe.

Mill's mental distress caused him to explore different modes of thought. He turned towards the romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Thomas Woods notes that after reading Wordsworth, what Mill "got into his head was that there were more roads than one to wisdom…it was part of the new attitude taken up by Mill that decisions are not coldly logical, or if they are, that they can be gravely misleading because they take no account of the feelings and emotions which, in many ways, are our truest and surest guides to wisdom."[86] Mill never completely left his utilitarian philosophy or outright refuted Benthamism; instead, he supplemented it with romanticism. Gairdner claims that after his mental breakdown, he began to think that poetry and reasoning merged into philosophy.[87] That is, Mill thought that the sentiments and intellect worked in combination to find wisdom. He began to develop an internal moral standard.

[85]David Walsh, *Guarded By Mystery: Meaning in a Postmodern Age*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999)14.
[86] Thomas Woods, *Poetry and Philosophy: A Study in the Thought of John Stuart Mill*, (London, UK: Hutchinson & CO., 1961), 50.
[87] Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill," in *Humanitas*, Vol. 21, Nos. 1& 2, (2008), 19.

Mill claims that this time of his life "had two very marked effects on [his] opinions and character."[88] First, he no longer thought happiness could be had by being an end itself. Instead, he argues that happiness could only be had if one had an end that is external—i.e. happiness is a by-product of another end.[89] Concerning the second effect—and most pertinent to the current discussion—Mill states, "I…gave its proper place, among the prime necessities of human well-being, to the internal culture of the individual**.** I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action."[90] Gairdner argues that Mill "was resuscitating and legitimizing a very old antinomian urge…to repudiate social expectations and the moral law outside us in favor of self-knowledge and a personally constructed moral law within."[91] Following his mental breakdown, he became disenchanted with his former (and his father's) philosophy. Capaldi claims that there were three reasons why Mill became critical of his father's philosophical Benthamism: 1) his father believed in "an impoverished conception of human fulfillment;" 2) "a denial of freedom of the human will;" 3) and finally, the "inability to deal with the issue of how the individual good is related to the common good."[92] James Mill believed in a determinist account of human freedom, whereas J.S Mill would come to believe in a free will. All of these criticisms have a place within this thesis; however, a major point of difference between Mill and Augustine is how Mill understands the free will—Mill believed that the

[88] Mill, *Autobiography*, 92.
[89] Mill, *Autobiography*, 92.
[90] Mill, *Autobiography*, 92-93.
[91] Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill," 15.
[92] Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 72.

will can be perfected, while Augustine argued in favour of a divided will. I will go into more detail on this difference later in this thesis.

As Mill began to read the romantics, he "abandon[ed] the 'mere reasoning machine' that was his old self—the Benthamite—and he emerged from this period a changed man."[93] This period marked a revolution in Mill's thinking. Gairdner points out that J.S Mill came to embrace an ancient "gnostic belief in the indwelling spirit, the persuasion that our relationship with Divine is direct, personal, private, and above all unmediated."[94] The extension of this argument "is the idea that all enlightened and free human beings, and these only, have a spark of divinity within, or as one critic put it, 'each man has his own personal quiddity or essence which awaits discovery.'"[95] Mill came to realize that "what [he] needed to replace his father's position is the notion of the higher motives that can sustain the common good."[96] Mill's comments in his *Autobiography* reveal that Manichaeism had always intrigued his father and himself—they both believed that it was free from inconsistencies.[97] But it is the Gnostic notion of the indwelling spirit that marks the beginning of Mill's serious embrace of Manichaeism.

Romanticism, as a philosophical movement, "proclaimed reason as the source or medium of universal truths. But reason could no longer be understood as a mirror held up to a contextless independent structure…Rather than being the result of grasping an external structure, our understanding of the world reflected the imposition upon it of an

[93] Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill," 18.
[94] Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill," 23.
[95] Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill," 23.
[96] Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill*, 73.
[97] Mill, *Autobiography*, 27.

internally generated frame of reference."[98] The internal standard, which is central to Romanticism, is as imaginative as it is rational. The idea is essentially that one should internally search to find a moral standard which can be used to judge the external. Capaldi argues that Mill resolved the criticisms of his father's work by restating "his father's views within the context of Romanticism. What this amounted to was a celebration of reason but the ultimate transcendence of reason by poetry."[99]

Mill's reading became focused on Continental thinkers such as Saint Simon, Auguste Comte, etc. From them, he learned "the human mind has a certain order of possible progress, in which some things must precede others, an order which governments and public instructors can modify to some, but not to an unlimited extent."[100] But the greatest influences on Mill's political thought at this time were the writers associated with the Saint Simonian School in France. "Saint Simon became famous for formulating a quasi-Newtonian deterministic account of historical progress."[101] Saint Simon believed that "Every society was allegedly based on a set beliefs, of which the most important were the nexus between metaphysical-theoretical knowledge and practical economic activity."[102] Linda Raeder argues that in the philosophy of the Saint Simonians, "history is characterized by alternating 'critical' and 'organic' periods. The critical periods are transitional phases during which the passing beliefs of the old order gradually give way to

[98] Capaldi, "John Stuart Mill," 91.
[99] Capaldi, "John Stuart Mill," 132.
[100] Mill, *Autobiography,* 104
[101] Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill,* 77.
[102] Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill,* 78.

the new stable belief system that characterizes an organic or 'normal' state of mind and society."[103]

What attracted Mill to the Saint Simonians was their progressive or teleological understanding of history—which is in direct contrast with the conservative philosophical understanding of history. However, Mill—and Auguste Comte—would eventually become disenchanted with the Saint Simonians. Capaldi claims that Mill would leave as he "disapproved of their rejection of private property, the focus on social as opposed to individual moral reform, the stereotypical view of women as spiritual, and of their authoritarianism." The reason why Mill left is that they do not give justice to individual freedom: "[m]oreover, any mechanistic theory of progress such as one finds in Saint Simon leaves no room for individual initiative. Any conception of a technocracy or even a meritocracy is ultimately incompatible with personal autonomy."[104] Mill left the Saint Simonians for the same reason he sympathized with Manichean philosophy. For Mill, Manichaeism became useful as it gave autonomy to individuals, allowing them to fulfill their nature as progressive beings. Mill's eventual disenchantment with the Saint Simonians was because they were in favour of an authoritarian state. Mill's philosophy and understanding of progress is centred on individual freedom. However, he would adopt aspects of their philosophy and incorporate it with his own.

[103] Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*, 236.
[104] Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill,* 80-81.

Positivism

Auguste Comte's philosophical venture consists essentially of a "Philosophy and a Polity;" he claims that "These can never be dissevered; the former being the basis, and the latter the end of one comprehensive system in which our intellectual faculties and our social sympathies are brought into close correlation with each other."[105] Comte argues, "The primary object, then, of Positivism is two-fold: to generalize our scientific conceptions, and to systematize the art of social life."[106] Comte's doctrine argued the "natural succession of three stages in every department of human knowledge: first, the theological, next the metaphysical, and lastly, the positive stage."[107] The theological stage is humanity's turning to a deity in order to answer questions that they did not understand. The metaphysical stage is marked by humanity turning towards abstract principles. Finally, the positive stage is humanity's turn towards scientific explanations (or methods) to answer life's questions. Mill believed that Comte's three stages were compatible with his philosophy and supplemented his philosophy by giving it a scientific foundation.

The Religion of Humanity had the role of replacing "traditional" religion in Comte's positivist philosophy. The Positivist "doctrine condemns all theological explanations, and replaces them, or thinks them destined to be replaced, by theories which take no account of anything but an ascertained order of phaenomena."[108] Comte's life can

[105] Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism,* trans. J. H. Bridges, (New York, New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1957), 1.
[106] Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism,* 3.
[107] Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism,* 3.
[108] John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism,* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. 1961), 13.

be split into two related periods. "In the first period he was the theorist of Positivism and the founder of the science to which he gave its name, sociology; in the second period he was the *Fondateur* and *Grand-Pretre* of the new religion."[109] Positivism was Comte's philosophical endeavour and Religion of Humanity was his religious enterprise.

John Stuart Mill formed a relationship with Comte when the latter had come to regard himself the founder of positivism and Religion of Humanity. Mill was attracted to Comte's philosophy as it promoted human beings as masters of their future. Angele Kremer-Marietti claims: "Mill approved of Comte's philosophy of history…he accepted the law of three ages, the theological, metaphysical and the positive." [110] However, he would be critical of Comte "for not having analyzed the methods of verification and established criteria for truth."[111] Mill "welcomed Positivism as the legitimate heir to the great philosophic movements of the past, a faith for the present and an inspiration for the future…Positivism was to take over from the 'negative' and 'critical' spirit of the Enlightenment."[112] Kremer-Marietti notes that Positivism was to be "based on observation and applied by pragmatic methods, would enable positivist philosophers to anticipate the needs of society; better still, the positive science of sociology gave philosophers the right and the duty to act in the political sphere."[113] Positivism was an instrument that enabled humanity to use their knowledge to motivate their political action. It is imperative that they act in the political sphere because this leads to societal progress.

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[109] Eric Voegelin, "The Apocalypse of Man: Comte," 163.
[110] Angele Kremer-Marietti, "Introduction", in *The Correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte,* trans. and ed. Oscar A. Haac, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 21.
[111] Angele Kremer-Marietti, "Introduction", in *The Correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte,* trans. and ed. Oscar A. Haac, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 21.
[112] Angele Kremer-Marietti, "Introduction", 2.
[113] Angele Kremer-Marietti, "Introduction", 3.

In Mill's first letter to Auguste Comte (written on November 8, 1841), he writes, "It is all the more urgent that we replace [religion] by embarking on the path of positive philosophy: and it is with great pleasure that I can tell you that, in spite of the openly antireligious spirit of your work, this great monument of the truly modern philosophy begins to make headway here, less however among political theorists than among various kinds of scientists."[114] What these two writers shared was a disdain for Christianity and a desire for society to transition from belief in the transcendent to one that relies on its own devices to ensure humanity's progress. Both Comte and Mill understood the importance of religion in controlling the hearts and minds of its adherents. This letter reveals a belief that their philosophy could create a religion that is centred on the premise of human progress. Mill has a "realization that positive philosophy, once it is conceived as a whole, is capable of fully assuming the high social function that so far only religions have fulfilled, and [at that], quite imperfectly so."[115]

Auguste Comte's philosophy—positivism—was based on the belief that humanity can progress by relying on its own faculties and understanding cause and effect relationships. Mill would eventually become critical of Comte's form of positivism, saying of Comte, "whose social system, as unfolded in his *Triate de Politique Positive* (*A General View of Positivism*), aims at establishing (through by legal appliances) a despotism of society over the individual, surpassing anything contemplated in the political ideal of the most rigid disciplinarian among the ancient philosophers."[116] In short, he believed that the proposed system is too centralized and authoritarian. Mill

[114] John Stuart Mill, "Letter 1", 36.
[115] Mill, "Letter 21", 118.
[116] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 15-16.

rejected Comte for the same reason he rejected Saint Simonians. Mill was argued that humanity progressed through individual action, which was undermined by the authoritarian philosophy of Comte. In the next section, we will see that Mill thought that Manichaeism is useful in teaching human beings to take initiative.

Mill On Religion

In this section, Mill discusses his understanding of creation of the divine and how human beings fit in relation to the divine. In many of his writings, John Stuart Mill claims that Manichaeism offers the most amount of utility in man's progress. Mill and his father both believed that Manichaeism was free of moral inconsistencies—i.e. it is a superior form of religion. His appeal to Manichaeism ultimately proves Walsh correct, when Walsh claims liberals require an existential/transcendent order.[117] Mill was raised in an areligious household with an anti-Christianity belief. His father thought that it was impossible to believe in a God that was all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving, and would create a world rife with evil, like ours currently is—so did J.S. Mill for that matter.[118] James Mill was not totally opposed to the possibility of a transcendent deity. J.S. Mill said of his father, "The…Manichaean theory of a Good and Evil Principle, struggling against each other for the government of the universe, he would not have equally condemned; and I have heard him express surprise, that no one revived it in our time."[119] James Mill was open to a Manichean theory of creation. While John Stuart Mill would never reveal his new philosophical beliefs to his father, it was this openness to an

[117] David Walsh, *Growth of the Liberal Soul*, 147.
[118] Mill, *Autobiography,* 27.
[119] Mill, *Autobiography,* 27.

alternative view of creation that caused Mill to believe his "father was not so much opposed as he seemed, to the modes of thought in which I believed myself to differ from him; that he did injustice to his own opinions."[120]

John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* is made up of three related essays discussing evidence of a supernatural force, as well as religious morality and utility. These essays were written late in his life and published posthumously ("On Nature" and "Utility of Religion" were written between 1850-1858, and "Theism" written 1868-1870). Mill's thesis is that what is good and moral is the consequence of human action. Mill seems to favor the secular Religion of Humanity, but he makes arguments that read as an "Apology" of Manichaeism. Linda Raeder states that Mill "appears to advocate [for] a…form of supernatural or transcendent belief."[121] In "Utility of Religion" and "Theism" in particular, Mill reveals the type of limited deity he believes can/does exist. In these essays, Mill argues that his understanding of the divine is useful in motivating humanity to overcome Nature.

Religion is useful in that it gives a moral standard to humanity and it is Christ, above all, who gives such an excellent ideal for humanity to aspire to.[122] In the *Three Essays,* Mill is attempting create the best environment for development of each individual. It is when individuals exercise their freedom that society as a whole can progress. The purpose of Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* is not to defend Manichaeism

[120] Mill, Autobiography, 130.
[121] Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity,* 139.
[122] John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays on Religion,* Louis J. Matz, ed., (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2009), 54

per se, but to illustrate the usefulness that religion (as long as it conceives the supernatural as limited) has in overcoming "evil".

The three essays offer insight into what Mill sees as both the ideal and probable relationship between man and his creator. This understanding of creation becomes a great influence on Mill's philosophy of individual freedom. Mill adopts his father's assertion that the fact bad things happen to good people, and vice versa, is proof that if there is a transcendent deity, it cannot be all-powerful, all-knowing, and good. He reveals in these essays that his god is imperfect and a limited creator (a Manichean understanding). It is up to humanity to build off the work of the "creator" and overcome all created evils.[123] It is man's duty to overcome nature and material evil.

Nature does not provide a moral standard. Nature is imperfect and it is up to humanity to re-order nature and eliminate suffering. In Mill's essay "On Nature" (he intended to publish in 1873), he launches an "[inquiry] into the truth of the doctrines which make Nature a test of right and wrong, good and evil, or which in any mode or degree attach merit or approval to following, imitating or obeying Nature."[124] The question being asked is whether or not Natural Law could/should be used as a guiding principle for humanity's actions. He acknowledges that there are two principle meanings to the word Nature that are often conflated in modern discourse: 1) "all the powers existing in either the outer or the inner world and everything which takes place by means

[123] This marks an important distinction with St. Augustine's thought. As we will demonstrate, evil according to Augustine is a corruption of the good. To Mill this is a created material evil, that is preventing humanity's progress.
[124] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", in *Three Essays on Religion*, Louis J. Matz, ed., (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2009), 71

of those powers"; 2) "what takes place without the agency…of man."[125] Mill claims that the first understanding of "nature" is too broad, as it encompasses all human action. [126] The second understanding is immoral, as nature is brutal and unjust. [127] It is irrational and immoral to imitate nature because man acts to improve on nature, and it is immoral because nature kills, starves, and tortures. Gray essentially makes the same argument about modern Gnostics when he says, "To be free, humans must revolt against the laws that govern earthly things. Refusing the constraints that go with being a fleshly creature, they must exit from the material world."[128]

"On Nature" is Mill's argument that because nature is imperfect, the creator cannot be perfect (all-loving and all powerful). It is an argument against state of nature theorists, as well as notable philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. As we will later examine, this argument represents an important difference with St. Augustine's view of a world created by a perfect creator where creation is fundamentally good, and evil is not an irredeemable material object but a corruption of the good. Mill's argument is that humanity develops their rationality and a standard of right and wrong is realized from his agency.

Individuals can remove themselves "from any particular law of nature, if [they] are able to withdraw [themselves] from the circumstances in which it acts."[129] Simply put, man is always subject to the laws of Nature and must conform to them; one law can

[125] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 68
[126] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 68
[127] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 68
[128] John Gray, *The Soul of the Marionette,* 13.
[129] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 74

always be used to counteract another (e.g. gravity vs. lift). Mill tries to find a "meaning to the supposed practical maxim of following Nature…in which Nature stands for which takes place without human intervention."[130] By studying Nature, Mill argues, we can learn its secrets or gain "knowledge of its properties" and use this knowledge to obtain our ends.[131] In short, man must overcome, or re-order, nature; as Mill claims "Nature is a scheme to be amended, not imitated by man."[132] Nature kills and tortures and these are actions that man should not imitate; in fact we should be proud of preventing "calamities" caused by nature.[133] It is the respectable attributes of humanity that represent an overcoming of its basic instincts. Mill claims that there is "hardly anything of value in the natural man except capacities," [134]—i.e. his ability to progress.

Mill makes an argument against the theory that "good" comes from evil, as evil also comes from good.[135] It is not the natural tendency for evil to produce good or vice versa; instead, evil tends to produce evil and good produces good. As Mill states, "It is one of Nature's general rules, and part of her habitual injustice, that 'to him that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he hath.'"[136] This is an argument against natural theology, which claims to find evidence in nature for God's existence. Natural theologians believe that the "goodness of God…does not consist in the happiness of his creatures, but their virtue."[137] But this is problematic, as suffering should

[130] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 75
[131] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 75
[132] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 89
[133] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 83-84
[134] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 92
[135] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 84
[136] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 85
[137] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 86

then be distributed equally. Mill states: "The only admissible moral theory of Creation is that the Principle of Good cannot at once and altogether subdue the powers of evil…could not place mankind in a world free from the necessity of an incessant struggle with the maleficent powers."[138] If we assume that the creator is good and not all powerful, then the "duty of man is to cooperate with the beneficent powers, not by imitating but by perpetually striving to amend the course of nature."[139] Throughout the three essays, Mill's arguments implicate Manichaeism as the true and most useful religion. "On Nature" is not just an argument against Christianity, but a claim that humanity must take up arms and overcome nature.

In "On Nature," Mill illustrates that nature is imperfect and needs human beings to re-order it. In "Utility of Religion," he attempts to answer the question: can religion help humanity progress? The two religions that he believes are conducive to progress are Religion of Humanity and Manichaeism. Mill begins his essay by examining the utility that religion is commonly believed to offer. Religion is often credited with giving moral duties and encouraging justice; Mill states that it only seems that this is the case because religion controls authority, early education and public opinion. In fact, it is human teachings of right and wrong that deserve the credit.[140] He also says that man's beliefs are affected by authority, but as infants, God's authority is no more real than the authority of our parents.[141] The implicit argument is that if society's institutions are organized around human progress, then human beings can eventually reach their "proper condition." This

[138] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 87
[139] John Stuart Mill, "On Nature", 104
[140] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", in *Three Essays on Religion,* Louis J. Matz, ed., (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2009), 110
[141] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 112

position is in direct opposition to the Augustinian notion. Augustine argues that human nature is the problem. Progressives, like Mill, think the problem is an oppressive nature. Mill claims that the only reason the Gentiles were able to accept Christianity was because they were "prepared", or educated, by the philosophers.[142] People can then be educated to accept positivism. Mill uses the example of Sparta, whose laws were not the result of religion, but from a devotion "to the ideal of the country or state."[143] The example of Sparta reveals Mill's conception of freedom as a society united in progressing towards a free state.

The next good that religion is supposed to give is an ideal of what a good human life is and what to aspire to.[144] This is related to Mill's belief that the sentiments can give humanity an understanding of the divine (as informed by his Romanticism). Mill's goal is to replace traditional religion with Religion of Humanity, as it offers a better ideal to pursue. A belief in the transcendent is not necessary for humanity to develop their morality. Linda Raeder argues that "One of the chief benefits of the Religion of Humanity, Mill says, is the impetus it gives to human will and agency, for, as said, such a god as Mill conceives is so limited and ineffective on his own that he 'really needs' man's help."[145] If the claim is that morality is ordained by a supernatural being, then whatever is held to be moral would be above public discourse—society would not be able to debate this morality.[146] "So that if among the moral doctrines received as a part of religion, there be any which are imperfect… [they] would be equally binding on the conscience with the

[142] John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism,* 24.
[143] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 113
[144] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 126
[145] Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity,* 231.
[146] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 123

noblest, most permanent and universal precepts of Christ."[147] Mill criticizes Christianity because to him, it does not allow for humanity's progress, as it ingrains in man a sense of apathy concerning worldly affairs. Christianity teaches humanity to be content living in an imperfect world. This understanding is a non-starter for Mill and sparked a desire to undermine Christianity.

Mill contends that Manichaeism is a superior form of religion when compared to Christianity because it instills in its followers a desire to better the world by remaking and overcoming Nature. This comes from the belief that creation is caught in a cosmic struggle between good and evil; man must act in this life in order to defeat evil: "The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire." He continues, "[this] condition is fulfilled by the Religion of Humanity in as eminent a degree, and in as high sense as, by the supernatural religions even in their best manifestations and far more so than in any of their others."[148] The Religion of Humanity is a social religion that aims to replace traditional religions with one based on human progress. It aims for the creation of heaven on earth. One of the benefits of this social religion is that the "rewards" are had in this life, not after death like Christianity. Raeder notes that the "Religion of Humanity incorporated not only Comte's Great Being of Humanity but also his well-known ethical distinction between selfish 'egoism' and selfless 'altruism.' The main purpose of morality…is to 'cultivate the unselfish feelings' through habitual exercise."[149]

[147] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 123
[148] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 130
[149] Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*, 136.

Mill believes that the Religion of Humanity is most conducive to temporal progress. This is so for two reasons. First, it "carries the thoughts and feelings out of self and fixes them on an unselfish object, loved and pursued as end for its own sake."[150] This is far more altruistic than other religions (Christianity) which promise rewards for "good" individuals and eternal damnation for the rest. Second, it does not teach that creation was made by a loving and all powerful God.[151] His point here is that by adopting the doctrine that the morals given by the creator are perfect, we prevent further rational inquiry and progress. The one supernatural belief that he believes is "clear both of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity" is Manichaeism.[152] Manichaeism teaches a proper understanding of creation and the place of the human being within creation. As Thomas Woods says, "It is human feeling and not an apocalyptic vision of a world beyond the one we know that endows our reality with significance and with pathos. It is man's own contemplation of the world as it is—the achievements, the failures, the good and the bad, that makes human life what it is. It is continuing presence of man that gives the world its true meaning."[153]

Manichaeism incentivizes individual action. As Linda Raeder notes, "[F]or Mill such human exertion is crucial because the vigorous exercise of human agency is essential to the realization of whatever goodness, justice, and order this reckless disorder of existence can hope to realize."[154] Manichaeism then offers utility in motivating individuals to better their lot in life—i.e. to pursue a just world. Raeder argues that the

[150] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 130
[151] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 131-132
[152] John Stuart Mill, "Utility of Religion", 134
[153] Thomas Woods, *Poetry and Philosophy*, 57.
[154] Linda Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity,* 105

suggestion of Mill's essays "On Religion" is that the "skill and power of man may one day equal that of the Demiurge, that is, man himself may eventually be able to create a human being, to make a man."[155]

"Theism"

In Mill's last of his *Three Essays on Religion*, "Theism", he starts a scientific inquiry into the proof of the existence of God—i.e. an inquiry based on "facts and analogies of human experience"; he uses a posteriori.[156] Mill concludes that monotheism, not polytheism, can be possibly claimed on scientific grounds. As phenomena follows laws of nature and all events are so intertwined, it is only conceivable that if there were a divine being, he would control all of nature not just a part—i.e. nature is a connected system.[157] While Mill begins his inquiry by saying that monotheism is the most logical claim, the rest of his essay claims that his god must be limited and Manichaeism (a dualist religion) is the most rational religion.

Mill's God does not govern according to his will but according to invariable laws.[158] He says this because of the existence of evil in the world. Intelligent design is the only argument that can claim to have some evidence, to which he uses the method of agreement.[159] Mill uses an eye as an example to aid his argument. He says that all parts of the eye must work together for an animal to see; he says "inasmuch as the elements agree in the single circumstance of conspiring to produce sight, there must be some connection

[155] Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity,* 196
[156] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 146
[157]John Stuart Mill, "Theism", in *Three Essays on Religion,* Louis J. Matz, ed., (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2009), 143
[158]John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 144
[159] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 161

by way of causation between the cause which those elements together and the fact of sight."[160]

Mill's creator has more intelligence and power than man, but the necessity of "[contrivance]—the adaption of means to an end…is a consequence of the limitation of power."[161] Mill argues that wisdom and contrivance are not needed and are even inconsistent with the idea of an omnipotent creator.[162] Mill states, "The Author of the machinery is no doubt accountable for having made it susceptible of pain; but this may have been a necessary condition of its susceptibility to pleasure."[163] To Mill's mind, the author of creation (a limited deity) is unable to create a just world. He concludes by stating that attributes of the creator would be "a being of great but limited power, how or by what limited we cannot conjecture; of great and perhaps unlimited intelligence, but perhaps, also more narrowly limited that his power: who desires, and pays some regard to the happiness of his creatures, but seems to have other motives which he care more for."[164]

This limited god gives humanity the impetus to use their freedom and overcome obstacles to progress. Woods points out that for Mill, "Man as the maker, to a large degree, of his own destiny is a better ideal than Man, the victim of powerful and irresistible 'historical' forces."[165] Mill would claim that there is no dignity in the Christian life because a Christian believes that he is subject to the whims of powerful divinity. Mill

[160] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 163-64
[161] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 167
[162] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 167
[163] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 176
[164] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 178.
[165] Thomas Woods, *Poetry and Philosophy*, 131.

believes that human beings can overcome nature and progress to their "proper condition." Mill concludes his inquiry by saying, "The indication given by such evidence as there is, points to the creation, not indeed of the universe, but of the present order of it by an Intelligent Mind, whose power over the materials was not absolute, whose love for his creatures was not his sole actuating inducement, but who nevertheless desire their good."[166]

Manichaeism offers a philosophically sound conception of Nature and Life. This is because Manicheans view "Nature and Life…as the product of a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material."[167] Humanity is caught in the middle of this cosmic struggle. This religion allows its followers to believe "that all the mass of evil which exists was undesigned by, and exists not by the appointment of, but in spite of the Being whom we are called upon to worship."[168] Mill discusses an unnamed "cultivated and conscientious" individual who devoutly followed Manichaeism.[169] Mill claims this religion has one advantage to Religion of Humanity: the belief in life after death.[170] Manichaeism motivates human beings to take initiative and overcome "evil." It gives an understanding of creation that is conducive to human progress.

Political Progress

On Liberty reveals how Mill perceives the question of the relationship between freedom and evil. Mill argues that the struggle for freedom is between the individuals and tyrannical oppressors and public opinion—i.e. the fight for freedom is between the

[166] John Stuart Mill, "Theism", 207.
[167] Mill, "Utility of Religion,"134.
[168] Mill, "Utility of Religion,"134.
[169] Mill, "Utility of Religion,"134.
[170] Mill, "Utility of Religion,"135.

individual and external forces. His understanding that freedom is expressed in an overcoming of externalities stems from his Romanticism (as explored in a previous section). Freedom is a result of a historical process where humanity overcomes nature (nature, as Mill understands, it is a tool to be used and not imitated). Humanity is progressing towards its "proper condition"—where human beings enjoy full self-knowledge and self-control. This reveals how Mill conceives the "will". Mill believes that the "will" can be perfected and is in complete control by the individual. However, a problem arises due to progress. Eventually society becomes intellectually homogenous. It happens as each citizen will take for granted the prevailing ideas of their time. Ultimately, Mill argues that man is a progressive being, moving towards perfectibility by overcoming oppression.

Mill begins *On Liberty* with a historical analysis of how humanity has progressed from their state of barbarism. As societies progressed, citizens began to demand limitations on their governments which took form in two ways: ensuring political rights and creating constitutional checks and balances, whereby consent of the community is needed.[171] Eventually, citizens began to have a voice in the affairs of the state through democratic institutions. Mill argues that despotism is needed for the "uncivilized". The need for despotism comes out in how Mill thought of the relationship between Britain (a "civilized" nation) and India (an "uncivilized" nation). Mill believed that British despotism would enable Indians to progress and overcome their immature state—that is, they would become civilized and reach their "proper condition". In effect, he is arguing that with British despotism, Indians could transcend their barbarism. For Mill, "Indians

[171] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 4.

could improve no other way—certainly not by native initiative."[172] Mill says in "A Few Words on Non-Intervention":

> A civilized government cannot help having barbarous neighbours: when it has, it cannot always content itself with a defensive position, one of mere resistance to aggression. After a longer or shorter interval of forbearance, it either finds itself obliged to conquer them, or to assert so much authority over them, and so break their spirit, that they gradually sink into a state of dependence upon itself…This is the history of the relations of the British Government with the native States of India. It never was secure in its own Indian possessions until it had reduced the military power of those states to a nullity. But a despotic government only exists by its military power…we bound ourselves to place at their disposal…such an amount of military force as made us in fact masters of the country. We engaged that this force should fulfil the purposes of a force, by defending the prince against all foreign and internal enemies…But being thus assured of the protection of a civilized power…the only checks which either restrain the passions or keep any vigour in the character of an Asiatic despot, the native Governments either became so oppressive and extortionate as to desolate the country, or fell into such a state of nerveless imbecility, that everyone…was the prey of anybody who had a band of ruffians in his pay.[173]

Mill is claiming that in the case of India, the native population had not progressed to the point where the British Government could treat them as civilized peoples. In a sense, it was moral of Britain to break India militarily and become the authoritative figure. Otherwise, India would have been left to barbarians who would have terrorized the population. It was British imperialism or action that allowed India to progress.

Mill thought that despotism was a necessity at the early stages of humanity's development. This is because the citizens had not yet cultivated their higher faculties; therefore, they were not able to exercise their freedom. But eventually the "many" will

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[172] Jimmy Casas Klausen, "Violence and Epistemology: J.S. Mill's Indians after the 'Mutiny'," in *Political Research Quarterly,* Vol. 69, No. 1, January, 2016, 97. http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/1065912915623379

[173] John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention", in New England Review, Vol. 27, No. 3, (2006), http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uleth.ca/stable/40244870, 259-260.

challenge their tyrant and demand more freedom. However, as Mill points out, as majority opinion begins to be reflected in government policy, a new brand of tyranny is formed: tyranny of the majority. Mill believed that tyranny of the majority is a far more odious and dangerous form of tyranny. Mill claims that tyranny of the majority is worse than that of a tyrannical despot because there can be checks and balances instituted to protect the people from the tyrant.[174] The trouble is that tyranny of the majority is not merely contained in the politics of the state, but rather it is the domination of prevailing opinion and the suppression of all differing ideas. This brand of tyranny does not end in progress but conformity of opinion, by restricting each citizen's thoughts and opinions, preventing them from using their own understanding. Woods claims that by tyranny of majority, Mill means, "The power of opinion, impressed by education and enforced by the many and subtle means of social reward and punishment, is found to be more effective."[175] This examination of history should not be overlooked, as it clearly shows the manner in which Mill views progress as the defeat of externalities. External limitations to liberty are, in a sense, evil. It also reveals Mill's adoption of a progressive understanding of history. What Mill got from Comte was a "link between 'universal history' and the philosophical concept of progress, applied to history; social statics, the coexistence of social phenomena, along with social dynamics which observes their succession."[176] The problem with Mill's progress is that it eventually leads to a regression of thought as a tyrannical custom emerges. Those who do not conform are treated with disgust.

[174] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 7.
[175] Thomas Woods, *Poetry and Philosophy,* 141.
[176] Angele Kremer-Marietti, "Introduction", 23.

Millian Freedom and the Proper Society

Mill's concern is not just with a despotic government but also a tyrannical majority. Central to Mill's philosophy of progress is individual freedom. I should note that his doctrine only applies to those "human beings in maturity of their faculties."[177] Freedom is not to be exercised by children or the "uncivilized". As Ralph Raico argues, John Stuart Mill's *"On Liberty* actually deviated from the central line of liberal thought by counterpoising the individual and his liberty not simply to the state but to 'society' as well…Mill aimed at stripping the individual of any connection to spontaneously generated social tradition and freely accepted authority."[178] In the previous section, I discussed humanity's progress from barbarism and the necessity of despotism for the "uncivilized." This section will discuss the relationship between the individual and civilized society.

When it comes to politics, Mill argues that human beings live on a spectrum between those who, "whenever they see any good to be done, or evil to be remedied, would willingly instigate the government to undertake the business; while others prefer to bear almost any amount of social evil, rather than add one to the departments of human interests amenable to governmental control."[179] Mill believes that in a "civilized" society, every individual should be free to live in the way that they see fit. While despotism is necessary for the "uncivilized," "as soon as mankind have attained the capacity of being guided to their own improvement by conviction of persuasion…compulsion, either in the

[177] Mill, "On Liberty," 12.
[178] Ralph Raico, "What is Classical Liberalism?", in *Mises Institute: Austrian Economics, Freedom and Peace,* last updated August 16, 2010, para. 12.
[179] Mill, "On Liberty," 11.

direct form or in that of pains and penalties for non-compliance, is no longer admissible as a means to their own good, and justifiable only for the security of others."[180]

Mill is concerned with the coercive power of the government and its ability to stomp out dissenting opinion and diversity of thought and values. He says, "I deny the right of the people to exercise such coercion, either by themselves or by their government. The power itself is illegitimate."[181] The legitimacy of power has no bearing of morality of the government. If all of society except one agreed, they still would not be justified in silencing the lone dissenter.[182] Even if the action that the government was going take was good, the power would still be illegitimate. To limit free speech is to prevent others from deciding for themselves what is true. It undermines their ability to reach their "proper condition."

Liberty for Mill is threefold: "first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense;" second, individuals should be free to pursue their own tastes or desires; third, freedom of assembly.[183] Mill claims that these freedoms are basic to a free society, and "[n]o society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected, is free, whatever may be its form of government; and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified."[184] Society gains when all are able to exercise their freedom. Ultimately, it is through each individual's freedom that society progresses.

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[180] Mill, "On Liberty," 12.
[181] Mill, "On Liberty," 18.
[182] Mill, "On Liberty," 18.
[183] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 14.
[184] Mill, "On Liberty," 14.

Freedom of opinion allows for further understanding of what truth is and how it should be applied, allowing individuals to progress and cultivate their higher faculties. Therefore, government never has the authority to suppress minority opinions, even when its actions are backed by popular opinion.[185] Suppressing opinion robs humanity as a whole. As Mill states, "If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth…[if] wrong, they lose, what is almost a great benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."[186] Preventing free discussion is a claim of our own infallibility, and by understanding history, man can see much of the "truth" that was held by prior generations and rejected by later generations. In order to cultivate the intellect, society needs to have free debate and be open to new ideas. Even the Roman Catholic Church, as Mill points out, listens to all that a "devil's advocate" has to say, prior to canonizing a Saint.[187] Diversity of thought is important for man's progress until he can understand all potential arguments.

Freedom of speech is essential for a healthy society. It is through disagreement that society progresses. By allowing dissent, mankind can have a greater conception of what is true. Mill argues for freedom of opinion on four distinct grounds: 1) to deny the possibility of truth of an opinion is to "assume our own infallibility;" 2) "Prevailing opinion…is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied;" 3) even if the opinion is true, if it does not go through the gauntlet of refutation but dissenters, then it will "be held in the manner of a prejudice with little comprehension or feeling of its rational

[185] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 19.
[186] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 19.
[187] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 25.

grounds;" 4) "[d]anger of being lost…becoming a more formal profession, inefficiencies are for good, but cumbering the ground and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience."[188] Thomas Woods claims, "The wise mind is one that is always open to comment and criticism; that considers experience in the light of all that can be said about it; that looks for objections rather than avoiding them."[189] Mill's argument in favour of freedom of speech was greatly influenced by the Saint Simonians—they argued that freedom of discussion was an important instrument in transitioning society away from past ideals (i.e. Christianity).

Mill acknowledges that freedom of action should not be given the same leeway as freedom of opinion. Mill says of individual liberty, "must thus far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people."[190] The only time that society has the right to interfere with a human being's freedom is to prevent harm. This is what is known as the harm principle. Mill defines the harm principle: "That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."[191]

As stated above, a human being's "proper condition" is reached when they are able to use their higher faculties to interpret their own experience. The higher faculties are

[188] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," 54.
[189] Thomas Woods, *Poetry and Philosophy,* 120; Mill has been criticized by many, including Woods, for underestimating the dangers of demagoguery and propaganda on society.
[190] Mill, "On Liberty," 58.
[191] Mill, "On Liberty," 11.

"perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and moral preference."[192] The individual's "proper condition" is threatened by tyrannical custom. Mill argues that the "mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used. The faculties are called into no exercise by doing a thing merely because others do it, no more than by believing a thing only because others believe it."[193] If human beings are to remain in their "proper condition," the higher faculties need to be used. Otherwise, the individual regresses.

Each human being has the duty to perfect himself. As Mill says, "Among the works of man, which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself."[194] In Mill's essay "On Nature," he discussed how nature (as an external force) should not be imitated but be amended. This is true for human nature as well. As Mill says, "Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing."[195] Mill envisions a society where all humanity lives in the "proper condition."

The problem arises that for this state of being to continue, disagreement is needed. There needs to be a continual battling to keep the higher faculties sharp. Mill says: "[W]hat was understood would have been far more deeply impressed on the mind, if the man had been accustomed to hear it argued *pro* and *con* by people who did understand

[192] Mill, "On Liberty," 60.
[193] Mill, "On Liberty," 60.
[194] Mill, "On Liberty," 61.
[195] Mill, "On Liberty," 61.

it."[196] This becomes a fatal tendency for humanity to no longer examine what it believes to be true.[197] Mill quotes one of his contemporaries who called this the "deep slumber of decided opinion."[198] The unfortunate reality for Mill is that as human beings progress, they begin to take "truths" for granted and become lazy. This "slumber" regresses the individual as it corrodes their higher faculties. As progress occurs, more and more doctrines will no longer be disputed. Mill argues that "[t]he cessation, on one question after another, of serious controversy, is one of the necessary incidents of the consolidation of opinion."[199] This consolidation of opinion, Mill calls "dangerous and noxious."[200] Homogeneity and laziness begins to characterize each citizen.

Tyranny of Custom

The result of Mill's progress is conformity and tyranny of custom. As Mill claims, "Our merely social intolerance, kills no one, roots out no opinions, but induces men to disguise them, or to abstain from any active effort for their diffusion."[201] This is an evil because it weakens the higher faculties of human beings and prevents them from choosing their own path. Those who allow society to "choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation."[202] Alternatively, "[h]e who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgement to foresee activity to gather materials for decision,

[196] Mill, "On Liberty," 44.
[197] Mill, "On Liberty," 44.
[198] Mill, "On Liberty," 44.
[199] Mill, "On Liberty," 44.
[200] Mill, "On Liberty," 44.
[201] Mill, "On Liberty," 33.
[202] Mill, "On Liberty," 60.

discrimination to decide and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold his deliberate decision."[203]

One of the great dangers of conformity is that even the smallest of differences between human beings seem to stand out. Mill states, "Its ideal of character is to be without any marked character; to maim by compression, like a Chinese lady's foot, every part of human nature which stands out prominently, and tends to make the person markedly dissimilar in outline to commonplace humanity."[204] As society progresses and begins to conform, the public begins to prescribe "general rule of conduct, and endeavor to make every one conform to the approved standard. And that standard, express or tacit, is to desire nothing strongly."[205] Society begins to inspire imitation and not individual freedom. Human beings are no longer motivated by strong impulses and "vigorous reason", but by a desire to conform.[206] The result is that the "geniuses" of society do not end up with power. Instead, "the general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind."[207] Public opinion dictates the path that politics will take. This ends in an ascendant mediocrity. Society's moral standard comes from the ascendant class. As Mill says, "Wherever there is an ascendant class, a large portion of the morality of the country emanates from its class interests, and its feelings of class superiority."[208]

[203] Mill, "On Liberty," 60.
[204] Mill, "On Liberty," 72.
[205] Mill, "On Liberty," 71-72.
[206] Mill, "On Liberty," 72.
[207] Mill, "On Liberty," 68.
[208] Mill, "On Liberty," 8.

Mill is one of the great defenders of individual freedom. For Mill, "The initiation of all wise or noble things, comes and must come from individuals; generally at first from some one individual."[209] It is through individual freedom that human beings can reach their "proper condition." The acknowledged problem of progress is that it breeds laziness and conformity. The smallest of differences become prominent. This relates to modern day identity politics, which segregates human beings into identity groups. We can see how Mill's flirtation with Manichaeism can lead to divisions and to the progressive movements of the 19th century (which will be discussed further in Chapter 4). The Manichean understanding of creation leads to endless pursuit to "slay the smallest of dragons" to liberate an oppressed group. Those who conform have an inflated sense of self and believe themselves to be righteousness. Those who are different are looked at with disgust.

Conclusion

John Stuart Mill criticized Christianity, believing that it prevented humanity from exercising their freedom and progressing. He argued that humanity was progressing towards what he called its "proper condition". In this period, human beings are rational beings who possess self-knowledge and self-control. Mill argued that Religion of Humanity should replace Christianity, because it aimed at progressing humanity and cultivating the higher faculties. However, in many of Mill's writings, he references an ancient gnostic religion, Manichaeism. Mill's understanding of Manichaeism is that it would teach its adherents to overcome "evil" by motivating each to act.

[209] Mill, "On Liberty," 68.

As we see in his writings, the overcoming of external evils is at the heart of Mill's view of freedom. For Mill, society should embrace Religion of Humanity and Manichaeism so society can reach its "proper condition"; material creation is the problem. Humanity needs to transcend nature and create a more just world. Progress occurs as a result of a battle with nature. Mill claims that humanity's progress is best realized if all (or all who are "civilized") are able to exercise their individual freedom. But Mill's philosophy of freedom promotes conformity. Even the smallest of differences become prominent. As progress occurs, society's citizens begin to take doctrines for granted. Man as "questioner" becomes lethargic, which in turn corrodes the higher faculties. An ascendant mediocrity takes over society through public opinion. The radical elements of Manichean doctrine is seen as those who conform believe in their own righteousness. Those who do not conform are ostracized and seen as a stain on society. The problem with Mill's understanding of liberty is that it inevitably cannibalizes itself.

Many who read Mill's "On Liberty" do not acknowledge the tyranny of custom that results from progress. As Gairdner says, many who embrace Millian thought embrace the beginning of *On Liberty* and ignore the "conflicted and contradictory latter parts in which Mill presents a host of strict limitations on his own first principles and proposes quite a bit of socialist legislation and various other forms of government control."[210] According to Mill, any moral standard pushed by the state is coercive. Gairdner interprets Mill's *On Liberty* as an effort to "incorporate into the moral and political discourse of the West a Romantic ideal of the spontaneous and authentically feeling Self."[211] Gairdner

[210] Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill," 13.
[211] William D. Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill: Sources of Libertarian Socialism," in *Humanitas,* Vol. 21, Nos. 1 &2, 2008, 9.

focuses on an "individualist aspect that is equally important and that in [his] view was a necessary condition for the special form of collectivism he favoured."[212]

[212] Gairdner, "Poetry and the Mystique of the Self in John Stuart Mill," 10.

Chapter 3: Augustinian Freedom

In the previous chapter, I discussed the problems that arise from Mill's progressive philosophy and the idea that the human being is a progressive being. This chapter will give an alternative understanding of freedom and discuss the political implications that arise. Mill's problem is an imperfect nature that needed humanity to amend it. The implication is that human beings can perfect nature. Augustine argues the problem is a fallen nature, which was created good, that prevents human beings from living in a just society. This will be examined in greater detail in this chapter.

Augustine was born in northern Africa (in the Roman province of Numidia) to a pagan father and a Christian mother—who was the moral constant in his life, continually praying for his soul, as he describes in his autobiographical *Confessions*. At the age of 19, Augustine became interested in philosophy after reading Cicero's *Hortensius.* It instilled in him a desire for "immortal wisdom."[213] To Augustine, "truth is pursued only because truth alone can make man happy, and it is pursued only to the extent that it can make him so."[214] Happiness is what all men desire. But it was Augustine's hunger to be happy that led him to embrace Manichaeism the next year. Augustine converted to Manichaeism as it allowed him to continue to freely pursue the temporal or material goods, while also seeming to satisfy his basic questions about morality and creation.

In the previous chapter, I argued that John Stuart Mill thought that Manichaeism offered utility by motivating humanity to take initiative and overcome nature. Mill's

[213] Augustine, *Confessions,* 41.
[214] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L.E.M Lynch, (New York: Random House, 1960), 3.

philosophy intends to liberate humanity from the oppression of Nature. An interesting juxtaposition occurs when we compare Mill and Augustine on their handling of Manichaeism. Augustine, who once embraced Manichaeism, would come to believe in a more complex understanding of freedom. Mill wanted to motivate humanity into being the creators of a perfect society that transcends the limitations of nature. Augustine thought that heaven on earth was impossible—that is, a corrupted or a fallen human nature prevented society from being perfectly just. When discussing Augustine's two cities (City of God and City of Man), Paul J. Cornish emphasizes that once man first turns away from God, the will ceases to be perfectly good: "At that point the order of human nature was lost, and the subject elements of human nature ceased to obey the ruling elements. The earthly city has its origin in sin."[215] Augustine thought that it was impossible for man to create a "good" or just society as man is insufficient in his own willing towards the good. He needs to receive grace to heal the will. It should be noted that when each individual receives grace, he experiences a greater freedom. Grace is not given by an earthly authority. It is given by a transcendent, unchangeable being. When human beings experience a relationship with the transcendent and have an orderly love, their desire for self-gratification is removed and justice is then grounded in the eternal.

Augustine's philosophy of freedom and evil is the driving force behind his view of politics. As John von Heyking notes, "Augustine thought the founding and maintenance of cities over the course of many generations is a natural good."[216] That is to say politics is rooted in human nature, not sin. Burnell claims that Augustine has three

[215] Paul J. Cornish, "Augustine's Contribution to the Republican Tradition," in *European Journal of Political Theory*, (2010), 140.
[216] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World*, 51.

convictions that need to be considered when examining civil society. First, the problem of original sin is "always the underlying human problem, and affects civil affairs as they do all areas of experience…All civil life is lived in the middle ground between perfection, stopping well short of perfection, and utter chaos."[217] Politics is not by nature evil, but it is affected by sin, which it cannot overcome on its own. Second, human beings, "though morally crippled and in any case having as our deepest need a beauty and order beyond this world, still have civil duties."[218] Third, "[D]espite the effects of original sin, civilization is susceptible of moral improvement."[219] The implication is that some societies are better than others. While human society will never be perfectly just, it can limit some injustices. This is the best that society can do; it can strive to prevent large injustices from occurring by limiting *libido dominandi* (desire to dominate).

This chapter will focus on Augustine's *Confessions, On Free Choice of the Will,* and *City of God.* The proceeding examination will reveal Augustine's philosophy in regards to his handling of religion, the relationship between freedom and evil, the importance of grace, and finally, how his understanding of freedom informs his view of politics. The purpose of this examination is to compare and contrast Augustinian and Millian philosophies of freedom. A key point of difference is whether or not human beings can reach perfectibility on their own. An examination of Augustinian freedom is complicated. It is complicated because it is necessary to discuss many related questions. I will discuss Augustine's conversion to Christianity to illustrate his transition from corporeal to incorporeal thinking. Incorporeal thinking allows human beings to

[217] Peter Burnell, "The Problem of Service to Unjust Regimes in Augustine's *City of God,*" in *Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc.* (1993), 180.
[218] Peter Burnell, "The Problem of Service to Unjust Regimes in Augustine's *City of God,*" 180.
[219] Peter Burnell, "The Problem of Service to Unjust Regimes in Augustine's *City of God,*" 180.

understand and experience their freedom, as well as understand God as creator of all; therefore, all of creation must be good by nature. The question arises: "How does evil exist in a world that is created by a benevolent, all-powerful creator?" The answer is that evil is a corruption of a created good. The problem of a fallen human nature prevents human beings from fully willing themselves towards the good—i.e. humanity never possesses complete self-knowledge or self-control. Human beings need to experience God's grace, and it is that grace leads to a higher experience of freedom. Once a discussion of the many parts that make up human freedom is complete, the focus of this chapter will then turn to the problem of political evil and why human suffering will always be a problem on the earthly city; therefore, Mill's progressive ideology is an impossibility.

Augustine and Manichaeism

Manicheans believe that man has two wills (one evil and one good). The stronger will—whether good or evil—will determine the "goodness" of the individual. The Manichean two will doctrine is demonstrated in Augustine's example of a man choosing to go either to a Manichean religious meeting or the theatre. In this example, the good will brings them to the meeting and the bad to the theatre.[220] It is an evil will that causes man to do bad things, while his spirit causes him to do good.[221] Michael Foley claims, "The body is thus deemed to be evil in Manichean thought because it is fighting against

[220] Augustine, *Confessions*, 156; Augustine will later refute this division, but observing the ability to want two good or evil things.
[221] It is important to keep in mind, that the Manichaeism is a materialist doctrine—that is, they have a material understanding of evil. It is this materialist understanding (that Mill agrees with) that Augustine is transitioning away from with help from the Neo-Platonists.

the soul, which was understood to be a piece of the divine that was broken off from the rest of God when He and Satan battled and is now imprisoned in the material world."[222] Augustine was attracted to Manichaeism as it taught him that his suffering was caused by an external source.[223] It did not force him to engage in self-reflection like Christianity did.

In his youth, Augustine criticized the Bible for being overtly simple. He fell for what he later calls the Manicheans "high sounding nonsense".[224] The Manicheans cultivated Augustine's suspicion of Christianity by asking simple questions such as, "Whence comes evil? And is God bounded by a bodily shape and has his hair and nails? And those [patriarchs] to be esteemed righteous who had many wives at the same time and slew men and offered sacrifices of living animals?"[225] Manicheans were critical of the Old Testament, as they believed it contained immoral behavior like polygamy and animal sacrifices.[226] They also questioned Genesis when it says man was made in God's image; Augustine raised issue with the Manichean interpretation of Genesis as they claimed that Christians believed in an "anthropomorphized God" who would be contained and possess limited power.[227] Augustine struggled with the fact that "righteous men", like Abraham and Isaac, were able to act in ways that current generations would deem immoral.

Augustine's education cultivated his critical mind and caused him to question elements of the Manichean religion. Augustine was no longer satisfied with superficial

[222] Michael P. Foley, "Notes," in *Confessions,* 330.
[223] Similarly, this motivation led Augustine to the studying of astrology.
[224] Augustine, *Confessions,* 6.
[225] Augustine, *Confessions,* 44.
[226] Augustine, *Confessions,* 44.
[227] Augustine, *Confessions,* 44.

grand statements, but he "longed" for truth. He began to find inconsistencies in Manichaeism, to which his peers told him that the Manichean Bishop Faustus would be able to answer when he arrived. [228] It is worthwhile to note that Augustine would ultimately reject Manichaeism on philosophical grounds as its teaching were not rational.

It did not take long upon Faustus' arrival for Augustine to realize why other Manicheans admired Faustus, as he was charming and ever so eloquent.[229] Augustine effectively accused Faustus with sophistry. Augustine believed that Faustus' rhetorical ability allowed him to deceive his followers with specious arguments. After Augustine was finally able to have a dialogue with the bishop, he came to the realization that Faustus was more concerned with lessons in oratory and the poets—as they "[furnished] his eloquence"—than he was for the liberal sciences.[230] Faustus desired esteem of his peers more that he desired the pursuit of truth. That is, Faustus did not share Augustine's hunger for truth; instead, he hungered for the esteem of others and the perception of intelligence. Faustus was unable to answer Augustine's questions and, while he did not leave Manichaeism at the time, he grew increasingly frustrated.[231] His meeting with Faustus was a pivotal step towards a realization that Manichaeism amounted to sophistry, and he became open to other methods of thought.

Shortly after his meeting with Faustus, Augustine accepted a teaching position in Rome where he began to associate with the academics; he began to see the academics as

[228] Augustine, *Confessions,* 89; Augustine was open to the teaching of the Manicheans he even accepted their criticisms of Christianity without doing his own research on the matter.
[229] Augustine, *Confessions,* 80.
[230] Augustine, *Confessions,* 81.
[231] Augustine, *Confessions,* 82.

wiser than everyone else because they doubted everything and "affirmed that no truth can be understood by men."[232] For all of his intelligence, he became frustrated that he could not find "truth", causing him to no longer pursue "immortal wisdom" with the vigor he had, or will have later in his life. Augustine's association with Manichaeism and subsequent turning away marks an important evolution in his thought. During this time, Augustine (similar to Mill) had a materialist understanding of creation. However, he would eventually come to understand evil as the result of human action, after his conversion to Christianity. Where Mill's philosophy teaches humanity to transcend their limitation and overcome all obstacles to progress, Augustine's philosophy forces human beings to acknowledge their limitations.

Augustine's Conversion to Christianity

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to Augustine's conversion to Christianity was the problem of evil. How could an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, benevolent God allow suffering and evil in his creation? Augustine's conception of evil and how to properly conceive his relationship with the creator was greatly influenced by the Neo-Platonists. Augustine likely came to learn Platonic philosophy through his readings of Cicero, the doxographers, and Plotinus.[233] However, it is important to note that this relationship was a complicated one. As John O'Meara states, "Neoplatonism, to begin with, was not one, unfaltering doctrine, even in Plotinus. After Plotinus, it evolved in

[232] Augustine, *Confessions,* 87.
[233] Robert Milner, "Augustinian Recollection, in *Augustinian Studies,* Vol. 38, No. 2, (2007), 446.

various ways and, some would say, in curious directions. But above all, the recipient of the influence, Augustine was a complicated character."[234]

Nonetheless, it was the Neo-Platonists that helped Augustine understand himself in relation to God as creator of all things; conversely, the Manicheans taught Augustine that Christians saw God as a limited, corporeal being.[235] Michael P. Foley argues Neo-Platonists permitted "Augustine's realization that the mind is not reducible to the operations of the brain [which] enabled him, in turn, to understand how God, in whose image the mind is made, can be real yet utterly immaterial."[236] Augustine's reading of the Neo-Platonists allowed him transcend the material understanding of creation. This allowed for a greater understanding and experience of freedom and leads him to believe that evil and suffering is the result of a fallen human nature as opposed to materialist explanation.

Augustine realized that the Christian God is not bound as a limited corporeal being as the Manicheans led him to believe. The Christian God is all-encompassing and all-powerful; God is a spiritual being and all things exist in relation to him. He states, "I entered into my own depths, with You as my guide; and I was able to do it because You were my helper. I entered and with the eye of my soul, such as it was, I saw Your unchangeable Light shining over that same eye of my soul, over my mind."[237] The idea of a spiritual God is reminiscent of Platonic conception of the "Good" when Socrates says**:**

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[234] John J. O'Meara, "Neoplatonism of Saint Augustine," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982), 40.
[235] Augustine, *Confessions,* 132.
[236] Michael P. Foley, *Confessions,* 332.
[237] Augustine, *Confessions,* 128.

> I imagine you'd claim that the sun not only endows the visible things with their power of being seen, but also coming into being…Then claim as well that things that are known not only get their being-known furnished by the good, but they are also endowed by that source with their very being and their being what they are, being, beyond it in seniority and surpassing it in power.[238]

Augustine comes to see God as the creator and cultivator of all things and Christ as being the link between man and truth. All things live in a limited world, created by and residing in a perfect God. His new understanding of a perfect God leads him to the understanding that there is a hierarchy of goods. Augustine comes to recognize evil not as a substance (as the Manicheans claimed), but the disharmony of otherwise good things.[239]

Creation, as a whole, has a harmonious order and although certain aspects of creation do not harmonize with other aspects, they continue to be good in themselves (as they were created by God and harmonize with something else).[240] Augustine claims that the nature of everything is good and ordered, but it is a perversion of the good that leads to evil. He states, "Hence not even the nature of the devil himself is evil, insofar as it is nature, but it was made evil by being perverted. Thus he did not abide in the truth, but could not escape the judgment of the Truth; he did not abide in the tranquility of order; but did not therefore escape the poser of the Ordainer."[241]

Augustine argues in favour of a perfectly good creator; therefore, all of creation must be created "good" and evil is a result of a corruption of the good. Conversely, Mill argued that nature needed to be overcome. Augustine's understanding of the relationship between creation and creator was influenced by the Neo-Platonists. He was able to think

[238] Plato, *Republic,* Trans. Joe Sachs, (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing. 2007), 206.
[239] Augustine, *Confessions,* 130.
[240] Augustine, *Confessions,* 130.
[241] Augustine, *City of God,* 624.

of God as being incorporeal. Thus, Augustine comes to understand evil as a corruption of the good. He compares evil to diseases or wounds that may inflict an animal. These diseases or wounds are nothing but the loss of health. "And when a cure is affected, it is not a case of those evils, that is, of the diseases and wounds which once were present, now leaving the body and taking up their abode elsewhere. Rather, they simply cease to exist."[242] Like evil, a wound or disease is not a substance; it is a defect or a corruption. In this example, the body is a good as it is created by God, and it is here that evils occur; the good that is lost is health.[243] He finishes his example by stating, "When these imperfections are remedied, they are not transferred elsewhere; but as they disappear in the restored condition, they simply cease to exist."[244] Scott MacDonald claims, "Insofar as evils are corruptions or privations in creatures they are not themselves created natures."[245] The important point is that because evil is not a permanent material feature, it can be rectified—i.e. the individual who commits an evil act can be persuaded to "will" themselves towards a higher good. However, the problem of a fallen human nature persists, and even after conversion, the problem can only be remedied by grace. It is the fallen nature that is the underlying problem of politics. It is why suffering can never be excised from human society. This will be examined more fully later in this chapter.

[242] St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, 4th ed., trans. Louis A. Arand (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press 1963), 18.
[243] St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, 18.
[244] St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, 19.
[245] Scott MacDonald, "Primal Sin", in *The Augustinian Tradition*, Gareth B. Matthews ed., (London, England: University of California Press, 1999), 114.

On Free Choice of the Will

Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will* most clearly reveals his philosophy concerning human freedom. In this dialogue, Augustine discusses the relationship between his incorporeal understanding of God, the hierarchy of being, the free will, and the problem of evil. This book is framed around three primary questions: 1) what is the cause of evil? 2) Why did god give humanity a free will? 3) Is the free will consistent with God's foreknowledge? As was mentioned previously, this section will primarily focus on the first two questions in order to clarify his concept of the free will. These two questions examine the problem of evil being the result of a disordering or unharmonious desire. However, I will briefly discuss why Augustine believes human freedom is in fact consistent with God's foreknowledge. The reason is that this is a charge that Mill and many other progressives levy against Augustine and Christianity as a whole. It shows the compatibility of creation and a perfect creator.

As Montague Brown observes, Evodius' opening question, "Please tell me: isn't God the cause of evil?" forces Augustine to prove human freedom, as human freedom can be the only cause of evil in a world created by an all-powerful and benevolent God. This is an interesting disagreement between Mill and Augustine. Mill claimed that there could be no intelligent or cogent argument that explains the existence of evil and a perfect creator. It is this understanding that leads Mill to Manichean activism. But Augustine would respond to Mill's criticism by arguing that he does not give adequate weight to human freedom.

Augustine addresses Evodius' question by distinguishing the difference between doing evil and suffering evil. Augustine claims that "everyone who does evil is the cause

of his own evil doing…evil deeds are punished by the justice of God. They would not be punished justly if they had not been performed voluntarily."[246] If people are not free, then it would be unjust to hold them accountable for their actions. Evodius then responds, "It seems that no one could sin unless he had first learned how to sin. And if that is the case, I must ask this: From whom did we learn to sin?[247] Augustine answers this question by explaining that learning, or understanding, is in itself a good thing; thus, we only learn good things, not evil things. Augustine says, "Evil is nothing but turning away from learning."[248] As mentioned in our discussion of evil, Augustine has struggled in the past with the question of evil. Before his conversion, this problem pushed Augustine to follow Manichaeism and learn astrology. It is in this section that "Augustine and Evodius articulate a distinction between the 'temporal law' that governs human political communities and the 'eternal law' by which God governs the universe."[249]

The distinction in eternal and temporal law leads Augustine and Evodius to distinguish between ordinate and inordinate desire (or cupidity). They do this because as Augustine tells Evodius, "You want to know the source of our evildoing. So we must first discuss what evil doing is."[250] An ordinate desire is orderly and a desire for what is eternal and unchangeable. On the other hand, an inordinate desire is a desire for a temporal (changeable and lower) good in place of eternal goods; it is irrational and disorderly. It is important to note that does not mean that temporal goods are evil in

[246] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* trans. Thomas Williams, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), 1.
[247] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 1.
[248] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 2.
[249] Daniel E. Burns, "Augustine's Introduction to Political Philosophy: Teaching De Libero Arbitrio, Book I", in *Religions,* (January 30, 2015), 86.
[250] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 4.

themselves, but putting the pursuit of temporal goods above the pursuit of eternal ones results in evil. James Wetzel calls this a choice between "flesh and spirit" and because of the fall of Adam, only Christ has been able to experience perfection.[251] That is, man needs to receive God's grace—which will be discussed in a later section.

The reason why this desire is so dangerous is because inordinate desire causes the will to cling to lower goods—the examples we see in Augustine's life are his mistresses and the passing of his unnamed friend, which he desired with no regard of the "good". These desires became false idols for Augustine and affected other areas of his life; it prevented him from pursuing truth. James Wetzel claims that Augustine "Characterizes sin as an unaccountable preference for temporal over eternal goods."[252] He continues, "Temporal goods are mundane things like money, health, and citizenship; eternal goods are mighty abstractions like God, Truth, and Law…Augustine's point is that temporal goods are naturally limited in value; these are the goods that can and will be lost involuntarily."[253] It is not that these temporal or lower goods are the root of evil (like the Manicheans believed); instead, evil is the consequence of the pursuit of these lower goods over the pursuit of the eternal goods.

The individual's object of love will dictate whether or not they have a good will. If they choose to pursue and love what is unchangeable and eternal, they will have a good will. If they desire what is temporal, they will have a bad will. Augustine asks Evodius

[251] James Wetzel, "Augustine on the Origin of evil: Myth and Metaphysics", in *Augustine's City of God*, James Wetzel ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 168.
[252] James Wetzel, *Augustine: A Guide for the Perplexed,* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 45.
[253] James Wetzel, *Augustine: A Guide for the Perplexed,* 45.

questions (about murder, adultery, etc.) in order to get to the root of what evildoing is. The first question is about adultery. Evodius' initial response is that he knows that he would not like to be in an adulterous relationship. He comes to the conclusion that "Anyone who does to another what he does not want done to himself does evil."[254] This does not appease Augustine; he asks Evodius, what if these men trade spouses? Is this evil?[255] Evodius' answer to these questions is an attempt to appeal to the authority of temporal law and convention. Augustine's response to Evodius clarifies what he deems the cause of evil is:

> Then perhaps what makes adultery evil is inordinate desire, whereas so long as you look for the evil in the external, visible act, you are bound to encounter difficulties. In order to understand that inordinate desire is what makes adultery evil consider this: if a man is unable to sleep with someone else's wife, but it is somehow clear that he would like to, and would do so if he had the chance, he is no less guilty than if he were caught in the act.[256]

Evil is not just an action or a consequence of an action, evil lies in the privileging of the temporal over the eternal. The reason is that it creates a disordering of the good and forms perverse habits. In the above example, the inordinate desire of lust creates a disharmony that prevents full desire of ultimate truth or God.

Reason is what makes humanity superior to all other forms of life, and man becomes a fool when his reason does not rule his desires. We know that for Augustine, reason is linked to happiness. This is because the good life requires a contemplation of

[254] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 4.
[255] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 5.
[256] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 6.

God.[257] Augustine says, "[If] [reason] controls the other things that constitute a human being, then that human being is perfectly ordered."[258] There is an ordering of humanity which happens when "a human being is ruled by the very thing that ought to rule according to the law that we have found to be eternal."[259] A person ordered by reason can come to understand the eternal law better than one who is disordered. Because the eternal law is ordering, human wisdom is in fact stronger than inordinate desire.[260] Evodius and Augustine conclude that reason "cannot be made a slave to inordinate desire by anything equal or superior…or inferior to it, because such a thing would be too weak."[261] "Just one possibility remains: only its own will and free choice can make the mind a companion to cupidity."[262] Therefore, the above example of a man desiring to sleep with someone else's wife is evil because it perpetuates a disordering of human nature. This disordering is its own terrible punishment. Augustine states, "Stripped by opposing forces of the splendid wealth of virtue, the mind is dragged by inordinate desire into ruin and poverty; now taking false things for true, and even defending those falsehoods repeatedly; now repudiating what it had once believed and nonetheless rushing headlong into still other false hoods;" he carries on to say, "now with holding assent and often shying away from clear arguments; now despairing completely of finding truth and lingering in the shadows of folly; no trying to enter the light of understanding, but reeling back in exhaustion."[263]

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[257]Saint Augustine, *City of God,* trans. Marcus Dods, 5th ed, (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2013), 638.
[258] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 14.
[259] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 14.
[260] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 16.
[261] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 16-17.
[262] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 17.
[263] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 17.

The cause of evil is not a material substance, nor does it come from the transcendent; the cause of evil is the free will. The good will, according to Augustine, is the "will by which we desire to live upright and honorable lives and to attain the highest wisdom."[264] A good will clings to the unchangeable, eternal, and transcendent goods. By an orderly love of the good will, human beings make the good life possible. This man who lives the good life comes to know virtue and embodies the four cardinal virtues: temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice.[265] He comes to know these virtues because of ordinate desire—that is, he an ordered love of the good and pursues the highest good. Augustine defines "temperance [as] the disposition that checks and restrains the desire for things that it is wicked to desire;" "fortitude [is] the disposition of the soul by which we have no fear of misfortune or of the loss of things that are not in our power;" "prudence is the knowledge of what is to be desired and what is to be avoided;" "[and] justice, finally, is the virtue by which all people are given their due."[266] It is important to note that what the will clings to is the result of individual choice. To be clear, the cause of evil is inordinate desire.

Augustine claims that the free will was given so human beings could live rightly and that good and bad deeds can only happen if they are willed; "punishment or reward would be unjust if human beings had no free will."[267] Evodius asks Augustine, "Don't you think that if free will was given to us for living rightly, we ought not to have been able to pervert it by sinning?"[268] In other words, he is asking if man should have been

[264] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 19.
[265] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 21.
[266] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 20.
[267] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 30.
[268] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 30.

given a limited free will. Augustine makes an argument to show that the good will should be counted among the best things in life.

Augustine and Evodius attempt to "prove" God's existence. This interaction becomes important to this thesis topic as it leads to a discussion of the degrees of being, where understanding is better than life and life is better than existence. O'Meara argues that Augustine's discussion of the degree of being comes from Neo-Platonists, such as Plotinus.[269] I include this book in this section because the answers to these three questions give insight into Augustine's believe in incorporeal God, a hierarchy of goods (and that all things created are by nature good), and the will itself.

The degree of being is inspired from the Neo-Platonist's idea that there are "different gradations of being, which ascend from lower goods to higher and from many to one."[270] They move on to discuss the senses and what they perceive. By reason, we can come to understand what they call an "inner sense".[271] "Inner sense" takes what is perceived by sense and brings it before reason so the data received by the senses can become intelligible; it also perceives the senses themselves. Gilson states, "[The] internal sense directs and judges the external sense. It tells sight to look at an object or turn away from it…Now one who judges is undoubtedly superior to the matter he judges. Hence the internal sense's superiority over the external senses cannot be contested."[272] This argument also applies to reason's superiority. While perception is not knowledge, "it does

[269] John J. O'Meara, "The Neoplatonism of Saint Augustine", 40.
[270] Michael P. Foley, *Confessions,* 331.
[271] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 35.
[272] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine,* 15.

suffice to move the animal;" reason is what allows all things to become known and a part of knowledge. [273]

The existence of objective truths is proof that there is something higher than reason. Augustine states, "[J]ust as there are true and unchangeable rules of numbers…there are also true and unchangeable rules for wisdom."[274] Brown claims, "[the] existing human being is not the ultimate key to understanding reality; for when we judge, we judge by some criterion of truth, goodness, or beauty. And if our judgment is correct, then the criterion we use must be certain and unchanging."[275] Augustine claims that those who enjoy the highest good are those who can enjoy the happy life. He says, "[Since] the highest is known and acquired in the truth, and that truth is wisdom, let us enjoy to the full the highest good which we see to acquire in that truth."[276] Human reason (mind) cannot be the highest thing as it is changeable—the mind degrades with time—but it is also easily mistaken. "All things that are in any way changing or limited must be caused by another. Thus, there must be an unchanging cause of all changing things—God."[277] But it is still a higher good than the inner sense and the senses that indeed governs them. The will is a middle good; it can be pointed towards higher things, such as virtue, but it can also be pointed towards lower goods. The will is indeed where human freedom lies. In *Faith, Hope and Charity,* Augustine says that "from the nature of man, which is good, there can come a will which can be good or evil."[278]

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[273] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 36-37.
[274] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 52.
[275] Montague Brown, "Augustine on Freedom and God", in *The Saint Anslem Journal,* Vol. 2, No. 2, (Spring, 2005), 52.
[276] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 56.
[277] Montague Brown, "Augustine on Freedom and God", 53.
[278] St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope, and Charity,* 22.

As was discussed in the above section on evil, there is a hierarchy of goods. The virtues, such as justice, are high (eternal) goods because they cannot be used wrongly, while middle and lower goods can be used either rightly or wrongly. Augustine claims, "free will [can use] itself by means of the free will…The happy life, that is, the disposition of a soul that cleaves to the unchangeable good, is the proper and principle good for a human being."[279] This means that we can use the will to will itself towards higher goods, thus making it a good will and allowing for the possibility of a happy life. The will's movement from higher and lower goods is voluntary. When it comes to why man possesses a free will, Augustine answers that creation is better because of the way human nature is. Human dignity resides in free choice of the will, and it is praiseworthy even when it goes astray.

The previous section has shown theological differences between how Mill and Augustine understand creation. This section offers a more concrete understanding of the free will in relation to a "perfect" creator. Book III is no different, as it is an attempt to solve the paradox that divine foreknowledge is consistent with the idea of a free will. Mill would have argued that divine foreknowledge and the free will to be inconsistent. The dialogue begins when Evodius raises the problem that if God foreknows everything, including who will sin and when, then the sin is necessary for God to have knowledge of it.[280] Evodius argues that if God knows all that will ever happen, then it cannot be true that the individual is free to sin or live the good life, as the action must happen for God to have foreknowledge. Evodius continues, "How, then, is the will free when such

[279] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 68.
[280] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 73.

inescapable necessity is found in it?"[281] Augustine answers by agreeing that there are certain things that happen by necessity, like sickness, and these things are not our choice. But happiness and things like it need to be willed by human beings; people cannot be happy against their will.[282] Brown argues that this is one of Augustine's two arguments for human freedom. [283] The other is in Book I when Evodius and Augustine first discuss the idea of a "free will"; the exchange shows the will is self-evident.[284]

Augustine does not believe that the free will and God's foreknowledge are in any way inconsistent or incompatible. Augustine says to Evodius: "God's foreknowledge, which is certain even today of your future happiness once you have begun to be happy; and in the same way, your blameworthy will (if indeed you are going to have such a will) does not cease to be a will simply because God foreknows that you are going to have it."[285] Augustine likens the downward movement of the will to that of a falling stone. However, there is one very important difference: the "stone has no power to check its downward movement, but the soul is not moved to abandon higher things and live inferior things unless it wills to do so."[286] Thus the will, because it has the ability to take stock of itself, is characterized by a voluntary movement. No one in their right mind can accuse a stone for sinning; this is because the stone merely exists. It does not have reason and cannot reflect upon itself. However, our prior discussion over the degree of being has clearly shown that the will has the ability to understand itself and thus, it is responsible

[281] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 73.
[282] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 76.
[283] Montague Brown, "Augustine on Freedom and God", 55.
[284] Montague Brown, "Augustine on Freedom and God", 58; Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 19.
[285] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 76.
[286] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 72.

for what it clings to. As Gilson claims, "A falling stone does not fall without cause, but it does fall without motive: it does not have free choice; but a will which would will without motives would be a contradiction and an impossibility."[287] Although God foreknows all that will happen, Augustine claims that just as "you do not force someone to sin just because you foreknow that he is going to sin…God foreknows everything that he causes but does not cause everything that he foreknows. Therefore, you must understand that God justly punishes the sins that he foreknows but does not cause."[288]

In *On Free Choice of the Will,* Augustine gives the reader a greater understanding of the compatibility of the free will with God's foreknowledge. It is in this text that it becomes clear that man cannot be happy unless he wills to live under the eternal law. If there is one thing that is lacking, however, it is the discussion of grace. But we can conclude from *On Free Choice of the Will* that there is no contradiction between free choice and grace. In fact, free choice enables man to freely choose the good.[289] In Augustine's conversion, we see him intellectually know right and wrong, but he cannot will himself to do what he knows is right. In the next section, I will examine Augustine's conversion, which will show the need for grace if man is to live the good life. The reason why man is in a constant struggle to "will" himself towards the virtue is because he has a divided will and is need of grace. But as Gilson says, "It is literally true to say that, from St. Augustine's point of view, the problem does not exist," in regard to the "reconciliation of grace and free choice."[290]

[287] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine,* 157.
[288] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 78.
[289] Montague Brown, "Augustine on Freedom and God", 60.
[290] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine,* 157.

The Need for Grace

The assumption behind Mill's philosophy is that through its actions, humanity can create a heaven on earth—i.e. a fully just society—by embracing Manichaeism. Mill believes that man can will himself to perfection. Conversely, Augustine argues that human nature is imperfect and man needs to receive grace. Augustine understands that human beings struggle with a divided will. Simply put, Mill wanted to take the mantle of creation off the transcendent and re-order the external world (society), while Augustine wanted an internal ordering of his soul with the aid of the transcendent. Similarly, Robert Dodaro describes Augustine's view: "[Human] beings are [not] able to act justly on the strength of their own reason and will."[291]

In the examination of *On Free Choice of the Will,* the reader may conclude that human beings are able to be free—or enjoy the highest form of freedom—by their own actions. But Augustine's philosophy of freedom is more complicated. We see in his other works that if humanity is going to live the good life, it needs to receive grace and be filled with the Holy Spirit. In Augustine's *Faith, Hope, and Charity,* he argues, the "[Free] will itself needs to be freed from the bondage of which the masters are sin death," and it is grace that frees the will.[292] Gilson claims, "Augustine urges the following thesis…'Neither knowledge of the divine law, nor nature, nor the mere remission of sin constitutes grace. Grace is given us by Jesus Christ, Our Lord, that through it the law may be fulfilled, nature liberated and sin overcome.'"[293] He continues to say that "Augustine

[291] Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.
[292] St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity,* 49.
[293] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine,* 168.

[attributes] to grace all the gifts which constitute the original condition of nature."[294] Ishtiyaque Haji points out, "With the aid of God's grace, Augustine implies, he will be able to refrain from consenting to evil."[295]

As has already been stated, Augustine argues that man is unable to freely choose right from wrong. However, man's will becomes divided because of his freedom. Augustine states, "The mind I say commands itself to will: it would not give the command unless it willed: yet it does not do what it commands. The trouble is that it does not totally will: Therefore it does not totally command."[296] He continues, "Thus there are two wills in us, because neither of them is entire: and what is lacking to the one is present in the other."[297] The will is divided in the sense that each individual does not wholly will—i.e. there is something always tugging at the individual preventing them from overcoming their own inordinate desires.

Perhaps the best illustration of the imperfection of the will and the need for grace is seen through the examination of Augustine's own conversion. The division of his will is so strong that even when he knows what he should do, he cannot; at one point he begs, "Let it be now, let it be now."[298] He explains, "[When] eternity attracts the higher faculties and the pleasure of some temporal good holds the lower, it is one same soul that wills both, but not either with its whole will; and it is therefore torn both ways and deeply troubled while truth shows the one way as better but habit keeps it to the other."[299]

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[294] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, 149.
[295] Ishtiyaque Haji, "On Being Morally Responsible in a Dream," in *The Augustinian Tradition*, Gareth B. Matthews ed., (London England: University of California Press, 1999), 168.
[296] Augustine, *Confessions*, 155.
[297] Augustine, *Confessions*, 155.
[298] Augustine, *Confessions*, 157.
[299] Augustine, *Confessions*, 157.

Augustine had an intellectual conversion after meeting Ambrose and reading the Neo-Platonists. However, he did not convert his will. The will is reflexive in the sense that when it acts, it also acts upon itself, forming habits. Augustine desires God, but as he says, "The lower condition which had grown habitual was more powerful than the better condition which I had not tried. The nearer the point of time came in which I was to become different, the more it struck me with horror; but it did not force me utterly back nor turn me utterly away, but held me between the two."[300]

It is a very powerful image when Augustine says, "my one-time mistresses held me back, plucking at my garment of flesh murmuring softly: 'Are you sending us away?' And, 'From this moment shall we not be with you, now and forever?' And 'From this moment shall this or that not be allowed you, now and forever?'"[301] Augustine desperately wanted wholly to will towards God, but every time he tried, his inordinate desires tugged at him, reminding him how good it felt to fulfill his desires. The habits formed in his youth are what were stopping him from wholly willing the eternal good. James Wetzel states, "[Augustine's] best philosophical intuition keeps him firmly convinced that something incorruptible and so incapable of losing any of its value is essentially better off than something more vulnerable."[302] However, he still struggles with his temporal lust. Augustine tried to "will" himself to do good but was held back by lust; every time he tried to act, his habits "swerved" his will. For Augustine, it was his sexual desire that divided his will. He explains that he was constantly reminded about his

[300] Augustine, *Confessions*, 157.
[301] Augustine, *Confessions*, 158.
[302] James Wetzel, *Augustine: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 53.

temporal desires. He says, "'They tell you of delights, but not of such delights as the law of the Lord you God tells.' This was the controversy raging in my heart, a controversy about myself against myself."[303]

Augustine intellectually understood what is needed to have a good will. But he was unable to will towards the good, which caused him to breakdown. He states, "[For] it struck me that solitude was more suited to the business of weeping. I went far enough from [Alypius] to prevent his presence from being an embarrassment to me…I flung myself down under a certain fig tree and no longer tried to check my tears."[304] In his dire state, he pleaded with God, "How long, how long shall I go on saying tomorrow and again tomorrow? Why not now, why not have an end to my uncleanness this very hour?"[305] It is in this moment that he receives grace, as he hears a child's voice singing over and over "Take and read, take and read."[306] Augustine would pick up his bible and read Romans 14:1: "Now him that is weak in faith, take unto you."[307] He instantly converted. He understood that while he could intelligently understand God, he still held his false idols (which included his professorship of rhetoric, his lust, etc.). It was these false idols that prevented him from experiencing joy. Augustine states, "Now my mind was free from the cares that had gnawed it, from aspiring and getting and weltering in filth and rubbing the scab of lust."[308] Without grace, humanity is left with an inability to

[303] Augustine, *Confessions*, 158.
[304] Augustine, *Confessions*, 159.
[305] Augustine, *Confessions*, 159.
[306] Augustine, *Confessions*, 159.
[307] Augustine, *Confessions*, 160.
[308] Augustine, *Confessions*, 163.

will or do the good. Grace allows humanity to reach a higher level of freedom, allowing them to "will" themselves to the transcendent good.

It is when human beings receive grace that they can become co-creators with God. However, it is a different type of co-creator than the type found in progressive philosophy. Progressives think of "co-creator" as man's ability to re-order, or re-define, the laws of nature. Mill's conception of God demands man as co-creator in the progressive sense. But humanity as co-creators with God means something different in Christianity. As Heyking notes, "Christianity does not produce a law in the same sense as found in either Judaism or Islam. Rather, Christianity introduces a person while keeping the content of the law more or less the same as in Judaism."[309] The end of Christianity is a relationship with God which "makes the law superfluous as an extrinsic cause of virtue, as now human beings are 'God's co-creators'".[310] In Augustine's philosophy, once human being's receive grace and are "infused with the Holy Spirit [they] are 'themselves a law'."[311] Grace allows humanity enjoy a higher freedom and an ability to wholly will the good.

Augustine and Civil Life

The above discussion examined the Augustinian understanding of the free but divided will. This section will discuss the political implications of Augustine's philosophy. To review, Mill believed that humanity can reach perfectibility, through their initiative overcome material oppression. Conversely, Augustine believed that no society

[309] John von Heyking, "God's Co-Workers: Remi Brague's Treatment of the Divine Law in Christianity," *Essay Contribution to Symposium on Remi Brague's The Law of God: A Philosophical History of an Idea, Political Science Reviewer,* XXXVIII, (Spring, 2009), 79.
[310] John von Heyking, "God's Co-Workers,"17.
[311] John von Heyking, "God's Co-Workers,"80.

could ever be perfectly just. He argues that Christians believe that in order to escape the supreme evil (eternal damnation) and attain the supreme good, they must live rightly (or virtuously) and receive grace. But the virtuous life does not guarantee a life without suffering. The vices are "not those that are outside of us, but within, not other men's but our own."[312] From an Augustinian perspective, Mill is wrong when he argues that society can reach perfectibility by overcoming material oppression. Mill claimed that humanity can overcome nature and reach perfectibility. Augustine claimed that Human nature prevents perfectibility because it is human nature that is corrupted. Augustine would argue that Mill's mistake is that he identifies the root of evil as being material creation. It is this understanding that fuels Mill's progressivism, leading him to a desire to master material existence.

It is this very fact that leads to the suffering of both the just and the unjust. Suffering is a permanent fixture of the "City of Man" and can never be completely overcome. But it is important to note that Augustine is not claiming that Christians should just roll over and accept all forms of political evil. In fact, Augustine believed that politics could (and should) limit suffering and evil. However, he did not believe that politics had the ability to rid the world of all suffering. Of course, Augustine's general understanding of politics cannot be thoroughly examined within the limitations of this paper. However, this thesis necessitates a brief discussion of the extent to which Augustine thought politics could ameliorate a variety of evils that afflict human beings, as a way of distinguishing Augustine's view from that of Mill. This section will be a quick study of various books found in Augustine's *City of God* (primarily focusing on book XIX) to give a better

[312] Augustine, *City of God,* 312.

conception of his view of civil society. For Augustine, the "political art requires efforts to form and to negotiate with a chaos of conflicting longings and desires."[313]

There are three circles of human society, all of which are prone to suffering: first is the house, second is the city, and third is the world. Humanity desires to live socially and this is a good thing, but man's relationships often cause him the most pain. Whenever man lives with others, judges and judgments become a necessity. To that point, Augustine says, "Melancholy and lamentable judgements they are, since the judges are men who cannot discern the consciences of those at their bar, and therefore frequently compelled to put innocent witnesses to the torture to ascertain the truth regarding the crimes of other men"[314] Judges are not perfect because human beings are not perfect; the fact that judges are imperfect often causes the innocent to suffer. These judges do not intend to do harm, but suffering follows their judgements "because [their] ignorance compels [them], and because human society claims [them] as a judge. But though we therefore acquit the judge of malice, we must nonetheless condemn human life as miserable."[315] Augustine's discussion of the judge is incredibly useful when we examine his views of political life because it reveals the basic problem in politics—the fallen nature of human. Augustine says—and it is brought out in his confessions—that human beings can never understand the soul of their peers, they cannot even understand their own. Man is a problem to himself, as he cannot fully understand himself. This is the basic problem of civil life. Even the first of the three circles of human society—the household—is prone to suffering, even though it is based on "natural affection"; however, it is full of misunderstandings as

[313] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* 50.
[314] Augustine, *City of God,* 616.
[315] Augustine, *City of God,* 617.

one will "experience the death of loved ones, or even the betrayal of a malevolent child."[316]

It is worthwhile to remember Augustine's example of the runaway horse when discussing his views of politics. Augustine says, "For a runaway horse is better than a stone that stays in the right place only because it has no movement or perception of its own; and in the same way a creature that sins by free will is more excellent than one that does not sin only because it has no free will."[317] Similarly, a drunk is better than the wine he gets drunk on. [318] This discussion highlights the fact that free will is always better than a creature that doesn't enjoy that freedom, even when it is characterized by inordinate desire. This argument has political implications. It points to a belief that governments need to indulge human freedom to a certain extent. Human dignity lies within individual freedom. It is worthwhile to discuss this now because suffering is a result of human freedom. But freedom should be tolerated because it is needed for human beings to desire virtue.

Suffering occurs even though all people desire peace; even the act of war is an action toward the end of peace and those who disturb the peace do so to bring a peace that serves them better. However, the peace of the unjust "abhors equality with other men under [God]; but, instead of His rule, it seeks to impose a rule of its own upon its equals. It abhors, that is to say, the just peace of God, and loves its own unjust peace; but it cannot help loving peace of one kind or other. For there is no vice so clean or contrary to nature that it obliterates even the faintest traces of nature."[319]

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[316] Paul J. Cornish, "Augustine's Contribution to the Republican Tradition," 141.
[317] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 81.
[318] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will,* 81.
[319] Augustine, *City of God,* 622.

Augustine proceeds to define the different instances of peace: "The peace of the body then consists in the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts. The peace of the irrational soul is the harmonious repose of the appetites, and that of the rational soul the harmony of knowledge and action. The peace of the body and soul is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law. Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law."[320] He continues, "Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquility of order."[321] The point of this discussion is that peace can only be had by receiving God's grace. For Augustine, peace is dependent on the peace of the individuals that make up society.

God commands two things of humanity: to love God, and to love his neighbor—from these commands it follows that he should also love himself. Augustine believes that man must "endeavor to get his neighbor to love God, since he is ordered to love his neighbor as himself."[322] A concord arises in man's community, "and this is the order of this concord, that a man, in the first place, injure no one, and, in the second, do good to everyone he can reach."[323] The primary care for the individual is the household, "for the law of nature and of society gives him readier access to them and greater opportunity of serving them…This is the origin of domestic peace…even those who rule serve those

[320] Augustine, *City of God,* 623.
[321] Augustine, *City of God,* 623.
[322] Augustine, *City of God,* 625.
[323] Augustine, *City of God,* 625.

whom they seem to command; for they rule not from a love of power; but from a sense of duty they owe to others."[324] Augustine prescribes to a theory where the autonomy of the household is respected and celebrated: "Since, then, the house ought to be the beginning or element of the city, and every beginning bears reference to some end of its own kind, and every kind, and every element to the integrity of the whole of which it is an element it follows plainly enough that domestic peace has a relation to civic peace." [325] There is a relationship between domestic obedience and civic obedience.[326] The family is the building block of civil life. The point here is that society and politics are rooted in nature.

In the above examination of Book XIX, we see the existence and permanence of suffering in all societies, no matter how virtuous they may be. However, Augustine gives a framework for a type of republic that minimalizes suffering, where the household is the primary element of politics. This allows each individual to possess a greater sense of duty to their fellow citizens. Paul Weithman explains: "Political societies enjoy the support of their member as long as their members love the same things… [societies] may be stabilized simply by their citizens' love for the limited peace their governments establish."[327] Augustine argues that society's virtues are a result of the virtue of its citizens, not government institutions. As Heyking observes, "The character of a people depends on the object of its love, and that determines what form the political society will take. The love itself does not create the people, which means that a political society remains constant even though the objects of its love fluctuate."[328] Civic peace/stability

[324] Augustine, *City of God,* 625.
[325] Augustine, *City of God,* 628.
[326] Augustine, *City of God,* 628.
[327] Paul Weithman, "Augustine's Political Philosophy", in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* David Vincent Meconi ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 242.
[328] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* 89.

needs a level of civic virtue. That is, governments and institutions do not produce virtuous citizens; "For example, Augustine would have disagreed with the French and Russian revolutionaries that their revolutions created a new *populous*. The revolutions would have expressed only the change in which the object of love received institutional or elemental representation."[329]

If you want to know the character of a people, then you need to look to the object of their love. Augustine states, "it will be a superior people in proportion as it is bound together by higher interests, inferior in proportion as it is bound together by lower."[330] As Heyking notes, "Just as one becomes more godlike by imitating Christ…so too do political societies become more like the objects their people love."[331] A republic is an "assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of love."[332] The only answer for the anxiety that exists in the temporal world comes from peace and hope of the "City of God". As Augustine says, the *City of God* is "[where] peace is complete and unassailable…There the virtues shall no longer be struggling against vice or evil, but shall enjoy the reward of victory, the eternal peace which no adversary shall disturb."[333] Augustine argues, "Virtue, if we are living rightly, makes a right use of the advantages of this peaceful condition; and when we have it not, virtue makes a good use even of the evils a man suffers. But this is true virtue, when it refers all the advantages it makes a good use of, and all that it does in making good use of good and evil things, and itself also, to that end in which we shall enjoy the best and

[329] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* 89.
[330] Augustine, *City of God,* 637.
[331] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* 83.
[332] Augustine, *City of God,* 638.
[333] Augustine, *City of God,* 619.

greatest peace possible."[334] The peace of the earthly city is a lesser peace than all those above it.

As was stated above, Augustine regarded the City of God (or celestial city) as the only city that enjoys perfect peace; conversely, the earthly city enjoys limited or imperfect peace. [335] However, politics is not seen as an evil or a perverse endeavor. Augustine sees politics as a "natural human good necessary for humans to flourish."[336] Heyking claims, "Augustine preferred small cities to large empires because small cities preserve moderation and are less prone to engendering the lust for rule."[337] He offers Augustine's discussion of rich and poor men in Book IV of *City of God* as proof.

Augustine uses the analogy of a rich man and a poor man and translates the virtues that make them either good or bad men to what makes a good and bad city. The first man is very rich but is "anxious with fears, pinning with discontent, burning with covetousness, never secure, always uneasy, panting from perpetual strife of his enemies, adding to his patrimony indeed by these miseries to an immense degree, and by these additions also heaping up most bitter cares."[338] This man clings to his inordinate desires. The second man is content with his moderate wealth and estate "most dear to his family, enjoying sweet peace with his kindred neighbors and friends, in piety religious, benignant in mind, healthy in body, in life frugal, in manners chaste, in conscience secure."[339]

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[334]Augustine, *City of God,* 620.
[335] Augustine, *City of God,* 623.
[336] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* 109.
[337] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* 108.
[338]Augustine, *City of God,* 100
[339] Augustine, *City of God,* 100.

Augustine believes that the choice between which life is preferred is obvious. Temporal wealth and fortune means nothing if there is not an eternal object to desire and to love. Fortune is given to the just and unjust, but it is not lasting and can be corrupted; this develops an anxiety in man and a fear that he will lose his fortune.[340] The above example illustrates that the man who has less enjoys peace, presumably because his will is oriented towards the eternal law and a desire for God. He clings to his ordinate desires. It is impossible to be happy without this peace. The first man in Augustine's example has inordinate desire as he clings to his temporal fortunes. This man's avarice causes him to pursue for more and more riches, leading to his anxiety and causing disharmony with the man, preventing him from becoming free. He is a slave to his desire. Heyking interprets this example as meaning that Augustine believed that a "compact and moderate city will be good whereas an imperial one will be feverish."[341] The city that is like the covetous man will seek to expand and dominate its neighbors. It prevents peace and causes harm. On the other hand, a city that loves virtue, like the good man, will be content and can exist as a good neighbor. Augustine likens the city that has the same values as the rich man to robbers. He states, "If…this evil increases to such a degree that it…takes possession of cities, and peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity."[342]

[340] Augustine, *City of God,* 101.
[341] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World,* 108.
[342] Augustine, *City of God,* 101.

Conclusion

Unlike the Manicheans, who believed that evil is a material substance, Augustine understood evil as being the deprivation of the good. All things were created by God *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). Because God is good, his creation is also good. The cause of evil comes from man's free choice. Evil is the corruption of good caused by a "swerving of the will which is turned towards lower things and away from [God]."[343] Augustine states, "And in this universe even that which is called evil, being properly ordered and put in its place, sets off the good to better advantage, adding to its attraction and excellence as compared with evil."[344] By focusing on the highest good (God), man learns the cardinal virtues. This relationship with God allows man the ability to more fully enjoy all other goods. However, focusing on lower goods creates a habit of disruption.

Human beings experience a higher level of freedom when they understand their selves in relationship with a spiritual God who is creator of all. Evil is not an object or a material, but the privation of the good. Scott MacDonald says of Augustine's conception of evil, "[Augustine] can acknowledge that evil infects creation without thereby committing himself to the claim that evil is one of God's creatures."[345] Augustine argues, "As long, then, as a being suffers corruption, there is in it some good of which it is being deprived."[346] Human beings cause evil by a disordered love, desiring a lower good above a higher good.

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[343] Augustine, *Confessions,* 132.
[344] St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity,* 18.
[345] Scott MacDonald, "Primal Sin", 115.
[346] St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity,* 19.

As discussed prior in this chapter, there is a hierarchy of being (which is an area where the Neo-Platonists influenced Augustine); when man clings to the lower goods, it results in sin. The will may cause man to sin but it also allows man to live a good life and come to know virtue. However, through this paper's examination of, primarily, Augustine's *Confessions* and *On Free Choice of the Will,* we can conclude that happiness and the virtuous life can only be had through God's grace. *Confessions* is especially important to the discussion of grace because, as Jennifer Heardt says, "Augustine's *Confessions* witnesses to the priority of grace, at work in him long before his conversion and baptism."[347] That is to say, Augustine believes that it is through Christ that human beings experience a higher freedom. As Heyking says, "Law does not command, but is the expression of the free being. Freedom has its own logic. Thus, human beings are co-creators with God because they partake in God's providence; they are friends of God, which is the end of the law."[348]

Augustine, a former Manichean himself, struggled to understand the problem of evil. He was attracted to Manichaeism because it taught that God was not the creator of evil, and that he was absolved of any blame. Instead, it was an evil nature that was the cause of his wrongdoing. But, if God is just, then for God to justly punish, man must be free to act. The will is the cause of man's actions, but it is also reflexive as it acts upon itself to form habits. The pull towards sin is not easy to break and necessitates God's grace. This is why man often struggles to will wholly, as is illustrated in Augustine's own conversion in Book VII and VIII of his *Confessions.* Augustine's lustful desires prevented

[347] Jennifer Herdt, "Theater of the Virtues", in *Augustine's City of God,* James Wetzel ed., (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 128.
[348] John von Heyking, "God's Co-Workers," 87.

him from pointing his will towards God. There is a disunity of soul and flesh exacerbated by sinful habits, as argued by G.G. Stroumsa and Paula Fredriksen, which "impinges on free choice, whose difficulties attest not to two contrary natures, but to a single conflicted will."[349]

In this chapter, I examined how Augustine understands the relationship between freedom and evil. It is this understanding that forms the basis of his political philosophy. John Stuart Mill argued that Christianity made humanity passive—i.e. it prevented humanity from trying to better their lot, or progress. Augustine believed that suffering is a universal reality of life. No matter how society is organized, it will never be perfectly just. However, depending on the object of the republic's love, the effects of evil and suffering can be mitigated. Cornish notes that "Augustine argues that all human beings suffer in this life, not because they are evil, but simply because of the ignorance and uncertainty to which one is subject in human society."[350] Augustine claims that all society is flawed and not free from suffering because humanity is flawed.

Mill is optimistic that tyranny of custom does not always have to be the conclusion of progress. However, Augustine claims that it will always occur because the problem is a permanent one (human nature). Progressives (like Mill) only serve the purpose of exaggerating our differences and creating more political discontent. Augustine's philosophy is an eternal questioning of self. This self-questioning prevents a corrosion of the "higher faculties," which Mill's philosophy does. It is an understanding that the city of man will never perfect. Suffering is a permanent reality of politics,

[349] G.G. Stroumsa and Paula Fredriksen, "The Two Souls and the Divided Will", 212.
[350] Paul J. Cornish, "Augustine's Contribution to the Republican Tradition," 141.

because misunderstanding will always occur. The best that can happen is that human beings live with each other's differences and try to persuade each other towards virtue. In the next chapter, I will discuss the differences between Mill and Augustine further, as well as the dangerous marriage of political Manichaeism and Progressives

Chapter 4: Political Manichaeism and Progressivism

Up to this point, I have compared the philosophies of Saint Augustine and John Stuart Mill and how they understood human freedom and the political implications that follow. An important difference between the two is how they handle the "will"—Augustine believed it to be divided, while Mill thought it could be perfectible. There is a religious aspect to both philosophies—for Augustine, Christianity, and for Mill, Manichaeism. Mill embraced Manichaeism as he believed it taught humanity to take initiative and reach their "proper condition". Augustine thought that Manichaeism overestimated and oversimplified human freedom.[351] At their heart, progressive movements have a Manichean belief that those who oppose "progress" are uncivilized or an oppressive evil. The idea is that those who agree with the progressive movement are pure and those who oppose it are a stain that needs to be dealt with.

In the previous chapters, I examined key works of Saint Augustine (including *City of God, On Free Choice of the Will,* and *Confessions*) and John Stuart Mill (including *On Liberty,* "Utilitarianism", "On Nature", "Utility of Religion", and "Theism") in order to gain a fuller understanding of how they conceived freedom and how that affected their political philosophy. In this final chapter, I will briefly discuss the relationship between Political Manichaeism and modern progressivism, in particular how its Manichean understanding of freedom has led to more suffering. The problem with progressives is that they have an oversimplified understanding of freedom.

[351] The core of Augustine's teaching on the divided will is found in his exposition of Romans 7:15: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate to do." (NIV & Augustine, *Confessions,* 133.) The point is that humanity is faced with an intractable struggle wholly to will and choose the good. Augustine regards Mill's view of the will's capacity to freely choose as too simplistic.

Modern politics has seen the development of deep divisions. As these divisions have grown, so has the adoption of the Manichean doctrine. It was seen in twentieth century progressive movements such as Marxism and was also behind residential schools in Canada. The progressive movements that fueled these examples show their Manichean tendency in how the ideology viewed or treated the other. Each thought that those who opposed or did not share their ideas were uncivilized, oppressive or evil. To oppose the prevailing opinion of the progressive ideology is perceived to be a character flaw. This idea stems from two essential points: 1) the idea that as humanity progresses it become more rational; inevitably, there is a homogenization of thought; 2) the idea that human beings are, or can be, in complete control of their will. Thus, there are two reasons why an individual would disagree with the prevailing ideology: either they are uncivilized (i.e. insufficiently rational) or they have freely chosen to impede progress (i.e. they are evil). The discussion on freedom between Augustine and Mill gives insight into modern progressive movements. In the next section, I will briefly review Augustine's and Mill's philosophies.

Review

Augustine argued that man has a fallen nature and is in need of grace. But to experience grace, humanity needs to understand themselves in relation to an incorporeal creator. Augustine thought that humanity can experience their freedom when they gain an incorporeal understanding of creation, where they are in a relationship with a benevolent, all-powerful, creator God (this aspect of his philosophy, as previously mentioned, is influenced by the Neo-Platonists). This is similar to Eric Voegelin's understanding of man as "questioner." He says, "Man, when he experiences himself as existent, discovers

his specific humanity as that of the questioner for the wherefrom and the where to, for the ground and the sense of his existence."[352] An incorporeal understanding allows human beings to understand themselves in an ordered relationship to a transcendent creator. Augustine's philosophy also reveals a fallen human nature where human beings have a divided will—i.e. they are unable to wholly will to the "good". Conversely, Mill claimed that man could progress to a point where he can become "creator". True to Manichaeism, Mill thought that human beings could master material creation as they have the ability to wholly control their will.

A key point of difference between Augustine and Mill is how they understood the free "will." Augustine believed that it was "divided", while Mill thought man could possess self-knowledge and self-control. In the last chapter, I discussed Augustine's understanding of the human will being divided against itself. To Augustine, the will is reflexive, meaning that it works on itself and forms habits. The will becomes divided as man can no longer wholly will towards the good; he needs to receive grace. Unity of thought and action is never possible for human beings because of a fallen nature. People are bad judges, not only because they cannot know the character of their peers, but also because they are always problems to themselves—for Augustine, full self-knowledge and self-control is never possible due to a fallen human nature. Because humanity is imperfect and struggles to wholly will the good, institutions and politics can never end suffering or successfully overcome evil. The best they can do is limit suffering. Utopianism is always an impossibility for Augustine. For Augustine, utopians will only ever create a dystopia

[352] Eric Voegelin, "Reason: The Classic Experience", in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin : Volume 12 Published Essays 1966-1985,* Ellis Sandoz ed., (Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 268.

full of pain and suffering—i.e. Marxism will always create a tyrannical state like U.S.S.R because it depends on a false understanding of freedom.

However, Mill believed that human beings could fully control their will and could reach self-knowledge (and reach perfectibility). Mill left the Saint Simonians, as Capaldi notes, because they do not adequately acknowledge human freedom and there is no room for individual initiative.[353] This is also his criticism of Christianity; he believed that there is no impetus for humanity to take initiative and overcome suffering. Mill thought that humanity could transcend the limitations of nature and material creation, and become creator of a just society. In the second chapter of this thesis, I examined Mill's philosophy of religion and he (and his father) argued that Manichaeism is the only religion free of intellectual and moral contradiction. Mill argued that Manichaeism gives humanity initiative to use their freedom to overcome oppressive evil and eliminate suffering. Mill's conception of progress relies heavily on the Manichean understanding of material evil. It is through rational progress that humanity can reach their "proper condition"—i.e. man can reach full self-knowledge and self-control—and then re-construct society and create a "utopia".

Mill thought man could have complete control over thought and action. Ironically, Mill recognized a major problem in *On Liberty* when humanity reaches their "proper condition". A homogenization of thought and action occurs that imposes its will on the societal milieu. It creates a society of likeminded individuals and those who disagree are a stain on civilized society. The existence of the other represents an oppressive force that needs to be overcome (as his Manichean thought informs him). The political effect of

[353] Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill,* 80-81.

Mill's liberty is tyranny of custom, which Mill himself believed to be amongst the worst social evils.[354] This tyranny pits the civilized (the good or pure) against the uncivilized (the evil or stained). It is this belief that has led to mass political and societal genocide, particularly in the twentieth century. In the next section, I will briefly illustrate how some modern progressive ideology possesses a Manichean character, predominantly in how they understand the relationship between freedom and evil.

Modern Progressivism and Manichaeism

Progressives like Mill believe that history is progressing to a "utopia" where society will be without suffering; therefore, there is no good reason for someone to oppose "progress." Political opposition is, then, considered to be an obstacle that needs to be overcome. We see Mill's Manichaeism when he discusses the need for strong authoritative figures in the first chapter of *On Liberty.* The necessity of despotism is highlighted when Mill says, "[t]o prevent the weaker members of the community from being preyed upon by innumerable vultures, it was needful that there should be an animal of prey stronger than the rest, commissioned to them down."[355] For the uncivilized, despotism is necessary for their liberation. In their barbarism, human beings were slaves to nature and not yet masters. Jahn Beate points out that Mill argues that "Some nations…will never accept the restraints of a regular civilised government—such as North American Indians or the barbarians who overran the Roman Empire…Thus, it is essential to determine the particular stage of development of a people in order to be able

[354] Mill, "On Liberty", 6.
[355] Mill, "On Liberty", 4.

to determine the most appropriate form of government."[356] Beate is referring to Mill's belief in a progressive view of history. Liberty, for Mill, cannot be enjoyed by "barbarians". Instead, liberty can only be enjoyed by those who have progressed through that stage and need not rely on a despot. Liberty is for the civilized. Mill's understanding of freedom and of human nature is shared by modern progressive movements.

As mentioned above, Mill argues that despotism is needed for the "uncivilized". But once society has progressed, citizens will demand freedom from the state. Mill defends individual freedom, believing it is the best way for humanity to progress. However, Mill's flirtation with the radical aspects of Manichaeism leads to a dangerous consequence in his philosophy (one that he acknowledged). Once humanity reaches their "proper condition" and society becomes "rational", a homogenization of thought occurs, where the smallest of differences are looked at with disgust. In this society, a tyranny of custom arises and Mill's fears are realized. Those who do not agree with the prevailing opinion are seen to have a character flaw. They are not rational and need to be re-educated or they are freely choosing evil. They are seen as oppressors and the progressives need to liberate their oppressed.

The twentieth century, in particular, showed the dangers of progressive movements, such as the embrace of class warfare in the Soviet Union. To a lesser extent, this philosophy motivated the progressive movement to re-educate Aboriginal youth in Canada and the atrocities that occurred on residential schools. First Nations citizens were believed to be uncivilized and an obstacle to Canadian progress. First Nation children

[356]Jahn Beate, "Barbarian Thoughts: Imperialism in the Philosophy of John Stuart Mill," in *Review of International Studies,* Vol. 31, No. 3 (July, 2005), 601. http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uleth.ca/stable/pdf/40072091.pdf

were taken to schools so they could be re-educated and assimilated into wider population. The running thread between these examples is a belief that there is no rational reason to oppose progress; thus, political opposition is treated as an evil. These examples have the purpose of showing of how Manichaeism has infiltrated modern (particularly progressive) ideologies. Because of the limitation of this thesis, I will not be able to examine these examples with the proper amount of depth that they deserve. Nonetheless, it would be beneficial to briefly show how each displays its Manichean character. It should be noted that Mill's philosophy did not "father" Marxism or other progressive movements, but Mill does flirt with same Manichean tendency that these ideologies embrace.

Marxism pitted classes against each other, claiming to liberate the working class from the capitalists. Marxism contends that the bourgeoisie are exploit and oppress the proletariat, preventing a more just society.[357] Like Mill, Marxism teaches that history is progressing towards a utopia, where, once all are equal, humanity can enjoy perfect freedom. The goal of Marxists and Communists is to liberate an oppressed class. In practice, Marxism has been ruthless in its treatment of political opponents (especially in the Soviet Union). Between 1929 and 1953, approximately 18 million people were at one time or another put into Soviet labour camps known as the Gulag—I should note that these camps were, in some form, still in use during the 1980s.[358] One of the functions of

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[357] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Frederick Engels ed., (New York: New York Labor News Co., 1908). http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzEwODYxOTlfX0FO0?sid=2e6dfff5-aaeb-4370-8755-5505f34609c6@sessionmgr104&vid=0&format=EK&rid=1 , Chap I.

[358] Nick Rennison, "Gulag: A History", in *The Sunday Times*, (London, March 07, 2017) http://fg2fy8yh7d.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rfr_id=info%3Asid%2Fsummon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Ajournal&rft.genre=article&rft.atitle=GULAG%3A+A+History&rft.jtitle=Sunday+Times&rft.au=Nick+Rennison&rft.date=2004-04-25&rft.pub=News+International+Trading+Limited&rft.issn=0956-1382&rft.externalDocID=624403001&paramdict=en-UK.

the Gulag was to house political opponents. Political opposition represented an evil to the Communist government as they hindered the progression to a Marxist utopia. Opposition was oppressive. Communists (and to a lesser extent, Socialists) believe that political opposition is motivated by a desire to exploit the lower and working classes. The Soviet Gulag represented an attempt to "re-educate" (or to break) opposition. In the cases of the Soviets, opposition did not deserve freedom. However, the sins of communism do not just belong to the U.S.S.R. During Mao's great leap forward, 45 million Chinese peasants were starved, tortured and eventually killed between 1958-1962.[359] Pol Pot led a genocide in Cambodia that killed nearly a quarter of the population.[360] These are only a few of the genocides influenced by a socialist philosophy (which has a Manichean foundation) in the 20th century.

I am not claiming that Mill was a Marxist; he would have thought them to be authoritarians (a similar criticism of the Saint Simonians and Auguste Comte). Mill does share a common understanding of human nature and of human freedom with Marxists. However, based on his writings, Mill probably would have been in supportive of policies like residential schools in Canada. He would have thought that the Canadian indigenous population was "uncivilized" and in need of a "despot". In Canada, about 150,000 thousand Native children (as young as four) were taken from their families and put into residential schools (also known as industrial schools) between the years of 1860 and

[359] Arifa Akbar, "Mao's Great Leap Forward 'Killed 45 Million in Four Years'," in *Independent*, last updated September 17, 2010, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/maos-great-leap-forward-killed-45-million-in-four-years-2081630.html, para. 3-5.
[360] Seth Mydans, "Death of Pol Pot; Pol Pot, Brutal Dictator Who Forced Cambodians to Killing Fields, Dies at 73," the *New York Times*, last updated April 17, 1998, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/04/17/world/death-pol-pot-pol-pot-brutal-dictator-who-forced-cambodians-killing-fields-dies.html, para. 3.

1996.[361] In this program, there was rampant physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. The Canadian government viewed the Native population as uncivilized and, in a sense, as barbarians that needed to be forcibly assimilated to the broader population in the name of progress. The government believed that it had a responsibility to bring the Native population into modernity.[362] Natives needed to be liberated from their "superstitions." The belief that this population was uncivilized (or "savage") made it easier to overlook the fact that these schools were underfunded and disease, abuse and death was too common.[363] The belief was that this population was a "black eye" to Canadian progress and needed to be dealt with. Students were taught to adopt "mainstream" Canadian culture; if they continued to practices their native traditions they would "experience severe punishment."[364] During the 1940s and 1950s, some schools engaged in nutritional experimentation (with the Canadian Government's knowledge).[365] The difference between the residential schools and Soviet gulags (for the most part) was that the gulags were meant to destroy "evil", while residential schools were meant to liberate the uncivilized—in a similar way that Mill thought that British despotism would help uncivilized India. What made Natives and Indians "evil" were their superstitions and the fact that they were not "modern". Their existence prevented societal progress.

This is not just a problem that manifested in the 20th century. Modern politics has seen a deep polarization; both sides see the other as an impediment to what they believe is

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[361] Rosemary Nagy and Robinder Kaur Sehdev, "Introduction: Residential Schools and Decolonization," in *Canadian Journal of Law and Society,* Vol. 27, No. 01, DOI: 10.3138/cjis.27.1.067., 67.
[362] CBC News, "A History of Residential Schools in Canada: FAQs on Residential Schools, Compensation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," in *CBC,* last updated March 2016, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-history-of-residential-schools-in-canada-1.702280, para. 1.
[363] Rosemary Nagy and Robinder Kaur Sehdev, "Introduction", 67.,
[364] CBC News, "A History of Residential Schools in Canada," para. 6.
[365] CBC News, "A History of Residential Schools in Canada," para. 8.

a just society. Communication has broken down with each side resorting to name calling in an attempt to dehumanize the other. This name calling is akin to saying that "you are evil, while I am on the side of righteousness." It has led to a breakdown of civil discourse and in some cases has led to violence. This polarization has become not just a political problem but also a societal one. Cass Sunstein has researched the deep political divisions within American society. Sunstein notes that political prejudice now trumps racial prejudice—i.e. political ideology is now the deepest division within society.[366] Individuals no longer approve, trust or associate with those of another political party like they once did. Sunstein calls this Partyism—the "immediate, visceral negative reactions to members of the opposing political party. The reactions operate a lot like racism, in the sense that they affect decisions in multiple areas of life, including friendship, dating, and marriage, hiring, and contracting."[367] Sunstein notes that Republicans now hate Democrats more than all else and vice versa.[368] The months following the 2016 presidential election perhaps display Sunstein's research the best. Donald Trump currently holds a favourability rating (as of February, 2017) of 84 per cent among Republicans and 8 per cent among Democrats.[369] This reveals the polarization in politics and the pervasive tribalism found on both sides.

Each side now views political opposition as a representation of evil. At the heart of their belief is that there is no reason why an intelligent human being would disagree. Disagreement, then, is the result of a character flaw or a mark of an evil will. Either way,

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[366] Cass R. Sunstein, "'Partyism' Now Trumps Racism."
[367] Cass R. Sunstein, "Cass Sunstein: We've Entered the Age of Partyism."
[368] Cass R. Sunstein, "Cass Sunstein: We've Entered the Age of Partyism."
[369] "Early Public Attitudes about Donald Trump," in *Pew Research Center: U.S. Politics and Policy*, February 16, 2017, http://www.people-press.org/2017/02/16/1-early-public-attitudes-about-donald-trump/

despotism and force are justifiable, as they are impeding progress. But today's problems are much deeper than "Partyism". Joshua Mitchell clearly articulates the evolution of how western society got to its current state—which he calls the "Age of Exhaustion". He makes the argument that contemporary politics is divided in a battle between three paradigms: Liberal Triumphalism, anti-Liberal identity politics, and "The Great Exhaustion." Joshua Mitchell claims that the last "several decades constitute the serial unfolding of two competing party understandings" which are headed towards a "shipwreck".[370] He claims that the "conservative version failed because it was predicated on a fixed and unwavering understanding of human nature that was supposed to be true for all peoples, at all times, in all places: Liberal Triumphalism."[371]

Manichean activism has permeated modern politics in the form of identity politics. Identity politics segregates society into groups by amplifying our differences. It argues that certain groups have been historically oppressed and it rallies its supporters to take up arms against "oppressors". On the topic of identity politics, Joshua Mitchell says, "To this declaration by which we remain self-enclosed is added the fateful moral vocabulary of *purity* and *stain*, which is nowhere more excelled than in still-Puritan America. Thus, the conclusion: 'because I am *this* and you are *that*, I am pure and innocent and you are guilty and stained.'"[372] He continues, "Because *purity* and *stain* are linked to identity itself, there can be neither penance nor forgiveness, which are (mere) changes of heart that in no

[370] Joshua Mitchell, "Age of Exhaustion: How the Triumphalist Mutation of Liberalism and the anti-Liberal Politics," in *The American Interest*, October 10, 2015, Vol. 11, No. 2, http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/10/10/age-of-exhaustion/ para. 5.
[371] Joshua Mitchell, "Age of Exhaustion," para. 2.
[372] Joshua Mitchell, "Age of Exhaustion," 36.

way bear on who we irremediably are."[373] Anti-Liberals argue that freedom is inherently prejudicial; as Mitchell points out, it is this sentiment that leads to modern labels like "white Tea Party Republicans".[374] In Martin Luther King's famous speech, "I Have a Dream", he said: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."[375] At the heart of Dr. King's speech is the belief that human beings are more than their identity and each person has an inherent dignity. Unfortunately, modern progressives have forsaken Dr. King's philosophy. Mill's progressive philosophy lends itself to identity politics. It leads to a belief in one's own righteousness and the desire to liberate the oppressed. Those who oppose this ideology are believed to be oppressive and have a character flaw. What this progressivism leads to is the creation of new dragons to slay by exaggerating our differences. On the other hand, Augustine's philosophy of the divided will causes human beings to look inward and be intentional with their actions and behaviour. It forces humanity to acknowledge our limitations and understand that perfection is unattainable, because the problem is not political or social institutions; the problem is a fallen human nature.

Conclusion

This thesis brought together Augustine and Mill in conversation over how they conceive freedom. The difference between them is the extent to which individual freedom is limited. Augustine thought that nobody could wholly will himself to the good—i.e.

[373] Joshua Mitchell, "Age of Exhaustion", para. 36.
[374] Joshua Mitchell, "Age of Exhaustion," para. 17.
[375] Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream", in the *Government Archives*, 1963, https://www.archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf

people have a divided will. There is a disunity between thought and action. On the other hand, Mill thought that when humanity progressed to a point of civilized maturity (able to use their own faculties, independent of others), they could wholly will themselves to overcome material evil. The problem of politics and suffering cannot be solved with institutional and social reform. The problem does not arise for material evil, but from a fallen human nature (a divided will). Augustine argues that suffering will always exist in society; the best that we can do is to limit suffering.

The problem of politics is not that it is inherently evil, as it has a function in human affairs. The problem is human nature and no amount of social or institutional reform can solve this problem. Augustine acknowledged that individual liberty can cause people to pursue temporal goods (wealth, prestige, etc.), but human dignity resides in the free will. Augustine is clear that it is better to be a drunk than the wine that he gets drunk off—i.e. it is better to be free to sin, than to not be free at all. While freedom causes suffering, it is freedom that allows people to pursue virtue. The best state is one where the citizens love virtue. Augustine is in favour of small government and small states; this promotes moderation and limits the lust for domination.

Manichean philosophy is the underlying principle behind modern progressive movements that believe that when humanity takes initiative to overcome evil, then they can reach a utopia. Over the past few centuries, these progressive movements (Marxism, residential schools, etc.) have shown the consequences of Manichean philosophy—which promotes a belief that political opposition is evil. What Progressives and Mill forget is what Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn acknowledges: "If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the

rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."[376] This is an Augustinian principle that argues that due to human nature, each person is the cause of evil. In a way, politics and liberty is more complex than Millian progressives care to admit. As Solzhenitsyn points out, evil cannot be overcome by separating a "person and destroying him". When society does pursue this view of politics, it tends to cause more harm than good (by forming Gulags, residential schools, etc.).

I in no way argue that progressive philosophy makes an explicit argument in favour of violence (especially Mill). They may justify the use of force (Marxists removing property from the capitalists, or First Nation children being removed from their community). In some ways, their aim is noble (like their desire to live in a world without suffering). The problem is a flawed human nature that no amount of social activism will fix. Mill's idea of society where all live in their "proper condition" is impossible. Progress results in a tyranny of custom, where those who do not conform to the prevailing opinion are treated with disgust. The smallest of differences are exaggerated and to be different is seen as a character flaw. Manichean activism influences individuals to take up arms (like St. George) and liberate the oppressed. The problem of progressivism stems from a flawed view of human freedom.

[376] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney, (New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973), 178.

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