CHAPTER 1

Augustine's Two Cities

As we saw in the Introduction, Richard Sennett, the American social scientist, critiques Christianity for its supposed rejection of public life and cities based on its fear of mixture and concern for purity.[1] Thus, Sennett interprets Christianity as a religion of pilgrimage towards a purely transcendent eternal horizon rather than a medium of existential placement. For Sennett, Augustine of Hippo's *City of God*, where he develops a theology of Christianity in relation to public life, is the classic expression of the triumph of an inner "city" restlessly in search of eternal fulfillment over the everyday human city.[2] Augustine's book seems to have been provoked in part by the sack of Rome by the Goth Alaric in 410. To be fair, Sennett is not alone in interpreting Augustine's *City of God* in this way as fundamentally a rejection of human cities. However, in my view, this interpretation of Augustine needs significant revision. The idea that Christian faith is unequivocally inward-looking rather than concerned with everyday self-giving and active service of fellow human beings is inaccurate.

Before Augustine

Before turning explicitly to Augustine (354–430 CE), it is interesting to note that he was not the first Christian writer to address the question of the human city. In the period before the conversion of the Roman

Empire to Christianity during the fourth century, the evidence concerning early Christian attitudes is ambiguous. The anonymous "Epistle to Diognetus," which dates from the late second century, describes the Christians who inhabit human cities as "resident aliens." Their presence reminds earthly cities of an ultimate heavenly destiny. The point being made is that Christianity offers a highly paradoxical response to "the urban." The theologian Tertullian (circa 160–circa 225) writes in his *Apology* (chapter 37) that Christians are often accused of being unengaged with the affairs of life because they are too concerned with eternity. However, as Tertullian underlines, in reality Christians participate in the economic and social life of the Empire and offer benefits to it. Because of this, Christianity actively supports the social and moral order. Even a non-Christian Empire is part of God's providence as a means of restraining violence and evil. Tertullian's theological contemporary, Clement of Alexandria (circa 150–circa 215), in his work *Stromata* (4.26) accuses human cities of being cities in name only. Only heaven may properly be described as a city in a perfect sense. However, Clement also believed that the presence of Christians on earth, while an "alien citizenship," is nevertheless a true citizenship. The life of the heavenly city may in some sense be anticipated here on earth. In that sense Christianity's "alien citizenship" is a seed of transformation acting within and on behalf of the world. Similar sentiments are echoed in Origen (circa 185–254) in his *Contra Celsum*. There he asserts that Christians do good to cities, first, by educating their fellow citizens in devotion to God, who is the true guardian of the city, and, second, by enabling those who have lived good lives in even the least of human cities eventually to enter the divine city.

Finally, John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (circa 347–407), in his *Homilies* (Homily 16.2) similarly notes that for Christians the only true city is the Heavenly Jerusalem. However, he exhorts his fellow citizens that earthly citizenship should be so informed by a heavenly vision that it is transfigured and the social order is sacralized. In his spiritual ideal for the human city, all the different orders of human society should be mutually dependent. Therefore, the rulers of cities have a duty to protect the weak from the strong (Homily 23). Interestingly, as Augustine did subsequently, John Chrysostom holds up the monastic life as the model for a new approach to human citizenship. Specifically he points to the monasteries of Antioch (Homily 72) as the "city of virtue."[3]

Augustine's Human City

Turning now to Augustine, the German Jewish political philosopher Hannah Arendt commented that "Augustine seems to have been the last to know at least what it once meant to be a citizen."[4] The question is whether he retained hope in the possibilities of human citizenship. It is true that he states at the start of his *City of God*, Book 1 Preface, that the earthly city is marked by a "lust of domination" or a desire for glory.[5] However, this is without question a critique specifically of Imperial Rome which was his historical urban paradigm. In addition, the book was written partly in response to accusations that the growth of Christianity was the cause of Rome's decline because Christian faith was too private and lacked a civic philosophy.

However, Augustine was concerned to counter any suggestion that any political system, even the relatively new Christian Roman Empire, could effectively be canonized as the privileged place of God's presence and purpose. In other words, as the contemporary Augustine scholar Carol Harrison underlines, Augustine clearly breaks with any attempt to create an "imperial theology."[6] In the mind of Augustine, the ongoing flow of history in the period between Christ's ascension and his second coming (or the Parousia) was "secular" in the sense that it manifested no definitive signposts to eternal life or guidelines to the sacred. No human social or political system came closer to God than any other. This aspect of Augustine gives Christianity a great deal of prophetic ammunition to critique attempts to promote specific social and political systems (for example, capitalism, Marxism or religious theocracies) as uniquely effective, let alone notably virtuous. However, Augustine did not deny that God acts equally in every time and place. While for Augustine the true "city" was the community of believers destined to become the City of God, he did not reject the status of "the secular" or of the human city in particular. Indeed he argues that it is incorrect to accuse Christianity of being apolitical. For Augustine, Christianity is neither to dominate public life nor to retreat from it.

The word "secular" (Latin *saeculum*), unlike the word "profane," with which it is often confused, does not have any connotations of being radically opposed to the sacred. In fact, the concept of the "secular" has Christian origins and is simply the shared, common, public space of "the present age" or the here and now. This is, if you like, a

zone in which there is an overlap and interchange between religious insiders and outsiders. In the minds of commentators such as Robert Markus and Carol Harrison, the *saeculum* is theologically neutral in that it is not to be taken over either by purely sacred narratives or by those that caricature it as irredeemably separated from the sacred.[7] What is common to all human beings is the public realm. Christians have a stake in its social structures and cultural realities, alongside and with everyone else.

Here, we also need to distinguish carefully between Augustine's theological concept of the "earthly city" (the *civitas terrena*) which is the realm of sin, and the realm of the "secular" – the social and political realities of the everyday human city. The everyday city, a paradigm of the public realm, is a neutral space where the spiritual reality of the city of God and the counter-spiritual reality of the earthly city coexist and contend, like the wheat and tares of the gospel parable, until the end of time. As Augustine comments in his *City of God*, "In truth, those two cities are interwoven and intermixed in this era, and await separation at the last judgment."[8] The theme of mingling the two theological cities in human society is present in other works, for example *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, Augustine's sermons between the years 405 and 408 and his commentary on the Book of Genesis, *De Genesi ad Litteram* (circa 414). In the latter (chapter 11.15.20) Augustine sets out the "city of the just" as social rather than self-centered in nature and with a "regard for the common good for the sake of the community" as opposed to the opposite.[9]

Augustine was far from indifferent to the moral foundations of a human city. He defended a legitimate place for the secular sphere within a Christian interpretation of the world as the theatre of God's action. Indeed, some commentators suggest that in the mind of Augustine the vocation of a human city, both socially and architecturally, was to strive to become an anticipation in the here and now of the eschatological *civitas Dei*. According to this view, while Augustine was neither a city planner nor a political theorist, he effectively redeemed an urban culture in crisis by using the city as his image of heaven. Once again, it is important to bear in mind the context. The *City of God* was written as the city of Rome and Greco-Latin classical culture collapsed in the face of barbarian invaders. In adopting the image of the city as a metaphor for paradise, Augustine effectively uses historic urban civil (and civilized) culture to counter the chaos wrought by what he saw as

culturally destructive barbarians. Thus, Augustine was, as it were, imagining a "better Rome." For Augustine, steeped in classical philosophy, no concrete image for paradise embodied the fullness of the human condition better than a city. As we shall see in the next chapter, during centuries following the fall of Rome monastic communities and their buildings effectively took the place of classical urban culture. Monasteries were mini-cities of God, images of the New Jerusalem (Book of Revelation 21) or cities set on a hill (Matthew 5:4). Later, this sacred role was then taken over, as we shall see in Chapter 3, by the medieval city revival.[10]

Human cities are shaped by time and space. Augustine's theology of time and human history was eschatological in the sense that it focused on the ultimate arrival of God's Kingdom at the end of time. Our human cities and our political systems are undoubtedly contingent. Nevertheless, human history is unquestionably God's creation. History is not to be condemned as evil or irrelevant. Augustine's distinction between sacred and secular cities does not render human history or built environments meaningless. What Augustine rejected was a sense that the contingent world or any version of human politics is definitive or of ultimate value. This would be idolatrous. In that sense, the existential human city can never be thought of in idealized, utopian terms. However, this distinction between a "common good" that is achievable in the everyday city and a City of God that is fulfilled only beyond time also counters any attempt to espouse some kind of totalitarian theocracy as the ideal social system.

Because Augustine's *City of God* was more concerned with the city as a community (*civitas*) rather than with it as a physical environment (*urbs*), people have been able to draw from his work a radical distinction between earthly and heavenly cities. As we saw in the Introduction, this image remained etched in the minds of people until the late Middle Ages and, arguably, even into the modern era. In practice, of course, there needs to be a dialectical relationship between the two planes of community and built environment. Only then will there develop a community-centered plan for cities that expresses the various ways in which life is actually lived, or that people hope it may be lived.

For Augustine, human institutions, including city life, are not irrelevant but are both convenient for, and necessary for, our current human purposes. They are also of moral and spiritual value when they are used to frame our human lives more broadly in ways that are

focused upon the love of God and are directed at ultimate union with God.[11] Augustine was significantly preoccupied by the question of authority. How were Church authorities (for example, the local bishop) and the civil magistrates to be allowed the necessary freedom to act in relation to their own proper field of authority and according to their own legitimate principles? In his *City of God*, Augustine sought to delineate a sphere in which everyone had a stake. The human secular urban environment was a context in which there was a mixture of both the City of God and the earthly (sinful) city in this contingent life. Augustine sought to define *civitas* – that is, civic community – in a way that enabled Christians to acknowledge its proper claims upon them.

Equally, for Augustine this civic realm was vitally important in order to maintain earthly peace. In one sense civic society was relativized yet it was still of value. Indeed, in Augustine's words, the city of God in its pilgrimage through contingent time and space uses "earthly peace" – social cohesion, we might say – as a useful, even necessary medium for the eventual attainment of the fullness of heavenly peace. There is no question that in the mind of Augustine, *perfect* peace, *perfect* justice and *perfect* community are to be found only in the Church as City of God. However, we need to be clear that this refers to the purified and perfected Christian community of the eschatological age, eternity, not to the contingent, Church institution in the here and now. Like all structures shaped by human action, the institutional Church throughout history is an ambiguous context of high aspirations but also of striking imperfections.[12]

This interpretation of Augustine appears to be somewhat different from the viewpoint put forward by the British theologian John Milbank in the final chapter of his book *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Milbank seems to suggest that any authentic and effective public realm is neither a neutral nor a shared space but must be intimately associated with and shaped by Christianity. In contrast, however, "The realm of the merely practical, cut off from the ecclesial, is quite simply a realm of sin."[13] For Milbank, the material human city is "secular" in this negative sense. This is because it is built solely upon human reason and is therefore inherently involved in a culture of violence – in other words, Augustine's "lust of domination" noted earlier. Given Augustine's relatively sympathetic review of Cicero and his attention to urban virtues in the everyday realm, an important question is whether this negative judgment is *inherently* true of all material cities

or is specifically a critique of the decadence of late-imperial Rome. To my mind, part of the problem, as I suggested earlier, is a failure to distinguish effectively between Augustine's unquestionably profane and sinful *civitas terrena* and his understanding of the neutral shared space of the everyday city in the *saeculum*, the here and now. If we accept Milbank's way of seeing things in reference to all human cities, the life of the Christian community would seem to be too sharply set apart from the everyday public world. In the words of the social philosopher Gillian Rose, the danger is that Milbank's approach "effectively destroys the idea of a city."[14] Interestingly, in his brief but astute comments on Augustine's theology of the city, Graham Ward, who is in some ways a theological confrère of Milbank, makes no mention of this interpretation.[15]

I agree with another Augustine scholar, Robert Markus, when he further affirms that any interpretation of Augustine that denies the value of political–social structures in "secular" culture is a misreading. Augustine clearly saw the possibility of moral action and value-driven aspiration within everyday social and political frameworks. It is important to be clear that groups, institutions and societies in the everyday world, such as our human cities, are for Augustine components of his theological–eschatological mixture until the end of time of two cities: the *civitas Dei*, City of God, and the *civitas terrena*, the realm of sin.[16]

To return specifically to his book the *City of God*, Augustine is not essentially a political theorist in a disinterested or theoretical sense. For Augustine, human community, *civitas*, is to be reconceived in terms of the transformation demanded by and facilitated by belonging ideally to the City of God. In the end, the heart of the matter is how we choose to orientate our love. As the theologian Rowan Williams suggests, the *City of God* is a schema for reflecting on the nature of social virtue.[17] Augustine suggests that only if we orientate our love towards God will we discover new ways of relating to the world. He does not really develop detailed ideas about the practical tasks of the urban civic community. The central question for Augustine is how people, whose lives have been transformed by relating to God, approach a life of service within the human city. How is the public realm of a city, human society and politics to be a medium for self-giving? For Augustine, the answer is that if we choose to love rightly the rest will follow. In other words, true citizenship involves observing the dual commandment of Jesus Christ to love God truly and also to love our neighbor (in this case, our

fellow citizens) as ourselves. Urban virtue is not purely utilitarian but depends on giving God God's due. Only this way will we give our fellow citizens their full due because their deepest value consists is being images of God.[18] The key is to realize that true human reconciliation and mutual pardon in the city, essential to social justice, can only be produced between people who consistently know themselves to be sinners in need of healing.[19]

Having said this, Augustine does offer a few hints about the tasks and values of a truly common life in the human city. It is clear from reading the *City of God* that Augustine is well aware of Greek and Roman philosophy and enters into conversation with, for example, Aristotle's social ethics and Cicero's *Republic*. For example, in Book 2 he bases himself on Cicero to suggest that Christianity strongly supports the values that are required for effective civil society. Only those who commit themselves to such values will be able to promote a genuinely common life.[20] To create an effective human city there must be some agreement about what constitutes justice and the common good. To speak of the human city as "secular" or "neutral" does not imply that it is a wholly value-free or morally indifferent zone. There must be some reference to the ultimate ends and purpose of human existence. For Augustine this is a theological matter rather than a purely philosophical or political one. Thus, a truly human city needs to be bound together by following the way of Christ, by honoring God and by loving our neighbor in God rather than by focusing on self-interest or power domination. However, the central point is that in this way Christians may contribute to the actual life of real human cities, assist in seeking the civic good and collaboratively work to make the human city an effective, if imperfect, expression of the highest good. This highest good is ultimately reached only beyond time and space in eternal union with God.

One value of civil society is that it promotes consensus or, in Augustine's words, "a certain cohesion of human wills." Clearly, Augustine does not underwrite any form of moral relativism in the human city or the supremacy of freedom of choice or the primacy of individual satisfaction. The further tasks of the civil community are to foster order in the face of chaos and conflict and to create human solidarity. Our common life in the human city is to be more than purely a set of pragmatic institutional arrangements. Equally, a community whose ideal is to be organized around the virtue of mutual love will

eschew the temptation to compete for power. For Augustine, true authority is concerned with service rather than with being served and honored. This makes politics a personally demanding and also a spiritual matter. In that Augustine is concerned to foster a particular approach to human life, the human city needs to be orientated towards a sense of ultimate human purpose. The question is, what horizon of human possibility do we promote? For Augustine, Christianity both underlines the limited horizons of Imperial Rome and promotes an alternative narrative of human potential and ultimate destiny. Christianity offers to the human city a unique theology that all people without exception are created in the image of God and are consequently endowed with a fundamental dignity.

The concept of *societas*, "society," in Augustine is the sum total of associations between people ranging from trade to neighborliness, to family and to civic friendship. Interestingly, the family or household is not purely domesticated but is also in some sense a part of "politics" – that is, the life of the *polis* – whose vocation is to build up the whole city. In the *City of God* 19.16, Augustine suggests that the household is the beginning of the city. Domestic harmony contributes to civic harmony. Both individuals and family households contribute to the "common good" and to a more noble civic order. While cities need civic authorities to regulate practical matters and also to mediate between potential conflicts of will, in the end true "society" is made up of a vibrant network of living relationships between people who are seeking to "live rightly" empowered implicitly by their relationship with God. Proper order in the city is built upon, indeed can *only* be built upon, this quest to live rightly.

Augustine also balances the arguably more detached concept of "society" with the more intimate notion of *amicitia*, friendship. In Augustine there is even "civic friendship" – that is, the ideal of a friendship that extends beyond our immediate circle to embrace all those who inhabit the same place in which we live. This ideal of friendship might even be said to extend beyond the city to the whole world "with whom a man is joined by membership of human society" (*City of God*, 19.3). This converges with Augustine's notion in his commentary on the Book of Genesis that it is humanity as a collective whole, rather than isolated individuals, that is created in the image of God and that will be redeemed. As an urban ideal, *amicitia* embraces bonds of real attachment rather than purely pragmatic arrangements or a sense of

obligation. It contrasts the self-emptying Christian virtue of *caritas*, self-giving love and service, with the power-driven notion of *libido dominandi* (the lust of domination) as the driving force of an effective city. In this way, Augustine counters a purely utilitarian approach to citizenship.[21] Finally, friendship in a fully Christian sense is bound to transcend social rank and to embrace the virtue of humility. As we shall see, this powerful notion of human equality appears again in the dossier of Augustine's monastic writings.

Although Augustine is bound to say that all human cities fall short of the ideal in relation to the true justice present in the heavenly city, there is a difference between those that fall "somewhat short" and those that fall hopelessly short. In this sense, urban virtues are relativized but not invalidated. It all depends, as Augustine suggests in the *City of God* (19.24), whether an urban society loves "better objects" or not. Augustine also counters any notion that the institutional Church cannot be true to itself in the public realm. The Church is able to proclaim its message of salvation to all while at the same time upholding the general consensus on what makes for a "civilized" life. This counters any rigid polarization of a collaborative against a contestational-prophetic understanding of Christian witness in the human city. The Christian community is a collaborative presence in the city but precisely in order to speak prophetically when required in ways that are true to itself and to its values.

Social Virtues: Augustine's Monastic Vision

Finally, there are also useful pointers to an urban vision in the collection of monastic texts known as "The Rule of St Augustine." The various texts that make up this Rule constitute the most influential monastic guidebook in the Western Church after the Rule of St Benedict. One problem is that Augustine does not mention the Rule in any of his other writings. Consequently, there has been some controversy over authorship, textual variations, and the dating of the various constituent texts. However, nowadays the scholarly consensus is that the male version of the Rule, known as the *Praeceptum*, is authentically by Augustine and dates from around 395–6. Other texts that complete the dossier of the Rule, including a version addressed to women, postdate the *Praeceptum*

and may be by Augustine or derive from his immediate monastic circle in Hippo.[22]

In Augustine's *Praeceptum*, which we shall mention again in the next chapter, the monastery is intended to be a mirror for wider society. It therefore models a social way of life where certain virtues are highlighted. Political health, or the security of the human city (*civitas*), is guaranteed by civic virtues which Augustine describes as *fides, concordia*, and *bonum commune*.

Fides, faith or faithfulness, refers back to the important civic Roman goddess of the same name. This urban virtue originally spoke of idealistic citizenship and self-giving patriotism. However, in Christianity "faith" refers specifically to Jesus Christ. It implies living according to faith in Christ. This is not merely a devotional or doctrinal reference but has profound social consequences. The life of a monastery (and by implication, of the human city) was to give off the "good odor" of Christ by exemplary living – witnessing to Christ by living according to his teachings. According to Augustine, true politics in a profound sense demands spirituality. The model he takes is the community of the first Christians in Jerusalem, as portrayed in the Book of Acts Chapter 4, who are described as "one in heart and soul [or mind]." This divinely rooted friendship embraces both love and goodwill or harmony, and brings about authentic "society." This leads naturally a second social virtue, *concordia*.

Concordia, living in concord, also played a central role in the classical Roman public imagination. However, in this ancient imperial context, "living in concord" referred only to the privileged classes. Artisans or slaves were excluded. In the *Praeceptum* Augustine takes this classical notion and radically expands it. For Augustine, living in concord modeled a new ideal of social community. The Rule makes clear that within the monastic community representatives of every social class should live side by side – rich and poor, educated and uneducated, nobility and workers. This deliberately breached the traditional and rigid class boundaries within which people had been conventionally brought up. In one sense, status, distinctions and differences were to be left at the door of the monastery, although the Rule recognized that this was not a simple or pain-free process. Those who came from poorer backgrounds were not to take advantage of their links with people from rich families nor were they to boast to their own families of such grand associations. Conversely, those from rich or noble backgrounds were not to disparage

their poorer brethren. Rather they should take pride in living with them. The equality implied by this version of "living in concord" was interestingly balanced with the defense of a certain plurality. Again, referring to the Book of Acts, Augustine noted that the distribution of material goods to each was to be made according to their particular needs. People's needs (or strength or capacities) were not the same across the board and therefore the same things were not necessarily to be provided for everyone in the community.

Augustine's third social virtue as expressed in the Rule, *bonum commune*, or seeking the common good, was once again one of the highest ideals of classical Roman political theory. It is a virtue that seeks to pursue common ideals while honoring individual needs. We find our own good by seeking the good of the other and together we are bound to work for the good of the whole. For, in Augustine's ideal of community or society, the common good is the highest good of all. Nevertheless, Augustine wishes to allow for the uniqueness of each member. In that sense, the common good is not the same as a lowest common denominator. The negotiation between individual personalities and expectations in favor of a common good necessarily involves discernment. That exercise of practical wisdom implies an examination by each person of their desires and aspirations in order to judge whether the needs of other people and of "the whole" might demand some degree of self-forgetfulness. In the light of this, in the *Praeceptum*, Augustine promotes the spiritual principle of self-transcendence – a movement from self-seeking to the higher ideal of seeking the common good.

Epilogue: Augustine's Theology of Self

Underlying Augustine's various approaches to the human city is a theology of human identity which in turn relates to his theological understanding of God.

Importantly, in terms of human identity, Augustine would have found the individualism and privatization that pervades much of contemporary Western urban culture entirely alien. In his contribution to the multiauthor *A History of Private Life*, Peter Brown, the eminent Augustine scholar, reminds us that the earliest approaches to the Christian life, including Augustine's, inherited from late-classical Judaism an intense sense of a

vital solidarity between the individual and the social community. The perceived danger was that people would retreat into protected privacy rather than give themselves wholeheartedly to the common good. Hence, Jewish writers turned their attention to the thoughts of "the heart" – the supposed core of human motivation and intention. Human destiny was a state of solidarity with others, expressed by the image of an undivided heart.[23] This biblically-driven perspective was complemented in Augustine by his acceptance of the classical Greek and Roman philosophical understanding (specifically in the writings of Aristotle and Cicero) that humans are essentially social beings rather than solitary by nature.

Augustine adopted this symbol of the heart as a way of expressing "the self." In Book 10 of his *Confessions*, when discussing how well other people may know the truth of a person, Augustine refers to "my heart, where I am whatever it is that I am."[24] The use of the word "heart" suggests that the Christian journey takes us "towards the interior self," the true self, where God dwells. This is away from what St Paul (in his Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:16) refers to as our "outer nature": "Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day." On the face of it, this language appears to be very close to the supposed Christian attitudes to the outer world that are criticized so sharply by Richard Sennett. However, here the notion of "outer" refers to our temptation to live on the surface of life, mistaking what is transitory for what is fundamental. It is not a rejection of the outer world of social relationships.

For Augustine, God created humans with the divine image "in their heart." This *imago Dei* is the measure of the true self and sin disconnects us from it. In his *Tractates* [or *Homilies*] *on the Gospel of John* (18.10) Augustine invites us to reconnect with this real self: "Return to your heart! See there what perhaps you perceive about God because the image of God is there. In the inner man [*sic*] Christ dwells; in the inner man you are renewed according to the image of God."[25] Earlier in the same section, Augustine suggests that in leaving the heart we actually leave ourselves: "Why do you go away from yourselves and perish from yourselves? Why do you go the ways of solitude? You go astray by wandering about… You are wandering without [that is, outside ourselves], an exile from yourself." It is not the journey into the heart that is self-centered and solipsistic; rather what is mistaken is to leave the true self where we engage with God and with all others in God. When Augustine writes about wandering about in our outer landscape, he implies an experience of fragmentation.

Augustine links this wandering to "the body." However, once again it is important to understand that "the body" here means fundamentally "the senses." The senses are plural and therefore have several dimensions that offer distinctive kinds of information. Each dimension, each sense, experiences reality only in part. However, Augustine does not mean that the bodily senses are not important. On the contrary, Augustine describes them as the "assistants" of the heart. Thus the heart stands for "the whole self" or "the true self" in its integrated wholeness. It brings together all these sense impressions and is the principle of unity, harmony, and the means of interpreting reality in the round. To put matters in another way, the outer world, for example the human city, is not the problem. The problem is when we live "exteriorly" – that is, out of our skins. The language of the heart is not evidence of a privatized rather than social spirituality. What is interior to me is, for Augustine, where I am also united in God with the whole human family.

The *imago Dei* in which we are created and which is imprinted on the heart must be read alongside Augustine's doctrine of creation. In Augustine's *Commentary on Genesis*, Adam's original sin was "pleasing himself" and "living for himself" (*secundum se vivere, sibi placere*). Thus, human communion is ruptured by sin – whether our union with God, solidarity with other human beings or harmony with a true self. In other words, sin is essentially a withdrawal into individualistic "privacy," but this should not be confused with inwardness or interiority. Self-seeking pride is the archetypal sin (*Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI.15.19–20).[26] Original Eden, or the monastic life, or the idealized future City of God are all based on "the love that promotes the common good for the sake of the heavenly society" (*Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI.15.20). In fact for Augustine the most insidious human sin is self-enclosure. The "private" is seen as the opposite of "common" or "public." In Augustine it is common humanity, rather than entirely autonomous individuals, who are created in God's image. Moral virtue involves defending what is public or held in common. Equally, in Augustine, the Heavenly City was the community in which there would be the fullness of sharing. There will be no room in the eternal kingdom of God for self-enclosed and protected privacy.[27] Within Augustine there is a tension that cannot be resolved. This is between a striking sense of the personal self and an equally striking sense of the fundamentally social nature of human life. "The heart" for Augustine is where a true integration of interiority and exteriority, the spiritual and the fleshly, happens. Equally, Augustine

is clear that if anything is claimed to be in the heart or inside us but does not show itself outwardly in love, community, and service, it is illusory. "The return to the heart is but the first step of a conversion process that proves itself in universal and unrestricted – catholic – love."[28]

What exists at the heart of each person is the image of God-as-Trinity. In his treatise *De Trinitate* Augustine focused on the traces of the Trinity (*vestigia Trinitatis*) found in the soul or center of every human person. People are made in the image of God-as-Trinity and are called to be restored to that image which has been obscured by sin (*De Trinitate* 14.19.25[29]). Further, being created in the image of God-as-Trinity involves a call to become a community or society (sharing the inner love of the Trinity). Augustine was concerned with how Christians are transformed interiorly by the indwelling of God-as-Trinity in the human soul. This indwelling of the loving communion of the Trinity brings about our capacity for mutual charity.

The point is that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is neither an abstract concept nor merely one doctrine among many. To conceive of God as Trinity impacts not only on how we understand and practice the Christian life but also on our understanding of how human society is, or should be, organized.[30] God is to be understood as "persons-in-communion." God's "societal" nature is fundamental. In the Christian doctrine of Trinity, God's unity consists in the interrelationship of persons in free and loving relationships. This understanding of God is rich for our understanding of not only of human identity but also of society and the intimate connection between the two. From this it follows that "communion," *koinonia*, is what makes all things come to be. Nothing and nobody exists without it. It follows that in the thought of Augustine communion, and therefore "society," is structured into the very nature of being human.[31]

Notes

English translations are cited wherever available.

1   Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, London: Faber & Faber, 1993, Introduction and Chapter 1.
2   Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, pp. 6–10.
3   For a commentary on these early Christian attitudes to cities, see Rowan Greer, "Alien citizens: A marvellous paradox," in Peter S. Hawkins (ed.), *Civitas: Religious Interpretations of the City*, Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1986, pp. 39–52.

4 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 14.

5 For an English translation see H. Bettenson (ed.), *St Augustine: City of God*, London: Penguin Classics, New Edition 1984.

6 Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, p. 203.

7 For an updated analysis of "the secular realm" in Augustine, see Robert A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.

8 *City of God*, 1.35.

9 See Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 63–4.

10 David Mayernick, *Timeless Cities: An Architect's Reflections on Renaissance Italy*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003, pp. 5–13.

11 Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, R.P.H. Green(trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2.25–38.

12 *City of God*, 19.17.

13 See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, p. 406.

14 Gillian Rose, "Diremption of spirit," p. 48 in Phillipa Berry and Andrew Wernick (eds.), *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, London: Routledge, 1993.

15 See Graham Ward, *Cities of God*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 227–37.

16 Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, pp. 41–68.

17 Rowan Williams, "Politics and the soul: A reading of the *City of God*," *Milltown Studies*, 19/20, 1987, p. 57.

18 Williams, "Politics and the soul," p. 59.

19 See Robert Dodaro, "Augustine's secular city," in Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (eds.), *Augustine and His Critics*, London and New York: Routledge 2000, pp. 231–59, especially p. 248.

20 For helpful comments on Augustine's idea of civic virtue, see David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 120–129.

21 O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, pp. 224ff.

22 See Thomas F. Martin, Chapter 8 "Augustine and the politics of monasticism," in John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes and Kim Paffenroth (eds.), *Augustine and Politics*, Lanham, MD and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005, pp. 165–86; also Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 182ff. For a scholarly edition of the Rule, see George Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

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24 *Confessions* Book 10, Chapter 3, section 4 in Albert Outler (ed.), *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, London: The Library of Christian Classics, SCM Press, 1955.

25 J.W. Rettig (trans.), *The Fathers of the Church*, Volume 92, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995.

26 *De Genesi ad litteram*, Migne Patrologia Latina, 34.245–486. English translation, "The literal meaning of Genesis," in J.H. Taylor (ed.), *Ancient Christian Writers*, pp. 41–2, New York: Newman Press, 1982.

27 On this point see Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 78.

28 Thomas Martin, *Our Restless Heart: The Augustinian Tradition*, London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2003, p. 43.

29 Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, translated and edited Edmund Hill and John Rotelle, New York: Augustine Heritage Institute, New City Press, 2nd edition, 2012.

30 See Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993, p. 1. Also see her comments on Augustine, pp. 10–11 and Chapter 3.

31 For an overview of various theological understandings of the impact of Trinitarian theology on our conceptions of human identity and society, see Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998, pp. 48–50 and Chapter 3 "Partners in conversation."