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Is Virtue Self-sufficient for Happiness?: Augustine on Virtue and Happiness

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Abstract: The paper investigates whether Augustine adheres to the Stoic assertion that "virtue is self-sufficient for happiness," especially whether Augustine still maintains the self-sufficiency of virtue in this imperfect life. This paper will first present how Augustine adopts the self-sufficiency of virtue in his earlier writings. After that, this paper will show how Augustine criticizes the self-sufficiency of virtue in this life by emphasizing original sin. Lastly, this paper argues that Augustine redefines virtue by introducing the concept of love, through which he redefines the cardinal virtues and theological virtues. Grounded in the idea of love, Augustine contends that properly ordered love can contribute to happiness in this life. In a word, virtue is also self-sufficient in this life, but only when received as love from God.

Keywords: Augustine, virtue, Cicero, love, happiness

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Introduction

During the Hellenistic period, various philosophical schools had different understandings and views of happiness, which guided their respective philosophical practices (Horn, 1998, 95-108). Stoicism was one of the most famous schools to identify virtue with happiness and to claim that "virtue is self-sufficient for happiness." [1] Indeed, Augustine's philosophical development was also influenced by Stoic doctrine, particularly through the writings of the Roman philosopher Cicero. The influence of Stoicism on Augustine, particularly in the context of the concepts of will and emotion, has indeed been a subject of scholarly research in recent years. (Colish,1985; Frede, 2011; Byers, 2012).

My aim in this paper is to examine how Augustine inherits and transforms Stoic doctrine regarding the relationship between virtue and happiness. More specifically, this paper is analyzing whether Augustine is an adherent of the Stoic doctrine that virtue is identical to happiness in this imperfect life. Scholars have different perspectives on this question. Classical solutions advocate the thesis of discontinuity. The earlier Augustine emphasizes the self-sufficiency of virtue and free decision for a happy life, while Augustine in his later works dismantles ancient philosophy's moral ideals, which conflict with Christian doctrines of predestination and grace. (Brown, 2010,490； Flasch,1990,19;25). The same paradigm is also used in James Wetzel's argument that the early Augustine followed the Stoics' position and advocated the identification of virtue with happiness by exploring the power of and the invulnerability of will, and by stating that in Augustine's mature years, he abandoned the Stoic view that happiness and virtue are the same thing. (Wetzel, 1992, 54-55). According to Harding, Augustine's philosophy breaks with ancient philosophy's eudemonist project because of the denial of virtue sufficiency and the attainment of happiness in this life. (Harding, 2008,32) Wolterstorff also argues that Augustine has a rejection of the fundamental tenets of eudaimonism in general. (Wolterstorff, 2012) The similarity between these authors lies in that Augustine, in his later writings, rejects the ancient eudaimonism, asserting that humans cannot attain happiness in this life. Instead, Augustine emphasizes the imperfection and corruption of human nature.

In contrast to previous interpretations, there is a current trend seeking to demonstrate that Augustine adhered to ancient eudaimonism (Beierwaltes,1981; Horn, 1999). Christian Tornau contends that Augustine

[1] Cicero recorded and engaged in discussions about the Stoic creed in *Tusculanae disputationes*. *Tusc*.V.1 "Virtutem ad beate vivendum se ipsa esse contentam".

consistently followed the Stoic tenet that "virtue is self-sufficient for happiness." According to Tornau, even in his later period, Augustine maintained the Stoic principle that one could achieve happiness through virtue, not only in the afterlife but also in this present life (*in hac vita*) (Tornau, 2015). Boersma's argument presents a nuanced perspective on Augustine's relationship with Stoicism. It suggests that while Augustine may have engaged in a critical examination of Stoic ideas, he ultimately accepted and incorporated certain elements of Stoicism into his own philosophical framework (Boersma, 2017).

This paper does not aim to discuss the relationship and difference between Stoicism and Augustine, as there have already been numerous studies, especially Byers' comprehensive research (Byers, 2012). Instead, this paper focuses on how Augustine grapples with the Stoic tenet "virtue is self-sufficient for happiness" in various periods of his writings. It is recognized that Augustine adopts a Stoic strategy in his earlier writings. However, consensus is lacking concerning the concept of happiness in this life when considering Augustine's later works in the context of original sin and the doctrine of grace.

This paper argues that Augustine still adheres to the Stoic principles in his later writings. Even though humans cannot gain a stable beatific vision, they can love God in this life. Rooted in the notion of love, Augustine's properly ordered love virtue can contribute to happiness in this life. Virtue is self-sufficient, but only when received as love from God.

Part I Virtue is Self-Sufficient for happiness

The principle "Virtue is Self-Sufficient for happiness " is presented and discussed in Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum* and *Tusculanae Disputationes*. Cicero, in his role as a skeptic philosopher, undertook an examination of the debate between Stoics and Peripatetics regarding the concepts of happiness and virtue. The primary issues that occupied these two philosophical schools were twofold: (1) the types of good and (2) whether virtue alone was sufficient for happiness.

Regarding the first question, the Stoics hold that there is only one good, namely, the good of the soul: virtue (*virtus*) or the beautiful (*honestum*). In contrast, Peripatetics argue that there are three kinds of goods: goods of the soul, bodily goods, and external goods.

Concerning the second question, the Stoics regard virtue to be a sufficient condition for happiness, insofar as virtue has intrinsic value and the self-

sufficiency of virtue protects it from uncertainties or misfortunes. In contrast, the Peripatetics criticized this claim, arguing that bodily or external misfortunes can influence happiness. According to them, virtue alone was not sufficient for happiness.

Cicero's perspective on these two philosophical schools evolved across his various works. George Karamanolis interprets this as follows (Karamanolis 2020, p.169): "Cicero first distances himself from all contemporary ethical theories in *De finibus* because he finds them all unconvincing; then in *Tusc*. 5 he returns to the main two antagonistic theories, the Stoic and the Peripatetic/Antiochean and supports the superiority of the Stoic view, arguing that it can be traced back to Socrates."

According to Cicero's view, the disagreement between the Stoics and the Peripatetics amounted to a verbal dispute, rather than a resolution of factual matters. According to Cicero's perspective, the Stoics did not regard bodily and external well-being as intrinsically good; instead, they viewed them as "conveniences" (*commoda*). On the other hand, the Peripatetics, while acknowledging the importance of bodily and external goods, did not prioritize them over virtue. Cicero criticized the position of both schools.

In *De finibus* Cicero adopted a skeptical stance towards both the Stoic and Peripatetic doctrines, refraining from endorsing either of them. In *Tusculanae Disputationes*, his position appears to align more closely with the belief that virtue is identified with happiness. This change in perspective is significant and is set in the context of Cicero coping with the death of his daughter. With philosophy as a way of life, Cicero maintains that one can discover inner serenity through philosophy. [2]

In what follows, we can summarize the argumentations for the sufficiency of virtue according to Cicero's presentation in *Tusculane Disputationes*.

First of all, according to Cicero, the Stoics believed in the concept of *apatheia*, which taught that a wise man's soul is free of emotional disturbances, such as fear (*metus*), pain (*aegritudo*), desire (*cupiditas*), and pleasure (*laetitia*). (*Tusc*.V.17) Therefore, virtuous people or wise people do not worry about external gains and losses and do not allow fortune to affect their lives in any way.

[2] Cicero, *Tusc*.V.2 "Those who first betook themselves to the study of philosophy were driven by their concern to give everything else a lower priority, and commit their whole being to seeking out the best condition of life. So it was certainly in the hope of living happily that they devoted so much care and effort to that study." (Douglas, p.81)

Second, the Stoics stated that happiness was characterized by permanence (*perpetuatio*) and constancy (*constantia*). (*Tusc*.V.40) With this concern, pursuing bodily and external goods would affect the stability of happiness. Therefore, they regarded the good of the soul as the sole good which lies in human power. By distinguishing between what is within our control and what lies outside our faculty, the Stoics deemed virtue sufficient for a happy life.

Third, Stoics famously advocated determinism through the concept of fate (*fatum*). (*Tusc*.V.25) Thus, they believed that individuals could only change their attitudes toward the world and cultivate virtue, establishing an inner citadel. This inner virtue enabled the Stoic pursuit of "conformity with nature".[3] Virtue and reason were within our power, preventing uncertainty and enslavement to fate.

It is indeed noteworthy that Cicero, despite sharing an agreement with the Stoic perspective that virtue and happiness are closely connected. In the end of *Tusculanae Disputationes* V, he claims that he is a follower of Socrates. Cicero's perspective is optimistic in that it underscores humanity's capacity to attain a happy life through the exercise of reason and the cultivation of virtue. Furthermore, in Cicero's skeptical perspective, he discovers happiness in reflecting on the viewpoints of diverse philosophical schools and in the pursuit of wisdom.

Part II Augustine's discussion on sufficiency and insufficiency of virtue

Augustine's conception of virtue was influenced by Cicero, and he directly quotes Cicero in various instances. Similar to Cicero, Augustine employed a strategy of syncretism when addressing the debate between Stoicism and Peripatetics. This debate extended beyond the classification of goods and encompassed the realm of emotions as well. According to Augustine, the dispute between these two schools are merely about words, not fact. (*verba, non facta*). (*De civitate Dei* IX, 4). In order to compensate these two schools, Augustine has also introduced the distinction among the happy life, happier life and the happiest life. (Byers, 2012, 73).

However, Augustine doesn't share the skepticism of Cicero. In his earlier *Cassiciacum* Dialogues, he firmly asserts that human happiness is knowing or possessing God. In this part, we will show Augustine discuss abouts the

[3] Cicero, *Tusc*.V.82. "Stoicorum quidem facilis conclusio est; qui cum finem bonorum esse senserint congruere naturae cumque ea convenienter vivere, cum id sit in sapientis situm non officio solum, verum etiam potestate, sequatur necesse est, ut, cuius in potestate summum bonum, in eiusdem vita beata sit. ita fit semper vita beata sapientis."

relationship between virtue and happiness.

(1) The Stoic's elements in the definition of virtue

Following Cicero, virtue is defined as a disposition (*adfectio*) and habit (*habitus*) of soul by Augustine in his earlier works.[4] In *De libero arbitrio* I 13,27-28, Augustine argues that virtue is rooted in on prudence (*prudentia*), which allows individuals to discern between what is morally right and wrong. In simpler terms, by making correct rational judgments through the exercise of prudence, one could cultivate a good will (*bona voluntas*), which ultimately contributes to achieving happiness.

It is also important to note that Augustine's earlier works place a significant emphasis on the power of the will, asserting that nothing is more within our control than the will itself. (*De libero arbitrio* I, 12,25) Regarding the connection between reason and will, Augustine's perspective was that the will is dependent on reason. Augustine argued for the self-sufficiency of virtue, emphasizing the power of the will and giving priority to reason. This perspective underscored the importance of human agency and rationality in achieving virtue and happiness.

Regarding the self-sufficiency of will and virtue, there are also elements that align with Stoic philosophy. First, the happiness lies in the human's power. Augustine claims that virtue which is dependent on good will can lead to happiness. Augustine expresses an optimistic attitude towards the power of the will in his earlier writings, emphasizing that happiness can be attained through human power. Thus, happiness does not lie in the possession of external and bodily goods, but in the possession of the unchangeable good.(*De beata vita 4.25)*

Second, virtue in Augustine's philosophy is characterized by its alignment with the rationalist tradition. Augustine defines virtue as the right reason (*recta ratio*) and states that one can achieve happiness by virtue: "For the virtue is the right and the perfect reason..... this is the truly perfect virtue, the reason, which arrives at its end, followed by happiness."[5] This definition of virtue corresponds to the definition of happiness as "living according to the best in us." [6]. "The best" refers to reason (*ratio*) or mind (*mens*). In Augustine's view, the rational soul is God's creation and is closer to God than anything

[4] Augustine uses the expression "adfectio" to refer to virtue in *De libero arbitrio* I.13.27.

[5] *Soliloquia* I, 6, 13 "Est enim virtus vel recta vel perfecta ratio... et haec est vere perfecta virtus, ratio perveniens ad finem suum, quam beata vita consequitur."(my translation).

[6] *Contra Academicos* I.2.5 "Quid censes, inquam, esse aliud beate vivere, nisi secundum id quod in homine optimum est, vivere?"

else. The participation (*participatio*) of ideas, which is based on the eye of souls, can be identified as the happiest vision (*beatissima visio*). In other words, happiness is found in the soul's perfection, nourished by wisdom. By contrast, unhappiness lies in searching for the things we will necessarily lose.

Third, Augustine, like the Stoics, considers happiness as a state free from emotional disturbances and from uncertainty. "The wise man doesn't fear either the body or the pains that are to be gotten rid of, avoided, or deferred by those necessities that are susceptible to become scarce for him."[7]

(2) The insufficiency of virtue

In the following, we can illustrate the inadequacy of virtue for happiness, specifically, emphasizing that virtue alone is not sufficient for a happy life.

A key difference between Augustine and the Stoics is the notion that virtue is not viewed as the supreme good (*summum bonum*). In *De libero arbitrio* II, 19,50, Augustine defines virtue as the great good (*magnum bonum*), which leads to happiness, while the supreme good is God, which is transcendent. In Augustine's view, the soul nourishes itself with wisdom which is transcendent, while the body relies on external goods for sustenance. This bears a resemblance to Plotinus' discussion of happiness in *Enneades* I.4, which posits that happiness is found in the soul's journey back to unity or oneness.

By doing this, Augustine differs from the Stoics and prefers the hierarchical understanding of the world. In addition, virtue is acquired in the pursuit of wisdom or the supreme good. Thus, virtue is seen as a great good, by which man lives rightly.[8] It is also worthwhile to note that virtue is immune to error when it refers to the supreme good.

Conversely, when the virtue is oriented to the earthly world, it cannot lead to the happy life. This idea has been further developed in *De civitate Dei* XIX.4.4, where Augustine argues that the four cardinal virtues acquired by man in this life are not sufficient for a happy life if they do not have a transcendent aim. For example, prudence teaches us to recognize good and bad, and temperance teaches us not to do bad things, but the existence of both shows that man is still in a struggle between the spiritual and the physical: the virtue of courage means that man still has to bear the bad things on earth; the virtue of justice also shows that man is still in a state of spiritual disharmony.

[7] *De vita beata* 4.25 "Non igitur metuit sapiens aut mortem corporis, aut dolores, quibus pellendis vel vitandis vel differendis sunt necessaria illa, quorum ei potest contingere inopia." (translated by M. Foley, 2009, 41.)

[8] *De libero arbitrio* II, 19, 50 "Virtutes igitur quibus recte vivitur, magna bona sunt."

Thirdly, Augustine differs from the Stoics by not subscribing to the belief that moral evil is the only form of evil. In contrast, he aligns more closely with Neoplatonic thought, which regards the body as an obstacle to the soul. For instance, in his work *Soliloquia* I,6,12 Augustine emphasizes that the body can hinder the attainment of happiness. In *De civitate Dei* XIX.4.2, Augustine offers a critical examination of the Stoic notion of the Wise. He underscores that even the Wise may encounter physical limitations and endure various difficulties in the earthly realm. Augustine's critique brings to light the Stoics' excessively optimistic perspective on virtue, underlining that humans cannot achieve a happy life on earth solely by relying on the self-sufficiency of their souls.

Lastly, in Augustine's *Contra Iulianum*, he critiques Cicero's definition of virtue. "Virtue was not defined absurdly by those who said, 'Virtue is a disposition of the soul that is in conformity with the mode of nature and to reason.' They told the truth, but they did not know what it is to be in conformity with the nature of mortals so as to free it and make it blessed." [9] According to Augustine, Cicero's definition is accurate in a certain sense, but it lacks an understanding of what it means to conform to the nature of mortal beings in a way that can free them and bring them happiness. Augustine's response to Cicero also underscores the inherent brokenness of human nature, which, he argues, can only be perfected by God's grace in order to be integrated into the spiritual realm. In addition, Augustine emphasizes that understanding virtue solely through human reason and nature is insufficient. Instead, he contends that grasping virtue requires an acknowledgment of the role of grace.

In summary, despite Augustine's incorporation of certain Stoic elements in his discussion of virtue, his philosophy does not align with Stoicism. On the one hand, Augustine asserts that virtue alone is not self-sufficient and instead relies on the supreme Good, which is God. On the other hand, one cannot attain happiness in this life based on intellectual efforts or human nature.

Part III The Christian-Platonic transformation of virtue

Now we turn to Augustine's definition of virtue as the supreme love of God (*summus amor dei*) (*De Moribus* 15.25). Here, Augustine substitutes reason with love as the central element. I will argue that this innovative shift reflects Augustine's distinctive theological perspective and the transformative role he attributes to the primacy of love within the moral framework. By introducing love, Augustine redefines the cardinal virtue and theological virtues. On one

[9] *Contra Iulianum* IV, 3.19. "Non enim absurde virtus definita est ab eis qui dixerunt, 'virtus est animi habitus, naturae modo atque rationi consentaneus.' Verum dixerunt, sed quid sit consentaneum liberandae ac beatificandae naturae mortalium nescierunt." (translated by I. Bochet, 2018,54.)

hand, we can see that there is an identification between virtue and happiness in the afterlife. On the other hand, love, as the gift of God, can unify the split soul and lead to happiness in this life. What we particularly need to demonstrate is that humans can attain happiness not only in the afterlife through virtue but also in this life.

(1) Defining the love

In *De diversis questionibus 83*, Augustine defines love as a form of desire (*appetitus*), a concept that involves an inherent sense of movement (*motus*) directed towards its object. This definition signifies that love is not static but rather dynamic, involving an inner drive that propels an individual towards the object. In other words, Augustine's characterization of love as a desire in motion underscores its active and transformative nature, highlighting the inherent inclination to seek connection and union with what is loved. In the context of the object of love, love can be differentiated into two categories: charity (*caritas*) and desire (*cupiditas*). Charity refers to the love of God, while desire pertains to the love directed towards mutable or changeable things.

It has been pointed out that love should be comprehended within the context of eudaimonism. (O'Donovan, 1980; Horn, 1999; Tornau, 2005) Augustine formulates this perspective in his definition of happiness as "to have what one loves or wills" (*habet quod vult/amat*) (*De beata vita* 2.14). Furthermore, the metaphor "my love is my weight" (*pondus meum amor meus*) (*Confessiones* XIII,9,10) aligns with the Platonic tradition and suggests a tendency to return to the concept of Oneness or unity as a fundamental aspect of love and happiness. Thus, love is directed toward the pursuit of happiness, and this pursuit is informed by pre-existing concepts of happiness in the mind. Thus, love is not wholly independent but is intrinsically connected to knowledge. Hence, it would be inaccurate to assert that Augustine departs from the ancient eudaimonism. Instead, he should be rightly characterized as an eudaimonist, as his philosophy emphasizes the pursuit of eudaimonia as a central concept in his moral and philosophical framework.

To deepen our grasp of Augustine's perspective on love, I will explore the correlation between knowledge and love. I aim to demonstrate that, in the perfected state, knowledge and love are intertwined. Yet, in the imperfect state or post-original sin, knowledge and love are not interconnected, particularly emphasizing that love is not a result of reason.

To begin with, there is a circular and interconnected relationship between love and knowledge. On the one hand, Augustine emphasizes that knowledge serves as a foundation for love. Augustine points out that no one can love

something unless he knows it. (*De Diversis Quaestionibus 83*,35.1; *De Trinitate* IX,3,3) As he asserts, it is challenging to genuinely love something without having a comprehensive understanding of it. Thus, our love for God is rooted in our knowledge of God – the more we come to know about God, the more profound and genuine our love for Him becomes. On the other hand, Augustine posits that love reciprocally perfects knowledge. "Nevertheless no one can perfectly possess or know a good that is not loved." (*De Diversis Quaestionibus 83*,35.1) When we love God, this affectionate bond brings us to a deeper understanding of Him. Love leads us to seek to know God on a more profound level. This understanding arises not solely through rational reasoning but also through a spiritual connection fostered by our love for Him. This interconnected relationship creates a cycle: knowledge produces love, and love enhances knowledge. Augustine's insight underscores the inseparable nature of our connection with God, where love and knowledge constantly enrich and inform each other.

Consequently, Augustine posits that love and knowledge are intertwined within the framework of our interaction with God. It necessitates not only the possession of God through rational understanding but also the enjoyment of God (*frui deo*). It follows that love and knowledge must penetrate each other in the relationship with God. Regarding God, human beings should not only possess God by knowing but also by enjoying God through loving. In other words, happiness lies not only in the possession of the knowledge of God but also in the enjoyment of God.

However, when it comes to the imperfect state in this life, love is not simply a byproduct of knowledge. In *De Trinitate* VIII, 2.3, Augustine regards God as truth and describes his intellectual failure. There, Augustine argues that humans can only see God at the first flash (in ipso primo ictu), but they cannot firmly remain in God. The difficulty of ascent to God lies in the "mists of bodily images and the clouds of phantasms" (imaginum corporalium et 10ubile phantasmatum), which are related to the sensible world. It indicates that the love does not necessarily follow the intellectual efforts.

Additionally, Augustine proposes a solution to this situation: if we cannot achieve a constant and beatific vision of God, what should we do in this life? In *De Trinitate* VIII, 12, Augustine shifts his focus to love and advocates following the command to love one's neighbors. Here, love is characterized by the self-reflexivity. "For since "God is love," he who loves love, surely loves God; but he must needs love love who loves his brother."(*De Trinitate* VIII, 12, translated by Peter King, p. 20).

This implies that love not only extends itself toward the beloved object

but also inwardly, toward itself. For instance, in the injunction “love your neighbor,” the action of love, as a verb, is directed not only toward the neighbor but also toward the love itself. For “God is love” (deus dilectio est). That is to say, by loving neighbors, the expression of love for God becomes evident. In this sense, the love of God does not hinge on a precise intellectual comprehension of God. One can express love for God through the act of loving one's neighbor.

In other words, the act of love inherently contains an understanding of God. From this perspective, we can imply that even though we do not have a fully intellectual understanding of God, we can still love him by loving our neighbors. In other word, the exercise of life in this world can be seen as a preparation for the perfect vision of God in the next life.

(2) The cardinal virtue as clinging to God

While Augustine does critique the Stoic understanding of virtue and happiness, it doesn't imply that he completely abandons the idea that "virtue is self-sufficient for happiness." Instead, Augustine transforms the concept of virtue. He contends that cardinal virtue can be fully realized in the eschatological state, which aligns with his Christian beliefs. Augustine maintains that true happiness can only be attained in the eschaton when humans will come "face to face" with God, as mentioned in 1 *Corinthians* 13:12. This perspective reflects his conviction that ultimate fulfillment is found in the divine realm beyond earthly existence. Let's now examine how Augustine reshapes the cardinal virtues through the lens of love. Augustine redefines the cardinal virtues, placing their focus on " clinging to God" (*adhaerere deo*).

“This might be called prudence because it will with perfect foresight cling to the good that will not be lost. It might be called courage because it will most firmly cling to the good that will not be torn away. It might be called temperance because it will most chastely cling to the good by which it will not corrupted. And it might be called justice because it will with full righteousness cling to the good to which it is rightly subject.”[10]

The central concept in this paragraph is "cling to God" (*adhaerere deo*), which Augustine defines as happiness. This differs from Augustine's previous definition of "possessing God" (*deum habere*), which can be equated with "knowing God" and is rooted in the faculty of reason. In contrast, "cling to

[10] *Epistulae*155,12 “Dicatur haec et prudentia, quia prospectissime adhaerebit bono quod non amittatur; et fortitudo, quia firmissime adhaerebit bono unde non avellatur; et temperantia, quia castissime adhaerebit bono ubi non corrumpatur; et iustitia, quia rectissime adhaerebit bono cui merito subiciatur.” (translated by R. Teske, 413)

God" places the emphasis on love. For Augustine, love is a dynamic force that drives human actions and guides the relationship with the divine. Thus, the act of "clinging to God" is not solely an intellectual endeavor or a result of practical engagement, but rather is an inner motivation toward God.

By introducing love, prudence no longer serves as the discernment between good and evil. Instead, it is defined as the act of clinging to God. Courage, once associated with enduring hardships, now takes on the meaning of not turning away from God. Similarly, temperance, which was previously about resisting the allure of evil, transforms into clinging to the good. And justice, which typically involves the harmonization of spiritual and physical aspects, is redefined as the submission to God. These transformations indicate that the cardinal virtues no longer hold their traditional practical connotations. Rather, they are rooted in establishing and nurturing a profound relationship with God or the supreme good. Augustine's perspective shifts the focus from specific actions to the deep spiritual connection with the divine, reflecting his notion that the ultimate virtue lies in the union with God rather than adherence to practical issues.

Indeed, the comparison between Augustine's perspective on the cardinal virtues and Plotinus's discussion in *Enneads* VI.8.5 draws attention to an interesting parallel in their philosophies. Plotinus, in *Enneads* VI.8.5, delves into the concept of the four cardinal virtues as they relate to practical life. He contends that if these virtues remain confined to the realm of practicality without being connected to reason or the One (the ultimate reality), they become emblematic of the flawed nature of our earthly existence. Plotinus's example involving courage highlights the paradox of virtues tied to practical life. Courage, considered a virtue, is entwined with the condition of war, which in itself is not intrinsically good. This exemplifies the intricate relationship between virtues and the complexities of practical situations.

Furthermore, Plotinus divides virtue into three categories: civil virtue, purifying virtue, and contemplative virtue. This classification suggests an evolution from practical engagement (civil virtue) to a purification of the soul (purifying virtue), culminating in contemplation that transcends the material world and connects with higher realities. This journey aligns with Plotinus's emphasis on ascending toward the One through intellectual and spiritual introspection. Similarly, Augustine's perspective also shifts the focus of virtue from earthly practicality to a transcendent connection with God or the supreme good. Augustine also argues that true virtue extends beyond the confines of conventional virtues linked solely to practical life. Instead, it involves a higher, metaphysical dimension that points towards a more

profound understanding of existence and an alignment with higher principles.

(3) Theological virtues

We turn to Augustine's discussion of the relationship between virtue and happiness in this life (*in hac vita*). As previously mentioned, due to original sin, humans cannot achieve perfect happiness in this life. Does this suggest that people can only live a pessimistic life? Is it true that humans cannot achieve happiness through virtue in their lifetime?

We can response these questions by illustrating Augustine's understanding of theological virtues. Let's first explore the context in which Augustine introduces the theological virtues. In *Soliloquia* I,6,13, Augustine states that it is impossible for a human to experience the vision of God in this life because of the body. In order to compensate the failure of the intellectual efforts, Augustine introduces the theological virtues, faith-hope-love. In other words, to attain the beatific vision, the theological virtues serve as a means of nurturing a pure heart. Augustine's theological virtues function akin to a Neoplatonic concept of purified virtue, aligning with Neoplatonism's teachings on the path to salvation.

This paper argues that Augustine transformed the cardinal virtues by introducing the theological virtues, paving the way for happiness. The discussion will proceed in the following steps: first, Augustine establishes the cardinal virtues on the foundation of the theological virtues, enabling these virtues to surpass the limitations of the earthly realm; second, there will be an emphasis on love as the core among the theological virtues—faith, hope, and love—which serves as the foundation for the continuity between earthly and eschatological virtues. Lastly, it will be pointed out that the role of love lies in unifying the split will and transforming one's love. In a word, when one loves God wholeheartedly, one can have the true virtues which lead to happiness, albeit not in a perfect state.

Concerning the relationship between theological virtues and cardinal virtues, Augustine emphasizes that cardinal virtues can attain the status of "true virtues" (virtutes verae) when grounded in theological virtues in different texts (*De civitate Dei* XIX,4,5; *Epistulae* 155,13). For example, Augustine illustrates this by asserting that the four cardinal virtues necessitate "faith" to truly become virtues –"This faith works through charity in such a way that the virtues also, whereby one lives prudently, bravely, temperately, and justly, are all referred to the same faith, for in no other way can they be true virtues." (*De trinitate* XIII, 26)

Among the theological Virtues, Augustine places love at the core. He articulates, "Without love, faith is of no benefit to others; without love, hope cannot exist."[11] Augustine draws upon the foundational source of this assertion primarily from the relevant biblical text, which states, "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13). Furthermore, Augustine argues that love maintains continuity both in this life and the afterlife, setting it apart from faith and hope. Augustine explains, "But sight will take the place of faith, and hope will disappear in the full joy we are to receive. However, love is not like this; when these diminish, it is destined to become greater."[12] In the afterlife, as faith and hope fade, love endures. That is to say, love not only exists as a theological virtue in this life but also persists into the afterlife. Both the cardinal virtues and theological virtues find unity around the concept of love.

Noteworthy, Augustine regards love as a gift from God, and it is only through Holy Spirit that man could change the orientation of his will and attain inner renewal. Augustine also underscores the power of love for worldly things. He argues that humans cannot avoid loving sensible objects and often become ensnared in desire (*cupiditas*). This inclination is not solely due to the influence of the body but is primarily a result of the perverse will (*perversa voluntas)*. Building on Paul's teachings about the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, Augustine formulates his concept of the "chain of will" (*catena voluntatis*) in *Confessiones* VIII, 5. This concept divides the will into the "new will" (*nova voluntas*) and the "old will" (*vetus voluntas*), corresponding to the spiritual will and the carnal will respectively. In such cases, rational judgment alone may not necessarily motivate the soul to turn towards God.

To attain happiness, the primary step is to resolve the internal conflicts within the will and establish a harmonious unity of purpose. Within this context, grace symbolized as love, assumes a vital role. Augustine perceived love as a divine gift, and he believed that it was solely through the Holy Spirit that individuals could reorient their will and achieve inner transformation. Augustine did not confine his definition of love solely to knowledge but also considered it as a bestowed gift from God. (*De trinitate* VIII.10.14). Through the introduction of grace, virtue is no longer solely the product of human cultivation of the mind in the knowledge of God; instead, it becomes the outcome of God's love. God, being love itself, has the power to draw humans to love Him. With the assistance of God, humans can achieve the unity of their

[11] *Enchiridion*,8 "Iam de amore quid dicam, sine quo fides nihil prodest? Spes vero esse sine amore non potest."
[12] *De doctrina christiana* I,38,42 "Sed fidei succedet species quam videbimus, et spei succedet beatitudo ipsa ad quam perventuri sumus, caritas autem etiam istis decedentibus augebitur potius."

will and love, directing their will toward what they should truly love. God's love doesn't overpower human love but liberates it. Human will, divided by conflicting desires, can be unified through love.

Conclusion

We now turn to the question we discussed at the beginning, whether Augustine followed the Stoic view of virtue. Augustine transforms the Stoics' teaching within his own Christian Platonism, asserting that while virtue alone may not be sufficient, virtue coupled with ordered love contributes to a happy life. Hence, we can argue that Augustine, despite emphasizing the imperfection of this life, is not a pessimist. Instead, he maintains that humans can still pursue happiness in this life through their love.

Augustine introduces several novel aspects to the discourse on virtue theory. Firstly, within the Christian framework, Augustine places a significant emphasis on human frailty and humility. He highlights the importance of human humility while opposing self-sufficiency. In order to be virtue, humans must rely on the grace and God. In this sense, Augustine's virtue is characterized as theo-centered.

Secondly, virtue does not solely rely on rational judgment and deliberation but also necessitates a transformation of the human love through the light of God's love in order to embark on the path to happiness. Therefore, Augustine replaces reason with love in his definition of virtue.

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