Magnum Beneficium est Pax, sed Dei Veri Beneficium est (*ciu.,* 3.9). Augustine's Realism, Strategy, and Insight into Human Motives as a Prelude to Peace at all Levels of Human Existence

6

Magnum beneficium est pax, sed Dei veri beneficium est (ciu., 3.9*).* El realismo, la estrategia y la comprensión de las motivaciones humanas de san Agustín como preludio a la paz en todos los niveles de la existencia humana

Paul van Geest
University of Tilburg, Netherlands

Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the vision Augustine developed on the relationship between religion and politics, and how he conceived the Christian religion as the foundation of political and social action. Firstly, he emphasizes in his reflections on officials in the *res publica* that their work was marked by tragedy. State institutions and political relationships are characterized by the volatility and temporality. The only ones that do not seem to realize this are the politicians themselves, because the nature of their work does not contribute to the development of the ability to (self-) introspection and growth in *humilitas* (humility). Secondly, in his *De Civitate Dei* Augustine strove to present human history as a mirror in which each leader can see the impact of his own inner motives. The struggle between Jerusalem and Babylon, greed and generosity, sincerity and opportunism is a battle in the interior for Augustine. But in Book XIX of *De civitate Dei* Augustine finally also relates physical balance, irrational and rational motives, striving for integrity, the role of family and government, in order to show that inner peace and peace in any social context are interwoven.

Keywords: Augustine, leadership, mystagogy, patristics, politics, rationality, religion.

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue examinar la visión que desarrolló san Agustín sobre la relación entre religión y política, y la manera en que concebía la religión cristiana como la base de la acción política y social. En primer lugar, él enfatiza en sus reflexiones sobre los funcionarios de la *res publica* cuyo trabajo fue marcado por la tragedia. Las instituciones estatales y las relaciones políticas se caracterizan por la volatilidad y la temporalidad. Los únicos que no parecen darse cuenta de esto son los políticos porque la naturaleza de su trabajo no contribuye al desarrollo de la capacidad de (auto) introspección y el crecimiento en *humilitas* (humildad). En segundo lugar, en *De Ciuitate Dei* Agustín se esforzó por presentar la historia humana como un espejo en el que cada líder puede ver el impacto en sus propios motivos internos. La lucha entre Jerusalén y Babilonia, codicia y generosidad, sinceridad y oportunismo, es una batalla interior para san Agustín. Sin embargo, en el Libro XIX de *De civitate Dei* Agustín, finalmente, relaciona el equilibrio físico, los motivos irracionales y racionales, la lucha por la integridad, el papel de la familia y el gobierno para mostrar que la paz interior y la paz en cualquier contexto social están interrelacionadas.

Palabras clave: Religión, política, racionalidad, mistagógica, patrística, san Agustín, liderazgo.

Sobre el autor | About the author

Paul van Geest [P.J.J.vanGeest@uvt.nl]

Professor of Church History and History of Theology, Faculty of Theology, Tilburg University; Professor of Economy and Theology, Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam; Visiting Professor Faculty of Theology, Catholic University Leuven; Member Koninklijke Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen (Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities); Editor-in-chief, Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity... Editor (co-founder), Brill Studies in Catholic Theology (Leiden); Editor, Brill Series in Church History (Leiden); Editor, Late Antique History and Religion (Leuven); Editor, Augustiniana (L)). Member of various National and International Scientific Assessment Committees including NWO, Vici in the Netherlands. Commentator for Dutch national broadcaster on developments in the Roman Catholic Church.

Incomparable Times

In the fourth and fifth century, the influence of the Christian bishops in the Roman Empire suddenly increased in a tremendous way. The fact that many of them were well educated began to pay off. The bishops had developed the capacity to integrate the rhetorical strategies and practices of the Greco-Roman orators into their own discourse. Moreover, they knew how to embed principles from classical philosophy into their interpretation of the Christian message. In doing so they reflected the culture of the upper class, to which many of them belonged personally.[1] Bishops such as the aristocrat Paulinus of Nola and his pen friend Augustine, for instance, were deeply versed in classical rhetoric, literature, and philosophy. They became important figures in Roman society because Christianity became the dominant religion, but also because of their own contribution to this process. In addition, the allure that the ascetical life held for the aristocracy also consolidated the power of the bishops, as bishops such as Ambrose strongly propagated it (Natal Villazala 59-107). Research of episcopal dealings in the public domain has revealed, moreover, that other activities of theirs also contributed to the increase of their power and influence. In addition to their catechetical, homiletical, and liturgical activities, in both East and West, they developed programmes for the care of the poor,[2] they also founded hospitals (Crislip, passim), and—recognised by the State as judges—bishops followed Roman procedures in issues related to property law, inheritances, or contracts, by interrogating—rather than inculpating—people in respect of the legal basis of slavery, the right of asylum, or adultery. Augustine once wrote to the tribune Marcellinus that this interrogation should be sharp and painful, so that the accused party would be all the more grateful for the evangelical clemency (*mansuetudo*) that should characterise the sentence (*ep.*, 133, 2). The Church father's intention in writing this will be explored below. What is clear in any case is that strategies such as these increased the bishops' power, although it must also be noted that Christian relations with the other religious or philosophical traditions in the plural society of the time were sometimes unclear, and that there was a certain unease between Christianity and Roman culture. But this does not mean that religion in Late Antiquity was a private affair. In the plural society of the time,

---

[1] This publication is based on van Geest and Hunink; van Geest "Waarachtigheid"; "Geordend is de politie"; and "'Quid dicam de vindicando." See also the important studies of the growing unofficial power, a power as yet without legal sanction, by Brown; Cameron; and Rapp.

[2] See Lepelley; and Holman.

Christianity embodied a social practice which was connected with individuals' own—at times ascetic—lifestyle.

The situation of Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries cannot be easily compared with the current situation of Christians in my own secularised country, the Netherlands. Whereas in the former case, the Church increasingly began to shape society; in the latter, bishops and other Church leaders are becoming ever more invisible in society. From the second half of the nineteenth century up to the 1960s, Dutch society was characterised by *verzuiling* ("pillarisation"). There was sharp segregation between the Protestant, Catholic, liberal, and socialist sections of society, which was deliberately enforced by the elites at the top of these four "pillars." It was sustained by the churches, media, vocational corporations, political parties, schools, hospitals, and even universities, and provided the members of the "pillars" with a strong sense of identity. In the Catholic pillar, political leaders were clerics such as Msgr W. Nolens and Msgr H. Schaepman. In the 1960s these pillars toppled over and came down with a crash. Prelates such as Herman Schaepman or Willem Nolens had long since ceased to dominate politics or parliamentary debate. Few people can remember that a hospital such as St. Francis's in Rotterdam was once founded and fully owned by the Augustinian Sisters of Heemstede—the doctors were employees of this congregation—and the existence of this hospital certainly cannot be said to contribute to an increase in episcopal power and influence. Whereas self-confident bishops energetically fostered the growth of Christianity as a significant societal force in Late Antiquity (through networks, sermonising specifically geared to certain audiences, care for the sick, or the administration of justice), relations between Church and secular leaders are currently characterised by a certain unease. Unless you are Desmond Tutu, Church dignitaries are relegated to the domain of faith, i.e. the private domain that must be kept strictly separate from the public domain.

Despite the incomparability of the times, it is nonetheless useful to examine the views that a Church father like Augustine developed on the relationship between religion and politics, and on the Christian religion as the foundation of political and social action. Can his vision offer anything of value to people who operate currently in the public domain? It will become evident that he offers no ready-made solutions for the problem of how Christianity might provide a solid basis for the development of Christian Democratic politics. Augustine never thought of this question because democracy as we know it was totally alien to him as a political system. What he does do in his political thought, however, is to intensify a sense of reality that is truly timeless.

The Tragedy of Politics and the State

When Augustine was young, around 390, he subscribed to the notion, derived from Greek philosophy and Roman political ideology, that the *polis* or the *civitas* offered free citizens a trajectory towards individual perfection. With Plato and Aristotle, he regarded "politics" as a creative process which generated a social order that enabled the free individual to obtain happiness through a step-by-step plan. Competent leaders, he believed, ordered society in such a way as to permit their subjects to attain the highest degree of happiness for themselves. This perfection was individual: *disciplina* was more important than *concordia*.[3]

However, his reading of Scripture, which informed him of the vicissitudes of the Jewish people, caused Augustine to conclude after 390 that it was much more difficult to actually realise this life under the guidance of the philosopher-politician, and on the basis of the right use of reason, than he had initially believed. As it turned out, people were much less reasonable than he thought. Scripture taught him that the classical philosophers had been unable to resolve the tragic nature of the *saeculum*, where tension, discord, and chaos determine life, and where neither society nor politics are capable of playing the grand role in the pursuit of happiness that they were supposed to. Having had a dose of realism through the pastoral work he began to do after becoming bishop of Hippo in 396, a town inhabited by fishermen and dockworkers, Augustine started to emphasize that, even though people are social animals, their dealings with one another since the Fall have engendered chaos and aggression. Initially he still believed on account of humankind's social character that the State should attempt to establish *concordia*, a condition which produces kindness, art, and civilisation in social interactions (*qu. an.*, 33, 72; *doc. chr.*, 2, 39, 58). But having become more realistic after 397, he moderated his expectations, because he realized that politicians were already hands full trying to curb violence of all kinds. He adjusted his ambitious expectations, writing that to attempt to counteract the forces that tended towards chaos, the opposite of order, was in fact politicians' most important objective (*doc. chr.*, 12, 27, 1). It was their task to prevent the people—to whom they belonged themselves, incidentally—from devouring each other like fish. That is all they can hope to achieve. They are not lords and masters of history, nor of the individual soul. In the best-case scenario, the leaders of the State create the conditions for that

---

[3] A groundbreaking work on this aspect is Markus' *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*.

peace that arises when society is in agreement with itself on the distribution and acquisition of the necessities of life (*civ.*, 19, 6; 2, 21).[4] Politicians can also bring about a certain measure of justice, the justice that flows from sacrificing one's own pursuit of profit for the common good (Markus 72-104).

But even so, later, when Augustine began writing his *De civitate Dei* ("The City of God") (cited hereafter *civ.*) in 410, he became convinced that perfect justice–the perfect state where citizens and their leaders are of one heart–could never exist in any earthly State. Wars waged by people who cannot even understand each other's language, and the dangers in society that increase as the masses grow in number, were further proof for him that peace can never be realised on any level.[5] This ultimately led him to disavow Plato's idea that politicians were the appropriate agents to lead people to individual perfection. But this does not mean that he thought politics meaningless. If politicians succeed in counteracting social chaos they have already achieved a great deal. In his reflections Augustine also took account of the fact that the activities of politicians are tragic. For a start, they must use language to realise their goals. And language also permits people to lie and to deceive, thus further distancing them from themselves and from others (*Gen. adu. Man.*, 2, 7; 2, 30; *conf.*, 1, 17, 27-18; 29; 3, 3, 6; 9, 2, 2; *doc. chr.*, 6, 2).[6] And secondly, no political system endures (s., 105).[7] Institutions of State and political structures are ephemeral and temporary. The only people who appear not to realise this tend to be politicians themselves, because the nature of their work is not conducive to developing the capacity of taking oneself lightly and to grow in *humilitas* ("humility"). Because of the impermanence of all empires or political systems, Augustine spoke increasingly of an *Imperium christianum* as he grew older (Lohse, 470-475). This brings us to the next topic.

The Uncoupling of Religion and Politics in Early Christianity

In the second and third century, the period in which the Church was being persecuted by the Roman emperors, Christian writers had decidedly apocalyptic ideas about the Roman Empire. Hippolytus, for instance, compared it to the last of the four beasts that the prophet Daniel had seen in a vision–the

---

[4] See Burt 127-129.

[5] On this theme see *civ.* 10, 4-7.

[6] This means Augustine believes there was no need for language in paradise.

[7] "Civitas manet quae nos carnaliter genuit."

most terrifying of the four, crushing everything before it (Dan. 7: 7-9). The emperors, he thought, increased their power by conquest and the empire was therefore a diabolical imitation of the Kingdom of Christ. But once Christianity had become a recognised religion, and bishops began to have power and influence themselves, the Christian perception of the Roman Empire changed. Eusebius of Caesarea, the first Church historian, believed that the unity of the *Orbis Romanus* under the Roman emperors had been God's will. That Jesus had been born under the unifying reign of the Emperor Augustus was no coincidence. This unity had facilitated the proclamation of the Gospel. Ambrose, Augustine's mentor, regarded the Roman emperor as a *filius ecclesiae*, the son of the Church *par excellence*, because he was able to Christianise the world using the institutions of the empire. Thus, Roman power became strongly sacralized.

Around 400, Augustine agreed with his mentor that Christianisation could take place in an institutional way under the aegis of the emperor. But as his interaction and correspondence with political leaders intensified, his view of the role of political leaders, and of humans in general, changed. Unlike Ambrose, his references to the *Pax Romana* as part of sacred history became scarce (*civ.*, 18, 46). He no longer regarded the Roman Empire as a *praeparatio evangelica*, and when he mentioned the Emperor Augustus, he emphasized the conflicts that marked his reign. He then explicitly linked the conflicts in the world to the restlessness of the human heart. This, he believed, prevented humanity from converting to Christianity collectively and along the institutional way. What is more: the actions of emperors and politicians were just as much the result of this restlessness, and in fact of an often fruitless ambition. On the basis of this observation Augustine emphasized that political leaders could not legitimise their claims on the obedience of the citizens by pointing to their belonging to a higher, divine order.[8] In this way, Augustine desacralized the history of Rome, and, having become more realistic about the intentions of those who serve the public cause, he uncoupled religion and politics (*civ.*, 2, 19).

The reason for this uncoupling was his gradual discovery that political leaders, particularly through their pride, their love of power, and their ambition, are apt to make choices that do not benefit their people. They should not therefore be invested with sacral power. As a young Christian, he had stressed that perfect leaders ideally should be well-educated and thus possess wisdom. Ideally, they would be impervious to the allure of temporary success and the temptation to place themselves in the spotlight. Leaders of this disposition would be able

---

[8] Other aspects of Augustine's view of imperial policy are discussed in van Geest and Hunink.

to lead the people, along the paths of the legally guaranteed order in society, to understanding of the universe and of the cosmic order, and to happiness, which are both accessible to reason (*ord.*, 2, 8, 25).[9] The social order is good only if it reflects the cosmic order, and treats each creature justly by assigning to it the place in the *ordo* that belongs to it.[10] A human being must, for instance, never be used as an animal or an instrument; nor must he see himself as God (*mus.*, 6, 16, 46; 6, 17, 58; 6, 17, 56; *vera rel.*, 12, 23; 20, 38).[11] A leader is good if, being wise and just himself, he gives his tormented subjects access to the universe and to happiness through reason (Cranz). Although Augustine continued to perfect his thinking on the natural and social order, he began to qualify this Platonic notion of political leadership after 400. Just as perfect justice will never be realised in society, no politician can embody perfect wisdom. Augustine sometimes uses *civ.* to present the history of humankind as a mirror in which leaders can see the reflection of their own motives and the effects of their actions. The struggle between greed and generosity, sincerity and opportunism, dominates both history and the struggle that leaders must wage within themselves before they speak, decide, and act. The dramatic conflict on earth between these two cities, Jerusalem and Babylon, has no end: the two cities are intertwined in this world, just as they are intertwined in the hearts of politicians and of other mortals.

The Intertwining of Church and State in the Person of the Bishop as a Mediator and Judge

As has been seen, bishops were given the authority by the State to adjudicate legal disputes and to reconcile quarrelling parties. This explains why Augustine spent a great deal of his time hearing litigants, passing sentence, and making peace between them. His biographer Possidius mentions that Augustine spent whole days dispensing justice in his *curia episcopalis*. In the *secretarium* of his cathedral church, Augustine issued rulings every morning in suits relating to the law of property, inheritance, or contracts. He also presided over cases concerning the legal status of slavery, the right of asylum, and adultery. It is no surprise that his treatise on adulterous marriages (*De adulterinis coniugiis*) is written in a legal style. Contested wills were frequently placed before him

---

[9] See Cranz, passim.

[10] See, for example, *ord.* 2, 5, 17; 2, 6, 18.

[11] See also *ep. gal.* 20: "Conturbatio enim ordini contraria est, ordo est autem a carnalibus ad spiritalia surgere, non ab spiritalibus ad carnalia cadere, sicut istis acciderat"; and *Gen. adu. Man.*, 2, 9,12 "arrogando."

for adjudication. The prestige of his position also ensured that many requests were put to him, requests he always took seriously and which he sometimes pursued with local rulers or imperial authorities. From time to time he undertook tiring journeys to be able to mediate in person. He even opened a legal advice centre to facilitate this juridical aspect of his activities, and he regularly consulted competent lawyers, such as his friend and colleague Bishop Alypius, who had excellent contacts at the imperial court.

As in the case of rulers who have the authority to implement coercive measures, Augustine argued that judges must be able to judge their own deeds and motives within themselves: "Esto iudex in te!" In his analysis, the real weakness of the legal system is not systemic but results from human frailty. His view of justice was based more on his analysis of the capacities, limitations, and imperfections of man than on his thinking on social and political structures (Dodaro 99-115). He also confronted the rulers and judges with the basic rule not to do anything in legislation or in the administration of justice that they would not want done to themselves. In order to distinguish justice from injustice, it is of course necessary to be competent, erudite, effective, and faithful to the legal precepts. But Augustine hastened to add that judges must personally experience in their imagination the sentence they pass by emphatically placing themselves in the shoes of the person they are sentencing. They will not have heard the case properly until they have themselves imagined the torments of the anxiety that the accused person is experiencing.

In *ep.* 133, which he wrote around 411 and was addressed to the imperial commissary Marcellinus, Augustine asked him why criminal justice was not applied to Donatists who had committed offences against Catholic priests. He maintained two principles in doing so.

The legal procedure stipulated that officers of the civil or ecclesiastical courts—i.e. judges or bishops—were bound to observe that judges must interrogate rather than inculpate. This is also what Augustine did himself. Comparing the judge's actions to those of a doctor, he told Marcellinus that the interrogation should be sharp and painful. It was part of his strategy to interrogate in great detail and very precisely. The accused was thus subjected to an inquisitorial trial, which was intended to foster in him a clear and unrestrained sense of his own badness. But this was not a goal in itself. Precisely because the interrogation was followed by a mild punishment, the realisation on the part of the accused ultimately served the intensification of a kind of gratitude at being let off lightly. Augustine's main interest in determining the penalty was not,

therefore, to apply the law;[12] his sentences were intended to occasion a process of seeking of the truth in the accused person's heart.

The torment of the interrogation was not a goal in itself, no more than the pain that the doctor inflicts or the violence that the State exercises are goals in themselves. Ultimately, the accused must become aware of the *paterna diligentia*, which Augustine was keen to reflect in his dealings with the accused. It was the responsibility of bishops who acted as judges to practice evangelical clemency (*mansuetudo*). Whereas the punishments imposed by the secular magistrates were meant to be deterrents, Augustine endeavoured to ensure—in line with his pedagogical "system"—that his punishments would produce new insight and inner reform.

Peace at Every Level of Human Existence

In the so-called "table of peace" in the nineteenth book of *civ.*, written around 425, Augustine discusses the aspects of human existence that are crucial to the realisation of peace on Earth. He returned there to a train of thought that he had first expressed in 388. In *De quantitate animae*, he described for the first time the seven aspects of human beings in their mutual interdependence. The level of vegetative life (breathing, 1) is followed by the sensory life (feeling, smell, sight, hearing, taste, 2), the intellectual life (thinking, manual and artistic skill, 3) and ultimately by the level of the moral life (4). This consists of obedience to precepts which, if practiced, ensures a balance in the soul (*pulchre ad pulchrum*), which then loses itself in God's life (*pulchre in pulchro*, 5), is absorbed in God (*pulchre ad Pulchritudinem*, 6) and becomes one with God (*pulchre apud Pulchritudinem*, 7).

This line of reasoning, which dates from the year 388, one year after Augustine's baptism, was no longer entirely neo-Platonic. Although Augustine described the elevation, the rise of human beings in a neoplatonic way, he clearly

---

[12] See *ep.* 133, 2: "Imple, christiane iudex, pii patris officium; sic succense iniquitati, ut consulere humanitati memineris: nec in peccatorum atrocitatibus exerceas ulciscendi libidinem; sed peccatorum vulneribus curandi adhibeas voluntatem. Noli perdere paternam diligentiam, quam in ipsa inquisitione servasti, quando tantorum scelerum confessionem, non extendente equuleo, non sulcantibus ungulis, non urentibus flammis, sed virgarum verberibus eruisti. Qui modus coercitionis a magistris artium liberalium, et ab ipsis parentibus, et saepe etiam in iudiciis solet ab episcopis adhiberi. Noli ergo atrocius vindicare, quod lenius invenisti. Inquirendi quam puniendi necessitas maior est: ad hoc enim et mitissimi homines facinus occultatum diligenter atque instanter examinant, ut inveniant quibus parcant. Unde plerumque necesse est, exerceatur acrius inquisitio, ut manifestato scelere sit ubi appareat mansuetudo."

already believed that all aspects of human existence are important in this rise or elevation to the highest being. The human is involved in this as a spiritual *and* physical being–in contrast to Plato; therefore, the physical does not need to be "eliminated." Nearly thirty years later, Augustine still espoused this anthropology. It formed the basis for his table of peace. He wrote:

> The peace of the body is, then, the properly ordered arrangement of its parts; the peace of the irrational soul is the properly ordered satisfaction of the appetites; the peace of the rational soul is the properly ordered accord of cognition and action; the peace of the body and soul together is the properly ordered life and wellbeing of a living creature; peace between mortal man and God is properly ordered obedience, in faith, under eternal law; peace among men is the properly ordered concord of mind with mind; the peace of a household is the properly ordered concord, with respect to command and obedience, of those who are living together; the peace of a city is the properly ordered concord, with respect to command and obedience, of its citizens; the peace of the heavenly city is perfectly ordered and wholly concordant fellowship in the enjoyment of God and of each other in God. The peace of all things is the tranquility of order, and order is the arrangement of things equal and unequal that assigns to each its due place (*civ.*, 19, 13) (trans. Babcock 368).[13]

Augustine assumes here that humans are composites of body and soul. Within the soul, the vital, non-rational part must be distinguished from the rational soul. Peace must reign in each of these three dimensions. The peace of the body is attained through "the properly ordered arrangement of its parts"; the peace of the vital, but non-rational part of the soul through the 'the properly ordered satisfaction of the appetites' (*civ.*, 19, 13).[14] If all organs and body parts function in accordance with the order of creation, and if the human is therefore free of any disordered tendencies, Augustine speaks of ordered life that causes well-being.[15] Peace within the rational soul in turn presupposes order in the body and the mind. But peace within the rational soul is primarily the fruit of the "the properly ordered accord of cognition and action" (*civ.*, 9.13).[16]

---

[13] See Cicero, De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum.

[14] "Pax itaque corporis est ordinata temperatura partium, pax animae inrationalis ordinata requies appetitionum."

[15] See *civ.* 19, 14: "Utrumque autem simul ei paci prodest, quam inter se habent anima et corpus, id est ordinatae vitae ac salutis." See also 19,13: «Pax corporis et animae ordinata vita et salus animantis, pax hominis mortalis et Dei ordinata in fide sub aeterna lege oboedientia."

[16] "Pax animae rationalis ordinata cognitionis actionisque consensio."

As in *De quantitate animae* and the *Praeceptum*, Augustine postulates in the table of peace that physical health is the basis for spiritual well-being. Physical health is therefore of the utmost importance for the spiritual life. He writes in s. 277:

> Look, my dearest friends; when this body of ours is healthy, even this fragile and mortal object, when it is regulated by the constitution of its parts, when there is nothing in it quarreling with anything else, not heat overcoming and driving out coolness, not warmth being extinguished by an excess of cold–and afflicting the body while the fight's going on; not dryness absorbing the moisture, not the moist overflowing and congesting; but all things it consists of are balanced with each other in a harmonious relationship, which is called health. In a word, the health of the body is the harmony of those things of which it consists (trans. Hill 35).

In the table of peace, Augustine also associates physical health with the instincts, unconscious motives and impulses that also cause human actions, but that cannot be derived exclusively from rational considerations. He thinks these are produced by the non-rational part of the soul, the part of the soul that humans have in common with animals. The Church father suggests here that people who do not experience peace within themselves are oblivious to irrational processes that take place within the non-rational part of the soul. But he does not subscribe to the Stoic view that all *perturbationes* must be eradicated before reason can rule. As has been seen, he does not think that victory over *pathè*, *apatheia*, is a normal condition, because it is wrong to believe that the wise man should have no compassion as compassion involves suffering (s., 348, 2).[17] He would write therefore in *civ.* that the affects cannot be eliminated but must be governed by the will. If the will is good, then fear will be good too (Fiedrowicz 431-440).

As has been seen, Augustine then assumes in the table of peace that peace is established in man's highest dimension of being, the rational soul (the only dimension that humans do not have in common with animals), through the harmony of thought and action. It is clear that personal integrity is a form of peace, founded on physical and spiritual balance: on health, insight into, and a certain level of control over the "animal spirits" within the "I."[18] This

---

[17] See *mor.* 27, 53-54 (compassion with those in need must not perturb one's own soul too much, but nor must *apatheia* cause inhumane behaviour). See also, for the influence of the notion of *apatheia* on Christianity, Mühlenberg 000.

[18] See, for the latter point, Akerlof and Shiller. They deplore the fact that almost all of the animal spirits that Keynes identified in *The General Theory* as the cause of the Great Depression have been pushed to the margins by later economists.

peace within the rational part of the soul is then immediately placed within the perspective of peace between mortal man and God, a peace that encompasses "properly ordered obedience, in faith, under eternal law" (*civ.*, 19, 13). If someone has attained physical and spiritual balance, and his thoughts and actions are consistent, then, Augustine believes, this results in the consciousness of being part of an order of creation which is oriented to peace. This is not very different from the notion of *oikeiosis*. In this context Augustine then describes peace between people as their ordered harmony. In the table of peace, just as in the *Praeceptum*, personal integrity is also related to the way one treats others, in chance encounters or in more structured forms of communal living such as the home, the city or the world. The discourse on peace within man is therefore followed directly by a description of peace within the home and in the city as the "ordered harmony" in which "with respect to command and obedience" (*civ.*, 19, 13).[19] Domestic peace, where paternal authority is characterised by caring compassion, just like that of the *praepositus*, is oriented to civic peace.[20] This *ordinata concordia* lies at the basis of every people, defined by Augustine as "an assembled multitude– not of animals but of rational creatures–, and is joined together by the common agreement on the objects of its love" (*civ.*, 19, 6).[21] This was a commonplace in Antiquity. Ideally, the family, the home, stood at the service of the city, just as the city was the foundation of the empire. At the same time, he emphasizes the social nature of the human race and the value of natural bonds and friendship (*bono coniug.*, 1, 1). Anyone who is born, is born to become a friend.

In the table of peace, social order is the result of the order and balance that individuals are able to realise within themselves. The individual's highest task is to become a person of integrity. This integrity is assumed and developed in his or her interactions with others. But Augustine contends emphatically that integrity in this sense must be supported by the ordering of irrational dimensions and of the physical dimension. Integrity thus presupposes *integritas*, wholeness, and also contributes to this.

---

[19] See *civ.*, 19, 13: "Pax hominum ordinata concordia, pax domus ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia cohabitantium, pax civitatis ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia civium, pax caelestis civitatis ordinatissima et concordissima societas fruendi et invicem in Deo, pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis" (trans. Babcock 385).
[20] See Schrama "Augustinus" 133-148; and "Praeposito" 847-878.
[21] "Coetus multitudinis rationalis rerum quas diligit concordi communione sociatus." See 19, 17.

In this way, Augustine brings physical harmony, irrational and rational motives, the pursuit of integrity, the role of the family and of the government into a single vision, articulated in his so-called "table of peace" in fewer than twenty lines. It is a map showing the reader precisely what factors are required for individual and social peace and how these two things are interrelated. Peace within an individual person is interrelated with the harmony that is pursued on various levels of society. In the different social units, the individual must, on the one hand, have the scope to discover what rational and irrational forces move him. On the other hand, relatives or members of wider social units set boundaries that prevent the individual from being destroyed by his animal spirits, his jealousy, resentment, and illusions. The table of peace shows that Augustine believes personal integrity is founded upon physical and spiritual calm and equilibrium. But in order to be able to stimulate integrity as the bridge between individual peace and peace in society, he demands the same from society at all levels. Augustine regards the social connections within society as instances that, each at their own level, create preconditions for the cultivation of personal integrity as a source of peace at the highest level of humankind, with all the beneficial effects that this has on society.

Conclusion: The Usefulness of Idleness

It has yet to be investigated whether the bishops' success in the fourth and fifth centuries was due to the sense of reality that Augustine expresses in his reflections on the business of politics and the inner life of politicians. But it is a paradox that their power in the Roman Empire should have increased at the time that Augustine was proclaiming frankly that political leaders cannot bring perfect happiness, and cannot do much more, in fact, than create the conditions to avoid chaos in the world, as well as that political institutions are essentially tragic due to their impermanence and transience.

Augustine has no ready-made solutions to offer on the utility of Christianity for Christian Democracy, because he lived and worked under different social circumstances. Yet his gradually acquired insight that people do not act quite as rationally in the public domain as they think they do, is as timeless as it is realistic. The attention he pays to the limitations of human beings is also valuable; it is even the prelude to his uncoupling of religion and politics, which is effected in order to avoid investing politicians with sacral power, thus obscuring their shortcomings.

Augustine describes three ways of living in *civ*. The first is a life without responsibilities, spent searching for truth about the world and about oneself; the second is an active life, spent taking care of human affairs. The third is a harmonious combination of the two former styles (*civ.*, 19, 2). There is no doubt that he believed the third way of life to be most appropriate for the politician, no matter in what era or under what political system.

The torment of the probing interrogation was not a goal in itself; the accused had to become aware of the *paterna diligentia* and the *mansuetudo* of the judge (the bishop) in his dealings with the accused. According to Augustine's own pedagogical "system", only then his punishments would bring about new insight and inner reform.

Augustine was demanding of those who fulfil responsible political functions. As a former professor of rhetoric he knew that those in public office gain in authority if it is clear to everyone that they pursue the same ideals in both the personal and the public domain. Clerics in particular are expected to make choices in their daily lives that are in accordance with their state of life or the position they occupy. At the end of his life, Augustine described in *De civitate Dei*, in less than twenty lines, the interrelatedness between physicality, irrational and rational motives, the pursuit of integrity, the role of the family and of government. In his so-called "table of peace", he charted the factors that come into play whenever people seek peace both within themselves and in the world. Augustine presupposed that there is interaction between tendencies that emerge from the body, from the instinctive, moral, and social life. In his view, animal spirits, one's own irrationality and subconscious motives, are not just possible causes of personal, but also of economic or social instability. He thought that integrity rests upon a balance in the personal life. Body and mind must work together. Equilibrium in the mind presupposes equilibrium in the body. Both form the basis for personal integrity, the virtue which Augustine believed is itself the foundation of peace in any form of community. It transpires therefore that Augustine's thinking on the order of the world and the quality of human society at all levels is infused with a sense that integrity, in our sense of the word, is a crucial virtue.

The phenomenon of man always remained a riddle to Augustine. In the *Confessiones*, at the end of his descent into memory and the subconscious, he expressed this very strikingly in his famous phrase "Mihi quaestio factus sum" ("I have become a question to myself") (*conf.*, 10, 33, 50). Living both in

a complex society and in an incomprehensible creation, people, Augustine thought, are faced with the tremendous challenge to seek the truth and to find the Truth. But perhaps more than any Church father before him, he was strongly aware of the fact that no one can even approximate the truth about themselves or the Truth behind all things if they do not live a truthful life.

Works Cited

Akerlof, George A. & Shiller, Robert J. *Animal Spirits: How Human Psychology Drives the Economy, and Why it Matters for Global Capitalism.* Jersey, 2009.

Augustine of Hippo. *Sermons* III/8 (273-305A) *on the Saints.* Translated by Edmund Hill, New York, New City Press, 1994.

------------------------. *The City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*) XI-XXII. Translated by William Babcock, New York, New City Press, 2012.

Brown, Peter. "Late Antiquity." A *History of Private Life.* Vol. 1: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, edited by Paul Veyne, Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press, 1987.

Burt, Donald. *Friendship and Society. An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy.* Grand Rapids, Cambridge, Eerdmans, 1999.

Cameron, Averil. *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

Cicero. *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum.* Translated by Harris Rackam, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1971.

Cranz, F. Edward. "The development of Augustine's Ideas on Society before the Donatist Controversy." *Harvard Theological Review*, 47, 1954, pp. 255-316.

Crislip, Andrew. *From monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity.* Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Dodaro, Robert. "Between the two Cities. Political Action in Saint Augustine of Hippo." *Augustine and Politics*, edited by John Doody, Kevin Hughesa and Kim Paffenroth, Oxford, Lexington Books, 2005, pp. 99-115.

Holman, Susan R. *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia.* Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2001.

Lohse, Bernard. "Augustins Wandlung in seiner Beurteilung des Staates." *Studia Patristica*, vol. 6, 1960, pp. 447-475.

Lepelley, Claude. "Facing Wealth and Poverty: Defining Augustine's Social Doctrine." *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 38, 2007, pp. 1-17.

Markus, Robert. *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Mühlenberg, Ekkehard. "Altchristliche Lebensführung zwischen Bibel und Tugendlehre." *Ethik im Antiken Christentum*, edited by Hanns Christoph Brennecke and Johannes van Oort, Leuven, Peeters Publishers, 2011.

Rapp, Claudia. *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity. The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition.* Berkeley, London, University of California Press, 2005.

Schrama, Martijn. "Augustinus over het verlangen naar vrede." *Communio*, 14, 1989, pp. 133-148.

------------------------. "Praeposito tamquam patri oboediatur." Praeposito tamquam patri oboediatur. Augustinus über Frieden und Gehorsam, edited by Bernard Bruning, Mathijs Lamberigts and Jozef van Houtem, Mélanges T.J. van Bavel, Leuven, 1991, pp. 847-878.

Michael Fiedrowicz. "'Cives Sanctae Civitatis Dei Omnes Affectiones Rectas Habent' (*Civ. Dei* 14, 9): Terapia delle Passioni e Preghiera in S. Agostino." *L'etica cristiana nei secoli III e IV: eredità e confronti*, Rome, 1996, pp. 431-440.

Van Geest Paul & Hunink Vincent. *Met zachte hand. Augustinus over dwang in kerk en maatschappij [brief 185].* Budel, Damon, 2012.

Van Geest, Paul. *Waarachtigheid. Levenskunst volgens Augustinus.* Zoetermeer, Meinema, 2011.

------------------------. "'Geordend is de politiek'. Het christendom als fundament voor politiek handelen volgens Augustinus.' *Dood of wederopstanding? Over het christelijke in de Nederlandse politiek*', edited by Erik Borgman, Pieter Jan Dijkman and Paul van Geest, Amsterdam, Boom, 2012, pp. 26-32.

------------------------. "*Quid dicam de vindicando vel non vindicando?* (*ep.* 95.3). Augustine's Legitimation of Coercion in the Light of his Role of Mediator, Judge, Teacher and Mystagogue." *Violence in Ancient Christianity: Victims and Perpetrators*, edited by Albert Geljon, Riemer Roukema, Leiden, Brill, 2014, pp. 151-184.

Villazala, David Natal. *Fugiamus ergo forum. Ascetismo y poder en Ambrosio de Milán Léon*, Universidad de León, 2010.