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## Justice in the City of God

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**Abstract:** The “City of God” as the most prominent work of St. Augustine can be considered a good link between the Christian and Greek philosophical tradition. He argues that the purpose of human Justice, surrendering to order, can be considered relatively a type of human justice. St. Augustine, like many of the philosophers before him, stress that the ultimate goal of Peace for the human being is the universe, and hence, all the creatures’ natural instinct is to preserve the essence of life and interest in continuing to seek peace. Thus, the aim of every society is peace, and peace in society consists of people agreeing to have a relationship with each other, in regularity.

**Keywords:** Justice, Augustine, City of God, Philosophy, Christian Philosophy

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### Introduction

If we account for the “Christian Philosophy” as a distinctive philosophy, the prominent role of St. Augustine cannot be overlooked in its origination and development. As the “Christian philosophy” is of the Christianity precedence and has developed and expanded by Christian Thinkers, an involvement of an issue descended from supernatural forces has to be sought in its establishment. It is not, of course, mandatory for this issue to be included in the context of this philosophy and, hence, to be in contradiction with the concept of philosophy which is a rational issue, but to be accounted for as the fundamentals of the philosophy. Hence, the “Christianity Philosophy” is called a philosophy which necessitates the contradiction of the Christianity revelation with the legal aid of the human wisdom, although there are superficial distinction between the two concepts of wisdom and revelation. “Christianity Philosophy” if conceptualized this way, cannot be defined in any abstract manner

as a simple concept, but rather gets related to the conceptualization of an inclusive history which is definable. The primary distinctive factor of such a philosophy, as indicated by Gilson is its supremacy of God, and its power and magnificence. God is the sole existence and pure wisdom, meaning that everything is originated by him and any future being is created by him (Gilson, 1991; 11).

With reference to what was mentioned to recognize the concepts like Justice in the view of Augustine, as a prominent figure of this philosophy, there is no other choice except referring to the fundamentals and the precedence of this theoretical insight, either that of Christian Religion or the historical philosophical tradition. Based on this insight, there is a need to survey the commonalities and demarcations between the “Christian Philosophy” and the philosophical traditions of its ancestors, with emphasis on the speculations of Augustine, and following the references and expositions of this philosophy from the mentioned tradition; as the precedence of the concept of Justice in the

philosophy of pre Christianity, especially that of Greek, makes us to investigate the expanse of the meaning of this concept in the philosophy tradition.

Augustine is considered as the greatest figure in Roman Catholic Church, and the greatest Christian philosopher, nevertheless, there is no agreement over the nature of his works, especially his prominent book, "The City of God", since some interpreters believe that "The City of God" is the first political dissertation of Christianity or a dissertation in the political theology, while the other group considers "The City of God" as a dissertation in "Theology of History" and the "History of Salvation", that is why they devalue the political interpretations by Augustine, specially, that about the supporters of the Pop and the Church Supremacy (Tabatabaee, 2003; 256). Away from this conflict whose solution is not the purpose of this article, "The City of God" as the most important work by Saint Augustine could be a suitable cradle for investigating the relation between Christian Philosophy and the Greek Philosophical Tradition, as Kasirer believes that even the title of Saint Augustine's book, "The City of God" is extracted from the Plato's "Republic", in addition to its knowledge and content aspects (Cassirer, 2003; 156). As Bloom, also, indicates, it should not be thought that the Augustine's Heavenly City (Utopia) is just a translation of Plato's Utopia, for its Meta Historical characteristics. They are basically different. The favorable system of Plato is a pure example and an abstraction, while Augustine's "City of God" is a society of human beings with flesh, bone, and blood coming from the earthly cities and with their own bodies, but they enter the paradise of God in a different shape (Bloom, 1994; 273).

Meanwhile, the key term of "Justice" as the most traditional involvement of human mind becomes our investigating topic in this city, and surveying its relatedness to the Greek Philosophical Heritage, especially Plato's views, we can get close to the specific viewpoints of Augustine.

## **The Concept of Justice and Order of Law in the "City of God"**

### **- Philosophical Foundations of Augustine**

Augustine can be considered as the ultimate degree of unison between the Christian Religion and the Platonic Thought in the Christianity of the middle Ages, as most of his thinking has been influenced by Plato or Neo Platonic followers (especially Plotinus). Gilson, however, considers his adherence to Christianity superior to his Neo Platonic tradition (Gilson, *ibid*; 42 & 43). But some also consider his Christianity as his latest concern, following Augustine's statements. It doesn't seem, however that his a priori and a posteriori considerations do not lead to less effectiveness of Plato's appearance in Augustine's thought, as the presence of Platonic ideas specially his view points about the theory of abstraction can be clearly witnessed in the basic thoughts of Augustine.

Plato's negotiations are about topics whose peculiarities are the basic duality of reasonable and sensitive affairs. Ideas or images are transcendences that make the whole reality against shadowy beings of materials and particulars; amongst these ideas the idea of Goodness is the main idea, both as the objective of knowledge and as the leader of morality. Wisdom should have superiority over feelings. Plato pictures the knowledge if ideas -i.e. the sole real knowledge- as a myth, i.e. a type of remembering the earlier life of the incarnated spirit.

Platonic instinct, even during the traditional period, underwent many changes as a result of continued persistence in Academia, and Alexandria school and by Plotinus, Proclus and their substitutes, it has undergone great transformations and has conceptualized Neo Platonism whose the most complete shape can be sought in Plotinus' ideas. The principle presupposition of this viewpoint is considering the hierarchy of being derived from deities (Winner, 2008, vol. 1: 387). Plotinus transcendental trinity consists of 1) Unique or the one which is equal to goodness, morally, it is transcen-

dental and ultimately unknown, and the only way to approach its recognition is positive atheism, 2) ideas or essences (phenomena) which are derived from the ultimate origin of everything i.e. the unique; and 3) The soul of the world that illustrates the power of creator in the natural world manifestations. Plotinus' trinity supernatural classification is quite similar to Christian Trinity about which Plotinus did not seem to know much about (Ibid: 398). These similarities make Saint Augustine to see Neo Platonism in reconciliation with Christianity, as he states that Neo Platonism carried with itself all spiritual facts, except the objective materialization.

Augustine borrows a lot from Plato about the creation of the world and then accommodates them with the principles of Christianity. As an example, Augustine in his discussion on the conflict between the soul and the body, which is prevalent in the thought of Christianity, refers to the distinction between the issue related to body and soul introduced by Plato, and using Platonic preexistence accounts for the distinction and conflict between immortal and mortal, and also unchangeable against changeable. Another assumption that Augustine borrows from Plato is the idea which he has taken it away from the Platonic model and talks of it as the "Thoughts of God" (derived from the point in genesis period in the Judas Bible: There was only word at the beginning). On this account, God has created everything on the basis of ideas which are similar to his thought. They are immortal like the God. Creatures, also, acquire their own shapes from God, by participating in his ideas (Taylor, 1989; 127).

Augustine in his book, "On the Ideas" introduces this idea of Plato, and writes about it: Wisdom is included in the science of God for what that is going to be created and for what which has been created. There is nothing in HIS science except what is unchangeable, nothing can exist, and Plato calls this principle wisdom for the objects as "Ideas". They are not only ideas, they are, also real, since they are unchangeable. It is because of using

them that everything exists because it exists (Laskem, 2001: 20).

Human soul can find the Idea of things, because they are reflected inside the human soul and illuminated in human mind, and they are real as the objects made from an idea (pictures, objects, or wisdom) which exist in the science of God. This training by Augustine about the resplendence of God is the essence of the thought in the middle Ages. Our cognition arises from our soul. Of course, our bodies are affected the way a physical body does and we recognize the physical realities through our senses. This is, however, the sensation. Recognition of true realities in the soul arises from their resplendence from God (Ibid, 21). Augustine places his Ideas, to some extent, on the Judas Bible. God sent his word to the world, and this word was the same real light that illuminated every man. (Bible of Judas, chapter 1, verse 9) but he developed training for thought and understanding. Understanding is, for the mind, as seeing is for the senses, Understanding is the vision of thought. Reality, especially the reality of ethics and logic, can be understood independent from physical senses, because the light of wisdom is present in the mind. Understanding or the seeing the reality or the vision of knowledge is possible in human wisdom through the illumination of some of the basic recognition principles, present in the science of God. This training about resplendence, specifically, is the base of Augustine's thought about ethics. The same way that the light of reality is present in the mind, God's canons are also written from within in the human heart or his conscience. Actually, Augustine lays the world of ideas in the wisdom of God, following the Middle Platonic and Christian thinkers like Origness, and considers it inclusive of all ingredients.

Here, he accumulates the Christian-Jewish faith with wisdom or Greek Philosophy. Plato states that the world of "Ideas" is the world of Logic and the real existence, it is Ousia. Augustine accepts the translation of Ousia as the essence and believes that

only God has the merit of being called the essence (Ilkhani, 2003: 97).

According to Plato, the principle or basic idea (Genesis) or absolute Goodness is the last understandable issue, of course with hard efforts. In the works and thought of Augustine, however, all these conditions, boundaries, and precociousness are disappeared altogether. His idea about resplendence shows him a new approach. According to him, Platonic Goodness of Ideas is unified with God. But this God, i.e. the God of the prophets of Israelites and that of the Christ Revelation is not away from us or out of our access. God is the beginning and the end of existence. We live and move in him and we exist in him. This insight encompasses the whole philosophy of Augustine and gives it a special feature (Cassirer, Ibid: 165). Augustine lays the fundamental philosophy of the middle Ages by placing his own religious experience in the center of the Logical world. Prophets had talked about the ethical laws and had announced that this law is nonsense and not understandable without a constitutionalist. Augustine expands this perception of the field of ethics to all theoretical fields. God is the absolute sagacity. It is through him that we know everything and we don't know anything without him (Ibid; 166).

#### - **Platonic and Middle Ages Backgrounds of Justice**

Plato's viewpoint on justice is defined on the basis of "Geometric Equations", according to which everybody had a share in the commonwealth life, but their shares were not equal. Justice was not equated with equal rights. Platonic State assigns to everyone and to any social class his/her specialized activity in a common job, but the payments and the responsibilities of each individual and each social class is different. By Plato, geometry was an eternal and unchangeable subject. Geometric facts are not created by anybody, but it is an affair that exists. Geometry is the understanding of something that exists eternally, not understanding something

that appears differently from time to time and subsides the other time. If this equation that Plato accounts for the geometry and ethics is considered true, then we can, no longer, talk about the bases of ethical laws. They don't appear to have fundamentals, they are as they have always been and they will be as they are now. The "Unestablished Laws", the "Laws of Justice" have no origin in time, they are not created by any human or celestial powers (Cassirer, Ibid: 159).

In the middle Ages, we observe the definitions of justice, among which there is equality between the law and justice. Cicero was a thinker of this period who provided a classical definition for justice, not only for Romans, but for many thinkers who lived after him. Cicero believes that all rational creatures should obey the same law as a globalized law, he also believes that since all human beings are equal against the law, all should act according to that law, and justice or injustice is defined by reference to obeying or disobeying the dominant law (Macintyre, ibid: 147).

This unity between justice and law becomes the principle of the Christian thinkers of the middle Ages. The only difference was that they did not believe and accept the eternal and non personal law (i.e. a law that nobody has constituted it) in their Greek understandings (Cassirer, ibid: 160). The Greek thinking in this regard was united with the historical fundamentals of religious ethical thought and the ethics proposed by Aristotle whose principles can be found in the rituals of Ibrahim, and the Moses' Ten Commandments. According to this view what is a revelation for Mosses is general and according to the Old Testament, these laws are not specified to Israelites and everybody can consider its goodness as a type of justice per se and not specific to a group or to a culture. Israelites were promised to enter a land gifted to them by God, if they would act according to the justice suggested to them. Thus justice and tyranny are defined as disobeying the law, the law that is both celestial and to which the human wisdom would lead to. In the

Jewish religion the principle laws are the same Ten Commandments that were bestowed to the Israelites by God, and the rest of laws that are combinations of Wisdom and Justice are left to the people themselves. Thus, according to Torah, justice is not only specified to Israelites, but also to everybody. Ten Commandments are, thus, orders which are applicable in any situation without exception. To reach goodness in life, one should act according to them, and justice which is offered on the basis of such law is following the orders and laws of God. Reward for such a justice is, also, earthly, which will be bestowed to Israelites by God. Therefore, injustice means disobeying the laws, either the laws of God, like Ten Commandments, or those of the human beings (Macintyre, *ibid*; 150-151).

### **The Unity of Justice with Law and Order in the Idea of Augustine**

Augustine is an obvious symbol and manifestation of persistence and development of Neo Platonic philosophy and the Christianity insight about the Unity of Justice with law and order in the history of Christian Philosophy. According to this view, the created world has meaningful order, and according to Augustine, as for Plato, the health of people is in observing this order and loving it. Observing this order is the function of wisdom, and because of that, one should love it, because one would ultimately be similar to what they love. What prevents them from observing this order is an imaginary manifested world that wisdom should withdraw its attention from. But, it is love, which is a decisive factor in everybody's decisions; "every individual is what they love. Do you love the earth? You will be the earth. Do you love God? You will be God" (Taylor, *ibid*; 128). Because of this point, from the view point of Augustine "society is a combination of wise people whose love toward something makes their common agreements. If this common point consists of higher level benefits, the society will also be better and if the low level interest of this issue is common, the society will also be at the

low level." This means that the criterion for classification of governments and societies are the ethical considerations related to the evaluation of their common value (Bloom, *ibid*; 275 & 276).

In the viewpoint of Saint Augustine, the two expressions of Pax or Peace and Security, and Justice can be understood in close relation to each other. It can, generally, be stated that the expression of Pax is the observer of the celestial order of affairs and *justitia* in its broader sense, is respecting that order (Tabatabaee, *ibid*; 191).

It has to be remembered that Augustine uses the expressions of Justice, coordination and peace in, totally, two different states. This issue, sometimes, confuses interpreters. According to Augustine, real and factual Justice, peace, and coordination can be found, only, in the City of God. We can only understand the signs and shadows of these sublime qualities in earthly social, economic, or political institutions. Pictures from principles and roots are different in kinds and degrees. On the basis of these differences some interpreters use the expressions of "relative justice" or "relative right" when they refer to the justice in earthly societies and states to elaborate on Augustine's ideas (Deane, 1966; 99) from the view point of Augustine, the real peace is not achievable in the life in this world. Complete and eternal peace is found only in the City of God; and the earthly peace, similar to Justice, is a relative and fragile issue (*Ibid*; 102).

Augustine believes: "The term Peace or Solace is used in relation to the human and perishable affairs, where there is no eternal life. Because of this reason, I prefer to use the word "eternal life" than the word "Peace and Solace" to show the end and ultimate objective of this city. Those who are not familiar with the holy and religious texts, might think that this very mortal, temperate, and vicious life is the same eternal life, under the influence of some philosophers, the ultimate objective of the City of God, or the same " Supreme Good" is "peace in the eternal life" or "eternal life in peace" (Augustine, 2003; XIX: 11).



As Augustine adheres to the definition of society on the basis of related meaning of love among the members of that society, he explains the dual order in the City of God and that of Human, with reference to the dual position of love which is embedded in human nature, because human beings make an order following the passion (devilish desires), which is the same as earthly city, and denying God while referring to God and being away from egotism making his entrance to the City of God, easy (Ibid, XIV). In spite of differences between nations and tribes, concerning their rituals and languages, there are not more than two systems in the world, which are referred to as “two cities in the Heavenly City”. First, the city of those who wish to live in peace and solace against the Physical doctrines and the other is the city of those who live in peace against the soul doctrines.

*The earthly city is the city whose habitants create false gods for themselves, while those in the Heavenly City do not obey any order except that of the real God (Ibid, CVII: 4).*

Augustine, on the basis of the interpretation of the verses in the holy book against which, in the time of creation, the body is superior to soul and that God has created the physical side of the human before his spirituality, is to confirm that the earthly city which is the Carnal city is superior in time to the City of God. As Cain as a member of earthly city, was the first son of human being and Abel as a member of the Heavenly City, was born after him.

Cain as the man of the world, was the founder of the Earthly City, while Abel lived in this alien world and did not establish any city, because the city of saints, although, whose habitants are born in this world and live as strangers, there, until the determined time, exists in the heaven (sky). Then the Celestial City will collect all those who will be alive again, in their own bodies, and they will be given the paradise they promised to be given; those saints will rule this kingdom of heaven where Jesus

the Christ, the king of all the worlds, will rule over this paradise (Ibid, XVI; 2).

Two earthly and celestial cities exist from the very beginning of the creation to the judgment day (resurrection) in a combination, but the appearance of the celestial city in this world, is a strange appearance which is constantly in movement from one point to the other. The real place of the earthly city is in this world, whose habitants enjoy not more than the blessings of the world and since the passions are dominant here, there are always fights between groups of inhabitants with the other group. The principle in the earthly city is hostility and fight, and there is not more than a short period of peace and solace dominant in it. Each group is on the verge of domination over the other, and peace and solace, which is not the objective for the habitants, is, only, a means to enjoy the earthly passions (Ibid, XV; 4).

In the earthly city, which is represented by some philosophers, there are innumerable gods who are responsible or representatives of one part of human beings or their actions and needs. But there is only one God which is worshiped and whose orders are followed. The earthly city is constantly involved in wars and turbulences because of the disputes their people have regarding their languages, religions, and the like, but the City of God or celestial city which is ruled by one God, only consists of all nations devoid from their disputes, who altogether make a society of pilgrims (Ibid), XIV; 17).

Justice persists, only, where it is ruled by God, Where soul dominates body in all individuals. In this city, human beings live fairly, and both the society and people live in justice. In this city individuals work with love, the love derived from God, the love which makes every person love his neighbor or he do himself.

On the other side, Augustine does not believe that the earthly city is free from justice, from some aspects, according to him, although the peace in the earthly city is not comparable with that in the celestial city, the earthly city is peace, in one way or

another, and this peace is a good one naturally, and is not vicious per se. (Ibid, XIX; 23).

The criterion of the earthly city is disorder and fight, but this fight is not instinctive in the city. This city, also, looks for solace and peace, to make inhabitants benefit from the blessings of the world. Augustine's position can be described as follows: "whatever exists is just," "Whatever exists, there must be a minimum of power in it, otherwise it cannot be said that it exists. In a more accurate sense, it should be stated that: "Order is good, disorder is not good. Hence, any form of order is better than disorder," If sameness and the choice of unjust peace an unending disorder, and turbulence, that unjust peace is also of value, and by this proposition, the association of "goodness" with the "existence" and "viciousness" with the "lack of existence" is meaningful. This concept is a heritage remained from the classical philosophers' tradition, and Augustine has elaborated on it from a different perspective and very fundamentally (Bloom, *ibid*; 288).

Although the celestial city is opposite to the earthly city, it has relations with the earthly city and benefits from the peace and solace in that city, since any type of peace, whether earthly or celestial is the objective of any type of city.

All human instincts are after peace, even behind all wars and disputes among human beings there is desire for peace. Those who try to abolish the present peace and solace, do not hate peace, but they look for a substitute for the present and dominant peace with their selected one (*ibid*, XLX; 12).

However, our eternal happiness is with the God, and the peace we are living in, in conjunction with others, is just to calm our catastrophes and is not an eternal peace. In the eternal happiness, we do not need wisdom, and ..., since there is no corruption and defect, there. God rules over humans and spirit rules body, there. There is eternal happiness and solace awaiting us, and thus the peace of this happiness, and the happiness of this peace are the same Supreme Good (*Ibid*, XIX: 27).

## Conclusion

In short, it can be stated that Augustine is directly influenced by Plato and Neo Platonic ideas, he unites the concept of justice with a type of order, of course, in contrast to Plato, whose initiator is the Christian God. From his perspective, although justice exists only in the celestial city i.e., where it is directly ruled by God, the earthly city can, also, be inclusive of some aspects of justice. In his view, justice means human surrender to order, and because of this, human justice is a relative concept.

Saint Augustine, similar to many other figures prior to him, emphatically believes that peace is the ultimate objective of human and all creatures, and because of that, all creatures instinctively, try to keep peace and continue their life. In this way, the objective of every society is peace and peace in society means agreement with one another.

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