

GOD’S POWER AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

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I

The inclination of the philosopher, when confronted with a topic such as “God’s Power and Human Flourishing,” is to resist the temptation to plunge straight ahead to discuss the topic and instead lay the groundwork for discussing it by asking how *human flourishing* is to be understood. For there is no agreed on understanding of human flourishing—far from it. I propose indulging this inclination of the philosopher. Indeed, I propose indulging it to the extent that I will devote most of my discussion to this question, since I think it is especially on this point that I can make a contribution to our consultation.

In the course of composing my recent book, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, I found myself led to the conclusion that there are three fundamentally different ways of understanding the good life—or as philosophers nowadays would usually put it, three fundamentally different ways of understanding *well-being*, or *welfare*. What led me to that conclusion was the following line of thought.

I think of justice in our social relationships as constituted of enjoying our rights; our social relationships are just insofar as we enjoy our rights. In turn, I think of that to which one has a right as always a life-good of some sort—more specifically, the life-good of being treated a certain way by one’s fellows. Thus, as I see it, the good is conceptually prior to the right; those

life-goods to which one has a right are a subset of one's life-goods generally. For this reason, I shall precede my account of rights by a discussion of well-being.

To the best of my knowledge, all present-day discussions of well-being proceed on the assumption that all writers have the same thing in mind by "welfare" and "well-being," and that the disagreements to be found in the literature are disagreements over what it is, in general, that contributes to our well-being. In his book, *Well-Being*, James Griffin, after rehearsing many of the perplexities and confusions in the literature, entertains the possibility that what accounts for some of these perplexities is that he and others are tacitly operating with different conceptions of well-being. But after briefly considering that possibility, he rejects it.

Approaching the topic as I did from the angle of rights, I eventually concluded that, on the way of thinking of the good life that is dominant in the modern world, there are a good many life-goods to which one has a right that are nevertheless not included among one's life-goods. That conclusion propelled me to search for an alternative understanding of the good life, one that would be adequate for an account of rights. It was that search which led me to the conclusion that there are three fundamentally different ways of thinking of the good life. In what follows I will articulate these three different understandings and explain why only the last, in my order of presentation, is adequate for an account of rights. I assume, without argument, that a conception of well-being which is not adequate for an account of rights should be rejected.¹

II

The understanding of the good life that is dominant in the modern world is that of what might be called the *experientially satisfying* life. The native home of this conception of the good

¹ Some passages in what follows are taken over from *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*.

life is the modern utilitarian tradition; it is this conception that is employed by most economists, by most social scientists, and by most social planners.

The official explanation of well-being that Griffin offers in his book is that it consists of a life being “good for such-and-such a person” (*Well-Being*, 37). It consists, he says, of “a life’s being valuable . . . to the person who lives it” (*Well-Being*, 21). This is also how Robert Adams, in *Finite and Infinite Goods*, thinks of well-being. In the third chapter of the book, a chapter he titles “Well-Being and Excellence,” Adams says that “within the realm of what is good for its own sake, and not just instrumentally good, most contemporary ethical thought focuses mainly on well-being or welfare—that is, on the nature of human flourishing or what is good for a person” (*Finite and Infinite Goods*, 83). A bit later he remarks that “it is one of the more difficult tasks of ethical theory to explain what human well-being consists in—what it is for something to be good for a person” (*Finite and Infinite Goods*, 84). From these passages it is clear that not only does Adams himself understand well-being as consisting in a life that is good *for* the person whose life it is, but that this, in his judgment, is how “most contemporary ethical thought” understands it.

And how, in turn, are we to understand the idea of a life that is good *for*, or good *to*, the person whose life it is? Griffin never explicitly says. But it is clear what he has in mind. A state or event within a person’s life contributes positively to that life’s being good *for* the person whose life it is only if that state or event is something that the person experiences. Griffin speaks of the life that is good *for* the person whose life it is as satisfying what he calls “the experience requirement.” Though Adams is no more explicit on the matter than Griffin is, it is clear that this is also how he understands the idea of a life that is good *for* the person whose life it is. After disposing of the so-called informed-desire account of welfare, Adams offers as his own account

of welfare that a life is good *for* one insofar as one enjoys the excellent; and then he says that “enjoyment is internal to my life, and even to my consciousness, in a way that the satisfaction of my desires need not be. Even though *what* I desire is often external to myself, the enjoyment itself must be an event in my experience. . . . [T]he enjoyment criterion helps to assure that what we are assessing is *my* good rather than some other good that I care about” (*Finite and Infinite Goods*, 100).

The reason this understanding of the good life is not adequate for a theory of rights is that a great many of the goods to which we have rights are not to be found among the states or events within a person’s life that contribute to its being an experientially satisfying life. Suppose, for example, that malicious rumor-mongers are ruining your reputation behind your back, but that you never hear about this and that it has no noticeable effect on how you are treated by others; neither the rumor-mongering nor its effects enters into, or alters, your experience. You have been wronged, deprived of a good to which you have a right, the good of not having your reputation besmirched; but the deprivation of that good has no impact whatsoever on how experientially satisfying your life is. Or suppose that someone spies on you for prurient reasons but keeps what he learns entirely to himself. Then too you have been deprived of a good to which you have a right; yet the deprivation of that good has no impact on how experientially satisfying your life is. These are but two of many examples of the point: many of the life-goods to which one has a right make no contribution whatsoever to how experientially satisfying one’s life is, because they don’t enter one’s experience at all. They fall outside the net.

III

The eudaimonist tradition, going back into classical antiquity, works with a distinctly different understanding of the good life. The good life is the life that is well-lived. Because

“*eudaimonia*” is standardly translated into English as “happiness,” I shall say that the good life, thus understood, is the *happy* life. I myself think that “happiness” is a very misleading translation into present-day idiomatic English of “*eudaimonia*”; but since it is the customary translation, I will follow the crowd.

Though eudaimonism is presently enjoying something of a renaissance in certain quarters, it remains much less familiar than utilitarianism. Because it is subtle, because it is often misunderstood, because many Christian thinkers have adopted it as their framework, and because it is the pattern of pagan ethical thought that the Church Fathers confronted, let me take some time to explain what the eudaimonists had in mind by *the well-lived* life, how they employed this understanding, and why it too is inadequate for an account of rights.

The eudaimonist holds that the ultimate and comprehensive goal of each of us is (or should be) that we live our lives as well as possible, the well-lived life being, by definition, the happy life, the *eudaimōn* life. As Aristotle puts it, “It is thought to be a mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g., about what sorts of things conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of things conduce to the good life in general” (*Nichomachean Ethics* VI, 5; 1140a 25–28). The disagreements we have about happiness—and they are many—are to be understood as disagreements over the content of the well-lived life, not over whether or not to aim at living one’s life well.

It is important to understand what sort of goal happiness is. “Happiness” is not the name of an experience of a certain sort. “Pleasure” names an experience of a certain sort; “happiness” does not. The eudaimonist is not saying that one’s sole end in itself is, or should be, to bring about experiences of a certain sort, everything else being a means. Happiness does not belong to

the content of the good life; it *characterizes* the good life. The good life is constituted of activities; and what characterizes those activities is that together they make one's life a well-lived life.

Some of the activities that constitute a well-lived life will be, in the scheme of one's purposes, ends in themselves. Acquiring knowledge of certain sorts, maintaining friendship with various people—these activities are life-goods that are appropriately pursued as ends in themselves; their having that place in one's life contributes to making one's life well-lived as a whole. From among all the good activities that *could* function as ends in themselves in the structure of one's intention and action, one makes a selection by using, as one's criterion, whether performing or aiming to perform those activities as ends in themselves will contribute to making one's life as a whole well-lived. One does not make a selection by asking, say, which actions will produce the greatest desire-satisfaction.

Thus one's own happiness is one's ultimate goal in the sense, and only in the sense, that it is one's ultimate reason for selecting as one does from among all the good things one could do, whether as ends or as means. To aim at happiness is to aim at bringing it about that the entirety of one's activities possesses the character of being a well-lived life.

Two explanatory comments are in order. First, the ancient eudaimonists insisted that *eudaimonia* is constituted of activity. Happiness does not consist in what happens to one but in what one makes of what happens to one. Living well consists of acting well. The life-goods comprising a well-lived life are all actions on one's part, doings. In the words of Julia Annas, fine scholar of philosophical figures and movements of classical and late antiquity, "Happiness is . . . thought of as active rather than passive, and as something that involves the agent's activity, and thus as being, commonsensically, up to the agent. This kind of consideration would rule out

wealth, for example, right away. Happiness cannot just be a thing, however good, that someone might present you with. At the very least it involves what you *do* with wealth, the kind of *use* you put it to” (*Morality of Happiness*, 45).

Second, eudaimonism is commonly charged with being a form of egoism. The term “egoism” means so many different things that unless further explanation is forthcoming, the charge is void for vagueness. Those who make the charge seem usually to take an egoist to be a person who always asks, when considering some course of action, “What’s in it for me?” that is, “What personally satisfying experiences for myself is this likely to bring about?” If that is how one understands egoism, then it is clear that eudaimonism is not, as such, a form of egoism. For example, most of the ancient writers held that in the life that is lived well, a prominent place will be found for friendships; and it was certainly not their view that, when presented with the possibility of establishing or nurturing a friendship, the question to ask is, “What’s in it for me?”

So eudaimonism is not egoism. Nonetheless, it is undeniably agent-oriented. I am confronted with a whole array of good actions as candidates for inclusion within my life, including such actions as *my* seeking to enhance *your* good. I must choose. I choose among candidates on the basis of which ones, in my judgment, will contribute most to my living my life well. That is the test that every candidate for action on my part must pass. Not whether it contributes to *your* living *your* life well, but whether it contributes to *my* living *my* life well. The fact that it contributes to *your* living *your* life well is never, by itself, sufficient reason for choosing it. Only if an action that enhances your happiness also enhances my happiness do I have a reason for choosing it.

And now for the particular way in which the ancient eudaimonists employed this conception of well-being—and for how all subsequent eudaimonists, to the best of my

knowledge, have employed it. “The framework for ancient ethics,” says Julia Annas, “is given by claims about the form my final end should take,” these being claims about what constitutes happiness for me, and by claims about “the place in it that virtue should have, rather than by claims about actions that are required or permitted or about ways to bring about certain consequences” (*Morality of Happiness*, 136). Specifically, the ancient eudaimonists agreed that acting virtuously is necessary and sufficient for living one’s life well. They also agreed that virtue, that is, *being* virtuous, is necessary for living one’s life well. The big topic of debate was whether virtue—not virtuous activity but virtue itself—was sufficient as well as necessary for happiness, the Stoics saying that it is and the Peripatetics (Aristotelians) saying that it is not. Let me explain these views as briefly as I can.

Fundamental to the thought of all the ancient eudaimonists was the assumption that we are each by nature such that we find certain things preferable and other things dis-preferable. For example, we find living until full of years, enjoying warm family relationships, friendships, good health, sufficient food, and satisfying work preferable to the lack thereof. In speaking of such things as “preferables,” I am using the Stoic term; the Aristotelians customarily called them *natural goods*. I would say that the most underdeveloped aspect of ancient eudaimonism was this doctrine of preferables, or natural goods. So let me say no more about it.

The eudaimonists then thought of virtues as skills of a certain sort for dealing with the preferables and dis-preferables in one’s life. The preferables and dis-preferables are, as it were, the stuff or material that the virtues work on. Annas makes the point repeatedly. The preferables and dis-preferables, she says, “conventional goods and evils—have value for happiness only in being the materials for and context within which the virtuous life is lived. On their own they

neither add to the happiness of a life nor subtract from it” (*Morality of Happiness*, 43). They are, as the Stoics called them, *indifferents*.

The thought of the eudaimonists went as follows. Not only do we each find some things preferable and others dis-preferable. Among the preferables, we find some preferable to others. The challenge facing the wise person is then to order the indifferents into a coherent and rational system of priorities. What the Stoics called the *fitting, due, appropriate, or right* action in a given situation is the action that seeks to promote the items which, in that situation, have as great a preferability as any. And a virtue is then, to quote Annas again, “a disposition to do the right thing, in various areas of life, and to have the right feelings and emotions about it” (*Morality of Happiness*, 108). Or somewhat more elaborately: a virtue “is a complex disposition to do the morally right thing for the right reason in a consistent and reliable way, in which one’s emotions and feelings have so developed as to go along with one’s decisions” (*Morality of Happiness*, 441). Once one has ordered one’s preferables and dis-preferables into a rational system of priorities, it would be irrational not to take the next step of cultivating those dispositions that are the virtues. The well-lived life will perforce be the virtuous life.

As I suggested above, the eudaimonists regarded the virtues as skills *of a certain sort*. Some skills are such that one can distinguish two very different things that one can aim at as one exercises the skill—call them the *objective* (*skopos*, target) and the *end* (*telos*). Archery was a favorite example for making the point. When someone is exercising the skill of archery, we can distinguish between his aim of hitting the target—call that the *objective*, the *skopos*—and his aim of employing well the skill of archery—call that the *end*, the *telos*. The point of making the distinction is, of course, that one might achieve one of these aims without achieving the other;

one might hit the target even though one is unskilled, and a strong and unexpected gust of wind might prevent even the most skilled archer from hitting the target.

It was agreed that virtues are skills of this sort. And that raises the question, Has one acted virtuously if one has achieved the objective but not the end of one's action, or must one achieve both? Suppose I am a courageous person; I have acquired the virtue of courage. And suppose that I am now confronted by an intruder about to attack my father. I courageously try to protect my father from this impending attack. Have I performed a courageous act, and thus in this respect lived my life well, even if I fail in my endeavor, or does acting courageously, and thus in this respect living well, require success?

The Stoics said that I have performed a courageous act, and thus in this respect lived my life well, even if I fail in my endeavor; the Peripatetics said that I have performed an act of courage, and thus in this respect lived my life well, only if I succeed in fending off the intruder. Thus it was that the Stoics held that the fully wise person is never hostage to fortune whereas the Peripatetics said that sometimes he is. Everybody agreed that virtuous activity is both necessary and sufficient for happiness, that is, for living well; they *disagreed* over what counts as virtuous activity. And this disagreement had the consequence that whereas the Stoics held that virtue itself was not only necessary but sufficient for virtuous activity, and hence for living one's life well, the Peripatetics held that virtue was necessary but not sufficient for virtuous activity, and hence not sufficient for living one's life well. Fortune had to smile on one.

There was a second way in which the Peripatetics regarded virtuous activity, and thus happiness, as vulnerable. Though the person living in straitened circumstances can act virtuously rather than viciously, his virtuous activity is necessarily of a pinched and deficient sort. As

Aristotle puts it: “[happiness] needs the external goods . . . ; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment” (*Nicomachean Ethics* I, 8; 1099a 31).

We are ready to ask our question. The conception of the good life that eudaimonism employs is that of the good life as the well-lived life. Is that conception of the good life adequate for an account of rights? It is not; far from it. The eudaimonist holds that what contributes to making one’s life a good life consists exclusively of actions on one’s part. Recall Annas’s comment: “Happiness is . . . thought of as active rather than passive, and as something that involves the agent’s activity.” By contrast, none of the goods to which one has a right are actions on one’s part; each of them is, instead, the good of being treated a certain way by one’s fellows. The goods to which one has a right are *ways of being done unto* rather than *ways of doing*.

That the goods to which one has a right all have this structure is somewhat concealed by the fact that we often refer to liberty rights as the right to do something—for example, “I have a right to walk on the New Haven Green.” And this makes it appear that, in such cases, the good to which one has a right is the good of doing something. Now in saying that one has a right to walk on the New Haven Green, one might mean that one is *permitted* to walk on the New Haven Green. But rights, as I and everybody else understand them, are legitimate claims rather than permissions. And if it is a legitimate claim that one is asserting in saying that one has a right to walk on the New Haven Green, then it is the claim *to be free* to walk on the New Haven Green. And to be free to walk on the New Haven Green is to be treated a certain way by one’s fellows; I am free to walk on the New Haven Green when no one hinders my doing so.

The ancient eudaimonists did not develop an account of rights. That was not accidental. Several features of their way of thinking made it impossible for them to do so, among the most

important of them being the one we have just noticed: none of the goods to which we have rights is an activity that contributes to living one's life well.

The main reason I went beyond an explanation of the eudaimonist conception of the good life to a description of how they employed this distinction in their comprehensive ethical framework is to draw attention to the fact that the ancient eudaimonists worked with a scheme of what one might call "values" in addition to, and distinct from, those activities that make one's life well-lived. As I mentioned, the Stoics called these values "indifferents," so as to distinguish them from the genuine goods and evils of activities that determine how well one's life is lived. What I also mentioned is that, for each of us, some of these indifferents are what the Stoics called "preferables" and what the Aristotelians called "natural goods."

An obvious question to consider, then, is whether perhaps the goods to which we have rights appear among the Stoic preferables (the Aristotelian natural goods). Though they don't appear among the Stoic goods, do they perhaps appear among the preferables? The answer is that some of them surely do. But whether all of them appear there is impossible to say, since the eudaimonists never gave a clear account of what it is for something to be preferable.

The alcoholic chooses Bourbon over water; is Bourbon on that account preferable to water in the structure of his preferables? I assume the eudaimonists would say that it is not; but if not, then actual preferences do not determine preferables. So what does determine whether something is a preferable? This is exactly the problem that has forever haunted utilitarianism: actual preferences and actual desires cannot be determinative of the good life, since preferences and desires are often disordered. This point has forced utilitarians to go into counterfactual mode and to suggest that what is determinative of life-goods is what a person *would* prefer or desire if

certain conditions were satisfied. No one has ever managed to spell out those conditions in a satisfactory way.

IV

I have called attention to two very different conceptions of the good life—the good life as the experientially satisfying life, and the good life as the happy, or well-lived, life. I mentioned that the former conception is the conception that the modern utilitarian tradition works with. Different utilitarians work with the conception in quite different ways; I did not take time on this occasion to look at any of those different ways. The latter conception is the conception that eudaimonism works with. I not only explained the conception, but also took the time to look at how the ancient eudaimonists worked with it. With respect to both conceptions, I argued that the conception is not adequate for an account of rights, since there are life-goods to which we have rights that do not appear as life-goods on either of these two conceptions of the good life. Throughout my discussion I have assumed that only if a conception of the good life is adequate for an account of rights is it an acceptable conception.

My positive proposal is that the good life be conceived as the life *that goes well*—it being understood that going well includes being lived well. So as to have convenient terminology, let me refer to the life that goes well as the *flourishing* life.

I am not aware that the conception of the good life as the life that goes well has ever been articulated in the way that the other two conceptions have been. But whenever an account of rights has been developed, it will have been this conception that was implicitly being employed. (Unless, most implausibly, the account held that the only goods to which we have rights are goods that enter into our experience.) And it is this account of the good life that is presupposed in Christian Scripture. One of the indicators of this latter fact is the laments in Scripture. Some of

the biblical laments are lamentations over the fact that the speaker has not acted “virtuously”—Psalm 51, for example. But most of the biblical laments are lamentations over the fact that the speaker’s life is not going well, Job being the paradigmatic example.

V

I see Augustine as having played a pivotal role in breaking the grip of eudaimonism on Western thought in general, and on Christian thought in particular. His break, as I see it, came in two stages, focused on two distinct aspects of ancient eudaimonism.

Augustine broke first with the agent-orientation of eudaimonism—that is, with the insistence that the fundamental question each of us should be asking ourselves is, How can I live my life well? As I read the Augustinian texts—especially Book I of *On Christian Doctrine*—it was Augustine’s absorbing the force of Jesus’ second love command that was decisive in causing the break.

In the Stoic universe, the only thing worthy of love is oneself—or more precisely, one’s own virtue; and correspondingly, the only thing worthy of regret is one’s own failures in virtuous activity. That is not how the Stoics themselves stated their position; they did not think in terms of love, and they said very little about how the person who wants to be fully wise and virtuous should regard himself if he has not yet attained that goal. But armed with the Augustinian categories of love and regret, this is surely the right way to describe the Stoic position.

But from Christ we have this astonishing injunction: As one loves oneself, so also one is to love one’s neighbor. One is to love one’s neighbor along with loving oneself, which one already does. The fact that some prospective action contributes to the well-being of the neighbor is sufficient reason for performing that action (other things being equal); it is not the case that

one has sufficient reason for enhancing the well-being of the neighbor only if doing so enhances one's own well-being.

Augustine's rejection of the agent-orientation of eudaimonism led him to the correlative rejection of the eudaimonists' prohibition of empathy; we are to allow ourselves to rejoice and to grieve over the religious and moral condition of our fellows:

Let all who are truly my brothers love in me what they know from your teaching to be worthy of their love, and let them sorrow to find in me what they know from your teaching to be occasion for remorse. . . . [M]y true brothers are those who rejoice for me in their hearts when they find good in me and grieve for me when they find sin. They are my true brothers because whether they see good in me or evil, they love me still. To such as these I shall reveal what I am. Let them breathe a sigh of joy for what is good in me and a sigh of grief for what is bad. The good I do is done by you and by your grace: the evil is my fault; it is the punishment you send me. Let my brothers draw their breath in joy for the one and sigh with grief for the other. Let hymns of thanksgiving and cries of sorrow rise together from their hearts. (*Confessions X*, 4)

Empathetic joy over the moral and religious excellence of one's fellow human beings and empathetic grief over their turpitude is what Augustine is urging. The ancient eudaimonists would have found such advice mad.

But notice that though in these passages Augustine has broken with the agent-orientation of ancient eudaimonism, he has not broken with its conception of the good life as the life that is lived well. We rejoice and grieve over the moral and religious condition of our fellows—over the state of their *souls*, as Augustine often put it. And that is to rejoice and grieve over how they are living their lives.

By the time of *City of God*, the break was complete; now Augustine was no longer thinking of the good life as the well-lived life but implicitly taking it to be the life that goes well.

We do not “so much ask whether a pious soul is angry,” says Augustine,

as why he is angry; not whether he is sad, but whence comes his sadness; not whether he is afraid, but what he fears. For I do not think that any right-minded person would condemn anger directed at a sinner in order to correct him; or sadness on behalf of one who is afflicted, in order to comfort him; or fear for one in peril, lest he perish. The Stoics, indeed, are wont to reproach even compassion. But . . . what is compassion but a kind of fellow feeling in our hearts for the misery of another which compels us to help him if we can? This impulse is the servant of right reason when compassion is displayed in such a way as to preserve righteousness, as when alms are distributed to the needy or forgiveness extended to the penitent. (*City of God* IX, 5)

The reader who comes to this passage fresh from Augustine’s writings of the late 390s—*Of True Religion*, *The Confessions*, Books I–III of *On Christian Doctrine*—will not be surprised to find Augustine speaking well of anger “directed at a sinner”; he will be surprised, however, to find him praising sadness “on behalf of one who is afflicted” and fear “for one in peril.” So too, he will not be surprised to find him saying, in another place in *City of God*, that those who love God will “feel pain for their [own] sins and gladness in their [own] good works” and will have the same feelings “on behalf of those whom they desire to see redeemed and fear to see perish” (*City of God* XIV, 9). Nor will he be surprised to find him saying that persons “will take care to ensure that his neighbor also loves God” (*City of God* XIV, 14). But he *will* be surprised to find him saying, with no hint of disapproval, that we are “anxious lest [our friends] be afflicted by

famine, war, pestilence, or captivity, fearing that in slavery they may suffer evils beyond what we can conceive” (*City of God* XIX, 8).

Clearly Augustine was no longer of the view that we are to love only the souls of our neighbors and be concerned only for their religious and moral well-being—only for their virtue. The point is made even more emphatically in the following passage:

The more friends we have, and the more places we have them in, the further and more widely do we fear that some evil may befall them out of all the mass of the evils of this world. . . . And when such things do happen (and the more numerous our friends the more often they happen) and the fact is brought to our knowledge, who, save one who has experienced the same thing, can understand the burning sorrow which then afflicts our hearts? Indeed, we would rather hear that our friends were dead; although this also we could not hear without pain: for if their life delighted us with the solace of friendship, how could it be that their death should not bring us grief? Anyone who forbids such grief must forbid, if he can, all friendly conversation: he must prohibit or extinguish affection; he must with ruthless disregard sever the ties of all human companionship, or else stipulate that such companionship must merely be made use of, without giving rise to any delight of soul. But if this can in no way be done, how can the death of one whose life has been sweet to us not bring us bitterness? For this is why the grief of a heart which is not inhuman is like a kind of wound or ulcer, healed by the application to it of our loving words of consolation. And though healing takes place all the more quickly and easily when the soul is well-conditioned, we must not suppose that there is nothing at all to heal in such a case (*City of God* XIX, 8).

The goal of the Stoic was to shape and reshape his judgments concerning what is truly good and what is truly evil so that, eventually, he has become emotionally invulnerable to the slings and arrows of misfortune. The only true good is living one's life well, living it virtuously; and since it is possible to live one's life well no matter what one's circumstances, there is nothing to get upset about even though one might prefer that one's circumstances be different. The Peripatetics were different. Straitened circumstances constrict the scope of virtuous action; likewise whether one is successful in the exercise of virtue is often dependent on circumstances. Either way, though, if one has become truly virtuous, then the only source of regret left for one is that circumstances have hindered one's virtuous activity.

Augustine has vastly expanded the scope of vulnerability, and hence of regret and lament. Whether or not it affects one's virtue, one regrets and laments the afflictions that befall one and cries out to God for deliverance. Likewise whether or not it affects the virtue of one's neighbor, one regrets and laments the afflictions that befall her and cries out to God for her deliverance. I do not have to argue that in moving away from eudaimonism in the way that he did, radically expanding the scope of our vulnerability, Augustine has moved himself into conformity with Scripture.

VI

Let me tip my hand. Shalom is flourishing. That is to say, shalom, as understood by the writers of the Old Testament, is not the life that is lived well, and is certainly not the life that is experientially satisfying; it is the life that goes well.

What has to be added at once is that the concept of shalom is not identical with the concept of the life that goes well. The concept of shalom is a distinct understanding of the contents of such a life; there are ways of understanding the content of the life that goes well that

would not count as shalom. It is open to a secularist to employ the conception of the good life as the life that goes well; but his understanding of the content of such a life will be profoundly different from that which the Old Testament writers had in mind when they spoke of shalom. They would say that one's life does not go well—does not constitute shalom—if it does not incorporate being rightly related to God.

It would be appropriate here to expand on this point and articulate the shalom-understanding of the life that goes well—the shalom-understanding of the flourishing life. I will content myself with making just one point on the topic, a point that is easily overlooked.

Suppose that I have a right to walk on the New Haven Green—that is, a right to walk on the Green free of hindrance, threat, and so forth. And now suppose that, on a certain day, it would be a good thing in my life for me to walk on the Green unmolested and that I am in fact doing so—I am walking on the Green unmolested. There are then two-life goods that I am enjoying simultaneously: the life-good of walking on the Green unmolested, and the life-good of enjoying my right to walk on the Green unmolested.

I have specified that walking on the Green unmolested on this particular day is a good in my life. But enjoying my right to do so is also a good in my life; indeed, enjoying one's right to the good of being treated a certain way by one's fellows is always a good in one's life. And that these two life-goods—walking on the Green unmolested, and enjoying one's right to do so—are distinct can be seen by noticing that walking on the Green unmolested might be a good in one's life even though one did not have a right to do so; only some of the ways of being treated by one's fellows that would be a good in one's life are ways of being treated that one has a right to. Perhaps the New Haven police have issued a legitimate order forbidding people to walk on the

Green for a week; perhaps grass is being seeded, or whatever. Then, even though walking on the Green unmolested would be a fine thing in my life, I would not have a right to do so.

In short, when one is being treated by one's fellows as one has a right to be treated, then one's life is going well in two respects: it is going well with respect to how one is being treated, and it is going well with respect to the honoring of one's right to be so treated. Perhaps the point is more easily seen when we look at the situation from the dark side. Suppose that it would be a good thing in my life to walk on the Green unmolested today and that I also have a right to do so; and now suppose that when I try to do so, I am forcefully prevented from doing so. Then there are two respects in which my life has not gone well. I have been deprived of the good of walking on the Green unmolested, and I have been wronged.

I do not have to argue to the members of this consultation that shalom is fully present among human beings, and between God and human beings, only when there is no injustice in those relationships. Shalom, in that way, incorporates justice. Justice in our relationships by no means exhausts shalom; shalom is more than justice. But justice is, as it were, the ground floor of shalom. And justice in our social relationships, so I have been assuming all along, is constituted of enjoying our rights.

The conclusion I wanted to reach is now right before us. To think of flourishing—the life that goes well—as shalom is to think of it in a highly distinctive way. One aspect of that distinctiveness, only one, is that which I have just now brought to light. Part of what contributes to the excellence of the well-lived life, on the shalom-understanding thereof, is those life-goods that consist of enjoying one's rights—of not being wronged.

This particular, highly distinctive, way of understanding the well-lived life has no name in the philosophical literature. But if I am right, this is the understanding that is implicit

throughout Christian Scripture. This is the understanding implied by what Scripture says about salvation, by what it says about love, by what it says about the relation between love and justice, and much more besides.

And here I call it off, without having said a word about the relation of God's power to human flourishing understood as shalom.