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AUTHOR MEETS CRITICS

What Is the Power of Humility?

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Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's *City of God*

By Mary M. Keys. Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 350. $99.99

Mary Keys's book is a major contribution to the literature on Augustine's *City of God*. It is surprising that there had been no book-length, comprehensive treatment of the role of pride and humility in *The City of God*, especially since the original sin of pride is so crucial for understanding Augustine's view of human nature and of the political dimension of human life. But now we do have such a study, and it is definitive.

Keys takes us through Augustine's massive work, book by book, showing its "clear ordering and unified argument." She makes a compelling case for the claim that pride and humility constitute the thread of Augustine's argument, his "rhetorical dialectic," intended both to defend Christianity from its pagan detractors and to set forth an account of the history of human association.

Keys's writing is exceptionally clear: she keeps the thread of the argument before the reader at every turn, even through Augustine's digressions, making the shifts in his topics intelligible. And she does not shy away from discussing the parts of Augustine's work that are, by contemporary standards, controversial and difficult to defend. With respect to the secondary literature, she is meticulously fair in rendering the views of those with whom she disagrees, and she is moderate in her criticisms. All these features of her writing make her book a pleasure to read. In what she set out to do, she has succeeded admirably.

Keys claims that for Augustine, humility, contrary to common perceptions, is actually "a form of and path to greatness" and "the exalted character of a virtuous form of lowliness."[1] In humility there is something that exalts the mind by making it subject to God.[2] Humility and classical magnanimity are not incompatible and at odds with each other in the character of the humble person. The exemplar of humility, Jesus Christ, the humble God, is not small-souled but divine and therefore truly great.[3] Therefore, we are entitled to speak of a "magnanimous humility."[4]

Keys shows that vicious pride creates "an unbridgeable gap between the few and the many,"[5] while "true worship unites elites and commoners, learned and unlearned in genuine community."[6] True religious humility "understands that we are brought to righteousness and salvation, not as elite individuals, whether philosophers or kings, but as members of a single body who need one another, the greatest as much as the least."[7] Augustine says that "pride hates a fellowship of equality under God, and wishes to impose its own dominion upon equals, in place of God's rule."[8] In political terms, pride manifests itself as the "lust for mastery" and domination over others. The final cause of pride is inordinate desire for power.[9]

Keys argues that the quality of magnanimous humility is the only thing that can make the love of equality possible. The individual who is humble and great-souled accepts his fellows as equals in spite of natural differences and inequalities. She claims that "the mystery of divine humility [is] the sole effective antidote to the dominion of political-religious pride."[10] And she argues that Augustine was able "to mediate between 'elite' philosophic perspectives, on one hand, and common, civic and religious thought and sentiment on the other. In this regard, he has hope to offer our contemporary age as well, as rifts between elites and 'ordinary' persons seem to be widening."[11]

In her conclusion, Keys raises the question of why the defense of humility matters. Pride and humility struggle for ascendency in all human beings, and so Augustine calls for an ongoing personal struggle within each person. However, humility is also "inherently civic," the "signature trait of the citizens of the heavenly city—the

city of God—in whatever land they may find themselves, not a quality of existentially isolated individuals."[12]

She addresses the two most prominent manifestations of pride that Augustine discusses: the political form of pride in rulers and the form of pride to which philosophers are susceptible. Augustine's teaching matters to us today because these same two forms are always with us. "Those who are leaders in the political sphere, meant to foster peace and justice, must perseveringly resist the desire to dominate" and those in the philosophic realm "while remaining true to its mission of truth-seeking, should not ignore the pre- or non-philosophic majority of humanity, but rather should emphasize what we share and seek to communicate truth to all who will listen."[13] In our own day, these forms of pride seem to have reached an intensity that threatens to tear our culture apart. Keys says that "in our world, wounded by war, oppression, prejudice, and pandemic—and pulled apart by political polarization and a scholarly culture of 'canceling' rather than engaging—Augustine's humility holds out hope for rapprochement and peace, for listening, for understanding, and for an honest response in open dialogue, even when we cannot agree."[14]

My response to Keys's book is not to disagree with her interpretation of Augustine's discussion of pride and humility but rather to elicit a more complete account of why humility matters. What are the implications of her work for our understanding of Augustine's political philosophy and its relevance to our own political situation?

First, is there a place for the standard of the common good in the earthly city? Michael Oakeshott places Augustine first in the line of political philosophers who belong to "the great sceptical tradition," a line that includes Hobbes and Pascal, among others.[15] The scepticism here refers to the view that no form of political association can secure the human good. Behind this scepticism is the assumption that human nature is flawed or fallen: the original sin is pride and no one is free from original sin. In the sceptical tradition of political philosophy, the only good that the political association can actually secure is peace. This is true, for example, for both Hobbes and Pascal. Augustine praises the Romans for

imposing peace, but he also says that Rome was never a commonwealth because there was no true justice.[16]

I am referring to the common good as it is understood by Aristotle—that is, a good that can be pursued only in common and thereby constitutes a genuine moral community. According to Keys, Augustine posits a connection "between love of a common good and humility."[17] But "this humble love for a common good that is God comprises the analogically political virtue par excellence of the citizens of the heavenly city."[18] So it seems that a community constituted by the common good is possible only in the heavenly city. As Pascal insists, the common good is nothing more than a false image of charity.[19]

Augustine claims that by nature, no man is a slave to another, and therefore no form of domination is justified: "not man over man, but man over beasts."[20] And in his *Confessions*, he addresses himself to God: "You who alone reign without pride, because you alone are the true Lord who have no Lord."[21] Only God rules without pride. "St. Augustine had taught that all government on earth, all power of man over man is a consequence of original sin; without the injustice of the original sin, which had destroyed the natural peace and equality among men, there would be no need for . . . the counter-injustice of human power on earth."[22] No form of political rule can be fully justified.

If there is no possibility of the common good, however imperfectly achieved, then, it would seem, political association could be understood only in terms of the inevitable conflict between weak and strong. How, then, would an Augustinian account of humility be defended against Machiavelli's charge that Christian humility has put the weak at the mercy of the strong? In the chapter of his *Discourses* on how the Romans defended their freedom, Machiavelli writes:

> Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative more than active men. It has placed the highest good in humility, abjectness, and contempt of things human; the other placed it in greatness of spirit, strength of body, and all other things capable of making men very strong. And if our religion asks that you have strength in yourself, it wishes

> you to be capable more of suffering than of doing something strong. This mode of life thus seems to have rendered the world weak and given it in prey to criminal men, who can manage it securely, seeing that the collectivity of men, so as to go to paradise, think more of enduring their beatings than of avenging them.[23]

Does humility, even understood as magnanimous humility, require the greatest possible suppression of the spirited part of the soul? Does the elevation of humility to the highest rank of virtue put the weak at the mercy of the strong? Augustine asks, "[W]hat difference does it make under what rule a man lives provided he is not compelled to do what is impious and wicked?"[24] But what happens when the Christian is compelled to do what is impious and wicked? Is there a place for a specifically Christian courage in magnanimous humility?

Finally, what is the role of the visible Church in the conflict between weak and strong? The two cities are necessarily in tension with each other in this world. How must the Church defend the most vulnerable among us, for example, the unborn and the elderly? Augustine says that the earthly city desires an earthly peace. The heavenly city, or at least that part of it that is a pilgrim on earth, "lives like a captive and a pilgrim," obeying the laws of the earthly city and making use of this earthly peace. But it must dissent from the laws of the earthly city when there is moral conflict.[25] How must the Church defend its authority over the consciences of its members in the face of the evils of human pride?

Keys concludes her book with an expression of hope that political and philosophical elites will find a way to end the "cancel culture" that is tearing us apart. The widening gap and increasing hostility between elites and the common people whom they despise point to the failure of modern political philosophy—with its subjection of religion to the state—to come to terms with the divisive effects of pride. Keys shows us that Augustine's unblinking vision of the destructive power of human pride makes his political philosophy essential for the Christian seeking to understand the human condition in the modern world. But what is the power of humility?

Pacific Dialogue or Agonistic Contestation? On Augustine's Ethos of Scholarly Engagement

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Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's *City of God*

By Mary M. Keys. Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 350. $99.99

Pride, Politics, and Humility is a gripping, accomplished book that unpacks the canonical defense of Christian humility, in Augustine's *City of God*, with insight and devotion. In a series of careful readings, Keys uses the critique of pride as a lens through which to decipher Augustine's imposing masterwork. Surveying the book in its entirety, Keys reaches conclusions that may surprise contemporary readers. The humility that Augustine defends as virtuous is emphatically theistic, predicted on the inadequacy of unaided human reason, which must be completed by divine grace. Yet Augustinian humility does not conduce to quietism or passivity. Rather, humility underwrites a vision of collaborative agency that allows humans to achieve a kind of magnanimity. On Keys's interpretation, Augustine aspires to a utopian model of human community—free of domination, oppression, and fear—founded on humble "participation in God's being, wisdom, and love."[26] Thus, humility emerges as a political (as well as a moral) concern, because, in Augustine's view, "real *res publica*" is possible only once humans reject proud delusions of self-sufficiency.[27]

Keys not only challenges received conceptions of Christian virtue but also pushes readers preoccupied with flashier topics (e.g., contract, sovereignty, democracy, pluralism) to take humility

seriously as a matter for political theory. As Keys acknowledges, humility is a demure or retiring virtue, "naturally at home with namelessness, in the sense of passing unnoticed at the service of higher goods."[28] Yet humility's reticence should not detract from its theoretical significance. In recent years, political theorists have increasingly challenged high modern denunciations of humility as a relic of benighted superstition and ruse of domination.[29] This rise in "humility studies" dovetails with and reflects the post-secular turn in political theory, which challenged secularism's vaunted neutrality, exposing the controversial conceptions of subjectivity and religiosity that undergird secular political orders. With the relaxation of liberal norms surrounding public religious expression, values such as humility—once dismissed as irrelevant to or even subversive of politics—were also subject to reevaluation. Unlike other works constituting this mini movement, which trace humility's counterintuitive career as a secular virtue, *Pride, Politics, and Humility* returns us to humility's classical Christian justification. Yet Keys shares the scholarly conviction that zeroing in on humility will yield rich theoretical dividends. In *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, Keys vindicates the methodological premise that the study of humility—a virtue that encapsulates an entire worldview—provides a fresh angle of approach to foundational political questions.

Pride, Politics, and Humility is not merely a study of humility's historical origins in Christian theology—it is in many respects a Christian book. The argument for humility that Keys meticulously reconstructs is neither neutral nor ecumenical. As Keys forthrightly acknowledges, "Augustine's account of virtuous humility and vicious pride as its foil is thus theistic and specifically Christian."[30] For Christians who conclude that Augustine's encomium to humility is "true," reading Keys's book provides occasion to "rejoice."[31] Yet not all of her readers believe that "the Son of God accepted a humanity like ours and died to save us."[32] What can *Pride, Politics, and Humility* teach those of us who are not Christian and reject the veracity of Augustine's theological claims?

On this score, Keys is appropriately modest. Alert to the historical and confessional divides that loom between Augustine and

ourselves, Keys resists the temptation to make grandiose promises of contemporary relevance. Keys does, however, present Augustine's rhetorical dialectic as a salutary corrective to political polarization and attendant phenomena, such as cancel culture.[33] "Augustine's defense of virtuous humility and prosecution of vicious pride offer an example of a scholarly discourse during a troubled time that endeavors to bridge religious, intellectual, and cultural divides."[34] For Keys, the way that Augustine goes about persuading readers of humility's virtues is as important as the substance of the virtue itself. Perhaps because I am not Christian, I remain unconvinced that Augustinian rhetoric "holds out hope for rapprochement and peace, for listening, for understanding"—or that rapprochement and peace are the proper ends of public, scholarly debate.[35] In an ironic twist, however, my very skepticism indicates a different approach to evaluating the contemporary resonance of Augustine's brief for humility. For non-Christians, I want to suggest, Augustinian rhetoric serves an exemplary function precisely because it dispenses with liberal values of consensus and conciliation.

In Keys's interpretation, Augustine practices humility when he appeals to diverse constituencies—many of them pagan—using reasons they are likely to accept. In this vein, Keys showcases the depth and sophistication of Augustine's engagement with pagan philosophy. The judgment that philosophy is proud—because committed to human self-sufficiency—does not prevent Augustine from taking up pagan arguments. Rather, Augustine meets pagans where they are, acknowledging their approximation to virtue, in an effort to convince them to accept Christianity. Unlike contemporary partisans, who demonize their opponents, Augustine proves willing to entertain and evaluate dissenting arguments. Indeed, Augustine bases the defense of humility on affirmation of shared values—love of wisdom, rational inquiry—in hopes that pagans will realize that these values, rightfully construed, culminate in conversion to Christianity.

It is easy to see why Keys admires Augustine, praising him as a paradigm for respectful scholarly engagement. Augustine takes his interlocutors' claims seriously, rather than dismissing them in

peremptory fashion. Yet Augustine's ethos of engagement may seem less inviting to non-Christians, who are condemned as proud unless they acquiesce to a controversial set of metaphysical propositions (e.g., miracles, grace, incarnation, bodily resurrection). According to Augustine, "an *a priori* rejection of Christianity is not truly philosophic, a mark of love of wisdom; it is rather foolish, perhaps prideful."[36] For non-Christians, however, it is Augustine's rhetorical dialectic—which requires a rationally unjustified leap of faith—that appears unphilosophical. Keys groups Augustine's arguments for humility under three headings: "epistemological, moral, and exemplary/theological."[37] At key moments in the argument, it seems that exemplary/theological reasons—which, for a non-Christian, bear no necessary relation to epistemological and moral reasons—are doing more of the heavy lifting than Keys allows. To take one example: Keys links Augustinian humility to a keen appreciation for "the *wonder* of the ordinary."[38] Once we grasp the wondrousness of the everyday, Keys implies, we will be forced to entertain the possibility of actual wonders, in the form of biblical miracles. Yet if the ordinary is so wonderful, why do we need extraordinary miracles and supernatural revelation? Couldn't appreciation for the wondrousness of the ordinary lead to deeper immersion in the immanent plane, to the exclusion of transcendence (e.g., Spinoza)? One can acknowledge human finitude and limits to human reason (moral and epistemological reasons) without "regarding as credible Christ's bodily Resurrection, Ascension, and promise of the resurrection of the body of all humans."[39] Yet Augustine interprets reluctance to accept these propositions as evidence of "philosophic or political pride."[40] The telos of Augustinian humility is established in advance, with the result that no matter how closely Augustine scrutinizes the claims of pagan philosophy, he will inevitably conclude that philosophers lack genuine virtue.

Convinced of the truth of Augustine's arguments, the Christian reader comes away with a consoling vision of eternal peace in the one true republic. Non-Christian readers, by contrast, are liable to experience Augustine's style of argument as agonistic. Granted, it is

incurious, even unphilosophical, to reject revelation outright, prior to inquiry. Yet why are readers who reject revelation's claims after rational reflection taxed with a moral failing? The moral indictment that suffuses the brief for humility risks limiting the scope of Augustinian "interfaith dialogue." Keys's commitment to such dialogue is admirable—but she is unduly sanguine about Augustine's potential contribution. To recuperate Augustine as a paradigm for dialogue, Keys offers an overly charitable reading of the anti-Judaism that suffuses *City of God*. Keys glosses Augustine's accusations against the Jews as incidental, a historical relic that contradicts the fundamental tendencies of his thought. "If Augustine were able to read his work today," Keys writes, "after the tragic era of pogroms and the Shoah, given his sensitivity to wrongful suffering and his emphasis on genuine dialogue, one hopes and suspects that he would revisit these aspects of his views and prose, recognize his errors, and reform his writing."[41] Yet the problem is not merely the "arrogant key" that Augustine adopts with respect to the Jews, but his supercessionist theology.[42] Establishing conditions of possibility for genuine dialogue would require a theological revolution on the order of Vatican II.[43] Granted, it is anachronistic to expect such a revolution from Augustine. By the same token, however, it is naive to expect that non-Christians will interpret Augustine's rhetorical dialectic as an invitation to reconciliation. Whether atheists or theists, readers who deny the possibility of, say, bodily resurrection may question the genuineness of a dialogue in which "conversion" occurs only in one direction.

In short, I am skeptical that Augustine's mode of argumentation can lead us beyond partisanship, polarization, and cancellation, toward reconciliation. Yet these very doubts provide me with an altogether different way to interpret the contemporary import of Augustine's ethos, centered not on peace but on productive contestation. If Augustine's approach exemplifies the scholarly discourse appropriate to a post-secular age, I would argue, it is precisely because it pushes us to uncouple humility from the "hope for rapprochement and peace" that Keys nourishes.[44] The post-secular commitments that have prompted a rehabilitation of

humility have also led theorists to question the wisdom of placing constraints on public discourse, following protocols of Rawlsian public reason.[45] Admittedly, for atheists wounded by imputations of sinful pride, the encounter with Augustine could illustrate why liberals sought to bracket fundamentals in order to achieve a secular, civil version of peace. However, I want to propose an alternative reading, in which the encounter with Augustine actually reinforces reservations about public reason, reminding us that peace is an illusory political goal (especially when it lacks metaphysical guarantees of divine grace). At a moment when liberal secularism has lost its veneer of obviousness, humility has returned to the theoretical conversation because it challenges liberal models of subjectivity and religiosity, as well as their corresponding norms of metaphysically abstemious public debate. At this juncture, Augustine's rhetorical dialectic points the way toward a mode of engagement that is simultaneously humble and agonistic because it is not afraid to debate metaphysical foundations in public.

Humility, in the sense that I am gesturing toward here, would entail openness to the consequences, both expected and unexpected, of one's sincerely held and assertively defended convictions. Unlike Rawls's liberal citizens, Augustine puts all his metaphysical cards on the table. Given his tendency to criticize dissenters as proud, it is unclear whether Augustine invites or welcomes a strong rebuttal. In practice, however, Augustine exposes himself to fierce rejoinders from pagans who resist his accusations of pride. On my reinterpretation, Augustine's brief for humility is agonistic, rather than pacific, because his metaphysical frankness invites pagans to respond in kind. The ensuing dialogue with philosophy would bear greater resemblance to (non-coerced) medieval disputation than to the circumscribed exchanges of political liberalism (or the eschatological vision of eternal peace). Indeed, the way that Augustine defends humility sits in productive tension with the stated telos of the cultivation of Christian virtue. For readers who admit fundamental controversies surrounding the *summum bonum* or conclude, with Hobbes, that no such thing exists, the vision of the one true republic remains unconvincing—and unappealing—because it is deficiently

political.[46] Yet readers who cannot accept the argument's doctrinal truth can still learn from Augustine. Keys's Augustine imparts crucial lessons about the risks, challenges, and burdens of engagement between partisans who do not hesitate to broadcast their deepest convictions. These lessons in humility are all the more important in the absence of (metaphysical and/or political) guarantees of rapprochement. In this sense, Keys's dialogue with and through Augustine is entirely of the moment. That *Pride, Politics, and Humility* generates a renewed commitment to humility from those who resist its theological foundations is one measure of Keys's immense accomplishment.

The Golden Thread of Humility

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Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's *City of God*

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Augustine's *City of God* has long held a place in the canon of political theory. Nearly always, though, the lion's share of attention goes to Book XIX, with a focus on the ends of the earthly and heavenly cities and whether Rome can be said to be a true *res publica*.[47] It is therefore refreshing to find a political theorist writing on the *City of God* who attends to the full scope of Augustine's expansive argument. Mary Keys does not merely keep the entirety of the *City of God* in view as she writes; she offers a book-by-book commentary, patiently unpacking what she terms Augustine's "rhetorical dialectic" from beginning to end. Others have recognized the virtue of humility and the vice of pride as pivotal for Augustine and for his contrast between the earthly and heavenly cities. Keys notes in particular the recent treatments of humility and pride in political philosophy by Julie Cooper and Christopher Brooke, whose accounts she seeks both to deepen and correct.[48] No one prior to Keys, though, has assumed the burden of tracing the "golden thread of humility" through all the twists and turns of Augustine's argument, showing how it is animating the texture of the discussion even when not explicitly mentioned.

Keys calls this a "humble, heartfelt task," and indeed, she executes it in a winsomely understated and self-effacing way.[49] She acknowledges at the outset that it remains to be seen "how helpful he will be for us," suggesting that we shall "see what in the end we can learn from this journey about humility and pride as they pertain to politics, philosophy, and religion."[50] Readers can be

forgiven for wishing that, writing as a political theorist, she had articulated the contemporary political implications of her argument more forcefully. Keys did not have the opportunity, unfortunately, to make common cause with Michael Lamb's stunning *A Commonwealth of Hope: Augustine's Political Thought* (also published in 2022), with its rich contextual engagement with the full range of Augustine's writings, including notably his sermons and letters, and its deft corrective engagements with Augustinian realists, communitarians, and democratic critics alike.[51] *Pride, Politics, and Humility* does articulate a critique of the standard mode of contemporary political leadership as the pursuit of domination and false divinization, rather than service to the common good.[52] But Keys is more intent on embodying hopeful humility than on issuing prophetic denunciation, and on unpacking Augustine's lessons than reflecting on how they might play out in detail in our own contexts. On her account, Augustine's *City of God* offers, not the stark binaries that animate Cooper's analysis and also characterize much public discourse in our own day, but rather "an example of a scholarly discourse during a troubled time that endeavors to bridge religious, intellectual, and cultural divides."[53] This is an important and much-needed corrective.

Central to this argument is establishing that Augustine, despite his famous rhetoric about glittering pagan vices, does countenance pagan virtues and, in particular, pagan humility. The miseries inflicted by the vice of pride are capable of being grasped apart from revelation, and Augustine places these miseries on display to prepare the ground for pagan appreciation of the corrective power of humility.[54] He locates, too, instances of pagan humility, genuine if imperfect. Keys judges that "Augustine must consider humility to have a foothold or a foundation of some sort in human nature, notwithstanding what he takes to be its fallen condition."[55] Pagan philosophers and politicians are not utterly incapable of humility, even if humility can triumph over pride only through "God's grace, seconded by humans' free response."[56] This final triumph through grace is eschatological; in this life, Christians, too, continue to struggle with pride and have no ground for complacency in their

virtue. Since the struggle against pride is a shared predicament, all, pagan and Christian alike, are fittingly reminded of shared givenness and shared fallenness and are enjoined to "emphasize what we share and seek to communicate truth to all who would listen."[57]

This is all to my mind both important and essentially correct; Augustine has a deeply ambivalent attitude toward pagan virtue, and his general account of its corruption by pride is conjoined with a willingness to praise exemplary pagans and to accentuate the frailty of Christian virtues.[58] If I have a quibble, it is that Keys reads Augustine's thought as tidier than it in fact is. I suspect that Keys may be reading Augustine through Thomistic lenses, in finding in him the equivalent of a doctrine of naturally acquired virtue. There is a second respect in which Keys might be understood as offering a Thomistic reading of Augustine. This is in the insistence that humility goes hand in hand with magnanimity or greatness of soul: "Augustine offers an account of humility understood precisely as a form of and path to greatness, and as itself a tremendous excellence or power."[59] This contrasts sharply with a received view according to which Augustine's concern is to trace what in another context has been termed "the frank and open conflict between the secular body politic and the church, between civic magnanimity and Christian humility."[60] It is indisputable that Augustine indeed regards ultimate human greatness as possible only through being filled by God's glory, and this claim is, as Keys shows, woven into Augustine's defense of Christianity against pagan suspicion of Christian humility. Yet it is Thomas who in the *Summa Theologiae* argues explicitly that magnanimity and humility constitute a "twofold virtue with regard to the difficult good."[61] Humility serves "to temper and restrain the mind, lest it tend to high things immoderately," while magnanimity works "to strengthen the mind against despair, and urge it on to the pursuit of great things according to right reason". [62]

It is surprising that Keys does not engage with J. Warren Smith's recent book *Augustine, Ambrose, and the Pursuit of Greatness*, which reads Augustine fundamentally as offering a critique of the classical ideal of greatness as embodied in the ideal

of the great-souled man.[63] Despite occasional positive references to magnanimity, as in the Exposition of Psalm 112:4, when he writes that the holy ones are the pusillanimous (small-souled) to whom God gives magnanimity (greatness of soul), Smith finds Augustine hesitant with the language of greatness within a normative conception of the Christian life: "there is always a yes, but . . . and one is never sure when he is speaking of greatness positively and when there is a touch of irony."[64] Smith would agree with Keys that Augustine is "redefining *magnus animus* in a way that conjoins love of God and humility," insisting that it is the indwelling of a truly great God that frees Christians from glory-seeking, transforming small-souled people into "great-souled saints."[65] But Smith sits more with Augustine's ambivalence, and we are left to wonder what Keys would say to this.[66]

Even if Augustine remains inconclusive about magnanimity, given the strength of its association with vicious pride, he is unequivocal in his praise of humility and of the ways in which it works to dismantle the persistent human tendency to grasp for independent greatness, thereby opening the way toward the true greatness that comes through dependency and participation. Keys is right to emphasize that Augustinian humility is "ennobling" rather than "humiliating."[67] Augustinian humility is not to be identified with Aristotelian pusillanimity, the smallness of soul that, mired in self-doubt, refuses to venture those things of which a person is actually capable. Augustine did not think in quite these terms; for him, the small-souled are more often the meek that shall inherit the earth, those open to being lifted up by God, not those viciously fixated on their own limitations.[68] We should not look to Augustine for a systematic account of the virtues and vices. But persistent misconstruals of humility make it important to articulate, as Keys does throughout her book, that Augustinian humility is not self-denigration but an openness focused on the good, rather than on whether one is capable of securing this good on one's own.

Can Augustine's *City of God* help to nudge our polarized culture in the direction of humble service to the common good and away from authoritarian demagoguery? Rowan Williams has noted

that religious talk, while it seeks to make claims about ultimate reality and the proper human response to that reality, is constantly "dealing with what supremely resists the urge to finish and close what is being said" and so is under a constant temptation to grasp after power and control.[69] On his account, "religious and theological integrity is possible as and when discourse about God declines the attempt to take God's point of view (i.e., a 'total perspective')."[70] The *City of God* strikes many readers as claiming just the sort of total perspective that Williams critiques, narrating history from God's point of view. It is not when Augustine's rhetorical dialectic is most stunningly on display but when Augustine reminds himself ("behold my life is but a scattering") that he cannot yet grasp the Supreme Good he seeks in his heart's restlessness, and so cannot narrate history from God's point of view, that the generative possibilities of humility—its "golden thread"—most shine forth.[71]

Wondrous Humility: Ennobling through Lowering?

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Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's *City of God*

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Mary Keys's *Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's City of God* is a very fine book. It was pure pleasure to read, and for someone like me with no expertise in Augustine's work it was entirely accessible. From the perspective of a novice, I am not in a position to comment on the accuracy of Keys's interpretation of Augustine. My scholarly interest lies instead in Augustine's understanding of humility and pride from the perspective of contemporary moral and political philosophy. To my mind, Keys has made an exceptionally convincing case for the continued relevance of a number of Augustine's ideas and the richness of his approach, but I do wonder if his conception still requires our lowering as the main means to cultivate humility.

First and foremost, in terms of the continued salience of Augustine work, is his multifaceted conception of humility that goes far beyond the main focus in contemporary moral philosophy on humility as a cognitive and epistemic virtue of self-assessment. Epistemological humility is required because of the radical uncertainty that Augustine identifies in our knowledge of theological, philosophical, and practical matters and because he incorporates Socrates's view that human wisdom acknowledges our ignorance of most important things into his case for humility. But, Keys shows that in Augustine's work this epistemic humility leads to a relational conception that embraces our dependence on others to achieve a

wider knowledge along with the need to trust others because of our lack of self-sufficiency. Our ignorance and dependency grounds a virtuous humility that in turn spurs a love of wisdom, truth, and the common good, "the *political* virtue par excellence of the citizens of the heavenly city."[72] Humility is a civic virtue that informs not only the way we think but also most importantly how we act.

Keys is at pains to emphasize that Augustine's conception of humility and human dignity coexist; virtuous humility does not entail having low self-esteem or underestimating one's worth or abilities. On the contrary, for Augustine, these traits are characteristic of a false humility, one that was evident in the practice of pagan Romans worshiping gods who were lesser or equal to humans. It is beneath human beings to submit to gods they do not wish to imitate. Augustine's commitment to equality among human beings means his conception of humility is distinct from the self-abnegation often attributed to the Christian tradition and provides a far more fruitful pathway for a democratic conception of humility.

Perhaps most surprising from the perspective of the contemporary reader is Augustine's views on the human body. It was a delight to discover that this early Christian saint rejected the Platonic mind–body dichotomy and regarded Platonic philosophers who "disdain the lowly animality of their condition, who wish to dwell free from flesh in the immutable world of forms" as displaying a prideful superiority. Humility entails acceptance of the human condition in its entirety, including its passions and emotions, with gratitude. Virtuous humility is ennobling and "excels at opening human minds and hearts to wonder," and for Augustine there is a great deal that is wonderous in human nature and nonhuman nature.[73] Nothing is intrinsically evil; all things are good and have utility even if it is hidden from us. One can only speculate what the world would be like today if the Christian church had followed Augustine's views on nature and the human body, and Keys reasonably contends in her conclusion that his position still holds positive implications for ecology.

All manner of ills, by contrast, arise from the vice of pride (*superbia*). Pride is the basis of injustice and is displayed in the lust for mastery and domination over others. It is the root of all war and blinds people to its horrors and the wrongfulness of aggression against peaceable neighbors by destroying honesty and glorifying martial prowess. Augustine's powerful critique of Roman imperialism aligns his work with critics of colonialism today. But I question the usefulness of Augustine bringing so many different human behaviors, ranging from the lust for domination, injustice, arrogance, vaingloriousness, vanity, envy, and hypocrisy to idolatry and love of praise, under the single category of pride. It works for Augustine if I understand him correctly because pride is in essence the failure to accept and voluntarily obey God and the teachings of Christ. But does that mean these behaviors are less subcategories of pride and more the consequences that arise from the prideful failure to believe in Christ? Is pride the *cause* of every imaginable ill committed by humans, or is pride every imaginable ill committed by humans? Is cruelty, which Judith Shklar famously placed as the first vice in a direct challenge to the Christian tradition, merely pride in another guise?[74]

And if pride consists in the failure to believe in and obey God, how do nonbelievers possess humility? Augustine is well known for having established the humility–pride antithesis in Christian thought,[75] but Keys argues that in spite of some notable exceptions, Augustine does not succumb to simple binaries such as Christians are humble, pagans are prideful; everyone in the heavenly city is humble and all in the earthly city are gripped by pride. The way we can cultivate humility is by learning to know and love Jesus because it is only Christ who can "heal the pathology of human pride."[76] So, Christians are those who cultivate humility because they have voluntarily accepted Christ even if they might err at times in completely obeying God's commands and following Christ's teachings, while pagan philosophers are guilty of pride as a result of their nonacceptance of Christianity. Nevertheless, Augustine acknowledged that because of their love of wisdom, truth, and learning,

many of them exhibited humility. A lack of belief in Christ need not, therefore, result in the aforementioned horrors.

The humility of these pagan philosophers is, however, imperfect because of their philosophic pride, which resists Christ, and yet those who are citizens of the heavenly city also do not possess perfect humility.[77] So, I assume it is feasible that philosophers like Socrates could have possessed humility with respect to wisdom, justice, and truth in far greater measure than some sinful Christians do. If this is the case, does Augustine's case for humility through belief in Christ become somewhat unstuck? Would we be just as well served avoiding the horrors of the political pride he describes in Books I–V through the cultivation of humility by following the teachings of Socrates? We may not reach the heights of the heavenly city, and I recognize that Augustine would therefore believe we would not be acting in our best interests, but might we still create justice on earth? For is it not possible to reject Christ without assenting to the vice of pride by thinking that that one is superior to other humans?

I am also curious about the implications of Jesus as the exemplar of humility for Augustine's conception of this virtue. Keys maintains that his example shows that the humble are "not small souled or insignificant," since Jesus, the Mediator, was the greatest person ever to have walked the earth.[78] Yet one of the reasons Augustine gives for him exemplifying humility is that God assumed in Jesus a human body and "humbled himself to become our neighbor."[79] To be sure, because human flesh is a gift from God, it is not shameful, but Keys nonetheless writes that Jesus has a "lowly human body and soul."[80] There is thus the inference that God lowered himself by performing this act even though Jesus remained a divine being as God's son. Similarly called humble is Jesus's identification with "the lowest and least-regarding among His 'brethren,'"[81] but is this because he associated with them as equals, given their status as human beings, or because Augustine considers that Jesus actually lowered himself by associating with such wretched creatures that were beneath him and other human beings? Is

humility for Augustine really a matter of lowering oneself if not to the extent of falling into a false humility?

Human beings show humility and overcome pride by freely and willingly participating "in God's being, wisdom, and love."[82] Such participation opens the path toward true peace, fulfillment, and happiness. Yet the form of this participation is not one of coequal partners in a common project. God, as a divine being, is unquestionably superior and expects complete obedience as, for example, Noah showed in building the Ark and filling it with two of every species on His instructions.[83] An important part of humility is recognition of one's dependency on God and His mercy; a belief in one's self-sufficiency is by contrast prideful: "For man has been made," Augustine wrote, "'that it is to his advantage to be subject to God, and harmful to him to act according to his own will *rather than* that of his Creator.'"[84] Obedience is not the same as humility in Keys's reading, and she argues that humility is more fundamental; yet humility appears to require obedience and even complete submission to a higher being. Humility might not be about submitting to other equals or lesser beings, but is it nonetheless still about lowering oneself by giving up one's own will in order to be ennobled?

The same theme is evident when Keys mentions the link between humility and humiliation. Divine humility is further shown to us "in Jesus's voluntarily suffering the death of the body . . . in an unjust, humiliating manner."[85] If humility is evident, however, in the voluntary acceptance of humiliation and injustice, is Augustine's understanding of this virtue not coming dangerously close to an excess of humility? Keys further notes the recurring motif in Book XVIII of the "interplay among exaltation, pride, humiliation, humility in history and the prophets' discourse on the meaning of historical events and trends."[86] It appears to be positive that people have endured "civic division, foreign conquest, captivity, and exile," because it humbles them and prepares them "for exaltation according to truth and true being."[87] Keys views Augustine's message as one of hope, since exaltation is the ultimate end, but does his interpretation of the prophets legitimate the

suffering of these people? Surely, suffering in itself does not "uplift, protect, and ennoble its possessors," which Keys claims is the sign of humility.[88] Again, I wonder if Augustine slips into a false humility by glorifying suffering as a pathway toward exaltation.

David Hume's assessment that humility is a "monkish virtue" that is really no virtue at all is also lent credibility with the view that humility is "an aversion to attention and praise."[89] As noted, nothing for Augustine is evil by nature. Keys explains, for instance, that power is not evil in itself and that God cannot be faulted for giving us power; problems arise only in "'the perverse loving' of power that diminishes the goodness and being of a person who seeks or possesses it."[90] If humility is to love the fullness of being and nothing is evil in itself, then I'm curious to know why humility is evident in an aversion to attention and praise. Could Hume's objection be answered by instead seeing attention and praise only as a problem if someone loves them perversely by neglecting moderation? Surely people justly deserve praise if they have served others well and should graciously accept it? Or would Augustine disagree?

Augustine's virtuous humility is, as Keys openly acknowledges, religious and exclusive to Christians. As we have seen, pagans can display humility, but only to some extent. Keys also recognizes that Augustine, at times, falls into a prideful, arrogant condemnation of Jews.[91] Augustine, like other Christians, does not possess perfect humility. Is, however, the exclusivist position that only Christians can belong to the heavenly city and cultivate divine humility itself paradoxically a display of prideful superiority by Augustine toward non-Christians? I wonder, too, how Augustine's conception of humility relates to his well-known intolerance toward the Christian Donatists. I recognize that might be a topic for another conversation, as the subject of toleration was not on Keys's agenda. I don't doubt, too, that to suggest Augustine's understanding of humility is itself prideful results from my own philosophic pride. I am nonetheless immensely grateful to have had this opportunity to engage with Augustine and Keys on these issues; my understanding of humility has certainly been deepened as Keys promised in her introduction it would be.

Response to Critics

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I am grateful to the editors of *The Political Science Reviewer* for this author-meets-critics symposium on *Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's* City of God. Thanks also to the four accomplished scholars who offered probing considerations and critiques: two are political theorists, Julie Cooper and Vicki Spencer; one a theologian, Jennifer Herdt; and one a philosopher, Ann Hartle. This book was from the first an interdisciplinary project and happily has sparked this dialogue among scholars from diverse fields. Having learned much from their thoughtful remarks, questions, and objections, I will continue to ponder these comments as I move forward with my research and writing.

Pride, Politics, and Humility built on my previous works in the history of political thought, especially its ethical dimensions. My first book, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, compared Thomas Aquinas's thought with Aristotle's and some contemporary political theorists' work on virtue, law, and the common good.[92] At the core of this project were the tensions and connections between personal and public flourishing. One key chapter, which first appeared as a journal article, compared Aristotle and Aquinas on the virtue of magnanimity, arguing that Aquinas's surprising pairing of greatness of soul with humility as twin virtues, or twofold virtue (*duplex virtus*), marked a subtle yet significant revision and deepening of Aristotle's virtue theory.[93] I wondered why, when this combination of traits in what I call Aquinas's humility-informed magnanimity rang true to my ears, some influential modern political theorists viewed humility in a negative light. And I began to question what impact this valuation may have had on their political vision and the world we inherited in part from their projects.

Turning to the history of early modern thought, I was struck by the import of the classical Christian thinker Augustine of Hippo, whose study had made an impression on me even before Aquinas's through a graduate reading course on *The City of God*. Important books on humility and pride in early modern thought by Julie Cooper and Christopher Brooke began their narratives over a millennium prior to modernity's dawn, precisely with Augustine's *City of God* and its defense of humility.[94] While I found much to appreciate in each of these projects, their treatments seemed based chiefly on just one or two of his masterwork's twenty-two books—those dealing with the biblical account of Adam and Eve's fall. Yet Augustine in his prologue frames the entire *City of God* as involving a defense of humility's goodness, even grandeur. It occurred to me that a broader interpretation from beginning to end would spotlight the social, humanistic, and nuanced Augustinian account of humility and serve as a valuable resource for political theorists and scholars in related disciplines.

Against this backdrop, *Pride, Politics, and Humility* represents the recovery and reconsideration of a long argument and intricate defense—what I term a rhetorical dialectic—of the human, social, philosophic, and religious dimensions of humility, as set forth by Augustine in what he calls his "great and arduous" opus.[95] My audience and interlocutors are fellow political theorists and students of political thought, as well as scholars in related fields, including philosophy, religious studies, and intellectual history.

In defending a virtuous form of humility (*humilitas* in Latin), Augustine also explores and critiques humility's nemesis, vicious pride (*superbia*). He begins with arguments appealing to believers and nonbelievers alike in his late Roman world regarding the harm caused by social and civic *superbia* and the inequitable cultural divides promoted or acquiesced in by philosophic pride. Augustine develops his positive case for humility with reference to religion, moderation, metaphysics, history, *res publica*, and peace. My book unpacks this long exploration, considering some of its key moments and insights in a way that enables readers to comprehend and consider them with greater ease.

In this symposium, Ann Hartle offers a generous reading of key aspects of my argument while raising a series of important questions concerning its implications for Augustine's political thought more broadly and for our contemporary civic situation. Here, as with all four critiques, I offer an initial response, aware that a longer reply than limits of time and space permit would be warranted. Hartle's first query concerns the common good, whether it has any place according to Augustine in political life in this world, as contrasted with the heavenly city in its fullness. I think she is correct that, according to Augustine, "a community *constituted* by the common good is only possible in the heavenly city" (emphasis added). Still, a human community united through love of a form of peace that is better and more widely shared than it might be expresses an aspiration to the common good, if imperfectly understood and approximated.[96] Immediately following Augustine's famous query, which Hartle quotes, as to what difference it really makes under whose rule one lives, provided one is not compelled to sin, Augustine goes on to suggest ways in which it *does* matter what sort of regime one is under. These include wide access to citizenship and a sharing of welfare among the public, including the poor—both indicating in my view an attenuated but not illusory common good standard for political life.[97]

Hartle next evokes Machiavelli's critique that Christian humility enfeebles people and leaves the weak prey to the strong, quoting this passage from the *Discourses*: "Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative more than active men. It has placed the highest good in humility, abjectness, and contempt of things human." Hartle asks, if this is true, does Augustinian humility "require the greatest possible suppression of the spirited part of the soul"?

On my reading, *The City of God* does not rank humility—much less abjection and contempt for human things—as the highest good. Augustine in fact distinguishes virtuous humility as raising, not diminishing, human beings. It is charity—love of God and neighbor—that is the highest good in this life, and charity must be practiced in both action and contemplation. It is true that

seeking truth and contemplation takes first place for Augustine when pursued from and for charity. At the same time, he insists that "under the impetus of love we should undertake righteous business." According to Augustine, "No one ought to live a life of leisure in such a way that he takes no thought . . . for the welfare of his neighbour; nor ought he to be so active as to feel no need for the contemplation of God." By the primacy of charity and the preservation of space for contemplation, he reflects, those in leadership positions are helped not to place power and honor in first place among their loves; "rather . . . we should seek to use that same honour or power righteously and beneficially, for the wellbeing of those under us, according to the will of God." [98] The spirited part of the soul (*thumos* in Greek) is subordinated to reason, which is in turn subordinated and directed to God in love; spiritedness is moderated and guided, but not suppressed in contemplation or in action. No doubt it took a considerable amount of spirit to commence and complete Augustine's "great and arduous" *City of God*.[99]

The greatest power of humility, then, by Augustine's account, consists in its indispensable service to charity, and so to other virtues, including justice and compassion, or mercy. Humility assists in moderating spiritedness with a reflective, other-focused disposition regarding God and neighbor. This hidden virtue nourishes a willingness to see and to do what is "good and right," even among persons, deeds, and social spheres "held in low esteem" by the powerful and worldly-wise.[100]

Now I turn to the next symposium scholar critique. Julie Cooper offers a spirited, magnanimous response to my book, which like Hartle's is a model of learning and candor. Cooper calls our attention to the ongoing "mini movement" of "humility studies" in political theory, to which she is an essential contributor and, for my book, a key dialogue partner.[101] In the introduction of *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, I consider what worth Augustine's defense of humility might hold today for readers of other faiths, and no faith, suggesting two possible paths of appreciation: one via a broad sort of "overlapping consensus" with aspects of Augustine's

argument (as seen in Vicki Spencer's response, more to follow), and the other, a sharpening of diverse, even opposing views via engaging with Augustine's arguments. Cooper's reply seems an instance of the latter mode of scholarly relevance, although, as she playfully notes, with "an ironic twist" that negates my book's focus on "consensus and conciliation" in favor of an argumentative approach to democracy: "For non-Christians, I want to suggest, Augustine's rhetoric serves an exemplary function precisely because it dispenses with [those] liberal values," opening up the democratic public space to competing metaphysical and theological views.

This response is a welcome challenge requiring continued reflection. For now, I will briefly address two dimensions of Cooper's critique. The first is her interpretation that on my reading Augustine's political thought is "utopian." Here perhaps greater clarity is called for. On my reading, Augustine's political theory is neither utopian nor ethically neutral nor strictly "realist" in a contemporary sense, as some interpreters have argued. Rather, in Augustine's worldview, ideals of peace and common goods are at play that can and should inspire civic cooperation with a distinctive chord of moderation. Moral evil and sin, together with ignorance and error, and other ordinary and extraordinary challenges of social and civic life will always be with us. Only in the fullness of the heavenly city should people hope for the lasting fullness of justice and peace. The peace of political life here and now rests on a real yet shifting and tenuous cooperation and compromise of wills regarding conceptions of goods, or more specifically, the objects of shared loves that bind peoples together. While the beginnings of the heavenly city's peace can be found in the hearts of some of its citizens and so enter into social relations, directing temporal goods toward their heavenly fulfilment, the perfect peace of that final city is not this-worldly politics' proper goal, such as would make for a utopian civic vision and practice.[102]

Notably, in addition to her founding status within political theory's "humility studies," Cooper is a leading scholar of Jewish political thought, and so the second aspect of her critique I wish to consider briefly is her reflection on Augustine's response to Judaism

and the Jewish People. Here Cooper combines kindness and candor, appreciating the intention of my book's brief treatment of this contentious issue while considering it "overly charitable," even "naive." Cooper stresses that "anti-Judaism . . . suffuses *The City of God*." But I would add that pro-Jewish rhetorical dialectic is also present—arguably at least equally.[103]

It is this tension that I highlight in *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, emphasizing the positive roles played by Jewish persons and the Jewish People throughout Augustine's defense of the heavenly city in Augustine's own selective use of exemplars. I consider Vatican II's "revolution," as Cooper aptly describes it, in Catholicism's theology of the Jewish People and its call to deepened Jewish–Catholic dialogue as a development of Catholic doctrine more deeply expressive of revelation's meaning than previous Church expositions. For this reason, I maintain that were he with us today, Augustine would acknowledge and correct the errors of his work's anti-Jewish aspects. Nonetheless, Cooper's strong reservations on this score remain important to consider carefully, with sustained and respectful attention.

This concern with coupling historically diverse thinkers or theologies takes us nicely from Cooper's response to Jennifer Herdt's. Herdt brings her impressive learning in theology, philosophy, and the history of both disciplines to bear on her critique, suggesting that I may have read Augustine through Aquinas's eyes and framework, making for a neater analysis than might otherwise have emerged. This may in some respects be true, though as she also notes I aimed throughout my book to stay close to Augustine's rhetorical dialectic in *The City of God*, which is clearly much less analytic and synthetic than Aquinas's discourse in the *Summa Theologiae*, and to consider Augustine's complex argument carefully in its own right. I do think that one of my introduction's key tropes, the compatibility of humility and magnanimity, came naturally to me from my previous work on Aquinas—work that gave rise to my ongoing project in the history of humility in political thought, of which *Pride, Politics, and Humility* forms a key part.

J. Warren Smith's wonderful book on magnanimity in classical thought, Ambrose, and Augustine came out when I was finishing my book's manuscript, and I did not discover it until my book was in production.[104] Had I seen it sooner, I would have incorporated it with profit in my discussions of magnanimity. But even now, having read it with care, I don't think Smith's analysis would have changed my essential argument regarding *The City of God*. In its preface, at the outset of Book I, Augustine emphasizes the greatness, the power or excellence of humility (*quanta sit uirtus humilitatis*), and later in Book I he takes up the question of what can rightly (*recte*) be called magnanimity (*animi magnitudo*).[105] He concludes that it is true to a great soul to bear life's trials patiently and courageously, not willingly end one's life seeking to escape them. In this discussion, I doubt there is an ironic dimension to Augustine's argument about true magnanimity, though there may well be such a dimension—here my reading has benefited from Smith's fine analysis—to Augustine's side consideration of faulty ways in which many ancient Romans understand the soul's proper greatness. If my reading is correct, Augustine indicates in his opening book of *The City of God* that those desirous of greatness of soul need not, indeed should not, reject humility's cultivation. Later on, he distinguishes someone who claims not to need to ask others' forgiveness—someone with a puffed-up, empty "greatness"—from someone who is "truly great" and so has the humble love for truth and self-awareness to seek pardon of God and neighbor.[106] This aspect of Augustine's rhetorical dialectic, taking his masterwork into account as a whole, intertwines virtuous humility and virtuous greatness, including what might correctly be called greatness of soul.

Herdt also suggests that my book could have paid more explicit heed to our current political predicaments and Augustine's relevance. This assertion is reasonable, and Herdt simultaneously underscores with care the complementary aspirations of my book: "to embody hopeful humility . . . and unpack Augustine's lessons" as they endeavor to bridge cultural divides during difficult times. Here I would add one observation: Augustine in *The City of God* and elsewhere writes of the Christian religion, Christian emperors,

and Christian times, but not, so far as I can find, of Christian empires or kingdoms. If humility is foundational for Christianity, as Augustine claims, the impact he anticipates in political life seems best channeled through the person and character of the individual philosopher, government official, and citizen, and the impact the faith has on common mores. Augustine encourages believers to look in the mirror, and more deeply into their consciences, to give thanks and ask pardon, and to deliberate honestly and find common cause with fellow citizens of other faiths whenever possible. For Augustine, the true magnanimity, or greatness, of the philosopher and civic leader is rooted in the humble, loving awareness of being a finite, flawed part of the great "fellowship of equality under God," a community that vicious pride disdains to acknowledge and would undermine via indifference or domination.[107]

This brings us to the fourth symposium scholar, Vicki Spencer, whose gracious, probing, witty response appreciates many aspects of Augustine's understanding of humility and its political value, as interpreted in *Pride, Politics, and Humility*. Spencer finds surprising affinities between this early Christian writer's views and her work in democratic theory. She underscores among the positive dimensions of Augustine's account of humility its social, relational, and action-oriented dimensions; its emphasis on the human dignity that virtuous humility enhances rather than diminishes; and its "acceptance of the human condition in its entirety . . . with gratitude"—soul and body, passions and emotions. Spencer also appreciates Augustine's philosophic and theological commitment to the goodness of all being and natures, as well as the ecological potential of his positive portrayal of humility.

At the same time, Spencer raises a number of challenging questions and critiques concerning Augustine's understanding and defense of humility as explicated in my book. Here I highlight and begin to respond to just a few of these, hoping later to continue the conversation, exploration, and debate. Spencer notes that by my account Augustine appears to *equate* vicious pride with numerous other vices, including arrogance, vainglory, indifference, and desire to dominate others. She asks, "Is pride the *cause* of every

imaginable ill . . . or is it every imaginable ill committed by humans?" While, as Jennifer Herdt recalls in her comments, Augustine's virtue-and-vice theory does not evince the systematic clarity of Aquinas, we can conclude that for Augustine pride is the root cause (in the "original sin" of Adam and Eve) of every moral ill but is not itself every moral evil. In other words, diverse vices flow from pride more or less directly, may be intertwined with pride, but are not themselves reducible to pride. Along these lines, Augustine could regard cruelty, causing pain or misery to others for its own sake or to assert their purported insignificance, as an independently identifiable evil characteristic of a human being or voluntary act, yet also rooted in pride (rejection of dependence on God and his love, disdain to live justly as other humans' equal in fellowship under God).

Yet this relationship of pride and cruelty may be related to another ethical-political problem Spencer finds ensconced in Augustine's account of humility: Is there an underlying cruelty (my example, not Spencer's), a form of vicious pride (Spencer's radical query) in Augustine's Christian interpretation of suffering as a path to virtuous humility? As the title of her remarks asks, must we arrive at ennobling through lowering? Is humiliation needed for the human acquisition of humility, as the example of Jesus—of God lowering himself to take on a human nature together with his divine nature—seems to indicate? This is, Augustine would agree, a "most difficult question," to which I'll here merely begin to reply. Augustine's reflections on history and humanity in their current state, marred by sin, violence, and suffering, necessarily pass through the problem of evil. He wonders, with philosophers, saints, and psalmists alike, why God would permit evil and pain, including cruelty and inhumanity, in minor and flagrant manifestations.[108] One possible benefit Augustine sees accruing to some people unjustly harmed or humiliated is a deepening of one's sense of self-worth through recalling one's participation in God's love and being, an ennobling and hope-enhancing form of humility. For those justly rebuked or punished, Augustine highlights a hope for recognition of wrongdoing and repentance that restores right

relationships and a true sense of one's worth and connection to others. In a world absent sin, being humbled by other humans would have no place in humility's appreciation and cultivation; humiliation is not of the essence of Augustine's humility.

Spencer's reservations with Augustine on this score recall Herdt's observation that Augustine's prose is not at its best when it appears—perhaps somewhat pridefully—to interpret history from a divine perspective. In this critique I humbly concur.

Notes

1. Mary M. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's "City of God"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 15.
2. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 161.
3. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 215.
4. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 112.
5. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 13.
6. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 89.
7. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 92.
8. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), XIX.12, 936.
9. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 128.
10. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 196.
11. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 99.
12. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 236.
13. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 237.
14. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 237.
15. Michael Oakeshott, *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Scepticism*, ed. Timothy Fuller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 129.
16. Augustine, *City of God* II.21, 80.
17. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 123.
18. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 125.
19. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Louis Lafuma, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 210.
20. Augustine, *City of God* XIX,15, 943–44.
21. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis, IN, Hackett, 1993), X.xxxvi.
22. Erich Auerbach, "On the Political Theory of Pascal," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 127.

23. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), II.2, 55.
24. Augustine, *City of God* V.17, 217.
25. Augustine, *City of God* XIX.17, 945.
26. Keys, *Pride, Politics and Humility*, 202.
27. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 202.
28. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 109.
29. See Christopher Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), and Julie E. Cooper, *Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
30. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 13.
31. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 15.
32. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 237.
33. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 99, 237.
34. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 6.
35. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 237.
36. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 231.
37. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 215.
38. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 221.
39. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 227.
40. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 227.
41. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 189–90.
42. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 189.
43. And even then, theological declarations could not erase well-founded mistrust stemming from historical legacies of Jewish political subordination. On this point, see Karma Ben-Johanan, *Jacob's Younger Brother: Christian-Jewish Relations after Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022).
44. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 237.
45. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
46. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65.
47. Mary Keys, in refreshing contrast, confines her treatment of this topic to a single page in *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 208.
48. Cooper, *Secular Powers*; Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*.
49. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 2.
50. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 6.
51. Michael Lamb, *A Commonwealth of Hope: Augustine's Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022).

52. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 17, 237.
53. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 6.
54. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*,19.
55. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 19.
56. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 234.
57. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 237.
58. Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 45–56. See also Lamb's rational reconstruction and extension of Augustine's account in *Commonwealth of Hope*, 230–262.
59. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 15.
60. Pierre Manent, *The City of Man*, trans. Marc A. LePain (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 199.
61. Jennifer A. Herdt, "Strengthening Hope for the Greatest Things: Aquinas's Redemption of Magnanimity," in *The Measure of Greatness: Philosophers on Magnanimity*, ed. Sophia Vasalou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 70–85.
62. https://www.cambridge.org/gb/universitypress/subjects/religion/theology/summa-theologiae-complete-paperback-set-60-volumes-plus-one-index-volume?format=WX&isbn=9780521690485
63. J. Warren Smith, *Augustine, Ambrose, and the Pursuit of Greatness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 15.
64. Smith, *Pursuit of Greatness*, 16.
65. Smith, *Pursuit of Greatness*, 236, 235.
66. In another twist, Justin Hawkins has argued that Augustine remains indebted to the Stoics even in his insistence that magnanimity is a gift from God; the Stoics, in contrast to Aristotle, regarded magnanimity as consistent with acknowledging all that one has received from others, and Epictetus explicitly exhorts his hearer to gratitude to the gods for their gift of nobility and greatness of mind. See "Augustine's Pseudo-Stoic Virtue of Magnanimity" (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Denver, November 2022), citing Epictetus, *Discourses* I.12.30–32.
67. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 1.
68. See, e.g., Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms* III.19, 99–120, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), Psalm 112:4, and Hawkins's discussion of the fact that Augustine does not treat smallness of soul (pusillanimity) as a vice.
69. Rowan Williams, "Theological Integrity," *CrossCurrents* 45, no. 3 (1995): 315.

70. Williams, "Theological Integrity," 317.
71. Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xxix.
72. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 123.
73. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 202.
74. Judith N. Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), 8.
75. Jennifer A. Herdt, "Christian Humility, Courtly Civility, and the Code of the Streets," *Modern Theology* 25, no. 4 (2009): 541–61 (551–52).
76. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 30.
77. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 94, 236.
78. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 215.
79. Augustine, *The City of God*, XX.29, 1037, cited in Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 219.
80. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 219.
81. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 219.
82. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 202.
83. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 177.
84. Augustine, *City of God* XIV.12, 607–8, cited in Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 159–160.
85. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 213.
86. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 197.
87. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 197.
88. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 45.
89. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, in David Hume and Geoffrey Saur-McCord, *Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge MA: Hackett, 2006), sec. 9, I, 3; Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 128.
90. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 129.
91. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility*, 187.
92. Mary M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
93. Mary M. Keys, "Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity," *History of Political Thought* 24, no. 1 (2003): 37–65.
94. See Julie E. Cooper, *Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Christopher Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).
95. Augustine, *City of God* I.Preface, 3.
96. Augustine, *City of God* XIX.24, 960.

97. See Augustine, *City of God* V.17, 217–18, discussed in Mary M. Keys and Colleen E. Mitchell, "Augustine's Constitutionalism: Citizenship, Common Good, and Consent," in *Christianity and Constitutionalism*, ed. Nicholas Aroney and I. Leigh (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).
98. Augustine, *City of God* XIX.19, 948–49, elaborated in Colleen E. Mitchell and Mary M. Keys, "Love's Labor Leisured: Augustine on Charity, Contemplation, and Politics," *Pensando il lavoro* 2 , no. 5, ed. Giorgio Faro (EDUSC, 2018): 315–32.
99. Augustine, *City of God* I.Preface, 3.
100. Augustine, *City of God* V.15, 214.
101. Julie E. Cooper, *Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
102. See Augustine, *City of God* XIX.17, 945–47, and V.24, 231–32.
103. On this tension and on the development of Augustine's theology of the Jewish people, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2008).
104. J. Warren Smith, *Ambrose, Augustine, and the Pursuit of Greatness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
105. Augustine, *City of God* I.Preface, 3, and I.22, 34–35; also I.18, 27.
106. Augustine, *City of God* XIX.27, 962–63.
107. Augustine, *City of God* XIV.9, 602; XIX.12, 936.
108. See Augustine, *City of God* XX.1, 966, and 20.27–28, 1033–35; and Mary M. Keys, *Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's City of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 185, 214–15.