

Resources for exploring Augustinian notions of goodness, evil, sin and original sin in relation to human beings and human origins.

Burnell, Peter. *The Augustinian Person*. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2003.

This is an excellent overview of various aspects of Augustine's anthropology noting the contexts, developments, and unresolved questions of his portrait of human existence, nature, and personhood

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1963

See especially chapter 3 "The Christian Conception of Sin" in which Niebuhr argues that humanity is in the condition of original sin not because of a primordial originating sin but because human beings fatally rebel against their own status as creatures by pridefully succumbing to the anxiety occasioned by their simultaneous capacity to apprehend infinite transcendence yet recognition of their own finitude.

The following articles are all available online as .pdf files from the ATLA Religion Database:

Burns, J Patout. "Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16:1 1988, 9-27.

Burns offers a focused and detailed discussion of the nature of evil in Augustine's thought, particularly in terms of what should be properly be understood as "evil", i.e. the moral evil of personal agents.

Duffey, Stephen J. "Genes, Original Sin and the Human Proclivity to Evil." *Horizons* 32:2 2005, 210-234.

Duffey argues that the while the Adamic myth which Augustine historicizes in order to articulate the nature of original sin must be shed, Augustine's fundamental insights into the human condition cannot be, nor can they be reduced to the level of biological reality or causation.

Russell, Robert John. "Entropy and Evil." *Zygon* 19:4 1984, 449-468.

Russell in this article gives an overview of what entropy is as a physical phenomena, offers observations regarding analogies between entropy and Augustinian and Irenaean understandings of evil, and discusses the significance of the "arrow of time" in relation to entropy and these differing (though not incompatible) understandings of evil.

What Social and Natural Scientists Should Know About "Evil"

I. "Evil" as a theological concept, evil as a metaphysical condition

- how does "evil" conceptually map onto reality?

- God and Goodness

"Then someone came to him and said, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.'" Matthew 19:16-17 (NRSV)

"A certain ruler asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.'" Luke 18:18-19 (NRSV)

- God, Goodness and Being

- God and "goods"

 - participatory being, participatory goodness

 - idolatry

 - beatitude and the unification of goods

- Preliminary definition: "Evil is that which is not consonant with the nature and activity of God."

- Augustine and (neo) Platonic thought

 - evil as parasitic on goodness

 - evil as privation

 - lack of physical harmony as "seemingly evil"

 - "natural evil" is not evil as properly understood

 - moral corruption as "evil properly understood"

II. Sin as moral evil

- "sin" as a theological concept

 - distinctions between "sin," "immorality," "crime"

- sin as personal (human, angelic)

- actual sin, originated original sin, and originating original sin

 - pride as self-centeredness

- Augustinian Platonism, anthropology, and the Fall

 - as created by God, human nature is unitary, but dualistic – rational spiritual soul united to and having primacy over a physical body.

 - as created by God, human persons HAD the capacity to sin or not sin

 - under the condition of originated original sin human beings inherit the corruption of Adam's fallen nature and are thus not able not to sin.

 - concupiscence

III. Problems with failing to recognize the evil of natural evil?

- God, order and chaos

- Protological/etioloical and eschatological depictions of universal harmony/shalom

- God and the overcoming of suffering and physical death

IV. Natural evil, moral evil, and the evolution of human beings

- human nature and evolutionary processes?

- concupiscence and evolutionary processes?

- human personhood and evolutionary processes?

- personhood, self-transcendence, sociality, culture, and God

V. Good, Evil, and the Tragic?

“The most general feature of our human condition is its tragic character. The term tragic refers to a situation in which the conditions of well-being require and are interdependent with situations of limitation, frustration, challenge, and suffering. Human condition is not tragic simply because suffering is an aspect of it but because sufferings of various sorts are necessary conditions for creativity, affection, the experience of beauty, etc. [emphases original]” Edward Farley, *Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition*