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# INNOCENCE

Stephen R. Munzer

There are at least five types of innocence. Innocence of various, but not all, types can be possessed, then lost, and later still regained or even surpassed. The most important of these I call “mature innocence,” which is a confirmed state of character, attained reflectively and by an individual’s exercise of effort and agency, that is highly resistant to sin and moral wrongdoing. Mature innocence can be either a secular or a specifically Christian ideal. To surpass mature innocence is to attain a related ideal of purity of heart.

A common view is that innocence, once lost, cannot be regained. Reasons for holding the common view include the brokenness issuing from original sin and one’s own sins, a strong emphasis on the need for divine grace, and a deep skepticism of one’s capacity to change one’s character.

In contrast, I argue that sometimes one can regain or even surpass innocence of at least one type in a significant respect. To regain or surpass innocence of this type, which I style “mature innocence,” requires an individual’s effort and the exercise of agency; it does not result from events and causes alone. My argument begins by isolating different types of innocence and the loss of innocence of these various types. It then investigates two types of innocence that are morally neutral or nearly so. Finally, it discusses mature innocence, which I cash out as a high character-based resistance to sin and moral wrongdoing, and relates it to the notion of purity of heart. Mature innocence can be both a Christian and a secular ideal.

The argument is, I believe, interesting for the following reasons. First, its payoff is the only sound account of what it is to regain or surpass a mature innocence. Second, its broad-ranging approach straddles theology, moral psychology, and the philosophy of religion. Third, it is attuned to biblical understandings of innocence and purity of heart.

## *I. Five Types of Innocence*

The concept of innocence is fuzzy around the edges. At the margins it sometimes shades off into naïveté or other kinds of ignorance. Theologians have not always understood innocence in the same way or drawn the same distinctions in trying to explicate it. The following account is somewhat stipulative. It begins with a general understanding of innocence and then identifies five types of it. I make no claim that these exhaust all possible types of innocence.



Etymologically, “innocence” is a lack or absence (“in-”) of harm or evil (“-nocēre”). I use the word “evil” to cover the broad range from anything done by human beings that is bad, morally problematic, or harmful to general depravity, wickedness, and grave sins or moral wrongs. Insofar as innocence is a matter of lack of knowledge of evil, the knowledge that is wanting can be knowledge by acquaintance or by description or both.<sup>1</sup> This broad understanding of innocence admits of secular and religious interpretations. Among religious interpretations it has more to do with the Old Testament than the New Testament. It forms the background of the Fall (Genesis 3:1–24). It touches only glancingly a distinction in the NT between *akakos* (Vulg. *innocens*) and *adolos* (Vulg. *sine dolo*).<sup>2</sup> Within this broad understanding one can identify at least five types of innocence; the last of these has subtypes.

1. First comes a lack of knowledge of evil. This type of innocence is universal among infants. It also occurs among older children and adults who are mentally too simple to grasp evil, or at least evil that is intentionally inflicted.<sup>3</sup> To be innocent in this sense is compatible with an awareness of pain, so long as there is no understanding or belief that the pain has been inflicted intentionally.<sup>4</sup>

2. Next is the absence of sin and moral wrongdoing. Here the innocence consists solely in not having sinned or acted immorally. It is not part of the characterization of this type that the innocent person has any particular emotional experience, such as feelings of guilt or remorse, with respect to a sin or immoral act. In this context I do not count realizing or coming to know that one has sinned as an emotional experience. This second type of innocence is often, though not invariably, linked to the first type of innocence. When so linked, the absence in question is compatible with, but

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<sup>1</sup>Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (London: William & Norgate, 1912), chap. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*Akakos* is the innocence of those who mislead no one by flattering speech and hurt no one by thought or deed. *Adolos* is the innocence of those who are guileless and lack any intention to deceive. On the former see Rom. 16:18 and Heb. 7:26; cf. 1 Cor. 13:6. On the latter see 1 Pet. 2:2; cf. John 1:47. See also R. L. Ottley, “Innocence,” in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1925), vol. 7, 329–330.

<sup>3</sup>This variety includes at least part of innocence *secundum aetatem*. “Innocentia tripartita esse dignoscitur. Est enim innocentia secundum potestatem, et est innocentia secundum aetatem, et est innocentia secundum voluntatem.” “Innocence is recognized to be of three sorts. For there is innocence according to power to act, innocence according to age, and innocence according to will.” Sancti Bernardi Abbatis Clarae-Vallensis, “Sermo de Duodecim Portis Jerusalem,” in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Typis Catholicis Migne, 1844–1864) (hereinafter *PL*), vol. 184, 1119. Ottley, “Innocence,” finds the distinctions useful but “incorrectly” ascribed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux; this sermon does not appear in *Sancti Bernardi Opera Omnia*, ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–1978), 8 vols. Unless otherwise indicated, Latin translations are mine.

<sup>4</sup>It is an interesting question whether a psychopath has innocence of type 1. I won’t try to answer it here because it would require too much digging into the diagnostic literature. Psychopathy is not a DSM-IV-TR category. Perhaps the most commonly used test is that offered by Robert D. Hare, *Manual for the Revised Psychopathy Checklist*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Multi-Health Systems, 2003).

does not require, knowledge of evil by description in one's own case. When not so linked, the absence is compatible with, but does not require, knowledge of evil by either description or acquaintance in the case of others.

3. Then there is a lack of awareness of moral complexity. Moral complications deal with more than high orders of evil. They also deal with higher orders of good and possible tradeoffs of good and evil. This type of innocence involves a lack of a semi-sophisticated sort of knowledge, whether by acquaintance or by description. A person can be aware of some sins and moral wrongs without being naïve or ignorant yet not be aware of moral complications. Thus, a person could lack the first and even the second types of innocence and still possess the third.

4. There is also lack of some significant emotional experience that involves pain, harm or evil. Examples include experiences of grief and combat, or the experience of feeling guilt and remorse for one's sins or moral wrongdoing. This type of innocence is not a lack of some significant type of experience *sans plus*. A lack of aesthetic experience of either natural or human-made beauty is not a type of innocence, for there is nothing in such an experience that is harmful or evil.

5. And then there is a lack of the capacity to do harm or evil. Of this there are many subtypes. (a) Some persons are physically unable to sin or do certain moral wrongs—e.g., a frail elderly man may no longer be able to beat his children. (b) Others no longer have the mental capacity to do certain moral wrongs—e.g., a demented Alzheimer's patient may no longer be able to exact revenge on someone else by spreading lies. This incapacity can be a matter of knowledge, intention, or will. (c) It is often said that Christ, owing to his essential nature, could not sin.<sup>5</sup> (d) Some hold that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not only conceived without sin but also incapable of sinning. (e) If Christ alone falls into category 5(c) and Mary alone in category 5(d), there may, a few suggest, be those whose character is such that they cannot sin or do moral wrong.<sup>6</sup> What sort of "cannot" is this? It would not mean that they are logically or metaphysically incapable of sin or moral wrongdoing. Rather, it would appear to mean that, short of some change in their character or their refusal of God's grace, it no longer lies in their makeup to do evil.

Subtypes 5(a) and (b) are self-explanatory but 5(c) requires discussion. That Christ did not in fact sin has a good deal of scriptural support.<sup>7</sup> Tradition agrees. Yet the issue here is whether he lacked the capacity to sin,

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<sup>5</sup>St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 184, 1119: "Potestativam innocentiam Christus habuit, qui solus veraciter dicere potuit." "Of Christ alone can one truly say that he has innocence according to capacity."

<sup>6</sup>"Prima igitur innocentia est malum facere non posse: altera, malum facere nescire: ultima, facere malum nolle." Ibid., 1120. "So in the first sort of innocence one can't do evil, in the next one can't know evil, and in the last one can't will evil." Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpike, "Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven," *Faith and Philosophy* 26 (2009), 398–419, at 409–413, in effect place the redeemed in heaven in subtype 5(e).

<sup>7</sup>For example, Matt. 4:1–11; John 14:30–31; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15, 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5.

i.e., was impeccable. Because Christ is both God and man, this issue is tricky, for his human nature might have made him susceptible to temptation from without and, perhaps, from within. One move here is to say that Christ, after the incarnation but before his baptism, was in a different position from that of Adam before the Fall. Adam was then in fact innocent, whereas Christ possessed a holiness that surpassed the innocence of Adam. From here the obvious next step is to argue that, because of the hypostatic union, the beatific vision, and Christ's habitual grace, he could not sin. This argument is inconclusive, for it does not address whether Christ had incompatibilist (libertarian) free will and, if so, whether he could have used his freedom to sin. It will not do to say that owing to his nature he always choose freely not to sin. That might show that Christ had the capacity not to sin. It fails to show that that he lacked the capacity to sin. It is, of course, unappealing to contend that Christ did not have free will, for this contention conflicts with the idea that he freely chose to obey the Father by giving himself up to a salvific death.

To preserve both impeccability and free will, one might attempt a Molinist move. One move of this sort presupposes that Christ in his earthly existence prior to the Resurrection was both fully divine and fully human. Given this presupposition, God the Son assumed an individual human nature that would, in certain circumstances but not others, have freely refrained from sinning. Based on God's middle knowledge of contingent actions beyond God's control, God chose to place Christ's individual human nature in lifelong freedom-retaining circumstances in which that individual human nature would freely refrain from sinning.<sup>8</sup> Some abiding problems with this particular move are whether the exact scope of God's middle knowledge is consistent with *freely* refraining from sin, and whether it makes sense to detach Christ the God-man from Christ's individual human nature, or, to use a more faithfully Molinist formulation, the essence of his individual human nature.<sup>9</sup> To avoid plunging into a Molinist pit, these and kindred problems must be left for another day.<sup>10</sup>

Subtype 5(d) likewise requires discussion. On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX declared the dogma of the immaculate conception in the bull *Ineffabilis deus*.<sup>11</sup> It proclaimed that "Mary at the first instant of her conception . . . was preserved from all stain of original sin."<sup>12</sup> Even the painstaking defense of this dogma a century later by Edward O'Connor

<sup>8</sup>Thomas P. Flint, "'A Death He Freely Accepted': Molinist Reflections on the Incarnation," *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001), 3–20.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 17–18 n4, 19 n22.

<sup>10</sup>Flint confronts the first of these problems and is well aware of the second. *Ibid.*, 6–7, 12–17, 18 n10, 19 nn20–22, 19–20 n27.

<sup>11</sup>Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer, eds. *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 32nd ed. (Barcelona, Freiburg im Breisgau, Rome, and New York: Herder, 1963), \*2800–2804, at 560–562.

<sup>12</sup>Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis and London: B. Herder, 1957), 413.

and colleagues acknowledged that the claim surfaced only around 1100 C.E., that Aquinas and some other Catholic theologians (but not Duns Scotus) had rejected it, and that the scriptural support for it is virtually nonexistent.<sup>13</sup> The dogma has found few adherents among Orthodox or Protestant Christians. Yet suppose for the sake of argument that the doctrine of original sin is sound and that Mary was free from original sin. That might seem to put Mary in roughly the position of Eve before the Fall, except that Mary, but not Eve, was said to be “full of grace” at the time of the Annunciation.<sup>14</sup> Unless we are to suppose that Mary had no incompatibilist free will or that God bestowed overwhelming grace on her to keep her from sinning, the case for her lacking the capacity to sin is on the verge of collapse. And if she could not sin because of an absence of free will or the presence of overwhelming grace, her incapacity to sin does not appear to be a personal achievement on her part. Nevertheless, O’Connor holds that Mary was impeccable:

Actual sin is not excluded by the simple fact of Mary’s having been conceived free from original sin. . . . It was the grace of impeccability that kept Mary from falling into actual sin. However, Mary’s impeccability did not come from a grace supplementary to that which preserved her from original sin; rather, the grace conferred at the instant of her creation was preservative from all sin, actual as well as original.<sup>15</sup>

O’Connor’s reasoning seems to be that the grace conferred upon Mary at her conception had a double impact: freeing her from original sin and conferring impeccability. The first effect is well within the standard interpretation of *Ineffabilis deus*. The second effect is not and even for traditional Catholics might seem speculative. One could retreat to the weaker position that Mary did not in fact sin before, during or after the birth of Jesus. Yet that is different from saying that she could not sin. By my lights we have now entered the terrain of sheer speculation, for not enough is known about Mary’s life to decide the matter one way or the other.<sup>16</sup>

Subtype 5(e), or some variation on it, requires careful handling. Subtype 5(e), as stated, holds that there is a non-logical, non-metaphysical

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<sup>13</sup>*The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance*, ed. Edward Dennis O’Connor (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958). O’Connor’s preface sketches the doctrine and provides an overview of the volume (v–xvi). Charles Journet looks at the scriptural evidence (3–48). Perhaps the best scriptural support is “full of grace” in Luke 1:28 (*kecharitōmēnē, gratia plena*). Yet that phrase is compatible with the interpretation that Mary received grace, maybe even supervenient grace, but this grace did not define her essential character. In O’Connor’s volume, Georges Jouassard, Francis Dvornik, Carlo Balić, Wenceslaus Sebastian, and René Laurentin cover the history from the patristics to the mid-nineteenth century (51–112, 161–324). The most useful theological studies in O’Connor’s collection are by Marie-Joseph Nicolas, Urban Mullany, Charles De Koninck, and O’Connor himself (327–444).

<sup>14</sup>Luke 1:28; see note 13.

<sup>15</sup>Edward D. O’Connor, “The Immaculate Conception and the Spirituality of the Blessed Virgin,” in O’Connor, *The Dogma* (note 13), 413–444, at 417.

<sup>16</sup>O’Connor’s essay is, I fear, a specimen of sheer, though heartfelt, speculation.

basis for the incapacity to sin. Thus stated, it is so strong as to be implausible. First, if one considers the reasons why it is inconclusive to maintain that Christ and perhaps even Mary were incapable of sin, it will be hard to show that other human beings having incompatibilist free will might be thus incapable. Second, if the thesis of this article were that some cannot sin and yet might sin, and if they did sin then thereafter by supreme moral effort might regain an incapacity to sin, but that nevertheless they might still sin again, there appears to be no obviously correct way to explain what "cannot" means, if it is neither logical nor metaphysical, that makes it compatible with "might" later sin.<sup>17</sup> Some may contend that a character-based imperviousness to sin could deprive a person of the ability to sin. This contention might invoke Pawl and Timke's analysis of the incapacity of the redeemed in heaven to sin.<sup>18</sup> Yet nowhere do they suggest that their analysis might apply to any human beings on earth, and their investigation centers on free will and compatibilism, not innocence. I am, thus far, inveterately terrestrial. Were someone to extend Pawl and Timke's analysis to human beings on earth, it would give no coherent explanation of how someone with an incapacity to sin "might" later sin.

For these reasons I address a weaker variation, subtype 5(f), which claims only that there is a high character-based resistance to sin. The degree of resistance is not so high that one's character precludes the capacity to sin. Two points are critical here. First, even a person who has a high character-based resistance to sin might nevertheless sin. For example, a person whose character includes a strong attachment to and respect for animals might, in a fit of pique, use his spurs and whip cruelly in urging his horse to gallop faster. What he does is, as we say, "out of character." A single act does not entail that one's underlying character, which supplies substantial but not overwhelming resistance to committing a sinful act of that type, has changed. It would be understandable for the rider to feel compunction the very moment it occurs to him what he has just done. Second, a person's character can change over time. If a woman had a character that at  $t_1$  was highly resistant to stealing, but if poverty, substance abuse, consorting with thieves, and other adverse circumstances and her reaction to them led to a change in her character at  $t_2$ , such that she had at  $t_2$  only a fragile character-based resistance to stealing, it would be understandable for the woman now to commit a sin that she would rarely if ever have done at  $t_1$ .

Although I examine innocence of types 3 and 4, it is this weaker variation on subtype 5(e), namely subtype 5(f), which is my main target in this paper. I argue that some persons might have a high character-based resistance to sin, that it is thus very difficult for them to sin, that they nevertheless have the capacity to sin (either because they act out of character or their character changes), and still by supreme moral effort they might

<sup>17</sup>An anonymous referee spotted this defect and suggested a way to remove it.

<sup>18</sup>Pawl and Timke, "Incompatibilism," 409–413.



regain their high character-based resistance to sin. Whether I eventually clinch this argument is for the reader to judge.

This last subtype of innocence (5(f)) arises in two broadly different ways. If the case involves a child of, say, four or five years, then her having this character likely arose unreflectively and without effort or agency. She is, we might say, naturally virtuous (5(f)(i)) or has an immature innocence. However, if the case involves an adult, then her character is likely to have been tested, and her having the character she does likely arose reflectively and involved some effort and agency. She is, we might say, non-naturally virtuous (5(f)(ii)) or has a mature innocence. She is disposed to avoid bad acts. The young girl or the mature woman will rarely if ever kick the family dog or betray a friend. Yet it is only the mature woman who has a confirmed state of character, attained reflectively and by exercise of agency, who resists temptation, and who, despite minor faults, tries earnestly not to sin and to behave well.

The distinction between sub-subtypes 5(f)(i) and 5(f)(ii) is important for my argument. It does not make sense to say that one can “regain” natural innocence, for the expenditure of effort and agency makes the innocence in question no longer natural. Neither is it correct to say that, in a scenario in which a person loses her natural innocence and through effort and agency becomes maturely innocent, she has “regained” a mature innocence. Of course, she has *attained* a mature innocence. Yet she cannot *regain* mature innocence until she has lost it. So one scenario in which she could regain a mature innocence would be this: she is naturally innocent, then loses that innocence, later achieves mature innocence, later still loses that mature innocence, and finally through effort and agency regains mature innocence.<sup>19</sup>

## II. Loss of Innocence

To understand innocence it helps to understand its loss. Because there are different types of innocence, the loss of innocence requires, in each case, a somewhat different action or event. The following cases track the types of innocence distinguished thus far.

(1) If one has no knowledge of evil, that innocence is lost by first becoming aware of evil in the world. In the passage from infancy to childhood, a child who grasps that her father is intentionally hurting her mother suffers a loss of innocence.

(2) If one has never sinned or done anything morally wrong, innocence is lost by committing that first sin or first moral wrong. As I explained innocence of this type, no particular emotional experience, such as guilt or remorse, is required or even relevant. There must, however, be an awareness or realization that amounts to knowledge that one has sinned or performed a morally wrong action, which here I do not count as an emotional experience, though it is doubtless an experience of some kind. I recognize

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<sup>19</sup>An anonymous referee clarified these points for me.



that gaining this knowledge can lead to, or sometimes be accompanied by, an emotional experience. My point is that there is a conceptual separation between the knowledge and any emotional experience.

(3) If one lacks awareness of moral complexity, innocence is lost by coming to believe that things are no longer black and white—or, to move away from the metaphor of color, to realize that good may not be unequivocally good and bad may not be unequivocally bad. For instance, a young boy may discover that he experiences a certain pleasure in tormenting small creatures or pushing down classmates. He now may see that there is a certain kind of good, namely pleasure, that sometimes flows from doing actions that he realizes are either sinful or morally wrong. Other illustrations involve moral principles that conflict or at least seem to do so. Thus, a young girl might have to choose between obeying a teacher and obeying her mother, or to cross against a traffic light to save a kitten, or to tell on close friends who lied to their parents about something serious. The world is now more morally complex than the boy and girl thought it was.

(4) If one lacks a significant experience of some sort, and if that experience involves evil or pain or sin, innocence is lost by having that experience—say, first experience of grief or combat. One may now realize that there is something going on in the world that one did not grasp from the inside before. Further, if the experience is an emotional reaction to realizing that one has sinned, then that reaction—be it guilt or remorse or shame or something else—is a loss of innocence. Observe that taking in for the first time the beauty of a sunset or Michelangelo's fresco "The Creation of Adam" would not count as a loss of innocence, for no evil is there. Yet someone who for the first time studies James Ensor's painting "The Intrigue" and understands it might experience a loss of innocence precisely because it expresses human duplicity, hypocrisy and mockery. The masks reveal, rather than hide, the true selves of their wearers.

By no means is the loss of innocence of types (3) or (4) always bad or unfortunate. To begin, the gaining of certain kinds of experience can be good, or at least instrumentally good. Grieving for the first time over the loss of a loved one underscores the preciousness of love and the finality of death. The first taste of combat can bring home the horrors of war and shatter romantic views of warfare. Moreover, the development of a sense of moral complexity is generally to the good. Perhaps something undesirable lurks in obsessing over fine moral distinctions. But it hardly makes sense for someone to remain in an untutored state in which everything appears morally simple.

Finally, gaining the capacity to sin or act immorally is the loss of innocence of type 5. Once that capacity is acted on, a person commits his or her first sin or moral wrong. This act triggers the loss of innocence of type 2 and often of types 1 and 4 as well. Earlier I separated various subtypes of type 5. Of these 5(a) and 5(b) require no further comment now, and the reader has heard enough of 5(c), 5(d), and 5(e) for the moment. It is 5(f) that needs attention.

Some thinkers might doubt whether it is possible to identify a first sin or moral wrong in the life of any given individual. This doubt is misplaced or irrelevant. It is misplaced in the event that these thinkers say it is possible to tell whether a person has committed a sin or moral wrong on a given occasion. If the person has, then either it was the first sin or moral wrong he or she committed, or it was not. If it was the first, then the problem is solved. If it was not, there was some prior sin or moral wrong that was the first. The doubt is irrelevant to the existence of a first sin or moral wrong, because identifying the initial wrongdoing is an epistemic rather than a metaphysical problem.

The initial act of wrongdoing is not, as such, a good thing in any human life. If the act is not gravely wrong (as in the case of most children, who might lie, cheat or steal a toy), committing it and understanding its nature might help move the child to a sort of moral maturity or at least closer to it. Think of St. Augustine and his stealing pears. More broadly, without some first sin or moral wrong, human nature would lack the variety and depth it actually has. To speak loosely, without it Adam and Eve would have remained a bit like children in adult bodies, barred forever from full participation in the richness of human life.<sup>20</sup> Let's face it: prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve would have been rather uninteresting dinner companions, except as odd illustrations of arrested development.

To forestall misunderstanding, I am not invoking the idea of *felix culpa* in my reference to Adam and Eve. Here I am not concerned at all with whether their eating of the apple—their happy sin or fortunate fault—triggered a need for a great Redeemer whose salvific death brought about an even better world than would have existed had Adam and Eve never sinned.<sup>21</sup> My interest is not theodicy but the changes wrought in Adam and Eve as a result of their disobeying God's command. As Morris puts it,

There is a good even in evil: the good that makes possible a life of a certain depth and scope. . . . They [Adam and Eve] have, in that profound imagery of the struggle between good and evil, not been crushed by what they have confronted, but have emerged, in ways mysterious to behold, victorious, capable, despite and because of knowledge, of affirming rather than denying life.<sup>22</sup>

Some might object that I am now committed to saying that Jesus and perhaps Mary were "barred forever from full participation in the richness

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<sup>20</sup>Herbert Morris, "Lost Innocence," in *On Guilt and Innocence: Essays in Legal Philosophy and Moral Psychology*, ed. Herbert Morris (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1976), 139–161, unpacks the new knowledge gained by Adam and Eve with greater subtlety than I could ever manage.

<sup>21</sup>I ignore infralapsarian and supralapsarian variations on *felix culpa*. Recent contributions to this topic in this journal include Marilyn McCord Adams, "Plantinga on 'Felix Culpa': Analysis and Critique," *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008), 123–140; and Kevin Diller, "Are Sin and Evil Necessary for a Really Good World? Questions for Alvin Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* Theodicy," *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008), 87–101.

<sup>22</sup>Morris, "Lost Innocence," 161.

of human life." They might urge, further, that Jesus and perhaps Mary were thus barred even if peccable, provided that neither in fact ever sinned. Although not wishing to be or seem impious, I answer that in these respects their lives were different from and less rich than our own. Because so much less is known about Mary than Jesus, I confine my reply to his case.

Human lives, even the life of a God-man, are often incommensurable. The life of Jesus was immensely richer in many ways than the lives of other human beings. But if Jesus never sinned, he will never have had first-hand experience of sin, guilt, and remorse. This first-hand experience is the common lot of virtually all non-psychopathic individuals of near-normal intelligence who make it past mid-childhood. Some of the richness of human life comes from the first-hand struggle with good and evil, with the realization that one has sinned or acted immorally, and from the experiences of guilt and remorse. Without these experiences, it is scarcely possible to appreciate the gravity of one's own sins and wrongdoing, or to grasp fully what it means to blame others for their sins and wrongdoing. In these respects, there is something in most human lives of which Jesus had no first-hand experience. If it now be said that Christ took upon himself the sins of all human individuals and bore enormous pain because of them, still it is not correct to say that he experienced the guilt and remorse that are the usual fate of humankind.

The discrimination of five main types of innocence and their loss, together with further divisions under the last type, is not an arid exercise in classification, for it yields a useful if incomplete picture of moral development. There is a coming to know evil. There is an entering into the world of right and wrong, and guilt and remorse. There is some wisdom gained in appreciating the complexities of this world of good and evil, right and wrong, and guilt and remorse. And then there is a move to a deeper level of interiority that comes with a mature innocence. The next step in the project is to see how this interior depth takes different forms in the case of innocence of types 3, 4, and 5(f)(ii).

### *III. Ambition and Jealousy:*

#### *How Morally Neutral Innocence Can Be Regained or Surpassed*

Innocence of types 3 and 4 is morally neutral. So is the loss of each. To think about the possibility of regaining or surpassing morally neutral innocence, once lost, it helps to put stages of a person's life into a series. First is a stage of innocence. Next comes a stage in which that innocence is lost. Last is a stage in which some further development or change has occurred such that innocence of a relevant type is regained or surpassed. The analysis of this final stage must observe a truth of tense logic: what has happened cannot now not have happened.<sup>23</sup> Thus, whatever happened at stage two cannot be said at stage three not to have happened

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Arthur Prior, *Past, Present and Future* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 32.

at stage two. So even if a person regains or surpasses innocence of some type at stage three, it remains a fact that this person's character at stage two had a certain quality that involved a loss or lack of innocence. The bell, once rung, cannot be unring.

I focus on two examples: ambition and jealousy. By ambition I understand an ardent desire for achievement. This understanding is more restricted than most in that it does not regard fame or riches as achievements. Ambition as such is generally morally neutral. Yet some ardently desired achievements, such as domination over others, are morally problematic, and others, such as developing a sound character, are morally praiseworthy. Further, ambitious striving after a worthy goal can sometimes involve unworthy motives or be the occasion for moral wrongdoing.

By jealousy I understand a negative emotion concerning the interference with, or possible loss of, a human relationship that a person values. Romantic jealousy is the most obvious case, but jealousy can involve other human relationships such as friendships and familial relationships. Jealousy as such is morally neutral, yet being consumed by jealousy is a defect, and can issue in immoral acts. To be simultaneously jealous and envious of someone else is morally problematic, if only because envy is often sinful. To be innocent of ambition and jealousy often involves innocence of types 3 and 4: a lack of awareness of moral complexity or a lack of a certain type of experience, or both.

The initial thought is that some innocent persons are neither ambitious nor jealous, and that one form of losing innocence could involve the appearance of ambition and jealousy in a person's psychological makeup. The question is whether a person could change with respect to ambition and jealousy in such a way as to say that innocence of some relevant type has been regained or surpassed. An answer unfolds with (1) putative examples of innocence regained; then (2) reasons for thinking that the examples do not represent the regaining of innocence; and finally (3) ways of resisting these reasons. The upshot is (4) that many interesting cases involve, not the regaining of innocence of types 3 or 4, but the regaining of mature innocence or the attainment of a superior state—a state that surpasses mature innocence.

(1) First consider ambition. A young child is not ambitious. An adolescent or certainly a young adult might be. But suppose that an adult commits herself to a project of changing her character in ways she perceives to be desirable.<sup>24</sup> Even if she has become ambitious, by degrees that ambition might be extinguished. If it is extinguished, an argument might be made that a sort of innocence has been regained.

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<sup>24</sup>My approach to character reflects the influence of Jonathan Jacobs, *Choosing Character: Responsibility for Virtue and Vice* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), a book whose merits have been underappreciated. I would, though, assign more importance to socio-historical embeddedness than, I think, Jacobs does. Cf. John Christman, *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-historical Selves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Next, consider jealousy. In Chapter 15 of *Jane Eyre*, Edward Rochester suggests that Jane cannot feel (romantic) jealousy because she has never felt (romantic) love.

You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? Of course not: I need not ask you; because you never felt love. You have both sentiments yet to experience; your soul sleeps; the shock is yet to be given which shall awaken it.<sup>25</sup>

Suppose that a person has felt romantic love and later romantic jealousy, and then joins a monastery. In due course one might think that a sort of innocence might be regained. In such a cloistered atmosphere, romantic love that is consummated sexually is not (it will be supposed) a permitted option, and neither are special friendships. One's non-sexual love is directed or made available to many. Hence, it might be argued, a type of innocence has been regained. In both examples, it is innocence *secundum voluntatem*, or some secular counterpart thereof, that has arguably been regained or, perhaps, even surpassed.

(2) Yet it can be contended that neither of these examples involves innocence regained, for two quite different reasons. In the first place, it is not clear, indeed it seems to be false, to claim that one has now been put back in a state that one formerly occupied. Imagine a sequence of events like this: at  $t_1$  one is innocent of ambition or jealousy, at  $t_2$  one has some experience of the world that includes ambitious desires or feelings of jealousy, and at  $t_3$  such motivations and emotions have disappeared from one's character. Then it is not the case that at  $t_3$  one has reentered the state that one had occupied at  $t_1$ . Hence it is not the case that innocence has been regained.

Secondly, whatever has been achieved at  $t_3$  does not appear to be innocence. The person in question at  $t_3$  still possesses knowledge of what it feels like to experience ambition or jealousy. Furthermore, this person may still be able to recognize it in others. Consequently, it is not the case that a sort of knowledge or experience has been lost or jettisoned. Rather, it seems more accurate to say that the person in question has moved beyond both innocence and experience—that is, gone beyond the innocence of  $t_1$  and the loss of innocence or the new experience at  $t_2$ . At  $t_3$ , the person has a new structure of desires, emotions, attitudes, and dispositions with which to react to the world.

(3) There are ways of trying to resist each of these points. As against the first point, one might argue that one has regained innocence because the desires and emotions of the sort that existed at  $t_2$  have disappeared from one's character at  $t_3$ . In that way, one is very much in the position that one was in at  $t_1$ . Of course, whatever has been the case cannot now not have been the case. Thus, the experiences and motivations that one had at  $t_2$  cannot now be said never to have occurred. Still, just because they once occurred hardly means that they are occurring now. That it is logically and psychologically possible at  $t_3$  for feelings of ambition and jealousy to

<sup>25</sup>Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* [1847] (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993), 142.

arise at some later time  $t_4$  is irrelevant, for it was also possible at  $t_1$  for these feelings to arise at  $t_2$ . So there may be a sense in which one can still say that innocence has been gained or regained. Even if one has not regained innocence of types 1 through 4, one might well attain, or regain after its loss, innocence of type 5(f)(ii), for mature innocence is compatible with a personal moral history that includes the suffering and the doing of harm or evil. There is nevertheless a difference between surpassing innocence of types 3 or 4 and attaining mature innocence. The former generally concerns a narrow feature of a person's character and a relatively short period of a person's history, whereas the latter generally concerns a broader feature of character and a longer period of a person's history.

As to the second point, one might respond that entirely too much emphasis is being placed on the cognitive aspects of innocence. True, at  $t_3$  the person in question knows what it is to feel ambition or jealousy. Furthermore, this person may be able to recognize ambition or jealousy in others. But there seem to be types of innocence that are not a matter of the absence of certain concepts but rather are chiefly, if not entirely, non-cognitive in character. They may, of course, be noncognitive in many different ways. In the examples of ambition and jealousy, the noncognitive category seems to be a certain structure of desires and emotions together with some attitudes and dispositions with which to react to the world. This particular structure is a character trait.

(4) Is there a way in which to resist these two replies? One mode of resistance might be to distinguish between innocence and a superior state or condition. If one makes such a distinction, one might say that the no-longer-ambitious woman or the monk who has moved beyond jealousy is not regaining an innocence that he or she first had. Rather, each person has entered into a superior state or condition. If this claim is correct, then it would appear that the concept of innocence regained does not play a role in the account of the description of these individuals at  $t_3$ . That role is taken by innocence surpassed, where the innocence belongs to type 3 or 4.

Whether innocence is regained or surpassed, a state that differs from one's current state is attained. Its attainment involves human agency. Attaining, regaining or surpassing are like forgiving rather than forgetting. Attaining, regaining or surpassing a state of freedom from ambition or jealousy, like forgiving a past wrong, requires effort to that end—or, for the theologically inclined, requires cooperation with God's grace. In contrast, forgetting need not involve human agency but only the fragility or imperfection of human memory.<sup>26</sup> A person with advanced Alzheimer's disease may be incapable of feeling ambition or jealousy but is not in a superior state. A ninety-year-old ex-roué who has utterly lost libido has not attained a state beyond lust; he just no longer has sexual desires. He is,

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<sup>26</sup>I recognize that there are some forms of "mental retraining" or "active forgetting" in which a person is able, though exercise of agency, to bring it about that she no longer thinks of certain earlier events or mental states in her life. Most forgetting, however, is not of this sort.



as to lust, in a different state and perhaps even in a morally different state. But he has not *attained* this state, and certainly he has not done so through effort and exercise of agency.

To attain, regain or surpass a desired state one must, moreover, exercise agency in a relevant way. When Origen is said to have emasculated himself because he was disturbed by the promptings of passion, he might be thought to have caused himself to be in a state in which lust no longer troubled him. Origen would have had to do something quite different to put himself beyond lust in a way that counts as regaining innocence or attaining a superior state or doing either through effort. Relevant effort and exercise of agency do not, of course, take place outside the events and causes that surround and interweave through human lives. The point is that it cannot be only events and causes that lead to the regaining of innocence or the attainment of a morally superior state in an interesting sense.

Let me try to clarify the difference between regaining and surpassing innocence of types 3 and 4 through an example of a particular ambition. I have suggested that ambition is generally morally neutral but not always so. Sometimes the ardently desired achievement is worth striving for, and a strong desire to succeed in the attempt is estimable, yet nonetheless moral risks are present. Suppose that Robert, a parish priest, has an ambition to become a bishop. Suppose also that being a bishop is a worthy office in which the possibility exists to do much good. Even so, Robert's ambition may not be praiseworthy. It is not just that Robert might curry favor or lobby discreetly to improve his chances, each of which is unseemly. If Robert's desire and striving for the office are quite strong, and if he proceeds without regard to whether he is best suited for the post, he may be guilty of pride or presumption. Hence, even ambition for a position in which one may do good is sometimes morally problematic.<sup>27</sup>

Robert might regain an earlier state of lack of ambition by scrutinizing his present state of character and extinguishing from it all desire to become a bishop and all dispositions to act in ways that increase his chances for a bishopric. For Robert to surpass his present desire to become a bishop, he needs to take different steps. These steps are compatible with his having a restructured ambition for a bishopric. He must renounce currying favor and lobbying. He has to face squarely whether he is suited for the office and, if so, whether he is best suited for it in light of other candidates. He needs to trust those making the decision to choose wisely. These steps in no way require Robert to become indifferent in the matter, for then he would have no ambition for the office. Yet with the reformation of Robert's actions, attitudes, and dispositions he has surpassed his earlier innocence.

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<sup>27</sup>See Basil Cole, "The Desire for the Episcopate and the Sin of Ambition According to St. Thomas," *Angelicum* 76 (2001), 3–21.



#### IV. *The Type of Innocence That Matters Most*

To me the type of innocence that matters most has to do with a variation on type 5—namely, the lack of capacity to do harm or evil. The variation involves a high character-based resistance to sin: subtype 5(f). This variation itself splits into two sub-subtypes, 5(f)(i) and 5(f)(ii), which I earlier dubbed natural innocence and mature innocence, respectively. I now seek to describe the last of these in more detail, examine the roles of effort and agency in getting there, distinguish between regaining and surpassing a mature innocence, and point out a connection between mature innocence and purity of heart.

If one attains or regains a mature innocence, one does not thereby attain or regain innocence of all types. In fact, one attains or regains almost none of them. Mature innocence does not bring back a lack of knowledge of evil (type 1), an absence of sin or moral wrongdoing (type 2), a lack of awareness of moral complexity (type 3), or a lack of some significant experience involving evil (type 4). Further, mature innocence does not entail that one is physically or mentally unable to sin or act immorally (subtypes 5(a) and 5(b)). Because one is neither Christ nor Mary, nothing in one's essential nature makes sin impossible, even if we suppose that Christ and Mary were impeccable (subtypes 5(c) and 5(d)). Mature innocence does not ensure that one has a non-logical, non-metaphysical incapacity to sin, which I earlier cashed out as a character-based imperviousness to sin (subtype 5(e)). Neither does one get back the immature innocence of a naturally virtuous young child, for that demands little reflection or effort and exercise of agency (sub-subtype 5(f)(i)). As to mature innocence (sub-subtype 5(f)(ii)), it is necessary to distinguish between first acquiring it and later reacquiring it. In the former case, one *attains* a high character-based resistance to sin through effort and agency. In the latter case, one *regains* this innocence after it has been previously attained and then lost.

My account of mature innocence is situated in the following understanding of the moral psychology of character. For me, character is dynamic even though largely enduring, nonlinear, and open to self-development, but nevertheless also vulnerable to disruption and setbacks. The idea of mature innocence regained depends on one's knowledge of and emotional reactions to one's prior wrongdoing. The loss of a previously attained mature innocence is a downward shift in one's character, but it is not catastrophic in the sense that one's personal fall is irreversible. To reverse it, though, requires effort and the exercise of agency.

This account differs from the views on virtue found in Plato, Aristotle, and Kant. I do not accept the view—roughly that of Plato—that knowledge of the Good suffices for virtue and that so long as this knowledge remains virtue is never lost. Neither do I accept both propositions of the view—roughly that of Aristotle—that the acquisition of virtue requires habituation and that once virtue becomes fully habitual it results in a firmly settled character. For both Plato and Aristotle, virtue and character are static,

linear, cumulative, and fundamentally invulnerable. Nor do I accept the view—roughly that of Kant—that virtue is a resolve to appraise one's maxims and choices from a moral point of view, which amounts to a sort of resolute continence. My account of mature innocence is closer to Kant's views than those of Plato and Aristotle. Still, my account of virtue differs from Kant's in its emphasis on dispositions (somewhat akin to habits). For me moral character does not exhaust the idea of character. And I make room for ideals in my treatment of mature innocence surpassed.<sup>28</sup>

I am not a person of mature innocence and doubt that I ever have been. Most surely I am an unreliable guide for attaining or regaining it. There are limits to the ability of human beings to transform their character—and not merely because of the brevity of human life. To become a person of mature innocence requires not only re-creating desires but also changing thoughts, motives, dispositions, emotions, decisions, and actions.

The requisite effort and exercise of agency differ according to one's perspective. As a matter of secular moral philosophy, one needs recognition of one's own past moral wrongdoing, repentance, and disciplining oneself not to slide back into wrongful behavior. Such discipline requires avoiding the circumstances that might trigger such behavior, or re-regulating one's desires and dispositions so that such circumstances no longer beguile, or both. From a theological perspective, one needs to go through analogous steps; but grace, Christ, and God's word assist the effort. Col. 3:9–10 bids the Christian to "strip[] off your old behaviour with your old self" and "put on a new self"<sup>29</sup> revived by the Creator and Christ. Be the state innocence attained or innocence regained, it involves, as J. H. Newman once put it, "the boldness and frankness of those who are as if they had no sin, from having been cleansed of it; the uncontaminated hearts, open countenances, and untroubled eyes of those who neither suspect, nor conceal, nor shun, nor are jealous."<sup>30</sup>

These remarks bring us to a point that has no interest for the secular moral philosopher but is of moment for the theologian: the effects of baptism. In what sense, if any, does baptism restore innocence? Two matters seem clear to "orthodox" theologians. First, if one believes in both original sin and infant baptism, then baptism restores innocence in that it removes original sin and its inherited stain from the infant's soul. Second, if one has these beliefs and if one further believes that baptism of older children or adults extends to sins they have themselves committed, then baptism also restores innocence in that it wipes out these further sins and the guilt for them from the soul of the baptized individual. Notice that sins committed by children or adults are acts or omissions rather than character

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<sup>28</sup>For my understanding of an ideal, see Stephen R. Munzer, "Beggars of God: The Christian Ideal of Mendicancy," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27 (1999), 305–330.

<sup>29</sup>Biblical quotations are from *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1985) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>30</sup>John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (London, Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1868), vol. 8, no. 18, 268.

traits. As acts or omissions, they are lapses from innocence of type 2 or, sometimes, type 4. A third matter is more disputed—namely, whether baptism affects the moral character of those baptized as older children or adults so as to instill innocence in point of motives, desires, attitudes, and dispositions—that is, innocence that approximates subtype 5(f)(ii). It does not, at least according to as “orthodox” a theologian as Augustine. He argues, against Julian of Eclanum, that “though the guilt of evil concupiscence has been dissolved through that same baptism, concupiscence itself abides until healed with the medicine that brings perfection, by Him who after casting out devils brought perfect health.”<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere Augustine emphasizes that “our inner human nature is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16) and that baptism only begins this renewal.<sup>32</sup>

So it is innocence of subtype 5(f)(ii) that one attains or regains. An adult has a character that arose reflectively and involved considerable effort and exercise of agency. Short of some downward change in this person’s character, it is no longer part of her makeup to do evil. With this confirmed state of character, marked to be sure by minor faults, she is no longer predisposed to sin or moral wrongdoing, and instead seeks to avoid all manner of sinful or immoral actions. She has, in Paul’s words, “put on a new self.” She and others like her display, in Newman’s words, “the uncontaminated hearts, open countenances, and untroubled eyes of those who neither suspect, nor conceal, nor shun, nor are jealous.” By no means does a guarantee attach to her innocence and her new state of character. One cannot rule out a relapse or a wrongful act done “out of character.”

In closing I wish to tease out two connected points. One is the distinction between attaining or regaining mature innocence on the one hand and surpassing it on the other. The other is the relation between mature innocence surpassed and purity of heart, and here I suggest that mature innocence surpassed and a certain understanding purity of heart are very nearly the same if not identical.

The phrase “purity of heart” together with its equivalents in other languages is a term of art without a particularly definite meaning. The Old Testament words for “heart” (Hebr. *lēb*, *lēbāb*; LXX *kardia*), used literally, refer not specifically to the organ that pumps blood but to all the organs of the chest and central torso.<sup>33</sup> Often, the OT uses the Hebrew words

<sup>31</sup>Augustine, *Contra Julianum, Haeresis Pelagianæ Defensorem* [c. 429–430], in Migne, *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 44; English translation in *Fathers of the Church*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1957), vol. 35, *Saint Augustine Against Julian* (trans. Matthew A. Schumacher, C.S.C.), 373. Ottley, “Innocence,” 330, provides a brief sketch. On Augustine versus Julian of Eclanum, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 381–397; and Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), 127–150.

<sup>32</sup>Augustine, *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione, et de Baptismo Parvulorum* [c. 411], in Migne, *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 44; English translation in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. J. E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 1997), vol. I, chap. 23.

<sup>33</sup>On the Hebrew and Greek words, see Irene Nowell, O.S.B., “The Concept of Purity of Heart in the Old Testament,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays*

metaphorically. So used, they refer to the source of thought, volition and decision, the seat of wisdom, and the center of the emotions.<sup>34</sup> A pure heart, in the OT, is whole (*tām*) (i.e., has integrity [*tamim*]), empty of evil and open to God (Ps. 24:4, *bar-lēbāb*, pure of heart), upright, sincere, and honest (*yāšār*), morally pure (*zāk*), and ritually clean (*ṭahôr*).<sup>35</sup> Ps. 51:10–11 indicates the importance of purity of heart as a key to moral action and closeness to the divine: “God, create in me a clean heart [Hebr. *lēb ṭahôr*; LXX *kardian katharan*], renew within me a resolute spirit, do not thrust me away from your presence, do not take away from me your spirit of holiness.” In Matthew 5:8 Jesus teaches his disciples, “Blessed are the pure in heart [*katharei to kardia*; Vulg. *mundo in cardo*]: they shall see God.”

If purity of heart is beginning to sound a bit like mature innocence surpassed, the impression increases as one explores the Christian ascetic and monastic literature. The main figures here are Evagrius Ponticus (c. 345–399) and John Cassian (early 360s–mid 430s). Evagrius drew on earlier desert ascetics for his account of *logismoi* (often translated as “thoughts” but really including a range of desires, dispositions, and vices) of which the monk needed to purge himself to be pure of heart.<sup>36</sup> High on the list are anger, greed, sloth, vanity, and pride.<sup>37</sup> Cassian simplified Evagrius’s scheme in some ways and modified it in others, but both saw purity of heart and purity generally as central to the monastic quest for holiness.<sup>38</sup> Subsequent commentary sometimes intimates that purity of heart is significant for a Christian life for lay people as well as monks, cloistered nuns, members of religious orders, and other clerics.<sup>39</sup>

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in *Honor of Juana Raasch*, ed. Harriet A. Luckman and Linda Kulzer, O.S.B. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 17–29.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 20–27.

<sup>36</sup>Evagrius discusses his eight *logismoi* in various works, including the *Eulogios* and the *Praktikos*. These two works and others are available in *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, trans. Robert E. Sinkewicz (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). The Greek texts of Evagrius in *Patrologia Graeca* are often incomplete or unreliable. Sinkewicz (310–333) has the most recent text of the *Eulogios*. For a critical text of the *Praktikos*, see Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, *Traité Pratique ou le Moine*, trans. and ed. Évaire le Pontique (Paris: Cerf, 1971) (Sources Chrétiennes, no. 171), vol. 2.

<sup>37</sup>The others are gluttony, lust (thoughts of fornication), and spiritual sadness (a sort of discouragement or depression). Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) reworked the eight *logismoi* of Evagrius into the seven deadly sins. See *Moralium Libri, sive Expositio in Librum B. Job* [c. 578–c. 595], pt. 4, bk. 31, ch. 45, sec. 87, in *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 76, 620–621. Gregory folded vainglory into pride, combined sloth (listlessness) and spiritual sadness into acedia, and added envy.

<sup>38</sup>Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 38–39, 41–57.

<sup>39</sup>Examples include Bruno Barnhart and Joseph Wong, eds., *Purity of Heart and Contemplation: A Monastic Dialogue Between Christian and Asian Traditions* (New York and London: Continuum, 2001); and Stephen R. Munzer, “Purity of Heart,” *The Way* 51:2 (April 2011), 95–104. Here I do not include Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is To Will One Thing*, trans. Douglas V. Steere (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), which pursues a somewhat different project. Any inconsistencies between my essay on “Purity of Heart,” which was not

These reflections help to identify what it means to surpass mature innocence as contrasted with merely attaining or regaining it, though I do not claim that the line is a sharp one. The ascetic and monastic literature on purity of heart has negative as well as positive elements. Negatively, the quest for purity of heart focuses on extirpating faults, sins, and defects of character. Do not be angry, greedy, or proud. Develop a confirmed state of character that makes you highly resistant to temptation. If you can achieve all these things, you have attained or regained a significant part of mature innocence.

Positively, the quest for purity of heart focuses on achieving a sort of holiness or perfection. Integrate your interior life, including its motives and dispositions, with your external behavior. Translate your knowledge into action, for "[e]veryone who knows what is the right thing to do and does not do it commits a sin" (James 4:17). Do the good or right thing, not merely avoid the bad and the wrong, the sinful and the immoral. That, I think, amounts to surpassing mature innocence. If it is sound to identify, or at least very strongly associate, surpassing mature innocence with purity of heart, the latter is nevertheless only a proximate goal (*skopos*, *destinatio*) of a disciplined perfection and works of (apostolic) love in this life, not the ultimate goal (*telos*, *finis*) of the kingdom of heaven or the beatific vision.<sup>40</sup>

Mature innocence and even the negative elements of purity of heart, though possible ideals, are only parts of an admirable Christian life or an admirable secular life.<sup>41</sup> To concentrate on nothing else, to slight the needs of others, or to fail to fight injustice and cruelty would amount to a shameful self-absorption. Yet once the positive elements of purity of heart are present as well, then one has surpassed mature innocence. One is now concerned not only with avoiding sin and immorality but also with doing the good, the right and the supererogatory.<sup>42</sup>

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intended for a professional audience, and the present article should be resolved in favor of the latter.

<sup>40</sup>Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 38. Elsewhere he speaks of purity of heart as "perfection attained through a disciplined life" and, quoting Cassian, views it as the "perfection of apostolic love." Columba Stewart, O.S.B., "Introduction," in Luckman and Kulzer, *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, 1–15, at 2, 9.

<sup>41</sup>The last sentence of John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 587, hints at a secular ideal: "Purity of heart, if one could attain it, would be to see clearly and to act with grace and self-command from this point of view."

<sup>42</sup>I owe much to criticisms and suggestions from James A. Benn, Michael Cholbi, John K. Davis, Kory DeClark, Maria Doerfler, David Dolinko, Sam Feldman, Thomas P. Flint, Tal Grietzer, Herbert Morris, Jenifer Morrissey, M. B. E. Smith, Jamie L. Summers, and two anonymous reviewers, and to the comments of gracious audiences at Smith College and meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Christian Philosophers.