

## The Source of Evil in Rousseau's *Confessions*: A Reply to Augustine's *Confessions*

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### 1. Introduction

At the prefatory note of his *Confessions*, Rousseau claimed, “I am forming an undertaking which has no precedent, and the execution of which will have no imitator whatsoever.”<sup>1)</sup> While he proclaimed a revolutionary and unique project in history, the title of his book leads us to think of another work with the same title; that is, St. Augustine’s *Confessions*.<sup>2)</sup> As Jean Guéhenno said, “it cannot be doubted that when

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1) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes*, trans. Christopher Kelly, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Master, and Peter G. Stillman (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 5.

he [Rousseau] chose his title, he was thinking of the *Confessions* of St Augustine.”<sup>3)</sup> If Rousseau was truly making a unique, historical project, why did he adopt a title that is the same as another popular autobiography? Some scholars suggest that Rousseau’s *Confessions*, other than the title, has nothing to do with Augustine’s *Confessions*. Ronald Grimsley argued that the only event related to Augustine in Rousseau’s *Confessions* suggests Rousseau’s limited knowledge of Augustine, likely from secondary sources. Furthermore, although Rousseau borrowed the title from Augustine’s *Confessions*, this does not prove that Rousseau had made a serious study of Augustine.<sup>4)</sup> Grimsley is not alone to doubt the comparison. Jacques Voisine said that apart from taking the same title, Rousseau’s *Confessions* has nothing to do with Augustine. To Voisine, it is a secular version of the story of religious conversion. If Rousseau wanted readers to relate his *Confessions* to Augustine’s, he would have compared his *Confessions* to Augustine’s, not - as he does in the *Neuchâtel Preface* - to Cardan’s *De Vita Propria* or to Montaigne’s *Essais*.<sup>5)</sup> D. G. Wright also objected

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2) Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

3) Jean Guéhenno, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 141. Lionel Gassman also mentions the similar point. He says that Rousseau by the title of *Confessions* invites the readers to compare two popular *Confessions* in his time, namely, Augustine’s *Confessions* and Duclô’s *Confessions du Comte de \*\*\**. Gossman, Lionel, “The Innocent Art of Confession and Reverie,” *Daedalus* 107 (1978), 60.

4) Ronald Grimsley, “Book Review on Ann Hartle’s ‘The Modern Self in Rousseau’s *Confessions*, A Reply to St. Augustine,’” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23(4) (1985, October), 592.

5) Jacques Voisine, “Confessions,” *Dictionnaire de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, publié sous la direction de Raymond Trousson et Frédéric S. Eigeldinger (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), 156-157.

to this comparison. He agreed that there are some similar episodes in the two *Confessions*, but “given the common biblical source for each of these writers, and given that Rousseau has already demonstrated a strong investment in the Eden story in his earlier writings,” Wright rejected that Rousseau’s *Confessions* is a reply to Augustine’s.<sup>6)</sup> I, however, hold a different position from theirs and argue that Rousseau, by using the same title, deliberately put the two *Confessions* together as a reply to Augustinian response to the problem of evil.

Augustine’s *Confessions* is a story of his self discovery and salvation. He traced the source of evil and searched for the truth along the life journey, in which he found himself, a sinner and God, the Creator and the Savior. Rousseau’s *Confessions* followed the similar path of self discovery, in which he found himself, a naturally good man and the social institutions as the source of evil. Looking closer to two *Confessions*, I cannot find the exact parallel between two entire books but some similarities and parallels in certain books and episodes. Hence, I agree with Hartle’s second diagram that Augustine’s *Confessions* is divided into two parts by placing Book Eight in the middle.<sup>7)</sup>

The thematic and structural similarities of two *Confessions* are as follows: the given state of man in this world in Book One and then the motivation of the theft in Book Two; the nature of evil and the approach to the truth in Book Seven, and the conversion in Book

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6) D. G. Wright, “Rousseau’s Confessions: The Tragedy of Teleology,” *Journal of Social and Political Thought* 1(4) (2003, January), note 6. <http://www.yorku.ca/jspot/4/rousseau.html>

7) Ann Hartle, *The Modern Self in Rousseau’s Confessions, A Reply to St. Augustine* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

Eight. The picture of the good man and the good life after conversion are discussed in Book Nine. In this paper, I will show Augustine's account of the source of evil in the story of theft and his conversion. Then Rousseau's false accusation to Marion, in which he admitted his weakness as the cause of his fault will be analyzed. This comparison will help us to see Rousseau's clear response to Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin. Rousseau turned the whole discussion of the source of evil from onto-theological discourse to a philosophical and social discourse to pave the path to an ethics based upon human autonomy instead of theistic transcendence.

## 2. The Source of Evil in Augustine's *Confessions*

### 2.1 Augustine's Account in Book Two

In Book Two, according to Augustine's account, there was a pear tree near his vineyard and the fruit was attractive neither in color nor in taste. He went with a gang of delinquent adolescents at night to shake off the fruits. They ate a few and threw the rest to the pigs. Many adolescents get into this kind of mischief. Nonetheless, Augustine used the occasion to examine the motivation of sin. He interpreted the story of the theft of pears as the story of the Fall of man in order to find out the source of evil. If man was born innocent as Adam before the Fall, what made him sin? Augustine investigated the motivation of the theft in terms of gaining the good, yearning for beauty, imitation of God, and for friendship. These motivations, not coincidentally, are mentioned in the Story of Fall of man. According to the Bible, the tempter approached the woman and tested her. Listening to what the

serpent said, the woman was tempted to be like God. She might also dislike the idea of God arbitrarily setting limits upon her. "So when the woman saw that the tree was *good for food*, and that it was a *delight to the eyes*, and that the tree was *to be desired to make one wise*, she took of its fruit and ate."(Gen 3, 6 emphasis added) By a threefold attraction, namely, the fruit was good for food, it was a delight to the eyes, and it would make one wise like God, woman took the fruit and ate. She passed the fruit to Adam and he took it and ate out of his love for her. It seems that those are the motivation of the first sin. Augustine investigated them respectively.

First he examines aesthetic motivation. Beauty is the goal of human action. The love of beauty motivates man to possess beautiful things and sometimes it even pushes Augustine to violate the law to get them. However, clearly this was not the case because the fruits were neither attractive in color nor taste. The attraction of Beauty cannot explain the motivation of his theft.

Second, Augustine examined the moral aspect of the motivation. Is stealing of pears a moral good for him? By nature, man desires to possess what is good, even though the good in his eyes may be bad objectively. Man does not do harm to himself intentionally. If a man commits a crime, he must think that he got a good that outweighs his possible punishment for the crime. It is unreasonable to believe that man sins for the sake of sin and gains nothing good out of it. However, Augustine did not obtain any good out of his thieving of pears since he threw them to the pigs. Thus, neither beauty nor goodness motivated him to steal.

In turn Augustine examined the motivation of perverted imitation of God. Man is created in God's image and likeness. By nature, every human act imitates God's likeness, except when man does not acknowledge God as the ultimate Good and the origin of all goods, and so attempts to replace God with himself. A perverted imitation of God's attribute becomes a motivation for sin by leading man away from God and making him the center of the world. Despite that, a perverted imitation of God is still an action for a good by which man still acknowledges that God's attributes are good to possess. Augustine suspected that the pleasure in breaking the law gave him a deceptive sense of omnipotence, but he knew this is not plausible because he cannot act against the law without being punished, thus revealing his true lack of omnipotence. He queried, "Was it possible to take pleasure in what was illicit for no reason other than it was not allowed?"<sup>8)</sup> Augustine repeated the fundamental question. He found out that there was no thing in the thievery. There was no winner in the theft. The owner of the garden lost his property, the pears. The common good and the justice of the society were damaged. God's commandment and the natural moral law were violated. Most importantly, Augustine and his friends also gained nothing in the thievery. Is his love for his friends, like Adam's love for her woman, the ultimate motivation of the theft? Augustine noticed that he would not have done this crime alone, but why not? If his motive was to insult the authority of God and the owner, he could have done it alone. So it seems that the pleasure he gained from committing the crime derived from his friends.

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8) Augustine, *Confessions*, II, vi, 14.

As he recalled, “As soon as the words spoken ‘Let us go and do it’, one is ashamed not to be shameless.”<sup>9)</sup> Therefore, it is not friendship but the approval of his friends that motivated him to steal. He loved himself and wanted to be loved by others as well. He acted in accordance with his friends’ opinions so he could get their love in return. Nonetheless, what he gained was not the love of friendship but only the avoidance of being rejected. The “not being rejected” gained in the thievery is not love.

In the end, there is no reason either for him to steal or for Adam to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. It is remarkable that Augustine made use of the image of theft for the analysis of the source of evil. In fact he did the theft not for gaining anything but violating the law set by God. In other words, Augustine wanted to say that he usurped God’s lawmaker position. It seems that Augustine had gained something. However, when he replaced God with himself, he was turning away from God to nothingness. Thus, the nature of evil depends upon not so much the object of act as the object of love. Theft is a sin against God for which Augustine accepted responsibility. However, Augustine did not satisfied with this answer yet and he finally found the ultimate source of evil in his conversion.

## 2.2 The Source of Evil in Book Eight

### 2.2.1 Divided Will: The Legacy of Original Sin

The battle in his mind between two forces is the crucial episode in which Augustine discussed the nature and the source of evil. What was

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9) Augustine, *Confessions*, II, ix, 17(Emphasis added).

going on in his mind?

Augustine used to struggle with external influences - parents, teachers and friends - that led him to sin, so they should be responsible for his sins. He, in particular, examined the feeling of shame as the source of evil in the theft of pear in Book Two. Augustine noticed in that event that he would not have done this crime alone, but why not? If his motive was to insult the authority of God and the owner, he could have done it alone. So it seems that the pleasure he gained from committing the crime derived from his friends. However, it is not friendship itself but the approval of his friends that motivated him to steal. He loved himself and wanted to be loved by others as well. He acted in accordance with his friends' opinions so he could get their love in return. Nonetheless, what he gained was not the love of friendship but only the avoidance of being rejected. The "not being rejected" gained in the thievery is not love. Augustine, however, did not satisfy with this answer.

Later on in Milan, the inner conflict shifted from those external factors to his mind as the battlefield where his will to serve God wrestled with the habit of passion. How are sinful habits formed? On the etiology of vice and sin Augustine wrote, "The consequence of a distorted will is passion. By servitude to passion, the habit is formed, and the habit to which there is no resistance, becomes necessity."<sup>10)</sup> The disoriented desires led Augustine towards sexual objects that aroused his passion. Pursuing his disordered sexual passion for many times thus formed a habit. Therefore, neither the family nor the society

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10) Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, v, 10.

but the distorted will is the source of the passion and the sexual habit. However, what distorts the will? If external factors cannot be blamed, what is accountable for the evil act?

Augustine said that he was responsible for the evil act because he had consented to the will's disoriented desire. "But I was responsible for the fact that habit had become so embattled against me; for it was me with my consent that I came to the place in which I did not wish to be. Who has the right to object if a sinner incurs a just penalty?"<sup>11)</sup> Augustine clearly stated that he had decided to pursue created things instead of God; therefore, he had to undergo a just punishment. Why then did Augustine will what he knew to be bad? If one should only will what he thinks is good, why did he consent to do what he knew was bad?

Augustine, the first one to formally articulate the freedom of the will, asserts that for an action to be voluntary, three conditions must be present: namely, knowledge of good, objectively possible alternatives among which to choose, and free consent.<sup>12)</sup> First, man has to be capable of knowing what is good either for him or for others. Otherwise he will not be able to deliberate about what it means to choose to attain the good. Second, there must be alternatives so that one can choose either this or that object; or either to perform this act or not. Third, one has the freedom to consent either to this object(or

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11) Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, v, 10.

12) William Babcock, according to Augustine's thought, makes a good analysis of an act of a moral agent and traces back to the cause of sin and evil. He, however, thinks Augustine has not yet solved the issue of the cause of evil. See William S. Babcock, "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16(1) (1988, Spring).

course of action) or another specified by one's deliberation. Finally, one freely wills to act out one's choice with consent. The first engages the intellect; the second considers the circumstances; and the third involves the will.

Furthermore, there are two subtle aspects of freedom in the third condition of human act: (1) the freedom of the human will to choose either good or bad; and (2) the power to maintain the will of the good. The selection of alternatives suggests the free will of choice (*liberum uoluntatis arbitrium*). After deliberation, the intellect suggests the option for good to the will. However, the free will does not necessarily opt for the suggested good, but may turn to other choices. Augustine said the will requires the power to continue the will to good, and this power he called liberty (*libertas*). Man is at liberty to will what he thinks is good, and is able to exercise a certain control over what he does.

God, then, in the beginning had given man a good will; he had made him in it, for He had made him right. *He had given him an aid*, without which he could not continue in it, if he willed; *but the will itself to continue was left to man's free choice*. He could therefore continue, if he willed, because the aid was not lacking by which he could, and without which he could not, perseveringly hold on to the good that he willed.<sup>13)</sup>

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13) Augustine, *Admonition and Grace*, 11, 32. The treatise is in Saint Augustine, *Christian Instruction, Admonition and Grace, the Christian Combat, Faith, Hope and Charity*, trans. John J. Gavigan, John Courtney Murray, Robert P. Russell, and Bernard M. Peebles (New York: Cima, 1947).

The freedom of choice and liberty are the underlying principles of the act of a moral agent.<sup>14)</sup> In the human act, the moral agent deliberates about the objects of love, and one is free to opt for what one thinks is good among the alternatives; and with liberty one is also able to maintain the option for the outcome of one's deliberation and selection. Otherwise the act is not considered as voluntary and does not deserve a punishment if it is bad.

In contrast to Socrates' concern of the knowledge of good, despite the influence of the Platonists, Augustine emphasized free will and the power of the habits that weakens the will. The focus is no longer on knowledge of good or alternative choices but the ability to will what one knows is good. In his treatise *On Two Souls Against the Manichees*, Augustine said that the will is "an uncompelled movement of mind either to acquire or to avoid losing some object,"<sup>15)</sup> so that while the will is characterized by the freedom to choose, it does not necessarily choose the right thing. For the will to make the right choice that reason presents, it will also need the ability to will efficaciously.<sup>16)</sup> Otherwise, he sins when he does not will the good

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14) Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960), 157. Gilson makes a clear exposition of the distinction between freedom of choice (*liberum uoluntatis arbitrium*) and the ability to persevere the good will (*libertas*). Augustine illustrated the concept of *libertas* in *On Grace and Free Will*, Book II, Chapter 13-14. The treatise is in Saint Augustine, *The Teacher, The Free Choice of the Will, Grace and Free Will*, trans. Robert P. Russell (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1968).

15) It is quoted and translated by Babcock, "Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency," 37. Augustine, *On Two Souls, Against the Manichees*, 10, 14 (Emphasis added). The treatise is in Saint Augustine, *On Two Souls, Against the Manichees*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff (Kessinger Publishing, 2004).

specified by reason. From this perspective, sin is the “will either to keep or to obtain something that justice forbids when there is freedom to abstain.”<sup>17)</sup> The freedom to abstain means the ability to refrain from following evil. “However, what will be more free(in the sense of *libertas*) than the free will(*liberum arbitrium*), when it shall have no power to serve sin?”<sup>18)</sup> Man is free to choose(*liberum arbitrium*) the good presented by reason and he is also free(*libertas*) to consent to abstain from the evil. Thus if man acquired the knowledge of good, but is weighed down by the bad habit and opts for what he knows is bad, he is responsible for his sin. Although Augustine felt that his will was forced by sexual habit to choose what he knows is bad, he consented to it due to moral impotence. He lacked effective liberty. Therefore, his free consent to the object of the bad habit made the act voluntary, and so he was accountable for the act.

In his personal experience, Augustine regarded his habitual lustfulness as another will in his mind. Thus, there were two wills within his mind that led him to different objects of love: one that followed the mind’s command and the other of his passions. Augustine did not excuse himself from blame and punishment because he consented to the necessity connected with habitual desires that compelled him to love the earthly goods instead of God. The sexual habit became greater over time, but before the formation of the habit, Augustine was more effectively freer to decide in accord with the good. Once the bad habit

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16) Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, 15, 31.

17) It is cited by Babcock, “Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency,” 37(Emphasis added).  
Augustine, *On Two Souls, Against the Manichees*, 11, 15.

18) Augustine, *Admonition and Grace*, 11, 32.

was formed, he lost this effective freedom to resist so that the bad habit became dominant. In his fallen state he could not deliver himself from the slavery of sin. But what makes the will distorted?

Ambrose's sermon and the story of the conversion of Victorinus, already convinced Augustine to abandon earthly pleasure to serve God. Rather than willing to serve God, he was morally impotent, due to the effect of bad habit upon his antecedent willingness. He had no doubt that the bad habits were a product of his free consent, so that he himself was responsible. St Paul's writings shed light on his personal experience. "In vain I 'delighted in your law in respect of the inward man; but another law in my members fought against the law of my mind and led me captive in the law of sin which was in my members(Rom 7,22).' The law of sin is the violence of habit by which even the unwilling mind is dragged down and held, as it deserves to be, since by its own choice it slipped into the habit."<sup>19)</sup> Thus, the division of the will.

At times, the power to act is identical with the will, as Augustine realized in the situation when the mind is commanding the limbs or members of the body. It is not always the case that the mind commands itself efficaciously. The mind may command itself to will the good; the will may not follow through. What has happened then? Augustine asserted that the mind has become determined by disordered desires chosen in the past. If the will is conditioned in this way, then its command is not wholehearted, and it loses the power to execute the command. When such an interior division exists, the good will is

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19) Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, v, 12(Emphasis added).

morally impotent. Wishing to serve God, he was drawn by force of bad habit towards earthly pleasure, and so torn between two wills. “So there are two wills. Neither of them is complete, and what is present in the one is lacking to the other.”<sup>20)</sup> Augustine then exclaimed, “It was I. I was neither wholly willing nor wholly unwilling. So I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated from myself.”<sup>21)</sup> There were not two faculties of the will, his will was torn between two objects of love, either to serve God or to enjoy the sexual pleasure. He willed the good and but also he willed the bad. His heart became the battle field of two forces, both belonging to him. Therefore he sinned when his good will, perverted by sexual habit, consented to the earthly pleasure.

In light of St Paul’s letters, Augustine discovered that he was not struggling against external forces, such as the pressure of unfriendly friendship or the sweetness of honor and praises. The power of the external forces was the result of inner corruption. The evil already existed in his heart. The law of sin was in his body, and the weight of habit carried in the members of his body resulted from the perverse will. This conflict between good and evil forces in his heart might easily have led Augustine to Manichean dualism, but he had already rejected the Manichean view concerning the war between good and evil in the human soul. There is no war between good and evil substances invading him. The internal conflict arises when one has to choose among mutually incompatible wills, which can be either good or evil,<sup>22)</sup> because conflict between two forces in the heart is not necessarily a

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20) Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, ix, 21.

21) *Ibid.*, VIII, x, 22.

22) *Ibid.*, VIII, x, 23-24.

war between good and evil. Then what is the nature of the conflict in Augustine's mind leading up to his conversion?

If one returns to Augustine's analysis of the hierarchy of being, one recalls that every being should act according to the measure and the species of its being; and so, for instance, as a rational being, man should contemplate God, the eternal truth rather than indulge in disordered sexual pleasure. In fact, Augustine insisted that both contemplation of God and enjoying sexual pleasure are good, but to prefer sexual pleasure at the expense of contemplation of God is evil. Not the object of love itself that is bad or sinful but willing in a disordered way by not choosing according to the order of being makes the act sinful. It is clear that Augustine said that he willed both the good and the bad. What made him choose the lower order of being? Was he the source of the evil will?

Following St Paul, Augustine wrote, "yet this was not a manifestation of the nature of an alien mind but the punishment suffered in my own mind, And so it was 'not I' that brought this about 'but sin which dwelt in me'(Rom 7,17.20), sin resulting from the punishment of a more freely chosen sin, because I was a son of Adam."<sup>23</sup>) Augustine's notion of original sin was in response to the

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23) Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, x, 22(Emphasis added). Augustine did not go far in investigating what happens at the moment of committing the original sin in the *Confessions*. He dealt with the original sin and the political consequence in Book XIV of *the City of God*. Adam's will was already perverted before he disobeyed God's commandment. However, if fallibility of man is a condition of freedom of choice, how can it become a reality? Augustine explained why first man and the angels who were good made the first twist of will to evil by appealing to the mystery of freedom.

problem of the cause of evil. He now realized that the weight of the sexual habit was in part the punishment of original sin in the concupiscence or the darkening of the intellect and the weakening of the will; this impeded him from willing the good. The sin, which dwelt in him, originated not only from his personal sin but also from the sin inherited from Adam. This inherited disposition had disoriented his will since his birth, the results of which he observed in his behavior as an infant. Inasmuch as he was already born with a distorted will in the sinful world, the probability was high that he would follow passions like pride and shame, which habitually disposed him to sin. Due to the will's being "cursed in on himself" Augustine was not free to will the good virtually since birth and he could not persevere in willing to carry out what he knew as good.

Augustine explained the consequence of Adam's sin in his later work, "At present, however, it is *a punishment of sin* on those to whom this aid [perseverance of the good will] is lacking."<sup>24)</sup> Only Adam could make the free choice of passions. Adam was free to choose good or evil but he lacked the ability of persevering the good will.

But for perseverance in it he [Adam] did need the aid of a grace, without which he was powerless to persevere. He had received the power to persevere, if he *willed*, but he had not the will to use his power of perseverance.... and the fact that he did not will goes back to his *free choice*, which at the time was free in the sense that he could will either good or evil.<sup>25)</sup>

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24) Augustine, *Admonition and Grace*, 11, 32.

25) *Ibid.*, 11, 32(Emphasis added).

Although Adam could get the grace of perseverance of the good will if he willed to ask for it, Adam did not do so and thus he fell into the temptation. “The fact that he did not will to continue was certainly his own fault; as it would have been his own merit, if he had willed to continue.”<sup>26)</sup> The consequence of Adam’s sin was the disobedience to the good will due to concupiscence. Every descendent of Adam inherits a will distorted by disordered desires(concupiscence) at birth. Man is born in a fallen state in which he is not liable to will to do good and also lacks the capacity consistently to carry out what he thinks is good. The distorted will is punishment for Adam’s sin from which no human beings can escape. Augustine wrote that “Actually, the effect of this grace of God in us is that, in recovering and holding on to good, we not only are able to do what we will, but we also will to do what we are able to do.”<sup>27)</sup> Augustine in *Confessions* finally discovered the true source of his moral impotence, in light of the saving grace that makes one once again able not to sin or also to sin again.

Thus, Augustine traced the source of the evil will back to original sin. Because of original sin, Augustine inherited a sinful disposition to evil and was ignorant of God’s goodness. The inherited antecedent bondage of sin was manifested in the pre-conscious sinful disposition of an infant and the distorted will in the adult Augustine’s mind. Thus he replaced God with other creatures and himself as objects of his love. The source of sin is not only pride and shame and sexual habit, but at their root the distorted will. Although Augustine was created good like

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26) Augustine, *Admonition and Grace*, 11, 32(Emphasis added).

27) Ibid.

every other human being, so, too, was he sinful and his heart corrupted since the first moment of his existence in the world. As nature was created good and ordered well by God, Augustine was not naturally evil, but ontologically and naturally good. However, as a historical man his existence was sinful and corrupt. In other words, there is no one who was not born in a fallen state. That is why man is so familiar with evil and not accustomed to good.<sup>28)</sup>

### 2.2.2 The Need of Grace and Its Means

According to Augustine's interpretation of the Word of God in the Scripture, based on his own experience, every man born suffers from the effects of the first sin of Adam. Throughout Augustine's life journey to God, human intelligence as shaped, for example, by Cicero's Hortensius, Aristotle's *Categories*, and Platonist's books, could help him see the goal, but it did not enable him to reach it. The law of sin, which paralyzed his good will, imprisoned him. Man is bound by the anterior bondage of sin from which he cannot save himself. "We have been justly handed over to the ancient sinner, the president of death, who has persuaded us to conform our will to his will which 'did not remain in your truth'(John 8,44)."<sup>29)</sup> Only God's grace mediated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can deliver man from this valley of tears. Man's humble confessions of praise, of faith, and of sin "leads him to the home of bliss, not merely as an end to be perceived but as a realm to live in."<sup>30)</sup> God calls man to be good

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28) Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, xi, 25.

29) *Ibid.*, VII, xxi, 27.

but alone one is not able to attain the goodness. He has to pray to God for the ability to accomplish the willingness. Augustine prayed, “You command continence; grant what you command, and command what you will.”<sup>31)</sup>

Although operative grace was the agent of his conversion, his free will had to cooperate with God’s grace. In Augustine’s conversion, God manifested his saving grace through different concrete means such as the vision of Lady Chastity and the Holy Scripture, inviting Augustine to choose the good. And later he confirmed his conversion through the sacrament of baptism by the Church minister. In the garden in Milan, the vision of Lady Chastity enhanced the delight of the good to him; the Holy Scripture mediated the revelation of the Word of God; Bishop Ambrose of Milan baptized him in the cathedral in Milan. Inasmuch as one is ignorant of the truth, one needs the teaching of the Church. In Augustine’s case, Ambrose’s sermons were essential for him to understand the Word of God. Until Ambrose’s teaching, Augustine had not received the light of the Truth. If the sacrament of baptism is an indispensable threshold of the life of grace, the institutional Church is also the ordinary means of human salvation, where scripture is preached and sacraments administered. Augustine solved the problem of theodicy by proposing that evil is a privation of good and the source of evil is the mystery of free will which influenced by the first sin of Adam.

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30) Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, xx, 26.

31) *Ibid.*, X, xxix, 40.

### 3. The Source of Evil in Rousseau's *Confessions*

#### 3.1 Rousseau Against the Doctrine of Original Sin

For Rousseau, other than writing for self-justification, portraying a self-portrait as a naturally good man is his purpose in writing *Confessions*. He endeavored to delineate the natural goodness of man as the new principle for judgment of human being. But this is clearly opposed to the Christian doctrine of original sin, which states that man is born sinful. Rousseau reflected on the natural goodness of man in all his writings but he speaks it explicitly in the mouth of the Vicar Savoyard in *Émile*.<sup>32)</sup> This evoked the argument between Rousseau and Archbishop Beaumont, which helps us to know Rousseau's criticism of the doctrine of original sin.

In 1762, after the publishing of *Emile*, Christopher Beaumont, the Archbishop of Paris, condemned Rousseau in his pastoral letter. The main criticism was about his principle of natural goodness of man in *Emile*. Archbishop Beaumont objected that Rousseau did “not at all recognize the doctrine of the Holy Scripture and of the Church touching the revolution that has happened in our nature.”<sup>33)</sup> The Archbishop was clearly talking about the doctrine of original sin, which is in direct disagreement with Rousseau's principle of the natural goodness of man. In his response, Rousseau stated that “the fundamental principle of all morality about which I have reasoned in all my Writings and developed in this last one with all the clarity of

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32) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont, Letters Written from the Mountain, an Related Writings*, trans. Christopher Kelly and Judith R. Bush, ed. Christopher and Eve Grace (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), 28.

33) Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, 4.

which I was capable, is that man is a naturally good being, loving justice and order; that there is no original perversity in the human heart, and that the first movements of nature are always right... have shown that all the vices imputed to the human heart are not natural to it.”<sup>34)</sup> He stated his belief that the natural goodness of man is the fundamental principle of all morality and serves as the basis of all his writings. It is not surprising that Archbishop Beaumont criticized Rousseau in his pastoral letter, saying Rousseau’s idea of the natural goodness of man is anti-Christian.

In the Letter to Beaumont, Rousseau refuted the Archbishop’s accusation and criticized the doctrine of original sin under three different aspects; namely, theological, philosophical, and sacramental.<sup>35)</sup> He first challenged the theological foundation of the doctrine and asserts that it is not clearly mentioned in the Scripture. Under the influence of Calvin’s theology, Rousseau only accepted doctrine based on Scripture. He said, “It is not certain, in my view, that this doctrine of original sin, subject as it is to such terrible difficulties, is contained in the Scriptures either as clearly or as harshly as it has pleased the Rhetorician Augustine and our theologians to construct it.”<sup>36)</sup> Rousseau did not deny the narrative of Adam’s sin in the Scripture. It is true that there is a narrative of the first sin of Adam and Eve, but it is not clear whether their sin would transmit to their descendants such terrible consequences. In other words, for Rousseau, this doctrine is only a

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34) Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, 28.

35) Jeremiah Alberg makes a similar examination of Rousseau’s criticism in “Rousseau and Original Sin,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 57(4) (2001), 773-790.

36) Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, 29(Emphasis added).

product of speculation by which, as merely rhetoric, Augustine and other theologians have explained the antecedent sinful bondage on human beings. If this doctrine is not based upon the Scripture, it loses its authority for Rousseau. Moreover, this doctrine only confuses the faith and veils the truth.<sup>37)</sup>

Besides the problem of the theological foundation of the doctrine, Rousseau also queried its philosophical argument. God created man, who consists of body and soul; but according to the doctrine of original sin at Rousseau's time, guilt arises when the body leads the innocent and pure soul to commit the moral sin. If God condemns man to hell because of his bodily sin, it is unfair to man as he is created with these sinful bodily inclinations. This doctrine contradicts God's justice and goodness. Rousseau claimed that the good and just God could scarcely make men vulnerable to sin and then condemn them.<sup>38)</sup> The doctrine of original sin is a blasphemy for Rousseau. Thus the doctrine of original sin is lacking any intrinsic logic.

Furthermore, Rousseau challenged the effect of the sacrament of baptism, which is regarded by the Christian Church as the virtually indispensable means of salvation. Rousseau argued that if original sin is the cause of sins for Adam's descendants, and if all their sins,

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37) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses Together with the Replies to Critics and Essays on the Origin of Languages*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 44. Rousseau criticized that the development of theology, the science of faith, distracts evangelization. He concluded, "In the past we had Saints and no Casuists. Science spreads, and faith disappears. Everyone wants to teach how to act well, and no one wants to learn it; we have all become Doctors, and have ceased to be Christians."

38) Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, 29.

including original sin, are cleansed by the grace of baptism, then a person emerging from the water in the baptismal font is like a newborn Adam coming from the hand of God. However, the newly baptized Christian will contract new impurities again. It amounts to saying the grace of baptism pales in the face of the power of sin. Rousseau asked, "Isn't the blood of Christ powerful enough yet to erase the stain completely, or is it rather an effect of the natural corruption of our flesh, as if God - even independently of original sin - had quite deliberately created us corrupt in order to have the pleasure of punishing us?"<sup>39)</sup> Rousseau saw from the consequences of baptism that original sin is not the source of our sin. Otherwise it would contradict the saving power of Christ and the goodness and justice of God. There is one more question left. If original sin is not the source of our sin, then what is the significance of the sacrament? Do we need sacrament for salvation? Rousseau challenged not only the doctrine of original sin but also the need of the sacrament for salvation.

The doctrine of original sin as accounting for the human likelihood of sinning is based on the Garden of Eden story in Genesis 3. However, Rousseau decried the doctrine, saying it fails to explain why Adam sinned at all. Rousseau refuted this doctrine: "You say we are sinners because of our first father's sin. But why was our first father himself a sinner?"<sup>40)</sup> The authority of the Scripture has not satisfied rational inquiry into the rationale of the first sin. If we sin because of the sinful inclination caused by our first father, then how did the first

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39) Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, 30.

40) *Ibid.*

father sin in the innocent state? He asserted, “Original sin explains everything except its own principle.”<sup>41)</sup> In short, Rousseau held that the doctrine of original sin fails to answer the problem of evil.

Rousseau violently assailed the doctrine of original sin in the Letter to Beaumont. Since the Archbishop condemned Rousseau by means of Pascal’s argument, that there is a mixture of baseness and greatness in human heart, Rousseau did not reply to Augustine’s argument of original sin in the letter.<sup>42)</sup> There is without doubt a clear conflict between the doctrine of original sin and Rousseau’s conception of the natural goodness of man. To justify the new principle of morality, the natural goodness of man, and to provide an alternate explanation of the source of evil, refuting the doctrine of the original sin is strategically correct. Rousseau therefore needed to confront the author of chief theological account of the doctrine, Augustine of Hippo.

### 3.2 Rousseau’s Account of the Source of Evil in Book Eight

#### 3.2.1 Divided Soul: The Social Cause of Evil

Rousseau shifted the discussion of the nature of evil from onto-theological speculation to a philosophical, socio-political issue. In other words, regarding the problem of evil, he abandoned theodicy for anthropodicy. In the experience of inspiration on the road to Vincennes, he grasped that “man is naturally good and that it is from these institutions alone that men become wicked.”<sup>43)</sup> Rousseau did not explain the social cause of evil

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41) Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, 31.

42) *Ibid.*, 31-32. Rousseau laughs at the Archbishop that His Excellence borrows the pagan philosophy of the Vicar to say that the Vicar does not explain what he has explained.

after the inspiration. However, his calumny of Marion is a good example to compare with Augustine's divided will in the struggle against the bondage of sin.

In the sudden inspiration, another universe dawned upon Jean-Jacques in which man is naturally good, and that man became wicked was from society's institutions alone. In terms of this new universe Jean-Jacques could reconcile the division between the natural beauty of Zuleika and her miserable social condition.<sup>44)</sup> Zuleika was neither a goddess nor a monster but a naturally good person. Social institutions debased her to become a prostitute. Rousseau asked as a young boy in Book One, "How could I have become wicked, since under my eyes I had only examples of gentleness, and around me only the best people in the world?"<sup>45)</sup> The social cause of evil explained why a good person became wicked in the society. Rousseau thought that the insight occasioned by inspiration explained the source of evil better than the doctrine of original sin.

Archbishop Beaumont followed the Augustinian teaching when he stated in his pastoral letter that the Holy Scripture and Church doctrine disclosed the mystery of man's heart, where the desire to live in accord with truth struggles against the penchant to vice by the doctrine of original sin. Because of the deplorable fall of our first father, man is subject to disordered inclination. Man needs God's grace and the Church teaching of Scripture and celebration of the sacraments, in order

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43) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 298.

44) *Ibid.*, 270-271.

45) *Ibid.*, 9.

to be a good man and a good citizen.<sup>46)</sup> The conversion experience of Augustine recounted in *his Confessions* confirms this doctrine.

However, Rousseau countered that the doctrine of original sin is not a sufficient answer to the problem of theodicy. If God were good and the body was created good, then why does He allow man to be dragged by his sexual desire? Why does He put man into this situation? According to Augustine's interpretation of the Genesis, one of the consequences of the first sin of Adam is the disobedience of God's commandment for the sake of concupiscence. Via the mouth of the Vicar of Savoyard Rousseau said that although it is true that the bodily passions lead man to act against the general order of nature, for as long as man makes good use of his freedom, the temptations to disorder actually witness virtue.<sup>47)</sup> However, Augustine's personal experience in *Confessions* seems to demonstrate that man was born with sinful inclinations, which compromised his effective freedom. The consequence of the original sin is the distorted will rendering man unable to choose the good freely. Like the Pelagian heretics, Rousseau claimed that any unavoidable act is not sinful. Therefore it is unfair of God to impute moral responsibility to a person who is compelled to sin due to original sin. The Savoyard Vicar objected to the doctrine of Original Sin that "it is doubtless no longer in their [men's] power not to be wicked and weak; but not becoming so was in their power."<sup>48)</sup> Furthermore, the doctrine of original sin fails to explain the source of

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46) Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, 4.

47) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 292.

48) *Ibid.*, 293.

evil. Why did Adam sin? Rousseau criticized the doctrine of original sin because it explains everything except its own principle, which itself has to be explained. Rousseau claimed that his explanation in terms of natural goodness and the social cause of evil is a better account of how man falls into the hands of devil. We are going to examine the incident of calumination of Marion to concretize Rousseau's new insight on the occasion of his inspiration.

### 3.2.2 Weakness and Wickedness

The incident took place in Mme de Vercellis' house. Jean-Jacques' relationships with the other people there set the social and psychological conditions for his false accusation of Marion. First, his relationship with Mme de Vercellis caused a separation of his inner being from his appearance. The social convention at that time demanded people to observe the custom in which there was no room for personal feelings and for ideas to play a role. Duties and virtues took priority over personal interests. Mme de Vercellis was an extraordinarily strong and virtuous woman but she related to others with a cold manner. "That strength of character sometimes went to the point of coldness. She [Mme de Vercellis] always appeared to me as little sensitive to others as to herself, and when she did good for the unfortunate, it was to do what was good in itself rather than out of a genuine commiseration."<sup>49)</sup>

Jean-Jacques was hired as a lackey in Mme de Vercellis' house and he expected to earn a decent fortune there.<sup>50)</sup> He was assigned to take

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49) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 68.

50) *Ibid.*, 67-70.

down what Mme de Vercellis dictated to him. Since Mme de Vercellis was a noble and virtuous woman who was philanthropic, Rousseau expected that she would naturally show affection to him. However, it did not turn out as he expected. At first, Mme de Vercellis did show her interest in him and asked him about his letters to Mme de Warens in which Jean-Jacques expressed his feelings. But as a virtuous woman she did not show her emotions or affection after reading the letters, following the social convention at that time. People were to act and speak according to their social role; their inner self or feelings did not count in the social relation. There was to be no mutual sharing of ideas and feelings among different social classes. By following the social convention at that time, Mme de Vercellis' cold manners prevented Rousseau from expressing his feelings to her as well. Thus, he replied to her in a low and timid voice, which bored Mme de Vercellis. She lost all interest in conversing with him and only talked to him about business. "She judged me less upon what I was than upon what she had made me, and as a result of seeing nothing but a lackey in me, she prevented me from appearing as anything else to her."<sup>51)</sup> He became reserved and timid in her house and behaved as nothing more than a lackey. Rousseau was convinced that the social order at that time in France produced only hypocrites who appeared virtuous to others but veiled their real personal feelings and self-interests.

Moreover, Jean-Jacques believed that he was not being put in the right position in Mme de Vercellis' house. He was talented and

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51) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 68.

deserved more. Jean-Jacques' performance threatened the interests of the head of household, M. Lorenzy and his wife. They were afraid that they might receive fewer bequests if Mme de Vercellis appreciated Jean-Jacques more. They kept Jean-Jacques from the eyes of Mme de Vercellis so she would forget about him when she wrote her will. When Mme de Vercellis died, Jean-Jacques got only thirty livres and the new suit he had on. He inherited less than other servants. Rousseau thought that this was the result of a plot of the jealous Lorenzy; otherwise he would have got more. Working at the same place, it was inevitable that Jean-Jacques's interests were in conflict with those of the other servants. He, as a weak and powerless lackey, was not able to compete with the head of household. Doomed to lose the game, Jean-Jacques, proud of his talent and jealous of his colleagues, was disappointed in the result. This feeling of frustration and injustice weakened his will to resist temptation.

During the dissolution of the household after the death of Mme de Vercellis, many things were mislaid and this situation tempted Jean-Jacques, who took an old pink and silver colored ribbon from Mlle Pontal. Later on, Mlle Pontal realized that the ribbon was missing and found it on Jean-Jacques. During the interrogation, Jean-Jacques struggled over whether to confess his crime or to insist on his innocence. "I faltered, I stammered, and finally, blushing, I said that it was Marion who gave it to me."<sup>52</sup>) Having chosen the latter, he calumniated Marion, a servant in the house, as the thief. When M. and Mme Lorenzy called Marion to verify Jean-Jacques' accusation, she

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52) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 70.

denied she had done it, but Jean-Jacques insisted that Marion gave him the ribbon. Because the truth was unable to be verified, both were dismissed from service. For Rousseau this episode showed that the social environment and psychological state of man play a decisive role in human wrong doings. To put it another way, man's naturally good will was weakened by the social environment and by his psychological state of mind, and so one was unable to choose good as he otherwise would have chosen to do.

Jean-Jacques committed two faults in this case: he stole the ribbon and he lied and calumniated Marion. The need for friendship motivated the first fault. "When I accused that unfortunate girl, it is bizarre but true that my friendship for her was the cause."<sup>53</sup>) He wanted to give the ribbon to Marion since he liked her and would like to become her friend. With this in mind, the mislaid ribbon became a temptation to him. Thus he acted immorally out of a good motivation by violating the right of property. However, Jean-Jacques might not have thought that was a theft in the first place, since he believed that he was being mistreated in Mme de Vercellis' bequest, in his mind, he just took what he deserved. He did not count it as theft, which is why he did not even try to hide it. In his first fault, he was fooled by his imagination into subjectively thinking that it was not wrong to take the ribbon to give to Marion. The readers are supposed to understand the social and psychological factors that put Rousseau in an unexpected situation in which he felt compelled to do the second fault.

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53) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 72.

In addition, three more factors of denaturation influenced him to commit the fault. First, he had learned from the experience of being falsely accused by M. Lambercier<sup>54)</sup> and the principle of judgment in Mme de Vercellis' house: namely, one cannot know the inner self of others and man only judges by appearance, Rousseau manipulated both the discrepancy between the inner self and its appearance and the limitations of human reasoning to his advantage. He insisted on making an occasion that could not be adequately verified by the limited evidence.

The second factor was that the end motivated by good feeling was implemented by bad means. He wanted to give the ribbon to Marion for the sake of friendship, which is a good feeling. Just as the journeyman who asked him to steal the asparagus for friendship had misled him,<sup>55)</sup> he was also misled by his imaginations persuading him that his talent deserved to have a higher place and to have received more from Mme de Vercellis' bequest. Due to the badly directed good feeling, he took the ribbon.

Finally, the bad judgment made under the influence of the badly directed feeling put Jean-Jacques in a situation that conflicted with Marion's interest. In this situation, if Jean-Jacques were willing to accept the consequences of his public confession of wrongdoing, he would lose his public esteem and be shamed. If not, he had to find a scapegoat or a victim. He acted on behalf of his public regard, the object of *amour-propre*, at the expense of Marion's reputation and her job.

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54) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 16-18.

55) *Ibid.*, 28.

Shame was the artificial passion that was the key to his calumny of Marion. When the ribbon was found at his place, he knew he had committed a crime. In that unexpected situation, he was caught up in the double feeling of shame: he was ashamed of his private self, who stole the ribbon; at the same time, since he had been summoned to account amidst his colleagues, he was also ashamed of exposing his private self, which would ruin the esteem of his public self in the house. The latter shame compelled him to put on his innocent appearance, and to commit the second fault of lying and calumniating Marion. At the moment of the false accusation of Marion, even though he was willing to confess his fault to Comte de la Roque personally in private, fear of losing public esteem compelled him to insist on the false accusation. Shame kept Jean-Jacques' will from choosing the good.

Rousseau's account emphasized the impact of shame in the decision-making process and on the movement of his soul. During the process, Jean-Jacques was fully aware that he could choose either to confess publicly or to calumniate Marion. His inner self urged him to confess to Comte de la Roque. "If they had allowed me to return to myself, I would have infallibly declared everything. If M. de la Roque had taken me aside, if he had said to me, 'Don't ruin this poor girl, if you are guilty admit it to me. I would have thrown myself at his feet instantly.'"<sup>56</sup>) Although he was free to choose, he lacked the liberty(in Augustine's sense of efficacious freedom) to do what he thought was right and what his inner self really intended to do. His fear of shame

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56) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 72.

did not give him the freedom to admit his fault. "I fear only the shame; but I feared it more than death, more than crime, more than everything in the world... invincible shame out weighed everything, shame alone caused my impudence."<sup>57)</sup>

Augustine felt a similar struggle during the period leading up to his conversion. He wanted to opt for God but his will at the same time was way laid by his sexual habit. Augustine's will was so weak that he could only sigh for his miserable weakness of will and begged for God's grace. Although he did not intend to continue in sin, his will consented to doing so. He was guilty of his sin and deserved punishment. He discovered that his perverse will was due to the first sin of Adam. While Jean-Jacques was struggling in the presence of Marion, his master and colleagues, he was overwhelmed by the fear of shame. The fear of shame came from his *amour-propre*. His public value was the highest good at that moment, and thus he was afraid of shame more than death. In other words, the value of his life was built upon the public opinion of others. He did not have the liberty to follow his heart in this situation. In sum, Jean-Jacques was naturally good but the social relations and the consequent psychological state of mind that weakened him became the source of his wickedness.

For Rousseau, the social relationships are the source of *amour-propre*. Jean-Jacques' passions of pride and vanity could be traced back to his reading of novels. His fear of shame was formed when he was living with M. and Mlle Lambercier. He said, "To be loved by everyone who approached me was my keenest desire..."

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57) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 72.

everything nourished the inclination which my heart received from nature. I knew nothing as charming as to see the whole world content with me and with everything.”<sup>58)</sup> This echoed the genesis of *amour-propre* in the *Second Discourse*’s state of nature. When the natural men and women sang and danced together in front of the huts or around a big tree, “everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself, and public esteem acquired a value... and this was the first step at once toward inequality and vice: from these first preferences arose vanity and contempt on the one hand, shame and envy on the other.”<sup>59)</sup> At the beginning of his social relationships, Jean-Jacques was very sensitive to other people’s opinions of him. The yearning for love made him acutely sensitive to shame. Disappointment with some significant people in his life enhanced his feeling of shame. Jean-Jacques feared failure in public less than disappointing his beloved Mlle Lambercier. “For although little sensitive to praise I was always very much so to shame.”<sup>60)</sup> When Jean-Jacques was working in Mme de Vercellis’ house, he was no longer innocent but was susceptible to pride and shame. It was not surprising that shame played the major part in his false accusation of Marion. Rousseau’s explanation of the cause of his false accusation of Marion demonstrated to his readers the source of evil, what makes man does harm to others. Rousseau showed that human wickedness comes from the weakness of the will caused by shame. Furthermore, he assured the readers that he was not wicked by nature or at birth. Augustine’s

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58) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 12.

59) Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, 175.

60) Rousseau, *The Confessions and the Correspondence*, 12.

self-portrait depicted an innate sinner who was corrupted by original sin at birth. On the contrary, Rousseau's self-portrait delineated a naturally good man who became wicked because of his weakness of will. Social institutions misdirect human self-love, which becomes the source of their weakness.

#### 4. Conclusion

By comparing it with Augustine's *Confessions*, it is clear that Rousseau's understanding of human nature and the source of evil rejects the traditional Christian view. Rousseau ingeniously composed his *Confessions* with a structural and thematical similarity to Augustine's *Confessions* in order to refute Augustine's theology and to convey his own answer to the problem of alienated secular society.

The structural and thematic comparison between Augustine's and Rousseau's *Confessions* showed their similarities and differences in philosophy and theology. Some scholars ascribe a pessimistic view of human nature to Augustine and an optimistic view to Rousseau. Our comparison showed that both of them are both optimistic and pessimistic. On the one hand, Augustine is optimistic about human nature because God granted the gift of the human heart, which makes it restless until man rests in God, and Rousseau is optimistic about human nature because the natural goodness of man remains intact in the corrupt society. Man can retain his natural goodness in a corrupt society as Rousseau demonstrated in the *Social Contract*, *Emile* and the *Confessions*. On the other hand, they are also both pessimistic. Augustine is pessimistic about human nature because man suffers

punishment for original sin. Man is ignorant of the truth and God, his ultimate happiness. He could be led astray by different philosophies and religions, as depicted in Augustine's *Confessions*. Furthermore, man confuses his innate yearning for God, *caritas*, with the desires of the flesh, *cupidita*. He chases after the wrong object of love without being aware of his error. Yet even when man knows the right object of love, he is too weak to follow the instruction of reason. Man's disordered carnal desires do not obey his reason. Augustine traced the source of human weakness to the punishment for the original sin. Rousseau also held a pessimistic view of humanity. The civil man, driven by *amour-propre*, chases after vanity and recognition by others. Living in society in which self-interests are in conflict with duty, he inevitably does himself good at the expense of others. Rousseau ascribed the source of evil to social institutions. Shame and pride, passions and erroneous reasoning, which are the sources of weakness, are engendered by society.

Augustine knew that man, suffering from the punishment of original sin and from moral and physical evil, could not attain ultimate happiness in this world by himself. Thus human sinfulness and weakness establish the limits of virtue and politics. Both virtue and political authority are means to God, the supreme good of man. Although man is willing to practice virtue, he is too weak to do so effectively and consistently. Man is not able to practice virtue habitually without God's grace. For instance, man needs God's guidance through Scripture and Church teachings to foster the virtue of prudence, which discerns the good action from the bad. The political

authority of the earthly city only maintains a temporal peace in which man can pursue his material well-being. By coercive power temporal laws can regulate men to do no harm and to do good when necessary to his fellows; and submission to the temporal authority does teach man humility, which is a cure for sin.

Rousseau also had a profound understanding of the limits of virtue and politics. He understood virtue as the strength to conquer passions, while holding that only very few men are really virtuous or morally strong. People are weak and they are only able to conquer their passions occasionally, as Jean-Jacques did. Moreover, he suggests that political society, based not on self-interest but the morality of duty, can only be realized under certain conditions. Both Augustine and Rousseau were pessimistic and optimistic, but in different ways due to their different understandings of the source of man's natural goodness and evil. Why did Rousseau propose an alternative theory of human nature? He thought Augustinian theology of sin and salvation inadequate because it could not cope with the new challenges of the modern society, and so he rejected it radically.

After the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church gradually lost its dominance in Western Europe. The rise of Renaissance humanism and the Protestant Reformation reconstructed the socio-political and religious contours of Western society. The Catholic Church was no longer the only Christian denomination in society in the West. One could be an unbeliever or a Protestant. A pluralistic secular society had taken shape. Traditional Christian doctrines on morality had difficulty coping with the challenges of this pluralistic secular society. Rousseau saw the

disproportion between aspects of the Augustinian theology of two cities, as based upon Augustine's theology of sin and grace, so he proposed a theory of ethics and politics founded upon the principle of the natural goodness of man instead of God. Stated in modern parlance, he shifted the focus from theistic heteronomy to human autonomy, and from an alienating transcendence to an empowering immanence. The meaning of the human self is no longer related to the transcendent God but the immanent good self. Rousseau spared God from the responsibility of evil and also of salvation. He finally established a morality and politics within a self-sufficient and immanent realm.

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## 루소의 『고백록』에서의 악의 원천: 아우구스티누스의 『고백록』에 대한 한 응답

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본 논문은 악의 원천에 관한 루소의 『고백록』에서의 설명이 아우구스티누스의 『고백록』에 대한 응답이었다는 것을 보인다. 루소가 자신의 자서전의 이름으로 ‘고백록’을 택한 것은 독자로 하여금 자신의 책을 아우구스티누스의 자서전과 관련하여 읽도록 의도한 것이라고 본다. 두 『고백록』은 주제와 구조에 있어서 유사점을 보인다. 그리고 그 두 책의 주된 주제는 악의 문제와 인간의 구원이다. 본 논문은 이러한 비교적 관점으로부터 두 『고백록』을 함께 자세히 읽으며 특히 악의 원천에 대한 두 책에서의 주된 기술에 초점을 맞춘다. 두 책에 대한 이러한 자세한 주석적인 비교 검토는 루소가 악의 문제에 대한 자신의 세속적 설명을 아우구스티누스의 설명, 특히 아우구스티누스의 원죄론에 대한 응답으로서 의도하였다는 사실을 분명히 이해하도록 도와준다. 루소는 악의 원천에 관한 논의를 완전히 뒤엎어서 존재론적이고 신학적인 논의로부터 철학적이고 사회적인 논의로 전환하였고, 그리하여 그의 논의는 유신론적인 초월성이 아니라 인간의 자주성에 기초한 윤리에로의 길을 열었다. 악의 문제에 대한 루소의 세속적 설명은 인간의 구원의 문제를 신과의 관련으로부터 떼어내어 인간의 마음 자체에 귀속시켰던 것이다.

**주제어:** 루소, 아우구스티누스, 자서전, 고백록, 악의 문제, 원죄, 윤리

**The Source of Evil in Rousseau's *Confessions*:  
A Reply to Augustine's *Confessions***

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This article argues that Rousseau's account of the source of evil in his *Confessions* was in fact a reply to Augustine's *Confessions*. By taking *Confessions* as the title of his autobiography, it believes, Rousseau wanted his readers to relate his book to Augustine's. There are thematic and structural similarities in two *Confessions*. And the main themes of both *Confessions* are problem of evil and human salvation. This article, therefore, reads very closely both *Confessions* together in this comparative perspective, especially some key accounts of the source of evil in two *Confessions*. It is only this detailed exegetical consideration of both texts in comparison that leads us to clear and full understanding that Rousseau intended his secular account of the problem of evil to be a response to Augustine's account, especially to Augustine's doctrine of original sin. Rousseau turned around the whole discussion of the source of evil from an ontological and theological discourse to a philosophical and social discourse, so as to pave the way to an ethics that is based upon human autonomy instead of theistic transcendence. Rousseau's secular account of problem of evil,

therefore, took the human salvation away from God, and attributed it to the human heart itself.

**Key Words:** Rousseau, Augustine, autobiography, Confessions, problem of evil, original sin, ethics

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