

AUGUSTINE ON LUST

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King David had at least six wives and five concubines.¹ Yet still he lusts after Bathsheba and felt compelled to sleep with her. The adventurer and diplomat Giacomo Casanova claims in his memoir to have had sex with 122 women. Various sportsmen, actors and male celebrities are reported from time to time as having slept with dozens or even hundreds of women. Men reading this chapter, who may have slept with only one or zero women, have moments when they wish they were King David, Casanova, or the others.

Let's face it: this is a chapter about men, by a man in conversation with another man, about something particularly experienced by men. The extent to which the reflections of this chapter are of use to women will be for them to judge, but what is perhaps most 'useful' is that it concerns men taking responsibility for their sexual thoughts and feelings. Like the biblical authors, Augustine did not turn male sexual lust into a woman's problem. He opposed those who blamed women, and

even now he reminds men that each man finally has to do business with this vice.

However, we may find that Augustine's investigation helps all who struggle with intense sexual thoughts and feelings, whether male or female. And he may assist us in our other desperate longings, whether sexual or not.

Augustine's defence of the body

But—what are we playing at here? Why would sexual thoughts and feelings be something to 'struggle' with? Casanova surely didn't. The infamous womanisers of fiction and history—Don Juan, James Bond, Rasputin, and so on—would laugh at the idea of sexual thoughts and feelings being a 'struggle'. They wouldn't care if we called them 'lustful', and would suggest that lust is only a 'struggle' because we call it a 'struggle'. If you just go with it, the 'problem' goes away and becomes fun.

Therefore many objectors argue that Christians 'struggle' with sexual thoughts and feelings because Christianity has bred a subtle but deep hatred of the body and its sexuality. Some also blame Augustine as the founder of such attitudes. For one commentator, Christianity displays a 'hatred of this world and of the body'.² She thinks Augustine helped to shape this view by teaching that our errors of judgment are 'rooted in the body itself and its sexuality'³ since people's bodies are just 'incidental accretions from the world of sin'.⁴

People who despise the body and demonise sexual desire can be found in all religions and ideologies, not only among Christians; but Augustine was certainly not one of them.

There is no need, then, in the matter of our sins and vices, to do injustice to our Creator by accusing the nature of flesh, which, of its own kind and in its due place, is good. But it is

not good for anyone to forsake⁵ the good Creator and to live according to a created good ...

In other words, our sins and vices are not the fault of our physical ‘flesh’, which God has made good. That assertion is bedrock for Augustine. ‘The nature of the original fault had, for Augustine, nothing essentially to do with the creation of the body⁶ because ‘Augustine had come to a firmly-rooted idea of the essential goodness of created things’.⁷ He also discovers the excellence of the body through Jesus Christ:

[T]he good and true Mediator showed that it is sin which is evil, and not the substance or nature of the flesh. He showed that a body of flesh and a human soul could be assumed and retained without sin, and laid aside at death, and changed into something better by resurrection.⁸

Augustine’s high view of our sexuality is connected to his high view of the body, for ‘what pertains more closely to a body than its sex?’⁹

How good goes bad

What really interests him, though, is the way something so good can often ‘malfunction’ to produce great evil. Augustine sums up another of his great themes when he observes that ‘it is not good for anyone to forsake the good Creator and to live according to a created good’.¹⁰ Evil happens when we lose perspective, when we *stop seeing things as they really are*, when some good thing is no longer enjoyed in its ‘due place’ but as an end in itself and we desert God for it. This logic of good things ‘malfunctioning’ brings Augustine to speak against what he calls ‘concupiscence’—those *strong desires* that spring from within our bodies, by which we are sometimes propelled into

evil. We can be ‘concupiscent’ for all sorts of things: power, food, money, recognition. We can also be ‘concupiscent’ for sex, which is what is usually meant by the term ‘lust’.

It is worth noting that sexual lust was not a major focus in Augustine’s investigation of concupiscence. For example, the first reference to sexual lust in his enormous *City of God* occurs after fourteen and a half chapters, and then only as one among a list of many strong desires that humans typically experience. Conversely, when he specifically addresses sexual lust, he immediately thinks of our other strong desires as well.¹¹

Augustine was fascinated by the common denominator between sexual lust and other kinds of strong desire: the way humans seem to be *voracious* and *insatiable* for what is good. We fall into the trap of thinking that because a thing is desirable we can never get enough of it. We switch into a kind of overdrive to soak up as much of the good thing as we can. The desperation that people display from infancy for everything good is seamless with the desperation that many people experience, as adults, for sex.

Augustine’s revolution (and his mistake)

When he does turn to examine sexual desire specifically, Augustine tries to imagine what sex would be like between Adam and Eve before they committed the first human sin. This is obviously a key moment in what Augustine thought about sex. If he really thought that human sexual desire is a sin springing from a faulty body, then he would imagine that Adam and Eve started out as non-sexual beings. Of course the Bible says no such thing. Genesis describes nakedness and a joining to become ‘one’ in verses that are overtly sexual (2:24-25), and which share the Bible’s generally joyous and erotic optimism about married sex. But subsequent to biblical times, some sub-Christian thought

implied that the 'sin' committed by Adam and Eve was their having sex. Is this Augustine's view?

When he imagines them having sex in a sin-free time and place, his vision of this sexual intercourse is a vision of deep peace.¹² He makes one mistake, to which we will return in a moment. But he pictures sex for this innocent couple as being a thankful, joyful, bodily, pleasurable and honest love. So much is the body and sexual pleasure *not* regarded by Augustine as sinful or offensive, that scholars have found he offered a revolutionary *antidote* to the views of his contemporaries. Paul Ramsey shows how Augustine's deep affirmation of human sexuality is actually his *distinguishing* feature.¹³ According to Peter Brown, who is an expert in ancient attitudes to sexuality and the body and also Augustine's foremost biographer, 'the pace of his thought on sexuality was set by firm if courteous disagreement with other Christians and upholders of radical ascetic ideals,' against whom Augustine gives 'a call to moderation'.¹⁴

He had come to envision, in a manner far more consequential than many of his Christian contemporaries, Adam and Eve as fully sexual beings, capable of ... a glorious intercourse, untriven by conflicting desires, without the shadow of sin upon it. ... two fully physical bodies follow[ing] the stirrings of their souls, 'all in a wondrous pitch of perfect peace'.¹⁵

So where does Augustine go wrong? He imagines that Adam would have been able to give his semen to Eve without the involuntary moment of orgasm. This view seems very strange, and it is; but in order to discover what drove it, we need to pause and remember the way Augustine was puzzled by human concupiscence in general.

He is trying to unravel the mystery of human desperation for what is good. What could cause us to act in such demented ways about good things? Babies crave desperately for good things in a way that blends into the way adults crave for good things.

Perhaps the father's orgasmic moment of intense desire, which inaugurates human conception, is to blame. Perhaps this moment of a father's 'lust' commences the continuum of human voracity that appears in all people even from infancy. Augustine's view of 'original sin' then follows: human concupiscence, both sexual and otherwise, is a judgment from God in response to Adam's strong desire to eat the fruit, to 'know good and evil', and to be 'like God'. Ever since, humans are conceived in a concupiscible moment, live concupiscible lives from infancy to death, and so are in solidarity with Adam. (These ideas are used in a discussion with Augustine's Pelagian opponents, which is beyond our scope.) Augustine concludes that sexual lust is a just punishment for humanity—a loss of rational control for a race who had so brazenly sought to seize control.¹⁶ On this view, the problem with concupiscence is the way it overthrows our 'reason', or *our ability to see how things really are*. The involuntary nature of our sexual arousal is, he thinks, a miniature example of this overthrow.

But Augustine has overstated his case. Eight centuries after Augustine, Thomas Aquinas observes that to stop thinking too hard during sexual intercourse and just enjoy it, does not mean we have overthrown the order of reason!¹⁷ That is, we do not stop seeing things as they really are just because we sometimes put thinking on hold for a bit. After all, we do the same when we fall asleep.

In fact Augustine knows that his account has some problems when it comes to marriage. He thinks sex finds its proper home in *marriage*, and so he becomes a bit tangled when trying to defend marriage while also defending his account of sexual lust. Augustine thinks that although a residue of sexual lust remains within marital intercourse, '[c]arnal concupiscence ... must not be ascribed to marriage: it is only to be tolerated in marriage. It is not a good which comes out of the essence of marriage, but an evil which is the accident of original sin.'¹⁸ Sexual pleasure in marriage can be 'honourable'.¹⁹ The 'carnal delight' of marriage

'cannot be lust', he says, when 'used' rightly:²⁰ 'in the indispensable duties of the marriage state,' sexual concupiscence 'exhibits the docility of the slave.'²¹ But his defence of married sex is a bit strained, if only because a desire is not really 'concupiscent' when it is 'docile'! More to the point, a man whose project is to honour his wife until death does not engage in sexual desire in the same way as a womaniser, who lives for his desire and *not* for the woman. The first man lives for his wife in precisely the kind of loving devotion that God wants from married men. Of course 'docile' is not the best word for this kind of sexual desire: wives generally do not want 'docile' husbands! But this picture of sexual desire that is 'docile' as a 'slave' tries to distinguish between sexual lust that serves only itself, and sexual desire that serves a wife and builds a marriage.

So Augustine is a bit fanciful to equate the involuntary nature of sexual desire and orgasm with the overthrow of reason; and he gets a little tangled when trying to defend the good of married sex. But even if his account needs revision at these points, it does perhaps highlight some truths that we easily forget. Modern Westerners love to imagine that *we* have arrived, that ancient views like Augustine's have nothing to offer, and that modern Western sex is all about freedom, liberation and fun. But by wrestling with whether concupiscence even threatens marriage, Augustine reminds us that sexual desire and its expression are not always untrammelled delight. There are darkly terrible secrets stalking our state of modern sexual 'enlightenment', ranging from disorders of desire that damage and deaden marriages, through to sexual obsessions that require imprisonment. These would come as no surprise to Augustine. He knows that even married people walk in the same wilderness into which Adam and Eve were cast. Married sex is no longer always a 'glorious intercourse' where two bodies follow the stirrings of their souls in a wondrous pitch of perfect peace, uncut by conflicting desires. We do well to keep listening to Augustine on lust.

Lust's real problem (from bitter experience)

Augustine's account is on stronger ground when he asserts a fundamental difference between sex within a marriage as compared to sex outside of a marriage. This kind of sex exemplifies people living for their desires, rather than their desires serving someone. For what would propel people to have sex without the commitment of marriage? In these arrangements, sexual concupiscence 'plays the king',²² or as we might say, is in the driver's seat. He sorrows over the breakdowns in relationship that follow from this use of sex. Men become isolated, women are devastatingly disappointed, and children are scorned.

Augustine did not come to this conclusion on theoretical grounds, but from bitter personal experience. He tells of the sadness and ambiguity he caused when he took a young concubine. The story is unbearably poignant. 'I lived with a woman ... a mistress whom I had chosen for no special reason but that my restless passions had alighted on her.' Here, again, was lust 'playing the king'. As is often the case with sexual activity, a loving companionship of sorts did grow: 'she was the only one and I was faithful to her.' Yet this was 'a bargain struck for lust, in which the birth of children is begrudged' ('though, if they come', as a son did in his case, 'we cannot help but love them.') It turns out that when a 'real' wife was chosen for Augustine, his mistress 'was torn from my side as an obstacle to my marriage', 'which crushed my heart to bleeding, because I loved her dearly.'²³

We glimpse in this story all the hallmarks of what modern people still find when they live for sexual desire rather than enjoying it in service of something greater. Although sex obviously is designed for children, unmarried sex despises children. Although the 'bargain' struck between sexual couples is not for permanence, the role of sex to generate and nurture lifelong companionship is realised too late when lovers are torn from each other's side. Men like to imagine that women are recreational objects, but sex creates powerful bonds of affection

that are painful to break. Augustine's lust was not for her good; she probably wept in anguish once used and rejected.

Yet his folly is not yet complete. While on the way to his 'real' marriage, he is impatient for sex and in consolation he takes another mistress, 'more [as] a slave of lust than a true lover of marriage'. He doesn't say too much at this point, but suggests that the marriage itself is thus marred, in part because 'the wound that I had received when my first mistress was wrenched away showed no signs of healing.'²⁴ Sexual lust has turned the goods of sex and marriage into something melancholy and scarred, deranging and distorting relationships that held so much promise and could have been so good.

What can be done for poor, stupid, concupiscent humans? The point of marriage is to create a space of peaceful order where all the goods of sexual relationship can be enjoyed. Marriage is a shelter where peace begins to be found. In 'the restraint of the marriage alliance, contracted for the purpose of having children',²⁵ children can be a welcome fruit of sexual desire. Men learn how to calm and heal their disordered desires, ceasing to range over all humankind, so that one person becomes the grateful and constant focus of their desire. Married people's sexual arousal is glorious, when it is directed toward the marriage partner and toward the conception of children.²⁶

Augustine's advice

We began with some womanisers who evidently did not think of sexual lust as a struggle, but abandoned themselves to it. What would Augustine say to them? In a sense, nothing. He knew their world.

His *Confessions* (where we read about his concubine) make strangely melancholic reading. Its background 'canvas' is alive

with earthy blessings: fertile ground, good food, a vibrant natural environment. Layered upon this canvas are a network of social goods: a loving family, good schooling, the bustle of a city, friends, and spouses. All the little human figures in the story move about on a massive, richly woven tapestry of riches, benefits, excellences and goods.

Against this backdrop of plenty, we read of various conquests in concupiscence: for professional advancement, for friends, for inclusion and recognition, for food, for knowledge, and (we could almost forget!) for sex. It is as if Augustine and his friends are drowning in a sea of plenty, but by grabbing desperately at titbits, life is experienced as a never-ending problem of scarcity. Augustine only ever sees abundance as scarcity, and responds in concupiscence. He has lost the capacity to see things as they really are.

Yet throughout the book he says ‘accept my confessions, O Lord,’²⁷ and we come to realise that Augustine’s ‘confessions’ are apologies—rueful admissions that God’s presence and generosity were always in plain view, but Augustine had lost the capacity to see.

Augustine knows the world of the womaniser. He knows what it is to be so obsessed by lust that no other way makes sense. The capacity for such human blindness is a marvel to Augustine. His reflections on it echo those of Paul the apostle, made four centuries previously, that ‘the outlook of disordered human nature is opposed to God, since it does not submit to God’s Law, and indeed it cannot’ (Romans 8:7, NJB).

However if Augustine were to have a go at persuading the womaniser, he would clarify that the problem of concupiscence is *not* that it points to whatever is pleasurable; and the problem of sexual lust is *not* that it leads to sex. The real problem is the way it deranges relationships. The womaniser who does not care for the women he uses is known by those around him, especially the women, as a problem to be avoided rather than a

cause to be celebrated. But what of womanisers who claim to 'love' women. For them, love is just another kind of hunger. Augustine would ask them—what if love is *not* always hungry, but just content? What if not all love is from hunger? What if love sometimes simply recognises a woman as precious, and treats her accordingly? What Augustine did to his mistress shows that lustful love is finally chaotic and cruel. But contented love can honour one woman for life. Only this kind of love gives a basis for justice and a common life together.²⁸

In the event that some slave to lust wants out, Augustine knows that there are answers to be had, both for someone who wants to change after a lifetime of lust, and for anyone who knows Christ but still struggles with lust.

Flee to the Mediator. Augustine's whole life and work is an amazed response to that 'good and true Mediator' who 'showed that a body of flesh and a human soul could be assumed and retained without sin ... and changed into something better by resurrection.'²⁹ But Jesus Christ is a 'mediator' at this point, not an 'example'. That is, we do not know and follow Christ in order to imitate our way to goodness. If that were possible, then 'Christ died for nothing' (Galatians 2:21). Augustine's fight with the Pelagians pivots upon this verse: if the solution to lust were within our grasp, then Christ died for nothing. But God is not that stupid. Christ's death for sin implies our desperate and hopeless need for one who will 'mediate' between us and God. With Christ as mediator, God forgives our ongoing concupiscent failures, and then gives us his Spirit who begins a deep change in us.

Stop singling out *sexual* lust. Of course we have done precisely that in this book, by calling it a 'deadly sin'! But Augustine wasn't interested in this medieval way of dividing up sins. He thought that sexual lust was one of many lusts that plague us. Augustine was far more disturbed by our lust to dominate one another, as

seen in the Roman lust for power. Indeed, it has been argued that later Augustine's thinking about sexual lust was singled out for display because the post-Constantian empire needed to downplay his attacks on the lust for power, and did so by emphasising his writings on sexual morality.³⁰

Sexual lust, then, is often only one aspect of an overall profile of concupiscence. Do you live to eat, or shop, or travel? Are you envious, or controlling, or desperate to belong, or hungry for recognition? If we think that people and things are generally ours to consume, then of course we will think the same about sex. It will also seem to us that there is *never enough* for us to consume: we will act as if good things are scarce, and we will desperately try to suck them up wherever we see them. We won't deal successfully with lust until we take on this overall lifestyle of desperate voracity.

Settle it, don't stoke it. With the exception of married sex, sexual desire seems to work by 'positive feedback'. Stoking it only makes it worse. If we drink salt-water at sea to ease our thirst, there is a moment of relief, but then a more raging thirst. Likewise with lust: a cycle of positive feedback makes it addictive, like alcohol or heroin. One internet porn user says 'after a not very long break, I start missing porn. I need to get that hit again. And I feel like there's nothing else in life to look forward to.'³¹ (Breaking these cycles of addiction may need the support of communal fellowship or a trained professional.)

Augustine saw this cycle when he observed that although lust generally decreased for the elderly, occasionally it increases in an old person who abandons himself to it. But the cycle of sexual desire also works in the other direction. It can be settled and calmed. Augustine notices the way it decreases for the 'sexually continent',³² by which he means those in whom sex and sexual desire has found its proper home. As we have seen, one proper home is marriage. Married men who are struggling

with lust may need to begin or restart a painful but rewarding process with their wives: apologising for neglect, asking for changes, rediscovering what his wife would like, and suggesting new ways forward. (A reputable trained counsellor may help this process.)

The other proper home for sexual desire, and Augustine's personal practice, is chaste singleness. Paradoxical as it may sound, chaste singleness that remains open to the possibility of marriage is a serious proposal for handling lust. When single people engage in a prosperous network of friendly relationships of service, it is the *absence* of any sexual favouritism in this network that holds them steady.

The ongoing barrage of sexual stimulation we endure is a new development. Perhaps dealing with this barrage should be thought of as part of a wider project, to take control of *all* messages we hear that instruct us to consume. Perhaps we can rediscover how truly boring the television, news media and magazines really are. Perhaps by removing those things from our lives for a time, we might find pleasure again in playing with kids, in coffee with friends, in long walks with our spouse. Perhaps we could rediscover that vast tapestry of plenty within which we are already situated, but which we do not see when we are so busy trying to suck up the tasty titbits that modern media wants to sell us.

Try thankfulness. The *Confessions* are also a picture of an ongoing life of thanks, breathing out glory to God for all the good that is there. Augustine's practice is obviously based upon the biblical authors' myriad practices of thanks and praise. There is not space to list them here; but in biblical logic, thankfulness is the antidote and vaccine for concupiscence. Once we have begun to breath out thanks for all that we have, we begin to see properly again. Little by little, greed becomes boring and pointless.

Remember the future. One of the strangest aspects of Christian thought is the way reflection upon the future often brings calm to the present. Augustine longs with Paul for ‘redemption of the body’ (Romans 7:24) in the kingdom of heaven, ‘where there shall be not only no guilt for sin, but no concupiscence to excite it.’³³ Having to wait is a bit sad. But it is also a relief. For it brings great hope to know that the struggles of the present are not the last word. They are passing, and the little changes that the Holy Spirit makes for people now, are a glimpse of and a down-payment towards this brilliant new future.

BIOGRAPHY OF AUGUSTINE

Augustine was born in 354 and died in 430, which made him remarkably long-lived for his time. He grew up on the Roman empire’s North African fringe during the final days of its imperial greatness.

Although his mother was a Christian, the young Augustine’s middle-class classical education left him unimpressed with Christianity. His lifestyle was littered with ancient belief systems, youthful excess, and careerist obsession. But when seemingly chance events coincided with a troubled mind, at thirty-two Augustine converted to Christianity.

He thought he would become a Christian philosopher. But a visit to church in an African regional town near his birthplace resulted in him becoming their priest in 391, and not long after, their bishop. Augustine pastored, preached and wrote in this role until his death. His early years were opposed to the body-hating ‘Manichees’; his middle years dealt with the century-old church-split involving rebel ‘Donatists’; and his final years restrained the stern moralism of the self-assured ‘Pelagians’.

His life straddled the 9/11 of his day—the first sack of Rome in 410. Rome was supposedly the ‘eternal city’, but its security had been breached in the first of many death-throes. Augustine used these events to point to the truly eternal City of God, pleading with Romans to become members of this city of real peace rather than bloody Roman ‘peace’

Augustine was good at describing what people needed in Jesus. Even today, his Scripture-based, experience-grounded insights continue to bring freedom and to show how Jesus can be said to bring true life.

ENDNOTES

1. David’s wives include Michal (1 Samuel 18:27), who is withdrawn by her father Saul (1 Samuel 25:40) but taken back by David (2 Samuel 3:14f); Ahinoam and Abigail (1 Samuel 27:3, 2 Samuel 3:2-3); Eglah (2 Samuel 3:5); additional unnamed wives (2 Samuel 5:13); and eventually Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:27). Three other women, Maacah, Haggith and Abital, may be concubines (2 Samuel 3:3-4) and additional concubines are unnamed (2 Samuel 5:13).
2. Martha C. Nussbaum, ‘Augustine and Dante on the Ascent of Love’, in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews, (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1999), 86 n.13.
3. Martha C. Nussbaum, ‘Morality and Emotions’ in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig, 10 vols., vol. 6 (London: Routledge, 1998), 561.
4. Nussbaum, ‘Augustine and Dante’, 81.
5. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans* tr. R.W. Dyson, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 588 (XIV.5).
6. Margaret R. Miles, *Augustine on the Body* vol. 31 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 67.
7. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber, 1967), 325.
8. Augustine, *City of God*, 426 (X.24).

9. *Ibid.*, 195 (V.7). Augustine directed this comment against ancient misogynists, in defence of the good of womanhood.
10. *Ibid.*, 588 (XIV.5).
11. Cf. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* ed. Philip Schaff, tr. Peter Holmes and Robert E. Wallis, NPNF 1, vol. V (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987; originally published New York, 1887), 272 (I.20), where sexual lust is just a species of the more generic 'lusts' of 1 John 2:15-17.
12. Augustine, *City of God*, 629 (XIV.26).
13. Cf. *Ibid.*, 628-30 (XIV.26) for his account of sexual intercourse in paradise; and cf. Paul Ramsey, 'Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 no. 1 (1988), 62 & passim.
14. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography (A New Edition with an Epilogue)* (London: Faber, 2000), 500.
15. *Ibid.*, 501, citing a letter by Augustine discovered comparatively recently (Divjak 6*). On this basis, Brown hotly disputes the 'egregious cultural narcissism' that blames Augustine for Western sexual discontents [502], even branding one recent treatment 'a travesty' [518 n.69].
16. Augustine, *The City of God* ed. Philip Schaff, tr. Marcus Dods, NPNF 1, including *On Christian Doctrine*, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988; originally published New York, 1886), 614-18 (XIV.16-18); Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 266 (I.7).
17. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (London: Benzinger Brothers, 1937), vol. 19, 83-84 (3a.supp.41.3.ad6).
18. Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 271 (I.19).
19. *Ibid.*, 291 (II.22).
20. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage* ed. Philip Schaff, tr. C.L. Cornish, NPNF 1, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988; originally published New York, 1887), 407 (§18).
21. Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 269 (I.13).
22. *Ibid.* (I.13).
23. Augustine, *Confessions* tr. R.S. Pine-Coffin, *Penguin Classics* edition, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 72 (IV.2).
24. *Ibid.*, 131 (VI.15).
25. *Ibid.*, 72 (IV.2).
26. Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 274 (I.25). Augustine speaks of 'illicit' uses of sex within marriage, by which he probably means sexual activities that cannot result in conception. While discussion of this matter should be pursued elsewhere, a quick summary of Christian discussion about contraception is needed here. Roman Catholic moral thought has

tended to judge married sexual play, with Augustine, on a 'per-act' basis. If a given sexual act cannot result in children, it is deemed wrong. But Protestant moral thought concluded that the goods arising from marriage—sexual pleasure, companionship and children—are appropriated 'per-marriage'. Therefore Protestants tolerate contraception and enjoy many forms of sexual play in the context of a *marriage* that is gratefully open, over time and fertility permitting, to the bearing and sustenance of children.

27. E.g. Augustine, *Conf.*, 91 (V.1).
28. Augustine, *City of God*, XIX.21.
29. *Ibid.*, 426 (X.24).
30. Gerald I. Bonner, 'Libido and Concupiscentia in St Augustine', in *Studia Patristica: papers presented to the Third International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford 1959)*, ed. Frank Leslie Cross, vol. VI (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), 312-14.
31. Cited in Simon Castles, 'In the grip of a guilty pleasure', *The Age*, 8 October 2006; online: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/gripped-by-a-guilty-pleasure/2006/10/07/1159641569552.html> (accessed 21/12/2006).
32. Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 275 (I.28).
33. *Ibid.*, 279 (I.38).