



IN SEARCH OF BEATITUDE: the teleological aspect and human conduct in Saint Augustine

Waléria Demoner Rossoni¹, Valéria Ângela Colombi Marchesi², Michela Direne Penitente³

¹Master in Public Security from Vila Velha University (2015-2016). Specialist in Philosophy and Theory of Law at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (2014-2015). Specialist in Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure at Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo (2013-2014). Graduated in Law from Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo (2009-2013). Undergraduate student in History at Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (course starts in 2021). Professor at Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC. ²Law degree from Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC (1995), specialization in Civil Law and Civil Procedural Law (1996), in Labor Relations Law (1999) also from Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC, in Family and Succession Law from Faculdade Damásio de Jesus (2018) and a doctorate in Legal and Social Sciences from Universidad Del Museo Social Argentino (2006). She is currently a lawyer for Free Legal Aid and supervisor of the Legal Practice Center at Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC and a full professor at the same institution. ³She holds a Master's degree in Education, Administration and Communication from Universidade de São Marcos (2002) and a Law degree from Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo (1993). She is currently a professor at Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo and a lawyer practicing in the District of Colatina.

ABSTRACT

Certainly, the search for happiness in life, as well as the necessary path to achieve it, has been one of the main motivators of the reflections made by the philosopher Saint Augustine, and is also characterized as the research problem of this study. The aim, then, through an analysis of specific literature, is to present some aspects of Augustinian ethics, with emphasis on the notion of the order of love - ordo amoris. As far as the method is concerned, exploratory research was carried out by means of a bibliographical survey and a description of the characteristics of beatitude in St. Augustine, which, as has been observed, has always unsettled the minds of humanity, since it is in the very essence of mankind to aim for happiness. However, his conception goes beyond the existing mutable goods, referring to the Supreme Good, God, one and triune. Abandoning the idea that philosophy allows and enables knowledge, St. Augustine rests happiness on the supreme anchor, the instrument Creator of all things and of beatitude itself. To this end, given the aforementioned statements, the research is justified by the understanding that the order of love must serve as an artifice for the scope of articulation, so as to constitute invisibility in order to truly achieve supreme happiness. Human beings often seek happiness in corporeal, transitory and earthly goods, resulting in misunderstandings. In St. Augustine, human pride drives natural decline and hinders the search for bliss, resulting in an "blindness" individual. The conclusion is that by overcoming this obstacle, it is possible to achieve true contemplation of divinity and the happiness of the human soul.

Keywords: Beatitude; human action; God; corporeal goods; bliss.



1 INTRODUCTION

Given the contextualization of Augustinian ethics, especially its teleological nature, it is clear that St. Augustine's philosophical idea is to achieve a scope that guides human conduct, the search for happiness, which is precisely God, the instrument Creator of all things and of beatitude itself. This study focused on the philosopher St. Augustine's reflections on the search for a happy life.

The aim of this work was to analyze the specific literature to present some aspects of Augustinian ethics, focusing on the notion of the order of love, known as *ordo amoris*. In the foreground of the research, it was emphasized how the ethics of love must permeate earthly human relations, since, although individuals can only be happy if they have what they want, they first need to know how to position themselves in relation to beings in general, outlining their present life and trying to achieve the immutable good.

It was then emphasized that the order of love must serve as the true articulating device of life, given that this feeling is an invisible sign, but a way to reach the one and true God, in other words, to achieve happiness.

Certainly, St. Augustine realized that in the individual there is a natural desire for God. Man wants to find him, but at the same time he is too distant because of his fallen state. Thus, St. Augustine considered the paths that lead to momentary and transitory happiness to be erroneous, since they are logically based on corporeal and non-perennial goods, and therefore far from pure and uncorrupted truth, referring to the absolute and eternal truth, which is found in God.

For the philosopher, God is the source and essence of all truth, and therefore the search for genuine truth leads to a search for God. To reach this pure and uncorrupted truth, St. Augustine emphasized the importance of interiority and contemplation, which would allow the encounter with a divine spark, which means a portion of the Creator in the human soul.

As a third way out, the need has arisen to define how pride and vanity can get in the way of human beings pursuing their ultimate and greatest goal, happiness. This is because those evil feelings or disordered passions (often referred to as concupiscence or greed) produce a "blindness" peculiar to the human being, in such a way as to make it impossible to observe the true human condition and clear beatitude, certainly preventing the consecration of beatitude. The concupiscence

mentioned, a direct result of the fall of Adam and Eve, can manifest itself in the most diverse ways, such as lust, greed, pride, envy, selfishness, anger and others.

From a methodological point of view, exploratory research was carried out by surveying the bibliography and describing the characteristics of beatitude in St. Augustine, which, as we have seen, has always troubled the minds of humanity, since the desire for happiness is of the very essence of mankind.

Therefore, the purpose of this work was to raise questions about the teleological aspect of the order of human action in St. Augustine, as well as its related concepts, with regard to achieving a happy life and the path to it. Therefore, the primary relevance of this research was to emphasize that, nowadays, happiness is sought in earthly, changeable and transitory things, forgetting the pure and clear truth.

2 THE ETHICAL-TELEOLOGICAL PATH: BEATITUDE IN SAINT AUGUSTINE AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND INTERIORITY

In order to understand the dimension of St. Augustine's thought from the perspective of his teleological vision and the order of action, it is necessary to attest that, from the very first lines of his extensive works, the philosopher considered that the only motive driving the knowledge of philosophy is the desire to be happy. What in fact makes humanity the possessor of beatitude is the goal of goodness, enabling human beings to remove themselves from the ignorance of which they are possessed (Beraldi, 2010).

In fact, every human being has, by essence, the natural desire to be happy and, in order to have access to happiness, philosophy must prevail in their behavior. According to St. Augustine, life is compared to a vast ocean, where navigators of different kinds sail. The mainland is bliss, and the port, in turn, is the philosophy that gives access to it (Costa, 2010).

However, for St. Augustine, all types of navigators are necessarily terribly threatened by an identical obstacle, which is embodied at the entrance to the port: (i) pride and (ii) the passion of vainglory, which prevent them from achieving a happy life (Vaz, 2007).

For Paviani (2004), although happiness is a metaphysical abstraction, a happy life is the most direct way, in the game of language, to express experiences,

difficulties and natural contingencies. Certainly, St. Augustine's proposal for philosophy is that it is not really a goal in the incessant search for beatitude, but actually the way to achieve it.

For Sangalli (1998), a point of convergence between the Augustinian and eudemonist traditions (which seek a state of fullness of being) lies in the fact that the actualization of human potential, especially that which distinguishes men from other animals (reason), is the basis for the pursuit of happiness.

In St. Augustine, we see that it is not just any corporeal good that enables human beings to live happily. Certainly, this much dreamed of and idolized is only possible through an immutable, one and true good: God (Dalpra, 2011).

At various points in his works, St. Augustine points out that the happy life, so sought after and desired, is nothing more than the Creator of all things, a premise common to Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophers (Vaz, 2007).

The happy life is truly a "gift from God", so that it should be sought with total caution and through requests. These alone are not enough to achieve happiness, but rather to lose oneself in divinity (letting go of oneself), which makes it possible to meet the individual and, ultimately, God (Ferreira, 2011).

Despite the wise diagnosis proposed by St. Augustine, there is one feeling that gets in the way of the pursuit of the ultimate human goal: pride. This makes it possible to create a particular "blindness", which makes it impossible to reach the true human condition and bliss (Gracioso, 2012).

In his work "The Trinity", St. Augustine (1995a, p. 378) gives a brief explanation of how the feeling of pride can become an obstacle in the search for beatitude:

Everything that pride wants to do, driven by its own self-interest, is against the laws that govern the world, and is done by means of the body, which man dominates only impartially. Filled with complacency for corporeal forms and movements, and not possessing them in her own interior, she involves herself with the images fixed in her memory, and stains herself with turpitude in a fornication of the imagination, directing all her activities to these ends (St. Augustine, 1995a, p. 378).

From reading the short passage mentioned above, human beings are also led to seek a happy life in corporeal goods, in the sensitivity and transience of the earthly. This occurs due to the domination of the feeling of pride and vanity, which lead the individual to prefer, "the inferior instead of the superior, the creatures instead of the creator" (Gracioso, 2012, p. 15).

In this way, happiness in its fullness has an important peculiarity: a personal encounter with God, guided logically by rationality. Being happy presupposes, above all, an interconnected and serious construction (Gracioso, 2012).

In this perspective, in “Confessions”, St. Augustine (1996, p. 282) teaches that a happy life is directly associated, and intertwined, with the Creator:

A happy life consists of rejoicing in God, of God and for God. This is the happy life, and there is no other. Those who think there is another cling to a joy that isn't real. However, his will shall never turn away from some image of joy (St. Augustine, 1996, p. 282).

Saint Augustine (1990), in his work “The City of God”, teaches that Augustinian beatitude represents the end of the process of restoring the divine image in the human being, since it is capable *of, per se*, liberating from evil and sin. Through this process, the corrupted will shall become perfectly and eternally good will, while reason will express full wisdom.

The path to bliss drives human beings to seek wisdom and good living, which contemplate the ethical and total meaning of existence. The core of the ethical life of humans is the ontological principle of the creature who, created in time in the divine image and likeness, by enjoying the eternal becomes an effective participant in eternity (Mattos, 2011, p. 120-121).

It is mentioned that the aim of linking happiness to the search for the divine demonstrates that it, in pure essence, resides in truth. In Confessions, St. Augustine (1996, p. 283) teaches:

The human soul: blind, languid, clumsy and indecent, tries to hide itself and doesn't want anything to be hidden from it. In punishment, you can't hide the truth, but you hid it. Despite being so unhappy, one wants to find joy in true things rather than false ones. You will be happy when, freed from all illnesses, you rejoice only in the Truth, the origin of all that is true (St. Augustine, 1996, p.283).

In his expositions in the work “Dialogue on Free Will”, St. Augustine (2001) emphasizes that pride is fully capable of producing a peculiar “blindness”, in such a way as to make it completely impossible to see the true human condition, since all individuals have free will, the possibility of choice and total freedom to define their conduct.

Thus, St. Augustine supports the thesis that everyone is responsible for their actions, since God has provided the choice of paths, so that the goodness of the Creator has established the creature's total liberality to choose the direction (Mattos, 2011).

Choice, in essence, is conduct, even if it cannot manifest itself externally. St. Augustine values the free will of the will, going against Manichaeism, which blamed God for evil and sin. However, a controversy arose with the ascetic monk Pelagius of Brittany (350-423), who emphasized man's natural freedom, minimizing the importance of divine grace. For St. Augustine, God's grace is indispensable for the human will to be able to get back on its feet and do good after original sin (HORNICH, 2009).

The relationship between will and freedom, in St. Augustine, is shaped by the action of divine grace. Without it, the will tends to be evil, seeking happiness in material and temporary things. Grace makes the will good by directing it towards the Supreme Good, identified with God, who is the source of infinite virtue and wisdom. Full human freedom consists of submitting to the divine order and finding security in God, something that man only loses through his own will (Hornich, 2009).

St. Augustine's thesis highlights free will as the cause of sin. It is important to mention that this is an intentional departure from God's will, an aversion to the divine and a conversion to created things. When a person sins, they voluntarily deviate from the right path and turn to earthly and temporal objects, thus devaluing what is eternal and immutable. In his view, sin is a choice contrary to love and the right order of things, resulting in a separation from true happiness, which can only be found in God (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

Through conversion and a return to the divine will, we seek to achieve beatitude and harmony with the eternal. In this sense, we can see that human beings have the capacity not to sin and the power to choose between sinning or not sinning. In this context, free will is understood as the cause of sin, since the person has the freedom to decide their actions and can make choices that lead to sin or good (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

Creatures, having been created by the goodness of the Creator, are impregnated with imperfection, which generates the existential gap. Disability is therefore ontological, since human beings are limited by their own fallen condition (Gracioso, 2012).

In this perspective, “man either doesn’t look at himself in order to know himself, or he looks at himself with a sick gaze, thus generating a misdiagnosis of his real condition” (Gracioso, 2012, p. 14).

In his work “Confessions”, St. Augustine recognizes that the individual is also led to seek a happy life in the corporeal and earthly good, in the sensibility of transitory things (Reale; Antiseri, 1990).

In an attempt to solve this problem, the Bishop of Hippo states that self-knowledge is necessary, so that philosophy has another purpose besides self-knowledge, namely the discovery of human origins and their peculiarities (Reale; Antiseri, 1990).

Therefore, from this discovery onwards, beatitude will no longer come from the outside, but from within the human spirit. Certainly, for St. Augustine, interiority - *reditio in se ipsum* - is a process, a movement, just the beginning of the long human journey towards beatitude (Reale; Antiseri, 1990).

All this is not possible without divine help, nor without the mind - *mens* -, which has rational content and intelligence. Without a doubt, St. Augustine assures her a position closer to God, the Highest Good and Creator (Santos, 2008).

The true inspection of the spirit manifests itself with the guidance of the Creator, and it is thanks to Him that the mind is called the most perfect and astute aspect of the human soul. This is because *mens* is made up of both reason and intelligence. When these two basic assumptions are added together, the Augustinian mind is the propulsive instrument closest to God, to the highest excellence (Santos, 2008).

Through his perceptions in search of an explanation for the immutable light that surrounded and disturbed him, St. Augustine identifies it with truth, not just any truth, but truth linked to eternity and charity. As soon as human beings are able to find them, they can attest to the presence of the Supreme God (Strefling, 2014).

It is important to highlight St. Augustine’s incredulity, which led him to conclude that, while God is so intimate to human beings and experienced through feelings of eternity and charity, the Creator is able to surpass everyone, transcending everything (Strefling, 2014).

In his obvious brilliance, St. Augustine manages to explain with precision that the inspection of the spirit is not located on the plane of externality, but only on the inner support, in human unity and in the speech of the heart. Happiness therefore implies the use of *ratio*, since happiness is not possible without truth and wisdom. In

its supreme character, it is linked to the very idea of immortality, a human aspiration (Streffling, 2014).

In this context, “it is not a question of absolutely denying the earthly, the sensorial, since, in Augustine, there is no room for the analogy of the worldly with evil, but of adopting an austere attitude” (Beraldi, 2010, p. 52).

Therefore, true virtue is not achieved by denying the totality of earthly instances, but in the cautious enjoyment of the ephemeral and the adoration of what is greater, absolute and eternal. Since human beings are subject to the contingencies and vicissitudes of life, they can only be happy by possessing what they cannot change (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

St. Augustine’s journey in search of beatitude begins with reading the Holy Scriptures in order to get to know them. Initially, the bishop highlighted the text precisely, considering it humble at the beginning, sublime as it progressed and veiled with extreme mysteries (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

Later, St. Augustine, disillusioned with reading the Holy Scriptures, joined Manichaeism, a religion that claimed to possess true *gnosis*, i.e., superior knowledge. Realizing its total internal confusion, Saint Augustine concluded that Manichaeism sought the supreme truth elsewhere and was riddled with veiled vacuities (Beraldi, 2011).

After living with the Manicheans and their materialist-dualist doctrine for a long time, he gradually became disillusioned, discovering that the supposed truths they were hiding were nothing more than veiled vacuities. Frustrated, Augustine follows the “winds” towards the Academics, and among them, suffers the scourging of the “waves” of the skeptical uncertainty that dominated the eclecticism of the School in that period (Beraldi, 2011, p. 18).

At this stage, the bishop of Hippo became attached to vain things, possessing countless doubts and dependent on externality and the sensible, since he was still unable to perceive beyond what the “eyes” humans are capable of capturing and revealing (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

Emphasizing the weaknesses and shortcomings of Manichaeism, St. Augustine turned to astrology and, later, skepticism. Extremely fashionable at the time, it was abandoned by the bishop as he came to the conclusion that the reality of thought cannot be doubted (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

With Neoplatonism, St. Augustine emphasized the certainty of the divine, which

allowed him to overcome the metaphysical-materialist conception, as well as prove the existence of an absolute and transcendent principle for being. Finally, St. Augustine turns to the human interior and the existence of a Supreme Creator (Strefling, 2014).

3 PARTICIPATION IN SUPREME GOOD AND THE ORIGIN OF EVIL: SAINT AUGUSTINE AND HIS CONFESSIONS

Human creation came about because of the goodness of the Supreme Good, of the Absolute Being. Because they have their origin in goodness, all created things are consistent with the figure of the Creator, since they are the purest signs of divine love (Strefling, 2014).

Through rationality, human beings occupy an important place in creation, which qualifies them to belong to the highest of creatures and eminently below God and the angels (Strefling, 2014).

Created by goodness and the divine will itself, all creatures participate in perfection and, sequentially, are good because they participate in Being par excellence (Strefling, 2014).

However, God alone, in his charity and goodness, is the only absolute being. All the others are relative. Because of immutability, it can be concluded that only God is capable of truly existing. If there is a comparison with God, all creatures have no existence in truth (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

Knowing this reality, St. Augustine emphasizes that the will cannot be determined by something outside of himself, but is found in God himself. It is clear that the origin of creation is God's goodness. For St. Augustine, this participation is the way in which creatures are elevated to the possession of perfection. However, as can be seen, this characteristic cannot be had in its entirety, since then creatures would be absolute (Tamasevicius Filho, 2006).

God created the world with this Goodness in mind, i.e., the world is good because of this free act of will of God. The world has its reason for existing in divine goodness. Now, it is precisely through divine goodness that beings, created by God with his goodness in mind, participate in his perfection (Santos, 2008, p. 29).

Certainly, creation has a striking duality. On the one hand, all things were created by God, who is the source of all goodness and perfection. In this sense,

creation bears the mark of goodness par excellence, as it is the fruit of the divine creative act. It should be noted that St. Augustine argues that God created the world out of nothing, without using any pre-existing matter. This creation from nothing implies that created things have a contingent nature, depending completely on God to exist (Torchia, 1999).

Imperfection is manifested in the fact that created matter is finite, changeable and subject to limitations. The contrast between divine perfection and the imperfection of creation stems from the very limited nature of created things in relation to the Supreme Being, who is infinite, immutable and eternal. (Strefling, 2014).

In "Confessions", St. Augustine (1996, p. 191-192) reflects on the nature of earthly things, considering them good, but not absolutely good:

I saw clearly that corruptible things are good. They couldn't be corrupted if they were extremely good, or if they weren't good at all. If they were absolutely good, they wouldn't be corruptible. And if they weren't good, there would be nothing to corrupt. Corruption is indeed an evil, but it wouldn't be harmful if it didn't diminish a real good. Therefore, either corruption is not an evil, which is impossible, or - and this is certain - everything that is corrupted suffers a decrease in good (St. Augustine, 1996, p. 191-192).

The main mark of human decay is limitation, division and imperfection in its essence. Because they are not identical to the Creator, creatures are, in truth, unending finitude, with no possibility of being fully. So evil is precisely this flaw and lack. Just like the cold, which does not exist physically, evil is not part of reality, since it cannot originate from the Supreme Good (Ferreira, 2011).

Through the definition of free will, St. Augustine redefines the question of evil in a single morality. For him, evil has no ontological nature of its own, being the direct result of disordered love (Ferreira, 2011).

Given the non-ontological nature of evil in St. Augustine (1995b), it is the final consequence of human ill-will, which, by moving away from the good, becomes non-pure. In essence, the intention is not bad, because it comes from the free will given by God, the Absolute Being.

Saint Augustine (1995b), abandoning the Manichaean theory altogether, emphasizes that matter cannot be the cause of evil, nor is it even possible to arrive at an efficient cause of it.

Based on the assumption that all nature is good, since it was created by God,

Augustine abandons the Manichaeian theory, which sought a material cause for the origin of evil, and states that matter cannot be the cause of evil, or that we cannot seek an efficient cause for evil (Costa, 1996, p. 125).

Since the initial sin with Adam and Eve, St. Augustine (1996) has taught that human frailty was informed to creatures by the Creator, so that they would be aware of it and be content with what they are. As highlighted earlier, pride is the feeling that increases the distance between creatures and the Supreme Good in which they participate.

Furthermore, for St. Augustine (1996), the human desire to have full knowledge of things, as well as the need to highlight good and evil, is what drives human beings away from the Supreme God, since when they do so, there is an immense feeling of shame and refuge for themselves. Human beings then come to know darkness, gloom and fear, finding themselves extremely humiliated before God, feeling immensely alone and weak. In this way, he gets lost in the sudden happiness of the outside world, which certainly doesn't have the conference of God's being.

In "Confessions", Saint Augustine (1996, p. 299), doctrines that the Supreme God is the only one worthy of all honor and all glory: "Behold, you dwelt within me, and I sought you outside". It is clear from this passage that the human soul often abandons the universal good in preference to the particular interests of the earthly world.

According to the perspective enunciated by St. Augustine, the soul of the human being is limited when faced with the mistaken tendency to seek to know the entire universal expanse. Creatures make the mistake of believing that ephemeral goods are enough on their own, not acting in search of an everlasting purpose (Costa, 1996).

In fact, those who are far from God are miserable and destitute. So much so that in his work "The Happy Life", St. Augustine (1998a) recognizes that creatures have yet to contemplate the divine essence in order to approach the unfathomable.

Without this necessary closeness, human beings cannot achieve wisdom and happiness. Bliss is obtained through the full knowledge of the divine Holy Spirit and truth, through searching. Therefore, perfect beatitude is not fully attained, experienced or manifested in this earthly world. It is recognized that unhappiness is the lack of the soul, and true happiness consists of not being lacking and being grounded in wisdom (Trapè, 1987).

4 THE WAY TO THE ABSOLUTE AND DIVINE: THE EXPERIENCE AND ETHICS OF LOVE

In addition to self-knowledge and interiority, it is also necessary to experience love in order to consecrate beatitude, the first and fundamental principle of which is charity. St. Augustine recognizes, therefore, that there are beings who are objects of *uti* (use), serving as a means, and others who are objects of *frui* (fruition, enjoyment), functioning as an end (Abreu, 1996).

In the words of St. Augustine, to enjoy something is to adhere to it out of love for it, while to use it is to orient the object you use with the aim of obtaining the object you love. The most important thing about this Augustinian differentiation is that, if human beings were attached to the means, there would be a serious risk of not reaching beatitude (Abreu, 1996).

From the moment one understands the *uti* and the *frui* and begins to live with this hierarchy, the configuration of the *ordinata delectio* (the order of love) takes place, the main foundation of which is human charity. Therefore, the moral life is necessarily translated into a sequence of individual acts. Each of them implies taking positions in the face of things, the *uti* and the *frui* (Abreu, 1996).

In fact, Augustinian morality is a concrete response to the existential drama of the human being, who is absorbed by both material goods and the only one who is eternal. This is how the Bishop of Hippo developed his thesis of “ordained love”, which is directed by rationality and freedom (Dalpra, 2011). In fact, St. Augustine wants to assert that the human creature has placed enjoyment (the *frui*) in created things, often forgetting the perfection of the order established by the Creator. Furthermore, the Bishop of Hippo distinguishes between the things that human beings can enjoy and the things that they can use as artifices for happiness (Dalpra, 2011).

Based on these basic assumptions, St. Augustine affirms that it is possible for the soul to make good use of temporal and bodily happiness, based on earthly things, but placing all this happiness in the Creator, since the individual is not capable of, *per se*, achieving beatitude. Only the Supreme God is the absolute good that makes it possible for creatures to be happy (Dalpra, 2011).

On the other hand, St. Augustine does not advocate that man should hate

himself and his body; on the contrary, he suggests that man should love himself in relation to God, finding the right balance of love in order to maintain care, order and prudence (Vaz, 2007).

By directing their existence towards the search for God, human beings will acquire virtue and start using the created world to achieve the goal of beatitude. The individual does not love in any way, but through the order of love itself and the hierarchy of beings (Vaz, 2007).

For Vaz (2007, p. 193), the order of moral life in St. Augustine is governed by the order of love:

The order of moral life is therefore governed by the order of love, which unfolds in the sphere of use as love of oneself and others according to the right way and the corresponding degrees, and finally rises to the sphere of fruition as love of God, loved in oneself and for oneself (Vaz, 2007, p. 193).

The driving force of morality is actually anchored in love, which, in St. Augustine, becomes the measure and weight of the human will, since this feeling is at its very core. It is impossible to separate man from his supreme love (Vaz, 2007).

It is love that establishes the parameter in the hierarchy of values of things, from which God appears at the forefront of existence, as is clear from the Holy Scriptures. Although there is an order of values, for Gilson (1929), it is not possible to put the higher things before the lower ones, but, in fact, *suum unicuique tribuere*, translated as *give to each what is their due*. To this end, St. Augustine (1995b) starts from the thesis that justice consists in distributiveness.

However, the will, for St. Augustine (1995b), is driven by two loves, (i) cupidity and (ii) charity. The former aims for the pleasure of bodies, while the latter leads to the desire to love God, the Creator. Thus, the order of love is protected by charity, but violated by greed. For the pursuit of a happy life, it is not enough just to convert the mind (*mens*), but also to change the will, so as to try to overcome the “abyss” that stands between man and God, as well as between misery and debility, and sin and punishment.

For St. Augustine (1996, p. 848-849), in Confessions, each body tends towards its usual place as a result of its weight. Similarly, the human will is directed by love:

The body, with its weight, tends towards its proper place. Weight not only tends downwards, but also towards its proper place. Fire tends upwards, stone downwards. Carried by their weights, they look for the places that are right for them. The oil poured

into the water rises to the top of the water, the water poured into the oil descends to the bottom of the oil: carried by their weights they seek their proper places (St. Augustine, 1996, p.848-849).

For the homeland of beatitude, Saint Augustine (1995b) recognized the crucial importance of Paul's Epistles in his studies and digressions, since they enabled him to reach divine grace and return to faith.

It is not possible for the bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine (1995b), to arrive at an efficient cause to try to explain why human beings "choose" happiness in earthly things rather than the perfect and the pure truth. Such ill will is actually a deprivation, the complete absence of a nature.

What St. Augustine proposes is that, from the moment the initial sin occurred with Adam, there is not only a substantial differentiation between Creator and creatures, but there is truly an "abyss", configuring human miserability and weakness due to punishment (Beraldi, 2010).

Due to the punishment for the initial sin, human beings were affected in their capacity to know and in their will, so that they were deprived of perceiving divine goodness and charity (Beraldi, 2010).

For St. Augustine (1990), human beings are unable, due to their weakness and fallen state, to return to their original principle, given the abyss that has always existed. In this context, the fallen state referred to refers to the condition of sin and spiritual confusion in which humanity finds itself as a result of Adam and Eve's original sin.

For St. Augustine (1990), salvation can only be achieved through divine grace and the redemption offered by Jesus Christ. According to Augustinian doctrine, when Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by God and inhabitants of the Garden of Eden, disobeyed, they fell into sin and, as a result, all of humanity carries this inheritance of original sin from the moment of its conception.

5 THE NEED FOR CRITICAL MEDIATION: THE PATH OF HUMILITY AND THE COMPLETE SATIATION OF THE SOUL

Using Platonic lessons, Saint Augustine recognized in their unbelief the presence of divinity, of the eternal and absolute, and furthermore, he recognized in them the assertion that only individuals who agree with God are in fact happy (Costa,

1996).

However, at no point in the Platonic passages was it possible to detect the humility of the Creator, who suffered from extreme pride. Criticizing this stance, St. Augustine wisely detected that Christ was the greatest example of humility and charity, since even in the face of his eternity and immutable nature, he became human, fragile and weak (Costa, 1996).

This allows the human being to perceive the degree of his abyss, of his “illness” and his fallen degree, allowing the indication of a posture to be followed (Dalpra, 2011).

For good measure, mention should be made of the passage from “Confessions” in which St. Augustine (1996) declared that at various times he himself was not stable in his enjoyment of the Creator, since he was not yet capable of being united with Him. The great weight and consideration of carnal habits allowed this to happen.

Despite this confession of Saint Augustine’s life, it is possible to attest to the need for a process of ever deeper interiorization, in which the inner strength of the soul rises up to reason and, subsequently, to intelligence. With this elevation, an immutable light can be discovered and apprehended (Dalpra, 2011).

In fact, St. Augustine (2004) proposes the ascent of “degrees” in order to reach the presence of the absolute. In an attempt to explain the figure of the mediator, who must act as a link between the Creator and creatures, St. Augustine truly emphasized that Jesus Christ performs this important function, but that he cannot be an intermediary. With his humility, Jesus Christ taught humanity the true way to reach God.

Saint Augustine (1996,p. 23) in his work “Confessions”, expresses how one can overcome exteriority to interiority, using humility:

I wasn't stable in the joy of my God. Attracted by your beauty, I was soon pulled away from you by my own weight, which made me fall groaning to the ground. That weight was my carnal habits; but the memory of you accompanied me, and I no longer absolutely doubted the existence of a being to whom I had to be united, even though I was not yet capable of it (St. Augustine, 1996, p. 23).

In the incessant search for the immutable, absolute and omniscient, humility is therefore capable of leading fallen human beings to recognize their own frailties and miseries, so that the mediator, Jesus Christ, can be admitted (Costa, 1996).

Despite the abyss, decay and human punishment, it is still possible to find a

happy life. To do so, the individual must submit to the conditions and, above all, recognize the importance of humility and distinguish between *praesumptio* and *confessio*. The first consists of trusting in oneself, while the second consists of recognizing divine greatness and human limits and insufficiencies (Costa, 1996).

To be humble, therefore, is to assume a posture of *confessio*. Only in this way will the individual reach bliss and beatitude, since he will certainly reveal his real condition, which is that of a sick person and a fallen nature. With this real recognition, it will be possible to indicate a posture to be followed (Costa, 1996).

With this clear ascension structure and a narrative in favor of conversion, Saint Augustine allows for the construction of a philosophy of the spirit. Certainly, God, omnipresent and benevolent, knows the human conscience in detail and, from this assertion, St. Augustine demonstrates that the confessional act does not aim, purely and simply, to teach something to the Creator, but only to demonstrate the fragility in the search for mercy and forgiveness (Dalpra, 2011).

Therefore, the proclamation of divine magnitude is certainly the recognition of human precariousness and misery, so that it is necessary to consider humility, according to the teachings of Dalpra (2011, p. 66):

The humility encouraged by Augustine translates into the posture of the human being who recognizes his place in the order of creation. Confession, therefore, is the very exercise of this humility, through which it becomes possible to free oneself from the malignancy of pride. In this way, confession confronts the main principle of sin, namely the attitude of pride caused by the desire to resemble God.

On the other hand, the confessional space allows for a human rapprochement with God, thus necessitating conversion, a change of direction, so as not to seek happiness in material (external) goods, but in the only immutable (internal) good, the propellant of all truth (Abreu, 1996).

To reach the aforementioned conclusions, Saint Augustine recognizes his own fragility, emphasizing the confusion, anguish and turmoil that dominated - completely - his soul (Abreu, 1996).

Now, the Bishop of Hippo wisely emphasizes that in the interiority of his soul there were luminous rays, yet these insisted on looking outwards, into physical space. This explains, peremptorily, the state of "darkness" that hovered in the Augustinian soul and which, consequently, was overcome, since the "look" was led to

a single direction: the interior (Abreu, 1996).

Only by caring for the soul, because of its immateriality and immortality, can human beings remain closer to God, to the Highest Good. For this reason, St. Augustine emphasizes the need for belief in reasoning, in the truth (Ferreira, 2011).

The eminently autographic character of the work “Confessions” certainly illustrates the transforming function of faith in the life of Saint Augustine, in a way that impels new individuals to recognize their frailties, as well as highlighting divine mercy (Capitani, 1994).

More than a role in reaching out to God, confession represents four aspects: (i) theological, (ii) metaphysical, (iii) psychological and (iv) moral. Certainly, confession does not peremptorily give way to the sense of collectivity that lies at the very heart of Christianity, but rather establishes a strident relational path between the planes of immanence and transcendence, finally perfecting the individual towards unity (Ferreira, 2011).

In this way, the act of confession, addressed to truth, beauty and the good, goes far beyond theology, psychology, ethics and metaphysics, integrating them under the purpose of a theoretical-conceptual framework that sustains and gives sufficient intrinsic coherence to St. Augustine’s thought (Ferreira, 2011).

Precisely, the problem of happiness in St. Augustine lies in the way in which its realization occurs, which must be based on (i) cognition, (ii) vision, (iii) love and (iv) contemplation. Not isolated in themselves, these characteristics are complementary elements of the problem of beatitude (Beraldi, 2010).

In reference to the concepts of pagan tradition, happiness must be understood and faced in conjunction with the adversities of fortune. Thus, in St. Augustine, there is a need to legitimize the fundamental principles of happiness with the categories of Greek and Latin philosophy (Beraldi, 2010).

The human being is made up of soul and body. The latter needs subsistence food, while the former also needs gradual nourishment. However, what would be the nourishing bases of the soul capable of bringing it closer to the Highest Good? (Capitani, 1994).

Saint Augustine certainly proposes two elements “nutritive” for the soul: (i) the *intelectio rerum* and (ii) *scientia* (intelligence and the knowledge of things). In fact, then, the soul of the ignorant is sown by nothingness (emptiness), so that temperance is essential (Capitani, 1994).

Wisely, St. Augustine finally sets out to concretely define the happy life in what is best in human beings, being, in fact, a means. The true happiness that truly satisfies man is beyond philosophical speculative knowledge alone (Beraldi, 2010).

In fact, what Augustinian man seeks is a good capable of satisfying all desire, giving him peace in the face of his worries, as well as being something superior and absolute (Gilson, 1929).

6 CONCLUSION

The research was anchored in the perspective of human action as a passage through the teleological and ordered dimension in St. Augustine. The guidelines adopted were based on the idea that there's no point in having what you want if it doesn't have a beneficial essence.

In this way, human conduct in favor of consecrating the tangle of social relations aims for a single, ready-made goal: happiness, built gradually through moral and intellectual virtues, the possession of ordered goods, which is nothing more than the passport for human beings to contemplate the Eternal Good. Therefore, we can see the importance of aiming for an immutable good, since otherwise beatitude would be anchored in transience.

From then on, the concept that definitions of happiness can be interrupted by human pride is constructed, thus generating a fallacious condition for the individual. In other words, by studying St. Augustine's perspective on questions of beatitude, we can see that this philosopher was concerned with elevating happiness beyond corporeal, sensible and transitory things.

In trying to explain the origin of evil, St. Augustine makes a real change, so that it actually becomes a moral problem, which has its source precisely in disordered and cruel love. So evil is not part of reality.

The concern and definition proposed by the research arose from the need to emphasize that the order of love must govern human life, in such a way that it becomes a means of achieving beatitude. In order for this to actually happen, we must understand the structural lines of the teleological dimension in St. Augustine, which is nothing more than the human being continuing to live well, guided by the precept of love, by the charity of a pure heart, by a good conscience and, above all, by sincere faith. This is the true and clear life, which will allow us to contemplate the

eternity of body and spirit.

However, without the necessary humility, the human being will continue to have a very hidden face, so as to remain dominated by pride and vanity, which make it impossible to live the clear order of love and, consequently, to reach the homeland of bliss and the desired rest. With the contemplation of divinity and Eternity, the soul will thus be able to live permanently happily alongside the Highest Good.

Thus, the perspective of eternity will constitute an essential and crucial presupposition of beatitude, as well as of the soul. This is the advance of remembering and seeking the Supreme, the only One capable of satisfying human imperfections and deficiencies. So much so that St. Augustine could only be happy when he loved, and this love was divine.

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