

Desire and the Ethics of Advertising



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The aim of this thesis is to examine advertising from the point of view of Christian ethics: how it works, what is wrong with it and how it might go right as a practice. It argues that much existing criticism of advertising is justified, but that its power to create desire might be turned towards serving the good of the education of desire, leading us towards, or strengthening, a love of God, and helping us relate to products and services based on this love. This is significant because learning to desire well is central to living a Christian life, and because advertising influences how many people desire today. In contrast to authors who simply criticise advertising, often as part of a general critique of consumer culture, this thesis offers a constructive and detailed examination of the practice itself, looking at how its techniques work and how they might be reformed into an 'art of advertising'. In making this argument the thesis draws primarily on Augustine, in addition to Plato, and modern critics of advertising. First, it describes desire, before examining how advertisements create desire, followed by an assessment of existing criticisms of this process. It then develops an account of the education of desire, identifying what an art of advertising should aim to achieve, before examining the techniques by which an advertisement might achieve this. The argument is intended to contribute to a project within Christian ethics of critiquing advertising, and presenting a workable ethical vision for the future of the industry.

ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis is to examine advertising from the point of view of Christian ethics: how it works, what is wrong with it, and how it might go right as a practice, that is, how it might become a practice which realises more goods than it does at present. It seeks to establish that the advertising industry can serve the education of desire, arguing that, while much existing criticism of advertising is justified, the power of advertising to create desire might be turned towards educating desire, leading us towards, or strengthening, a love of God, and helping us relate to products and services based on this love. Attempting to show that this is a practical possibility is a significant task, because learning to desire well is central to living a Christian life, and because advertising influences how many people desire today. While various authors have criticised advertising, often as part of a general critique of consumer culture, this thesis focuses constructively and in detail on the practice of advertising, examining how its techniques work and how they might be reformed into an 'art of advertising' which serves the good. If Christian ethicists, drawing on the resources of their tradition, can describe a way for advertising to develop as an art which educates desire, they will have helped improve a practice which needs ethical attention, in an analogous way to how ethicists approach medical ethics or the ethics of war. This thesis aims to contribute to an analogous constructive critique of advertising within Christian ethics.

This thesis draws primarily on Augustine, who is chosen because he offers a comprehensive and insightful theological perspective on desire. Augustine examines desire and the conversion of desire intimately in the *Confessions*, a text on which we will draw heavily; he describes the personal and social dangers of disordered desire, particularly sexual desire and the desire for human glory, in *The City of God*, his treatise on marriage, and various letters and sermons; and he gives a conceptual analysis of good desire in his distinction between use and enjoyment in *On Christian Doctrine*, and in discussions in *On the Trinity*, a text we will rely on for understanding the creation of desire. As this thesis aims to understand desire as a personal experience, as well as how the creation of desire by advertising affects society, for this purpose Augustine is a crucial thinker. The thesis also draws on Plato, for three reasons. The first is that he is concerned with the nature of desire and education of desire, topics we will examine with reference to the *Symposium*. The second is that he provides a useful framework for categorising desires: his tripartite division of the soul described in *The Republic* and the *Phaedrus*. The third is that he offers illuminating observations and descriptions, in his metaphors and examples of different desires. At various points Plato's perspective is helpful in our reflections; nevertheless, Augustine's view has primacy. The organising

beliefs of this thesis are Christian convictions as understood by Augustine. What this means in practice, for example, is that we rely on Augustine for our understanding of the soul and the will, particularly the fallenness of the will, and how pride can arise from the soul. We use Plato's tripartite division of the soul to structure our discussion, but we investigate the deeper nature of these desires, and the true end of our longing for the good, via Augustine. While Plato's view of the education of desire is helpful in our discussion of this topic, we will be circumspect in appropriating material from his work. Any points we draw from Plato will be considered in relation to Augustine's views, and the conclusions we reach will be guided by Christian convictions.

The argument begins with an analysis of the nature of desire, in Chapter Two. To introduce the concept, it turns to the *Symposium*, describing desire as a state involving a lack in relation to an object, and a longing for that object. It then introduces Plato's tripartite division of the soul and discusses the conflict between these parts and their differing objects of desire. Following this, it considers Plato's understanding of desire with reference to Augustine's convictions. It argues that Augustine also understands desire as involving a lack and a longing, but that he adds an emphasis on the fallenness of human desire as the basis for conflict in our soul. The chapter discusses the different terms Augustine uses for 'desire', and his definition of desire as love under the aspect of seeking its object. Guided by Augustine's thought, we also explore the role of the imagination in desire, and clarify the relationship between desire and pleasure, and desire and the will.

We then turn, in Chapter Three, to investigate the process of the creation of desire by an advertisement, drawing on our account of desire. The chapter begins by examining a discussion in *On the Trinity* concerning the desire to learn a language, exploring Augustine's view that the desire begins in a vision of goodness. It then applies this view to an analysis of four advertisements, arguing that these create desire by presenting an ideal, or vision of goodness, and positioning the product as an embodiment of or means to this end. This is why we might desire a Volkswagen after seeing it presented as part of a more appealing life. Nevertheless, other advertisements seem not to work in this way, particular those which appeal to our baser desires. The chapter turns next, therefore to examine how our lower desires are stimulated, drawing on Plato's discussion of *epithymia* – the lower appetites. The final section discusses *thymos* – the desire for self-assertion and honour – and explores how advertisements appeal to status-seeking to create desire. This account of the creation of desire is drawn on throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Four explores, critiques and clarifies prominent critiques of advertising, from within Christian ethics and from economists and social theorists. We begin with one longstanding criticism, articulated recently by Avner Offer, that advertising is not truthful. To clarify this criticism, we analyse cases of exaggeration and vagueness in advertising, applying Augustine's thought from his treatise *On Lying*. We also argue that the focus for judgements of truth in advertising should be on whether the advertisement creates desire for a true good, and whether this is truly linked with the product or service. We then turn to address the criticism that advertising creates desires for things that we do not need, advocated by John Kenneth Galbraith. We clarify the distinction between need and desire, arguing that a true need is a lack in relation to a good. Our most important need is therefore for God. On this basis, artificial desires – often the target of criticism – are not always bad; rather, because we are fallen creatures, we need the help of artifice to create desires based on true needs. Finally, we examine a criticism made by Graham Ward and Vincent J. Miller, that advertising creates a culture of consumption which involves ongoing dissatisfaction. We examine the role of

advertising in the cycle of desire and disappointment, and how advertising encourages short relationships to commodities, not oriented towards goodness. Ward and Miller are both in favour of a way of relating to the material world informed by God's love; however, their arguments fall short in not considering how this might work in detail – in our relation to a luxury watch, or a pair of Nike shoes, for example. We conclude by noting that each criticism touches on the fundamental problem of how an advertisement might help lead us to God, a problem taken up in the remainder of the thesis.

To consider how advertising might be improved, in Chapter Five, we consider the practice of advertising through the lens of the concept of 'art' or *ars*, as understood by Aquinas. Aquinas is used at this point because of his clear definition of this concept. We begin by discussing the concept *ars*, which Aquinas defines as practical knowledge about how to realise the good in some contingent material, such as the art of carpentry for seeking to bring good form to wood, or the art of friendship for seeking to help a friend grow in virtue. Based on this, we define 'an art' as a set of habits and techniques which aim to realise a good, within the demands and limitations of a particular practice. Advertising as it is currently practiced is not a well-developed art, because it does not realise as many goods as it might; however, the current practice does involve elements of an art, which could be developed. We argue that the appropriate good to be sought by an art of advertising is 'the education of desire'. We then examine three aspects of this good. First, we consider the orientation of desire towards God, with reference to the *Confessions*. Loving God may not be the first step in the education of desire; there may be intermediate moves which are helpful, such as coming to desire God's goodness without yet articulating it as such. This is not a desire for God, but it is better preparation for coming to love God than having the love of status or sex as one's ruling aim, for instance. Drawing on Augustine's discussion of the happy life, and his own journey of conversion, we look at desires for a happy life which are idolatrous, but, we argue, might be good precursors to developing the desire for God. We also discuss the education of a concept of God, and the role of meditative experience. Second, we consider the integration of different desiring parts of the soul, with reference to Augustine's discussions of the fallen human will, enacted particularly in the desire for sex and the desire for human glory. We note his warnings of the dangers of these desires, and the difficulty of overcoming their conflict with the desire for God. Finally, we address the question of how our desire should be educated in relation to created things. We consider Augustine's distinction between use and enjoyment, particularly the interpretation offered by Oliver O'Donovan, and describe what it means to love something or someone 'in God'. Material objects should sometimes be desired in God. At other times we are pursuing another good desire and they merely help with this. We relate each conclusion in this discussion back to the question of what an art of advertising should aim to achieve in the soul of the viewer.

Chapter Six, the final part of the thesis, seeks to describe how the techniques of an advertisement could be reformed to better serve the education of desire. We discuss three elements of an ethical advertisement. First, we consider what it would mean for an advertisement to present a truly good vision. We give examples of how an advertisement might refer the viewer's desire directly to God, and we look at how a popular advertising campaign, for the company Dove, might be reformed to promote a better vision of the happy life. In this example, we are able to see in more detail how one desire for the happy life is a better precursor to the desire for God than another. Second, we explore how an advertisement might appeal to the whole soul while still being ordered to God. We propose how particular advertisements might be reformed along these lines, and in relation to these examples, look again at Augustine's view of

lower desires. We conclude that Augustine leads us to be, at best, ambivalent in this area, and suggest a direction for future research. Finally, we address the question of how an advertisement might help customers towards the good. Here, we are concerned with how an advertisement might shape the customer's relation to the commodity in the long term – after they have seen the advertisement and made a purchase. We consider how an advertisement can shape the practice by which the commodity is used in the customer's life, considering the example of drinking Johnnie Walker whisky with a friend. The whisky plays a modest role in the practice, but the bottle also symbolises the ideals presented by the advertisement. This is a case of using the product to move closer to God (one has good conversation, and loves the friend in God), not primarily desiring the product itself in God. We then consider the use of products in the sense of loving them in God, considering the example of a Rolls-Royce car, and how advertisements might guide us to meditate on material objects, to cultivate good desire. An ideal advertisement should prompt us like Diotima prompts Socrates, or like Augustine urges his readers in the *Confessions*: to love eternal goodness.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to examine advertising from the perspective of Christian ethics: to investigate how it works, to clarify the main lines of criticism against it, and to determine how it might be improved, that is, how it might become a practice which realises more goods than it does at present. Drawing on St. Augustine and Plato, it develops an account of desire, and applies this to an examination of how advertisements create desire. It then considers the main criticisms of how advertisements currently create desire, the techniques they use and their impact on society. With these criticisms in mind, it develops an account of the education of desire and applies this to consider how specific techniques of advertising might be reformed, as part of an ‘art of advertising’, to educate desire. Seeking to examine advertising from a constructive, ethical perspective is an important task because learning to desire well is central to living a Christian life, and advertising shapes how many people desire today.

In the mind of those who have sought to assess the state of modern society, advertising has often been the target of severe criticism. For example, the British economic historian Arnold Toynbee is reported to have made the following remarks in a speech in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1961. He refers to ‘Madison Avenue’ which stands for the industry of advertising, based at that time largely in New York.

In the Western world of our day, the tempter’s role, which in St. Francis’s personal history was played by the saint’s father, is being played, towards our society as a whole, by everything we sum up under the name of Madison Avenue and all that this label stands for ... The first assault on the cupidity that is latent in every one of us is made by Madison Avenue by finesse ... Now this is the inner adversary with whom we have to contend. And, just because he assails us from within, he is more formidable than any external opponent. And often we externalize our opponent when he is really within us. I would suggest

that the destiny of our Western civilization turns on the issue of our struggle with all that Madison Avenue stands for more than it turns on the issue of our struggle with communism.¹

In some ways it appears that Toynbee must be right. Compared to the paintings of the Renaissance, for example, or the efforts of churches to attract people with beautiful architecture and music, advertising makes appeals to the soul which we rightly consider ‘low’: it seeks to stimulate our desire for acquisition rather than appreciation, it plays to our desire for status, it makes blatant use of our tendency to focus on anything related to sex, and in moments when we might otherwise be observing the beauty of the countryside or taking a moment of rest as we wait for a train, advertising prompts us to consider buying a new watch, some moisturiser, or a bottle of whisky. Advertising is also immensely powerful. If, like Toynbee, we find the practice unsettling, it is perhaps not only because advertisements aim at “the cupidity that is latent in every one of us”; it is also because advertising seems to have taken over the world.² The practice has incorporated and exploited every technology of communication, having moved from posters to billboards to television advertisements to online videos. And it has spread around the globe into public and private spaces.

Any practice able to present images, ideas, and suggestions to hundreds of millions, indeed billions of people, in a way which actually influences the thinking and conduct of at least some of them, requires a vast amount of resources. As advertiser Sir John Hegarty writes, “the most valuable piece of real estate in the world is a corner of someone’s mind”.³ For example, it costs about 150 thousand pounds for a six-week poster campaign on the London Underground. According to Exterior Media, this buys an average of three minutes of engagement from each passing traveller on the platform,

¹ Quoted in E. Davidson, ‘Professor Toynbee and Madison Avenue’, *Modern Age*, 1962, p. 114.

² Davidson, p. 114.

³ J. Hegarty, *Hegarty on Advertising: Turning Intelligence Into Magic*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2011, p. 39.

seventy-nine percent of whom have looked up something or purchased a product at some point as a result of advertising they have encountered on the Underground.⁴ An equivalent, six-week long campaign on London buses costs about three million pounds.⁵ Worldwide, the total amount spent on advertising in 2015 was estimated at 540 billion dollars. Put another way, the advertising industry is larger than the entire economy of Belgium.⁶

Toynbee does not say precisely what kind of “struggle” he would like us to attempt with Madison Avenue. However, his mention of St. Francis’ father is revealing. Francis of Assisi grew up working for his father, who was a successful merchant, before renouncing him to devote his life to God.⁷ Toynbee is comparing Francis’ money-loving, status-conscious father with the industry of advertising, which appears also to promote these worldly values at odds with a love of God. Like Francis’ father, advertising promotes the drive to acquire material objects and the obsession with one’s social status. Advertising is also entirely dependent on commerce. The only reason the practice is able to enshrine messages in public spaces, drawing in resources at an equivalent scale to a small country, is because it serves capitalism: advertising holds out the promise to businesses of being able to increase sales of their products and services.⁸ Following the saint, we might take the route of rejecting this worldly institution, and seeking to persuade governments to do the same.⁹ Another approach, however, is to recognise that advertising has an extraordinary power to influence people around the world, but that this power, at present,

⁴ Exterion Media, ‘London Underground Advertising’, 2016, <http://www.exterionmedia.com/uk/what-we-do/our-media/london-underground-advertising/>, (accessed 1 May 2016).

⁵ Exterion Media, ‘Bus & Tram Rate Card 2016’, 2016, http://www.exterionmedia.com/uk/~media/Files/UK/Rate%20Cards/EM_Rate_Card_2016.pdf, (accessed 26 April 2016).

⁶ Carat, ‘Carat Global Ad Spend Report’, 2016, <http://www.carat.com/global/en/news-views/carat-global-ad-spend-report/>, (accessed 26 April 2016); The World Bank, ‘GDP Ranking’, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table>, (accessed 26 April 2016). This figure is in US dollars.

⁷ P. Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, New York, Cosimo, 2007, pp. 40-42.

⁸ We will explore the role of advertising within the economy further when we discuss John Kenneth Galbraith’s view in Chapter Four.

⁹ For example: “We recommend that advertising in urban centres be restricted to a minority of defined commercial areas, and banned in all public spaces elsewhere”. J. Fuller, ‘Promoting Good Choices: Patterns of Habit and the Role of Government’, 2010, <http://percapita.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Promoting-Good-Choices-Per-Capita1.pdf>, (accessed 27 April 2016).

is mostly being used for banal ends. Seeking to describe and pursue a better approach to advertising will also be a struggle, but it will be one which seeks to use the power structures of the existing world – in the way that Augustine called on the power of Rome – to serve the end which Francis and Augustine loved. It also holds out the promise of influencing more people.

Advertising has received attention within Christian theology, but only as part of more general critiques of capitalism or desire in consumer culture. The author knows of no study within Christian ethics focusing specifically on advertising. For example, Vincent J. Miller's book *Consuming Religion* focuses on the theme of consumer culture, examining the development of capitalism and its impact on religious practice and thinking. Within this, Miller does discuss the role of advertising in shaping the habits of desire in consumer culture; yet this is the most extensive treatment of advertising we have found in the discipline, and it is ten pages long.¹⁰ Peter Sedgwick, in *The Market Economy and Christian Ethics*, addresses advertising, but only briefly as part of a description of consumerism, in addition to other passing mentions.¹¹ Timothy Gorringer, likewise, mentions in passing the temptations and distractions of advertising in his book on desire.¹² Finally, Graham Ward, in *Cities of God*, traces the urban culture of the Western world over the last half-century, examining its roots in theology and early modern philosophy. In part of this work, Ward discusses patterns of desire and dissatisfaction which he argues are influenced by advertising.¹³ These works of Christian theology and ethics will be discussed in this thesis, especially Miller and Ward's critiques which will be examined in Chapter Four. However, this thesis makes a contribution to the discussion in two ways

¹⁰ V.J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2003, pp. 116- 126.

¹¹ P. Sedgwick, *The Market Economy and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

¹² T. Gorringer, *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses*, London, SCM, 2001.

¹³ G. Ward, *Cities of God*, London, Routledge, 2002.

which the above authors do not. First, it focuses specifically on the practice of advertising. It examines in detail how advertisements create desire in relation to different parts of the soul, and it organises its discussion around analyses of particular advertisements. Second, it uses criticism as part of a constructive effort to develop a Christian ethic of advertising. It organises its constructive argument around the concept of ‘art’, examining the theory of the education of desire seeking to draw conclusions about what an ‘art of advertising’ should aim to achieve, and it examines the particular techniques of advertisements, to propose how they might be reformed according to this purpose. Although the theologians above conclude their work with various proposals relating to their theme, none of them attempt to describe how the practice of advertising might be improved.

The task of this thesis is analogous to the way in which Christian ethicists approach medical ethics or the ethics of war. Ethicists working in these areas aim to understand a particular practice, to become familiar with many examples of the practice, past and present, in order to understand its limitations, possibilities, and how its techniques are evolving. They aim to clarify the goods to be protected or sought in the practice, and with this in mind, to offer concrete suggestions for improvement. In reflecting on the role of the ethicist, Nigel Biggar notes that this latter idea, of offering concrete suggestions, is controversial, at least in relation to Christian ethicists offering judgements and advice to governments. Biggar responds, however, arguing that being specific is important for cultivating a good relationship between Christian ethicists and the practitioners they hope to guide.

An ethicist can best help a decision-maker by giving him options as thoroughly thought through as possible. It is not enough to hand him a set of abstract norms and rules, and then leave him to work out from scratch what they might require in the case before him. The meaning of moral rules is made manifest in terms of concrete cases. Therefore a fraternally responsible ethicist is bound to show the decision-maker, as concretely as he can, how the relevant rules impact on the empirical

matter in hand – and, ideally, how that impact changes according to different understandings of the matter.¹⁴

Biggar also notes that “the very process of interpreting moral principles in relation to concrete particulars refines the principles and illuminates the reasoning”.¹⁵ Following this approach, this thesis aims to link theory and practice, examining the goal of educating desire in relation to the practice of advertising as it is situated within the economy. We hope this will not only provide a starting point for discussing the reform of advertising, but also illuminate some of the value and implications, as well as ambiguities and difficulties, of the work we draw from Plato and Augustine, raising productive questions about what they intended to communicate and the nature of the topics they considered.

The core argument of this thesis can be summarised briefly. Advertising does indeed often appeal to lower parts of the soul. Hope, however, lies in a dynamic found in many advertisements: the advertisement presents a vision of an ideal – depicting some kind of happy life or embodying some appealing quality – and then positions the product or service as a first step one might take towards approaching this ideal. The ideal is the focus of the desire. Our fundamental move is to suggest that advertisers take this ideal and the desire for it more seriously: to look more ambitiously into what it means to present a truly good vision, and to strengthen the way to this ideal. The essence of a good advertisement is to present an ethical vision, ideally related explicitly to God, and to help potential customers love and pursue this vision.¹⁶ In establishing this central argument, the various investigations of the thesis are concerned with exploring the nature of desire, how advertisements work and what is wrong with current advertising, the details and

¹⁴ N. Biggar, *In Defence of War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 333.

¹⁵ Biggar, p. 333.

¹⁶ We will use the word ‘ideal’ in this thesis not intending any specific meaning in terms of Plato’s writings, but rather to mean simply a description or presentation of a good state of being.

theological basis of the education of desire, and the specific ways in which techniques of advertising might be reformed to educate desire.¹⁷

Thus in Chapter Two we analyse the nature of desire, drawing on Plato and Augustine to explore the characteristics of lack in relation to an imagined object, and longing for that object. We also discuss the nature of conflict between desires in the soul, introducing Plato's tripartite division of desire in the soul, and exploring Augustine's emphasis on the fallenness of our nature. In Chapter Three we turn to advertising, investigating the process of the creation of desire by an advertisement. We explore Augustine's view of desire as beginning in a vision of goodness, applying this view to an analysis of particular advertisements. We see how these advertisements present a vision and the ways in which they relate the product to this vision, pointing out that the actual object of desire is this vision, and the product as understood in relation to this vision, even though we tend to speak of simply having a desire for the product. Nevertheless, other advertisements seem not to work in this way, particularly those which appeal to our baser desires. The latter part of the chapter, therefore, examines how our lower desires are stimulated, including the appeal to bodily appetites, and the desire for honour and status. Having looked at how advertising works, we then turn to examine criticisms of the practice in Chapter Four. First, we consider the criticism that advertisements do not tell the truth. We argue that, while this is often the case, our judgements of truth should focus on the vision of the advertisement – whether it presents a true good – and whether the product truly helps the customer towards the vision. Second, we address the criticism that advertising creates desires for things that we do not need. We clarify the distinction

¹⁷ This thesis is concerned with commercial advertising, not government or charity advertising. There are two reasons for this: commercial advertising is the target of the criticisms of advertising, and it presents the harder ethical problem, with its own particular characteristics. The thesis seeks to address the problem of how advertising can do good while also increasing the sales of products and services – the rationale of commercial advertising, and the origin of its resources and power. Government and charity advertising is paid for ultimately by tax or donations, so the vision it presents can be determined by government departments or the particular charity. The challenge in commercial advertising is to serve the education of desire while also satisfying business demands.

between need and desire, arguing that this critique should be put in terms of whether the advertisement helps us towards God or not, who is our true need. Third, we consider the criticism that advertising creates a cycle of desire and dissatisfaction in consumer culture. We examine how exactly advertising contributes to this situation and suggest that the criticism identifies a central problem: a lack of good relationships with products.

We then turn to the constructive part of this thesis. In Chapter Five we consider advertising as an ‘art’, understood as a set of habits and techniques which aim to realise a good, within the demands and limitations of a particular practice. We argue that the appropriate good to be sought by an art of advertising is ‘the education of desire’, a process which has the aim of leading people, perhaps after some intermediate stages, to love God – a love which is the basis for appreciating and caring for the world rightly, imagined in its relation to God. We examine the orientation of desire towards God, the education of a concept of God, and the role of meditative experience. We consider the integration of different desiring parts of the soul, particularly the desire for sex and the desire for human glory, and finally, address the question of how our desire should be educated in relation to created things, describing what it means to love something or someone ‘in God’. In Chapter Six we aim to make these ethical principles manifest in terms of concrete cases. We discuss three elements of an ethical advertisement. First, we consider what it would mean for an advertisement to present a truly good vision. We give examples of how an advertisement might refer the viewer’s desire directly to God, and we look at how a popular advertising campaign, for the company Dove, might be reformed to promote a better vision of the happy life. Second, we explore how an advertisement might appeal to lower desires while still being ordered to God, examining how the desire for status might be co-opted to lead people towards humility, and how sex appeal might lead people towards contemplating Scripture – although we note that Augustine would likely

be critical. Finally, we address the question of how an advertisement might help customers towards the good, considering the techniques which might be used to help a customer develop a good relationship to a commodity over the long term.

This thesis draws primarily on Augustine, who is chosen because he offers a comprehensive and insightful theological perspective on desire, from an intimate and a political point of view. Augustine examines desire and the conversion of desire intimately in the *Confessions*, a text on which we will draw heavily; he describes the personal and social dangers of disordered desire, particularly sexual desire and the desire for human glory, in *The City of God*, his treatise on marriage, and various letters and sermons; and he gives a conceptual analysis of good desire in his distinction between use and enjoyment in *On Christian Doctrine*, and in discussions in *On the Trinity*, a text we will rely on for understanding the creation of desire. As this thesis aims to understand desire as a personal experience, as well as how the creation of desire by advertising affects society, for this purpose Augustine is a crucial thinker. We also draw on Plato in this thesis, from the same perspective that Augustine adopted, interpreting Exodus 3:22 and 11:2, that God's gold is God's wherever it exists, therefore truth might be found in pagan texts:

Any statements by those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, which happen to be true and consistent with our faith should not cause alarm, but be claimed for our own use, as it were from owners who have no right to them. Like the treasures of the ancient Egyptians, who possessed not only idols and heavy burdens which the people of Israel hated and shunned but also vessels and ornaments of silver and gold....¹⁸

¹⁸ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. R.P.H. Green, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 125. Augustine is referring to Platonists here rather than Plato himself, however he is stating a general principle about how Christians should relate to all philosophy. In the *Confessions* Augustine also describes how he was brought to God partly via the Platonists' books, using the same scriptural metaphor: "And I had come to you from the Gentiles and fixed my attention on the gold which you willed your people to take from Egypt, since the gold was yours, wherever it was". We will discuss Augustine's relationship with the Platonists in Chapter Two. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 123.

We draw on Plato for three reasons. The first is that he is concerned with the nature of desire and education of desire, topics we will examine with reference to the *Symposium*. The second is that he provides a useful framework for categorising desires: his tripartite division of the soul described in *The Republic* and the *Phaedrus*. The third is that he offers illuminating observations and descriptions, in his metaphors and examples of different desires. At various points Plato's perspective is helpful in our reflections; nevertheless, Augustine's view has primacy. The organising beliefs of this thesis are Christian convictions as understood by Augustine. What this means in practice, for example, is that we rely on Augustine for our understanding of the soul and the will, particularly the fallenness of the will, and how pride can arise from the soul. We use Plato's tripartite division of the soul to structure our discussion, but we investigate the deeper nature of these desires, and the true end of our longing for the good, via Augustine. While Plato's views on the education of desire are helpful in our discussion of this topic, we will be circumspect in appropriating material from his work: any points drawn from Plato will be considered in relation to Augustine's views, and the conclusions reached will be guided by Christian convictions.

Additionally, it seems important to justify our intent to turn to these classic authors to help us address a contemporary problem. A critic might suggest that Augustine and Plato are too far removed from our modern problems to be good guides to their solution. On the contrary, however, we would respond that these authors have many insights concerning lasting features of existence. Regarding worldly things, they discuss themes in human nature, such as desire and the different kinds of desire, which are still present today; regarding heavenly things, they discuss eternal truths about the nature of goodness, beauty, and in Augustine's case, God's love, around which our discussion and practical suggestions are organised. There is still work to do to identify the relevant points from

these authors, and to discuss these points and the problems of advertising in a way which brings them into productive contact. However, what advertising misses most is clear thinking about ends, and how human beings should relate to and strive for those ends, and that is what these authors can provide.

Another way of putting this point is that these authors have a conception of the good – what it is and how we should relate to it – which we require in order to develop a constructive ethic. It is on this basis that some well-known modern theorists of desire are not considered. That is, those theorists in the line of thinking that derives largely from Freud and Lacan, on the one hand, and Nietzsche on the other.¹⁹ Two prominent scholars in this area are Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, co-authors of *Anti-Oedipus*, a book which Michel Foucault praised as “a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time”.²⁰ Daniel Smith describes Deleuze’s understanding of ethics, which Deleuze contrasts with morality:

[Morality is] any set of ‘constraining’ rules, such as a moral code, that consist in judging actions and intentions by relating them to transcendent or universal values (‘This is Good, that is Evil’). What he calls ‘ethics’ is, on the contrary, a set of ‘facilitative’ (*facultative*) rules that evaluates what we do, say and think according to the immanent mode of existence which it implies. One says or does this, thinks or feels that: *what mode of existence does it imply?* ... Deleuze calls this the method of ‘dramatization’: actions and propositions are interpreted as so many sets of symptoms that express or ‘dramatize’ the mode of existence of the speaker.²¹

Our response to this is that we doing morality, rather than ethics, as Deleuze understands it. There is surely a place in Christian ethics for linking particular acts and feelings to the more general approach to life from which these follow, but this alone does not allow us to

¹⁹ For this genealogy, see P. Goodchild, *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire*, London, SAGE, 1996.

²⁰ Quoted in J.W. Bernauer and M. Mahon, ‘Michel Foucault’s Ethical Imagination’, in G. Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 163; G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, London, Continuum, 2004.

²¹ D.W. Smith, ‘Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Towards an Immanent Theory of Ethics’, in N. Jun and D.W. Smith (eds.), *Deleuze and Ethics*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011, p. 124.

describe a vision for what advertising should become, which this thesis seeks to do. As we will argue further in Chapter Four, criticism in the social sciences has become increasingly wary of attempts to articulate what is good and valuable, which makes this work increasingly useless for seeking to describe how different practices in society might be improved.²²

This thesis concerns the encouragement of the desire for God's goodness, and how advertising might be used as a tool for this purpose. But one might ask about the desire required to make this happen at all: what motive would advertisers have for being more ethical? In response to this, we suggest that the purpose of developing an ethical vision is to guide people who are in a position to act and who have some motive to do so. We also seek to strengthen the motive: to strengthen the desire and hope by depicting the goal and outlining a way to move in that direction. As is the case in any area of Christian ethics, many practitioners would not be receptive to these arguments. An assumption of this thesis, however, is that people who wish to do good, perhaps especially in advertising, are often dispirited because they are unsure about how to do so. As well as contributing to a discussion of advertising within the discipline, therefore, we aim to reach those people, to show how mainstream ethical advertising might be possible.

²² René Girard is another modern theorist concerned with desire. However, his approach is similarly descriptive rather than normative. His mimetic theory of desire discusses how we often (Girard seems to imply always) follow others in forming our desires. We will discuss this topic in this thesis, drawing on Augustine. However, this observation about our psychology cannot serve as a guide for developing a constructive ethic. See P. Livingston, *Models of Desire: René Girard and the Psychology of Mimesis*, Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE OF DESIRE

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the nature of desire. This is addressed first because understanding desire is central to understanding advertising: the power of an advertisement is to create desire. As one prominent practitioner put it: “The purpose of a commercial is not to *entertain* the viewer, but to *sell* him”.²³ Creating desire is a psychological task, that is, it is concerned with bringing about changes in the soul. The goal of an advertisement is to move the soul into a state of desire which will lead a customer to buy what the company offers – a watch, some garden equipment, a car, a holiday. Our starting point, therefore, is to investigate this state of soul. What are the characteristics of the state of desiring something?

To answer this question, we will draw first on the work of Plato, followed by Augustine. In the Introduction, we discussed our rationale for selecting these authors and the way in which Augustine’s Christian convictions will have primacy throughout the thesis. We draw on Plato in this chapter, and in Chapter Three, for his understanding of desire in general, and his descriptions of different desires within the soul. The first section of this chapter identifies three elements in Plato’s understanding of desire: lack, longing, and conflict within the soul. The second section begins by examining these three themes from Augustine’s perspective. We argue that Augustine also understands desire along these lines: desire is a kind of love in the condition of lacking its object, and seeking its object in longing. We add to this Augustine’s discussion of imagination and its role in desire. We then explore further the theme of conflict in the soul, which Augustine discusses within the frame of the fallenness of our nature; Augustine emphasises the

²³ D. Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, London, Southbank Publishing, 1987, p. 145. We will analyse one of David Ogilvy’s advertisements in the following chapter.

weakness and crookedness of our will as a constant inner disruption and danger. As part of these discussions, we will offer brief clarifications, drawing on Augustine's work, of the distinctions between desire and pleasure, and desire and the will. In the following chapter, we will also clarify the distinction between desire and hope, as we apply the account developed in this chapter to investigating the creation of desire.

Plato on desire

Desire is a familiar state of mind: we might have a desire for a cup of tea, a desire for the sun to come out, or a desire to check the news. We are also familiar with sexual desire. But what are the characteristics of this condition of desiring? What is going on within us when we experience desire? This section will examine Plato's answers to this question.

We will begin with the discussion of *eros* in the *Symposium* as it is here that Plato outlines some fundamental characteristics of desire in general.²⁴ Six speeches are made in the work on *eros*, with a seventh contribution in Alcibiades' final interruption. John Ferrari argues that the six speeches are divided into two categories. Phaedrus, Pausanias and Eryximachus all discuss good and bad versions of desire, focused on different objects. For example, "Pausanias draws the obvious contrast with lovers who are more concerned for the body than the soul ... and who therefore do not take virtue into account".

Aristophanes is the first to describe *eros* as "a single aspiration, common to all, and

²⁴ A number of terms in this dialogue might be translated as 'desire'. For example, Plato writes that "the desire [*epithymia*] and pursuit of the whole is called love [*eros*]", or at another point, "the soul ... evidently desires [*boulomai*] and cannot tell". Our focus in this brief discussion of the *Symposium* will be the meanings which the different speakers give to *eros*, for we are seeking to describe some broad characteristics of Plato's understanding of desire – lack, longing, and conflict. These broad characteristics apply to all desires. Later in this section we will discuss *epithymia* in the context in which Plato uses the term in the *Republic*. *Boulêsis* is not a term we will examine in this thesis, though as Charles Kahn notes, the *Gorgias* describes *boulêsis* as aiming at some good, suggesting that in at least in some of Plato's thought, it is similar to *logistikon*, the desire for the good in the *Republic* which we will discuss in this thesis. We will also explore below how *eros* relates to the tripartite division in the *Republic*. Plato, 'Symposium', in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. B. Jowett, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1892, p. 562; C.H. Kahn, 'Plato's Theory of Desire', *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1987, p. 91.

directed ... at the same generic object – wholeness”.²⁵ Aristophanes introduces this idea in a narrative about the history of the human race, noting before he begins that his audience might laugh at him for what he is about to say. “[T]he original human nature was not like the present”, he proposes.

[T]he primeval man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond. He could walk upright as men now do, backwards or forwards as he pleased, and he could also roll over and over at a great pace....²⁶

The gods, particularly Zeus, were afraid of the power of these creatures – who were not actually men but androgynous – and decided to split them in half. We, their descendants, now search for what will complete us. “After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together ... throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one...”.²⁷ Although the story is comic, it is a memorable presentation of the idea that we desire wholeness. By telling a story of loss, Aristophanes also introduces the idea that desire involves a lack. This point is made explicitly by Socrates later in the dialogue. In questioning Agathon, Socrates establishes the point that we desire only things which we do not have: “Would he who is great desire to be great, or he who is strong, desire to be strong?”²⁸ To take a contemporary example from advertising, an advertisement might bring us to desire a bottle of whisky, but an advertisement which sought to sell us the same model of car we have recently bought would not move us. It is, indeed, possible to say that one desires what one already has, for instance “wealth and health and strength”, but as Socrates argues, this can only mean that

²⁵ G.R.F. Ferrari, ‘Platonic Love’, in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 251.

²⁶ Plato, ‘Symposium’, p. 559.

²⁷ Plato, p. 560.

²⁸ Plato, p. 570.

one desires to go on having this thing into the future. In this part of Socrates' speech, therefore, Plato establishes one fundamental characteristic of desire: that it involves a lack. "The inference that he who desires something is in want of something, and that he who desires nothing is in want of nothing, is in my judgment, Agathon, absolutely and necessarily true".²⁹

The other characteristic of desire which Plato describes is longing. This theme is present in Aristophanes' speech: the two halves are "longing to grow into one".³⁰ In the case of a couple, he writes, this longing is for more than sexual intercourse; it attaches to something greater which they cannot explain.

For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of lover's intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment. Suppose Hephaestus, with his instruments, to come to the pair who are lying side by side and to say to them, 'What do you people want of one another?' they would be unable to explain.³¹

According to Aristophanes, the fulfilment they are longing for is a return to unity. As he says, "suppose further, that when [Hephaestus] saw their perplexity he said: 'Do you desire to be wholly one...?' [T]here is not a man of them who when he heard the proposal would deny or would not acknowledge that this meeting and melting into one another, this becoming one instead of two, was the very expression of his ancient need".³² The subsequent speech by Agathon, however, describes the object of *eros* in different terms, giving a different context for understanding the characteristic of longing. According to Ferrari, the important move made in Aristophanes' speech is to propose that that all *eros* is for the same generic object, wholeness. "Agathon agrees with this structural claim",

²⁹ Plato, p. 570.

³⁰ Plato, p. 561.

³¹ Plato, p. 562.

³² Plato, p. 562.

Ferrari argues, “but contends that the single object of love is *kallos* – one word in Greek, but with a semantic range requiring many in English: the beautiful, the fine, the noble, the good”.³³ Again, the point is made explicitly later in Socrates’ speech. Diotima says to Socrates, “you hear people say that lovers are seeking for their other half; but I say that they are seeking neither for the half of themselves, nor for the whole, unless the half or the whole be also a good”.³⁴ *Eros*, she says, “may be described generally as the love of the everlasting possession of the good”.³⁵ Diotima’s description of the ascent of *eros* begins with a physical, sexual attraction, an experience involving longing with which we are familiar. David Halperin describes how Diotima positions attraction to corporeal things as the starting point for the pursuit of that greater object about which we have a “doubtful presentiment”:³⁶

Sexual desire, insofar as it is aroused by that measure of the transcendent beauty instantiated in a beautiful body, is a low-order form of philosophical activity; every sexual impulse to possess another person physically – ultimately an impossible and therefore a limitless longing – represents (to the extent that it is stimulated by beauty) an inchoate expression of our metaphysical desire.³⁷

Later in this thesis we will discuss Plato’s concept of the education of desire. We will also explore the idea of longing for the good, examining the Christian rationale for why the good is attractive, in the following chapter. At this point, we merely note another general

³³ Ferrari, ‘Platonic Love’, p. 252.

³⁴ Ferrari shows how Plato’s view that every person loves the good can be reconciled with the point made by the earlier speakers in the dialogue, that people pursue better and worse things: “If love is an ongoing search for the good, then even the distinction between good and bad varieties of love developed by the first group of speakers, or something like it, can be accommodated; for a search is dynamic, and a search for the good will be better, the closer it comes to its goal”. Ferrari, p. 253.

³⁵ Plato, ‘Symposium’, p. 576.

³⁶ Plato, p. 562.

³⁷ D.M. Halperin, ‘Plato and Erotic Reciprocity’, *Classical Antiquity*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1986, p. 73. Cheryl Hall argues that the *Symposium* aims to give a new meaning to the word *eros*; that Plato aims to take a concept of desire anchored in the sensual realm, the kind of desire we direct towards food and drink, but particularly sex, and show how this can be educated to become a means of passionately connecting with the good. C.A. Hall, *The Trouble with Passion: Political Theory Beyond the Reign of Reason*, London, Routledge, 2005, p. 41.

characteristic of desire discussed in the *Symposium*: that it involves a longing to possess, or be united with, the object.

So far we have identified two characteristics of the state of desire as described by Plato: the awareness of a lack, and longing. These two characteristics combined make desire a bittersweet experience; the poet Sappho describes desire with the word *glukupikron*: sweet and bitter.³⁸ To explore the state of soul further, we will move from Plato's discussion of *eros* in the *Symposium*, to his discussion in *The Republic*, in which he categorises different types of desire. In Book Four he proposes that the soul has three parts: a rational part (*logistikon*); a part constituted by spirited emotion – self-assertive, and ambitious for power and status (*thymos*); and lower appetites, including for money, food and sex (*epithymia*).³⁹ John Cooper explains the contrast between Plato's theory and the more familiar modern understanding of desire, which goes back to Hobbes, that a person's actions follow from the combination of their desires and beliefs. In the Hobbesian theory, "there are two sorts of determinants of action, belief and desire, one of which (desire) is the exclusive source of motivation while the other (belief) contributes only factual information, but no additional impulse to action". Cooper writes that there is a misleading similarity between this theory and Plato's, in that Plato appears also to distinguish reason, on the one hand, and two varieties of desire, on the other. Yet Cooper argues that this interpretation is incorrect:⁴⁰

On Plato's theory all three of the parts, reason as well as appetite and spirit, are independent sources of motivation; the contrast between reason and the other two is not really akin to the modern theory's distinction between inert, purely factual belief and motivating desire. This fact does not emerge with perfect explicitness until the ninth book, where Socrates

³⁸ Sappho, *Sappho: A New Translation of the Complete Works*, trans. D. Rayor, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 137.

³⁹ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd edn., trans. F.M. Cornford, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1942, pp. 128-135.

⁴⁰ J.M. Cooper, 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1984, p. 5.

advances the claim that “as there are three parts, there are also three kinds of pleasure, one peculiar to each part, and so with desires”.⁴¹

This understanding of desire enables Plato to talk about conflict between the different parts. The higher rational desires in the soul can become disrupted by the lower desires. This is because they can pursue different objects. Plato gives an examples of thirst, a desire of *epithymia*, being overpowered by *logistikos*. He asks, first: “Now, is thirst, just in so far as it is thirst, a desire in the soul for anything more than simply drink? Is it, for instance, thirst for hot drink or for cold, for much drink or for little, or in a word for drink of any particular kind?” He argues that thirst, considered in itself, is simply the desire for drink, rather than the desire for a good drink. “[T]he soul of a thirsty man, just in so far as he is thirsty, has no other wish than to drink. That is the object of its craving, and towards that it is impelled”.⁴² Charles Kahn argues that, in this passage, Plato introduces the idea that the lower desires have a more rudimentary conception of their object; Plato emphasises that “thirst as such is a thirst as such is a desire for drink as such, and not a desire for hot drink or good drink ... because he wants to insist upon the appetite’s *indifference* to all considerations other than getting what it wants”.⁴³ Thirst, as a desire, involves an awareness of a lack and a longing, but it does not involve a judgement that the object which would satisfy this lack is good. It has a crude conception of its object and it cannot discern goodness. This is what leads it into conflict with *logistikos*, which reflects on the situation and discerns that the drinkable object is not good.⁴⁴ Kahn compares this discussion to passages in the *Gorgias* and *Meno* in which desire is always directed at something judged to be good. Yet to incorporate the fact of conflict, Plato must define a

⁴¹ Cooper, p. 5. Paul Ludwig reaches the same conclusion as Cooper, arguing that in Book Nine it becomes clear that “not only the ‘desirous’ (*epithumetikon*) part, but also the other two parts, have ‘desires’ (*epithumiai*). The *thumos* is *philonikon* and *philotimon*, whereas the rational part is *philomathes* and *philosophon*”. P.W. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 223, n. 8.

⁴² Plato, *The Republic*, pp. 131-133.

⁴³ Kahn, ‘Plato’s Theory of Desire’, p. 85.

⁴⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 133.

notion which is not present in his previous dialogues: a desire that is independent of any discrimination of what is good. *Logistikon*, as the highest desiring part of the soul, seeks the good; the other desiring parts do not determine their objects on this basis. Kahn writes: “It is precisely as a desire for what is judged to be good and beneficial that reason is set apart from appetite and the *thymoeides*”.

How can we reconcile the tripartite conception of desire in the *Republic* with Diotima’s description of *eros* in the *Symposium*? To seek to do so obviously requires an argument beyond the scope of this discussion, however, we can note two points from Kahn and Ferrari, which give some more context to our understanding of conflict. Kahn suggests that the two approaches to desire might be reconciled by seeing *eros* not as the desire of any single part of the soul, “but as an undifferentiated source of psychic energy or motivation for all three parts”. He draws support for this interpretation from a passage in Book Six of the *Republic*: “When a person’s desires incline strongly in one direction, we know that they will be weaker in other directions, like a stream of water directed off into one channel”. Without interpreting *eros* in this way, the idea of one desire being channelled into others would be confusing because it would contradict the theory in the rest of the *Republic* that each part of the soul has its own “distinctive desires”. Nevertheless, Kahn comments that this way of reconciling the dialogues is speculative and this view of *eros* probably cannot be attributed to Plato. In particular, it does not take account of the attribute of *eros* foregrounded in the *Symposium*, that it desires the good.⁴⁵

Ferrari offers an interpretation which does take account of *eros* as a desire for the good. Although this is based on a comparison between the *Symposium* and the tripartite division of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, Ferrari writes, that the tripartition is similar to that in the *Republic*, and he points out the corresponding parts. In the *Phaedrus* the soul is

⁴⁵ Kahn, ‘Plato’s Theory of Desire’, pp. 96-98.

described allegorically as a chariot, with *logistikos* as the driver, a white horse, corresponding to *thymos*, and a black horse, corresponding to *epithymia*.⁴⁶ Ferrari's interpretation is that one might say of the chariot as a whole, that it is by nature oriented towards the good.

It is only at the level of the whole person, not the parts, that all love is directed, by its nature, toward the good. And to say that the whole person is naturally oriented toward the good is, more accurately, to say that, first, the charioteer of his soul is naturally oriented toward wisdom and truth; second, that the charioteer is natural ruler of his soul (although not necessarily the actual ruler of his soul) – as symbolized by his being in the driver's seat; and third (a corollary of the previous point), that it is when the charioteer is in charge that the entire soul is at its best, and the person lives the good life, the philosophic or 'wisdom-loving' life.⁴⁷

The *Symposium* is the description of an ideal, and how to approach that ideal, so it is describing how a love of the good may come to rule in the soul. *Eros* by nature loves the good, and the soul is rightly ordered when it is ruled by the love of the good. Therefore, we can say that everyone desires the good – by nature we are oriented towards the good. The *Symposium* and the *Republic* have this conviction in common, but the *Symposium* presents an ideal of education, in which lower desires are steps towards higher desires, whereas the *Republic* is concerned, in parts of its discussion, with how lower desires can conflict with higher desires in the soul. In this discussion we have, of course, only touched on some of the general characteristics of desire drawn from Plato's works, primarily the above two dialogues. In the following section, we will continue to discuss and develop these themes, from Augustine's perspective.

⁴⁶ Ferrari, 'Platonic Love', p. 264. We will examine this allegory in the *Phaedrus* further in the following chapter.

⁴⁷ Ferrari, p. 264.

Augustine on desire

This section aims to extend and critique the account of desire we have developed so far by examining Augustine's understanding of desire. We will begin with an overview of the context of Augustine's relation to Platonism, before examining Augustine's view of desire. We will relate his understanding to the discussion above, as well as introducing the role of the imagination, before turning to Augustine's view of conflict in the soul.

In the *Retractions* Augustine regrets some of the enthusiasm he had shown earlier in his career in praising the Platonists: "I have been rightly displeased, too, with the praise with which I extolled Plato or the Platonists or the Academic philosophers beyond what was proper for such irreligious men". He adds that philosophers "lack true piety".⁴⁸ Yet Augustine's thought was strongly influenced by Platonists. In Milan he read Platonic books, most likely the *Enneads* by Plotinus and his student Porphyry.⁴⁹ As Eugène Portalié writes, no other philosophy played so great a role in shaping Augustine's thought.⁵⁰ During his earlier period of enthusiasm, writing in the *Confessions*, he recalls his meeting with the priest Simplicianus who congratulates Augustine on having read the books of the Platonists. Simplicianus describes "the writings of other philosophers full of fallacies and deceptions 'according to the elements of this world' (Col. 2:8)", whereas in contrast, "in all the Platonic books God and his Word keep slipping in".⁵¹ Earlier in the work he describes encountering many truths of Christianity in these books; that God is spirit and not a material thing; that God is the maker of all things; that God's Son is God by nature. Yet he also writes what he did not learn; that God "took on himself the form of a servant"; that "as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become sons of God by

⁴⁸ Augustine, *The Retractions*, trans. M. Inez Bogan, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1968, pp. 10-14.

⁴⁹ G. Clark, *Augustine: The Confessions*, Exeter, Bristol Phoenix Press, 2009, p. 22.

⁵⁰ E. Portalié, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*, trans. R.J. Bastian, London, Burns & Oates, 1960, p. 95.

⁵¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 135.

believing in his name”; and that “at the right time he died for the impious”.⁵² As Portalié summarises:

Augustine always reproached the Platonists for their ignorance or rejection of the three fundamental Christian dogmas. The Incarnation is missing from their philosophy; it is even declared impossible ... Equally unknown to them is everything concerning the person of Christ, the mystery of the cross, the ineffable humiliations of the Son of God and the great lesson of humility which flows from them. Finally they have no knowledge of grace as the source of all virtue. They lay down some sublime moral precepts, but without any helps to put them into execution.⁵³

From his passage in the *Retractions* above, we might assume that Augustine is seeking to retract statements such as his praise in *The City of God* for Plato as the student of Socrates who “shone with a glory so illustrious he entirely eclipsed all the others, and not, indeed, unworthily...”.⁵⁴ It seems likely, however, that Augustine would still hold to the view that the opinions of the Platonists are “preferable to the dogmas of all other philosophers”, and his wish that “mythical theology which enchants the minds of the ungodly ... give place to them”.⁵⁵ He also warns his readers as Paul warns his, first, to take care that “no one deceive you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the elements of the world” (Col. 2:8). But, then again, Augustine adds, quoting Romans 1:19-21:

[L]est he suppose that all philosophers are of this kind, the Christian man hears the same apostle saying of some of them: ‘That which may be known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them. For His invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, also His eternal power and Godhead’. Also, speaking to the Athenians, having said a great thing concerning God, which few can understand, ‘in Him we live,

⁵² Augustine, pp. 121-122.

⁵³ Portalié, *Saint Augustine*, pp. 101-102. Augustine makes this latter point in the *Confessions*, describing “those who see what the goal is but not how to get there”, in contrast to those who seek the way in Christ. We will examine Augustine’s use of the books of Plotinus and Porphyry further in Chapter Five. Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 130.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 316.

⁵⁵ Augustine, p. 318. Augustine means this latter statement to express a preference for Platonism over other philosophies; obviously he would prefer Christianity to either.

and move, and have our being’, the apostle adds: ‘As certain also of your own have said’.⁵⁶

This passage supports our justification made in the Introduction for drawing on some elements of Plato guided by Augustine’s convictions. Indeed, the first two characteristics of desire we identified in Plato’s work are consistent with Augustine’s description of desire.⁵⁷ In Book Nineteen of *The City of God*, in the context of examining the use of the words *amor* and *dilectio* in the Bible, Augustine defines desire as a form of love. He does so as part of examining the state of rightly loving God and one’s neighbour. “This disposition”, he writes, “is more usually called ‘charity’ [*caritas*] in Holy Scripture; but, in the same sacred writings, it is also called love [*amor*]”. Augustine is arguing against people who have thought that *amor* is to be taken in a bad sense: “not a few have supposed that *dilectio* and *caritas* are something different from *amor*”. On the contrary, he responds, *amor* is used in good senses in Scripture, such as Titus 1:8 when Paul says that a man chosen to govern the people should be a lover (*amator*) of the good, although *amor* can also be bad, as in Paul’s description of the last days, when men will be lovers (*amantes*) of themselves and lovers (*amatores*) of money.⁵⁸ Augustine describes different forms which love may take, depending on its relationship to its object: “love possessing and enjoying what it loves is joy; love fleeing what is averse to it is fear; and love undergoing such adversity when it occurs is grief”. And then, he gives his definition of desire: “love striving to possess what it loves is desire”.⁵⁹ For ‘desire’ in this sentence,

⁵⁶ Augustine, pp. 325-326.

⁵⁷ Furthermore, Oliver O’Donovan argues that Augustine thought the Platonic tripartite division had a basis in Scripture – that the ‘heart, soul, and mind’ of Matthew 22:37 aligns with *epithymia*, *thymos*, and *logistikon*. As O’Donovan writes, commenting on Ragnar Holte: “This seems to me to give decisive support to Holte’s intuition that even in contexts where he makes no direct mention of the Platonic doctrine, Augustine took for granted the presence of the three Platonic parts in the three phrases of the Scriptural text”. O. O’Donovan, “‘*Usus*’ and ‘*Fruitio*’ in Augustine, “*De Doctrina Christiana I*”, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1982, p. 372.

⁵⁸ The Greek word used here in Scripture is *philagathon*. Although Augustine is using Latin translations of the New Testament to make his points, this passage is useful because it shows how Augustine understands the use of the Latin words.

⁵⁹ Augustine, pp. 591-592.

Augustine uses the word *cupiditas*.⁶⁰ In Sermon 359A, he makes the same point: “I mean, you love both when you desire and when you see. Your love, when you desire, is aimed at arriving; your love, when you see, at staying”.⁶¹

This definition of desire captures the first two characteristics of desire we drew from Plato in the previous section. To say that desire is love striving to possess its object implies both that it does not have its object, and that, as a form of love, it involves some kind of longing. As well as this conceptual alignment, Augustine illustrates these characteristics of desire in relation to his own experience. For example, in the passage in the *Confessions* which begins, “Late I have loved you, beauty so old and so new...”, he writes “I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you”.⁶² He thus describes his lack in relation to the whole. A taste is a limited experience: if all he has had is a taste he has not eaten fully. Thus in describing an encounter with God earlier in the work, using smell as a metaphor as well as taste, he writes of his “desire for that of which I had the aroma but which I had not yet the capacity to eat”.⁶³ He illustrates his lack more directly when he writes, using an expression drawn from Plotinus, that his experience of a vision of God led him to look back on himself “far from you ‘in the region of dissimilarity’”.⁶⁴ Provoked by

⁶⁰ Augustine, pp. 591-592. Following these definitions, Augustine turns to another word for desire used in Scripture, *concupiscentia*, employed, for example, when Paul writes that he has “a desire [*concupiscit*] to depart, and to be with Christ” (Phil. 1:23). He concludes that love is bad or a good depending on the object of desire, but that “when we employ the words *cupiditas* or *concupiscentia* without adding what it is that is desired, they signify ‘desire’ in a bad sense” (Augustine, p. 592). Additionally, we can note that Augustine uses two other terms which can be translated as desire: *libido* and *desiderium*. As Timo Nisula notes, Augustine uses *libido* more often. Nisula describes the use of this term in *The City of God*: “At first, *libido* is connected to the discussion of emotional functions, where Augustine loosely mentions *libido* to be a common term for all desires (*generale vocabulum omnis cupiditatis*). Augustine continues by listing various kinds of desire according to their objects. Some of these lusts have their ‘proper names’; thus, for example, the lust for revenge is properly called anger (*ira*) ... However, some of the various lusts do not have a proper name at all ... As a technical term, *libido* can thus be applied to all imaginable desires. As a word, it has, however, a connotation of its own, namely sexual”. *Desiderium* is used less frequently and “denotes a large and general spectrum of wishes and volitions”. We include this explanation of terms to show that the different words Augustine uses for desire might all be used for good and bad desires, even if they have different connotations. Whatever word Augustine is using would conform to the core understanding of desire we adopt for our argument: love seeking an object, whether that object is good or bad. T. Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscentia*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 18; pp. 38-39.

⁶¹ Augustine, *Sermons (341-400) on Various Subjects*, trans. E. Hill, New York, New City Press, 1995, p. 210.

⁶² Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 201.

⁶³ Augustine, p. 128.

⁶⁴ Augustine, p. 123. Chadwick notes that this expression is drawn from Plotinus’s *Enneads* 1. 8. 13. 15. Augustine, p. 123, n. 22.

the ‘taste’, he thus develops an awareness of the difference between his own creaturely, distracted and sinful state, and the perfect beauty of God. He is not noticing the difference between two versions of a good thing, like one might notice the difference between two styles of speaking, for example. He is describing a whole, and his lack in relation to that whole.

Augustine also illustrates the characteristic of longing. He writes in the same passage in the *Confessions*, “I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours”.⁶⁵ Here he only uses the word *amor*, but we can infer from his views in *The City of God* discussed above that this is *amor* in the form of desire because he is striving to possess the object of his love. The image of ‘burning’ certainly expresses the striving, as opposed to being at peace. As Nisula mentions, *cupiditas* in Augustine, as well as in Ambrose and in other literature of the time, often appears as something hot: “it is burning, flaming and blazing in people”.⁶⁶ Augustine mentions longing at many points in relation to desire. For example, in Book Thirteen of *The City of God*, on the souls of the departed saints: “They do not desire to forget their bodies, as Plato thought. Rather, because they remember what has been promised to them by Him Who fails no one ... they look forward longingly and patiently to the resurrection of their bodies...”.⁶⁷ As Peter Brown notes in his biography, Augustine often spoke movingly of his yearning for the Eternal City. Brown quotes Augustine from a sermon preached at Carthage, in which Augustine expands on his desire for peace which he had described in the *Confessions*: “When, therefore, death shall be swallowed up in victory, these things will not be there; and there shall be peace – peace full and eternal. We shall be in a kind of city. Brethren, when I speak of that City, and especially when scandals grow great here, I just cannot bring myself to stop...”.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Augustine, p. 201.

⁶⁶ Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, p. 35.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 566.

⁶⁸ P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, London, Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 312.

We may also draw on Augustine to add another element to our account of desire: the role of imagination. This concerns how we conceive of the object which we lack and long for. Augustine addresses this topic as part of his discussion of memory in the *Confessions*. He describes how an image of the thing we lack is held in our mind: “sick people [would not] know what was meant when health was mentioned, unless by the power of memory they held the same image, even though the thing itself was absent from their body”. Yet our minds also have the power to combine memories to create images, in a mysterious process – “who can say how images are created, even though it may be clear by which senses they are grasped and stored within”.⁶⁹ Augustine then attempts to describe something of this process, relating it to fears, hopes, and desires.

These actions are inward, in the vast hall of memory. There sky, land, and sea are available to me together with all the sensations I have been able to experience in them ... Out of the same abundance in store, I combine with past events images of various things, whether experienced directly or believed on the basis of what I have experienced; and on this basis I reason about future actions and events and hopes, and again think of all these things in the present. ‘I shall do this or that’, I say to myself within that vast recess of my mind which is full of many, rich images, and this act or that follows. ‘O that this or that were so’, ‘May God avert this or that’. I say these words to myself, and as I speak, there are present images of everything I am speaking of, drawn out of the same treasure-house of memory. I would never say anything like that if these images were not present.⁷⁰

In *On the Trinity* Augustine describes this same creative processing of images. He describes how the things we perceive through the senses remain in the mind: “the form of the body that we perceived without has inhered in the memory”. From this remembered form, the mind creates other images: “we call the form, which is in the memory, the parent, as it were, of that which is wrought in the phantasy of thought”.⁷¹ Augustine gives an example: when he imagines Carthage he draws the image from a memory which he

⁶⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 186-196.

⁷⁰ Augustine, p. 187.

⁷¹ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, trans. S. McKenna, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 73.

received through his senses, from having been there; when he turns his mind to Alexandria, he creates the image. “For I had heard from many people and believed that it is a great city; so in accordance with the description that could be given me, I formed an image of it in my mind as I was able...”⁷² Following Marianne Djuth’s analysis of the concept in Augustine, we can use the word ‘imagination’ to refer to Augustine’s concept of “the role that memory plays in storing, reproducing, and arranging the images generated in it on the basis of sense experience”.⁷³ As Augustine describes above, imagination creates the images we have in mind when thinking about the actions we will undertake, and what we fear or hope. He discusses imagination directly in relation to desire in Book Ten of *On the Trinity*. Regarding someone who has heard something being praised, he writes: “He therefore frames in his mind an imaginary picture by which he may be aroused to love. (But from what does he picture it except from those things which he already knows?)”.⁷⁴ This mental image is the object of our desire. If Augustine had desired to go to Alexandria, for example, this image he created of the city would be the object of his longing. The range of different things we might desire is as extensive as the creativity of the imagination. We might have an idea of ‘kindness’ and desire that; we might desire a particular person, or we might desire a drink. Whatever object we can hold in mind might be the object of a desire. Djuth observes that the imagination, for Augustine, is a site of our struggle to love God. For Augustine, “the imagination constitutes the locus of the mind’s struggle to liberate itself from the ill effects of memory images that orient it rather toward the world than God”.⁷⁵ Like the sick person desiring health, our mental image is our idea of what we lack, and the focus of our longing.

⁷² Augustine, pp. 15-16.

⁷³ M. Djuth, ‘Veiled and Unveiled Beauty: The Role of the Imagination in Augustine’s Esthetics’, *Theological Studies*, vol. 68, 2007, p. 80.

⁷⁴ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 46.

⁷⁵ Djuth, ‘Veiled and Unveiled Beauty’, pp. 79-83. Djuth discusses the various terms Augustine uses for ‘image’: *imago*, *phantasia*, and *phantasma*. She notes that Augustine tends to use *phantasma* for mental images which do not relate to the truth, however, his usage is somewhat loose. For our argument, we only need to see how the mind pictures an image,

Desire as a form of love, therefore, is guided by the image we have in our mind of what it is that we are pursuing. The relationship of this image to reality, of course, determines whether it might be possible to satisfy our desire, or whether this desire will always be unfulfilled. As Augustine writes, describing someone finding the actual thing which everyone has been praising: “Yet perhaps he will not love the form that was praised when he discovers how unlike it is to the one which he pictures in his mind”.⁷⁶ Based on this discussion, we can define the relationship between pleasure and desire. Pleasure follows when love as desire is able to become love as joy, when the real object is attained. Augustine confirms his view on this in *On Christian Doctrine*, that “when the object of love is present, it inevitably brings with it pleasure as well”.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this does not seem entirely satisfying, because the concept of pleasure also seems broader. The term also refers to a physiological response, not necessarily connected with a desire. Having one’s feet massaged, for example, can be pleasurable simply because of the physical pressure which releases pleasurable hormones. Or, one might reluctantly join one’s friends on a walk, expecting it to be strenuous, but find unexpected pleasure from the exercise and the fresh air in one’s lungs. These are pleasures which do not necessarily follow from the fulfilment of a desire. One way to make sense of this is to return to Augustine’s reference to joy. Joy is the form love takes when the object is attained, and pleasure, as Augustine writes, is present in such cases. It seems reasonable to consider joy, and enjoyment, as a state which involves pleasure, as Augustine says, but which also engages more of the human being than the examples of pleasure via foot massage or unexpectedly pleasant fresh air. Augustine writes, describing his vision of God, “I trembled with love and awe”.⁷⁸

which can be an object of desire. In later chapters, when we discuss the education of desire, we will address the question of how our imagination should be guided to conceive of a good object.

⁷⁶ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 46.

⁷⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 592; Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 47.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 123.

Pleasure is present in this moment, but it is a different experience from the stimulated pleasure which does not involve an object of love. It is beyond our scope to investigate in detail the state of the soul experiencing joy; however, especially in the pursuit of a desire for the good, it seems that the pleasure in fulfilment also engages one's understanding, and perhaps even memory. We might call the pleasure of joy – although aware that we have not investigated the details – a 'higher pleasure'.⁷⁹ This allows us, at least, to delineate a relationship between desire and pleasure. The category of pleasurable experiences involves states that can be triggered for many reasons. However, this category includes the fulfilment of desires. When a desire is fulfilled, pleasure is always present, although this pleasure engages more of the person, perhaps combined in some way with understanding and memory to create the experience of joy. Furthermore, we can add that the experience of pleasure can be part of the object of one's desire, indeed, it usually is, because we expect that pleasure or joy will accompany the attainment of the object.

Finally, we can turn to discuss Augustine's view of conflict between desires. On this theme, Augustine differs in some significant ways from the Platonists of his day, although not necessarily from the views of Plato himself.⁸⁰ One disagreement concerned the Platonist view that the body is the source of the impulses which hold the soul back from its desire to ascend. Augustine critiques this view in *The City of God*, using Virgil to represent the belief.

⁷⁹ We have not been able to find any study of the concepts of pleasure and joy in Augustine. However, for a further investigation of the experience of joy, drawing on Aquinas, see E. Padilla, *Divine Enjoyment: A Theology of Passion and Exuberance*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2014, pp. 13-44; pp. 122-149. The distinction between the pleasure of a foot massage and the joy of a fulfilled desire for the good is less clear in the case of lower desires, such as those discussed under *epithymia* above. The fulfilment of desires for food or drink seems closer to the examples of a massage and fresh air, because the appetite involves little cognition and the pleasure follows, largely if not entirely, from physical contact in the right places, rather than the use of any higher faculties. Rather than investigating this further, we can simply say that kinds of pleasure exist on a spectrum from low to high, like desire, from the unexpected bodily pleasure, without a preceding desire, through to the pleasure of the fulfilment of a bodily desire, to the kind of pleasure involved in a vision of God which we call joy.

⁸⁰ The beginning of this section described some of Augustine's views on the Platonists. We leave open the question of whether the particular views he disagrees with regarding the soul could be also attributed to Plato. The more important point is that we clarify Augustine's position and the views with which he disagrees. Then, when we take anything from Plato, we will do so according to Christian convictions understood via Augustine.

Virgil, it is true, seems to be expounding Platonic teaching in his magnificent verse when he says, ‘The force of those seeds is fiery, and their source is heavenly, to the extent that they are not impeded by harming bodies nor enfeebled by earthly limbs and dying members’. Also, he wishes us to understand that the body is the source of all four of the most notable disturbances of the mind: desire, fear, joy and grief, which are the origin, as it were, of all sins and vices.⁸¹

On this view, the body is the source of all desires that conflict with the noble desires of the soul. This view, as Augustine describes it, holds that desire and fear, gladness and sorrow do not look up to heaven, “but are confined in a dark and sightless cave”. On the contrary, Augustine asserts: “Our faith is something very different. For the corruption of the body, which presseth down the soul, was not the cause of the first sin, but its punishment; nor was it corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible”.⁸² John Cavadini describes both sides of this debate. The Platonists observe that emotions “come from somewhere else other than the rational mind, which they disturb, which can be said to ‘suffer’ them as passions”. This feeling of being impinged upon by desires which come from outside our mind is the source of “the Manichaean and Platonist temptation to theorize that they do in fact come from somewhere else, to wit, the body”.⁸³ Yet for Augustine, although “this corruption of the flesh results in some incitements to sin”, pride and envy arise in the soul.⁸⁴ Thus corporeal impulses can prompt us to sin, but pride and envy arising in the soul can also prompt us to sin. Cavadini writes that “Augustine is suspicious of claims of any independent volition coming from a source other than the soul or self. ‘Passions’ too are acts of the will, though they are acts of the will as corrupted and warped by the primal sin of *superbia* or pride, so warped that they seem to represent a will different from our own”.⁸⁵ Hence Augustine’s description in the

⁸¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 585.

⁸² Augustine, p. 585.

⁸³ J.C. Cavadini, ‘Feeling Right: Augustine on the Passions and Sexual Desire’, *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 36, no.1, 2005, p. 199.

⁸⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 585. Here Augustine means ‘flesh’ in the sense of the body.

⁸⁵ Cavadini, ‘Feeling Right’, pp. 199-200.

Confessions of his indecision about whether to serve God, which he writes he had long been disposed to do:

I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated from myself. The dissociation came about against my will. 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.⁸⁶

As Cavadini argues, this view enables Augustine to say that the emotions, including desire, are neither right nor wrong in themselves; rather, “if the will is right, not only will the emotions be blameless, but even praiseworthy”. As Augustine argues, “the emotions are shot through with will ... in fact they are nothing but ‘voluntates’, ‘wills’ in the sense of ‘acts of will’”, but our will is divided and we are in conflict within ourselves, not simply with our bodies.⁸⁷

This discussion of conflict within the will raises the question of the relationship between the will and desire. Like the discussion of pleasure and desire above, we do not have the scope to explore this topic in depth. However, we can turn to the work of John Rist to adopt one way of clarifying this point. As Rist argues, the word *voluntas*, usually translated as ‘will’, “does not denote for Augustine a part of the human psyche; rather, it is the human *psyche* in its role as moral agent”. He adds that Augustine, quoting Luke 2:14, describes good men as men “‘of good will’ (*bonae voluntatis*)”. “Thus *voluntas* is not a decision-making faculty of the individual, as subsequent philosophy might lead us to suppose, but the individual himself. Hence it can be good or bad”. Rist does not address the concept of desire directly, but he does refer to the “desire of the will”.⁸⁸ If we consider the will as simply the human soul in its role as moral agent, or, as we might put it, the soul

⁸⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 148-149.

⁸⁷ Cavadini, ‘Feeling Right’, p. 199.

⁸⁸ J.M. Rist, ‘Augustine on Free Will and Predestination’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1969, pp. 421-425.

undertaking or considering undertaking some action or pursuit, it seems reasonable to understand desire in relation to the will as we have understood desire in relation to the soul. According to Rist, in the context of moral action, we can replace the references to the soul, or psyche, with the will. Therefore, the will can be in a state of desire, or ‘have a desire’, just as the soul can be in a state of desire, or ‘have a desire’. We should add, though, that Augustine also uses the term in a slightly different way. When he writes of a person vacillating between going to church and going to the theatre, he describes this as “a single soul wavering between different wills” (*diversis voluntatibus*).⁸⁹ This requires some more clarification. In this case, ‘the will’ or active soul of a person is torn between different ‘wills’. As Cavadini writes above, an emotion, such as a desire, is an ‘act of will’; many of these can be active, and in tension, within the will as a whole. This is what it means for the will to be divided. The soul is being pulled towards different poles of willing; there are different nascent movements conflicting within the soul, each with its own object, seeking to come to dominance, to become ‘the will’ of a person. We can also describe this situation in terms of desires of the will. Two desires, to go to church or the theatre, are competing to become ‘the desire of the will’. That is, different nascent desires of the will are dividing the will, or active soul, against itself. Therefore, rather than the Manichee idea of different natures, each with its own will, or the modern idea of a decision-making faculty in the soul, Augustine has a vision of the soul as one, but torn by rebellion. The will is not one conscious part of the soul, weighing options; it is the whole soul, conscious and unconscious, being pulled in different directions by competing desires.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 149.

⁹⁰ For a criticism of Rist’s position, which argues that Augustine does in fact conceive of the will as a separate part of the soul from memory and understanding, see J. Hopkins, *Philosophical Criticism: Essays and Reviews*, Minneapolis, MN, The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1994, pp. 41-73.

Augustine has a severe view of the consequences of this discord within the will. In recounting his experience in the garden in Milan in the *Confessions*, he describes the strength of the worldly desires holding him back: “I was deeply disturbed in spirit, angry with indignation and distress that I was not entering my pact and covenant with you, my God, when all my bones (Ps. 34:10) were crying out that I should enter into it and were exalting it to heaven with praises”.⁹¹ He is held down by the crookedness and disability of his will. “The body obeyed the slightest inclination of the soul to move the limbs at its pleasure more easily than the soul obeyed itself, when its supreme desire could be achieved exclusively by the will alone”. This is a “monstrous situation”.⁹² Following Paul, Augustine sees this as a conflict between two wills, “one carnal, the other spiritual”. “In this way I understood through my own experience what I had read how ‘the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh’ (Gal. 5:17).⁹³ ‘The flesh’ in this context does not refer to the body; a desire being of the flesh refers to its object: they are desires which turn the will away from God. As Augustine explains in *The City of God*, the division between bad and good will follows from the choice to live according to one’s self or according to God.⁹⁴ Cavadini summarises Augustine’s view: “if the will is right, that is, fixed in love of God, in charity, then the emotions will be right, and if the will is wrong, that is, fixed in love of self over love of God, then the emotions will be ... ‘sicknesses’, pathologized versions of feelings which would otherwise be commendable”.⁹⁵ As we will see in Chapter Five, Augustine’s emphasis on the weakness of our will, and the power of the temptations we face in orienting our love towards God, will shape our view of the education of desire.

⁹¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 146-147.

⁹² Augustine, p. 147.

⁹³ Augustine, p. 140.

⁹⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 581-584.

⁹⁵ Cavadini, ‘Feeling Right’, p. 201.

Based on Plato's account of desire, particularly in the *Symposium*, it might be possible to argue that conflict is not essential to understanding this state of soul. In the *Symposium*, we are told about the ascent of desire from the perspective of its success: Diotima tries to explain to Socrates what it is like to move from desiring the things of this world, to coming to see perfect beauty – from the point of view of how this process can go well. Plato was surely aware of difficulties, but Diotima does not mention how the student might give up, become unable to think of anything but sex or the achievement of honour, or (as Augustine admits about how he spends his own time) prefer to devote their attention to “a lizard catching flies or a spider entrapping them”.⁹⁶ The *Symposium* does not give an impression of conflict, because it is an ideal account of avoiding conflict, between higher and lower desires, by reflecting on one's lower desires to raise up one's soul. Having begun to examine Augustine's thought on the topic, in contrast, we can affirm that conflict is an essential element of desire. As we will discuss later in the thesis, before the Fall in Paradise, there were no conflicting desires. There may also be moments, like Augustine's vision of God, in which the soul has only one desire. Yet conflict is essential to desire in the sense that it is a permanent feature of a fallen soul, although we might hope for improvement, and even for God's love to overcome conflict for a moment.⁹⁷

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have investigated the characteristics of the soul in a state of desire. We examined Plato's discussion of lack, the awareness that we are missing something in

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 213.

⁹⁷ This thesis will take its understanding of the soul from Augustine. That is, considered as a moral agent, it is a fallen will, divided against itself, with a propensity to rebel from God and orient itself towards other objects. To judge the merit of any particular desire, we will rely on the Pauline distinction Augustine adopts, between the will of the flesh and the will of God. That is, depending on the object towards which it is oriented, a desire is sinful or not. A desire is good when it is oriented towards God, or towards something or someone ‘in God’. On this basis, we can judge any desire, including the descriptions and analyses of desire from Plato, which we introduce into our discussions.

relation to a whole. We discussed the characteristic of longing, and how, at least in some cases, we have a longing for the good. We also explored Plato's tripartite division of the soul and its conflicting desires: some for the good and others for honour or for money or sex. Turning to Augustine, we identified his definition of desire as love seeking its object, a definition which implies both lack and longing. In addition, we examined Augustine's concept of the imagination, meaning the capacity of our mind to create new images out of sense impressions. The mental image, however near or far it is from reality, is our conception of the object of desire: the object of longing in relation to which we define what we lack. We also examined the relation between pleasure and desire, noting how pleasure is involved in desire's fulfilment, as joy, especially in the case of higher desires, but that pleasure may also be triggered in other ways. Finally, we examined Augustine's theory of conflict in the soul. We noted that the soul can be the origin of sin, and that the will, considered as the soul in action, is divided against itself because of the Fall. Our choice is to desire God or to desire things other than God, but this choice is turned into an ongoing struggle because of the fallenness of our will. This understanding of desire will inform our later discussions of the criticisms of advertising, the education of desire, and the design of an ethical advertisement. In the next chapter, we apply this account of desire to examine the process of the creation of desire.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CREATION OF DESIRE

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the process of the creation of desire by an advertisement. The question it will address is: What are the important changes which occur in the viewer during an engagement with an advertisement, in moving from a state of not desiring something, to a state of desire?⁹⁸ In the previous chapter, we investigated the characteristics of the state of desire, concluding that desire involves lack, longing, and conflict. This chapter will develop an account of how this state is brought about in us by an advertisement, an account which will be employed throughout the thesis.

The first section of this chapter examines Augustine's discussion of how desire is created in relation to learning a language, a process which he analyses in *On the Trinity*. As part of this discussion, we also define the relationship between desire and hope, and the place of hope in the creation of desire, considering statements in the *Enchiridion* as well as various sermons. We then apply this account to an analysis of particular advertisements, describing the variations in technique across a range of examples. We then turn to explore the creation of desire in advertisements which appeal to lower parts of the soul, organising this discussion according to Plato's tripartite division, and making use of his descriptions and metaphors for various desires. We first explore the creation of desires which Plato considers under the term *epithymia*, before, in the final section, considering how advertisements appeal to *thymos*. We thus develop an understanding of how advertising works, before in the next chapter examining critiques of the practice.

⁹⁸ By 'important' in this context we mean salient from the point of view of aiming to develop a Christian ethical account of advertising. For example, there may be facts about what goes on in the brain which are not relevant to know for this purpose.

Augustine on the creation of desire

We are familiar with the experience of forming a new desire. For example, perhaps at some point we had never heard of the island of Saint Lucia in the Caribbean, then, after a conversation with a friend about a good holiday they had, we have passing daydreams about how nice it must be there, and we start to long to go there ourselves. Or, consider another example: we see a magazine advertisement for a glasshouse in a garden. It looks affordable, well-built, spacious, and, looking at the page for a moment, we might feel a surge of enthusiasm for improving our own neglected garden. Accordingly, a few weeks later, the idea of building a better garden comes to mind again, and we set aside a day to do something we will enjoy: to buy one of the glasshouses. Over this period, something has developed within us – or has been imposed on us, or brought to the fore from within us. What is this process of the creation of desire, and what are its salient features from a Christian ethical point of view? In what follows, we will investigate Augustine's discussions in *On the Trinity* relevant to understanding the creation of desire.

In Books Nine and Ten of *On the Trinity* Augustine examines ways in which a desire might be created. He addresses this within a broader discussion of the relationship between love and knowledge, specifically the questions of whether love depends on knowledge and how we can, apparently, come to love something which we do not know. Augustine's purpose in these passages is different from ours in this section: he is seeking to explore the nature of knowledge. However, we can identify some ideas in his discussion which are helpful for our aim. Augustine approaches the topic of desire as follows. In Book Nine, he establishes that love is dependent on knowledge: we cannot love something that we do not know at all. In Book Ten, he then considers an apparent counter-example to this claim – one instance of someone loving something which they do not know. That is, someone might have a desire to learn a new branch of knowledge about which they are

ignorant. In this case, it seems that the person desires, or loves, something, without having any knowledge of the thing they love.⁹⁹ This presents a problem for Augustine's earlier conclusion, for it seems that love is not always dependent on knowledge. To clarify this situation, therefore, he must look closely into what is occurring when that person desires to learn. "We must carefully examine of what sort is the love of those who study, that is, of those who do not yet know a branch of knowledge, but are eager to learn it".¹⁰⁰ It is in this context that Augustine addresses the topic of the creation of desire.

Augustine notes that desire often begins when we hear about an attractive thing. We hear a good report of something, and this report calls to mind previous experiences we have had of beautiful things, similar to the thing we have heard described. We then long to get closer to this instance of beauty, and a desire forms based on what we have heard.

For even with respect to those things to which the term 'study' is not generally applied, love often arises by simply hearing about them. Thus from a report of any beautiful thing our mind yearns to see and to enjoy it. For it knows the beauty of bodies generically, since it has seen very many of them, and there is something within it which gives its approval to that for which it outwardly yearns.¹⁰¹

At this point in his argument, the only example of desire which Augustine has given is the case of loving a good man "whose face we have not seen". In this case, the love would be largely in the form of desire: a desire to meet and know this person. The basis of this desire lies in "our knowledge of his virtues, which we already know in the truth itself".¹⁰² Augustine does not elaborate on how this desire is created, beyond saying that the yearning began "from a report". Yet from our discussion of desire in Chapter Two, particularly the role of the imagination, we might infer from Augustine's brief mention a

⁹⁹ As explained in Chapter Two, we are following Augustine's understanding of desire as a form of love: desire is love seeking its object. Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 592.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 41.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, p. 42.

¹⁰² Augustine, p. 42.

more detailed description of the process. That is, we begin with various memories of appealing things. We then hear anecdotes describing how kind this person is, whom we have not met. Like the stories which were told to Augustine about Alexandria, these anecdotes provoke our imagination to create new images based on our past encounters with beauty, in this case, beauty in the form of virtues. The praise of the person giving the good report highlights the particular form virtues have taken in this absent person's life. As we hear the story, we imagine this, and this beautiful object in our imagination (our idea of this person) becomes an object of desire. We yearn to see and enjoy this person, whom we hope will be an embodiment of our idea.

This seems to be a reasonable extrapolation from Augustine's example, drawing on our understanding of desire. In the context of Augustine's argument in *On the Trinity*, however, this brief example raises a number of questions. How does Augustine see the relationship between beauty and goodness? Why exactly do we start to desire something (particularly, what is it within our minds which "gives its approval")? And how does our desire for the particular person relate to our desire for virtue or goodness in general? In what follows, we will investigate these questions by looking at an example which Augustine considers next in his argument, and which he analyses in more detail: the creation of a desire to learn a language.

Augustine begins discussing the desire to learn a language by narrowing his focus to the question of how we form a desire to learn a single new word. Consider the situation, he writes, of hearing an unknown word, such as the Latin word *temetum*. After hearing this we might desire to know its meaning, to know what idea those syllables are intended to convey.¹⁰³ If we believed that *temetum* was simply a meaningless sound, and not a sign which pointed to anything more than itself, we would not seek to know any further,

¹⁰³ Incidentally, as Augustine notes, *temetum* means 'strong wine'. Augustine, p. 44.

because our belief would be that we had “perceived the sensible thing in our consciousness as far as we could”. In this case, however, we know that we do not know the full extent of what we have glimpsed. Because of the tendency in us to search for the truth, Augustine writes, “the more a thing is known, but not fully known, the more that mind desires to know the rest”.¹⁰⁴

Augustine is interested in exploring the relationship between knowledge and love, so he raises this question: What exactly is the object of our desire, when we desire to learn this unfamiliar word? Based on his earlier argument, it seems that the person cannot desire the meaning of the word itself, because that is unknown. The answer he gives is that this person, who is setting out to understand one word, in fact loves something greater, on account of which they take an interest in the smaller part.

What does he love then, except that he knows and beholds in the reasons of things, what the beauty of that learning is in which the knowledge of all signs is contained; and what usefulness there is in that skill by which human society mutually communicates its thoughts, so that the assemblies of men may not be worse for them than solitude, if they were to share their thoughts in conversation.¹⁰⁵

The real object of the desire, Augustine is arguing, is a greater whole. We desire to know the individual word because we have seen a vision of the more beautiful whole: the idea of a whole language, the knowledge of all signs, of which this single word is one part.

Augustine’s point is that there are not two desires: a desire to know the meaning of *temetum*, and the desire to learn the language as a whole. There is one desire: to learn the language. Our activity concerning the unknown word is indeed part of *some* desire – this person “eagerly searches” for the word’s meaning – but this desire is not as circumscribed

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, pp. 42-43. Augustine distinguishes two kinds of desire which might motivate us to know more. The first is what he calls, in the *Confessions*, *morbo cupiditatis* – diseased desire, or curiosity, which is the motive to find out things “when there is no advantage in knowing and the investigators simply desire knowledge for its own sake” (Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 211-212). The other desire is for knowledge of the truth, meaning truth itself, which is goodness, or God. God is truth which should be desired for His own sake. Seeking knowledge of other truths (why the stars move as they do, why plants grow) must be connected with the pursuit of a good, or it is *morbo cupiditatis*.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 43.

as we might at first think. The object is not the word, but the beauty of language functioning as a whole. This person has perceived “the beauty of that learning ... in which the knowledge of all signs is contained”.¹⁰⁶ To prove this, Augustine imagines someone who believes that the word *temetum* is obsolete, therefore not part of the whole of the language. In this case (other than out of curiosity), they would have no interest in learning the meaning of the word. The encounter with the word would not be shaped and motivated by the broader desire. Therefore, in this way, Augustine solves the problem of how we can, apparently, desire to know something which is unknown to us. “We love something known, and on account of it, seek something unknown ... in that case, it is by no means the love of the unknown, but of the known thing, that holds us fast”.¹⁰⁷

Can we look any closer into this moment: the vision of beauty and the origin of the desire? Augustine does not elaborate on what is occurring during this vision, the moment when the person “beholds in the reasons of things ... the beauty of that learning...”.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, reading Book Ten in relation to other discussions in *On the Trinity*, we can draw some conclusions about the nature of this experience. First, Augustine makes clear that the vision of beauty to which he is referring is also a vision of goodness. We can see this by comparing the multiple references he makes to the moment. Having at first talked of the experience as seeing “the beauty of that learning”, he then refers to the same experience this way: “in the light of truth he realises how great and how good it is to understand and to speak all the languages of all the countries”. That is, the person realises how good it is to understand, and how beautiful is that understanding. That Augustine is talking about beauty and goodness is also supported by a phrase he uses later: “the splendour of such knowledge”.¹⁰⁹ The word translated as ‘splendour’ is *decus*; the sense of

¹⁰⁶ Augustine, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, p. 43.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, p. 43.

this word covers both beauty and goodness.¹¹⁰ The splendour somehow creates desire.

Augustine says that the splendour of such knowledge “so arouses the zeal of learners that they are spurred into activity on account of it”.¹¹¹ He also describes the moment of encounter in another way, in terms of the person encountering a beautiful form:

For that form touches the mind that knows and thinks; it reveals the beauty of minds that have been brought together in fellowship by listening to and answering questions through signs that are known. And this form enkindles him with zeal, who is looking indeed for something he does not know, but who beholds and loves the form that he does know, to which the unknown thing belongs.¹¹²

The effort to learn a particular word like *temetum* is part of an attempt to bring to perfection the whole form, or complete pattern, of a language within ourselves: “the soul, therefore, perceives, knows, and loves this beautiful and useful form, and whoever seeks the meaning of whatever significant words he does not know is endeavouring as much as he can to perfect it in himself”. What is occurring here? How does beholding the form of beauty and goodness arouse zeal? The answer lies in Augustine’s phrase: “he knows the beauty of this knowledge and *loves it because he knows it*”.¹¹³ Here, Augustine is pointing to the origin of the desire, in the connection between love and knowledge.

The relevant passage of Scripture is 1 John 4:8, “God is love”. Augustine discusses this in Book Eight of *On the Trinity*. When we properly love someone else, we are living out the form of love, and thus, we are coming to know God. As Augustine asks: “[O]f what, if not of God, is he full who is full of love?”.¹¹⁴ Also, as the line in 1 John preceding the quote above declares: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 Jn. 4:7). Thus, in the case of true

¹¹⁰ P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 6th edn., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 495.

¹¹¹ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 43-44.

¹¹² Augustine, p. 44.

¹¹³ Augustine, pp. 43-44. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁴ Augustine, p. 19.

beauty and goodness, love does not follow from knowledge. To know is to love. This is because true beauty and goodness and love are equivalent: they are names for God. On this basis, we can unpack Augustine's ideas about how we come to desire the good and beautiful vision of a language. To 'see' the beautiful vision of a whole language (in this case one is imagining) means to have good form brought to the patterns of the imagination of one's mind. The good is made real, to a degree, in the good image in one's mind. Goodness is love, therefore having goodness brought to life inside oneself is the same as having love brought to life inside oneself. This love has an object and a subject, because where love is found there is always a trinity, "the lover, the beloved and the love itself".¹¹⁵ Here, the person who has seen the good has become the lover (his mind has been formed according to the goodness in the beloved); the beautiful and good object he has imagined is the beloved; and there is the love itself, the form of goodness itself. It seems reasonable to argue that it is goodness, or love itself, which is the thing in our minds which "gives its approval" to what we have encountered.¹¹⁶ The goodness within us loves the new good thing we have imagined. As Augustine puts it in Book Nine: "love is also loved, nor can it be loved with anything else except with love, that is, with itself".¹¹⁷ In a formulation which Augustine might have enjoyed, we could say: love loves love. Because God is love and God is goodness, the extent to which we perceive any good thing is the extent to which love is born in us.

Is this love in the form of enjoyment or desire? It would seem that both forms of love are involved in this moment of the creation of the desire. Let us consider the point at which the good form comes to being in one's mind. Is this a moment of enjoyment? In some cases of encountering splendour it is undoubtedly so. In recounting one of his

¹¹⁵ Augustine, p. 26.

¹¹⁶ Augustine, p. 42.

¹¹⁷ Augustine, p. 31.

visions of God, for example, Augustine writes “I trembled with love and awe”. Before he falls back to normal life, Augustine is in the presence of God, and experiences joy.¹¹⁸ The difference between the encounter with God and beholding the beauty of language, however, is that the former is an encounter with goodness itself, whereas the beauty of language is conceived in the imagination.¹¹⁹ The imagination, though, need not be mistaken: it can present the true good (the form created in the imagination can participate in the true good). One might imagine beautiful Alexandria, and the imagination might be accurate. With a good imagination one can participate in the good, just not as fully as in a direct vision of God. We ‘see’ the beautiful vision of a whole language in our mind, and although it is not as awesome an encounter as Augustine’s vision of God, it is an experience of participating in goodness and beauty. For a few moments, one might be in somewhat of a reverie enjoying the splendour of the image. Therefore, we can propose that the encounter with the good is indeed a moment of love in the form of joy.¹²⁰

Before we continue to discuss how the rest of the formation of desire might occur, we should note that this ‘beginning’ we have discussed above – the moment of conceiving of the beauty of language – in fact has many antecedents. As noted in Chapter Two, Augustine describes drawing from the “vast hall of memory” to “combine with past events images of various things, whether experienced directly or believed on the basis of what I have experienced”.¹²¹ By combining various images and descriptions of good things, he creates new images which can become objects of desire. We can say that a desire begins, therefore, when one imagines an object which becomes the object of a desire. In the

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 123. We discuss this experience further in Chapter Five.

¹¹⁹ Djuth points out that Augustine described his vision at Ostia as a direct revelation rather than a mental image (*phantasia*). Djuth, ‘Veiled and Unveiled Beauty’, p. 82.

¹²⁰ In Chapter Five we will discuss Augustine’s thoughts on the kind of enjoyment we should take in worldly things. He believes that there is an appropriate kind of delight, but that we should not truly enjoy them because that would be to see them as a final resting point. Here we are discussing the process of the creation of desire; whether this enjoyment is warranted or not is not part of this inquiry.

¹²¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 187.

example of language, Augustine describes the experience of imagining the whole form at once: a beautiful mental image of the entirety of language and the conversations of a whole society. Yet this moment of conceiving the object is preceded by many hints and glimpses which are stored in the memory. This is clearer in the example of the virtuous man: we hear a good story or two about him and we combine this with other memories in our imagination to elaborate a mental vision of the whole person.

The moments in which we picture to ourselves, and enjoy, objects of desire in the imagination are usually brief. We know from our own experience that extended periods of joy are rare. Hence, there follows a second stage. Augustine, similarly, seems to describe two stages in the creation of desire. Regarding the person seeing the beauty of language, he writes: “what he sees within the light of truth is one thing, and what he desires within his own faculty is another”.¹²² The claim here is that one first sees the goodness (‘how good it *is*’), which is different from another mental act: perceiving the goodness in relation to oneself, as something which might be attained (‘how good it *would be* if I were to attain it’). In the example, the person moves from beholding the splendour of language, to thinking how good it would be for them personally to acquire or partake in this object: to learn the language. We can infer what mental change goes on between these two states. What must happen at some point is that the person moves their attention from beholding the good itself to considering themselves in relation to that good. That is, in light of the vision, we turn to our own present situation. We notice the lack in our own life: the absence of the object, or how rarely and fleetingly the good appears. Thus, we come out of the reverie, or moment of joy, and feel the lack. At this point, the love takes the form of desire. We have become aware of the distance between ourselves and the good which we have glimpsed and imagined. In the enjoyable reverie, we turn the good object over in our

¹²² Augustine, p. 43.

minds. Something similar happens as we long for the object – we still turn over, we might say ‘mentally caress’, the attractive thing in our minds – but with an awareness of the distance, hence we call it longing.

Augustine also discusses another aspect of the creation of desire, namely, hope. In the *Enchiridion* he describes hope and love as mutually dependent: “love cannot exist without hope, nor hope without love”.¹²³ He makes a more ambiguous statement in *On the Trinity*: “one who is not buoyed up by the hope of acquiring something either loves it tepidly or does not love it at all”.¹²⁴ This sentence may be interpreted in two ways. The question is: is Augustine referring to someone who has no hope at all, or merely someone who does not have much of it – enough to be “buoyed up”? If we assume that he means someone who has no hope at all, then he is suggesting that a person without hope might still love the thing, albeit tepidly. Therefore, love can exist without hope. To be consistent with his statement in the *Enchiridion*, however, we must assume that he means merely someone who does not have a great deal of hope. Interpreted this way, he is saying that without enough hope, love is tepid or absent.

Although Augustine provides no direct definition of hope, it is clear that hope is concerned with the possibility of attaining the object. As Augustine says in Sermon 359A, “How after all, when you’re walking somewhere, will you even move your feet, if you have no hope of ever getting there?”.¹²⁵ Note that this sentence implies a desire: the person is walking somewhere, with some desire in mind.¹²⁶ Yet this person will not pursue the desire – and will perhaps lose the desire entirely – if they have no hope. Augustine describes hope again with the example of Christ in Sermon 342:

¹²³ Augustine, *The Augustine Catechism: The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity*, trans. B. Harbert, New York, New City Press, 1999, p. 37.

¹²⁴ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 44.

¹²⁵ Augustine, *Sermons (341-400)*, p. 211.

¹²⁶ The content of the sentence, concerning hope and the objects of love, implies this person is acting out of their own desire, rather than, for instance, being compelled.

He came down to what he was not, the one who was something else. He lifted you up to what you were not, because you were someone else. So stir up your hope. It's a great thing that has been promised you, and it seems incredible, and it's generally reckoned that it's impossible for the sons of men to become sons of God. But much more was done for them, when the Son of God became a son of man. So stir up your hope ... expel disbelief from your hearts. Something more incredible has already been done for you than what has been promised you.¹²⁷

He is speaking here to those who disbelieve that they might ever become sons of God.

Becoming a son of God is surely something to desire; however, "it's generally reckoned that it's impossible". "It's a great thing that has been promised you, and it seems incredible..."; there is a great object of desire, but that we might actually attain it seems incredible. What we lack is hope. Augustine is trying to encourage hope by insisting that it is possible. Once we see that much greater things than this have been accomplished, on our behalf, we might more easily believe that it is possible to become a son of God.

What Augustine does not do, however, is to separate out the distinct development of desire and hope. As we discussed above, desire begins with an encounter with a good. In this case, consider someone, perhaps a child, who hears the promise that they can become a son of God. If the vision is communicated effectively, this should kindle desire. If the vision is described appropriately, in Christian terms, then they would be desiring the right thing. Yet imagining this from a child's perspective is revealing, because a child is less likely to be sceptical of how this might happen in practice. An adult might conceive of the desire, but very quickly believe that it is impossible to attain, therefore they have no hope, and so, according to Augustine in the *Enchiridion*, they lose love. This is the audience Augustine is speaking to in Sermon 342, who have already heard the vision and lost hope for it. Yet if we examine the case of the child, it is clear that desire and hope involve distinct mental efforts. Desire begins as love kindled in the perception of goodness

¹²⁷ Augustine, *Sermons* (341-400), p. 37.

(perceiving it is to realise it in one's mind), elaborated by the imagination into a conception of a greater whole, before one realises the lack in relation to oneself. Then the love which was enjoyment, becomes desire. Hope involves an entirely different consideration: whether it is actually possible to attain the object. If one believes that it is, this will fuel hope, as Augustine is seeking to do for his audience. Of course, one's consideration may not be very deep: the child may hope, not having thought about it very much.¹²⁸ Regardless, forming hope is still a different mental effort – considering, or even just feeling or guessing, whether attaining this end might actually be possible. All these moments might happen in quick succession, but each involves different activity in the mind. We therefore reach a conclusion which challenges Augustine's statement in the *Enchiridion*: *pace* Augustine, it may be that love can exist without hope. The experience of love itself is simply in relation to the object; one might be in a reverie (love in the form of enjoyment), or one might have brought to mind one's lack, and so feel desire. This can occur without hope, for hope follows (or not) depending on how one thinks or feels about the possibility of attainment. Love itself – as enjoyment or desire – does not involve a consideration of possibility: one simply encounters the object, and experiences love. This might occur before one finds, or gives up on finding, a basis for hope. Augustine's point that love and hope are mutually dependent can be explained by the fact that if one has no hope, this undercuts desire, the point which Augustine makes in *On the Trinity*, that with no or little hope, love dies or becomes tepid.¹²⁹ This would mean that desire cannot exist

¹²⁸ The main point Augustine is making in the *Enchiridion* and these sermons is that faith is the basis which gives rise to hope in relation to God's promises. In faith, we believe it is possible. This is not a worldly calculation, such as working out whether one will get to where one is walking. However, faith, in this case, is the answer to the common question of hope in relation to all objects: whether one will actually get there.

¹²⁹ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 44. In the line we are paraphrasing here from *On the Trinity* – “one who is not buoyed up by the hope of acquiring something either loves it tepidly or does not love it at all” – Augustine is referring to desire when he writes ‘love’, as he is considering the acquisition of the object. In regards to enjoyment, however, it would seem that hope does not undercut love. One might enjoy a painting in an art gallery, for instance, the scene of an elegant party by a river, even without hope that one might bring the beauty and elegance one is enjoying into one's own life. If one did form a desire after encountering the painting, though, a lack of hope would undercut the desire.

without hope, over a stretch of time beyond the initial moments of the creation of desire. One finds hope, or not, relatively soon, and one cannot go on without it.

To summarise our analysis of the creation of desire, there appear to be three moments which follow each other in this process. First, one ‘sees’ the object. Prompted in some way, one comes to form an image in one’s mind of the object of desire, drawing on the “vast hall of memory”.¹³⁰ We might hear an anecdote about a virtuous man, and our imagination creates a whole picture of the person. We might see an image of a beautiful city, and elaborate a conception of what it is like there. Or prompted by an overheard conversation, perhaps, one might imagine the beauty of language. This moment is one of joy; we might call it a brief reverie, in that we are caught up in the appeal of the object. Second, at the point of bringing one’s own condition to mind, one realises the lack. The moment of joy is over, and we fall back to our life, which is largely missing what we have experienced. At this point the love takes the form of bittersweet desire. Third, although we have a desire at this point, the consideration of whether we might actually attain this thing we love comes to the fore. One might have faith, or a feeling, or a well-considered plan; whatever supports the belief in possibility, gives one hope. If one has no grounds for hope, the despair turns back on desire and undermines it. If one finds hope, its arrival strengthens the desire. As Augustine writes, of learning a language: “the closer he comes to this faculty in hope, the more ardently he is inflamed with love”.¹³¹

So far, in investigating how desire is created, we have traced one desire back to its origin. At this point, we might return to the experience with which Augustine introduced his example: the moment of encountering the unknown word *temetum*.¹³² If, as we have discussed, the desire has already been formed at this point, what is happening in this

¹³⁰ Augustine, p. 187.

¹³¹ Augustine, p. 44.

¹³² Augustine, p. 44.

moment? A person moves from never having seen the word *temetum*, to setting out to find its meaning; what is occurring here if not the creation of a desire? Augustine describes two scenarios regarding what might happen when we already have a desire and encounter some new thing related to that desire. First, we might perceive in the new thing, or person, a similar beauty to that which we have already seen in a larger whole. To illustrate this Augustine describes the person who “already knows generically what he loves, and is now eager to know it in some particular thing”.¹³³ This scenario depends on the form in the new thing being similar to the form already desired. Augustine makes this point by first describing what happens when they are not similar.

Yet perhaps he will not love the form that was praised when he discovers how unlike it is to the one which he pictures in his mind ... And if he shall love it, he will begin to love it from that moment which he got to know it. For it is different from that form which he loved a little before, and which the mind that formed it was wont to exhibit to itself. If, however, he shall find it similar to that form of which he had heard report and can truly say to it, I already loved you, even then he certainly did not love it as unknown since he had already known it in that likeness.¹³⁴

Augustine gives no example here, but we might use his example of the virtuous man. If we have a love for kindness and humility, we know that we love these things, and we are now eager to meet them embodied in this particular person. If the new thing is dissimilar to our imagined object, however, it will not be relevant to our existing desire, although we may well develop a new love. If we do discover that the particular thing embodies the form we loved, we can say, “I already loved you”. Therefore, this is not a case of a new desire being formed. We will return to this scenario in our discussions of advertising and how the product is positioned in relation to the vision. However, this particular scenario is not applicable to the example of encountering the word *temetum*, because the beauty we

¹³³ Augustine, pp. 45-46.

¹³⁴ Augustine, p. 46.

are seeking here – the beauty of conversation and a functioning language as a whole – is not found in the individual word.

The second scenario Augustine describes is the one relevant in this case: when we realise that the new thing we have encountered serves our attaining the desired whole. Augustine describes how the word *temetum* is a means to attaining the end of communication and mutual understanding. He writes that if someone asks the person searching for the meaning of *temetum* why this matters to them, they will answer: “lest perhaps I may hear it spoken and may not understand, or perhaps I may read it somewhere and may not know what the author means”.¹³⁵ Finding the meaning, that is, is a means to the end of understanding language. Augustine supports this by making the point that the desire disappears when no connection exists.

Therefore, when he hears ... that this word is now obsolete and is not used nowadays in our language, he will perhaps think that he should still know it, on account of some of the books by the ancient authors. But if he judges that they are also superfluous, then he no longer believes that it is worth remembering, because he does not perceive any connection between it and that form of learning which is known to his mind and upon which he gazes and loves.¹³⁶

Therefore, we can answer the question about what is occurring when someone encounters the unknown word. It is not the formation of a new desire, although something new does form in their mind. We might say that the person has a realisation. They realise that this new thing might help them to attain an existing object of desire. This realisation focuses their effort and attention on the new thing, even though the true aim of their desire is a greater object.

To summarise what we have gained from Augustine so far, we have seen that the formation of ‘the desire to learn an unknown word’ is in fact the desire for a greater

¹³⁵ Augustine, pp. 44-45.

¹³⁶ Augustine, p. 45.

whole; a desire which began earlier, with a perception of the beauty and goodness of a language. As all goodness comes from God who is the highest goodness, and God is love, this encounter with good form is what kindled love; the person imagines the beautiful object, elaborating on hints and glimpses, and they desire this object when they consider that they lack it. Given hope, the desire is pursued. When the person later encounters an unknown word, it is this desire which causes them to seek its meaning, in the hope that doing so will be useful in bringing their own lives closer to the good whole they have imagined. We now turn to apply these conclusions in examining the creation of desire by an advertisement.

The creation of desire by an advertisement

This section will use the ideas examined above to begin developing an account of how desire is created by an advertisement, an account which will be extended in the remaining sections of this chapter. It begins by applying Augustine's ideas to analyse an advertisement from 1959, an advertising campaign considered by many in the industry to be an iconic step in the development of current practice. It will then develop the discussion by considering three more examples, before turning to the question, for the next sections, of how advertisements stimulate lower desires.

In 1959, Rolls-Royce set out to develop an advertising campaign, for which they employed David Ogilvy, an Oxford-educated Scotsman working on Madison Avenue. Ogilvy went on in his career to create a series of famous advertising campaigns; his book *Confessions of an Advertising Man* has been recently reprinted, and he was described by *The New York Times* as one of the fathers of modern advertising.¹³⁷ The advertisement

¹³⁷ C.L. Hays, 'David Ogilvy, 88, Father of Soft Sell in Advertising, Dies', *The New York Times*, 22 July 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/07/22/business/david-ogilvy-88-father-of-soft-sell-in-advertising-dies.html>, (accessed 29 April 2015).

Ogilvy designed, for a magazine page, shows at the top of the page a picture of a Rolls-Royce ‘Silver Cloud’ parked out the front of a grocery shop, and at the bottom some factual description of the car: “the coachwork is given five coats of primer paint, and hand rubbed between each coat”. It is the statement in the centre of the page, however, in large font, which draws the most attention. “At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock”.¹³⁸ In the context of a technical report, this sentence could be seen as a simple factual observation. Indeed, Ogilvy picked this sentence out of the engineer’s technical report.¹³⁹ Yet Ogilvy was astute enough to recognise the power of this sentence to create desire. It evokes an alluring vision – alluring especially for the wealthy and over-worked audience at which the advertisement was aimed. One can imagine oneself, calm and in control, driving at sixty miles an hour, with only the gentle noise of the electric clock, and otherwise silence. The vision promises a kind of redemption, within the world of the city worker: a way to drive away from busyness, to peace and quiet, and the security of being surrounded and held by something which one can rely on.

Can we describe how this advertisement creates desire? The ideas we have examined in Augustine seem particularly relevant in this example. First, the effect of the advertisement seems to be primarily created by the centrally positioned, evocative sentence. The sentence guides the reader in imagining a particular vision: it invites us first to imagine travelling at sixty miles an hour in this car, then asks us to focus specifically on imagining the sounds around us, and what the loudest sounds might be, which turns out (in a pleasant surprise, like a kind of memorable plot twist at the end of the sentence) to be no sound at all, other than the background of an electric clock. So the advertisement helps us

¹³⁸ Ogilvy & Mather, ‘Ogilvy & Mather Classic Ads’, 2015, http://www.ogilvy.com/#/The-Work/Galleries/ogilvy_classic_ads.aspx/rollsroyce/, (accessed 29 April 2015).

¹³⁹ D. Ogilvy, *Ogilvy on Advertising*, New York, Vintage Books, 1985, p. 11.

in having a vision, which Augustine describes as the origin of desire. Second, this vision is calculated to appear truly splendid, a vision of goodness and beauty, to the intended audience. Busy city workers are likely to have already had many occasions to recognise calm and a secure environment as good, desiring these things in other contexts and resting in enjoyment when they momentarily achieved them. This particular evocation is also beautiful because it appeals so well to the senses, with just a few words and a photograph, helping us to conjure up the sound and the image of being in the car. There are likely other desires being created as well in the advertisement – we will explore this notion further below. However, at this point, we can note that the dynamic outlined by Augustine is particularly clear in this example. The audience feels the lack and the longing for the goods seen in the vision, and the car is positioned, quite obviously, as the vehicle to take us to this end.

Let us now examine the creation of desire by an advertisement in more detail. In Chapter Two we discussed characteristics of the state of desire. We might examine how desire is created by an advertisement along the lines of these characteristics. How is each element brought into being and supported or stimulated by an advertisement? As another example, we will take a more recent car advertisement, but one which has a similar structure to Ogilvy's Rolls-Royce poster. The advertisement is for Volkswagen (VW), in the form of a short video: it begins with a Christmas scene, depicting the extended family arriving at a holiday house. The viewer is shown flashes of endearing detail: the grandfather is breathing in helium from a balloon, about to begin talking in a high pitched voice, and all the grandchildren are laughing. One of the sons arrives and gives his mother a hug; men and women are in the kitchen talking and having fun cooking together. In one moment the grandmother dozes off to sleep at the lunch table, and everyone deals with this situation in a good-natured and amused, but tender way. Each of these scenes is

interspersed with sets of new family members arriving, as one might expect, each in a different model of VW car. The final line of the advertisement is “welcome to the family”.¹⁴⁰

Augustine’s ideas are also useful for analysing this example in terms of the creation of desire. The same basic dynamic appears to hold as in the previous example. That is, the viewer is brought into contact with an ideal, a vision of a good whole, and then the product is presented as a first step towards attaining this object. The goal of the advertisement is to make us think – or rather, given that we might not articulate this clearly, to make us feel – that the product is a way to the ideal, an ideal which the bulk of the advertisement focuses on encouraging us to envision and to desire. We might think – approaching the advertisement without having considered Augustine’s views above – that the advertisement is obviously ‘about the car’, meaning that the advertisement is created to sell the car. A successful advertisement, we might assume, would make the car the object of desire. However, drawing on Augustine’s distinctions, we can see that the desire being created here is not focused on the car. The cars themselves, the body of the cars, as physical objects, play little role in the advertisement. No attention is focused on their design or effectiveness as vehicles for transport. Nevertheless, they play a crucial role in the narrative: VW cars are making this family union possible. They are the helpers, the initial movers, delivering each new group of participants to the ideal Christmas gathering, which is the object of desire. The advertisement is not encouraging us to see the VW car itself as the object of desire; we do not long for closer contact with the interior of these cars.¹⁴¹ We want to have a good time like the people in the video. Most likely we have no clue where to start in seeking to acquire tenderness and forgiveness; probably, we do not

¹⁴⁰ Bestadsontv.com, ‘Volkswagen: Welcome to the Family’, 2013, <http://www.bestadsontv.com/ad/57967/Volkswagen-Welcome-To-The-Family>, (accessed 29 April 2015).

¹⁴¹ In the above advertisement for Rolls-Royce the situation is more blurred, because the object of the desire is closely tied with the physical sense of being inside the car: the quiet, contained space which is appealing as an escape.

even articulate to ourselves that these qualities are the basis of the good vision. We do know, however, what is involved in buying a car. If we bought the car, it might indeed be involved with a range of desires with different objects: the car could be an object of desire itself, for its outer form, or the beauty of its engine, for example. In the advertisement, however, desire is being created by inspiring our love for a set of family relationships, and positioning the car as a way to act on this desire.

Looking in more detail, we see that this advertisement is spurring the creation of desire in a range of ways. First, it assists the imagination by presenting specific embodiments of desirable things. Augustine refers to this in Book Two of *On Christian Doctrine* when he discusses the imagery in the Song of Songs 4:2:

And it is with the greatest of pleasure that I visualize the shorn ewes, their worldly burdens set aside like fleeces, ascending from the pool (baptism) and all giving birth to twins (the two commandments of love) ... Exactly why this picture gives me greater pleasure than if no such imagery were presented by the divine books, since the topic is the same, and the lesson the same, it is difficult to say ... But no-one disputes that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery.¹⁴²

The advertisement assists the imagination in putting together a desirable mental image by giving us concrete scenes to combine into such an image: a close-up on the father welcoming his son, the image of the grandfather surrounded by excited children. Most of us would agree in the abstract that we want a happy extended family. However, many of us might be hard pressed to make vivid to ourselves what this would really be like, as the advertisement shows us. The task might have been done less powerfully, for example, by simply filming someone talking about a good family. As it is, the advertisement assists longing by providing striking and memorable images to turn over in one's mind.

¹⁴² Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 63.

Second, the advertisement stimulates the sense of lack. In this case, we see a family having affectionate, enjoyable relationships. Feeling the sense of lack depends on comparing this portrayal to one's own life, that is, one's own relationships. It might indeed be possible to watch this video simply in the mindset of enjoyment, rather than desire. When we turn to consider our own life, we might truly believe that our family reunions were this good. We might feel no lack and watch the video simply being reminded of how much we have to thank God for all the charity and forgiveness spread liberally around our extended family. Or we might simply never make the move of comparing the vision to our own life. If we see a painting of some eighteenth-century aristocrats enjoying one another's company, we might never consider comparing the situation to our own lives. The desire, however, is more intense the more we do make the comparison, and the more we do feel that our own family is far from this. This is the 'bitter' part of bittersweet desire. This VW advertisement facilitates the sense of lack by making comparison easy. The people – if we are in the intended audience – are wearing the same clothes as us, celebrating Christmas just like us; they could almost be a portrayal of ourselves, except for the fact that they are having an exceptionally lovely time. Mostly likely, given that we are all fallen, our family does have some major lacks. The advertisement is attempting to crystallise the awareness of this in the viewer's mind.

Third, the advertisement makes use of hope. The same aspect of the advertisement which evokes a negative feeling of lack – the similarity of the people in the advertisement to the viewer – also supports a positive idea: the hope that these good relationships might be possible for us to attain, too. For the other possibility, in the case of viewing painting of aristocrats, is that we do see the good, and do make the comparison with our own lives, but then we cannot form hope because we feel that they are too distant from us. We have no idea how we might approach the ideal. In the VW advertisement, these people do not

feel so distant from us, that we might give up on ever living this way. Rather, for all the pleasure they are taking in each other's company, the scene also comes across as plausible and familiar, which kindles hope and therefore, strengthens desire. Furthermore, there is another way in which the advertisement encourages hope: via the car itself. The advertisement positions the car as facilitating the good scenario. From the perspective of the viewer, the advertisement presents no other step one might take to approach the vision, other than the idea that we might buy the car. We are unlikely to be on the verge of buying a car, but by presenting this practical option, the advertisement converts the nebulous question of how one might hope to get closer to this attractive kind of life, into a sense that there is a way. The car is an expensive means, but the presence of an option suggests that a way forwards is not impossible, or undefined, which would dampen hope, and dampen desire. One may not consider the practical possibility in great detail, but the background sense of possibility might help the desire remain in one's mind.

To take another example, an online video advertisement for Sandals Caribbean Resorts begins with an image of a man and woman walking out into turquoise water with the word 'Freedom' printed like a watermark across the screen. As the video shows images of quiet beaches, people walking on jetties in the sun, sailing and lying in hammocks, the voiceover says: "I want to go on a vacation where I don't have to worry about a thing. I want to be free to try new things, to explore new horizons, and be free of any schedules".¹⁴³ We can analyse this advertisement using the same framework we have drawn from our discussions in Chapter Two and Augustine's work above. Like the VW advertisement above, this advertisement is structured around presenting a vision and creating desire for that vision. It assists the imagination with imagery and gives the vision a name – freedom. It nudges us to feel a sense of lack: the people holidaying in the

¹⁴³ SandalsResorts, 'Sandals Resorts Vacation Freedom', 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWWTabHiV2E>, (accessed 14 April 2016).

Caribbean are calm and happy, and when the voiceover mentions ‘schedules’, we are likely to think back to our own life and to feel our distance from this ideal. The advertisement is also focused on creating hope: Sandals charges a single price at the start, then everything they offer is available without further charge: access to beaches, dinners, sailing boats and hammocks. Clearly, in this case, paying for this service is positioned as a practical way to attain the ideal.¹⁴⁴

The Sandals Resorts and VW advertisements present a distinct ideal, and so illustrate the account of the creation of desire we have drawn from Augustine. How might we apply Augustine’s thought to advertisements which do not attempt so obviously to present an ideal? In the January 2015 edition of *The Garden*, there is an advertisement for bird seed. This takes up half a page, beginning at the top with an offer of a “free feeder and scoop, plus free delivery, worth £19.48 – when you buy this brilliant bird food, Essential Mix 12.5kg, only £19.99”.¹⁴⁵ A large image of the packet of Birds & Bees Wild Bird Food next to a bird feeder takes up most of the space below, along with a different formulation of the price, “only £1.60 per kilo”, followed by details about ordering near the bottom of the page. At the very bottom of the advertisement is a short note which reads: “help birds and UK wildlife to flourish: we plant one square foot of wild flower meadow for every new customer”.

At first glance, it might appear that Augustine’s ideas are not helpful in this case. There appears to be no beautiful ideal being invoked. The advertisement is not encouraging us to long for anything as the VW and Rolls-Royce advertisements clearly were. Nevertheless, on closer examination, the ideas we have drawn from Augustine do

¹⁴⁴ Peter Sedgwick also describes the way advertisements operate, along similar lines: “What occurs in advertising directly, or in exposure to the media indirectly, is that a symbolic message is attached to a product. Desirable images are associated with consumption, or ownership, of a product. Symbolic meanings are connected with gratification far more than the intrinsic utility of a product. This is closely associated with imagination and emotion, and not with rational utility”. This analysis, however, is made in passing in the context of another argument. Sedgwick does not investigate these ideas in any more detail. Sedgwick, *The Market Economy and Christian Ethics*, p. 105.

¹⁴⁵ Birds & Bees, ‘Birds & Bees Essential Mix’, *The Garden*, January 2015, p. 29.

help us clarify the dynamics of this advertisement. For we can see that in this case the desire is clearly not for the bird food itself. The bird food is not the object which would consummate our search; if the advertisement were directed at the birds, rather than at humans, it might point out how the bird seeds are delicious and satisfying in themselves. As it is, the bird seed is like the word *temetum*; not desirable in itself, but a means to attract birds, to achieve the goal of a flourishing garden. In this case, however, the advertisement is doing little to provoke the imagination into picturing the ideal. Instead, this task is being achieved by *The Garden* magazine around it, which displays on every other page paradisaical images of gardens and wildlife. The magazine itself is creating desire for the object, doing the work of presenting a vivid image of what we lack and strengthening our longing for it. The advertisement, in this case, rather than creating desire, is strengthening hope. It seeks to encourage hope by its focus on the price of the product. By emphasising how cheap the bird seed is, the advertisement positions the product as a way to the goal which is entirely possible, with the aim that this hope should strengthen the desire, and lead to a purchase.

Other advertisements involve the creation and strengthening of more than one desire. For example, a different advertisement in *The Garden* promotes glasshouses. In this advertisement the glasshouse itself is being advertised as a beautiful object: there is a central photograph of the building, sparkling in the sun, surrounded by a magnificent garden. The glasshouse is praised as both practical and beautiful, an object which will “tenderly complement your surroundings”.¹⁴⁶ One desire this advertisement is seeking to create, therefore, has the glasshouse itself as its object. The picture of the glasshouse itself is the vision, inherently attractive, something we should love and seek for its qualities. This desire alone, however, would not be enough to increase sales of the product, because

¹⁴⁶ Griffin Glasshouses, ‘Where Beautiful Gardens Beat with a Heart of Glass’, *The Garden*, January 2015, p. 60.

no one (probably) is thinking of wanting a glasshouse entirely for its own sake, as an object purely for visual enjoyment. The glasshouse is also clearly related to another desire: for a good garden as a whole. Given all the tools and plants it will hold it is also playing the role of a means to that end.

A further observation we can make from *The Garden* is that the object of a desire, a good garden, is formed over multiple encounters with images and words, over multiple pages and issues of the magazine. For the viewer in whom these images incite desire, each glimpse of an ideal contributes to how they imagine the object of desire. Thus their imagination is working, across many encounters, to elaborate or update their conception of the object. Although, for clarity, we have been discussing how one encounter with a good vision might lead to the formation of a desire, what is usually the case is that multiple encounters lead to one's concept of the object. This follows from Augustine's point about the imagination, that it combines different remembered images and ideas to create new images. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the range of 'objects' we might desire is as extensive as a capacity of the imagination. One of these 'objects' – a desired image – might contain other objects of desire. Our vision of a flourishing garden might include a beautiful greenhouse. The greenhouse itself might also be the object of a desire. Our account can cope with this flexibility, by simply stating that a desire is defined by its object, and to understand its object, we must look more closely into what is occurring in the imagination of the person when they experience the desire. What this observation also suggests, however, is that many desires evolve out of previous desires. We have a desire to see Carthage, and our desire to see Alexandria is elaborated out of images which made up our conception of Carthage, as well as other images and stories we have heard. Sometimes, we might form a desire for an object we have never desired before, perhaps a glasshouse. But often, the situation is more blurred. Before watching the VW

advertisement, we surely have desires for good relationships, and perhaps a desire for the qualities of forgiveness and patience; the advertisement brings these into focus, adds new images, and prompts us to combine them into a single imagined object of desire: a family enjoying themselves and being forgiving to each other. Advertisements might also increase the prominence of a desire by bringing it to the fore of our minds, making our sense of lack more acute, or intensifying the beauty of the ideal. Understanding these variations, we can still refer to the ‘creation’ of desire by an advertisement. But it is not creation from nothing: advertisements shape and create new objects of desire, and prompt the elaboration of existing ones, made from our memories and the vision presented in the advertisement.¹⁴⁷

Lower desires

In our examples above we have avoided one of the most salient characteristics of advertisements: their focus on stimulating our basest desires – our appetites for sex, violence, power and status, food and drink. A lot of advertisements appear to create desire in a way that has nothing to do with a vision of goodness. How can we develop our account to include these cases?

To do so, we will examine an advertisement presented in 1989 on Australian television, for a business called Ken Bruce Bedding and Electrical. This advertisement falls into a category known in the industry as ‘bulldog advertising’, referring to the idea that the advertisement is ugly, but gets the job done.¹⁴⁸ It begins with the voice of a parrot

¹⁴⁷ Whether we decide to label something a new desire or an elaboration of an existing desire depends on the particular imagined object, and whether it seems right to call something a new object in that person’s mind. When a person first hears of Alexandria, and imagines it, and then hopes to get to this particular city, this is clearly a new desire. For a reader of *The Garden* who already desires a good garden, but sees an image of a greenhouse, and adds this to their conception of the object, this is an elaboration. There will be cases in between. In each case, the dynamics of hope still hold: in regards to the new or elaborated object, hope depends on whether we feel that it is possible for us to attain it.

¹⁴⁸ The Gruen Transfer, ‘The Gruen Transfer: Series 4’, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5318v4nHaKg>, (accessed 29 April 2015).

screaming: “Ken Bruce has gone mad, Ken Bruce has gone mad” as Ken Bruce rocks back and forth in his chair in a straightjacket, staring wildly. The rest of the thirty-second advertisement consists almost entirely of a screaming voice. The voiceover first follows the parrot, shouting “Ken Bruce has gone mad”, and then shouts that the staff of the shop are “in bedding with Madonna” at which point two men holding whips and dressed in leather jump onto one of the store’s beds with a person dressed up as Madonna. There follows a rapid list: “fridges from \$199, beds from \$199, washers from \$199...”. At the conclusion of the brief advertisement, the voice becomes even more hysterical, as though desperately trying to hold someone back: “Madonna, what are you doing?” The final shot is of Madonna with wild hair stumbling forward through the store being pulled by a pack of dogs whose leads she is holding, as the voiceover screams “come down to Ken Bruce for the ‘take advantage of the fact that Madonna has lost the plot’ sale”.¹⁴⁹

The focus of this advertisement is the idea of taking advantage of someone who has gone mad. Its tone is encouraging a kind of looting frenzy. The message is something like: ‘the man who guards the loot has gone crazy – come quickly and get everything you want’. The other theme is freed sexuality: the staff are sleeping with Madonna (who is also uncontrolled and desirous). The way this advertisement aims to create desire does not appear to be well-captured by Augustine’s ideas around the presentation of a vision of beauty and goodness. It is not that the products themselves are necessarily divorced from such visions: a fridge, for example, could be part of an ideal of a good kitchen, and a vision of a good home. It is that the way this advertisement works seems to be different from the examples discussed above; in particular, there seems to be a more prominent element of pure avarice at work. Can we get clearer about how this advertisement is creating desire?

¹⁴⁹ Teamspd, ‘Ken Bruce Has Gone Completely Mad’, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWGIytePrRI>, (accessed 29 April 2015).

To answer this question, we will return to Plato's categorisation of the soul introduced in the previous chapter. As discussed, Plato identifies different tendencies to desire within the soul. He describes three parts, each of which has "its own form of pleasure and its peculiar desire, and any one of the three may govern the soul".¹⁵⁰ As noted in Chapter Two, Plato discusses the tripartite division in the *Phaedrus* as well as the *Republic*; in the former work he introduces a metaphor for the three parts of the soul as a charioteer and two horses. The charioteer is *logistikos*, or the reasoning part. By this, however, Plato means more than just the ability to organise a logical argument; *logistikos* is the home of "a person's considered impulse to do right", the judgement which "leads us by reasoning towards what is best", and is the part of the soul that may perceive eternal beauty.¹⁵¹ The first of the two horses pulling the chariot is *thymos* – angry, honour-seeking self-assertion – a noble horse with white coat and black eyes, "upright in frame and well jointed, with a high neck and a regal nose", he is a "lover of honour with modesty and self-control ... he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone".¹⁵² The other horse is *epithymia* – bodily appetites – an ignoble horse with "a crooked great jumble of limbs with a short bull-neck, a pug nose, black skin and bloodshot white eyes; companion to wild boasts and indecency, he is shaggy around the ears – deaf as a post – and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined".¹⁵³ In this discussion, Plato is using the example of falling in love with a young man. He describes how desire is instantiated in each of the three parts of the soul.

When the charioteer looks love in the eye, his entire soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire. As for the horses, the one who is obedient to the charioteer is still controlled, then as always, but its sense of shame, and so prevents itself from jumping on the boy. The other one, however, no longer responds to

¹⁵⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 300.

¹⁵¹ C.D.C. Reeve (ed.), *Plato on Love*, trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff, Indianapolis, IN, Hackett, 2006, pp. 100-119.

¹⁵² Reeve, pp. 118-119.

¹⁵³ Reeve, p. 119.

the whip or the goad of the charioteer; it leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasures of sex.¹⁵⁴

It was mentioned in the previous chapter that Plato sees *epithymia*, considered by itself, as being almost blind: having only a crude conception of its immediate object and involving no assessment of whether that object is good.¹⁵⁵ Plato often describes *epithymia* as a wild animal: “an element in the soul ... driving it like a beast to drink”; a beast with “many limbs and many forms”.¹⁵⁶ He gives a longer description later in the *Republic*:

The third [part] was so multifarious that we could find no single appropriate name; we called it after its chief and most powerful characteristic ‘appetite’, because of the intensity of all the appetites connected with eating and drinking and sex and so on. We also called it money-loving, because money is the principal means of satisfying desires of this kind. Gain is the source of its pleasures and the object of its affection; so ‘money-loving’ or ‘gain-loving’ might be the best single expression to sum up the nature of this part of the soul.¹⁵⁷

This suggests a view of *epithymia* as being even less receptive to the particular nature of its objects: being simply “gain-loving”. Plato sees these lower appetites as being “by nature insatiably covetous”.¹⁵⁸

We began this section with the Ken Bruce advertisement, which seemed important to examine because it appeals to baser desires, in contrast to earlier examples. Plato, in these passages above, outlines a view of our baser desires. Can we use his descriptions to shed some light on the dynamics of the Ken Bruce advertisement? Drawing on his discussions, we might identify three ways in which the Ken Bruce advertisement creates desire. First, it screams at the viewer that there is an opportunity for acquisition. That this is an appeal to *epithymia* is supported by the observation that the advertisement downplays

¹⁵⁴ Reeve, p. 119.

¹⁵⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 133.

¹⁵⁶ Plato, p. 133; Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. S. Scully, Newburyport, MA, Focus, 2003, p. 16.

¹⁵⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 300.

¹⁵⁸ Plato, p. 137.

the nature of the individual objects – the fridges and beds for sale – which are skimmed over in a list. *Epithymia* has a crude conception of its object, being simply “gain-loving”, and the advertisement is playing to this characteristic, striving to combine all the white goods into one object to present to the viewer: a pile of things to acquire. The viewer is shown an overflowing warehouse, rather than being led to focus on specific items. As in the examples of the Rolls-Royce and the beautiful glasshouse, the Ken Bruce advertisement is also presenting an object of desire. However, the kind of object presented is different because this part of the soul is not concerned with registering what is good, merely whatever is available for gain.

Second, the Ken Bruce advertisement shows us unleashed sexual desire. The advertisement is structured in two parts: in the first ten seconds one is presented with images of a man in a straightjacket; the following twenty seconds takes up the theme of unleashed desire. One feels cramped at first, watching the close shot of Ken Bruce tied up; then there is an image of release as two men fling themselves into a bed with Madonna. Here it may be useful to consider that Plato, in addition to his tripartite structure, occasionally draws on a different way of describing desires. He refers to the god *Himeros*, one of a set of sibling gods, each of whom embody a different aspect of desire: *Pothos*, for example, embodies the sense of longing.¹⁵⁹ *Himeros* embodies lust: the immediate rush of sexual desire, which we can consider as a type of intense longing, directed at a sexual object. Plato invents an etymology for *himeros*: he proposes that the word comes from “the stream (*rhous*) which most draws the soul; because it flows with a rush ... and thus draws the soul on through the impulse of its flowing”.¹⁶⁰ The feeling of a rush aligns with the experience of sexual desire. The advertisement appears to encourage this desire by

¹⁵⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁰ Plato, *Cratylus*, *Parmenides*, *Greater Hippias*, *Lesser Hippias*, trans. H.N. Fowler, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1977, p. 123.

communicating the sense of release followed by a focus on a sexual object, Madonna. The effect is that, on some level, one feels as though sex will be involved in this potential looting session. Madonna's own desire is also running wild: the last image is of her being dragged along by dogs – in a surprisingly apt enactment of Plato's metaphor of the chariot being pulled along by the wild horse. This image of Madonna also contributes to the same effect, prompting the viewer to copy this, and unleash the longing of appetite.

Third, the advertisement works to forestall other parts of the soul which might inhibit the appetite. One potentially inhibitory factor is the sense of shame (*thymos* as controlled by *logistikon*). Shame comes from being judged and found wanting, either by a group with whom one identifies or by oneself (in Plato's metaphor this is when the charioteer speaks to the noble horse, to hold him back). The Ken Bruce advertisement is an invitation to join a group where one will not be shamed for avarice – because they are looting and fornicating too. One gets the sense that the voiceover is coming from a mad place, a world where all the rules are off; within the shop only permissive norms dominate. This impression is reinforced by the image of Ken Bruce tied up, the idea that the owner and overseer is mad: the guardian (charioteer), who might reign one in, is powerless. Furthermore, the advertisement works to forestall the operation of *logistikon* in general. The insane voice gives one little chance to have a coherent thought about anything that is being presented; the screen changes image every few seconds, so one cannot string thoughts together. The image of Madonna and the whips, juxtaposed with the fridges, beds and microwaves, is also absurd: one laughs at first because it is unexpected, but then, one feels that there is no point trying to think about any of this. One feels that this is not an object for reflection. In these ways, the advertisement aims to neutralise anything that might inhibit the rush of sexual and acquisitive desire.

We can conclude that this advertisement does indeed have a different way of operating from the advertisements considered in the first section. It is appealing to a different part of the soul, a part which does not seek the good, but responds to the image of lower objects: the chance for looting or sex. Another desiring part of the soul identified by Plato is *thymos*, the honour-seeking, or status-seeking element. Again, this would appear, on first sight, to be relevant to an analysis of advertising. Many advertisements appeal to our longing for praise and high-status. In the next section we turn to analyse how advertisements create desire by appealing to this part of the soul.

The desire for status

Before we examine *thymos* this in the context of an advertisement, we will look further into Plato's understanding of this part of the soul and how the appeals to which it responds. According to Plato, the objects of *thymos* are "power and victory and a good name".¹⁶¹ *Thymos* is competitive, concerned with establishing a secure place in society. When a society as a whole is dominated by *thymos* it has a "competitive and ambitious temperament".¹⁶² In *The Republic* Plato describes *thymos* developing within an individual over the course of a lifetime, and coming to govern the soul. He imagines how this might happen to the son of a good father – a father who is a guardian of the state, devoted to wisdom.

His son's character begins to take shape when he hears his mother complaining that she is slighted by other women because her husband has no official post. She sees too that he cares little for money, and is indifferent to all the scurrilous battle of words that goes on in the Assembly and the law-courts; and she finds him always absorbed in his thoughts, without much regard for her, or disregard either. Nursing all

¹⁶¹ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 300.

¹⁶² Plato, p. 261.

these grievances, she tells her son that his father is not much of a man and far too easy going.¹⁶³

The wife feels she has been slighted: she lacks a secure position in society, she is looked down on when her husband is compared to others, and she receives little attention from her husband. Therefore she feels aggrieved, and passes this on to her son. This is the beginning of *thymos* coming to dominate in the son. Plato goes on to describe the household servants, who have a similar effect on the boy.

[T]hey urge the son, when he is grown up, to stand up for his rights and be more of a man than his father. When the boy goes out, he sees and hears the same sort of things: one man is made light of as a fool for minding his own business, whereas another who has a finger in every pie is praised and respected. All this experience affects the young man, and on the other hand he listens to his father's conversation and can see at close quarters how his way of life compares with other people's; and so he is pulled both ways. His father tends the growth of reason in his soul, while the rest of the world is fostering the other two elements, ambition [*thymos*] and appetite ... and the two contrary influences result in a compromise: he gives himself up to the control of the middle principle of high-spirited emulation and becomes an arrogant and ambitious man.¹⁶⁴

This description of the growth of *thymos* in the soul also suggests how this desire is created in particular circumstances: *thymos*, when provoked, is an anger that comes from feeling slighted, and the desire which proceeds from this is the desire to stand up for oneself, to win the esteem of others, that is, social status. As people can allocate esteem to different things (in this example, to the man who 'has a finger in every pie'), the particular way this desire plays out is guided by what is praised and respected.

In addition to desiring "a good name", Plato writes that *thymos* drives us to seek "power and victory".¹⁶⁵ Cooper, whose work on desire in Plato we considered in Chapter Two, makes a relevant observation. He notes that Plato draws on the concept of *thymos*

¹⁶³ Plato, p. 266.

¹⁶⁴ Plato, p. 267.

¹⁶⁵ Plato, p. 300.

not simply as it is used in his day, as one general description for anger, but specifically as it is used in Homer, where it drives heroes to seek honour by arousing themselves to great action, to defeat their opponents.

[*Thymos*] names a part of themselves to which Homeric heroes speak, or which speaks to them, when they are aroused for action, and into which they, or some tutelary deity, pour might and strength when their prowess is about to be put to the test. It is thus the immediate source of action.¹⁶⁶

Thymos, as we might expect from our personal experience, is also closely linked to action: the desire for power and victory can be stimulated when one feels threatened, when one is about to be put to the test. The operation of *thymos* rouses one to stand up for oneself, to take some action to defeat one's competitors, to secure one's status and social position by winning a victory. In what follows we will explore these ideas further in relation to how an advertisement might appeal to this part of the soul.

One long-running advertising campaign which clearly appeals to our desire for status is for Patek Philippe, a prominent luxury watch maker.¹⁶⁷ Since 1996 Patek Philippe has been running a series of advertisements under the slogan "begin your own tradition".¹⁶⁸ These advertisements, usually on billboards or in magazines, depict a father and son on a yacht or in a luxury motor boat, with the father showing the son how to tie the ropes or steer the boat; or, other variants show the father and son side-by-side in a portrait photograph with an image of the watch placed in the bottom of the frame. In the action photos, the father always looks competent and relaxed; the son is always concentrated on the task, his eyes fixed on the water ahead or the ropes he is learning to tie, and he is smiling, clearly secure under the guidance of his father. The father is strong

¹⁶⁶ Cooper, 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation', p. 12.

¹⁶⁷ A. DeMarco, 'The Most Popular Luxury Timepieces', Forbes, 27 January 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/anthonydemarco/2013/01/27/the-most-popular-luxury-timepieces/>, (accessed 19 April 2016).

¹⁶⁸ Patek Philippe, 'Product Advertising', 2016, <http://www.patek.com/en/communication/news/product-advertising>, (accessed 19 April 2016).

and good-looking: one can see the muscles in his forearms, near the Patek Philippe watch, and his powerful hands are holding the wheel or the rope (compared to the son's smaller hands and more tentative grip). In all the variants the father and son are expensively dressed. In addition to the slogan, the other piece of text which always accompanies these images is: "You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation".¹⁶⁹

Drawing on our previous discussions, we might observe multiple ways in which these advertisements seek to create desire. Part of their appeal is to present a vision of goodness to the viewer: the good relationship between the father and son. They also incite covetous and sexual appetites: there is the promise of acquiring the watch, and the sexy man. Yet the overriding appeal is to *thymos*. We can identify three ways in which this is occurring. First, the advertisement presents an image of status and power. The father and son are surrounded by symbols of high standing and social power, and there is power represented as well in the father's physical strength. Unlike the Ken Bruce video, this advertisement is not about buying something on the sly – giving permission to the viewer to dive into a mad world with no restraining social norms, while the father figure is tied up. The Patek Philippe advertisement is not about escaping norms and honour, but about performing well within them. The father figure in this advertisement, who projects sanity and control, is completely endorsing the desire. The suggestion is that buying a Patek Philippe watch is something honourable, which people who live honourable, highly-praised lives will endorse. Although the advertisement is appealing to *epithymia* as well, the primary object, according to the text, is not actually ownership: "You never actually own a Patek Philippe". Rather, the vision is about looking after a watch for the next generation. It is the social gain that is foregrounded. We can imagine the context of lack

¹⁶⁹ Patek Philippe, 'Product Advertising'.

which gives this vision power in the mind of the viewer: the idea of being valued by others and feeling socially secure might be painfully far from the experience of being side-lined at a family gathering, or undermined at work. The viewer is being prompted to imagine taking his place in a line of inheritance, assuming a respected and powerful social role. The advertisement is positioning the purchase of the watch as the path to this goal.

Second, the advertisement also stimulates *thymos* by framing the object of desire in terms of victory. The techniques of the advertisement speak to competition and victory over one's competitors, in a subtle but powerful way. The phrase "begin your own tradition" is actually a strategy for winning against one's peers. The message is: 'if you lack the esteem of the people in your life – at the office, for instance – forget about them; ignore their petty competitions, start your own tradition, and win the esteem of future generations who will look back to you as the founder'. Of course, one also knows that a Patek Philippe watch is a praised symbol of status, at least in the circles to which this advertisement is appealing, so one can beat competitors at work too by having a watch which is superior to theirs.

Third, the advertisement enhances this desire by assisting us in feeling hope that we might attain the vision of high status. The product, as mentioned, is positioned as the way to this end. However, hope is not encouraged by making the product cheap, like in the Ken Bruce video or the bird food advertisement. Rather, the advertisement presents the viewer with an opportunity to take heroic action, to attain the object of founding one's own tradition and securing a social place. Part of what makes this action heroic is how much it will cost. More accurately: in the eyes of many people, buying this watch will come across as a significant action, because they know that it costs a great deal. The advertisement creates hope by presenting the opportunity for a rare action, an action which will save one from social insignificance. Not everyone can or will do this, therefore this

sacrifice will set one apart. As in the Homeric heroes, *thymos* responds to an opportunity for difficult action, it prepares the person to make a great effort for the achievement of a great goal, an act which will win esteem down the generations. This is what the advertisement promises, and how it positions the purchase of the watch as the way to realise the object of desire.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the creation of desire by advertisements in relation to three parts of the soul. We began with Augustine's discussion of the origin of a desire to learn a language, exploring his argument that this desire begins with a vision of goodness, which is the true object of the desire. We saw that this dynamic can illuminate how various advertisements create desire. We considered different ways advertisements present an ideal in a way which spurs our imagination, prompts a feeling of lack, and generates hope around the product or service on offer. Given that many advertisements appeal to lower desires in the soul, we then examined how desire can be created by appealing to *epithymia*, the appetites for sex, consumption and gain, which have a crude idea of their object. Following this discussion, we examined how an advertisement can create desire by appealing to *thymos*, the self-assertive anger which seeks status and power over competitors. We also noted that a single advertisement might contain appeals to different parts of the soul. In essence, advertisements create desire by presenting the object of desire, and positioning the product or service as a first step towards attaining that object. This account of how advertisements work will be drawn on throughout the remainder of the thesis. The following chapter will examine criticism of the techniques of advertising, considering their impact at a personal and social level.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICISMS OF ADVERTISING

The aim of this chapter is to explore, critique and clarify some prominent criticisms of advertising. The purpose of doing so, within the argument of the thesis, is to identify and understand problems that will need to be addressed if advertising is to be improved as a practice. The criticisms will be discussed drawing on the accounts of desire and the creation of desire developed in the previous chapters. Subsequent chapters will respond to the problems identified here in considering how advertising could develop as an ‘art’ which does not have these problems.

In this chapter we analyse criticisms articulated by economists and sociologists, in addition to Christian ethicists. The reason for this is that criticisms of advertising developed by scholars in the social sciences can contribute to the discussion within Christian ethics. When the criticisms are appropriated with circumspection, according to Christian convictions, in the context of relevant discussions in Christian ethics, they can point us towards genuine problems with advertising. That is, the resources of Christian ethics can be applied to sharpen prominent and longstanding critiques of advertising, which had previously relied on the assumptions of the social sciences. By exploring these criticisms from a Christian perspective, this chapter seeks to show where the arguments have not in fact identified important problems, and to clarify the substantial problems which have been presented.

The chapter addresses three criticisms of advertising. The first section examines the most longstanding criticism, that advertisements do not tell the truth about the products they promote. The discussion will examine this criticism as presented by a contemporary critic of advertising, the economist and social historian Avner Offer. We

argue that assessments of truth do indeed have a role to play in distinguishing ethical from unethical advertising, but that the criterion of truthfulness should focus on the goods being presented: the degree to which the advertisement presents true goods, and whether the product and the advertisement, in their combined effects, could assist in bringing those goods into the life of the customer.

The second section addresses the criticism that advertising persuades us to desire things we do not really need. This critique was articulated most strongly in the first half of last century, although it has now been largely abandoned in the social sciences, as the distinction between desire and need rests on some conception of what is good, which secular theorists are often unwilling to articulate. The economist John Kenneth Galbraith, however, presents a version of this argument, which this section will assess along with arguments made by social scientists. This discussion clarifies the distinction between need and desire, arguing that advertisements do often lead us away from what we need. However, against these critics, it argues that the capacity for advertisements to synthesise desires does not imply that they must lead us away from our true needs.

The third section examines the criticism that advertisements, in their aggregate effect, form a culture of consumption which keeps us in a state of dissatisfaction. This discussion will engage primarily with Christian ethicists Graham Ward and Vincent J. Miller, who argue that advertisements present us with an endless series of objects to desire, and use the disappointment we feel around products as a way to promote more consumption. We examine this dissatisfaction, which we argue is caused by the frustration of hope, and we investigate the basis of the cycle of desire and disappointment. We argue that this cycle occurs when the desires of *epithymia* and *thymos* guide our relationships to products – a situation which advertising often encourages. We conclude that the underlying problem is that consumers do not have the prompts or the support to form good

relationships with material objects, guided by *logistikon* – relationships which could support well-founded desire and hope.

Truth in advertising

This section addresses the criticism that advertisements often do not tell the truth about the products they promote. The criticism is a longstanding one; an early statement is found in Samuel Johnson's 1759 essay on advertising. In it, Johnson remarks on how advertisements often exaggerate the merits of a product, for the sake of making large promises to the consumer.

Advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused, and it is therefore become necessary to gain attention by magnificence of promises, and by eloquence sometimes sublime and sometimes pathetic. Promise, large Promise, is the soul of an Advertisement. I remember a Wash-ball that had a quality truly wonderful, it gave *an exquisite edge to the razor*. And there are now to be sold, for ready money only, some *Duvets for bed-coverings, of down, beyond comparison superior to what is called Otter Down*, and indeed such, that *its many excellencies cannot be here set forth*. With one excellence we are made acquainted, *it is warmer than four or five blankets, and lighter than one*.¹⁷⁰

In a contemporary context, the criticism is taken up by the economist and social scientist Avner Offer, who makes it central to his discussion of advertising in *The Challenge of Affluence*.¹⁷¹ Offer notes a study conducted in 1978 which concluded that fifteen percent of advertisements in the United Kingdom that year had breached the Advertising Standards Authority code regarding the “truthful presentation of a product or company”.¹⁷² Offer notes how advertisements have often relied on false testimony, such as in Chesterfield's

¹⁷⁰ S. Johnson, ‘No. 40. Saturday, January 20, 1759’, in R. Lynam (ed.), *The Works of Samuel Johnson in Six Volumes*, vol. 2, London, George Cowie and Co., 1825, p. 502.

¹⁷¹ A. Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 103.

¹⁷² Offer, p. 110.

advertising campaign which described its cigarettes as having “no adverse effects”.¹⁷³

Other prominent cases include Duracell’s advertisement claiming that its Ultra Power batteries lasted longer than normal batteries, which was untrue; or the campaign from the pomegranate juice company Pom Wonderful which promised its consumers they could “cheat death”, because pomegranate juice helped prevent ageing, heart disease, Alzheimer’s disease and cancer, untested claims they had simply invented.¹⁷⁴

Why is it a problem to present false information in an advertisement? For Offer, the problem of false information is significant because, as he sees it, the primary good which advertising can achieve is to deliver useful information to customers. Although he is mainly critical of advertising, he does describe some of its upsides, including that advertising “presents information about products and services”. This point is actually part of a list of reasons to value advertising, including the very generous opinion that advertising “makes townscapes, newspapers, magazines and television more lively and colourful than they might otherwise be”. The point about information, however, is the one which Offer expounds.¹⁷⁵ As he explains, “in a business or retail exchange, both parties enter the transaction with the expectation of gain”. This can lead to conflict; however, “information can narrow down the scope for disagreement: if both sides are well informed about quality, cost, and each other’s preferences, the potential for friction is smaller”. As Offer notes, the supplier almost always has more information than the customer, therefore false advertising usually undermines the customer’s power to gain from an exchange.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Offer, p. 114.

¹⁷⁴ Advertising Standards Authority, ‘ASA Ruling on Procter & Gamble UK’, 2014, https://www.asa.org.uk/Rulings/Adjudications/2014/11/Procter-and-Gamble-UK/SHP_ADJ_250557, (accessed 10 April 2016); B. Kendall, ‘Pom Wonderful’s Ads Were Deceptive, Appeals Court Agrees with FTC’, *Wall Street Journal*, 30 January 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/appeals-court-upholds-ftcs-deception-findings-on-pom-wonderful-1422633948>, (accessed 9 April 2016).

¹⁷⁵ Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 103.

¹⁷⁶ Offer, pp. 105-106.

Assessing this argument from a Christian ethical perspective, two things in particular are lacking. The first is that Offer does not describe what he means by ‘gain’: whether he sees gain in terms of preferences being satisfied, or whether he has a more detailed conception of what is good. The second is that his view of the problem of lying focuses only on the recipient of the lie. Augustine’s positions, in his treatise *On Lying*, differs from Offer’s on both points: Augustine bases his view on a worked-out understanding of what is good, and he includes in his account the effect on the person who lies. His definition of a lie is “a false signification with will of deceiving”.¹⁷⁷ He quotes St Paul: “putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25), and argues that lies are wrong because they do not follow from a love of God.¹⁷⁸ God is pure truth – “that luminous good in which there is no darkness of a lie” – therefore lying is a sin because it involves turning away from God.¹⁷⁹ From this perspective, Offer’s argument that false information makes exchanges turn out worse is still valid. However, the Christian understanding of what goods are being denied is broader. If someone buys an oven which was advertised as being able to heat up to 250°C, but which can only reach 180°C, he will have been cheated; he will have wasted time and money, and his life will be slightly worse off. There are, however, other goods being lost. If the advertiser acted with a will to deceive, this is a sin and affects his own life. For the advertiser is not loving God in his neighbour; he is not loving the customer as he loves himself, or attempting to do as Augustine said he aimed to do while conducting his work: to “set before the eyes of my heart (such as they be) the intellectual beauty of Him out of Whose mouth nothing false proceeds”.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Augustine, ‘On Lying’, trans. H. Browne, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 3, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1887, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.v.v.html>, (accessed 10 April 2016).

¹⁷⁸ Augustine, ch. 15.

¹⁷⁹ Augustine, ch. 36.

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, ch. 36.

Instances of definitive falsity, however, are only one aspect of this criticism. Much of the concern with truth in advertising is about the truth being distorted, to exaggerate the merits of a product. As Offer puts it, advertisements often “stray from the literal truth”.¹⁸¹ He gives examples of such ‘puffery’, quoting from a book on advertising regulation by Ivan Preston, *Great American Blow Up*: “The best small car in America (Ford Escort)”, “The best the world has to offer (Ford Explorer)”, “We make the world’s best mattress (Serta)”, “The most fluffy softness (Downy)”, “It’s like nothing you’ve ever used before (Caress Moisturizing Body Wash)”, and “Nothing’s got the power of Gold (Visa Gold Card)”.¹⁸² He adds that “sometimes the puff is in the name of the product, e.g. ‘Wonder Bread’, or, indeed the ‘Rover Metro Tahiti Special’ – each element in its name conveying exaggerated pretensions for what is no more than an ordinary subcompact car”.¹⁸³

How are we to assess the truth or falsity of such claims? According to Offer, “the definition of a ‘puff’ is a claim that is impossible to validate, and which no reasonable person would believe”. To this he adds, in the following paragraph, that “‘puffs’ are manifestly untrue”.¹⁸⁴ Offer’s view seems to be straightforward: he is saying that such claims cannot be proven true, and that advertisers are obviously exaggerating just to call attention to what are, in fact, unremarkable products. However, on closer examination, some ambiguity appears in Offer’s description. His point that “no reasonable person would believe” these claims means either that there happen to be no reasonable grounds for believing them, or that there is no reasonable way to show such claims as true or false. He seems to suggest the latter when he states that the claims are “impossible to validate”. Yet this seems to be at odds with the idea that such claims are “manifestly untrue”.

¹⁸¹ Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 105.

¹⁸² I.L. Preston, *The Great American Blow-Up: Puffery in Advertising and Selling*. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸³ Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 108.

¹⁸⁴ Offer, p. 108.

Presumably what Offer means by this is that it is manifestly untrue that the Ford Escort is the best small car in America, or that it is untrue that Downy mattresses have the most fluffy softness. We might note a contradiction in his position. On the one hand, he seems to be arguing that such claims have no grounds on which they might be judged true or false; on the other hand, on some basis, he is confident that they are false.

Nevertheless, there is a way to make some sense of Offer's position. First, we should note that the claims of puffery are indeed often too vague to be determined as true. It is not that 'the world's best mattress' or 'the best small car in America' are nonsensical claims, but that considered by themselves, without an account of the goods which each statement is referring to, the claims are vague. This point makes some sense of Offer's statement that puffs are impossible to validate. Without an account of what constitutes a good car, there are no grounds on which to assess or prove the claim that the Ford Escort is the best car in America. Someone who sought to validate this claim would not know what to look for: one might set out to investigate the quality of the tyres, or the price of the car, or one might focus on the way an owner uses a car, or even on how a car affects an owner's sense of themselves. However, Offer's statement about validation appears not to hold in all instances. For if we were to develop an account of what makes a good car, and had the capacity to perceive or measure those goods to some degree, then Offer's point would no longer hold. In this instance, it would be possible to make a judgement on the truth of the claim. Consider the claim that Downy mattresses have 'the most fluffy softness'. If one could arrive at a reasonable concept of softness, and a way to measure it, one could compare mattresses according to this standard. Clearly, this is not always going to be straightforward or possible in practice. In the case of the claim about the car, it may turn out that there is reasonable disagreement about what makes a good car. Or even if there is agreement on the concepts, it may turn out that the distinctions between good cars

are hard to make. Nonetheless, although one might never have the same accuracy as in physics or chemistry, it does seem possible in some cases to develop reasonable accounts of the goods in question – for instance, the concept of softness – as a basis for measurement and judgement. The claims of puffery, therefore, although they are often too vague to be assessed for truthfulness, might in some cases be open to validation, to the degree to which the goods involved can be clarified.

On this basis, we can also make sense of Offer's apparently contradictory point that puffery is manifestly untrue. For it may often be easier to observe falsity in a claim than to seek to show its truth. What Offer appears to be emphasising is that it is usually easier to observe that a product is bad, than it is to make fine distinctions between claimants to be the best. For example, we might readily say that many mattresses are softer than this particular mattress, or that a car (which might be both expensive and badly made) is clearly not in the running to be the best. Making such a judgement, we would indeed be relying on some background conception of the goods involved, but even if our conception of the goods is vague, we can in many cases dismiss a claim with some confidence. We do not need a clearly articulated measure of softness, for example, to say that, on a range of reasonable accounts of 'softness', many mattresses in the world are softer than this especially uncomfortable one. The more extreme the claim – that the Ford Explorer is 'the best the world has to offer' – the more confidence we can have in dismissing it. This makes sense, therefore, of Offer's statement that puffery is manifestly untrue. However, once again, Offer's statement appears not to hold in all instances. For in some cases, high praise is not manifestly untrue. If the VW Golf were to be advertised as 'the best small car in the UK', for example, this claim might not be 'manifestly' wrong. At least, one would at least want to consider the goods in question before assessing such a statement, in the way that competitions in the car industry seek to do. Falsity might often

be obvious, but for good products, it is sometimes reasonable to wonder whether praise might have a good basis. The claims of puffery, therefore, are not always manifestly untrue. Sometimes, even statements of high praise call for further investigation, to seek to validate claims which a reasonable person might indeed believe.

We can now turn to assess the ethical status of exaggeration and vagueness in advertising. In the first place, the kind of praise of a product which is manifestly false, as discussed above, often fits Augustine's definition of lying as "false signification with will of deceiving".¹⁸⁵ Because advertising a product involves understanding a product's position in the market in relation to the competition, an advertiser who exaggerates in a way which is obviously false is likely also to be aware of this falsity. If they are aware of this, then given that they are using the claim to sell a product, we can assume an intention to deceive. A manifestly false exaggeration in advertising, therefore, is usually a lie.

It is less clear how to make judgements of truthfulness when the claim is vague. How are we to judge a claim which is not obviously false, but which requires more investigation to attempt to resolve its vagueness, for instance, the claim that the VW Golf is the best small car in the United Kingdom? Augustine's view of lying appears to be less applicable in this instance, for he makes a dichotomy between truth and lies central to his position: "Of lies are many sorts, which indeed all, universally, we ought to hate. For there is no lie that is not contrary to truth. For, as light and darkness, piety and impiety, justice and iniquity, sin and right-doing, health and weakness, life and death, so are truth and a lie contrary the one to the other".¹⁸⁶ To address the question of vagueness, we should turn to the convictions motivating Augustine's argument. Augustine develops his argument that lying is wrong out of the conviction about what is right: he opposes lying on the basis of a strong desire for the beauty of the truth. For example, in considering whether someone

¹⁸⁵ Augustine, 'On Lying', ch. 26.

¹⁸⁶ Augustine, ch. 4.

should lie for the sake of sparing a father the news that his son had died, he writes that, although he is moved “exceedingly” by this argument in favour of lying, he would not lie because of a greater love. “Where truth in her radiance does more and more brighten upon me, there my weak and throbbing sense is beaten back: yet I am with love of that surpassing comeliness so set on fire, that I despise all human regards which would thence recall me”.¹⁸⁷

From this basis of Augustine’s argument, we can critique the vague statements made in advertising. There are three possible situations of vagueness: when reasonable criteria around the goods involved support the claim; when reasonable criteria exist but do not support the claim; and when no reasonable criteria exist. First, there might be some cases in which the statement appears vague to the viewer, but there is in fact a solid argument backing it up. Perhaps Serta, for instance, who claims in their company slogan, “we make the world’s best mattresses” in fact has a reasonable basis for this claim.¹⁸⁸ They might have thought carefully about what makes a good mattress, perhaps having tested what helps with a good night’s sleep while also supporting good posture over the long term, and they might be far ahead of the competition in creating this ideal. In such a case, it seems reasonable to say they are not doing wrong. One can’t avoid some vagueness in a single sentence, and if they provide their account of what makes a good mattress on their website, we might claim on a good basis both that their statement is not false, and that they are not intending to deceive. Second, behind the apparently vague claim, the advertiser might have developed such an account which defines the goods involved, but one which suggests that their claim is false. They may not have a will to deceive, but they

¹⁸⁷ Augustine, ch. 36. This apparent dismissal of human concerns may seem excessive, and there is debate around whether Augustine’s avoidance of lying would be right in every circumstance (see, for instance, D. Decosimo, ‘Just Lies: Finding Augustine’s Ethics of Public Lying in His Treatments of Lying and Killing’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2010, pp. 661-697). Investigating this debate is not relevant to the discussion here, however, because we are not seeking to justify a lie in extreme cases. The point to be made here is only that Augustine has a positive vision of the desire for truth at the heart of his opposition to lying.

¹⁸⁸ Serta International, *Serta Singapore*, 2015, <http://www.serta.com.sg/>, (accessed 10 April 2016).

probably do, if they know all this and are attempting to sell their product with a false claim. Third, an advertiser might not have such an account, in which case the claim is vague to the viewer and to the advertiser. We cannot call this lying, but we can critique the advertiser for not having desired rightly, for having putting little effort into seeking the truth. That is, when an advertiser makes a grand claim, not obviously false, but one which they have not or cannot set out to validate because they lack an account of the goods involved, they are not loving God or their neighbour as they should. Clearly, an advertiser who is lying is more culpable. However, the criticism of a lack of truthfulness applies in this case too. Although the examples of error or vagueness discussed above are more or less culpable, they are all instances of a lack of love for the truth.

We have based our discussion so far on examples selected by Offer, all of which are in the form of short sentences making a claim about a product. It seems more difficult to apply this reasoning about truthfulness to cases such as the VW advertisement discussed in the previous chapter, which sets out to present an ideal, and then positions the product as a way to attain this. No claim is being explicitly articulated in words in this advertisement; the slogan at the end is merely “welcome to the family”.¹⁸⁹ Yet even in earlier advertisements, such as the 1959 poster for Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud, the approach of assessing the truth of claims about the product runs into difficulty. The Rolls-Royce advertisement is constructed around the statement “At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock”.¹⁹⁰ According to Offer’s view, what should matter in our consideration of this advertisement is whether this information is correct. Certainly, if this claim were false, we could criticise the advertisement on this basis. However, focusing our attention on this seems to miss the point of this advertisement, which is to use the statement, along with the accompanying image, to set

¹⁸⁹ Bestadsontv.com, ‘Volkswagen: Welcome to the Family’.

¹⁹⁰ Ogilvy & Mather, ‘Ogilvy & Mather Classic Ads’.

up an ideal of calmness. How are we to apply the criteria of truthfulness to this central point of the advertisement? Offer raises this point when he critiques the name ‘Rover Metro Tahiti Special’ for conveying “exaggerated pretensions”.¹⁹¹ It is not immediately clear how we might articulate these pretensions, in order to assess them. This seems even harder for advertisements which rely primarily on images. The actual advertisement for the Rover Metro Tahiti Special shows the car on a Polynesian-style raft being paddled down the Thames.¹⁹² This is obviously an invented scene, yet it misses the point to consider its truth in this way. These examples raise the question: How are we to assess truth in advertising in relation to advertisements which make no explicit claims, vague or otherwise, about the products they advertise?

To answer this question, we need to consider what aspects of an advertisement are important to consider in terms of their truth. Offer’s conception of advertising is based around the provision of “information about products and services”.¹⁹³ This is, in fact, a useful starting point. However, we should examine the concept of ‘information’ more closely. What exactly are advertisements seeking to provide information about? Even those advertisements which deliver a lot of information are not simply describing true facts about a product. Rather, they are seeking to provide information about what a product can do in a consumer’s life, specifically, what good or goods the product might bring into a consumer’s life. Consider an example of an early text-based advertisement, which provides many paragraphs of information about its product: a 1906 poster in *The Advertiser* for the Red Cross Shoe made by Krohn, Fechheimer & Co. The advertisement describes the shoe: “The sole of the Red Cross is of regular walking thickness but it is *flexible*. It is made of specially tanned leather, so supple that you can *bend it double when*

¹⁹¹ Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 108.

¹⁹² D. Waller, ‘Advert For Rover Metro Tahiti (1993)’, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3JXjrPZgLG>, (accessed 10 April 2016).

¹⁹³ Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 103.

new”. However, it also explains the relevance of this information to the experience of wearing the shoe: “This suppleness makes the shoe which fits at every point, *follow every movement of the foot*”. And it summarises the good one might hope to attain: “The Red Cross shoe gives you *comfort with style*”.¹⁹⁴ This advertisement is not simply listing information about the product; its purpose is to describe a good which might motivate someone’s purchase. Its structure is thus in line with the advertisements analysed in Chapter Three: it is seeking to attract someone to an ideal and persuade them that the product is a way to that ideal. It is indeed providing information about a product, but specifically it is information about what good a product could do – at least, that is the claim of the advertisement.

Consider another example: a 1982 television advertisement for the Spacemaker Microwave Oven from General Electric (GE), advertised as being large enough to fit a crown roast, a six-pound ham, or four Cornish hens. Central to this advertisement are idealised images of a meal, which is the good a customer can hope to attain via their purchase of the machine. One buys the machine motivated by a desire to bring this good into one’s life; indeed, the advertisement finishes with what was GE’s slogan at the time: “we bring good things to life”.¹⁹⁵ The central claim of the advertisement is that it is presenting us with a means which will help us to a desirable end. Like the advertisement for shoes, as well as examples discussed in the previous chapter, this advertisement is built around the presentation of a good – appealing meals – for which it hopes to incite a desire, and the suggestion that the product is a convenient means to this end. Based on this, there are two lines of inquiry we might make in considering the truthfulness of this

¹⁹⁴ Period Paper, ‘1906 Ad Krohn Fechheimer’, 2016, <http://www.periodpaper.com/collections/vintage-advertising-art/products/1906-ad-krohn-fechheimer-820-830-sycamore-st-cincinnati-ohio-shoe-style-leather-197062-ydl3-034>, (accessed 10 April 2016).

¹⁹⁵ Video Archeology, ‘1982 - Commercial - GE/General Electric - Space Maker Microwave Oven’, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeWxeV7LQSo>, (accessed 10 April 2016).

advertisement. The first is whether the object for which the advertisement seeks to incite desire is in fact a true good. The second is whether it is true that the product will help us towards this good.

Assessing the truth about goods is often more involved than the assessments of truth Offer is considering. Yet these two lines of inquiry provide the basis for discussion and critique. For example, assessing the advertisement about shoes, one would ask whether the central good which is promised, ‘comfort with style’, is a true good. Compared to other advertisements which put more effort into bringing to life the central ideal, this is a brief description. However, it is given some substance by the images of the Red Cross Shoe, which is in fact offered in a number of styles. It seems reasonable to say that comfort with style is a good to aim for, though in the broad context of living a Christian life, a moderate good.¹⁹⁶ One would also ask how substantial is the link between this product and the ideal. In this case the link appears to be strong: assuming that the shoes are comfortable, and the style they embody is a good one, the customer needs only to put on the shoes to experience this ideal. From this brief analysis we might conclude that the advertisement is making a true claim: the product it presents is a real means to a true, if moderate, good.

We can also investigate advertisements which more vividly present an ideal. The advertisement for the Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud, for example, is built around the image of calm. We should inquire, drawing on the resources of Christian ethics, and considering the ideal as presented in the advertisement, whether calm is a true good. On a brief analysis, this seems true: we need moments of calm in our day, if we are to reflect at all on our life,

¹⁹⁶ One could pursue the investigation of this good further. Comfort is usually valuable in clothing, but one could argue that comfort as the guiding value removes other potential goods of clothing, hence the importance of comfort constrained by style. There are a number of themes in a discussion of style, including perhaps the moderate good of fitting in with a social group, the most important of which, however, is the discussion of the qualities embodied in a particular style. This relates the critique of style to the goods we want to live by in general; for instance, one might conclude that an important good is a style which embodies simplicity and modesty.

and live a life that might be hospitable to receiving God's Word.¹⁹⁷ We should also investigate whether the product will help lead someone towards this good. Considering the idea of the car as a quiet, calm space, one is reminded of large houses in which there are rooms to suit different activities and different moods – one might have a bright breakfast room, a chapel, and a reading room, for example. We might see the Rolls-Royce as like a moveable room of such a house. Whether in a room or a car, a physical environment can only do so much to encourage an inner state; however, it is possible for an interior to prompt and support calm. We might conclude, therefore, that the link between the product and the ideal does have a basis, and so it is not false signification to suggest this.

A somewhat more difficult example is the advertisement for the Rover Metro Tahiti Special. In the scene, as the car is being floated into London, there is a lively drumbeat and enthusiastic shouting from the Polynesian rowers, who are out in the middle of the Thames, suggesting free-spiritedness and enthusiasm arriving in England. The whole scene is also playful: the Rover Metro is surrounded by flowers, positioned on a raised platform on the central float. Like the Rolls-Royce advertisement, this image suggests an escape from the city. Yet the dominating theme is wild enthusiasm, which one could argue is not as important a good as calm.¹⁹⁸ The car also seems less likely to help in injecting this spirit into its driver, other than via the colour of its paint which is Tahiti Blue.¹⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the connection is not impossible. One could imagine that, for some users, who remember the advertisement, see that the blue paint looks a bit like an ocean, and

¹⁹⁷ Again, this discussion could be pursued. It is reasonable to say, at least, that some moments of calm are important for a Christian life. We will discuss the good of calm further in Chapter Six.

¹⁹⁸ The form of these discussions is the same as the criticism of a painting. One might conceivably find a new description of the themes running through this scene, or develop an argument that enthusiasm is something to be valued. The relevant point is merely that it is possible to have a reasonable discussion to assess the goods presented by an image or scene, as part of the task of determining which goods belong in a Christian life and in what order.

¹⁹⁹ Halfords, 'Halfords Rover 'Tahiti Blue 93' Car Spray Paint', <http://www.halfords.com/motoring/paints-body-repair/car-spray-paints/halfords-rover-tahiti-blue-93-car-spray-paint-300ml>, n.d., (accessed 10 April 2016).

notice the name ‘Tahiti Special’, the car could act as a reminder of these supposedly Tahitian qualities.

Finally, we can consider another advertisement which Offer cites. As he describes it: “a single, big, yellow peanut, shining with oil and sprinkled with salt, appears over the following copy: ‘Something no one ever ate ... Just one Planters Cocktail Peanut! No one we know of ever stopped after eating only one Planters Cocktail Peanut’”.²⁰⁰ This advertisement is not presenting a true good. It is not presenting a good ideal at all; it is purely appetitive. Its object is designed to create desire from the part of the soul Plato called *epithymia*, with no reference to any good which might appeal to *logistikon*. In practice, the peanuts might be involved in some good: perhaps they do play a role in some good socialising. However, there is no true good being presented by the advertisement itself. The product is being incorporated into a simple, otherwise blind desire for salty, oily things. It may, incidentally, be a true fact that no one they knew ever stopped after eating one of these nuts. But from the perspective of considering truth in advertising, there is no important truth in this advertisement.

In summary, the criticism that advertisements do not tell the truth about the products they promote is occasionally true in the sense of presenting lies about the capabilities of the product, or other obvious lies. Other kinds of untruthfulness include exaggerating or making vague, grand claims about the worth of the product. The relevant good, however, around which advertisements are designed, is the purported good which the product will bring into the life of the customer. Although this claim is often not made explicit in words, it is the most important focus for assessments of truth. We should assess whether the image is of a true good, drawing on the resources of Christian ethics, and assess whether and to what degree it is true that the product might help lead us to this end.

²⁰⁰ Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 107.

Need and desire

Another of the main criticisms made against advertising is that advertisements persuade us to desire things we do not need. An early proponent of this criticism was the economist John Kenneth Galbraith. In *The Affluent Society* he writes that the demand for more products is manufactured by a society as productive forces grow. One major cause of this is that the desire for status is insatiable. As Galbraith quotes John Maynard Keynes: “Keynes noted that needs of ‘the second class’, i.e. those that are the result of efforts to keep abreast or ahead of one’s fellow beings, ‘may indeed be insatiable; for the higher the general level, the higher still are they’”.²⁰¹ The other major cause is advertising.

The even more direct link between production and wants is provided by the institutions of modern advertising and salesmanship. These cannot be reconciled with the notion of independently determined desires, for their central function is to create desires – to bring into being wants that previously did not exist ... A broad empirical relationship exists between what is spent on the production of consumer goods and what is spent in synthesising the desires for that production.²⁰²

Galbraith’s contention is that “as a society becomes increasingly affluent, wants are increasingly created by the process by which they are satisfied”. By this he means both that higher levels of consumption raise expectations – “one man’s consumption becomes his neighbour’s wish” – and that producers “proceed actively to create wants through advertising and salesmanship”. Thus, “the higher level of production has, merely, a higher level of want creation necessitating a higher level of want satisfaction”. “Wants thus come to depend on output”, a process which Galbraith calls ‘the dependence effect’.²⁰³

²⁰¹ J.K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society and Other Writings, 1952-1967*, New York, Library of America, 2010, p. 471.

²⁰² Galbraith, pp. 472-473.

²⁰³ Galbraith, pp. 471-475.

Within Galbraith's overall argument, this is a central concern because his aim is to set out a critique of "the edifice which now rationalises the importance of production and the urgency of consumer need". The theory of consumer demand which he is criticising rests on two propositions, that the urgency of wants does not diminish significantly once they are satisfied, and that people's desires should simply be the given data for an economist. The economist, it is assumed, "has no need to inquire how these wants are formed"; rather, "his function is sufficiently fulfilled by maximising the goods that supply the wants".²⁰⁴ This position becomes untenable, Galbraith argues, when desires result from advertising and the search for comparative social success, for in this case, "the notion of independently established need now sinks into the background". We cannot assume it is always a good thing to satisfy wants, if some of these wants are invented, and some are grounded in real needs. Galbraith contrasts the desires created by advertising with the need for food. "The fact that wants can be synthesised by advertising, catalysed by salesmanship, and shaped by the discreet manipulations of the persuaders shows that they are not very urgent. A man who is hungry need never be told of his need for food".²⁰⁵

Earlier in his work, Galbraith had argued that we are committed to expanding production not so much for the goods themselves so much as for the economic security which is founded on maintaining or increasing production.²⁰⁶ To this criticism of production he adds the point that the desire for these goods does not arise in us spontaneously. "Now we find our concern for goods further undermined. It does not arise in spontaneous consumer need. Rather, the dependence effect means that it grows out of the process of production itself. If production is to increase, the wants must be effectively contrived". For an illustration of this, we might look at the advertisements for the clothing

²⁰⁴ Galbraith, pp. 463-464.

²⁰⁵ Galbraith, pp. 472-475.

²⁰⁶ Galbraith, p. 476. By 'goods' Galbraith means goods resulting from productive processes in industry.

company American Apparel. Over the last decade, this company has produced a series of highly sexual posters and online images of young women modelling their clothing.²⁰⁷ For each new item they design, the company finds an attractive woman to create the required desire. Galbraith sees contrived wants such as these as less pressing: “If the individual’s wants are to be urgent, they must be original within himself. They cannot be urgent if they must be contrived for him”.²⁰⁸

In the article on ‘Needs and Wants’ in *The Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, Marta Vilar Rosales discusses a distinction between ‘true needs’ and ‘false needs’. Drawing on Galbraith and others, she describes the distinction as follows.

According to John Galbraith ... true needs are, by definition, urgent to satisfy given that they are grounded in physical necessities. Unlike false or created needs, they do not ask for the intervention of an external entity to call attention to their existence. They are, as Zygmunt Bauman, Polish sociologist author of *Consuming Life* (2007), argues, grounded in survival, exist in a restricted and fixed number, and have their limits set by their instrumentality. Unlike true needs, false needs are created by the market and constitute powerful mechanisms of social manipulation and control of consumption practices, since they have the ability to induce people to buy things that they do not really need.²⁰⁹

According to this view, true needs are limited to those “grounded in physical necessities” or in survival. Much of Rosales’ article, however, refers to the work of sociologist Don Slater, who presents a somewhat different view of the concept of need, not acknowledged in her review. In *Core Sociological Dichotomies* Slater defines need in terms of survival and identity. “To say that something is a need is to say that it is essential to the continued existence or identity of a body, person or social order”. This definition covers needs for “food, clothing and shelter”, but it also goes further. As Slater writes, “the list of basic

²⁰⁷ American Apparel, ‘Our Ads’, 2012, <http://www.americanapparel.net/advertising/>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

²⁰⁸ Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, pp. 476-477. In this discussion ‘want’ is considered a synonym for ‘desire’, following Galbraith, who uses the terms synonymously: the “central function [of advertising] is to create desires – to bring into being wants that previously did not exist”. Galbraith, pp. 472-473.

²⁰⁹ M.V. Rosales, ‘Needs and Wants’, in D. Southerton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE, 2011, pp. 1030-1031.

needs can be extended to needs for love or security or creativity or education, indicating that humans are essentially more than bodies and need certain capacities or pleasures in order to be what a community considers really human". To claim that something is a need, Slater writes, is to claim some fact about the objective world: "needs appear to be anchored in the objective world, either in the physical human body or in the nature or essence of human life". Although Slater's argument is that needs are in fact not objective, but are "always bound up with social values and value judgements, [and] are matters of culture, not nature", he does give two examples of how people attempt to 'anchor' needs objectively. The first is how descriptions of bodily needs can follow from "scientific definitions of the nutritional requirements for basic health". The second is how Karl Marx's description of human needs was based on "claims about the real nature or 'species being' of the human: he argued that the human's essential need is for conscious and creative human praxis and therefore their most pressing need in modern society is the overcoming of alienation". Although Slater does not commit to a view of objective reality, his perspective on needs is broader than Rosales', in that he includes in his view needs related to being "really human" as well as needs related to merely surviving.²¹⁰

What does it mean to claim that advertisements lead us to desire things which we do not really need? In order to assess this criticism, we should investigate the concept of need, and its relation to desire. On the one hand, we seem to see objects of need as a subcategory of objects of desire: there are many things that we desire, but only some of these we would be prepared to say that we need. For example, we might desire a new computer, a VW car, a trip to a luxury resort in the Bahamas, a flourishing garden, a Patek Philippe watch, something nutritious for dinner, a haircut, and deeper friendships. It is not immediately clear which of these we should call 'needs'. Aside from the need for food, the

²¹⁰ D. Slater, 'Needs/Wants', in C. Jenks (ed.), *Core Sociological Dichotomies*, London, SAGE, 1998, pp. 315-316.

others seem at best unclear: perhaps we do not need the latest computer, but one might make an argument for needing some kind of computer, given one's obligations at work. We might conclude from this that needs are a subset of desires. On the other hand, this cannot be entirely right, for there are clearly some things which we need, but which we do not desire. For example, we might need more vitamin D but have no desire for this. Or we might say that a friend needs emotional support, but that they are resisting rather than desiring it. Therefore it seems, rather, that need and desire are distinct but overlapping categories. There are some things we desire but do not need, other things we need but do not desire, and in some cases there is overlap: there are some things we need and desire.

The above paragraph looked at the objects of need and desire. What about the relation to an object which need and desire describe? One similarity here is that need and desire both involve a lack. To say that we need something clearly means that, at least to some extent, we do not have it; and, as discussed, desire also involves a lack. One difference, however, is that desire involves an element of longing for or attraction to the object, whereas need does not imply longing, or even an awareness of the object. This is clear in a case when awareness is impossible. We might say that a coat needs a button, for example, but the coat cannot desire a button. For an inanimate object, a relation of need is possible but not desire. In the case of a person, there are some instances when awareness and longing are tied to the existence of a lack: there is usually a desire for water present when there is a need for water. However, the concept of need itself does not seem to imply awareness. To say that someone needs some medicine does not imply that they are aware of that need. Whereas to say that the person desires a particular medicine is to imply that they are aware of the medicine they want. This distinction between need and desire aligns with Slater's distinction between needs and wants: he notes that needs are not necessarily

experienced by the person whereas wants are ‘subjective’ in the sense that they are experienced by the subject.²¹¹

A need, then involves a lack, although not necessarily an awareness of the lack. A lack implies a comparison with a whole, or some state closer to a whole: something is lacking in relation to a more complete state. Slater illustrates this in his discussion when he writes that “humans are essentially more than bodies and need certain capacities or pleasures in order to be what a community considers really human”.²¹² That is, the community holds an ideal of what it means to be a full human being – their concept of the whole – and needs are described in relation to this. Slater lists love, creativity and education as examples of needs, meaning that if a community saw education as part of being really human, then an absence of education would be considered a need: an absence in relation to this whole. To take another example, to say that someone has a need for vitamin D is to say that vitamin D is lacking when we compare their current state to a state of health. To debate whether someone has a need is to debate the nature of their lack in relation to the whole. Consider two doctors debating whether someone needs heart surgery. The doctors agree, more or less, on the whole in consideration: the ideal of health, specifically a healthy heart. They are debating what kind of lack the person has in relation to that whole: what is missing or going wrong in the functioning of their heart, in relation to a fully functioning heart?

To say that something ‘meets a need’ is to say that it remedies the lack. It would be awkward to say that we ‘lack heart surgery’. Rather, the lack with which we are concerned is the lack of a properly functioning aorta: we need a working aorta. Heart surgery might be an important part of remedying this lack, therefore we say that we need heart surgery. There might be various things and actions, or products and services, which meet a given

²¹¹ Slater, p. 316.

²¹² Slater, p. 315.

need: the doctors might also say that we need a better diet, as well as surgery. We call these things needs because they relate to remedying the lack in question, considered in relation to the whole. A need might also be described in various ways. For someone who lacks vitamin D, there might be other ways to describe their current difference from a full state of health. A lack of vitamin D, for instance, means the intestine cannot absorb calcium as effectively. We might also say that this person has a need for a more effective intestine, or that they have a need for calcium. These are indeed also needs, but they are partial descriptions; to say that the person needs vitamin D most completely and accurately describes their lack.

However, we do not acknowledge a need in relation to any idea of a whole. If we did, the criticism of advertising would have no weight. For example, consider someone who claims they ‘need’ the latest Yves Saint Laurent bag. If we are sceptical of this claim, it is either because we cannot see the whole which they have in mind, or more likely, we do not believe that their concept of the whole is a genuine good. It is obvious that they do not need the bag simply to meet a need to carry something. Spelt out, this person’s actual claim might be that, to achieve high status among a set of wealthy, fashionable people, they need the latest luxury bag. And it may be true to say that, in relation to high status among their colleagues, the bag is precisely what they lack. However, we are probably unwilling to say they have a need for the bag, because we do not recognise the vision of high status as a good one. Rosales’ criticism of advertising is also underpinned by a conception of goodness. Her argument, along with Bauman, is that true needs are “grounded in survival”. Although she does not use the word ‘good’, she clearly sees survival as something valuable. In contrast, she sees false needs, “created by the market”, as not being related to any good; rather, she describes them as “powerful mechanisms of

social manipulation and control”.²¹³ Most of us do not limit our conception of what is good to mere survival. Indeed, we describe needs in relation to goods even of minor importance – although we understand the need to be of lesser importance. For instance, we might suggest that a friend needs a haircut. Unlike the example of ‘needing’ a luxury bag, this is not a claim we resist. In this case we recognise or intuit some goods at stake: cleanliness, order, friendly loyalty to a social group. Attaining these goods is not urgent, but it appears that we accept the idea of a need for a haircut, because it relates to some goods. We merely consider it a need of low priority.

The writings of social scientists attest to the idea that conceptions of need are linked with conceptions of the good, even though these writers do not explicitly acknowledge goods. Slater, for example, although he does not recognise an objective basis for value judgements, notes the conceptual dependence, observing that concepts of need “are always bound up with ... value judgements”, and that “much of political life and social critique consists in judging whether current social arrangements meet human needs and produce a way of life which is deemed good”.²¹⁴ As Rosales summarises, Slater’s argument “links the social definition of needs to the question of how people should live their lives”. The way we define needs “articulates, as Slater states, visions of ‘the good life’”.²¹⁵ The link between need and value is also supported by Ryan Moore, in an article on the concepts of false consciousness and false needs in the *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*. Moore observes that, with the rise of postmodern theory, these concepts have “fallen out of intellectual fashion and are rarely invoked anymore because of the assumptions they carry about the critic’s authority to define true consciousness or true

²¹³ Rosales, ‘Needs and Wants’, pp. 1030-1031.

²¹⁴ Slater, ‘Need/Wants’, pp. 315-316.

²¹⁵ Rosales, ‘Needs and Wants’, pp. 1029-1030.

needs”.²¹⁶ This is consistent with the idea that concepts of need depend on ideas of the good: scepticism among social scientists about the reality of goods has led eventually to the abandonment of the discussion of true and false needs. Further support comes from another article in the same volume, by Soren Askegaard. Askegaard notes that criticism of advertising has often been based on attempts to “isolate more basic, prosocial sets of utilities and privilege them with the denomination ‘need’”. He remarks that “to some extent, behind this critique there is a tacit moralism”, that is, “an understanding that desire is somehow dubious and less acceptable as a social principle of organisation compared to the more acceptable fulfilment of personal and social needs”.²¹⁷ Though he does not spell out his argument beyond this statement, it is reasonable to say that he is sceptical that there could be any basis for privileging something with the term ‘need’. That the fulfilment of need is held by others as a “more acceptable” basis for organising society than the fulfilment of desire, he describes as “tacit moralism”. This provides further support to the idea that claims of need rely on moral considerations.

Galbraith presents a more explicit argument for the link between judgements of need and considerations of goodness. He himself does not seek to discard moral reasoning, but he shows how, when it is abandoned in economics, one loses the basis on which to discern needs. In describing the development of economics, he notes how, “in the name of refined scientific method”, scholars sought to “divorce economics from any judgement on the goods with which it was concerned”. “Any notion of necessary versus unnecessary or important as against unimportant goods was rigorously excluded from the subject”. This unwillingness to judge removes the basis for distinguishing the worth of different desires. “Nothing in economics so quickly marks an individual as incompetently trained as a

²¹⁶ R. Moore, ‘False Consciousness/False Needs’, in D. Southerton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE, 2011, p. 570.

²¹⁷ S. Askegaard, ‘Channels of Desire’, in D. Southerton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE, 2011, p. 152.

disposition to remark on the legitimacy of the desire for more food and the frivolity of the desire for a more expensive automobile”. The ‘legitimate desire’ for food he also describes as a ‘need’: “a man who is hungry need never be told of his need for food”. The differing worth of the underlying goods provides the basis for the distinction between ‘need’ and ‘craving’; for example, he describes “consumer need that was once felt in a world where more production meant more food for the hungry, more clothing for the cold and more houses for the homeless” in contrast to “the craving for more elegant automobiles, more exotic food, more erotic clothing, more elaborate entertainment”.²¹⁸

In the context in which the term is used to criticise advertising, therefore, a ‘need’ is not simply a morally neutral description of any lack in relation to any whole. A need is better defined as a lack in relation to a good. The good is the object of the need; the need is a description of a state of deficiency in relation to that object. In debating whether something is a true need, we are debating whether the apparent good at stake is a true good, and the nature of a person’s lack in relation to that good. In the example of the doctors debating whether someone needs heart surgery, they agree on the good – health – but are discussing the nature of the lack in relation to that good. In the case of scepticism about the need for a luxury bag, the status of the good is in dispute. If we seek to avoid value judgements, like the social scientists above, we cannot make sense of such scepticism, and any criticism based on true and false needs, or the charge that advertising leads us away from what we need, loses its basis. In contrast, the concept of need becomes useful and clear when we employ it in discussing our relationship with goods. It would be wrong however, to follow Rosales and Bauman in limiting our idea of goods to those related only to physiology and survival. Rather, as we acknowledge throughout this thesis, drawing on Plato and Augustine, there are various forms of goodness in our lives, unified

²¹⁸ Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, pp. 461-475.

by their participation in God, the highest good. Our needs for various goods are all needs for God, in different contexts. The most important lack in our lives is the lack caused by sin – our turning away from God, and the consequent lack in our souls. God is the truly good whole. Accordingly, the most important need we have is to love God, to participate in His love and for His grace to fill our lives.

Based on this discussion, we can now return to the distinction between need and desire. The difference between the two concepts is as follows. Desire, as discussed, involves a sense of lack and a conception of a whole. This, however, is an imagined whole, related to a sense of lack as conceived by the subject. This image of a whole may or may not be an image of a true good; the conception of lack might be well grounded, or not. A need, on the other hand, is a real lack in relation to a true good. We can have a need without being aware of it, because a need is a statement of the shortcomings of our condition in relation to some good whole; it can remain true independently of whether we are aware of it. Hence, we desire things we do not really need when our image of the whole is not an image of a true good. We need things we do not desire when we have a lack in relation to a good of which we are not aware, and around which we have not formed a longing.²¹⁹ And the ideal is to become aware of our most important lacks, and to form longings based on these: to desire the goods we really need, all of which are unified by their participation in the highest good.

We can now clarify the criticism that advertisements persuade us to desire things we do not need. Using the distinction described above, this is indeed a useful basis on which to critique advertisements. For a particular advertisement, we can assess the degree to which it leads us to desire what we really need: to align the objects of our desire with

²¹⁹ In identifying an individual's need rather than human needs in general, the good would be described in terms of one's vocation. That is, everyone has a need for God, but the particular forms which God's goodness takes in one person's life – their particular relationship to Christ and the goods of Creation – will vary.

objects of true need. For example, the Patek Philippe advertisement discussed in the previous chapter is focused primarily on presenting an appealing ideal of high status and persuading us to buy a watch as a means to attain this ideal. High status, considered by itself, is not a good.²²⁰ As there is no good at stake, there is no lack in relation to a good, therefore the advertisement is not concerned with a need. In inciting our feeling of lack in relation to status it is not drawing attention to a true need, and the suggestion that the watch could help remedy this lack goes no way towards meeting a need. This is not to say that the watch itself could never meet any needs in someone's life, just that the advertisement is not organised around forming a desire based on a real need. In the early days of advertising, there may have been an advertisement for a watch focused around the need to tell the time, which we could consider a minor good. In this case, the watch would be meeting the need around which the advertisement created a desire.²²¹ To claim that the Patek Philippe advertisements leads us to buy something we do not need is therefore not entirely accurate. The more precise way to describe the problem is that the desire created by the advertisement is focused on status, which is not a need. The expensive watch which it suggests will get us to this goal may well do so, but in this capacity the watch is not serving a true need. By comparison, other advertisements are not as empty. The VW advertisement discussed earlier, which creates a desire focused on a good family life, is creating a desire based on a need. The problem with the VW advertisement is that, at best, the VW car helps meet this need in a marginal way. To claim that someone does not need the car may or may not be true, depending on what goods the car might serve in their life.

²²⁰ We will discuss the desire for status, or human glory, further in the next chapter. Although it is not a good, we argue that it can help direct our attention and effort towards the pursuit of goods.

²²¹ Assume, for the sake of this example, that this watch is reasonably priced. As noted in Chapter Three, the high price of the Patek Philippe watch is part of persuading the viewer that it is a genuine means to high status: the glory which is the object of *thymos* is often achieved by sacrifice.

It is more accurate to say that the advertisement directs our desire to a real object of need, but does not help us meet this need.

Where does the distinction between synthesised and spontaneous desires fit within this account? This is important to address because, as outlined at the beginning of this section, the criticism of advertising we are examining draws on this distinction. At the heart of Galbraith's argument, as mentioned, is the contrast between wants which are "effectively contrived" and those which "arise in spontaneous consumer need". Instances of "consumer need" include "food for the hungry, more clothing for the cold and more houses for the homeless".²²² To clarify this point, using the distinctions made above, the desires or wants which are formed for these objects are well-founded. Galbraith remarks on "the legitimacy of the desire for more food" as against "the frivolity of the desire for a more expensive automobile". Yet on what basis does Galbraith make this assessment of need? Part of his judgement on the goods of food, clothing and houses rests on an account – for most examples, kept in the background – of the value the particular good would bring to a human life. As Rosales notes, for Galbraith this account is mainly "grounded in physical necessities". Sometimes he makes this explicit; for instance, he writes that, in eighteenth-century England, increasing the bread supply was an urgent task because by these means hunger might be lessened: "life itself might be extended".²²³

Galbraith's judgement of the worth of desires, however, does not rest only on the good of the desired object. He also makes his case based on a consideration of how the desire is formed. In discussing which desires should have a greater claim on our attention and effort, he distinguishes between the natural and the artificial. "If the individual's wants are to be urgent, they must be original within himself. They cannot be urgent if they must be contrived for him". Here, he makes no reference to the object of desire, only to

²²² Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, p. 476; p. 461.

²²³ Galbraith, pp. 463-467.

how the desire developed. He rules out the idea that contrivance might play a leading role in producing an important desire. He also makes the same point in the other direction. The urgent wants are original; the fact that a desire is synthesised by advertising should count against our taking that desire seriously: “the fact that wants can be synthesised by advertising ... shows that they are not very urgent”.²²⁴

Strictly speaking, Galbraith’s statement is not claiming that because a want originates within us it must be important or worthwhile: that all original desires are urgent. Rather, the claim is that all urgent desires are original. Nevertheless, the way he makes his argument, emphasising spontaneous desires which are urgent, and giving no examples of problematic desires which originate within ourselves, does tend to suggest the former claim. Even if this is not Galbraith’s position, Rosales notes that a common argument often used to define real needs is to identify them with natural ones. As Rosales notes, this move goes back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the claim, as she paraphrases it, that “in a state of nature, man acts on the basis of finite needs, of real needs”.²²⁵ This position is flawed, however, because it does not take account of the breadth and moral ambiguity of the desires rooted in our nature. We do have a spontaneous desire for food, but one could also make a good case that the desire for status is as deeply rooted in human nature. While it is acted on differently in different cultures, the desire for glory over one’s neighbour existed long before consumer culture, as evidenced by the central argument of *The City of God*, as well as the story of Cain and Abel. Our nature is fallen, and we have deeply rooted desires which are not innately well-directed. As discussed in the previous chapter, a persistent part of our nature is the desire for status and self-assertion, which Plato calls

²²⁴ Galbraith, pp. 470-475. Galbraith is trying to undermine the belief that all existing consumer desire must be urgently satisfied, which is the basis for believing that increasing production is always beneficial. For a sense of what is implied by a want being ‘urgent’, we can note Galbraith’s description of bread being supplied to the hungry: “any measure to increase the bread supply merited the deep and serious interest of the public-spirited citizen”. Urgent wants are contrasted in his argument with “products of great frivolity”. Galbraith, pp. 463-465.

²²⁵ Rosales, ‘Needs and Wants’, p. 1031.

thymos, as well as the desires for sex and acquisition which Plato groups under the term *epithymia*. These desires arise spontaneously within us, yet they often work against our own good. The fact that a desire is original within the person, arising without external contrivance, is not a basis for judging its merit.

Galbraith's stronger claim is that synthesised desires cannot be urgent. This claim is also made by Rosales, who argues that "false needs are created by the market" and that advertising cannot be concerned with true needs because such needs "do not ask for the intervention of an external entity to call attention to their existence", that is, that a need cannot be synthesised and true.²²⁶ Clearly, advertising often contrives desires which are not based on true need; the Patek Philippe advertisement analysed above is one instance of this. However, not all synthesised desires are bad, or frivolous. Often we do not know, and thus cannot desire, what is good for us, or else our desires are vague and need clarification and strengthening. In deciding our vocation, for example, we might have various ideas about where we would flourish, drawn from internal and external sources, but we might need a helpful friend to lead us towards an ideal we should desire. Or to take an example from Augustine, in the *Confessions* he writes about his friend Alypius in Carthage. Alypius' spontaneous desire was for the bloodshed at the arena. Yet while sitting in one of Augustine's classes, Augustine makes an attempt to convert him. As Augustine reports, "it seemed opportune to use an illustration from the circus games ... and to make the matter clearer and more agreeable I was bitingly sarcastic about those captivated by this folly ... he took it to heart, and believed that I had said it exclusively with him in mind".²²⁷ So Augustine sets out to persuade Alypius away from a spontaneous desire, and contrives to lead him towards a desire which he may not have reached by himself, for continence.

²²⁶ Rosales, pp. 1030-1031.

²²⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 99.

The more general point is that, as well as the instinctual desires for food, shelter, sex and status, we also have within us a natural desire for the good, the object of *logistikon*. As we will argue in the following chapter, we are born with an obscure and inarticulate desire for God, which derives from our nature being made in the image of God, but this desire requires development, guided by external interventions. Indeed, the formation of a desire for God is an act of synthesis: we see that all goods proceed from Him; our divergent desires for a happy life become focused on Him. This process of formation is called the education of desire; our argument will be that advertising can contribute to it. What is artificial need not hinder us. Although the term ‘artificial’ has acquired negative connotations under the influence of the view that what is natural is good, the root of the word suggests something formed by an art, and the possibility of worthwhile artifice. It is because we are fallen that we require external support structures and guidance to form desires based around what we really need.

In summary, therefore, the criticism that advertisements persuade us to desire things we do not need is an important argument, though there are problems with how it has been formulated. Galbraith, or sociologists like Bauman and Slater, either limit needs only to survival and health, which, based on Christian convictions, derives from too narrow an account of goods. Although they might analyse ‘the need for love’ as a social construct, like Slater, they do not believe that goods are real, which ultimately leads to difficulty making sense of the concept of need. We can define a need as a lack in relation to a good, the need for God being our central need to which all others are related, and on this basis analyse where advertisements are lacking. In principle, it is not natural desires that we need to favour, but God’s goodness, and being fallen creatures, we often need help to form good desires.

Consumer culture

A third criticism of advertising focuses on its contribution to a culture of consumption which is fundamentally dissatisfying for those who participate in it. More so than the previous two criticisms, this is a prominent theme within Christian ethics. In addition to incorporating some of Bauman's critique, therefore, this section will focus on this criticism as it is presented by the Christian ethicists Graham Ward and Vincent J. Miller.

In introducing his discussion of consumer culture in *Cities of God*, Ward summarises his view of desire in modern capitalism as follows:

Desire in secular culture can never be satisfied – that is fundamental. In its very crudest form – desire for sexual gratification – however many orgasms I have I'll want more. This has other social analogues. However much I earn I can always spend it and beyond it. Whatever I achieve there is more to achieve. Desire within the postmodern city can never come to an end – or the market would cease.²²⁸

Ward describes postmodern cities as “cities of endless desire”.²²⁹ Throughout his argument, he uses the idea of the ‘postmodern city’ as a metaphor to describe the conditions of capitalism today, but he also discusses specific cities and places which exemplify these conditions. Disney World and Las Vegas are two of his examples of places built around the patterns of desire which drive consumer culture.²³⁰ In Disney World, “time is reduced to the euphoria of present consumption which the experience of the ‘rides’ intensifies and focuses”. Las Vegas, likewise, is a “seductive space”. Its casinos create “domains of transitory illusion”; they are like “film sets or the facades of film locations”, “unashamedly superficial and glossy productions in the middle of nowhere”. The city “advertises both its superficiality and its access for escape into capitalism’s

²²⁸ Ward, *Cities of God*, pp. 76-77.

²²⁹ Ward, p. 52.

²³⁰ We can define consumer culture as those conditions of modern capitalism relevant to how people desire and how they relate to the commodities they purchase.

glitterdomes, both its ruthless, endless consumption and also its unbounded capacity to seduce the public”.²³¹

Ward describes how the rise of information technologies has intensified commercial environments by giving advertising new power: “It is these uncontrolled technologies that produce ‘the aggressive hell of commercial advertising’”.²³² Advertising produces distraction rather than leading us to any objects we might appreciate and enjoy. The postmodern city is constituted by “the endless flow of signifiers, the chain of signs producing and expressing the object of desire which is forever missing from that chain”.²³³ That is, we are drawn by one promise of satisfaction after another, without ever attaining the satisfaction of fulfilled desire. Miller’s criticism of consumer culture is aligned with Ward’s on this point. In *Consuming Religion*, Miller examines the change in advertising at the beginning of the twentieth century, when technology first enabled the widespread printing of images. This was another moment of intensification of advertising. The industry adopted “more sensational, attention-grabbing forms”, at the same time as “the growth of other forms of popular spectacles such as cabarets and amusements parks, which provided ‘commodified titillation’ for harried city dwellers”.²³⁴ Like Ward, Miller remarks on the seductive, mentally taxing environments we experience, online, in magazines, on television, in shopping centres, and in areas of cities which have some of the character of Las Vegas or Disney Land. These are environments which confront us with “an endlessly renewed series of objects to desire”.²³⁵

In developing his argument, Miller frequently references Bauman, whose analysis of modern capitalism focuses on how the continual movement from one desire to another

²³¹ Ward, pp. 59-63.

²³² M. Serres, *Angels: A Modern Myth*, trans. F. Cowper, Paris, Flammarion, 1993, quoted in Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 215.

²³³ Ward, p. 12.

²³⁴ Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 87.

²³⁵ Miller, p. 116.

affects our relationships to products. “Principal among the consumerist ways of dealing with disaffection”, Bauman writes, “is disposal of the objects causing disaffection”.

Bauman describes the mindset underlying the culture of disposal as “subjectivity fetishism” by which he means the feeling, as a consumer, of being elevated “to the noble, flattering and ego-boosting rank of the sovereign subject, uncontested and uncompromised”. “It is by the high rate of waste, and by shortening the time distance between the sprouting and the fading of desire, that subjectivity fetishism is kept alive and credible despite the endless series of disappointments it causes”.²³⁶ Companies have an interest in us desiring one thing after another, he argues, because this is the basis of profit. They have an interest in “the continuous flow of advertising messages” to maintain the constant promise of satisfaction, a promise which would lose its grip over us were we actually to become satisfied.²³⁷

Consumer markets focus on the prompt devaluation of their past offers, to clear a site in public demand for new ones to fill. They breed dissatisfaction with the products used by consumers to satisfy their needs – and they also cultivate constant disaffection with the acquired identity and the set of needs by which such an identity is defined. Changing identity, discarding the past and seeking new beginnings, struggling to be born again – these are promoted by that culture as a *duty* disguised as a privilege.²³⁸

The personal consequence of this is that we remain in a state of dissatisfaction. “While consumer society rests its case on the promise to gratify human desires to an extent which no other society in the past could reach or even dream of reaching, the promise of satisfaction remains seductive only as long as the desire stays *ungratified*”.²³⁹

The suggested means of changing ourselves, and seeking to remedy the dissatisfaction, are the products and services advertised to us. We give up on one product

²³⁶ Z. Bauman, *Consuming Life*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007, pp. 16-21.

²³⁷ Bauman, p. 121.

²³⁸ Bauman, p. 100.

²³⁹ Bauman, p. 46.

and turn to another, in “the search for individual pleasures articulated by the commodities currently offered, a search guided and constantly redirected and refocused by successive advertising campaigns”.²⁴⁰ Gorringe describes the experience one might have walking down a commercial street: “From every window larger than life-size pictures of children, young women and young men, but especially young women, urge you not only to buy clothes, soaps, perfumes, shampoos, sportswear ... but cars, houses, beer, wine, holidays, garden equipment, insurance – you name it. You are your body, and you need all these things to be attractive, to fit in, to be like the person in the adverts, to be truly human”.²⁴¹ Buying the products does not resolve the dissatisfaction, but as Miller writes: “The bitterness of disappointment and frustration with particular objects of desire is endlessly glazed over by the sweetness of desire for new ones”. Each failure feeds the cycle of desire and disappointment: “Seduction uses the surplus of dissatisfaction as a spur to encourage only more consumption”.²⁴²

To analyse these arguments, we should differentiate between two kinds of dissatisfaction present in consumer culture. The first kind is that which is inherent in any desire. As Ward acknowledges: “Desire issues from difference; difference not satisfied in its own differential”.²⁴³ Even the highest desire, for God, involves dissatisfaction: with one’s lack of communion with God resulting from sin. Being dissatisfied, therefore, is not always a bad thing; it is worthwhile when it is part of the pursuit of a good object. Our assessment of this kind of dissatisfaction depends on our assessment of the object of desire. In the criticism above, many of the examples which the authors cite are instances of wrongly directed desire. Las Vegas and Disney Land are unethical influences in large part because of the objects towards which they are directing desire: they are inciting

²⁴⁰ Bauman, p. 121.

²⁴¹ T. Gorringe, *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses*, London, SCM, 2001, p. 84.

²⁴² Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 119; p. 130.

²⁴³ Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 172.

desires not based on true needs. Much of the dissatisfaction created by advertising, therefore, should be analysed based on the distinction explored in the previous section of this chapter, between true needs and mere desires. In cases of misguided desires, the associated dissatisfaction is indeed a problem, but the reason it is a problem is the nature of the object of desire. The second kind of dissatisfaction identified by the critics above does not derive from a particular desire incited by an advertisement, but from the aggregate effect of multiple advertisements, which hinder us from being able to pursue any object properly. When we are disappointed by one desire, we are pulled on to the next, in a cycle which Ward describes as “endless desire”.²⁴⁴

What is the nature of this latter kind of dissatisfaction? We can see how it differs from the former if we examine the situation in terms of hope. While the former dissatisfaction can be involved in a desire being pursued with hope, the latter kind of dissatisfaction derives from the frustration of our ability to develop hope, as we move from one pursuit to the next. As discussed in Chapter Three, hope is concerned with the path to attaining an object of desire. The formation of hope depends on the belief that there is a way open to attaining the object, and that one is on that path. In contrast, a desire does not include an account of whether the object is attainable; desire is simply a form of love that arises in response to an encounter with the object: whenever an object is presented which excites *epithymia*, *thymos*, or *logistikon*. In the condition of being pulled from one desire to the next, the person experiences multiple moments of desire formation, but is constantly frustrated in their ability to form hope. For it is difficult for us to maintain the belief that we are on a path to fulfilment, when we are being constantly diverted by new tantalising images, associated with different products and services advertised as the way to satisfaction. Augustine describes the satisfaction of having hope

²⁴⁴ Ward, pp. 53-54.

in divine things. In the *Confessions*, he quotes Isaiah 46:4: “Run, I will carry you, and I will see you through to the end, and there I will carry you”.²⁴⁵ He also says, in Sermon 359A, “by fixing our hope up above, we have set it like an anchor on firm ground, able to hold against any of the stormy waves of the world”.²⁴⁶ Augustine is concerned with justified hope, based in truth. But we might take from this that the experience of hope, if one believes one is on a path towards attaining the object, brings some security, we might say, satisfaction, though not as complete a satisfaction as having attained the object. The sense of continuous hope is to be contrasted with the feeling of being tossed about, which is the effect of multiple advertisements. This suggests that the root of the dissatisfaction which stretches across multiple never-pursued desires derives from the frustration of never being able to feel anchored to some over time. The satisfaction of ongoing hope is what we miss when we are constantly diverted and frustrated by advertisements.

Advertisements, however, usually do not have the effect of completely removing hope. If we entirely lacked hope, believing it was truly impossible to attain the objects of love, we would completely despair and lack desire: this would be love in the form of sadness. Ward expands on this point in his discussion of Las Vegas. In the course of his argument, he analyses the film *Leaving Las Vegas*, the characters in which represent “the bankruptcy of urban desire”. One of the main characters, Ben, is fired from his job as a script writer, and over the course of the film, loses all hope, reaching “the stage beyond the illusions of satisfaction”. Throughout the film, the characters purchase clothes and presents for each other, but in their despair “the consumption is narcissistic, valueless (material objects – particularly clothes – mean nothing to either of them)”.²⁴⁷ The loss of all hope is a more intense kind of dissatisfaction, one which, in turn, hinders our ability to

²⁴⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 110.

²⁴⁶ Augustine, *Sermons (341-400)*, p. 209.

²⁴⁷ Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 64.

form even a desire. The characters in this film are so despairing they are not moved in any way by the seductions around them; their purchases are without any hope or desire. In contrast, the more common state, and the focus of this criticism, is not the collapse of desire, but endless desire, meaning the cycle of desire and disappointment caused by advertising. Rather than truly losing hope, therefore, more often we are kept at a low level of hope. Our hope never has a chance to develop further because of the pressure for our desires to be fickle.

We can illustrate this by considering how an encounter with a single advertisement might fit within a consumer's experience of multiple advertisements. Consider the poster advertisement for the Nike women's running shoe Bold Sister, which features a bright yellow shoe framed by an explosion on a black background, and the slogan 'Just Do It'.²⁴⁸ Imagine this advertisement successfully influencing a viewer, evoking in her a desire for the bright confidence embodied in the poster, and suggesting to her that buying the shoe might be a way to get closer to this vision. To apply the analysis developed in Chapter Three, the product is being positioned in a way which supports hope: the message is that buying the product is a practical way for the viewer to act on the desire for the ideal. Accordingly, let us imagine, the customer buys the shoes, but then, as tends to happen, the qualities which were originally attractive in the advertisement are not pursued in earnest. The yellow shoes are exciting for a while, but they lose their interest and perhaps some of their colour, and are left in the cupboard to be worn on the occasional run. A year later, perhaps on a particularly depressing day, this customer encounters another advertisement in a magazine which encourages her to buy the next, newest, model of shoe. The vision which appeals to her might be the same – perhaps the new advertisement presents a different embodiment of the same quality of confidence – or the appeal might change.

²⁴⁸ M. Wheeler, 'Nike Training "Bold Sister+" Running Shoe Posters', 2011, <https://www.behance.net/gallery/900056/Nike-Training-Bold-Sister-running-shoe-posters>, (accessed 10 April 2016).

Either way, the new product is different; she may be encouraged to buy a different kind of running shoe, or a pair of boots. She is not despairing; most likely, she remains open to feeling hope again that ‘confidence’ is an attainable goal. Yet she never feels she is truly on a path to that ideal. One seduction follows another, in “the dizzy pirouette of wants and commodities”.²⁴⁹ There is an ongoing dissatisfaction which comes from being tantalised, but never taken anywhere; there is no serious engagement which would allow hope to grow.

To explore this criticism further, we should look more closely at what goes on in the pattern of desire and disappointment at the heart of consumer culture, and what role exactly advertising plays in this dynamic. We can begin with a point of clarification. Miller, in the discussion above, claims that advertising prompts us to move along “an endlessly renewed series of objects to desire”, replacing the disappointment of one pursuit with the sweetness of a new desire.²⁵⁰ We should note, however, that the restless shifting of attention from one thing to another does not always involve a shift in the object of desire. As we can see in the Nike advertisement above, having given up on one product, it is possible to attach one’s hopes to a new product, yet motivated by a desire for the same object, such as the ideal of confidence. It seems entirely possible that someone might desire a second pair of shoes, or a different product entirely, inspired again by the thought that they might bring the quality of confidence into their lives. Equally, someone might be gripped by the presentation of a new object of desire, associated with a new product. To be more accurate, therefore, advertisements do not always pull us from one desire to the next. On some occasions the object of desire might remain constant, but a different product is suggested as an embodiment of, or means to, this end.

²⁴⁹ W. Leiss, *The Limits to Satisfaction: An Essay on the Problem of Needs and Commodities*, Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1976, quoted in Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 121.

²⁵⁰ Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 116.

What role does advertising play in the cycle of desire and disappointment? One argument put forward by Miller focuses on what he calls “misdirection”: when advertising raises our hopes via “the systematic association of other needs and desires with commodity objects”, with the result that commodities can never deliver what we are looking for. “As desires and values as diverse as belonging, success in sexual relationships and friendships, adventure, concern for the environment, and political and ethical commitments are attached to objects of consumption, the act of consumption becomes simultaneously overdetermined and undecidable”.²⁵¹ By “overdetermined” Miller means that “so much is at stake”, that is, that we desire a lot from one act of consumption. By “undecidable” he means that “we have fewer and fewer resources to guide us” in working out our true needs and how a product should relate to them. Advertisements promise us that the commodity will serve “the integration of our fragmented needs”, but “the inevitable failure of the commodity’s promised synthesis drives us back into the marketplace for endless, futile repetitions”.²⁵² We buy a product with initially high hopes for the benefits that will follow from this purchase, but the advertisement sets us up for disappointment, so Miller argues.²⁵³

On the one hand, this seems to capture at least part of the contribution advertising makes to the pattern of desire and disappointment. In raising our hopes around products, advertisements do appear to present material things as more than they really are. In the case of the Nike poster, despite the name of the shoe, ‘Bold Sister’, it is essentially a modest object, with no obvious power to change our inner life. It is no wonder we are disappointed when we look to the running shoe for inspiration to live a more confident

²⁵¹ Miller, p. 121.

²⁵² Miller, pp. 119-121.

²⁵³ In this thesis we use the word commodity to mean “something that is bought and sold”, following the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Merriam-Webster, ‘Commodity’, n.d., <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commodity>, (accessed 10 April 2016).

life. On the other hand, however, one might question whether it is the product itself that is limited, or our own capacities in relation to the product. For we often seem to make the mistake opposite to overvaluation: we underestimate the potential of the material things around us to communicate value. As Ward argues, with the right vision, we can find inspiration even in the humblest things. Even a simple material object, when we relate to it in the right way, can take on “a certain density of significance, a rich materiality that cannot be exhausted, cannot be possessed”. “[Physical] objects are not inert”, Ward writes, “they are caught up in the motion and communication of all things through the Spirit of Christ”.²⁵⁴ From this perspective, advertising may not always be at fault in raising our hopes. Certain kinds of high hopes may be warranted, given the depth of value which even humble objects can mediate. Miller does indeed identify a way in which advertising helps to cause disappointment. Yet this is not always a criticism of advertising, for it is not always an error to introduce us to products in a way which creates the potential for disappointment. There is indeed a lot at stake in acts of consumption, and framing a product in terms of value is necessary to show this. The problem, rather, lies in the task of developing a relationship with a product which does justice to the physical object, and edifies us in the right ways. It is in such relationships, based around the pursuit of a good, that we might develop worthwhile hope.

Is advertising to blame for hindering the development of such good relationships? To explore this further, we might start by investigating the idea of ‘consumption’, which is the term the authors above use to refer to how customers relate to commodities.²⁵⁵ Ward writes that consumers relate to products with “a craving which lusts”, a desire which “wants to put an end to the lack by subsuming that which is other”.²⁵⁶ As he writes, “this

²⁵⁴ Ward, *Cities of God*, pp. 172-173.

²⁵⁵ The concept of consumption is given a morally neutral definition in economics which cannot be used as a basis for criticising advertising, and so is not relevant to this discussion.

²⁵⁶ Ward, p. 172.

secular desire feeds; it preys on others for its own satisfaction”; “the object is turned into something which feeds and pleasures the person”.²⁵⁷ Ward sees this form of desire symbolised in books and films: “Killer viruses, parasitic creatures that adapt quickly and intelligently to new environments, vampires – are all key motifs in contemporary popular fiction and film expressing the subconscious horror of endless desire”.²⁵⁸ It is revealing that Ward uses the phrase ‘endless desire’ here with a different, but related, meaning from the sense of the phrase considered above. In the discussion above, Ward uses ‘endless desire’ to describe the condition of moving continually from one desire to the next. In the present context, Ward means ‘endless desire’ in the sense of a desire which involves no good end: like the desire of a vampire, the motive is simply to feed on any object available. These two senses of the phrase are related: we might consider them as describing two aspects of the operation of *epithymia*. In Plato’s description, *epithymia* is a part of the soul blind to the good, seeking simply to hoard or feed or have sex, and moving from one object to the next. Ward’s references to feeding and preying on others also suggest the metaphors of the beast evoked by Plato to characterise *epithymia*.²⁵⁹ We might summarise the idea of consumption, therefore, as understood by Ward, as a term referring to how people relate to products guided by *epithymia*.

This description seems to capture much about how we might treat a new purchase. Although it is odd to say that we ‘consume’ running shoes, for instance, it seems reasonable to say that we might relate to shoes with this kind of desire, taking pleasure simply in their acquisition. In such a case, given that we wanted nothing more from the shoes than to acquire them, it follows that we should forget about them after a month or two, as in the example of the Nike shoes above. Miller cites the extreme example of

²⁵⁷ Ward, p. 77; p. 172.

²⁵⁸ Ward, p. 77.

²⁵⁹ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 133.

Imelda Marcos, once the First Lady of the Philippines, who owned one thousand pairs of shoes. As Miller notes: “Her pleasure was in accumulating”.²⁶⁰ Compared to Ward’s argument, however, Miller’s work contains a broader view of the concept of ‘consumption’. Miller emphasises that we often relate to products as markers of status. As discussed in Chapter Three, we can understand status-oriented advertisements as making an appeal to *thymos*. This appeal is central to Miller’s account of consumption, which he discusses in terms of “the relationship between consumption and social differentiation”. As he summarises, “the wealthy [engage] in the difficult work of ostentatious consumption to mark their difference from the middle and working classes”.²⁶¹ Luxury watches, for instance, are products which serve as “conspicuous displays of distinction”.²⁶² Although Miller’s discussion partly concerns the dynamics of *epithymia*, therefore, in comparison with Ward, Miller foregrounds the role of the desiring part of the soul which Plato labelled *thymos*. Noting these different emphases, we can summarise ‘consumption’, as understood by Ward and Miller, as a term for the relationship of the consumer to the commodity guided by *epithymia* and *thymos*.

Viewing consumption in this way, it is clear how it underpins the cycle of desire and disappointment. For *epithymia* and *thymos* both tend to promote short relationships. As described by Plato, *epithymia* has only a crude conception of its object: once something has been acquired or eaten or used as a sexual stimulant, this desiring part of the soul is satisfied. The satisfaction, however, is not lasting, for these lower appetites are “by nature insatiably covetous”.²⁶³ Hence one is driven on from one acquisition to the next. We should observe that, regarding *epithymia*, the cycle is not one of desire and disappointment. Rather, having grasped its object, this part of the soul is satisfied, but the

²⁶⁰ Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 127.

²⁶¹ Miller, pp. 148-153.

²⁶² Miller, p. 120.

²⁶³ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 137.

satisfaction is not sustained. *Epithymia* is a desire without a good end, and leads to an endless series of desires. Advertising can certainly be criticised for strengthening *epithymia*. By framing commodities based on what will appeal to *epithymia* – as in the example of the Ken Bruce advertisement considered in the previous chapter – advertisements strengthen the habit of being guided by this part of the soul. Being guided by *thymos*, likewise, also tends to lead to short relationships with products. For in this case, we are prompted to move from one commodity to another, as we seek to attain the latest vision of status in accordance with changing fashion. Advertising, likewise, is clearly central here, as advertisements continually promote visions of social success associated with new products. Unlike *epithymia*, however, being led by *thymos* does lead to constant disappointment. For one is only motivated to relate to the product as long as it has the effect of asserting or enhancing one's social standing, and when these social norms change, the old object becomes a disappointment. Therefore, the underlying problem in consumer culture, that people are hindered from developing relationships with commodities that could support the hopeful pursuit of goods, has its roots in the dominance of *epithymia* and *thymos*, a situation which advertising often encourages. When these lower, desiring parts of the soul come to dominate in customers, advertising creates a population which is insatiable and often disappointed, and consequently, even more susceptible to the promises of advertising. This is the basis of a consumer culture marked by distraction, and ongoing dissatisfaction due to frustrated hope.

In the latter parts of Ward and Miller's critique, these authors contrast the way we consume now with the task of developing good relationships to material things. Their criticism is weakened at this point, however, by maintaining a simple opposition between consumption as it currently operates, and their ideal. They are partly able to maintain this distinction because their proposals remain abstract; they do not address how we might

form relationships with specific products. For example, Ward argues that a theological account of the world which focuses on the participation of Creation in God's goodness "safeguards bodies as such – stops them disappearing. It does this by safeguarding the significance of materiality; viewing the material as suspended within a divine economy of love".²⁶⁴ Yet Ward does not say what it would be like, or whether he thinks it is possible, to appreciate the materiality in a pair of shoes, or a car, for instance. Miller, likewise, is an advocate in the abstract for better relationships to material things, observing that we are "fixated on consumption but not attached to things", and that "proper enjoyment is work that takes focus and time".²⁶⁵ Yet the latter part of Miller's work focuses on the reform of the Roman Catholic Church; he does not refer back to what a good attachment to a product might involve.

Earlier in his argument, Miller does in fact outline a relationship to a commodity which goes beyond status concerns or the acquisitive drive, even if it also involves these desires. Yet Miller positions this example as a straightforward criticism of consumer culture. "Consider how an attractive commodity such as a well-made watch appears", he writes. "Its case is carefully cast and machined from an impressive metal – stainless steel or titanium. The window on the front – its 'crystal' – is 'hardened mineral glass' or even a disk of synthetic sapphire ... The case is waterproof to five hundred feet. The mechanism is accurate to within one-tenth of a second per day". This watch, like many products, "provides compensations far beyond its most literal use".²⁶⁶

The well-made thing is a fetish of competence, reliability, stability and durability. When we wear and use such an item, we are reassured that we too are competent and capable. We are prepared to face not only daily life by extreme circumstances as well, where these exotic materials –

²⁶⁴ Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 117.

²⁶⁵ Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 127.

²⁶⁶ Miller, p. 120.

titanium eyeglass frames, hard-anodized cookware – will prove their mettle, as will we.²⁶⁷

Miller is describing this effect of the product ironically, for he will conclude in the following paragraph that commodities inevitably fail to bring into our lives the values with which they are associated via advertising. Nevertheless, while his description is exaggerated in parts, parts of it do not seem implausible. Having the watch may not by itself prepare us to meet difficult situations, but it may be true that the watch plays a role in reassuring us. We can imagine someone owning this product who is aware of its competence, reliability, stability, and durability, who finds the watch helpful as a symbol and reminder of these qualities. This relationship to the watch, or at least this aspect of a relationship, is not guided by the desire for status. Nor is it a relationship guided by Ward's "craving which lusts".²⁶⁸ To the extent that this person relates to the watch seeking whatever the good qualities it may embody, they are being guided by *logistikon*. In this instance, the watch is not discarded and forgotten. It accompanies and helps the owner.

Miller's argument seems to prevent him acknowledging the worth, or even the potential as a starting point, of such deeper, longer relationships with products, even though he is arguing for this in the abstract. For as we have seen above, one basis on which he criticises advertising is precisely that it associates material products with values – the process he calls "misdirection". An advertisement for the watch which presented these qualities would presumably be a target of such criticism, as would the appeal to confidence in the advertisements for Nike shoes. In Miller's defence, one might argue that it is the specific values invoked by advertising that he sees as problematic. Yet included in his list of values which advertising might evoke, quoted above, alongside "friendships"

²⁶⁷ Miller, pp. 120-121.

²⁶⁸ Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 172.

and “concern for the environment”, is the general category of “ethical commitments”.²⁶⁹ This suggests, rather, a complete dismissal of the very act of associating products with any kind of ethical commitment, leaving us to wonder how desire should be directed, if referring to any value is misdirection. In the later part of his work, in the abstract, Miller argues that products can mediate values. In presenting his constructive vision, he argues that the basis for a sensibility opposing consumerism is what he calls the “sacramental imagination”, a way of looking at the world which relates material objects to values. “By hallowing physical things, it endows them with importance. As mediations of the divine, they matter. This sensibility is the opposite of the oft-heard dismissal that something or other is ‘just a symbol’”.²⁷⁰ Yet as we have seen, Miller’s entire criticism of the appeal of a luxury watch was based on a dismissal of the importance of its symbolic qualities – not the qualities in particular, but the very fact that a product might offer something beyond its most literal use. Miller wants to apply the sacramental imagination to hallow all physical things, but for some reason which is unclear – perhaps simply force of habit from critiquing consumerism – he seems uneasy about identifying values symbolised by particular commodities. His critique is not only internally contradictory on this point, it is unsound. For involving one’s desire for goodness in the formation of one’s relationships to material objects is the starting point for identifying and pursuing true goods, and integrating all our desires into a desire for God. Advertising as it currently operates does much to limit the possibility of forming such fruitful relationships, it is true. But its occasional encouragement of *logistikon* is a good starting point, not a criticism.

²⁶⁹ Miller, *Consuming Religion*, pp. 119-121.

²⁷⁰ Miller, p. 189.

Conclusion

This chapter examined three criticisms of advertising, with the aim of exploring the basis of the critiques, clarifying the points made against advertising, and criticising weaknesses in the arguments. First, we explored the criticism that advertisements do not tell the truth, concluding that this is often the case, in terms of obvious lying and exaggeration.

However, on the basis that advertisements are not providing just any information about the product, but information about the good which it might do in the life of the consumer, we argued that this criticism should be refocused on the two most important assessments of truth in an advertisement. First, whether the advertisement presents a true good; second, whether and to what extent there is a connection between that good and the effect of the product or service in the life of the consumer. Second, we examined the criticism that advertisements lead us to desire what we do not need. We defined a need as a lack in relation to a good, noting that, indeed, advertisements often do not create desire around true needs. Third, we looked at the role of advertising in creating a culture of consumption which provides little or no satisfaction, concluding that advertisements encourage habitual forms of desire which underpin such a culture. Overall, we have organised and integrated these various criticisms, describing them all in terms of the good and our distance from the good. This unity makes sense, for, given that the love of God is our most important concern, all important inquiries into advertising should be versions of the inquiry: Does this advertisement help lead us to love God's goodness? The three sections of this chapter have asked this question under different aspects, in terms of the truth of the good promoted by an advertisement, in terms of whether the advertisement meets needs, and finally, in terms of how we might love the good within ongoing relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ART OF ADVERTISING

This chapter begins the task of considering how advertising might be improved, a task which will be continued in the following chapter. This chapter establishes the framework for thinking about what ‘improvement’ would mean in relation to advertising. The discussion is organised around the concept of ‘art’, defined as a set of habits and techniques which aim to realise a good or goods, within the demands and limitations of a particular practice. Advertising as it is currently practiced is not a well-developed art, because it does not realise as many goods as it might; however, the current practice does involve elements of an art, which could be developed. We argue that the appropriate good to be sought by an art of advertising is the education of desire. We then examine this good, seeking to define what an art of advertising should aim to achieve in the soul of the viewer. Chapter Six will then consider how an advertisement might achieve this.

The first part of this chapter defines the concept of art which will be employed in the argument, drawing on Aquinas’ discussion of the virtue of *ars*. Aquinas is introduced at this point because his definition of *ars* is clear, useful for this argument, and conceived from a Christian perspective. As our purpose is not to trace past meanings of the word ‘art’, but to clarify and employ a useful concept in discussing an ethic of advertising, it seems reasonable to turn to a prominent Christian thinker for the sake of his clear definition of this concept. We apply this concept of art to the practice of advertising, discussing the good which an art of advertising should seek to achieve. We note that advertising, as discussed in Chapter Three, is centrally concerned with the creation of desire, and that therefore, the good which it might achieve lies in this area: the formation of good desire in the soul. As we are not attempting to describe a static state of good

desire, but an ongoing effort at development made by fallen creatures, an appropriate name for this good is ‘the education of desire’.²⁷¹

The remainder of this chapter is an investigation of this good, examining three interrelated aspects of the education of desire. As in previous chapters, we will draw primarily on Augustine in the *Confessions*, supplemented by Plato, interpreted according to Christian convictions. First, we discuss the orientation of desire towards God, examining what kind of desires for the happy life might act as helpful precursors to developing a desire for God. We also discuss the formation of a concept of God, and the role of meditative experience. Second, we examine the integration of different desiring parts of the soul, considering how the desire for sex and the desire for status might be aligned with the development of the desire for God. Finally, we examine the way we should desire in relation to created things, ordered by the desire for God. We investigate Augustine’s distinction between use and enjoyment, and how it applies to our neighbour and material things.

In this chapter and the next, as well as drawing on Augustine to investigate the reform of advertising, we will use the perspective of advertising to reflect on elements of Augustine’s work. We will apply his arguments and examples to new problems, exploring the value and practical implications of his insights, as well as noting points of ambiguity and questions which require further investigation. Because we will range across numerous aspects of Augustine and Plato’s work, from the mystical encounter with God, to the possibility of educating sexual desire, to the concepts of use and enjoyment, we cannot aim for a thorough investigation of each point. Rather, our goal is to draw on arguments

²⁷¹ The education of desire could be labelled as a single good or described as multiple interrelated goods, just like we might describe ‘rightly ordered love’ as a good and examine love for God and love for neighbour as goods. Similarly, considering the good of the art of carpentry (realising good form in wood) ‘good form’ involves many elements; one might discuss order, grace, symmetry, etcetera, as good qualities, considered by themselves. Thus, whether the education of desire is described as one good or as many related goods is a matter of what one is seeking to emphasise.

and examples from Augustine to develop an account of the good which an art of advertising should seek to achieve, starting a discussion by bringing classic work into contact with a contemporary problem. Future work on the ethics of advertising should seek to further understand this good, drawing more on Augustine and Plato's thought, and other relevant resources within and outside Christian ethics.

The definition of *ars*

Below we will describe the virtue of *ars* in the context of Aquinas' thought, with the purpose of clarifying this concept for use in the following parts of the thesis. We will show how the concept of *ars* relates to our concept of 'an art' in the sense of 'the art of conversation' or 'the art of carpentry'.

In Aquinas' conception in the *Summa Theologica*, *ars* is a virtue, that is "a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us".²⁷² *Ars* is a virtue of the practical intellect, by which Aquinas means a part of the intellect which reasons about action; differentiated from the speculative intellect, which reasons about what is true without regard to action.²⁷³ As Gregory Reichberg notes, there is a further distinction between the practical and speculative intellects which Aquinas does not mention in the *Summa*. In *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, Aquinas adds that the practical intellect operates in the order of contingent things, differentiated from the speculative intellect which concerns reasoning about necessary things.²⁷⁴ The practical intellect studies how to bring about good things

²⁷² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2nd edn., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 1920, I-II, 55.4, ob.1. <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/index.html>, (accessed 19 April 2016).

²⁷³ Aquinas, I-I, 79.11.

²⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, trans. R. McInerney, Indiana, St. Augustine's Press, 1999, Q. 12, <http://www.dhsprory.org/thomas/QDdeVirtutibus.htm>, (accessed 9 February 2016).

which might or might not be realised, depending on how we act.²⁷⁵ *Ars* is thus a virtue concerned with acting to bring about certain contingent things.

Aquinas defines *ars* as “right reason about things to be made”.²⁷⁶ He explains this by contrasting *ars* with *prudentia*, the other virtue of the practical intellect. *Prudentia* is defined as “right reason about things to be done”.²⁷⁷ This seems somewhat confusing, because making is doing. However, the fundamental distinction between *ars* and *prudentia* concerns the goods they seek. Reichberg writes that the word for ‘making’, *facere*, is used to designate any activity which is ordered to the good of the work being done.²⁷⁸ Right reasoning about things to be made means thinking about how to work to bring about some good in the contingent matter over which one has influence. Thus *ars* is right reason about actions like ‘sawing wood’ or ‘building’, which result, when *ars* is present, in a good house.²⁷⁹ Reasoning about making is contrasted with reasoning about ‘doing’ (*agere*), which means thinking about how to act in order to seek one’s own ultimate good in God – one’s own good rather than the good of some work.²⁸⁰ Therefore, *prudentia* is right reason about actions like ‘seeing’ and ‘willing’ – that is, right reasoning about our own will – which we need to do well, in order to come closer to God.²⁸¹ Having *ars* is compatible with being a mean-spirited person: one can know how to create images of true beauty in paint, but be a misguided person. In practice, ideally, *ars* and *prudentia* are active together: one sets about making a table with knowledge of how to make a good table, as well as a good will. But *ars*, considered by itself, does not have reference to the good of the person acting; it is concerned with achieving the good of the thing on which

²⁷⁵ G.M. Reichberg, ‘The Intellectual Virtues’, in S.J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2002, p. 138.

²⁷⁶ Aquinas, *Summa* I-II, 57.3.

²⁷⁷ Aquinas, I-II, 57.4.

²⁷⁸ Reichberg, ‘The Intellectual Virtues’, p. 138.

²⁷⁹ Aquinas, *Summa* I-II, 57.4.

²⁸⁰ Reichberg, ‘The Intellectual Virtues’, p. 138.

²⁸¹ Aquinas, *Summa* I-II, 57.4.

the person acts. As Aquinas writes: “The craftsman needs *ars*, not that he may live well, but that he may produce a good work, and have it in good keeping; whereas *prudentia* is necessary to man, that he may lead a good life”.²⁸²

To summarise, therefore, *ars* is an intellectual virtue; it is a body of ‘right reason’, or correct thinking about how to pursue the good in some contingent matter other than the good of the person acting. The nature of that thinking will differ according to the application of *ars* to a particular contingent matter: we might be seeking the good of a house as a carpenter, or the good of the body as a doctor. Thus, one person’s practical reason might be educated in a number of different arts. ‘Liberal’ arts, as Aquinas writes, are those in which the results of the work done concern changes in another soul, such as rhetoric in speeches or conversation; the results of the ‘servile’ arts are effects produced in the body, such as in medicine.²⁸³ Other arts may include elements of both. In addition to medicine Aquinas mentions the arts of seamanship and warfare, for example.²⁸⁴

When we refer to ‘an art’ such as the art of carpentry, we are referring to a particular body of reasoning (*ars*) about how to produce a good, in this case, the practice of cutting and joining of wood, by ‘artifice’.²⁸⁵ When an art is successfully enacted, this means that a set of habits and techniques – which might exist within a particular art studio or business, for example, or within an industry as a whole – are being governed by right reasoning about the goods to be pursued via this work. The particular way in which an art is enacted will depend on the limitations and possibilities of the circumstances. An art, such as the art of advertising, therefore, considered not simply as a virtue of a person’s mind, but as a practice governed by *ars*, refers to a set of habits and techniques – which

²⁸² Aquinas, I-II, 57.5, ad. 1.

²⁸³ Aquinas, I-II, 57.3, ad. 3.

²⁸⁴ Aquinas, I-II, 57.4, ob. 3.

²⁸⁵ Thus in Aquinas, I-II, 57.3, ad. 1, *aliquis habens artem* is translated as “someone who has an art”.

we might call the ‘artifice’ – constrained by limitations and demands pertaining to this area of work in existing circumstances, nevertheless organised to bring about some good.

Ars applied to advertising

The purpose of defining *ars* was to use it to organise our thinking about how advertising could be improved. If we use the word ‘practice’ as a general term for any organised activity, we can say that advertising as it currently operates is a practice but not an art, or at least not a well-developed art. For a practice is an art to the extent that it is organised to realise some good. Advertising as it is now may sometimes realise some goods, by occasionally directing our desire towards a good ideal. What we will argue, however, is that advertising has the potential to become more of an art.

To consider how *ars* might be applied to advertising, we can focus on the case of a single practitioner. If an advertiser were seeking to develop the virtue of *ars* in relation to her work, what would she be seeking? Based on the discussion above, we can answer that she would be seeking to develop a body of right reason about how to pursue the good via her work. The central part of this task, which should come first, is determining what good she is attempting to realise. The good being sought is the central feature of an art: it is the rationale for seeking to develop an art out of existing practices, and the organising purpose of its activities. One’s conception of the good at stake determines how one refines the techniques and habits which make up one’s work.

Yet how does one determine the good of an art? If the good or set of goods is the central feature, from which the formation of the rest of the art takes its cue, where does one look to form a conception of the good relevant to this art? On first consideration, it might seem that because the techniques of the art follow from the good being sought, one could not look to existing techniques for guidance as to what this good should be.

Nevertheless, even though in a fully developed art, the techniques follow logically from the good, in practice, a body of techniques is developed before any work is governed by the virtue of *ars*. The practitioners of early techniques probably do not lack their own idea of the goods they are seeking; it is just that their conception may be misguided, or vague, or they may be considering lesser goods and missing greater ones. The people who first worked with wood, presumably, had some idea of the results they were aiming for, which in their eyes was good. Yet the art of carpentry probably develops after the initial practical efforts, at a later point when people reflect on the practice, engage with inspiring examples, and seek and attain right reason about making good form in wood.

In determining the good of an art, therefore, it seems reasonable to take cues from elements of the existing practice which is not yet an art. One might take cues both from the existing techniques, and from the matter over which these techniques have influence – even though both of these areas might be reconsidered in the light of the good which one investigates.²⁸⁶ Let us take the example of carpentry, and imagine how a Christian ethicist would seek to turn this into an art. One begins with a general idea of what the activity is about: making things out of wood. One has in mind the material over which the practice has influence, and some knowledge of how that influence is brought to bear. Then, one aims to identify what goods are at stake in this activity, drawing on the resources of Christian ethics.²⁸⁷ In the case of carpentry, two important goods seem closely connected with this work: creating beauty in wood, and making products that are useful for a good life.²⁸⁸ There follows an investigation into good form in wood. The results of this

²⁸⁶ For example, in considering the art of friendship, one might conceive of the goods involved in a way which narrows the range of relevant relationships (friendship might be a rarer kind of relationship than one originally thought) and which changes one's understanding of the habits and techniques involved (one might develop a different understanding of the habits of conversation, for example).

²⁸⁷ A good might be 'at stake' if it is in danger of being lost via this activity and needs protecting, as in the lives of non-combatants during war, or if there is a potential to realise it, as in the goods which might be realised via conversation within friendships.

²⁸⁸ There are other goods at stake, for example the good of the soul of the carpenter. Aquinas, however, classes the good of the person who is acting as the concern of *prudentia*.

investigation then shape one's definition of the activity. One no longer understands carpentry simply as 'making things out of wood' but as 'making useful and beautiful forms out of wood'. With a better understanding of the good one is attempting to realise, one can refine the techniques of the art. This pattern of inquiry seems to hold, also, when considering an art of friendship. The starting point is a general description of the activity: people having relationships. From here one, again, seeks to identify the most important goods at stake in this activity. The results of this inquiry reshape one's initial description: friendship is the effort to help one's neighbour to love God. With this conception of good in mind, one can turn to considering the relevant habits, such as how one has conversations. In both cases, pursuing the activity and reflecting on particular examples will lead one to discover more about the good one is pursuing.

We can now apply this pattern of inquiry to advertising. We should begin by looking at the elements of the existing practice, which has been our task in previous chapters of this thesis. Based on these discussions, we have a general description of what the current activity of advertising is about: creating desire in potential customers. That is, the contingent matter over which the current practice has influence is the souls of other people, specifically their capacity for desire. In Chapter Three, we analysed the techniques currently in use in advertising to create desire. We can now ask: What are the most important goods at stake in this activity? We could identify many goods: in Chapter Four, Offer proposed 'providing information', or making "townscapes, newspapers, magazines and television more lively and colourful that they might otherwise be".²⁸⁹ One might set out to build an art with these goods in mind. Examining this question from the perspective of Christian ethics, however, we can see that there is an even more important good at stake: desiring well, which is a central part of living a Christian life. Therefore, in

²⁸⁹ Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence*, p. 103.

applying *ars* to advertising, our starting point should be to investigate ‘good desire’ and how it may be brought about in the soul.

The description ‘good desire’, however, is misleading for two reasons. The first is that it implies a straightforwardly good state, whereas in the fallen conditions of human life, we cannot have a perfect state of love in the soul. Indeed, even the best form of desire, the desire for God, involves a lack of contact with God (for it is love under the aspect of seeking its object) and is a consequence of our fall from a state of communion with God. The second, related, problem is that the improvement of desire happens in degrees, or bursts of development. Even St. Paul’s epiphany, which reoriented his desire, was not an end point but a new beginning on a better footing. It may be useful to refer to good or ordered desire, to contrast the ideal state – loving God with all one’s heart and mind and soul – with sinful desire. However, the good we are considering for an art of advertising is not a single state, but encompasses different stages of the development of desire. An art concerned with desire would do good by helping someone to desire better, in some way, even though their love is still fallen. A better name for this good, therefore, is ‘the education of desire’. An art of advertising would realise its good by helping at any point in a process, or journey, of education.

It is clear that this good would not be unique to an art of advertising, in the way that making good form in wood is unique to the art of carpentry. Indeed, the education of desire – the journey of the soul in coming to desire God – is the central story of a Christian life, and one might say, of all Creation. As Henry Chadwick writes in his introduction to the *Confessions*, “the story of the soul wandering away from God and then in torment and tears finding its way home through conversion is also the story of the entire created order”.²⁹⁰ The proper good of an art of advertising, therefore, is not unique to advertising.

²⁹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. xxiv.

Other practices, for instance, the Eucharist and prayer, also involve the education of desire. The point made here, rather, is that the power of the existing practice of advertising, the power to shape desire, has as its proper good a central concern of Christianity. We are arguing that, were advertising to be organised as an ethical practice, it would serve a central good for human beings as articulated by Christianity.

Examining the education of desire thoroughly is beyond the scope of this work. What would serve our purpose, though, is to develop an account of the good with enough observation and analysis in it to inform a discussion, in the following chapter, of how an advertisement might serve this good. We can order our discussion along Christian lines, for any Christian account of the education of desire should be organised according to the commandments to love, which are the basis for understanding what it is to desire well. Our discussion will investigate three interrelated aspects of the education of desire, each of which relates to the commandments to love. First, we look at the orientation of our desire towards God, which follows from the first part of the first commandment, that God should be the object of our love. Second, we address the integration of the desiring parts of the soul, which follows from the latter part of the first commandment: that our love for God should be with all our heart and soul and mind. Third, we discuss the desire for what God has made. Although this final section focuses on our relation to material objects rather than our love for our neighbour, the discussion is related to the second commandment, in that it concerns how we should love created things, given our love for God.

The desire for God

This section will discuss one aspect of the education of desire: the orientation of desire towards God. The purpose of doing so, as stated, is to clarify what an art of advertising should aim to achieve, or help to bring about, in the soul. This section will investigate

what changes occur in the soul in the development of a desire for God, starting from the earliest point. As Augustine emphasises, in such an inquiry into changes in the inner life, we are limited by how little we can know of the movements of the soul.²⁹¹ We should therefore note a limitation to our discussion: although we will aim to describe ways of prompting our neighbour towards desiring God, the operation of grace is ultimately mysterious, and such a desire may also begin from the darkest point, after someone has run far from God. Understanding that our effectiveness and knowledge is always limited, then, our approach below will be to draw on Augustine's analysis of his own experience, with the aim of extracting some general points concerning this aspect of the education of desire. We will discuss, first, what kinds of desires may be useful precursors to developing the desire for God, before examining how Augustine's concept of God was educated, and finally looking at the role of meditative experience in orienting desire towards God.

The starting point for discussing the orientation of our desire towards God should be that we are created in His image. As Augustine writes in *On the Trinity*, the Fall has not destroyed the image of God within us: "whether this image be so effaced as almost to amount to nothing, or whether it be obscured and disfigured, or whether it be clear and beautiful – it always exists".²⁹² Augustine observes how knowledge can lie in our minds obscurely. "In the hidden recesses of the mind there is a certain knowledge of certain things, and ... when we think of them, they then proceed, as it were, to the centre and are placed, so to speak, more clearly in the sight of the mind".²⁹³ While our mind has

²⁹¹ "For there is in me a lamentable darkness in which my latent possibilities are hidden from myself, so that my mind, questioning itself upon its own powers, feels that it cannot rightly trust its own report". Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, p. 178. See also Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 182.

²⁹² Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 142.

²⁹³ Augustine, p. 146.

“completely forgotten” the happiness which existed before the fall, God is not lost from our memory, for God is whole everywhere and lives also in our memory.²⁹⁴

Yet the mind remembers the Lord its God ... He is whole everywhere, and on that account [the mind] loves, moves, and has its being in Him [cf. Acts 17:28], and, therefore, it can remember Him ... It is reminded that it should turn to the Lord as to that light by which it was touched in some way, even when it was turned away from Him.²⁹⁵

Concerning those who turn from God to “pursue another joy and not the true one”, Augustine writes, “nevertheless, their will remains drawn towards some image of the true joy”.²⁹⁶ This is not a conscious desire for God, which is what the education of desire should seek to cultivate. Yet it exists in us because our being is good and goodness is love, therefore we are always drawn, even in an obscure way, towards our true joy in Him. This is the starting point for understanding what it means to orient our desire towards God, and what advertising should aim to help bring about. We are seeking to bring the desire for God from obscurity to consciousness, to exist “more clearly in the sight of the mind”.²⁹⁷

To explore the development of the desire for God, we can begin with the desire for the happy life. The desire for God is more or less central or obscure in different people, but everyone is guided by the desire for a happy life, as Augustine argues in Book Ten of the *Confessions*.

What all agree upon is that they want to be happy, just as they would concur, if asked, that they want to experience joy and would call that joy the happy life. Even if one person pursues it in one way, and another in a different way, yet there is one goal which all are striving to attain, namely to experience joy.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Augustine writes that our memory can concern present things as well as past things, in the sense of forgetting and remembering one’s self. “That is not unreasonably to be called memory, by which the mind is present to itself”. Augustine, p. 153.

²⁹⁵ Augustine, p. 159

²⁹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 199.

²⁹⁷ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 146.

²⁹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 198.

Augustine gives the example of two people, one of whom wants to be a soldier and the other who does not. Both people would call the object of their desire ‘the happy life’, but this object is different for each of them, formed out of different memories of joy. This point concurs with our analysis of the creation of desire in Chapter Three: joy is involved for every person, at the moment of encountering the object. Then when we realise the lack, the love changes from enjoyment to desire. Given the work of different people’s imaginations in conceiving the object, different people’s moments of joy lead to the creation of various desires. Therefore, although we may say that everyone strives to attain joy and the happy life, what people take joy in and the desires which follow lead them in different directions. The only true idea of the happy life, as Augustine writes, is to seek to enjoy God: “That is the authentic happy life, to set one’s joy on you, grounded in you and caused by you. That is the real thing, and there is no other”.²⁹⁹ Considered in these terms, the ideal of the education of desire is to have one’s actual concept of the happy life align with the true happy life.

From the perspective of developing an art of advertising, it would seem important to investigate the ethical status of different desires for the happy life which are not desires for God. For, as we have seen, much advertising is about focusing our minds on different alluring ideals of the happy life, from the Patek Philippe advertisement which depicts the supposed security of high status, to the VW advertisement portraying a certain kind of family life, to the American Apparel advertisements which seek to seduce us into a fantasy of sex. No mainstream advertising, currently, sets out explicitly to orient our desire to God. But Augustine’s discussion of the happy life raises a question: Might there be some use, as part of the education of desire, in promoting some ideas of the happy life over

²⁹⁹ Augustine, p. 198.

others? That is, might an art of advertising lead us to some views of the happy life which are better precursors to developing the desire for God than others?

To investigate this, we should first clarify the concept of ‘the happy life’. Although people have different ideas of what constitutes the happy life, there must be some content to the concept itself, which is what enables one to say that two people with different objects of desire both desire the happy life. It seems reasonable to say that ‘the happy life’ refers to the central, organising desires in that person’s mind: altogether, that person’s idea of what would make them fully happy. One’s conception of the happy life is an object of desire made up of all the objects of the central desires one has for one’s life; imagined together, they make up one’s idea of fulfilment. The desires are ‘central’ in the sense that one prioritises them and takes their pursuit seriously. This would explain why Augustine chooses the example of vocations to illustrate desires for the happy life, rather than a more peripheral desire, such as a preference for a certain kind of food. In choosing a vocation – to be a soldier or not – one calls to mind the most important things which would fulfil one’s life as a whole. If someone had a mild preference for a certain kind of cutlery, but did not care much either way, it would be odd to call this desire part of their vision for a happy life. On the other hand, someone might be obsessed with cutlery, and believe that buying the right sort was central to the possibility of their being happy. To take another example, one person’s vision of a happy life might involve a flourishing garden; this person would probably not want to be a soldier because the military life would not give them enough time to build this garden. The garden is an object which is central to their concept of a happy life. On the other hand, another person might also have a desire to build a flourishing garden, but in this case it should not be considered part of their desire for the happy life, for they do choose to be a soldier, and the fact that this rules out

building a nice garden does not bother them much.³⁰⁰ Therefore, to refer to someone's desire for the happy life is to refer to the central, guiding desires in their life, which together make up their idea of what would make them fulfilled.

Given that the enjoyment of God is the only true happy life, it would seem that any desires for the happy life which are not for God are idolatrous. Eric Gregory, in his discussion of the order of love in Augustine, makes this point. As he writes, "Augustine's self (and his needs) finds its rest in God". The error is to seek rest – to imagine that we will be fulfilled and find the end of our journey – in another object, apart from God. Thus Gregory describes disordered, idolatrous love as "a love that prematurely rests in the neighbour, in institutional purity, or the anxieties of our own moral confidence". "It is this premature rest that denies the ceaseless dynamic of loving which is fundamental to Augustine's vision of God".³⁰¹ Sarah Stewart-Kroeker makes a similar point in her analysis of the motif of pilgrimage in Augustine's work: "Delighting in transient things in praise of God is good and right, but becoming stuck to them is to seek permanence and rest in the wrong place". She defines idolatry as "locating the source of our happiness in things and people rather than in God".³⁰² Her discussion draws on the following quote from the *Confessions*:

Rest in [God] and you will be at rest. Where are you going to along rough paths? What is the goal of your journey? The good which you love is from him. But it is only as related to him that it is good and sweet. Otherwise it will justly become bitter; for all that comes from him is unjustly loved if he has been abandoned. With what end in view do you again and again walk along difficult and laborious paths? There is no rest where you seek for it.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ A third possibility is that someone has an ambitious but concept of a happy life, which includes spending a lot of time looking after a nice garden as well as being a full-time soldier.

³⁰¹ E. Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 329; Gregory, p. 362.

³⁰² S. Stewart-Kroeker, 'Resisting Idolatry and Instrumentalisation in Loving the Neighbour: The Significance of the Pilgrimage Motif for Augustine's Usus-Fruitio Distinction', *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 2014, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 219-220.

³⁰³ Stewart-Kroeker, p. 220.

On this basis, all the advertisements discussed in this thesis promote idolatrous visions of the happy life, because they all suggest resting in places other than God. Yet to declare everything idolatrous straightforwardly unethical, and therefore not to be pursued, would limit ethical advertising only to those advertisements which explicitly direct our desire towards God and the love of created things ‘in God’.³⁰⁴ It may indeed be possible to create influential, overtly religious advertisements, as we will explore in the following chapter. However, to let the discussion rest here would be to ignore an important point. That is, in exploring the education of desire, we are not solely interested in the state of desire for God. The goal is to lead people to such a state. Certainly, *resting* in a state in which anything other than God is the centre of one’s conception of the happy life is sinful, and to be avoided. However, neither of the above authors address the question of whether an intermediate state might be helpful, as part of a process of education, even if it is idolatrous. Gregory and Stewart-Kroeker, like Augustine, are writing from the point of view of what states are bad and what states are good, considered in terms of the state of desire we should aim to maintain in this life. Augustine does describe steps he took himself before coming to a desire for God. But he does not place these examples in the context of a discussion about how one might educate the desire of others. In the discussion below we will attempt to do so, to draw some conclusions relevant to building an art of advertising.

The way Augustine relates to his past, before he became a Christian, suggests a way of differentiating between desires not oriented to God, which might nevertheless be closer to or further from God. In discussing the nature of memory in the *Confessions*, he reveals that he sees markedly different value in different joys he experienced in his past. As he writes, recalling “joy of long ago”:

³⁰⁴ We will discuss the meaning of loving something ‘in God’ in the final section of this chapter.

I experienced [joy] in my mind when I was glad, and the knowledge of it stuck in my memory, so that I could remind myself of it, sometimes with scorn, sometimes with desire, according to the varied character of the things which I remember myself delighting in. For I derived a sprinkling of pleasure even from discreditable acts which I now recall with hatred and execration. But sometimes my delight was in good and honourable things, which I recall with longing....³⁰⁵

Augustine provides an example of the difference between discreditable and honourable delights earlier in the work, as part of a discussion recalling his adolescence. He describes his youthful conception of the happy life: “The single desire that dominated my search for delight was simply to love and to be loved”. Yet although he describes it as a single desire, he in fact differentiates better and worse forms of love for others, which fought within him. The better pursuit is “the brightly lit pathway of friendship”. The more wretched condition was to be ruled by sexual desire. “The bubbling impulses of puberty befogged and obscured my heart so that it could not see the difference between love’s serenity and lust’s darkness. Confusion of the two things boiled within me”.³⁰⁶ What is interesting about this example is that, although Augustine was not a Christian at that point, he nevertheless notes the value of his desire for friendship. Presumably, some of those friendships at that time were the “good and honourable things” to which he refers. Thus, even though none of his conscious desire was oriented to God, he makes a strong distinction between a better form of desire, which he pursued to some degree, and a worse form, which came to dominate his idea of the happy life. Although he is travelling the wrong way along it, Augustine describes a path of the education of desire, which has points on it closer to God and further from Him, even in the stage, as he was, before being converted to Christ. “I travelled much further away from you into more and more sterile things productive of unhappiness”.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 198.

³⁰⁶ Augustine, p. 24.

³⁰⁷ Augustine, pp. 24-25.

The concept of idolatry does not capture this distinction which Augustine makes. Viewing an ethical problem from the perspective of idolatry may lead us to forget that there are still ethical distinctions to be made between desires held by non-Christians. It would have been more admirable for Augustine to have pursued friendship, rather than lust, as an adolescent, although of course, as his mother Monica sought to bring about, the most admirable thing would have been for him to turn to Christ. Yet in this discussion we are not seeking to judge states of desire considered in isolation from a person's development, but rather as part of the education of their desire. To investigate early points in the education of desire, prior to any conscious love of God, therefore, we need to look beyond the concept of idolatry, to examine whether any pre-conversion ways of imagining the happy life prepare one for or lead one towards a desire for God.

To examine why an idea of the happy life might be a better or worse precursor to developing the desire for God, we need to look behind the terms 'closer to' and 'further from' God. Why exactly does one state of desire for the happy life serve the end of coming to desire God better than others? We can identify two possible reasons. The first is that the desire is more likely to set them on a path which leads to the desire for God. An example in Augustine's life is the shift in his idea of happiness which occurred when he was nineteen, after having read Cicero's *Hortensius*. He describes the effect of this book as follows: "The book changed my feelings. It altered my prayers, Lord, to be towards you yourself. It gave me different values and priorities. Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart".³⁰⁸ Strikingly, although he was not a Christian at that point, Augustine nevertheless looks back on this experience as having turned his prayers towards the Lord. Incidentally, then, we might argue that this non-Christian desire for "the immortality of wisdom"

³⁰⁸ Augustine, p. 39.

actually falls outside Stewart-Kroecker's definition of idolatry: Augustine is not locating the source of his happiness in things or people; he is not resting in any transitory thing but is longing for eternal wisdom, even though he does not yet understand this in Christian terms. However, we are interested in whether this desire would help to put one on a path towards developing the desire for God. Given that such a desire would rule out seeking happiness in any temporal thing, it would seem to be a good start. The desire rules out many dead-ends into which worldly desire would certainly lead us: "to burn with a zeal for wisdom" might lead us to God; the same cannot be said for burning with a zeal for money or sex.³⁰⁹ Although of course a lot could go wrong – Augustine's search for eternal wisdom led him first to the Manichees – one might be led to read further, perhaps encountering the wisdom literature in the Bible, or one might be prompted to go to church. With this desire, one has a chance; in the case of the worldly ruling desires, things are guaranteed to go wrong as long as they remain our ultimate guides. This example suggests what an art of advertising should aim to achieve in the soul. We can conclude that, were an advertisement able to encourage someone to imagine wisdom, even in a rough and pagan way, and to seek wisdom as the way to a happy life, this would be a good first step, because such a ruling desire is more likely to lead to God than others.

The second reason why an idea of the happy life might be a good precursor to the desire for God, is if the pursuit of this end would give one experience which would enrich one's later appreciation or understanding of God's goodness.³¹⁰ Consider, for example, a pursuit of the happy life oriented towards interior, spiritual goods. As Augustine writes, "they are not easy to be found who love interior goods, that is, which belong to the inward

³⁰⁹ Augustine, p. 104.

³¹⁰ This argument would also support the pursuit of wisdom as a comparatively worthwhile desire, however, this reason highlights a different aspect of the desire.

man, which alone should be loved”.³¹¹ We can note an instance of this in Augustine’s life: his first meeting with Ambrose the bishop. He recalls being moved by Ambrose’s virtue:

That ‘man of God’ (2 Kgs. 1:9) received me like a father and expressed pleasure at my coming with a kindness most fitting in a bishop. I began to like him, at first indeed not as a teacher of the truth, for I had absolutely no confidence in your Church, but as a human being who was kind to me.³¹²

Augustine, in this moment, enjoys God’s goodness but does not recognise it as such. At the time, the love of inner goods was not dominant in his soul (he sought “honours, money, marriage”).³¹³ For the sake of argument, however, what if we imagined that Augustine’s encounter with Ambrose contained a moment of joy which inspired in him a desire for the kindness shown by the bishop. If Augustine were to think and feel, having met Ambrose, that the happy life is found in the love which Ambrose showed him – not in Ambrose himself but in the love which he embodied in that encounter – his idea of a happy life would be quite closely focused on Christian love, even though he would not be consciously desiring Christ. The pursuit of this kind of love, which would involve paying more attention to the quality and appreciating it in others, would be an experience which would enrich a later appreciation of God, as one came to see the true meaning of one’s past encounters with this virtue. If the person came to love God, they would not completely reject the desire in the same way that Augustine recalls “discreditable” joys with “hatred and execration”.³¹⁴ Rather, they would be gaining a better appreciation of the origin and true nature of this quality. The desire is taken up into, and clarified in, a subsequent love of God, and the past loves gives a richer picture later of God’s goodness. Furthermore, such a desire would help with a later understanding of God’s love. Even if

³¹¹ Augustine, ‘Exposition on Psalm Four’, trans. J.E. Tweed, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 8, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1888, sec. 8, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf108>, (accessed 20 April 2016).

³¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 88.

³¹³ Augustine, p. 97.

³¹⁴ Augustine, p. 198.

one did not love internal goods in the right order, valuing wittiness above charity, for instance, with this orientation would learn what it is like to focus on qualities of character and conflicts in the inner life, in oneself and others, and thus practice paying attention to the spiritual life. If an advertisement could orient someone's central desires towards qualities of the spirit, what would be needed next is to educate their conception of the object. This person will already have been dwelling on qualities of the spirit, so they would have experiences which would flesh out the lesson that all goods are spiritual and unified, with charity as the highest; that this unity is God; that God is forgiving, and so on into other lessons of Scripture, as we will discuss below.

One final point should be made before we conclude this discussion of the happy life. That is, that the art of advertising is, ideally, not the only art in a society which serves the education of desire. Other arts also help to lead us to and cultivate our love for God; we have mentioned prayer and the Eucharist, but we might add the arts of film and painting, and Christian education in schools and universities, for example. Even if an art of advertising could not by itself lead people to God, therefore, it could nevertheless play a valuable role in preparing souls to develop the desire. Our aim is to describe, and eventually, to construct, an art of advertising which serves the good of the education of desire as best it can. If advertising could influence people's souls in the ways described above, it would not save them, but it would put them in a better position, which might work in conjunction with other Christian means to lead them to the love of God. Within the purpose of this thesis, therefore, the important question is not whether visions of the happy life which lack Christ are idolatrous or not. Even if we assume that they all are, the important question is not whether they are deficient but how we can be educated out of them, and therefore, which kind of comparatively uneducated desires for the happy life might best help this happen.

The beginning of Augustine's conscious desire for God, in his adult life, followed an intellectual challenge to his criticisms of Christianity.³¹⁵ As he writes of his experience listening to the sermons of Ambrose, "first what he said began to seem defensible, and I did not now think it impudent to assert the Catholic faith, which I had thought defenceless against Manichee critics". He is persuaded by Ambrose's approach to reading the deeper messages of Scripture: "Above all, I heard first one, then another, then many difficult passages in the Old Testament scriptures figuratively interpreted, where I, by taking them literally, had found them to kill (2 Cor. 3:6)". Having spent some time under the influence of Ambrose's sermons and friendship, he then decides to become a catechumen in the Catholic Church, although not with any particular zeal: "I therefore decided for the time being to be a catechumen in the Catholic Church, which the precedent of my parents recommended to me, until some clear light should come by which I could direct my course".³¹⁶

From the point of view of developing an art of advertising, it would be useful to understand the development of Augustine's concept of God, because such an art would seek to bring this about in others. As we discussed in Chapter Two, for Augustine, the imagination is the site of our struggle to orient our desire towards God.³¹⁷ Above, we have discussed above some intermediate steps for improving our imagination with regards to the happy life. But what of a desire for God Himself? What does Augustine teach us about how we might hold God as an 'object' in our imagination?³¹⁸ After having given his "preference to the Catholic faith", Augustine refers to the concept of God he held onto through this period, the basic idea that God exists and that He cares for us: "I always

³¹⁵ We refer to his adult life because in his early years Augustine may have had a conscious desire for God under the influence of Monica.

³¹⁶ Augustine, pp. 88-89

³¹⁷ Djuth, 'Veiled and Unveiled Beauty', pp. 82-83.

³¹⁸ As we have been using the term 'object' in relation to a desire we are merely referring to the end at which a desire is directed; we are not implying anything about that end.

retained belief both that you are and that you care for us, even if I did not know what to think about your substantial nature or what way would lead, or lead me back, to you”.³¹⁹

He writes of a mistaken concept of God which he later rejects. “I conceived your creation as a single vast mass differentiated by various types of bodies”.³²⁰ God surrounds this universe, infinitely larger than it in physical terms.

I visualised you, Lord, surrounding it on all sides and permeating it, but infinite in all directions, as if there were a sea which had within it a large but finite sponge; and the sponge was in every part filled from the immense sea. This is the kind of way in which I supposed your finite creation to be full of you, infinite as you are.³²¹

The problem was that he was looking to physical things to find God. “I was seeking for you outside myself, and I failed to find ‘the God of my heart’ (Ps. 72:26)”.³²² In addition to Ambrose’s sermons, he learns from the books of the Platonists, Plotinus and Porphyry, that God is spirit.³²³ “There I read, not of course in these words, but with entirely the same sense ... that the Word, God, is ‘born not of the flesh, nor of blood, not of the will of man nor of the will of the flesh, but of God’”. In these books he reads the lesson that “all things were made by Him”. He learns about our dissimilarity to God: “the soul of man, although it bears witness of the light, is ‘not that light’”. But that we may participate in God: “[souls] are renewed to be wise by participation in wisdom abiding in them”.³²⁴ As James J. O’Donnell summarises, in his discussion of Augustine’s concept of God, “the narrative Augustine gives in the *Confessions* of his discovery of his God” turns around three points: “God is good, God is spirit, God is just”.³²⁵

But to find those answers took Augustine a decade’s weary searching that only bore fruit after he came to Milan. Ambrose’s sermons, with

³¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 96.

³²⁰ Augustine, p. 115.

³²¹ Augustine, p. 115.

³²² Augustine, p. 90.

³²³ Augustine, p. 121, n. 14.

³²⁴ Augustine, pp. 121-122.

³²⁵ J.J. O’Donnell, ‘Augustine’s Idea of God’, *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 25, 1994, p. 27.

their emphasis on the Pauline distinction of letter and spirit as a means of interpreting the chasm between the Old and New Testament, rescued God's justice. The first encounter with the books of the Platonists, revealed to him a God who was not like the all-penetrating sea soaking into the sponge of material creation, but instead a spirit. The final stage in that revelation came on second look at the Platonists, when the doctrine of evil as a privation of good made itself understood to him, and he could see that all that was created was good, and thus that the creator himself was good.³²⁶

Augustine's struggles with the questions raised by Manicheism are less relevant today; for a participant in modern consumer culture, learning that evil is a privation is unlikely to lead to a breakthrough in orienting one's desire towards the Christian God. Yet Augustine is aware that the message of Scripture may lead people to God by less intellectual routes: "The Bible offered itself to all in very accessible words and the most humble style of diction".³²⁷ From Scripture he learns a fuller picture of God's nature and relation to the world than he learnt from the Platonists. Particularly, that God is forgiving – "at the right time he died for the impious' (Rom. 5:6)" – and that he speaks to those who are humble of heart – "he directs the meek in judgement and teaches the docile his ways (Ps. 24:9)".³²⁸ To draw closer to God one does not necessarily need to grasp doctrines which are intellectually difficult to comprehend, although that is part of the journey for some people; the difficulty lies in making oneself receptive and taking the messages to heart. Scripture tells us about God with a directness and simplicity which touches people who are "light of heart' (Ecclus. 19:4)".³²⁹ On the whole, this is good news for an art of advertising. There is often not much time to deliver a complicated message in an advertisement, and a strength of the practice lies in its ability to make a point emotionally significant.³³⁰ We

³²⁶ O'Donnell, p. 27.

³²⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 96.

³²⁸ Augustine, p. 122.

³²⁹ Augustine, p. 96.

³³⁰ Particularly in television and print form, advertising remains dependent on brief messages, although in other contemporary forms of advertising there is increasingly greater scope to deliver more involved content, as we will discuss in the following chapter.

have addressed, in the discussion above, a number of ways in which Augustine's concept of God was educated. In the following chapter we will apply this understanding to explore how an advertisement might deliver brief but influential points about the nature of God and His relation to us.

Although the Platonist books educated Augustine's concept of God, perhaps their more significant effect was to strengthen his hope of a way to God. Previously, Augustine had been close to despair: "I had no confidence, and had lost hope that the truth could be found".³³¹ This changes in reading the books of the Platonists, which direct him away from external things and prompt him to introspection.

By the Platonic books I was admonished to return into myself. With you as my guide I entered into my innermost citadel, and was given power to do so because you had become my helper (Ps. 29:11). I entered and with my soul's eye, such as it was, saw above that same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind – not the light of every day, obvious to anyone, nor a larger version of the same kind which would, as it were, have given out a much brighter light and filled everything with its magnitude. It was not that light, but a different thing, utterly different from all our kinds of light. It transcended my mind, not in the way that oil floats on water, nor as heaven is above earth. It was superior because it made me, and I was inferior because I was made by it.³³²

We know that this meditative experience shaped Augustine's desire, because, he writes that the experience inspired love in him: "you gave a shock to the weakness of my sight by the strong radiance of your rays, and I trembled with love and awe".³³³ Yet this love only takes the form of enjoyment for a moment – "I was not stable in the enjoyment of my God" – before it ends and leaves him with just a memory, and a sense of lack. His love, in other words, now takes the form of desire. "My weakness reasserted itself, and I returned

³³¹ Augustine, p. 88.

³³² Augustine, p. 123.

³³³ Augustine, p. 123.

to my customary condition. I carried with me only a loving memory and a desire for that of which I had the aroma but which I had not yet the capacity to eat”.³³⁴

Such an intense, mystical experience is rare. However, it raises two interesting points from the perspective of considering an art of advertising. The first is that it shows the role of hope in developing a desire for God. As Augustine writes, he came to see that the Platonists “see what the goal is but not how to get there”, and that only Christ is “the way which leads to the home of bliss, not merely as an end to be perceived but as a realm to live in”.³³⁵ However, at the time, the Platonist books inspired him, in contrast to his previous despair, and eventually led him on to a greater desire for Christ. Although, again, it would be better to desire Christ first, the general lesson we can take from this is that the hope of a way can inspire one to continue the search, in a case when despair might stop one from seeking further at all. The second point this raises is the value of meditative experience as part of the education of desire. Prayer is the ideal kind of meditative experience to focus our desire on God. However, there may be other ways to conduct meditations which help bring our mind closer to God, in the case of someone who does not yet have the willingness to pray. We will take up this point in the final section of the following chapter when we discuss the idea of advertising via meditation.

The integration of desire

This section will discuss a second aspect of the education of desire: the aim of integration of all desiring parts of the soul into the desire for God. As in the previous section, we are seeking to determine what an art of advertising would aim to achieve. The previous section examined the transition from the obscure longing for God to a conscious desire;

³³⁴ Augustine, pp. 127-128.

³³⁵ Augustine, p. 130.

this section will discuss the idea of that desire spreading throughout the soul, ordering the other parts, so that the desire for God is from all our heart and soul and mind. Given that attaining this complete love is not possible for fallen creatures, we will be seeking, as above, to describe points along a path of good development. The search for integration is the answer to the problem of conflict within desire discussed in Chapter Two; the attempt to integrate all of one's nature into the desire for God is the attempt to overcome this conflict.

In the *Republic*, Plato presents an ideal picture of relations between parts of the soul, with the highest part guiding the operation of the others:

Each part of the soul will not only do its own work and be just when the whole soul, with no inward conflict, follows the guidance of the wisdom-loving part, but it also will enjoy the pleasures that are proper to it and the best and truest of which it is capable; whereas if either of the other two parts gains the upper hand, besides failing to find its own proper pleasure, it will force the others to pursue a false pleasure uncongenial to their nature.³³⁶

Like Plato, Augustine also hopes for an end to conflict within the soul. However, he presents a more vivid picture of the depth of conflict between desires and the difficulty of attempting to order oneself according to the love of God. Augustine sees conflict as a defining feature of life in the fallen world: "all these elements [of the universe] which have some mutual conflict of interest are congruous with the inferior part of the universe we call earth".³³⁷ As Peter Brown summarises this aspect of Augustine's thought: "Adam and Eve had originally enjoyed a harmonious unity of body and soul. Their bodies had followed the dictates of their wills with the same loving and familiar concord as they

³³⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 307.

³³⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 125.

themselves had followed the will of God ... such harmony no longer existed on any level”.³³⁸

Following his mystical encounter with God, described above, Augustine turns to the conflict within himself: “The new will, which was beginning to be within me a will to serve you freely and to enjoy you, God, the only sure source of pleasure, was not yet strong enough to conquer my older will”. The old will has “the strength of old habit”, it is a “harsh bondage”. As Augustine laments, “I understood through my own experience what I had read, how ‘the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17)’”.³³⁹ Brown points out how Augustine understood this tension: “*the flesh* was not simply the body: it was all that led the self to prefer its own will to that of God”.³⁴⁰ Augustine refers, in the *Confessions*, to two forces of the flesh in particular: “the chain of sexual desire, by which I was tightly bound, and ... the slavery of worldly affairs”.³⁴¹ The temptations of sex, and success in worldly affairs are prominent themes in advertising, as we have seen. To develop an art of advertising, therefore, it is important to investigate whether such desires might serve our desiring the good, instead of distracting us from it. In the discussion below we will address both these desires of the flesh discussed by Augustine, with the aim of understanding how they might be integrated, at least to some degree, into the desire for God.

Brown notes that although the root problem of sinfulness is the rebellion of our will from God, Augustine considered the disorder in our sexual desire as “an exceptionally sharply delineated symptom of Adam’s fall”.³⁴² Summarising Augustine, he writes: “As soon as they had made their own wills independent of the will of God, parts of Adam and

³³⁸ P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, London, Faber and Faber, 1988, p. 405.

³³⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 140.

³⁴⁰ Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 418.

³⁴¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 141.

³⁴² Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 406.

Eve became resilient to their own conscious will. Their bodies were touched with a disturbing new sense of the alien, in the form of sexual sensations that escaped their control”.³⁴³ Augustine confesses that his sex drive drags him back from his encounter with God. “With a groan I crashed into inferior things. This weight was my sexual habit”.³⁴⁴ Referring to his old and new wills, he writes, “I was split between them, but more of me was in that which I approved in myself than in that which I disapproved”. The old will exists outside his conscious self: “in the latter case it was ‘no more I’ (Rom. 7:17), since in large part I was passive and unwilling rather than active and willing”.³⁴⁵ This description is reminiscent of Plato’s description of *epithymia*, the dark horse, in his metaphor of the soul.³⁴⁶ This horse has “a crooked great jumble of limbs ... he is shaggy around the ears – deaf as a post – and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined”. Although *epithymia* is greedy for many things, Plato also foregrounds sex: “[the dark horse] leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasures of sex”.³⁴⁷

In his discussion of *eros* in the *Symposium*, Plato proposes a way in which sexual desire might be linked to the good. As noted in Chapter Two, *eros* in the *Symposium* is a concept of desire anchored in the sensual realm, often implying a desire for food or drink, but particularly sex.³⁴⁸ In Socrates’ speech, Plato also proposes how sexual desire can be linked with a higher end than sex. The speech outlines a process of education by which an initial sexual attraction leads to a love for what is beautiful in itself. This proceeds as follows. In our initial uneducated state, we focus *eros* on a single object, such as another person. A teacher with the knowledge of how to desire well – for Socrates this was the

³⁴³ Brown, pp. 416-417.

³⁴⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 127.

³⁴⁵ Augustine, p. 140.

³⁴⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, p. 137.

³⁴⁷ Reeve, *Plato on Love*, p. 119.

³⁴⁸ Hall, *The Trouble with Passion*, p. 41.

priestess Diotima – makes use of the student’s initial physical, sexual attraction to this object, and teaches him to appreciate more consciously the beautiful qualities in the object: to see the desired object as one instance of qualities which are beautiful in themselves. Once the student becomes familiar with and gives names to these qualities, he will start to notice and appreciate these qualities instantiated in other places. Attention is thus directed to an appreciation of all beauty as “one and the same”. At this point the student “will relax his excessively intense passion for one body, looking down on that and thinking it of small importance”. This is the first step in the education of desire. The next step is to teach the student the value of immaterial goods: the recognition that “the beauty in souls is more honourable than that in the body”, which as we noted in the previous section, is also a point Augustine makes.³⁴⁹ The final goal of the education of desire is the vision of what is ‘beautiful in itself’. As Diotima says to Socrates:

For whoever has been educated to this point in the things of love, beholding the beautiful things in order and rightly, coming to the completion of the things of love, will suddenly perceive something astonishingly beautiful in its nature. All his previous labours, Socrates, were for the sake of this.³⁵⁰

Plato thus presents an account of how the force of a physical, sexual attraction may be rightly used, under the right guidance. In the ideal account of education he presents, this lower desire helps to lead the student towards the good. In this process of education the student moves from desiring based on physical appeal, to a desire for the beautiful itself.

Augustine proposes two ways to contain and direct our wayward sexual desires: virginity and marriage. We will examine his view on marriage as it suggests how sexual desire might be aligned with the pursuit of goods. In *The Good of Marriage* Augustine

³⁴⁹ Quoted in M. Nussbaum, ‘The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato’s Symposium’, *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1979, pp. 147-148; Augustine, ‘Exposition on Psalm Four’, sec. 8.

³⁵⁰ Quoted in R.M. Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 13.

describes the purpose of the institution: “the purpose of their marrying was to confine such lust within lawful bonds so that it did not play fast and loose in a degrading and degenerate way”.³⁵¹ Within marriage, the lust is turned to a good end. “Such lust itself involves weakness of the flesh which is out of control, but within marriage it promotes alliance in fidelity which cannot be dissolved”.³⁵² This is the good of “ordered love between husband and wife”.³⁵³ Additionally, Augustine argues:

Marriages promote this further good: carnal or youthful incontinence, which is admittedly a defect, is applied to the honourable task of begetting children, and so intercourse within marriage engenders something good from the evil of lust. Moreover, the lustful tendencies of the flesh are kept in subjection, and their hot passion becomes more seemly, for parental love constrains it. This is because a sense of responsibility obtrudes into the heat of pleasure, for as they cleave together as man and wife, they reflect on their roles as father and mother.³⁵⁴

In a letter written after his treatise on marriage, Augustine states his position on the institutions again, arguing that it helps a corrupted desire to be rightly used. Sexual desire is “an urge which burns quite indiscriminately for objects allowed and disallowed, and which is bridled by the urge for marriage, that must depend upon it, but that restrains it from what is not allowed ... so that the urge of the flesh may be rightly used”.³⁵⁵ Marriage depends on sexual desire, but the institution is ordered, so that the activity of the desire, in this context, supports the attainment of a good.

³⁵¹ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali, De Sancta Virginitate*, trans. P.G. Walsh, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 13. In this quote and the quotes below, ‘lust’ is a translation of *concupiscentia* or *libido*, two terms which Walsh notes “are virtually interchangeable when applied to sexual activity by Augustine”. Both refer to “the passionate and uncontrolled element in sexuality” which arose “when owing to the Fall Adam lost control over his body” (Augustine, p. 7, n. 19). ‘Lust’ can therefore be interchanged with the expressions we have been using, ‘sexual desire’, by which we mean fallen sexual desire, other than when we discuss it in the context of Paradise. Cavadini affirms this usage. In Paradise one could engage in sex with feelings, including desire, which were ordered by the will being fixed in the love of God; but sexual desire now is always lustful because, even when we love God, this desire resists being ordered by this will. “[I]f it is accepted that lust is a pathologized desire, trying to imagine sex without lust is not the same thing as trying to imagine sex without feeling, even intense feeling. And yet it almost amounts to the same thing because lust has such a firm grip on the emotional life of the fallen that it is hard to imagine or to speak beyond it”. Cavadini, ‘Feeling Right’, p. 204.

³⁵² Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, p. 7.

³⁵³ Augustine, p. 7.

³⁵⁴ Augustine, p. 9.

³⁵⁵ Quoted in Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 424.

These two examples, from Plato and Augustine, seem to suggest a promising approach to using sexual desire as part of an art of advertising. Although these authors propose different regimes for remedying the waywardness of sexual desire, what they have in common is that they propose some external guidance, requiring some will from the person to participate in this. At least part of this will comes, in both cases, from sexual desire – which plays a role in prompting one towards marriage, or towards the initial object, in Plato’s example. In marriage, or under Diotima’s tutoring, the desire which seeks a sexually appealing object is allowed to operate. However, circumstances have been arranged so that the pursuit of this desire happens to lead the person to a starting point for education. In the ascent of *eros*, the encounter with the sexually attractive object is used by the teacher as an occasion to develop a new desire, with a better object: a desire for beautiful spiritual qualities. In a good marriage, sexual desire is part of the motivation to enter into the relationship, and is active within it, but the relationship, if it supports “ordered love”, may lead to and strengthen a love of God.³⁵⁶ We might consider Diotima’s teaching, and marriage as Augustine describes it, as models for what an art of advertising might aim to bring about in people’s souls. The task would be to design an advertisement which uses sex appeal as part of leading a viewer towards the good.

One problem with using Augustine in this way is that the interpretation seems to gloss over his insistence on the permanently twisted and dangerous nature of sexual desire, in contrast to Plato’s description of an ideal ascent. A large part of Augustine’s thought on the topic was about the struggle to abandon sexual desire altogether. As Brown writes: “By abandoning sexual pleasure of any kind, Augustine hoped to uproot within himself the dark mirror-image of a fierce longing to hold God’s Wisdom in ‘an utterly untroubled gaze, a most clean embrace’”.³⁵⁷ After his mystical experiences in Milan,

³⁵⁶ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, p. 7.

³⁵⁷ Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 394.

Augustine describes how the desires of the flesh, particularly “the chain of sexual desire”, held him back.³⁵⁸

[My old loves] tugged at the garment of my flesh and whispered: ‘Are you getting rid of us?’ ... What filth, what disgraceful things they were suggesting! ... I hesitated to detach myself, to be rid of them, to make the leap to where I was being called. Meanwhile the overwhelming force of habit was saying to me: ‘Do you think you can live without them?’³⁵⁹

Regarding the sexual aspect of human life, Augustine believed that virginity was the best route we could hope to pursue.³⁶⁰ Brown notes that Augustine “remained convinced that the stream of charity flowed more deeply and faster in those committed to a life of continence”, because “in man’s fallen state, sexual desire invariably created eddies in the will”.³⁶¹ This emphasis on the tendency of sexual desire to hold us back from the good should make us wary of using Augustine to support a positive role for the appeal to sex in advertising.

However, two observations about Augustine’s thought mitigate this warning. The first is that Augustine’s stance mellowed as he moved from admiring the ascetic, monastic life in Milan, to becoming a bishop in Hippo. Brown traces this change in his thought:

The agenda that Augustine brought with him from Ambrose’s Milan changed subtly and irrevocably in his first decade as a bishop in the African church. By 400, Augustine was no longer the convert who had broken, so suddenly and with such evident relief, from his need for a physical relationship with a woman. The sharp tone with which he had spoken of material things, immediately after his conversion, had mellowed.³⁶²

Brown also remarks in his biography on the change in Augustine’s life during this period, influenced by his daily legal and pastoral work, engaging in the local affairs of other

³⁵⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 141.

³⁵⁹ Augustine, p. 151.

³⁶⁰ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, p. 87.

³⁶¹ Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 403.

³⁶² Brown, p. 396.

flawed humans: “Thus the virtue of coexisting with a mixed company of men, whose merits and destinies have to be accepted as hidden from us, are the qualities which Augustine came to value most in his middle age – *tolerantia, patientia*”.³⁶³ Augustine wrote his treatise on marriage after this shift in attitude had begun. While he continues to hold virginity and celibacy as a higher calling, compared to the “sharp tone” of his repudiation of sexual desire in the *Confessions*, he has become an advocate for a Christian institution which involves sexual desire. His support of marriage is especially notable in the context of other Christian opinion at the time. Augustine wrote to nuns advising them never to look down on married women.³⁶⁴ And, “at a time when Jerome could state that even the blood of martyrdom was barely able to wipe away ‘the dirt of marriage’ from a Christian woman”, Augustine could write that “the urge of the flesh may be rightly used”.³⁶⁵

The second observation about Augustine’s thought concerns his view of the place of sexual desire in paradise. For most of his contemporaries, like Ambrose and Jerome, “sexuality, hence marriage and the creation of the family, could only have followed the Fall of Adam and Eve”. In contrast, “Augustine invariably wrote of Adam and Eve as physical human beings, endowed with the same bodies and sexual characteristics as ourselves”. They had been placed in paradise to learn to accept, “with open-hearted gratitude, the full range of the joys of fully physical, fully social and, Augustine was quite prepared to conclude, of fully sexual beings. Compared with the notions of many of his most vocal contemporaries, it was a singularly sociable and full-blooded vision”.³⁶⁶ Though sexual desire is a disruptive force in the fallen state, “[in] Adam and Eve’s first state, sexual desire was not absent, but it coincided perfectly with the conscious will”. The

³⁶³ Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, p. 210.

³⁶⁴ Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 397.

³⁶⁵ Brown, p. 397; p. 424.

³⁶⁶ Brown, pp. 399-401.

underlying problem, which manifests itself in sexual desire as well as other desires beyond conscious control, is the principle of discord present in the will since the Fall. “The twisted human will, not marriage, not even the sexual drive, was what was new in the human condition after Adam’s Fall”.³⁶⁷ Cavadini writes, affirming Brown’s interpretation, that Augustine saw the desire for sex as desire “disintegrated against will and against itself, not simply an innocent impulse, like hunger though more difficult to use in moderation”.³⁶⁸

Augustine’s discussions of how to cope with sexual desire are focused on two institutions – rightly called ‘arts’, for they are practices which pursue a good: virginity and marriage. He does not address the question of whether sex appeal could be used to achieve good within any other arts, for example, in painting. Therefore, while we can seek to draw out lessons from his discussion of marriage, we might conclude, based on our efforts above, that it is not entirely clear how Augustine’s arguments around sex would apply to the task of creating an art of advertising. On the one hand, Augustine was strongly aware of the fallen nature of sexuality and the ability of sexual desire to control our will and lead it into temptation. Advertising obviously makes use of this tendency. Many advertisements, such as the posters for American Apparel, grip us entirely through an appeal to this desire of the flesh. Augustine would probably see these posters as evil influences, exploiting “the disjunction between conscious will and sexual feeling”.³⁶⁹ On the other hand, his arguments do seem to suggest a way forward for advertising in serving the integration of the desiring parts of the soul. While Plato outlines an ascent of desire guided by the wills of the teacher and student; perhaps ironically, it is through his pessimism about the human will that Augustine becomes helpful for our purpose, because

³⁶⁷ Brown, pp. 402-404.

³⁶⁸ Cavadini, ‘Feeling Right’, p. 196.

³⁶⁹ Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 407.

on the basis of our fallenness he argues for the need for Christian institutions which allow for, but which also bind and direct, sexuality.³⁷⁰ In supporting marriage, he argues for one way in which sexual desire might be “rightly used”, if an appropriate external artifice arranges things so that its operation aligns with the attainment of a good. If advertising could provide such external artifice, it might be justified by the same arguments. Finally, the reason Augustine sees sexual desire as a problem is that it does not align with the will for the good. However, it did in paradise. This suggests that if it were possible for a new Christian institution to influence this part of the soul to align better in practice, it might be justified on the basis that it is helping sexual desire operate a little more in line with – although we cannot go very far in this direction – its original holy state in Paradise.

Plato’s ascent of *eros* may offer a way to integrate sexual desire into the desire for God, if we view Plato’s scheme from the perspective of Augustine’s view of sex. For the fact that the desire is incurably wayward does not mean that the occasion of a sexual attraction cannot be used to draw our attention to the good. The good may not even necessarily be related to the original encounter. This process of education would occur as follows. Sexual desire would lead the person to some encounter. The teacher, then, ignoring the sexual desire, would then introduce a new, good object. This good object could be a good quality in the original thing; it could be something connected loosely with the original object; or it could be quite unrelated. The aim would be to introduce the good to the person’s vision, in a way which incites desire. This is partly what occurs initially in Plato’s ascent: one’s original desire is refined, so that one moves from a crude vision of the person, to imagining the good qualities of the person. But given that the aim is to lead someone to beauty and goodness, it would not seem essential that these qualities are

³⁷⁰ David Hunter makes this point, noting how Augustine’s pessimism about sexual desire led to a view of marriage which was more accepting of sex than many of his contemporaries. D.G. Hunter, ‘Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine’s Teaching on Sex, Marriage and Celibacy’, *Augustinian Studies*, vol. 25, 1994, pp. 153-177.

actually in the particular object of first desire. What matters is that the mind of the person is directed towards the good, and a sexual attraction, to whatever object, might simply be a way to get someone involved in a process. This may not be what Plato intended; in using a single term, *eros*, to describe all the stages through which desire might pass, he suggests, perhaps, that the sexual desire is transformed. On Augustine's view that the sex drive is incurable in this life, we might imagine, not an ascent of the whole soul, but a seduction of one broken part of it, followed by portrayal of the good, once the person's attention has been won.³⁷¹

In addition to "the chain of sexual desire", Augustine refers to another force holding him back from God: "the slavery of worldly affairs".³⁷² This relates to two themes in Augustine's thought: the desire for glory and the desire for power. He sees these desires as closely linked: "He who delights excessively in human glory will also be much inclined ardently to desire mastery...". The desire for glory seeks out praise, honour and esteem. We might call the object of this desire 'high status'; Augustine refers to it as "human glory".³⁷³ The desire for power seeks dominion over others; it is "the lust for mastery".³⁷⁴ What both desires have in common is a deliberate or habitual turning away from God and an attempt to fill that lack by aggrandising the self, with human glory or power, desires

³⁷¹ Kahn proposes an interpretation of Plato's ascent which does not involve the idea of the initial desire being transformed, but rather employs the tripartite division from the *Republic* to understand the ascent of desire. Kahn suggests that in the early stage of attraction *logistikos* is "temporarily trapped in the attachment to a lovely body" and the process of education is "the cognitive liberation of the rational principle that will permit it to turn its attention towards its proper object". This view of education is similar to our proposal, in that it involves, initially, an appeal to one kind of desire, then an appeal to another kind (which, if Kahn is right, is what is going on in the *Symposium*). It is different from our proposal, however, in that Kahn believes the longing for the good is somehow involved in the operation of sexual desire, and needs liberating. In contrast, Augustine directs us more towards the view that the sex drive has become autonomous of the love of God. Kahn, 'Plato's Theory of Desire', p. 100.

³⁷² Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 141.

³⁷³ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 223. Augustine seems to use a number of terms interchangeably. Dyson's translation has him using variously 'praise', 'esteem' and 'glory'. For example: "That glory which the Romans so ardently desired to possess is the judgement of men thinking well of other men"; "...he is doing this only to obtain greater praise – greater glory, that is...". Augustine, p. 210; p. 224.

³⁷⁴ Augustine, p. 223. Brown explains this concept of *libido dominandi* in Augustine's thought. "[T]he deranged relationships between fallen angels and men show themselves in a constant effort to assert their incomplete power by subjecting others to their will. This is the *libido dominandi*, the lust to dominate ... fasted upon by Augustine as the universal symptom *par excellence* of all forms of deranged relationships". P. Brown, 'Saint Augustine', in *Trends in Medieval Political Thought*, B. Smalley (ed.), Oxford, Blackwell & Mott, 1965, p. 10.

which follow from the fundamental sin of pride. “Pride imitates what is lofty; but you alone are God most high above all things. What does ambition seek but honour and glory? Yet you alone are worthy of honour and are glorious for eternity”. Driven by pride, Augustine writes, “men either corrupt or pervert their own nature which you made and ordered”.³⁷⁵

The way to God requires us to be humble, to recognise that we maintain that lack because we resist allowing Christ into our hearts: “return to you is along the path of devout humility”.³⁷⁶ In humility, we reduce the desire to aggrandise the self, and instead seek to fill the lack with God’s goodness. Augustine writes of how we may participate in the glory of God in this life. For example, the Apostles “conquered hard hearts” and spread righteousness and peace, with the result that “great glory followed them”. In humility, though, the Apostles referred any admiration which came their way to God: “they did not rest in that glory as if it were the virtue which they sought as their end. Rather, they referred that glory itself to the glory of God, by Whose grace they were what they were”.³⁷⁷ Augustine gives the example of someone honoured in society, who is tempted by “the enemy of our true happiness ... everywhere laying traps with ‘Well done, well done’ (Ps. 34:21). To fight the grip of “the enemy” Augustine appeals to God: “Be our glory. Let it be for your sake that we are loved...”.³⁷⁸ This is the true fulfilment of the desire for glory. The praise is not directed to us, but we participate in the glorious goodness which is praised.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 31; p. 47.

³⁷⁶ Augustine, p. 47.

³⁷⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 214.

³⁷⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 214.

³⁷⁹ In this discussion we are examining the desire to receive praise. As Augustine notes, *giving* praise is a different matter, and is central to the Christian life when it is properly directed. “...the person who gives the praise is superior to the recipient of the praise, for the former is pleased by God’s gift to man, whereas the latter is more pleased with what man gives than with what God has given”. Augustine, p. 214.

Although Augustine sees both the desire for power and the desire for praise as prideful, he differentiates between them, noting that “those who aspire to the true glory even of human praise will nonetheless take care not to displease men of good judgement”. In contrast, “one who desires to rule and command but who lacks that love of glory which will deter him from displeasing men of good judgement will very often seek to obtain what he loves even by the most blatant acts of wickedness”.³⁸⁰ Among the Romans, he observes, there are “those who bridle their baser desires by means of the desire for human praise and glory, and not with the faith of godliness and the love of intelligible beauty...”.³⁸¹ This understanding of the desire for praise aligns with Plato's description of the white horse of the ‘chariot of the soul’, *thymos*, which is a “lover of honour with modesty and self-control”.³⁸² In the scenario Plato describes, in which the soul encounters a desirable person, the white horse can exercise restraint, and in alliance with reason, holds back the chariot: “the one who is obedient to the charioteer is still controlled, then as always, by its sense of shame, and so prevents itself from jumping on the boy”.³⁸³ For Augustine, the desire for praise can lead us to overcome greed, or place the safety of the city before our own, for instance.³⁸⁴ In these examples, both authors are observing that the desire can bridle our baser desires. Plato, however, is considering a more ordered soul: the reasoned love of the good rules the chariot, and *thymos* serves *logistikon*. Augustine is describing a worse situation, a case in which the love of praise rules the soul, yet noting that this is better than others kinds of motivation. Regardless, however, it is still a serious problem of pride. This situation, for Augustine, is by no means satisfactory; it is only “less vile”. “Beyond doubt”, he writes, “it is better to resist this desire for praise than to yield to

³⁸⁰ Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 223-224.

³⁸¹ Augustine, p. 213.

³⁸² Reeve, *Plato on Love*, pp. 118-199.

³⁸³ Reeve, p. 119.

³⁸⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 212.

it". He quotes John 5:44: "How can ye believe, who look for glory from one another, and do not seek the glory which is from God alone?"³⁸⁵

We are fallen creatures, however, and Augustine admits we have to cope somehow with the desire for praise: "It may be that, in this life, it cannot be completely eradicated from the heart".³⁸⁶ Also, it would be insane to do things specifically *opposite* to what is praised, he argues, thereby pointing out that what is praised does not always conflict with what is good to desire. "But how can we live so as to be indifferent to praise, and to be sure of this in experience? Are we to live evil lives, so abandoned and depraved that no one who knows us does not detest us? Nothing more crazy can be suggested or imagined".³⁸⁷ Alongside his powerful warnings of the dangers of the desire for status, and his revulsion at the situation of the desire ruling the soul, he does acknowledge a gradation of ways of living with the desire, from those who succumb completely, to those who have conquered it. In "those who are well advanced in virtue" the desire does still tempt the mind, but it is overpowered by the love of God. In this life, we might hope to reach this imperfect but comparatively admirable state.

Let the lust for glory be at any rate so surpassed by the love of righteousness that, if at any point 'those things which are held in low esteem' should be neglected even if they are good and right, the love of human praise will blush and yield to the love of truth.³⁸⁸

At various points in his argument, Augustine lays out different figures who are nearer or further from attaining this order in their souls. Emperor Nero represents the basest man, the kind who "despises glory yet is avid for mastery".³⁸⁹ Somewhat better than Nero is Julius Caesar, who was guided by "eagerness for praise and passion for glory".³⁹⁰

³⁸⁵ Augustine, pp. 213-214.

³⁸⁶ Augustine, p. 214.

³⁸⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 215.

³⁸⁸ Augustine, p. 214.

³⁸⁹ Augustine, p. 224.

³⁹⁰ Augustine, p. 208.

Compared to these two, Marcus Cato is more admirable, for although he was strongly motivated by a desire for honour, his ruling desire was in fact for worldly virtue – “that imperfect kind of virtue”.³⁹¹ As Augustine writes, “the virtue of Cato seems to have come far closer to true virtue than did that of Caesar”.³⁹² Greater than all these, however, are those guided by the love of God. Augustine gives the example of the Apostles, who were clearly not ruled by the desire for praise, in that they preached the gospel of Christ in places where it was held in low esteem, “even where it was held in the utmost detestation”.³⁹³ Such examples illustrate increasingly better ways of ordering a fallen nature.

Strikingly, given his language of revulsion above, Augustine also discusses more directly how the desires for honour and power might play a constructive, instrumental role, when they are ordered by the desire for a good. In *Letter to Proba* he writes that it is proper to desire honour and power as means to a good end:

Shall we then say, that in addition to this health of body men may desire for themselves and for those dear to them honour and power? By all means, if they desire these in order that by obtaining them they may promote the interest of those who may be their dependants. If they seek these things not for the sake of the things themselves, but for some good thing which may through this means be accomplished, the wish is a proper one; but if it be merely for the empty gratification of pride, and arrogance ... the wish is improper.³⁹⁴

There is some ambiguity in this passage. On the one hand, Augustine seems to be talking about honour and power being solely a means to a good, never themselves the object of a

³⁹¹ Augustine, p. 225. He writes that virtue is “not truly such when it serves human glory”, but “nonetheless, those who are not citizens of that eternal City which is called the City of God in our sacred writings are more useful to the earthly city when they have even that imperfect kind of virtue that they would be if they did not have it”. Augustine, *City of God*, p. 225. According to Irwin, the phrase “splendid vices” is misattributed to Augustine as he never used the phrase *splendida peccata*. T.H. Irwin, ‘Splendid Vices? Augustine For and Against Pagan Virtues’, *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1999, pp. 105-127.

³⁹² Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 210.

³⁹³ Augustine, p. 214.

³⁹⁴ Augustine, ‘Letter CXXX’, trans. J.G. Cunningham, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 1, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1886, ch. 6, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.CXXX.html>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

desire: “seek these things not for the sake of the things themselves”. On the other hand, he writes that “men may desire for themselves ... honour and power”.³⁹⁵ In this latter phrase he seems to be talking about a desire with honour and power as its object, but which plays a constructive role as part of a broader effort. The ambiguity is understandable because the distinction will not always be clear-cut: one might conceive of a single object of desire which involves having a position of honour and using that honour well. The ethical goal, we might assume, is for honour and power not to be part of one’s conception of the object at all, to be considered without any stirring of desire, simply as a means, as in Chapter Three we considered learning the word *temetum* as a means to acquiring a language, of no appeal in itself. If we cannot attain this purity, we might hope that the desire for the good dominates our motives, even if simultaneously we have a vicious desire for honour or power, which also motivates us. In this case, pursuing the lower desire in practice aligns with the attainment of the higher good. This situation of mixed motives is likely to be the case, for as Augustine holds, the desires of the flesh are persistent. The task of education, therefore, should be to move us as far as possible towards considering honour and power solely as a means, and to strengthen the desire for the good. “In the acquisition of all these sources of social status, one must not depart from you, Lord, nor deviate from your law”.³⁹⁶

Augustine does not explore exactly how obtaining honour may be a means to accomplishing some good. It is clear that one way it may be used, though, is as a means to sway desire. Writing of its lack of intrinsic value, Augustine describes human honour as “smoke, which has no weight”. Yet, as he notes, being fallen creatures, people will always be swayed by what has high status and what attracts esteem.³⁹⁷ Different objects can be

³⁹⁵ Augustine, ch. 6.

³⁹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 29.

³⁹⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 218.

given high status in a certain group of people, depending on how that group directs its praise. The object that the smoke of human honour surrounds becomes an object of human glory – an attractive object for those seeking glory, whether the praise surrounds victory in battle, or greatness in rhetoric, or the accumulation of riches, or the overcoming of the desire for riches.³⁹⁸ These praised objects become attractive for those seeking to obtain high status for themselves; insofar as they want status, they will seek those things which will bring them praise, whatever they are. The situation becomes slightly more involved when a human person becomes an object of praise and honour, thereby gaining status in a group. This person gains the ability to confer high status on other things because they have the power to sway the desires of others. Based on our understanding of desire, we can see, with some thought, why such people have this power. When a person is praised and honoured, status-seekers try to attain this object too; they seek to attain the kind of life that is being praised. They want to attract praise like this person, therefore they emulate the life.³⁹⁹ Augustine does not describe why having obtained honour gives one the power to influence others, but he gives an example of this influence at work, showing how honour might be a means to help lead people towards the good. In the *Confessions* he describes the conversion of Victorinus, who was a prominent citizen in Rome – “he was offered and accepted a statue in the Roman forum, an honour which the citizens of this world think supreme”. Victorinus’ honoured life made his conversion a major event. This is why the story, for Augustine, “gives occasion for me to confess to you in great praise for your

³⁹⁸ Augustine, p. 212.

³⁹⁹ This point has been analysed in detail by Thorstein Veblen, who focused particularly on the issue of seeking and displaying wealth in order to attract praise, which he called ‘conspicuous consumption’. Yet Veblen also looked more broadly at what he called standards of “reputability”, meaning attainments, ways of living and spending money which attract praise. Veblen describes how more respected social groups are able to shift what is honoured and what is not, because their way of life shapes what people see as reputable. “The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in point of reputability; and its manner of life and its standards of worth therefore afford the norm of reputability for the community”. The point we take from Veblen is the same one we take from Augustine’s story of Victorinus: that reputable people can shift what is praised. Much of Veblen’s work is taken up with describing the habit of spending money to attract praise. T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, New York, B.W. Huebsch, 1899, p. 83, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/veblen-the-theory-of-the-leisure-class-an-economic-study-of-institutions>, (accessed 25 April 2016).

grace”. “The enemy suffers a severer defeat when he is overcome in a man ... by whose influence he dominates many. Pride in aristocratic nobility enables him to hold sway especially over the upper class, and by their title and authority he dominates many more”.⁴⁰⁰ Victorinus did not deliberately seek human glory with the intention of eventually using this to convert more people to Christ, but his case is an instance of honour being incidentally used to extend good influence. We might add another example from Augustine’s own life. That is that Augustine himself was drawn to Milan and Ambrose partly if not largely out of ambition for human glory: “For Augustine, Milan meant new interests, new learning, great chances of success”.⁴⁰¹ As Augustine writes of himself at that time, he aspired to “honours, money, marriage”.⁴⁰² As Brown writes: “He had a career to make, and Monica was arranging a match for him with a Catholic heiress”. Augustine was certainly interested in learning, but also, we might speculate, desired to meet Ambrose and became interested attending his sermons partly because Ambrose was a “great man”. His reputation drew visitors from as far away as Persia.⁴⁰³

Compared to his discussions of sexual desire, Augustine is more explicit in arguing that seeking status can be aligned with the attainment of goods. Nevertheless, his argument is silent on an important point from the perspective of developing an art of advertising. While he argues that it is improper to desire status for its own sake, and shows us how the education of desire should lead us to value status less, he does not comment on whether it would be proper to use someone else’s desire to be praised to lead them towards the good, even if the desire to be praised is dominant in that person’s soul, at least initially. He seems to imply as much in his story of Victorinus: more people would be turned to Christianity because of the status his conversion would give to the act of

⁴⁰⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 135-139.

⁴⁰¹ Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, p. 72.

⁴⁰² Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 97.

⁴⁰³ Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, pp. 81-82.

converting. One problem with Augustine's argument, however, is that he does not give enough examples of the influence a person gains being an object of honour, being used for the good. In his own life, Augustine was led to God on a journey that began with worldly desire: his longing for human glory brought him to a place and then a person who ultimately led him to God. Augustine thanks God for having arranged matters in this way:

But it was you, 'my hope and my portion in the land of the living (Ps. 141:6) who wished me to change my earthly home for 'the salvation of my soul' (Ps. 34:3). You applied the pricks which made me tear myself away from Carthage, and you put before me the attractions of Rome to draw me there, using people who love a life of death ... To correct my 'steps' (Ps. 36:23; Prov. 20:20) you secretly made use of their and my perversity.⁴⁰⁴

In this case, the situation was arranged not by human will but by Providence. Yet it suggests an outline of what an art of advertising should aim to achieve. In investigating how an ethical advertisement might work, we will be discussing how human will might arrange things in a similar way, so that the appeal to status might be used as part of drawing someone's soul towards God. Based on Augustine's belief that honour can be used as a means to achieve good, his example of this happening, and the case of his own life, we can conclude that Augustine's work and life provides some basis for such an effort.

The desire for created things

This section will address a third aspect of the education of desire: how we are to desire in relation to created things. The question we will address is: What role should desire play in our relationship to created things, given that we should love God with all our soul? The answer it arrives at is that we should seek to imagine the object of our desire in a way

⁴⁰⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 81.

which involves God, in conjunction with the created thing – a type of relation which Augustine refers to as loving something or somebody ‘in God’. This is the kind of desire which an art of advertising should seek to encourage. Our discussion will have two parts. First, we will examine the topic of loving our neighbour, while loving God; second, we will discuss loving material objects based on a love of God. This latter topic is relevant to advertising, as advertisements influence how we relate to material products, yet the former topic is also relevant, for as we will see in the following chapter, ethical advertisements should also seek to cultivate the right kind of desire oriented to our neighbour ‘in God’.

In *On Christian Doctrine* Augustine addresses the question of how we are to relate to created things. Early in the work he introduces the distinction between use (*uti*) and enjoyment (*frui*), in the following passage:

There are some things which are to be enjoyed, some which are to be used, and some whose function is both to enjoy and use. Those which are to be enjoyed make us happy; those which are to be used assist us and give us a boost, so to speak, as we press on towards our happiness, so that we may reach and hold fast to the things which make us happy. And we, placed as we are among things of both kind, both enjoy and use them; but if we choose to enjoy things that are to be used, our advance is impeded and sometimes even diverted, and we are held back, or even put off, from attaining things which are to be enjoyed, because we are hamstrung by our love of lower things. To enjoy something is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake. To use something is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love.⁴⁰⁵

Augustine’s meaning of ‘use’, with regards to loving our neighbour, is controversial.

Gregory, in his survey of contributors to the controversy, cites two prominent interpretations, from Oliver O’Donovan and Helmut Baer.⁴⁰⁶ In what follows, we will discuss the opinions of these two authors, with the aim of clarifying how we are to relate to our neighbour. O’Donovan believes that Augustine introduced the distinction between

⁴⁰⁵ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 15.

⁴⁰⁶ Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*, pp. 335-341.

use and enjoyment experimentally, in an attempt to describe rightly ordered love, but that Augustine ultimately found the phrase awkward as applied to neighbourly love, and therefore abandoned it after *On Christian Doctrine*. The passage which O'Donovan believes Augustine eventually abandons is 22.20, in which Augustine seeks to define neighbourly love in terms of use and enjoyment.

It is therefore an important question whether humans should enjoy one another, or use one other, or both. We have been commanded to love one another, but the question is whether one person should be loved by another on his own account or for some other reason. If on his own account, we enjoy him; if for some other reason, we use him. In my opinion, he should be loved for another reason. For if something is to be loved on its own account, it is made to constitute the happy life, even if it is not yet the reality but the hope of it which consoles us at this time. But 'cursed is he who puts his hope in a man'.⁴⁰⁷

The statement that we should 'use' the neighbour, O'Donovan writes, is "the cardinal assertion, daring and contentious" of *On Christian Doctrine*.⁴⁰⁸ Augustine eventually gives up on this paragraph above, argues O'Donovan, because he "has simply been unable to suppress the instrumental significance of the verb *utor*, and that the resulting conception is too much for his stomach". The term 'use' originally entered Augustine's thought as a term "expressing the relation to things of this world of one who seeks the things of the next". But, O'Donovan writes, "the neighbour does not belong simply among the things of this world; he belongs at the 'end' and 'fulfilment' of the command, beyond the limits of the temporal dispensation".⁴⁰⁹

O'Donovan's argument rests on two points. The first is that there is an instrumental way of relating to people, even when we are trying to love God and neighbour (not when we are obviously exploiting a colleague, for example), which is mistaken. The second is that Augustine wanted to avoid this mistaken depiction of

⁴⁰⁷ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, pp. 29-31.

⁴⁰⁸ O. O'Donovan, "'Usus' and 'Fruitio'", p. 386.

⁴⁰⁹ O'Donovan, pp. 389-390.

neighbourly love, realised that ‘use’ tended to point towards it, and so eventually dropped the term ‘use’. What is this problematic instrumental way of relating to people, as O’Donovan understands it? He quotes the following passage from *On Christian Doctrine*:

But he does not use us in the way that we use things; for we relate the things which we use to the aim of enjoying God’s goodness, whereas God relates his use of us to his own goodness. We exist because he is good, and we are good to the extent that we exist ... So the kind of use attributed to God, that by which he uses us, is related not to his own advantage, but solely to his goodness. If we pity someone or take thought for someone, we do so for that person’s advantage, and we concentrate on that; but somehow there also results an advantage to us....⁴¹⁰

O’Donovan believes that Augustine is struggling, trying to depict right neighbourly love within the language he has adopted of love described in terms of use. O’Donovan believes that Augustine falls into depicting the erroneous, instrumental concept of love in the passage above – as O’Donovan understands it – because he has “been unable to suppress the instrumental significance of the verb *utor*”. O’Donovan criticises the view of human love which comes through in this passage from Augustine:

The meaning of this distinction is clear: our ‘use’ of others is *brought into the project of our need*. It serves our ‘utility’ in that its reference is not simply to God’s goodness as such, but to our enjoyment of God’s goodness. We never cease to act as beings whose very existence depends on God’s goodness; therefore our reference of others to that goodness inevitably serves our own inescapable concern with that goodness as the source of our being – and that is true however attentive we may be in the first instance to the other’s need. Thus our ‘use’ must be different from God’s because God has no needs, no utility to be served. In marking this difference Augustine concedes that ‘use-love’, when predicated of human beings, has not lost all its instrumental overtones.⁴¹¹

O’Donovan argues that, at this point, Augustine introduces a new expression in his work, to enjoy one another ‘in God’, because he wants to move away from the language of use. “In other words he would already like to reverse the answer he gave in 22.20, where he

⁴¹⁰ Quoted in O’Donovan, p. 389. The translated text has been used, from Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 45.

⁴¹¹ O’Donovan, “‘*Usus*’ and ‘*Fruitio*’”, p. 389.

included love of neighbour within the scope of *usus*".⁴¹² Yet can we clarify this underlying, 'instrumental', mistaken way of relating – the sense which Augustine is supposedly seeking to avoid, but which the overtones of *usus* keep suggesting?

O'Donovan gives another description of it earlier in his argument: that "the love for the neighbour should be regarded as an instrumental pursuit by which one intends to attain the beatitude of an immediate love for God". "Not surprisingly", he writes, "those who understand Augustine in this sense are troubled at his willingness to see the neighbour 'used' in a frankly exploitative sense".⁴¹³ O'Donovan's purpose in his article is broader than ours in this section. He is seeking to trace Augustine's relationship with the term *utor*, and to establish his contention that its "instrumental significance" undermined what Augustine was ultimately trying to communicate about right neighbourly love. Our purpose here is to identify this underlying view of right neighbourly love. However, we will engage with O'Donovan's argument with the aim of clarifying how we should relate to our neighbour.

O'Donovan asserts that regarding love of neighbour "as an instrumental pursuit by which one intends to attain ... beatitude" is "frankly exploitative". However, it is unclear whether O'Donovan really has identified an exploitative way of relating to the neighbour. He seems to be pinpointing a problem when he emphasises the phrase "project of our need" above. But on closer investigation, his depiction of bad neighbour relations does not seem to actually capture a problem. The phrase "project of our need" certainly implies a bad form of relationship. Like the word 'instrumental', and indeed our modern sense of the word 'use', it implies the idea of a project of our lower need, such as using someone for sex or career advancement. O'Donovan does not argue that Augustine suggests this kind of exploitation, but it is worth mentioning, because O'Donovan does not distinguish

⁴¹² O'Donovan, p. 389.

⁴¹³ O'Donovan, p. 361.

between using someone for a lower need and using someone for a higher need. He describes using someone for a higher need – the beatitude of a love for God – and then declares that this is obviously exploitative. Nevertheless, if we look more closely at this phrase, particularly the concept of ‘need’, it is unclear what error O’Donovan is describing. As we saw in Chapter Four, a need is properly understood as a lack in relation to a good. Our highest need is for God. This need is met to the degree that we can love God, and know His love by living out His love – bringing it to life within us. Doing so is part of a longer-term journey, which we might reasonably call a ‘project’: a project to live more fully by God’s Word. In engaging with our neighbours, the only way to meet this need is to love them with the love of Christ, rather than treating them in any lesser or meaner way. Indeed, if we reverse the perspective: as the neighbour, one should be happy to be brought into the project of such a need. For it means that one will receive the self-sacrificial love of Christ from the neighbour. On inspection, therefore, neither the term ‘project’ nor the term ‘need’ seems to capture a problem.

The phrase certainly has an overtone of selfishness; it suggests engaging with someone only in so far as it is personally advantageous. O’Donovan thinks that engaging with someone with one’s own good in mind is wrong, even when the good is the highest one, of beatitude. Yet, Augustine does not seem to believe this, exactly. He states a relevant point at the end of the passage above which O’Donovan quotes. For some reason, however, O’Donovan truncates his quote to finish on the point that “there results an advantage to us”. The full quote is as follows:

If we pity someone or take thought for someone, we do so for that person’s advantage, and we concentrate on that; but somehow there also results an advantage to us, since God does not let the compassion we show to the needy go unrewarded. This reward is the supreme reward –

that we may thoroughly enjoy him and that all of us who enjoy him may enjoy one another in him.⁴¹⁴

If we assume that Augustine was not struggling, but was successfully expressing his view of the right way of relating to the neighbour, this passage does not seem to raise problems. O'Donovan has a problem with a love which “serves our ‘utility’ in that its reference is not simply to God’s goodness as such, but to our enjoyment of God’s goodness”.⁴¹⁵ O'Donovan does not explain what he means by ‘reference’ here. Perhaps he means the idea of having our own enjoyment of God’s goodness in mind – the rewards of our beatitude – when we deal with our neighbour. If we simply took Augustine’s line, “we relate the things which we use to the aim of enjoying God’s goodness”, it might be possible to think that Augustine is describing this way of relating. But Augustine clearly dispels this in the following lines, noting that we concentrate on the other person’s advantage – the aspiration to embody, in part, God’s self-giving, in the love we have for others. O'Donovan may be taking issue with the idea of having as our ruling motive a desire to enjoy God’s goodness, so that in the moment, we may be attentive to the neighbour, but that in the long-run it is all about the project of our own enjoyment. Rather than loving simply to live out God’s goodness, to love as He loved, we are loving with the ultimate aim of adding to our own utility, in attaining an enjoyable end for ourselves.

What O'Donovan does not address, indeed, what he admits from the quote he uses from Augustine, is the shared nature of the advantage. In the passage above, Augustine is emphasising that the advantage is always mutual. There is never only one person who benefits, since God ensures that true, self-giving charity, which proceeds from a genuine love of God, does not go unrewarded. And this reward is mutual and social: “that we may

⁴¹⁴ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 45.

⁴¹⁵ O'Donovan, “*Usus*” and “*Fruitio*”, p. 389.

thoroughly enjoy him and that all of us who enjoy him may enjoy one another in him”.⁴¹⁶

O'Donovan has a problem with a love which is referred to our enjoyment. His phrase, 'a project of our need', suggests that the need is exclusive to us. Yet the right love of neighbour is not referred to *our* enjoyment, but *mutual* enjoyment, and this is precisely what Augustine emphasises. Likewise, it is not our need, but a mutual need: the practice of good friendship or good neighbourly love is centered around coming to recognise this mutual need for God, and pursuing it together. Even if they are our enemy, or someone hostile to Christ, our greatest desire, our greatest need guiding our relation to them, should be to share with them in the ultimate enjoyment of communion with God. O'Donovan does not refer in his article to the idea of mutual enjoyment of God, which is the focus of the truncated quote he uses.

A second interpretation of the concept of 'use' in *On Christian Doctrine* is provided by Baer. In Baer's view, Augustine is not struggling with problems created by an initial, perhaps rash, statement of contrast between use and enjoyment; rather, "the terms *uti* and *frui* have been selected deliberately, precisely because they are flexible and thus well suited for the *rhetor* seeking to refashion language in a way useful for articulating Christian doctrine".⁴¹⁷ Baer argues that the discussion of Christ in Book One, following the introduction of the distinction between use and enjoyment, serves to flesh out Augustine's intended sense of 'use'. Christ, in giving Himself up for us to be our way, helps us on our journey. Christ's self-giving, which we might encounter, for example, in the Eucharist, seems to fit with Augustine's description of things to be 'used': "to assist us, and give us a boost, so to speak, as we press on towards our happiness".⁴¹⁸ Christ is our end and final rest, but Augustine's description of our relation to Christ undoubtedly

⁴¹⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 45.

⁴¹⁷ H.D. Baer, 'The Fruit of Charity: Using the Neighbor in "De Doctrina Christiana"', *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1996, pp. 49-50.

⁴¹⁸ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 15.

emphasises the image of journeying on, which he attaches to things to be used. “[N]othing must detain us on our way, since not even the Lord, at least in his graciously chosen role of being our way, wanted to detain us, but wanted us to pass on...”.⁴¹⁹ Baer’s interesting move is to reverse the perspective: to point out that, if we truly love someone, we should want to be useful to them. Baer proposes that Augustine’s point in Book One could be re-described in these terms, that “Christ makes Himself useful to us, so that He can be used”.⁴²⁰ Christ wants us to relate to Him guided by the overall aim of attaining communion with God – oriented to “the purpose of obtaining what you love”.⁴²¹ Yet Baer also emphasises that we are searching for a shared good, a shared enjoyment, which we can only reach in conjunction with our neighbour. We are indeed seeking our highest good, but once we flesh out what this actually involves, we see that this seeking consists in loving others as Christ loved us.⁴²² “Paradoxically, it is in seeking the neighbour’s good that we discover our own good. In seeking to be useful to the other, we make the neighbour useful to ourselves”.⁴²³

The object which guides both people’s relation to the other is a shared object. In rightly ordered love, both neighbours desire to love one another with God’s love, because they desire to find joy in God together. O’Donovan, in proposing his concept of a love which “serves our ‘utility’”, which he argues that Augustine seeks to avoid, falsely separates seeking to enjoy God’s goodness from seeking to love truly as He loved. Based on Baer’s analysis, and our discussion above, we can conclude that O’Donovan has not clearly identified a problematic form of love under the label ‘instrumental’. His argument is that the *usus* tends to point towards a disordered state of love, which he describes as

⁴¹⁹ Augustine, p. 49.

⁴²⁰ Baer, ‘The Fruit of Charity’, p. 55.

⁴²¹ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 15.

⁴²² Baer, ‘The Fruit of Charity’, pp. 59-60.

⁴²³ Baer, p. 60.

relating to the other as a “project of our need”, as a way to increase our own utility by seeking our own enjoyment. Yet on closer examination, the idea of a project of our need, and the idea of seeking our true enjoyment – used in relation to God, which is how O’Donovan uses them – in fact seem to describe a good form of love. Perhaps O’Donovan does have a particular idea of a disordered relationship in mind, but we have argued that he does not capture a problem in the way he describes it in his article. For, if our desires are aligned with our true needs, and our need for God – our most important lack – is uppermost in our mind, then we are guided by the desire for God: a project of our need. When one thinks of approaching the neighbour with this highest, shared, need in mind, that is the longing to be together both fulfilling our desire and need for enjoyment in God, a desire pursued in the world by bringing true love to life inside ourselves and others, one cannot imagine a better principle to guide one’s interactions.

O’Donovan points out that Augustine introduces another expression, ‘enjoying one another in God’, which he draws from Philemon 1:20: “So Paul says to Philemon: ‘So, brother, I shall enjoy you in the Lord’”.⁴²⁴ O’Donovan argues that Augustine introduces this to replace his failing language of ‘use’; however, for our purpose we can consider the idea as a way to explore further the right relationship to the neighbour. Earlier in Book One Augustine writes that we should channel all our loves into the one love of God, so that “any other object of love that enters the mind should be swept towards the same goal as that to which the whole flood of our love is directed”.⁴²⁵ Can we discuss what loving someone ‘in God’ this might involve in practice, drawing on our account of desire developed in this thesis? In a letter, Augustine refers to the idea of enjoying a friend in God. He writes that to do so is to love God’s love in that person.

⁴²⁴ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 47.

⁴²⁵ Augustine, p. 31.

A man is just when he seeks to use things only for the end for which God appointed them, and to enjoy God as the end of all, while he enjoys himself and his friend in God and for God. For to love in a friend the love of God is to love the friend for God.⁴²⁶

In coming to love God's love in a neighbour, we can define two distinct steps we must undertake. The first concerns where we direct our attention. We must focus on the true good: we need to be able to perceive and attend to the good of God's love in the first place. For there are many other, lesser, things we might notice in a neighbour: their status, their sex appeal, or their use to us for the sake of a business deal, for example. The second step concerns the development of the desire in our mind after we have paid attention to God's goodness. In our account of the creation of desire, we have seen that this involves an act of the imagination, in which we elaborate from the good we have glimpsed, to create a picture of the whole good to which it belongs. Then, as we do not have full communion with the whole, it is loved with desire, given our awareness of our distance from it. In the case of relating properly to created things, what is required of the imagination? We know that it involves making God the object of our love. But it does not involve forgetting the person, to focus instead on God. Augustine's metaphor is inclusive: the other object of love is swept into "the whole flood of our love" for God.⁴²⁷ In terms of how we conceive of the object, it seems reasonable to say that bringing our love of one thing into our love of another is a way of saying that our imagination can hold both God and the neighbour, not as two objects, but as a kind of composite object of desire, with the neighbour imagined in their relation to God. We love the person 'in God' because this is the truth of what they are: they are made by God, loved by God, and their being is sustained by participation in God's goodness. When the love is mutual, we love each other

⁴²⁶ Augustine, 'Reply to Faustus the Manichean', trans. R. Stothert, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 4, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1887, sec. 78, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104.iv.ix.i.html>, (accessed 25 April 2016).

⁴²⁷ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 31.

“as joint participants in such goodness”. Thus part of the work of imagination is to conceive a fuller picture, beyond an initial glimpse, of how this person’s entire being, now, is sustained and loved by God. But our image of the greater good, developed from the initial encounter, is also teleological: we relate God and the neighbour in our imagination also by picturing how the two might be even more closely joined in future, indeed, in mutual enjoyment with ourselves. This imagined object should also include ourselves: the object of desire, the greater good, is our neighbour and ourselves in even closer communion with God. In relation to every person, “it should be our desire that they all love God together with us”.⁴²⁸ The love takes the form of desire, because we see some good – we see God’s love in the neighbour – and then, if we imagine the whole rightly, we realise our lack of and need for God’s love. The object of desire is still God. Yet it is a particular way of imagining this same object. It is also a particular love – for the neighbour – because we are encountering God’s goodness in the form it has taken in their life.⁴²⁹ To return to the aim of this section, therefore, we have considered the principle and practice of what it might mean to desire well in relation to our neighbours. To help and encourage people to desire this way should be a part of the education of desire, and one aspect of what an art of advertising should set out to achieve.

We can now turn to the second part of this section, to consider how desire should be educated in relation to material objects. There is less controversy in this case.

O’Donovan admits that the idea of ‘use’ applied to inanimate objects presents no problem for Augustine. He refers to Augustine’s “illustration of the plank which saves the

⁴²⁸ Augustine, pp. 39-41.

⁴²⁹ Augustine writes of the ‘enjoyment’ involved in loving one’s neighbour in God. He writes that we should relate the joy to our permanent goal, rather than rest in it, believing it to be the final end, and that therefore, this is said to be ‘enjoyment’ only in a transferred or figurative sense (Augustine, p. 47). This point fits our account: one glimpses God’s goodness in the neighbour, and encountering goodness is a moment of joy. Rightly treated, this becomes the basis of a love – that is, desire – for the neighbour in God. If our imagination focuses our mind on God, after having experienced the joyful, brief encounter with the good, this is how the joy is ‘related’ to our permanent goal, rather than considered a something to rest in. If we do this, we love rightly, and do not believe that the joy is final. Therefore, the character of the experience changes: we are not enjoying this moment in the sense of resting in it as our final end, even though there is still some kind of delight, or enjoyment in a figurative sense.

shipwrecked mariner”, which shows how we are to use material things instrumentally. “[The illustration] makes the point clear enough: we are so to use earthly goods that we may be able to dispense with them finally once and for all”.⁴³⁰ The original quote from *On Music* states that we should relate to temporal things “by using them well, as with a board in a flood by not throwing them aside as burdensome and not grasping them as stable.”⁴³¹ In Chapter Three, we have already explored two kinds of relation to material things. First, we looked at the advertisement for bird seed, which is a material thing we would purchase and use in a way that helps us attain the object of our desire, which is to have birds as part of a beautiful garden. The bird seed is used as a pure means; like the word *temetum*, its value lies in its practical helpfulness as part of the pursuit of another good. To consider this in relation to something which is clearly a Christian good, we might say that the bus we take to get to church is a material good being well used – “to assist us ... as we press on towards our happiness”.⁴³² Likewise, in this case, the bus is not the object, or part of the object of desire. It serves the achievement of the object. This is an example of one kind of use.

However, there is another kind of use of created things. Material objects might be used to assist us, and give us a boost towards our happiness, in another way. Following the bird seed example, we considered the advertisement for the beautiful greenhouse. Like the bird seed, the greenhouse is practically helpful for attaining a good garden, because it keeps tools and helps seedlings to grow. But also, the greenhouse itself could well be the

⁴³⁰ O’Donovan, “‘*Usus*’ and ‘*Fruitio*’”, p. 380.

⁴³¹ Augustine, *The Immortality of the Soul; The Magnitude of the Soul; On Music; The Advantage of Believing; On Faith in Things Unseen*, trans. L. Schopp, Baltimore, MD, Catholic University of America Press, 1947, p. 368. Although O’Donovan quotes the original in Latin, he alters Augustine’s point significantly in paraphrasing it, changing the metaphor to that of a shipwrecked mariner, and adding a phrase about final rejection which is not present in the original. One cannot help wondering if he is emphasising that ‘use’ implies an ultimate rejection, in the case of material objects, in order to support his later conclusion that Augustine is bending the sense of ‘use’ too much, and does not succeed in applying it to the love of the neighbour. Augustine’s actual metaphor, in contrast, is more balanced. It seems to be illustrating that, on the one hand, we should not throw material things aside as burdensome, because they can be essential supports in this life; but on the other hand, we should not seek to rest in them as we should seek to rest in eternal goods.

⁴³² Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 15.

object of desire; we can conceive of someone who might desire to enjoy the beauty of the greenhouse in the sun. At a stretch, even the birdseed itself could be an object of desire. One might focus on its beauty as part of God's creation, although this use would not be normal. In the *Confessions*, Augustine describes a way to use material things along these lines, different from the kind of use described above. At one point in the world, as mentioned above, he writes of being distracted by looking at lizards and spiders. Yet this distraction can also be a starting point for turning his mind to God. He writes that the lizard attracts his attention, but that "the sight leads me on to praise you, the marvellous Creator and orderer of all things".⁴³³ Augustine is concerned to teach us the right way to understand the beauty of material things. He describes his own investigation of physical beauty.⁴³⁴ He begins by asking what it is that he loves when he loves God. "And what is the object of my love?" Augustine asks this question to the earth, and it answers: "'It is not I'".⁴³⁵

I asked the sea, the deeps, the living creatures that creep, and they responded: 'We are not your God, look beyond us.' I asked the breezes which blow and the entire air with its inhabitants said: 'Anaximenes was mistaken; I am not God.' I asked heaven, sun, moon and stars; they said: 'Not are we the God whom you seek.' And I said to all these things in my external environment: 'Tell me of my God who you are not, tell me something about him.' And with a great voice they cried out: 'He made us' (Ps. 99:3).⁴³⁶

Augustine's previous state was to love things for themselves:

You were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were within me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you....⁴³⁷

⁴³³ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 213.

⁴³⁴ Beauty was an interest from a young age; early in his career, he tells us, he wrote a book investigating why we are attracted to things through our senses. Augustine, pp. 64-65.

⁴³⁵ Augustine, p. 183.

⁴³⁶ Augustine, p. 183.

⁴³⁷ Augustine, p. 201.

His point is not that we should shun beauty, but that we should develop the right relationship to it. He explains what he means by his metaphor of ‘asking’ – “I asked heaven, sun, moon and stars” – which is, that he was giving these created things a certain kind of attention. “My question was the attention I gave to them, and their response was their beauty”.⁴³⁸ What is this attention? It involves relating the experience of beauty to God. There are different ways to do this, emphasising different thoughts we might have about God. Yet the principle is the same as we have discussed above: one should imagine the created thing in its relationship to God. One way to relate the experience of beauty to God is to remember that this is a glimpse of a greater beauty which we do not see, a comparatively degraded sensory impression, only analogous to a transcendent beauty which is God. Another way, following Augustine’s emphasis in this passage, is to remember that God is the maker of the created thing. Augustine’s error was to imagine that the good he was looking for existed in the material objects themselves, even that the good he sought was a physical thing.⁴³⁹ One might imagine that the glasshouse itself, or the sun and the glasshouse together, are the source of the beauty. Augustine’s realisation was that the ultimate good was not in the objects themselves but their maker. Augustine is seeking to educate our imaginations: the moment after experiencing a beautiful thing, he is urging, instead of imagining the thing alone, one should imagine it as made by its maker. A further way of relating the experience of beauty to God is to remember, and hold in one’s imagination, that God loves this thing. This mental effort, in all these cases, is similar to the proper love of our neighbour, in that we should see the created thing in God. There is an important difference, however, which is that a physical object cannot share in loving God with us. As O’Donovan writes, the neighbour belongs “beyond the limits of

⁴³⁸ Augustine, p. 183.

⁴³⁹ Augustine, pp. 114-116.

the temporal dispensation”.⁴⁴⁰ Part of our desire, in relation to people but not inanimate objects, is that this created thing might come to love God with us.⁴⁴¹

Concerning the education of Augustine’s desire in relation to material things, we can observe that, prior to his realisation about God as the maker, he spent a great deal of effort paying attention to and appreciating beauty. This is not an attitude from which we all begin. Through education or instinct, Augustine had an unusual sensitivity to physical beauty. In *The City of God* he writes of “the extraordinary brilliance and surface effects of the light itself, in sun and moon and stars, in the dark shades of a glade, in the colours and scents of flowers...”.⁴⁴² We can consider this desire for material beauty a good intermediate desire, in that it enriched his later appreciation of God. His intense engagement with the beauty of objects, prior to connecting their beauty to God in the right way, is what makes the realisation so moving for Augustine. If he did not care about the beauty of creation, then he would have no sense of God’s splendour when he realised that this beauty was made by God. Unusually, even from a young age, his relation to material objects was often centered on their beauty. We can see the value of this by comparison with focusing on objects for their status. Collecting lots of things for status reasons would not enrich the thought, were one to come to it later, that God has made all things. While his earlier desire was idolatrous, his habit of being receptive to beauty stocked his memory full of experiences of beauty, and gave weight to his later imaginative attempts to conceive the true object of his desire, a Beauty like the beauty he has known, but also infinitely greater: “Yet there is a light I love, and a good, and a kind of embrace when I

⁴⁴⁰ O’Donovan, ““*Usus*” and “*Fruitio*””, pp. 389-390.

⁴⁴¹ There is something of a parallel, however, between the desire that our neighbour might come to love God more, and a rightly ordered desire for a material object. In the case of physical objects, we might desire that this created thing comes to embody God’s qualities more than it currently does, and act to bring this about, either through the arts of carpentry or architecture. Indeed, O’Donovan notes that Augustine’s *On Music* mentions aesthetic values and how the well-ordered soul should have a part in bringing order to the universe. O’Donovan, p. 379.

⁴⁴² Quoted in Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, p. 329.

love my God – a light, voice, odour, food, embrace of my inner man, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain”.⁴⁴³

Regarding this second way of using material things, if we love them this way ‘in God’, then love in the form of desire should predominate. This is because, rather than resting in worldly things, enjoying them in the sense that we believe we have found our final end, we have a sense that the true goodness of God, which we have glimpsed via God’s creation, is larger than we can imagine, analogous to the good we have known but also transcendently better. As Augustine notes, there is a place for delight, in relating to our neighbours or in experiencing beauty, but it is right that these experiences pass and leave us with desire.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have investigated the education of desire, in order to identify what an art of advertising should aim to achieve. We began by defining the conceptual framework – the concept of *ars* – we use to organise our thinking about how to improve advertising. For advertising to develop from a mere practice into an art, it must be organised around seeking some good. In this case, the goods we are seeking to realise are in the souls of viewers: an art of advertising would seek to educate their desire. We then explored three central strands of this education. First, we discussed the orientation of our desire towards God, developing the idea of intermediate states of desire which would support or enrich a later formation of the desire for God. We examined the idea of educating one’s concept of God, and the role of meditative experience. Second, we discussed the possibility of integrating different desires into the love of God, exploring how status might be loved subordinately to God. We discussed the fallen will in relation to sex, and suggested two

⁴⁴³ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 183.

models for aligning sexual desire with the good: marriage as described by Augustine, and Plato's ascent of *eros*. We also proposed another way of educating desire, which begins with sex appeal, and then introduces a good, not necessarily related to the original desire as it is in Plato's scheme. Finally, we considered good desire in relation to created things. We argued, with Augustine, that we should use all created things in a way which helps us attain our ultimate end. In relation to neighbours, with whom we hope to enjoy God, this means that we love and desire them by imagining them loved and sustained by God. In relation to material objects, we might picture them 'in God', in the way that Augustine looked at material things, understanding God to be their maker, or they might assist us in a practical way to attain some other good, which should also be desired in God. Having thus examined the kind of education an art of advertising should aim to bring about, the next chapter will discuss techniques by which advertisements achieve this.

CHAPTER SIX

AN ETHICAL ADVERTISEMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the techniques by which advertisements create desire might be reformed to better serve the education of desire. In the previous chapter, we discussed what would be involved in developing the practice of advertising into an art, and examined the good which would define such an art. In this chapter we look at the means by which this good might be achieved. Though we have established a foundation in the previous chapter, understanding the good of an art is an ongoing process, advanced not only in discussion, but also by applying suggestions in practice – attempting to make influential ethical advertisements (as in carpentry, in which a carpenter learns about what is possible by practicing, experimenting and discovering what wood has the potential to achieve). This chapter moves the discussion to problems of design, seeking to explore how the underlying principles might look in practice, by taking some of the limitations and demands of the practice into account.

The argument we have been developing in this thesis is that the power of advertising to shape desire might be oriented to the good. This point, however, might apply equally to a range of media. As noted in the previous chapter, there are many arts which also shape desire, from the Eucharist to the production of films. When any powerful persuasive medium exists, from liturgy to online video, the ethical approach is to orient the use of that power towards goodness. Augustine makes this point regarding rhetoric: that its proper role is the propagation of wisdom.⁴⁴⁴ It might seem reasonable, therefore, to set out to describe an ethical advertisement in the same way as we might describe an ideal sermon, or an ideal painting.

⁴⁴⁴ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, pp. 203-205.

However, there is an important way in which advertising differs from these media, which is that advertising involves selling a product or service. Unlike a painting or a film which a viewer pays for because they want to own it or see it, an advertisement is presented to people without payment, and then aims to draw them towards an offering from the company who bought the advertisement. Like a painting, an advertisement can create desire, occasionally for a beautiful ideal, but in advertising it is also necessary that this creation of desire leads some viewers to purchase something. Put in terms of the institutional setting of the practice, ethical advertising will only be competitive with existing advertising if it also makes money for the advertising agency and the client. There are, therefore, a number of limitations and demands particular to this practice, which must be taken into account. The content of the advertisement must mention the commodities, or the company itself; it must engage viewers in some way which eventually leads them to buy from the company; and it must compete with rival efforts to attract customers in the same industry. These demands limit what might be done, as we will discuss below, although there are also possibilities for education unique to the practice of advertising. To describe an ethical advertisement, the challenge is not just to describe how words, images and film might be used to educate desire, but how words, images and film can educate desire in conjunction with selling a product or service.

The chapter is divided into three sections, each of which examines an aspect of an ethical advertisement. Each section uses the account of the education of desire developed in Chapter Five as well as relating back to the criticisms analysed in Chapter Four. The first section examines the presentation of a good vision which is at the heart of an ideal advertisement. It argues that the good should be a true good, in that the qualities should be the qualities of Christ, and that the vision of life presented should either feature the love of God in an overt way or lead the viewer to better desire for the happy life. The second

section looks at how advertisements can present this good in a way which grips all parts of the soul. It examines the appeals to sex and status, arguing that low desires can be useful starting points for leading people towards true needs. The final section examines how advertisements might help people towards the good. It describes how advertisements can help to instil habits of good consumption, that is, the development of deep relationships with products and services, oriented towards the good.

More so than the previous chapters, this chapter involves a creative element, in that we are aiming to describe techniques for an art of advertising which does not yet exist. The creative thinking in this chapter, however, is grounded and constrained in two ways. From one direction, our discussion of the design of techniques is guided by the ethical demands of realising some aspect of the good. Each proposal for reforming advertising is based in an aspect of the education of desire and responds to criticism of existing techniques. From the other direction, the creative thinking is constrained by the practical, commercial demands of advertising. These will shape the discussion at various points. Furthermore, each proposal for better techniques will be developed out of an existing capacity or trend within advertising, using examples of popular advertisements which have succeeded within the constraints of the practice. By situating creative explorations of new techniques within a discussion of the rationale for those techniques and some of the requirements for their implementation, the chapter aims to link theory and practice, and thus to contribute to an ethical vision for the future of the industry.

A good vision

This section describes how an ethical advertisement should present a good vision, that is, a set of good qualities embodied by the advertisement, for instance, in an image, a video, or text. This discussion relates to the first section of Chapter Five which examined the

orientation of desire towards God, for the vision of the advertisement is the object towards which it orients desire. As we argued in Chapter Five, we all have an innate desire for God, as we are made in His image, although this desire might be far from our consciousness.⁴⁴⁵ The education of desire involves bringing the desire for God to consciousness and seeking to make it the guiding desire in our life. This discussion also relates to part of the first section of Chapter Four: the point that the criteria of truthfulness in advertising should focus on whether the advertisement presents a true good.⁴⁴⁶ The desire we are concerned with in this section is the desire for the good, the operation of *logistikon*. In the following section we will address the role of *thymos* and *epithymia*.

How might the vision of an advertisement help orient our desire towards God? To answer this question, we can first examine how an advertisement might explicitly refer to God, drawing on our discussion in the previous chapter of the education of Augustine's concept of God. As we have mentioned in previous examples, some advertisements already appeal to *logistikon*, although they do not present the good as fully as they might. For instance, the VW advertisement we have analysed presents a generous, convivial picture of the meeting of an extended family. From a Christian perspective, we can see many virtues on display in this scene, such as forgiveness and patience.⁴⁴⁷ Yet, as we might expect, the virtues are not shown in an explicitly Christian context, or linked in any way to God. We can consider another example of an advertisement which presents a good ideal: an online video advertisement for Google Search India, created by the Indian branch of Ogilvy & Mather, the agency established by David Ogilvy, who was introduced in Chapter Three. This video tells the story of two childhood friends, Baldev and Yusuf, who

⁴⁴⁵ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, p. 146.

⁴⁴⁶ The other aspect of this conclusion, concerning the truthfulness of the link between the vision and the product, will be addressed in the final section of this chapter.

⁴⁴⁷ Volkswagen, 'Welcome to the Family'. It is unknown in this case whether we are looking at Christian virtue or pagan virtue, as we do not know very much about the people in the advertisement.

were divided by the partition of Pakistan and India, and who have not seen each other since childhood. The granddaughter of one of them looks up her grandfather's old friend using Google and calls the shop in Lahore which his family owns. She speaks to the grandson of the other man, and the two of them arrange for their grandfathers to meet. The daughter, using Google, arranges travel, and her grandfather arrives in Delhi at the front door of his old friend's house. The two men take a moment to recognise each other, before an emotional reunion.⁴⁴⁸ This video, like the VW advertisement, touches on some genuine goods: the Search service helps to bring about the gratitude and mutual love which follows the reuniting of two friends. Nevertheless, in this advertisement we are also being prompted to desire these goods without this desire being related to God. What is missing in both these cases is an effort to direct our desire towards God, to see the goods being presented as God's goodness.

Based on our understanding that the creation of desire involves an encounter, followed by an act of imagination in which the person conceives of the greater whole which they have glimpsed, we can consider two aspects of the vision of an advertisement. The first aspect is the content of the vision, its qualities, which should be grounded in God's goodness; this is the first point from Chapter Four, that the advertisement should present a true good. The second aspect is how we are prompted, in responding to this vision, to imagine the greater whole of which this is a part. That is, the embodiment, or articulation, of the vision should be done in a way which guides our imagination towards understanding that the good is grounded in God. There are a number of ways this could be one. One option is that the vision could be related to a basic concept of God such as Augustine held onto through all his doubts, simply "that you are and that you care for

⁴⁴⁸ Google India, 'Google Search: Reunion', 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHGDN9-oFJE>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

us”.⁴⁴⁹ Alternatively, it could teach what Augustine learnt from the Platonists, that God is spirit. More ambitiously, it could draw on any lesson from Scripture concerning God’s nature and His relation to the humanity and the world, the aspects of God which O’Donnell summarises under justice and goodness.

If we were to reform the VW advertisement, for example, we would ideally want the viewer to understand that the good qualities presented – forgiveness and patience – belong to God; that these desirable things are embodied by Christ, and are central themes of the kind of relationships which God wants us to form with each other. Ideally, in the course of an emotionally moving encounter with virtues in action, the viewer is prompted to consider the greater divine good of which these are a part: the nature of God and His relation to us. Examining this particular advertisement, we can see that there is indeed an opportunity to refer the viewer’s mind in this direction. Accompanying the video is a song, to the tune of ‘The Animals Came in Two by Two’ also known as ‘Into the Ark’, written to match the scenes in the advertisement. The song tells the story of the glimpses of the various interactions: that the grandmother has fallen asleep while they try to bring her some cake, that the parents and children are playing cricket together, for instance.⁴⁵⁰ The gentle, kind, cheerful tone of the song, as well as the nuances of acting in the scenes, show that everyone copes well with upsets and treats each other kindly. This song is the technique by which the advertisement prompts our imagination. It is explaining the context for the images and guiding how we should interpret our glimpses. As the video is only forty-five seconds long, there is not space for a lengthy message about God, but a talented songwriter could include a line suggesting that this is God’s love. For instance, one could include at the end ‘this is the way it’s meant to be / though we’re a far from perfect family / it’s the forgiveness which looks down on us / from God and the stars

⁴⁴⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 96.

⁴⁵⁰ Volkswagen, ‘Volkswagen: Welcome to the Family’.

above'. Whatever the lyrics, the principle is that ethical reform of this advertisement should explore rewriting the song to include the message that this is the kind of love God wants us to have for each other, because this is the kind of love He has for us. The advertisement would thus make a contribution to guiding our desire to focus on God's love, understood and articulated as such in our imagination.⁴⁵¹

We can consider another case of how the vision of an advertisement might be reformed to direct desire towards God. In the Google advertisement, one starting point would be to consider the theological meaning of the tearful reunion of two friends at the centre of the narrative. The advertisement creates desire around this moment of joy and mutual love. As in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32), losing and finding people in our life can be considered an analogy to losing and finding God. Moments of actually feeling love for God's goodness are hard to hold onto, but we might feel a similar love when we think back to good experiences in childhood, as the people do in the advertisement, or when we see the goodness in a friend, as they do in their reunion. The task, therefore, as above, is to relate this vision to God. One possibility is that the friends themselves could thank God, or, the advertisement could finish with a short message: 'God's goodness is in all of us. We only have to search and we will find it'. More substantially, the narrative could be rewritten to show someone reuniting with religion. In the same way that the grandson uses Google to search for the grandfather's old friend, he could use Google to find a Bible verse, or a church service. The tearful climax might occur as the grandfather returns to church after many years, recovering the religion he knew in childhood, but had forgotten. As in the existing advertisement, the service, Google Search,

⁴⁵¹ Although it may seem a small, and perhaps insignificant change, to mention God, we can see the importance of such a move when we consider Augustine's emphasis on the importance of referral. Brown explains this theme within Augustine's thought: "A good action is one that is undertaken in the light of a relation to a wider framework: the word *referre*, 'to refer', or 'relate', is central to Augustine's discussion of human activity; and for Augustine, of course, this human activity, of whatever kind, can only reach fulfilment when it can take its place in a harmonious whole, where everything is in relation to God". Any opportunity to relate a depiction of God's goodness explicitly to God should be valued in this context. Brown, 'Saint Augustine', p. 7.

is positioned as playing a modest but important role in helping something good to happen. In both examples above, the principle is that the vision of the advertisement is related to God, meaning that it creates desire around aspects of God's nature, such as His forgiveness and patience, perhaps seen as virtues, or around an aspect of how God relates to humanity, such as the love He has for the person who has wandered, and the joy we would share with Him were we to return to Him.

One might argue that such brief mentions of God, or short narratives leading to God, are unlikely to have any beneficial effect on people's lives. Indeed, no single advertisement, probably, can inspire a desire for God. There are, however, two points we can make which place such brief mentions in context, and which should be considered before we dismiss the power of the reforms suggested above. First, the cumulative effect of advertising can be great. As discussed in the third section of Chapter Four, advertising has contributed to a culture in which *thymos* and *epithymia* are often dominant influences in the soul. Of course, ethical advertising, even if it reached a large audience, would begin with limited influence over that audience; however, over time, through repetition of individual advertisements, and with the combined effect of other ethical advertisements, the art could contribute to a change in mental habits among viewers. Second, as we will see below, contemporary techniques enable a single advertisement to include more content. We will examine this point especially in the final section as we discuss how advertisements can help viewers pursue the good by cultivating long-term engagements and loyalty. The vision is seen briefly, but it is an important starting point, and over time the viewer might be helped to pursue it.

These scenarios above assume that the commissioning company is willing to be associated with overt mentions of God, and that the intended demographic would be receptive to such a message. That such a situation is unlikely, at least in the United

Kingdom, is suggested by the fate of an advertisement commissioned by the Church of England featuring the Lord's Prayer, which was rejected by the country's leading cinemas on the grounds that the prayer "carries the risk of upsetting, or offending, audiences".⁴⁵² This seems to suggest that we should be pessimistic about the possibility of widespread, overtly religious advertising, like the suggestions above. Companies or advertising agencies may fear that religious messages will turn people away. Nevertheless, before we dismiss this possibility, we should note two reasons for hope. The first is that the United Kingdom is one of the world's most secular countries. This approach to ethical advertising might find a more favourable audience, and more sympathetic commissioning companies, in parts of the United States, or in Latin America, for example. The second reason for hope is that a predominantly secular culture might in fact create a greater opportunity for inventive advertising that refers to God. For advertising has a history of playing successfully with potentially offensive and unsettling themes. A prominent example of this is the advertising strategy of the clothing company United Colors of Benetton, which has focused on making statements about racism. One advertisement shows a picture of three bloody human hearts, each of which looks identical apart from a different word printed on top of it: white, black, yellow.⁴⁵³ In his history of the advertising industry, Mark Tungate summarises the development of Benetton's campaigns, which were led by the photographer Oliviero Toscani:

His earliest images appropriated the theme of multiculturalism ('United Colors of Benetton'), and although they remained within the boundaries of acceptable taste, they were already ahead of their time. Towards the end of the [1980s], though, Toscani's work became more provocative, with an image of a black woman breastfeeding a white baby. This was followed a short time later by a picture of two little girls, one white and

⁴⁵² The Church of England, 'Church of England "Bewildered" by Cinema Ban on Lord's Prayer', 2015, [https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/11/church-of-england-"bewildered"-by-cinema-ban-on-lord's-prayer.aspx](https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/11/church-of-england-), (accessed 21 April 2016).

⁴⁵³ AdReview, 'Hearts', 2010, <http://www.ad-review.co.uk/view/image/item/hearts/1338>, (accessed 21 April 2016). The focus of desire in this advertisement is the ideal of racial equality, the thought that more of us might recognise our common humanity, which the image embodies.

one black. The black girl's hair had been sculpted into the shape of two devilish horns. Was the ad racist – or what is a comment on racism? It was impossible to tell, which was exactly what Toscani had intended. This was no longer advertising: it was fuel for debate.⁴⁵⁴

One might argue that today, it is commercially less risky to fight for multiculturalism than it would be to fight for a particular understanding of God. However, we should observe that the Benetton campaigns worked for the very reason that the topic was emotionally charged. The fact that references to God are risky, therefore, should not lower our hopes for advertising moving into this territory. Rather, it raises a challenge for advertisers, to take advantage of the controversy around the topic. One might imagine an advertisement by a boutique bank wishing to draw attention to itself, and raise debate around ethics, for example, which presented images of forgiveness, along with the line 'God is higher than money'. Or, we could imagine a campaign which featured videos of people in hospital talking about what mattered most to them in their lives, and mentioning their thoughts about God. These reflections on what mattered most would prompt images of a good life – the object of desire for the viewer – which referenced God. Such an advertisement would be helping to direct desire towards God, while positioning the company, such as a bank or an insurance firm, as an organisation engaged with important values. Like the Benetton campaigns, this advertisement would suggest that buying the company's products and services might be a step towards the ideals of a good life, presented in religious terms.⁴⁵⁵

Furthermore, advertisements have a history of using playfulness as a disarming move, a technique which might be helpful in making explicit mentions of God in a largely secular culture. As Tungate notes, this playful approach developed in advertising as it absorbed the counter-cultural trends in music, fashion and photography during the 1960s

⁴⁵⁴ M. Tungate, *Adland: A Global History of Advertising*, London, Kogan Page, 2007, p. 147.

⁴⁵⁵ In the third section of this chapter we will examine how advertisements can help us relate to products and services in a way which actually moves us closer to the greater object of desire.

and 1970s.⁴⁵⁶ Yet advertising has also made fun of the tenets of that alternative culture, for instance, the 1979 slogan for Fiat Strada which makes no apology for industrialisation: “Hand built by robots”.⁴⁵⁷ Or the 2002 IKEA advertisement which promotes industrial efficiency over sentimentalism: the video deftly creates pity in the viewer for an old lamp being discarded by its owners, before a man suddenly walks onto the screen and announces in a Swedish accent: “Many of you feel bad for this lamp. That is because you are crazy. It has no feelings. And the new one is much better”.⁴⁵⁸ Although making a statement supporting God runs counter to the post-war alternative culture which shaped advertising, in a predominantly secular culture, the technique of making playful statements against prevailing norms may, ironically, turn out to be helpful for promoting religion. We can imagine some ways of mentioning God which are witty but not irreverent: a car advertisement which might conclude, ‘it wasn’t us that made it, it was God’, or ‘thank God for this car – literally’. Whatever the particular tactic of the advertisement, the underlying point is that the controversy surrounding religion could reasonably be considered an opportunity for the creativity of advertisers, rather than a reason for pessimism about the possibility of overt references to God.

Despite this, however, given that our aim is to describe an art of advertising which might realistically be pursued, we should also explore what is possible under more pessimistic assumptions. Assuming that no influential company or advertising agency would take up the challenge of explicitly linking an advertisement to God, is there any way the vision of an advertisement might still help orient desire towards God? We are assuming in this case that a company would be interested in pursuing an ethical,

⁴⁵⁶ Tungate, p. 84.

⁴⁵⁷ ‘Fiat Strada ‘Handbuilt by Robots’ by Collett Dickenson Pearce’, *Campaign*, 20 March 2009, <http://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/fiat-strada-handbuilt-robots-collett-dickenson-pearce/893171>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

⁴⁵⁸ Sterntag Film, ‘Ikea - “Lamp”’, 2012, <https://vimeo.com/34504930>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

theologically informed advertising campaign, but would be wary of the risks of mentioning Christianity explicitly. For this purpose we might draw on Augustine's discussion of the happy life, considered in the previous chapter. In our argument, we defined two criteria to assess desires for the happy life which are not for God, but which are good precursors to the desire for God: first, whether the desire is likely to set us on a path leading to the desire for God, and second, whether the desire would be rejected or taken up and clarified in a future love of God.

We will now seek to investigate this position further by exploring what it might look like in practice. For this purpose we will introduce a new advertisement, for the personal care company Dove, called 'Dove Real Beauty Sketches'. This advertisement is a three-minute video which aims to explore "the gap between how others perceive us and how we perceive ourselves". The video begins by introducing a forensic sketch artist, who is skilled at drawing pictures of people based solely on verbal descriptions. He sits in a room, hidden behind an opaque screen, while a woman enters the room and describes herself to him. From her description he draws a portrait. She leaves, and another woman enters, who had been sitting next to the first woman in the waiting room outside. This second woman now describes the first woman to the artist. In this way, two portraits are produced, one based on a self-description, and the other based on a description by a stranger. This is repeated a few times, and at the end, all the participants are shown into a gallery with the finished portraits. Looking at the different versions side-by-side, it is clear that each person has been harsh in describing their own appearance. The portraits from the stranger's descriptions are not only better looking, they are more accurate. The mood is contemplative, and the setting is beautiful: the gallery is in a sunlight-filled upper story of a converted warehouse. A few of the women wipe away tears as they observe the differences between the two portraits, and the complete impression is moving. One

participant comments: “We spend a lot of time, as women, analysing and trying to fix the things that aren’t quite right. And we should spend more time appreciating the things that we do like”. After this, the scene fades to the message: “You are more beautiful than you think”. The final image is the Dove logo and a link to the website dedicated to the campaign.⁴⁵⁹

What is interesting about this advertisement is that it does not stand alone. It is part of a ten-year advertising campaign by Dove on the theme of beauty and self-esteem, called the ‘Dove Self-Esteem Project’.⁴⁶⁰ The website to which the link refers is the online home of this project, providing a range of material for viewers to engage with after having watched any one of a number of video advertisements which refer to the website. In the advertising industry, this approach is called ‘multichannel marketing’, meaning the effort to reach viewers with a single idea via multiple means, television advertisements, online videos, websites, billboards, and print advertising, for example.⁴⁶¹ Dove has produced at least six videos as part of this campaign.⁴⁶² The unifying vision is described on the website: “At Dove, we have a vision of a world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety. Our mission is to ensure the next generation grows up enjoying a positive relationship with the way they look”. The content on the website is focused on the idea of ‘body confidence’, which the authors argue is an important ingredient for living up to one’s potential. The advisors are a group of doctors, research psychologists and psychotherapists, as well as public figures known for their work on issues related to women’s body image.⁴⁶³ The campaign has been extraordinarily successful: one month

⁴⁵⁹ Dove US, ‘Dove Real Beauty Sketches: You’re More Beautiful Than You Think’, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk>, 2013, (accessed 11 April 2016).

⁴⁶⁰ Dove, *Dove Self-Esteem Project*, 2016, <http://selfesteem.dove.co.uk/>, (accessed 21 April, 2016).

⁴⁶¹ C. Gomersall, ‘Agencies, It’s Time to Own Multichannel Marketing’, *Advertising Age*, 11 September 2015, <http://adage.com/article/digitalnext/agencies-time-multi-channel-content-marketing/300284/>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

⁴⁶² J. Neff, ‘Ten Years In, Dove’s ‘Real Beauty’ Seems to Be Aging Well’, *Advertising Age*, 22 January, 2014, <http://adage.com/article/news/ten-years-dove-s-real-beauty-aging/291216/>, (accessed 14 April 2016).

⁴⁶³ Dove, ‘Our Mission in Action’, 2016, http://selfesteem.dove.co.uk/Articles/Written/Our_Mission_in_Practice.aspx, (accessed 21 April 2016).

after it was released, Real Beauty Sketches became the most watched video advertisement on the internet, with 114 million views in twenty-five languages.⁴⁶⁴ The ten-year advertising campaign as a whole has been credited with an increase in Dove's sales from two and a half billion to four billion dollars over that period.⁴⁶⁵

This kind of advertising campaign, which engages the viewer with multiple advertisements in different media around a vision, has been employed by other large companies. Procter & Gamble has run a multichannel marketing campaign focusing on giving a better meaning to the phrase 'like a girl' – one of the advertisements has sixty million views.⁴⁶⁶ Another successful example is the campaign 'Better For It' run by Nike. For this they have produced a series of ten-minute episodes of a story called 'Margot vs Lily', which follows the narrative of a bet between two sisters – that Margot can make some new friends, and Lily can learn to exercise. They also reach customers with a website advertising clothing related to the short films, and a fitness training phone 'app'. This also proven popular: the first episode of the series received nineteen million views.⁴⁶⁷

Although multichannel marketing is more elaborate than the single, discrete advertisements we have examined previously, we can analyse it along the same lines because it is unified by one vision. Although there are more techniques, all these serve the creation of desire for the one object, which is the vision. We can ask, therefore, how might the vision which orders the Dove Real Beauty campaign be reformed to better serve the education of desire? Currently, the vision is of a life lived enjoying a positive relationship with one's appearance. The campaign is setting up this ideal as the object of desire important for a fulfilled life; an ideal we can reach if we change the way we think. As they

⁴⁶⁴ S.M. Kelly, 'Viral Dove Campaign Becomes Most Watched Ad Ever', *MashableUK*, 20 May 2013, <http://mashable.com/2013/05/20/dove-ad-most-watched/#tTGT9f8RNEqN>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

⁴⁶⁵ Neff, 'Ten Years In'. These figures are in US dollars.

⁴⁶⁶ Always, 'Always #LikeAGirl', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJBjWYDTs>, (accessed 26 April 2016).

⁴⁶⁷ Nike, *Front Row by NikeWomen*, 2016, http://www.nike.com/us/en_us/c/women/better-for-it/margot-v-lily, (accessed 26 April 2016). For the first episode see NikeWomen, 'Margot vs Lily – "Resolutions" by NikeWomen', 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iggq7fbL6-8>, (accessed 26 April 2016).

write: “Positive body image means accepting the way you look, in spite of any perceived imperfections, and rejecting the narrowly defined beauty ideals of the media or society”. To make us happier with our physical appearance seems a fine aim. From the perspective of our earlier discussion, however, the opportunity Dove is missing is to focus our desire on inner goods. Although they are concerned with an inner change, this change is solely about the perception of our body. “Because girls are surrounded by a narrow interpretation of beauty and so many digitally manipulated images, it’s easy to believe a ‘perfect’ body exists. If you think a girl might be feeling this influence, check out our article about beauty perceptions for guidance on how to help her see beyond the manipulated images in the media”.⁴⁶⁸ Yet – to elaborate on the discussion from the last chapter – they have a chance to extend the discussion of beauty to the idea of spiritual beauty, which would be an education of desire.

Dove’s vision would be improved if they built it around the idea of loving inner, spiritual goods – promoting a vision of a happy life in which the appreciation of such goods is central. Indeed, the Dove Real Beauty Sketches video already touches on this theme. In the interviews at the end of the video, one woman compares the qualities embodied by her two portraits, referring to some spiritual qualities: “She looks closed off and fatter, sadder too; the second one looks more open, friendly, and happy”.⁴⁶⁹ In an earlier video of the campaign from 2007, ‘Daughters’, one girl makes the comment: “Either you’re too tall or you’re too short, or you’re too skinny, you’re too fat. It doesn’t seem so important what’s inside to a lot of guys and girls”.⁴⁷⁰ If Dove were to take up the theme of inner goods, they could focus their material on rehabilitating the idea of ‘inner beauty’. For example, a starting point could be to design an advertisement around the

⁴⁶⁸ Dove, ‘Frequently Asked Questions’, 2016, <http://selfesteem.dove.co.uk/Faq.aspx>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

⁴⁶⁹ Dove US, ‘Dove Real Beauty Sketches’.

⁴⁷⁰ Laughsnmore, ‘Dove Mothers and Daughters’, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_Km6o331sY, (accessed 21 April 2016).

phrase ‘she has a great personality’, which is occasionally used as a euphemism for saying someone is ugly. The advertisement could demonstrate how inner beauty is attractive, and that it is often the basis of physical beauty, because the spirit animates the body. To go further, the advertisement could focus on particular qualities, informed by Christian ethics; the campaign could explore two aspects of love, admiration and generosity. It could present the cultivation of these loves in oneself and one’s children as central to inner beauty and a fulfilled life. With this message to the fore, there could an opportunity, as a background part of the scene, or in materials on the website, to mention or explain the phrase which Augustine learnt from the Platonists: ‘God is spirit’. The fact that the company is called ‘Dove’ may provide an opportunity to examine the past symbolism of the name. Such a campaign might be conceivable were a company like Dove to employ sympathetic theologians and classic philosophers, in addition to doctors and psychotherapists.

In the last chapter we discussed what kind of desires for the happy life could be helpful steps towards developing a desire for God. In the case above we have connected these arguments to the reform of existing techniques in advertising. Referring directly to God may not be possible, if the company does not want to run a controversial campaign, or if they are concerned about communicating across cultures in twenty-five languages, for example. In this case we need to turn to the advice of advertiser Sir John Hegarty: “Don’t focus on what you can’t say, but concentrate on what you can”.⁴⁷¹ We have explored how a viewer’s desire might be focused away from the body towards inner, spiritual goods. Now we can see, in more detail than the last chapter, how certain ideas of the happy life might be good precursors to the desire for God. Imagine a young girl engaged with this ethical advertising campaign. She would learn that the spirit animates

⁴⁷¹ Hegarty, *Hegarty on Advertising*, p. 178.

the body, and can give it beauty. While this would not necessarily lead her to God, by analogy, it would make the view intelligible, that God animates the soul, and the world, and gives it form and beauty. She would learn that cultivating a good inner life is the basis for finding peace of mind, around one's body, and elsewhere. This might lay the groundwork for an interest in lessons from Christianity about what it means to have a good inner life – to love God. And she would be prompted to reflect on specific good qualities, the different aspects of love, which would help in noticing God's goodness in others, even if she did not yet know it as God's. This is not the ideal situation. It could go wrong, like Augustine's search for wisdom led him first to the Manichees. Yet an ethical advertisement will not always be able to lead people directly to God. What is possible is that these techniques, and the techniques to be discussed below, are guided by an account of the education of desire organised around the goal of leading people to God, a goal which, we hope, is shared by other arts in society. If it is impossible for an advertising campaign to go further, we can only hope that other Christian means do.

Appealing to the whole soul

This section examines another aspect of an ethical advertisement: the techniques which it might use to appeal appropriately to the lower desires of the soul, *thymos* and *epithymia*. This follows on from the second aspect of the education of desire discussed in Chapter Five: how these lower parts of the soul should align with or serve the desires of the higher. We will therefore investigate whether an advertisement can present a good vision while appealing to the desire for status or the desire for sex in a way that does not undermine the vision. This section also relates to the distinction made in Chapter Four between mere desires and needs. The argument, in these terms, is that an ethical advertisement should not only create desire for what we need (creating desire for a good vision) but also align

mere desires (the desires for status, or sex) with the attainment of the good. We will examine the appeal to the desire for praise and status first before turning to a discussion of sexual desire.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Plato describes *thymos* as desiring “power and victory and a good name”.⁴⁷² In the previous chapter, we investigated these desires for power and human glory primarily through Augustine’s work. From one angle, we looked at how they can be a barrier to the love of Christ, leading us into “the slavery of worldly affairs”.⁴⁷³ The way to avoid this danger is to seek humility, to reduce the desire for one’s own aggrandisement, and instead to seek to fill the underlying lack with the truly fulfilling object, the eternal glory of God, in which we might participate. From another angle within Augustine’s work, we looked at how ‘the smoke of human honour’ might surround more or less valuable objects. Augustine proposes that honour should not be sought for its own sake, but “for some good thing which may through this means be accomplished”.⁴⁷⁴ One problem with this argument, we noted, was Augustine’s lack of examples showing in detail how this might be done. In what follows we will discuss one example of how honour may be rightly used as a means.

Consider the Patek Philippe advertisement we have discussed, which links the purchase of a luxury watch to the ideal of high status. The suggestion in this advertisement is that by making a heroic purchase – heroic because the cost of the watch is a sacrifice – one can be assured of being remembered by future generations.⁴⁷⁵ There is the promise of lasting honour. An ethical challenge for advertisers would be to design an advertisement for a luxury watch which made use of the desire for status in a comparatively benign way.

⁴⁷² Plato, *The Republic*, p. 300.

⁴⁷³ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 141.

⁴⁷⁴ Augustine, ‘Letter CXXX’, ch. 6.

⁴⁷⁵ Plato sees the desire for heroic action as an aspect of *thymos*, as discussed in Chapter Three. In discussing Augustine’s work in the previous chapter we did not address this theme explicitly, although Augustine clearly sees the desire for heroic acts as an aspect of the desire for human glory. See Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 207-212.

We might in fact link the second part of Augustine's argument with the first, by using the honour as a way to direct people to value humility. Given the competition among luxury watch brands for ever-greater levels of complication, it might in fact be a strength to compete in this market on a principle of modesty. A company with a more homely reputation than Patek Philippe, such as Swatch, for example, could commission an advertisement on the theme of modesty and humility. Drawing on the point that we need to remember our sinfulness, a possible slogan could be: 'Feeling like a sinner is a great way not to look like an idiot'. The advertisement could portray a group of young bankers being egoistic and boastful in various settings, but in a way that makes them look small-minded, and makes the viewer cringe. That is, the viewer is prompted not to see these people as praiseworthy, so that their status is lowered in the eyes of the audience. The intention would not be to make someone who already dislikes bankers cringe; rather, the aim would be to have this effect on a status-driven young person who is interested in or already involved in the financial industry. The strategy would be to define a new identity, a sub-culture, based around humility, in contrast to the dominance of pridefulness in this part of the economy. The creation of desire might occur by placing the watch in the advertisement, worn by a self-contained, stylishly dressed woman, speaking to a man at the bar. One of these two people should be a celebrity who is already admired by the intended audience. These two people, along with the watch, would present the desirable vision of the advertisement: a high-status life with a prominent theme of modesty. The aim would be to make humility 'cool', that is, praised or honourable. This would be the primary attraction, for those people who are driven primarily by the desire to be praised. But the advertisement would also aim to show the beauty of humility to people once they were attracted by initial appeal. If successful, the advertisement would, for a group of people, help shift the honoured quality from pride to humility. Therefore, the search for

human honour and glory, amongst this group, would lead in a better direction.

Furthermore, such an advertisement would also appeal to the desire for heroic action which Plato and Augustine discuss as often present with the desire for praise. The heroic action in this case, however, rather than a sacrifice of money, would be the bold move of choosing to wear a modest watch.

In this example, it would be the company, Swatch, seeking to obtain honour, to use as a means to a good end. Like many advertisements, this video would function to direct esteem towards the product and the company's name. However, the intention would be to articulate a good quality symbolised by the product, so that people driven to seek status are in fact directed towards a good. On this basis, Augustine's statement that it is proper to seek honour to be used as a means for good, would support this move. Also, in its structure, this situation mirrors the larger events of Augustine's life, when he was drawn to Milan and Ambrose ruled by a desire for human glory, but in his interactions with Ambrose, was educated, both in terms of his concept of God and the strength of his desire for God relative to his other desires. The intention of this advertisement is to have a similar effect, on people who are likewise initially guided by the longing for honour: to appeal to status initially, to draw someone in, but then to educate them in such a way that the desire for status is lessened in their soul. Like Augustine in his journey, then, the viewer of the advertisement is educated without their knowledge; in darkness, as it were, relative to the awareness one hopes they will develop. As Augustine writes of how God led him to Ambrose: "I was led to him by you, unaware that through him, in full awareness, I might be led to you".⁴⁷⁶

As we saw in the Dove campaign, current techniques are enabling longer engagements with viewers, increasing the opportunity to educate desire. The Swatch

⁴⁷⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 87-88.

watch advertising campaign, likewise, might incorporate online material. Adopting a recent trend, it could include a video game based around the different attitudes to status.⁴⁷⁷ The design of this game could be informed by Augustine's descriptions in *The City of God* of various figures who had better or worse relationships to human glory. Having played the Swatch status game, participants could be categorised as an ally of Emperor Nero who "despises glory yet is avid for mastery", or Caesar, motivated by "passion for glory".⁴⁷⁸ Other ways of interacting in the game could lead to one being compared to Cato the worldly yet more honourable Roman, or the Desert Fathers or Apostles, who remain true to their good message even when it is held in low esteem. Like the Dove website, surrounding commentary could be written to provoke discussion, perhaps posing the question of whether one should aim to be "he who despises the judgement of those who praise him".⁴⁷⁹ Then, if viewers were amenable to being led further, they could be introduced to the idea that the true pursuit of glory is to praise goodness wherever we find it, to know that the praise does not belong to us or others, but that in praising and loving goodness we can share in the "love of intelligible beauty" which is God.⁴⁸⁰ In all interactions with potential customers, buying the product would be positioned as the first step one might take, to adopt a more humble and therefore more receptive approach to life, with the love of the greater good as the longer-term goal.⁴⁸¹

One possible argument opposing this advertisement is that it excites and exaggerates people's desire for status. One might argue that it would be better to lead people without the appeal to the desire for honour and status. This view could certainly find support within Augustine's work, most obviously in his strong warnings about the

⁴⁷⁷ The integration of advertising and games is a growing trend. See S. Hicks, 'Does the Video Game Industry Hold the Keys to the Future of Advertising?', *Adweek*, 6 February 2014, <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/engage-consumers-brain-chemistry-155531>, (accessed 21 April 2016).

⁴⁷⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 224; p. 208.

⁴⁷⁹ Augustine, p. 224.

⁴⁸⁰ Augustine, p. 213.

⁴⁸¹ As mentioned, we will explore the role of the product in more detail in the following section.

desire for human glory in *The City of God*. It is “beyond doubt” better to resist the desire, he argues. Regarding those who are ruled by it, even those who seek the praise of men of good judgment, he writes: “These are not, therefore, yet holy; they are only less vile”.⁴⁸² The difference between the city of man and the city of God is the object of its love. The former is ordered to the desire for human glory; the latter to the love of God. One might argue that the advertisement above simply entrenches the sin of the city of man, in seeking to guide people by playing to their desire for praise. However, this is not the entire picture of Augustine’s position. To counter this argument, however, we might observe two further points about Augustine’s work. The first point we explored in the previous chapter: although he is vehemently against the desire as a guiding love, he acknowledges that the power of status might be used as an instrument for the good. He declares in his *Letter to Proba* that the wish to use honour to bring about something good “is a proper one”.⁴⁸³ Although in this case, this would be the wish of the advertiser, not the wish of the viewer, he also describes the example of Victorinus in an unambiguously positive light, remarking how he used the extra power of his status to draw more people towards conversion and baptism, and praising God for Victorinus’ unusual power to sway people towards this good.⁴⁸⁴ Victorinus’ influence moves people in the same way in which they might be moved by the use of celebrity in the advertisement, and, one might think, what Augustine applies to Victorinus he should apply to Jude Law. The goal of this advertisement – encouraging people to value humility – is not as transformational as directing people towards baptism. Yet even if viewers are drawn in simply because what is ‘cool’ for them has been redefined, they are more likely to be open to further education in desire if they value humility, even just nominally, than if they overtly and happily value boasting.

⁴⁸² Augustine, p. 213.

⁴⁸³ Augustine, ‘Letter CXXX’, ch. 6.

⁴⁸⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 135-139.

The second point we might observe about Augustine's approach to the desire for honour concerns the act of writing *The City of God* itself. Though he rails against the *libido dominandi* and a society whose highest motive is human glory, he is attempting to convert people who live this way. He engages thoroughly with their starting point, with imaginative sympathy for what they admire, even though he hopes to lead them elsewhere. For instance, early in the work he discusses the heroic Marcus Regulus with some admiration.⁴⁸⁵ Of course, his theme is the superiority of Christianity over pagan worship, and he emphasises that Regulus worshipped idols. However, one of his underlying strategies in the work is to use pagan sympathy for splendid cities and a heroic people to lead them towards the true God and the heavenly city, which is a no less heroic path. In the advertisement we are seeking to make a similar move, not only to shift the object to which human glory attaches, but eventually towards considering true glory. Valuing humility is a first step in this direction. Furthermore, Brown observes, in discussing Augustine's early sermons, that he rarely adopts the technique of standing apart from and threatening his audience, aware that "the preacher had to keep his audience united by meeting them half-way on many issues".⁴⁸⁶ Even though Augustine is repelled by status as a ruling motive, he does describe a spectrum of better and worse ways of ordering a nature in which this desire "cannot be completely eradicated from the heart".⁴⁸⁷ With the aim of educating desire, therefore, we hope to move people along this spectrum. Based on the points above, we might conclude that Augustine would be sympathetic to the necessity of meeting certain audiences half-way, as a place to start.

The other force Augustine discusses which holds him back from a love of God is the desire for sex. We will address desires in the category of *epithymia* by continuing this

⁴⁸⁵ Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 23-26.

⁴⁸⁶ Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, p. 250.

⁴⁸⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 214.

discussion of sexual desire. As we noted in the previous chapter, it is difficult to apply Augustine's arguments about sexual desire to advertising, particularly because he did not focus on how the power of this desire might be used for good within an art. As we have discussed, Plato's outline of an ideal education of *eros* in the *Symposium* begins with a sexual encounter, which is then used by the teacher as an occasion to develop a desire with a more focused object – more directed towards the good. Augustine, in contrast with Plato, emphasises the permanent twistedness of our fallen sexual desire, lamenting the “harsh bondage” in which it held his will.⁴⁸⁸ Augustine, nevertheless, does argue that the desire for sex might in practice support the attainment of goods – children, and the love between husband and wife – in the context of an institution which “confine[s] such lust within lawful bonds”.⁴⁸⁹ He also believes that sexual desire was once part of well-ordered life, in Adam and Eve before the Fall, a view which, as Brown remarks, was a more “full-blooded” vision than the outlook of many of his contemporaries.⁴⁹⁰ What are the implications of this discussion in the previous chapter for the design of an ethical advertisement?

The advertisements from American Apparel are a good example to consider because they are based almost entirely on sex appeal. The company has been producing the same kind of advertisement for over a decade, and it seems to have been successful in drawing customers towards their brand of clothing.⁴⁹¹ As it is now, this campaign is as morally vacuous as the ‘Ken Bruce Has Gone Completely Mad’ advertisement we analysed in Chapter Three. Yet we might apply the version of the education of desire we discussed in the last chapter to consider if this sex appeal could be rightly used. How

⁴⁸⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 140.

⁴⁸⁹ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, p. 13.

⁴⁹⁰ Brown, *The Body and Society*, pp. 399-401.

⁴⁹¹ Zerbo, J., ‘A Brief History of American Apparel’, *Dazed*, January 2016, <http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/28779/1/a-brief-history-of-american-apparel>, (accessed 22 April 2016).

might the appeal to sexual desire be used to serve a good vision? Our starting point should be to try to relate the themes in the advertisement to themes in Scripture. One starting point could be to consider the connection between these images of women in the posters, and the recurrence in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, of comparisons between beautiful places and beautiful women. Charles Ellicott, in his Bible commentary, makes this point, describing Hebrew as “a language that delighted in personifying a nation or city under the character of a maiden”. He refers, for example, to Isaiah 47:1 and Song of Songs 6:4: “Thou *art* beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem...”.⁴⁹² In these advertisements, there is an opportunity to draw such a comparison. Many of the American Apparel images contain a dense block of text explaining some background about the model. The text is usually uninspiring, for instance, “...in her free time Maryam likes to practice her oil painting, record music, experiment with photography...”.⁴⁹³ Yet, in viewing the advertisement, one looks first to the image and then to the text, to find out more about the vision, indeed, the person, being presented. This is the moment in which we might move the viewer from the sexual desire, to a desire which appeals to *logistikon*. The existing text could be replaced by a statement which prompts the viewer to divine things. There is an appropriate passage in one of Augustine’s sermons, on the Gospel of John, which one might simply insert unaltered into the advertisement:

Give me a man in love: he knows what I mean. Give me one who yearns; give me one who is hungry; give me one far away in this desert, who is thirsty and sighs for the spring of the Eternal country. Give me that sort of man: he knows what I mean. But if I speak to a cold man, he just does not know what I am talking about....⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² C.J. Ellicott, *An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers*, vol. 4, London, Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co, 1882, <https://archive.org/details/oldtestamentcomm04elli>, (accessed 22 April 2016).

⁴⁹³ American Apparel, ‘Our Ads’.

⁴⁹⁴ Quoted in Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, p. 375.

Or, one might experiment with juxtaposing lines from Scripture with the images, perhaps from Psalm 36, on which Augustine draws in this sermon: "...they shall be made drunk with the fullness of Thy house; and of the torrents of Thy pleasures Thou wilt give them to drink; for in Thee is the Fountain of Life..." (Ps. 36:8-9).⁴⁹⁵ It is not important whether this text actually describes the qualities in the initial 'beloved'. Even if the higher desire is only loosely related to the initial, sexual object, the goal is to create the higher desire. Indeed, a degree of disjunction between the two elements could prove effective in drawing attention. This technique might have the effect, at least in some cases, of prompting people to desire and investigate the higher beauty hinted at in the advertisement, even though they were initially drawn in by *epithymia*, which has no ability to discern goodness.

To return to Augustine's thought on sexual desire, however, this example seems more difficult to justify than the example of the status-based advertisement above. Firstly, we cannot claim that the way sexual desire would operate in this advertisement is very much like Paradise. Even assuming the viewer responds as we would hope, there is a gap between the operation of sexual desire and the orientation of their desire towards the good vision. They experience a moment of sexual desire, and then later come to read the text and, perhaps, imagine the good. In Paradise, in contrast, according to Augustine, the desire "coincided perfectly with the conscious will", which was a will directed by the desire for God.⁴⁹⁶ We could make the argument that, if we take Paradise as an ideal by which to judge worldly situations, the reformed advertisement is at least an improvement on the current advertisement. For sexual desire works less against the desire for the good than it does in the original advertisement. A critic might respond, however, in the same way one might criticise the Swatch advertisement above: appealing to sexual desire strengthens the habit. The critic's argument seems stronger here, however, than in the case above. This is

⁴⁹⁵ Quoted in Brown, p. 374.

⁴⁹⁶ Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 402.

because Augustine does not argue for or give examples of the good use of sex appeal – other than noting that it attracts people into marriage. Furthermore, the particular nature of sexual desire is that it can overtake our minds in a rush. As we discussed in Chapter Three, Plato discusses *himeros* as sexual desire which flows like a stream, rushing into the soul. Augustine does not use this imagery, but he is emphatic about the disruptive power of the desire. As Cavadini paraphrases Augustine’s view, this desire is for “a pleasure which is ‘unsurpassed among physical pleasures’ and which involves the almost complete obliteration of the mind’s powers of discernment”.⁴⁹⁷ In describing the scenario above, then we may not have taken account, as much as Augustine would have, of the disruptive power of the desire for sex. Especially given the gap in the viewer’s experience between the sexual stimulus and the attempt to direct one’s mind to the good, it seems more likely the viewer would not behave as we would hope. More likely, perhaps, they would be simply gripped and entirely diverted by the image. Any American Apparel advertisement, even if it attempts to prompt viewers towards eternal beauty, might make viewers think of little else but lust, strengthening the chains of bondage that frustrated Augustine.

Furthermore, the principles of Augustine’s argument on marriage do not apply straightforwardly in this case. The ‘mellowing’ Brown describes following Augustine’s return to Hippo was obviously not the development of a more permissive attitude towards sex; it rather involved coming to see the sex drive as a force which is permanently intractable and ineradicable. Augustine did indeed become an advocate of an institution which would create space for sexual desire. However, we must note some differences between marriage and this example above. First, the advertisement cannot bind sexual desire. Augustine understood marriage as a holding place for a wild and powerful desire, one form of bondage to respond to our inner bondage to the force within us. While the

⁴⁹⁷ Cavadini, ‘Feeling Right’, p. 204.

advertisement does seek to arrange things so that the operation of sexual desire, in practice, leads to the desire for the good, it cannot force the viewer. Second, the advertisement does not reduce sexual desire, unlike Augustine hoped that marriage would, so that “the lustful tendencies of the flesh are kept in subjection”.⁴⁹⁸ There is no force in this advertisement equivalent to parental love in marriage, which Augustine hoped would dampen sexual desire. Even if the advertisement does prompt some people towards the good, therefore, seen in the context of all advertising, this final point may be a more important ethical concern: that the image contributes to a consumer culture, as discussed in Chapter Four, in which *epithymia* is habitually dominant in the soul.

Considering these problems from the perspective of developing an art of advertising, the strongest argument for appealing to sexual desire is that practitioners might need to do so to build an art which has any significant influence. Ethical advertising of the sort we have been describing will have to compete with existing advertising in markets as they currently are. Consumers are currently strongly tempted by multiple appeals to the sex drive from multiple advertising campaigns; the task ahead would be to reach these people as one among many of these influences, and grip them, to educate their desire in a better direction. Considering the actual construction of an art, it is clear that any good which might be done depends on success against rivals. Admittedly, three very successful advertisements we consider in this chapter – for Google India, Dove, and Johnnie Walker, to be discussed below – do not rely on sex appeal, although it is arguable that the Johnnie Walker advertisement does, to a degree. However, in the major industries of fashion – clothing, shoes, watches – it may prove difficult to survive as an ethical advertising agency, seeking clients in these industries, if one decided to abjure sex appeal altogether. This may or may not be true; it is a point that requires more investigation, in

⁴⁹⁸ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, pp. 8-9.

terms of contact with practitioners, and experimenting with creating new advertisements. At this point, we can remark that Augustine's general attitude to fallen society might have made him sympathetic to the struggles of conscience around using imperfect means: he writes that the judge should still take his seat, even if his work is occasionally "a thing to be greatly lamented" and "bathed in fountains of tears", for he is serving the good in a fallen society.⁴⁹⁹

Drawing on Augustine, therefore, we can reach no position better than ambivalence, leaning toward scepticism, concerning the use of sex appeal within an advertisement. Mere desires, in this case, are difficult to align with true needs. As a final point, we can note that the use of sexual desire as a starting point for education has more support from Plato than Augustine. Examining this further, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis. To extend this discussion, and to explore more possibilities for using lower desires to serve the higher, especially regarding sexual desire, it would be useful to examine Christian authors who have taken up the Platonic theme of the ascent of love, for example, the Renaissance scholar Marsilio Ficino.⁵⁰⁰ Discussing Ficino in relation to Augustine on the topic of sexual desire, and how their different perspectives might inform an art of advertising, would be a productive starting point for future work.

⁴⁹⁹ Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 926-928. One is tempted to make an additional argument, citing Augustine's acceptance of coercion as a means to unify the Church, in support of the proposal to use sex appeal to persuade. If he was willing to condone violence, one might think, surely he could not oppose the use of sex appeal. Yet we could equally point out his adamant opposition to using lies in the service of the truth, and in this case there is a parallel with lust in that both lies and lust involve turning away from God. Furthermore, as Augustine argues against the Donatists, his justification for coercion rests partly on value of punishment as a precursor to repentance, and partly on suffering itself as a good. There is no equivalent benefit when one is constantly tempted, and gives in to, lustful desire. See Augustine, 'Answer to The Letter of Petilian the Donatist', trans. J.R. King, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 4, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1887, ch. 85, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104.v.v.i.html>, (accessed 22 April 2016).

⁵⁰⁰ See M. Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. The Language Department of the London School of Economics, vols. 1-8, London, Shephard-Walwyn, 1975.

Helping customers towards the good

This section examines techniques which an ethical advertisement might use to help customers attain the good presented in its vision. It follows on from the third aspect of the education of desire discussed in Chapter Five: how we should desire in relation to created things. For the worldly offering – the product or service – is the way the advertisement raises our hopes of attaining the good presented in the vision. We therefore investigate how an advertisement might guide our relation to the commodity in a way which actually helps us attain the good. This responds to the points made in the first section of Chapter Four, that the truth of the advertisement should be assessed partly in terms of whether the product truly helps lead us to the ideal. It is also a response to the criticism analysed in the third section of that chapter. Here, we seek to show how we might remedy consumer culture, by promoting good ongoing relationships with commodities.

As we saw in our discussion of use and enjoyment, we should sometimes relate to created things with desire, desiring them ‘in God’ – and we are commanded to always love people in this way. This is one way to ‘use’ someone or something to bring us closer to God, without loving that person or thing any less; indeed, one loves the person or thing even more when one loves them in God. However, sometimes physical objects should not be desired in God. Though every physical object might be loved in God if we pay attention to it, sometimes we are being guided by another desire and the physical object simply helps us attain this. This is a way to ‘use’ something well which does not involve making that thing the object of desire. To return to examples we discussed in Chapter Three, this is the difference between the glasshouse and the bird seed. We are ideally taught to desire the beauty of the glasshouse, within the beautiful garden, imagining this as participating in the beauty of God. The bird seed we buy to attract birds to create a beautiful garden, and the garden is the object we desire in God. In both cases we are using

the product to help bring us closer to God. As we will see in the discussion below, an advertisement should sometimes encourage use which involves desire, and sometimes use which does not, in helping us relate to created things in a way that supports us in pursuing the good vision.

In this section, therefore, we are concerned with how an advertisement affects what happens after a customer makes a purchase: how it shapes our ongoing relation with the product. We are interested in whether the customer is actually helped towards the good. Often, our hopes are raised but not fulfilled. This can be so even if the vision is a good one. For example, in the ethical version of the VW advertisement, the viewer is drawn towards a vision of forgiveness, understood as an aspect of God's nature. Regarding how we might seek this good, however, the advertisement meekly suggests buying a car, giving us no hints about how we might use the car – what we might need to do with the car, the practice in which the car might play a role – in order to pursue the good. What our investigation needs to determine, therefore, is how an advertisement can accomplish the ethical tasks described above, presenting a good vision, appealing to the whole soul, but in a way which shapes a longer-term engagement with the product which helps with the pursuit of the good vision. We are concerned with the advertisement's contribution to shaping a practice: the customer's habits of using the commodity, in the way we are supposed to use worldly things, to help us towards the enjoyment of God's goodness.

To explore this topic we will introduce another advertisement, a popular short video made in 2014 by Johnnie Walker to advertise its 'Blue Label' brand of whisky. The advertisement is six and a half minutes long and has over eleven million views. The film begins with two men, the actors Jude Law and Giancarlo Giannini, sitting on the deck of a beautiful wooden sailboat anchored in an isolated, sunny part of the British Virgin Islands, drinking whisky. Law, the younger man, asks Giannini if he can buy the boat, but

Giannini says it is not for sale. Law says that he doesn't want to buy it with money; he wants to "win it, with a dance". The scene then cuts to London where Law is renting an old dance hall and dusting off a piano. Giannini arrives and sits down, and Law, along with a group of dancers, performs a suave and restrained type of swing dance. Giannini clearly enjoys the lengths that Law has gone to, and he is impressed. The final scene is back on the boat, but the men have switched places. The same dialogue is repeated as at the beginning, with the roles reversed – Giannini now asks if he can buy the boat – and both men are clearly aware of the friendly game they are playing. Law answers that the boat is not for sale, and Giannini says "I don't want to buy it with money; I want to buy it with a story...". Law smiles at Giannini, and the camera pulls back to show the boat floating in a sparkling ocean. The text appears over part of the ocean: "Johnnie Walker Blue Label, A Blend of Our Rarest Whiskies".⁵⁰¹

The vision of this advertisement is an ideal of friendship. Within the friendship, the lower desire for money is not relevant, and the desire for self-assertion and honour becomes a game between the two friends. In the reversal of the roles at the end of the advertisement, one feels even that it does not even matter who owns the boat; the ownership has swapped, but the situation is just the same. One is left with a sense that the friendship transcends all the worldly things they are playing with. They are sharing the beauty of the boat and the setting, and sharing the enjoyment of each other's company. Part of the appeal of the advertisement is that it speaks to the desire for status and human glory: these people have clearly succeeded in society, as many viewers would probably like to do. Within the friendship, however, they are valuing higher things more than lower things; their relationship is based around the goodness in the other person and the goodness in the world. As in the VW advertisement, the good vision is not articulated in

⁵⁰¹ Johnnie Walker, 'Johnnie Walker Blue Label Presents Jude Law in 'The Gentleman's Wager'', 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ7kWpTrtJw>, (accessed 24 April 2016).

explicitly Christian terms, but nor can we rule out that this is a picture of Christian love; there is nothing to suggest the contrary, and it is conceivable that these characters could be Christian. We would like the articulation to go further, but as far as it goes, we should call this vision a good one. The greater problem is that the advertisement does not help customers towards the good. It merely shows the image of a successful friendship. After the advertisement finishes, one is left with no path towards the ideal; much as the advertisement might encourage us to desire and hope, buying the whisky is unlikely to be a good first step towards the attainment of this end. We can conclude, therefore, that there is not actually a true connection between the good and the product, and that this advertisement should be judged untruthful according to our criteria.

To reform this advertisement, we should recall our discussion of use and enjoyment in Chapter Five, to consider how the product can be used to help us towards the good which is being presented. In this case, the possibilities seem to lie not primarily in the qualities of the product itself, although drinking the whisky may be part of the effort – as we will describe below. More important in this case is the practice of which the product is a part, and which is featured in the advertisement: drinking with friends. This practice has the potential to support the development of the kind of good friendships described above. Indeed, Augustine used to drink with friends, and found it important to guide this practice properly (if anyone gossiped maliciously about someone not present, their glass of wine would be taken away).⁵⁰² We can consider ‘drinking with friends’ as a practice which might be made into an art, which forms part of the broader art of friendship.⁵⁰³ The Johnnie Walker advertising campaign should seek to cultivate this art, with a focus on the practice of drinking together. As we will see below, individual advertisements can

⁵⁰² Brown, *Augustine: A Biography*, p. 409.

⁵⁰³ In the way that the art of sharpening a tool might be a subordinate practice within the art of carpentry. We describe an art in relation to the good one is seeking to pursue, in a particular contingent matter; the pursuit of the good of one art can thus form part of the pursuit of the good of another.

cultivate desire not simply for good friendship, as does the advertisement, above, but for specific elements of this good, creating desire in a way which helps the customer achieve the end. The whisky, then, used as part of the pursuit of the good of friendship, is not primarily ‘used’ in the sense of loved as an object ‘in God’, as defined in the previous chapter; rather, it is primarily ‘used’ as part of an effort to pursue the good of friendship; it is valued as a means in relation to this object of desire.

How might this advertisement help the customer towards this good? One lost opportunity is in the final message. There is no equivalent of the line in Dove’s campaign, “You are more beautiful than you think”.⁵⁰⁴ The Johnnie Walker advertisement should replace its slogan with a line which better articulates the good at stake. Currently, the final text notes that this is a whisky made of a blend of rare varieties. This reminds one that the whisky is rare, as is the boat, and, probably, these kind of wonderful experiences with friends in one’s life. Rather than focusing on rarity, the slogan could instead capture something of the essence of good friendship, perhaps the fact that friendship rises above pettier things. Indeed, in more recent advertisements, including an eleven-minute sequel to the video above, set this time in an Italian mansion, the Johnnie Walker campaign has made a shift somewhat along these lines, adopting the line “Joy Will Take You Further”.⁵⁰⁵ What is still missing, however, is an outline of a path to the enjoyment of friendship. This means that a viewer needs to see in detail how they might live out the good. This should begin, conceptually, with an analysis of the art of friendship: the ingredients of good friendship and what needs to be done to bring it about. This could be done drawing on the resources of Christian ethics, for example, our discussion in the previous chapter of what it means to love a person ‘in God’. There is also Augustine’s

⁵⁰⁴ Dove US, ‘Dove Real Beauty Sketches’.

⁵⁰⁵ Johnnie Walker, ‘Johnnie Walker Blue Label Presents Jude Law in ‘The Gentleman’s Wager II’’, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzME9i03PpI>, (accessed 24 April 2016).

discussions of friendship, for example his list of the joys of friendship: “conversations and joking, doing favors for each other ... being foolish and being serious together, disagreeing without hatred almost as though I was debating myself”.⁵⁰⁶ One could identify principles which run throughout the activities of friendship: the need for forgiveness and humility; the importance of valuing God’s goodness above status concerns; the courage to overcome fears when they should be overcome, which enables good kinds of playfulness and foolishness; the need to educate and help each other to live out virtues, for instance. A viewer would be helped by seeing each of these ‘ingredients’ of good friendship in more detail, rather than simply an overview of their result – a successful friendship.

Thus a series of ten-minute advertisements could focus in more detail on elements of friendship, each advertisement encapsulating its point with its own final piece of text. For example, one advertisement could deal with humility and the theme of teaching, in the sense of educating each other in virtue, a task which often requires tact and charm. The story could show moments in which the older man tactfully, perhaps playfully, rebukes the younger man for thinking that he has seen the whole world; then by candlelight, at the end of a long dinner in summer in a beautiful Italian mansion, the older man could tell a story – holding a glass of whiskey – which makes a point about the beauty of eternity and the transience of this world. The line at the end of the advertisement could be, ‘There is more to see’. The advertisement would create desire around an image of humility in friendship, and it would help the viewer in two ways: by actually encouraging humility in the viewer, and by showing realistic ways in which one friend might speak to another to correct him. The ethical advertisements could keep the same glamour and humour as the existing advertisements, and there could be various scenes involved, with a running theme of good conversation over a drink of whisky. Altogether, Johnnie Walker would be providing a

⁵⁰⁶ Quoted in D.X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy*, Grand Rapids, MI, William B. Eerdmans, 1999, pp. 57-58.

‘recipe’ for good friendship, which could be articulated as a whole on a website describing the mission of the campaign.

This is one instance of how an advertisement might help the customer pursue the good. Rather than positioning the product in a vague way as a means to the end, it explores in detail how the product might be used in one’s life to support a practice which will help one realise the good vision. In our ethical example, customers are brought into longer contact with a single vision, which different advertisements in the campaign examine from different angles, showing the customer practical ways to live out the good of friendship. The advertisement is concerned with shaping a practice, that is, the customers’ habits around using the commodity, in a way which supports the achievement of the good. In other words, the art of advertising is shaping another art, the art of friendship. The campaign would focus on cultivating humility, an important requirement for the art of friendship; teaching the customer techniques for how to educate a friend; and would depict the potential good of the practice of drinking with a friend, a practice within the art of friendship. In this case, the product is not being desired itself in God. We are not using the whisky by meditating on it, loving it in God. Rather, we are being taught to orient our desire towards loving our friend in God. Our relation to the whisky is to use it as a modest support within this art.⁵⁰⁷ Like the candlelight or the beautiful room, the whisky plays a role in creating a moment in which we might pursue the good. The advertisement is encouraging the customer to live according to *logistikon*, above *thymos* and *epithymia*, promoting better habits of consumption.

Compared to the Italian mansion or the beautiful wooden sailing boat, the whisky does not add as much to the charming settings in these Johnnie Walker advertisements. The whisky, however, does play one further role, distinct from the other material objects

⁵⁰⁷ Though in the example we did not mention God directly, there would be two opportunities to do so: as part of the story of the beauty of eternity told over the whisky, or in materials stating the mission on the website.

featured in the scene: it symbolises the whole vision, and thus might serve for the customer as a useful reminder of the ideal the advertisement promotes. This is another way in which the advertisement can help the customer towards the good. Simply by positioning the product as a means, in this case, the advertisement can help it become a helpful means, by creating this symbolic association. One might see the ethical advertisement, and set out to buy the bottle, to have a piece of this world in one's life. Apart from its role as a drink for two friends to share, the bottle sits on the table standing for this aspiration, reminding the participants in this practice of the scenes of good friendship and the associated lessons they have encountered in the advertisements. This is an extension of the point that the product can embody part of the vision. Considered by itself, in this example, the bottle would not in fact embody the vision, but the advertisement creates the association. This occurs in many advertisements, for example, in the Dove campaign, the products become more useful to the extent they become mementos, reminders of the thought 'you are more beautiful than you think'.

There are two further conclusions we can draw from the discussion above. First, that the link between the product and the good vision involves the participation of the customer. Thus, in applying the criterion of truthfulness, seeking to discern whether the product truly leads to the good, one must consider the effect the advertisement has on the customer, not simply the relation between the vision and the commodity, considered by themselves. In judging the truthfulness of an advertisement one should want to examine how the advertisement fits within a full campaign, and the cumulative effect of this on customers, after their experience of the advertisements, as they engage with the product or service. Second, that regarding ethical advertising, the distinction between products and services becomes blurred, or disappears entirely. For there is a continuity between products and services, related to this need for the consumer's participation. The Sandals

Resorts advertisement for a holiday in the Caribbean, which suggests that one might practice worrying less, and the ethically reformed Johnnie Walker advertisement for whisky, which suggests that one might practice good friendship, both require the customer to participate, if good is to be realised. In one case, what one purchases is a room for a week, meals and access to a beach; in the other case one purchases a bottle of whisky. In both cases, there is a practice around these things which is required to realise the goods which are promised. It seems obvious to consider practices if one is examining a service; what we are suggesting here is that a practice be cultivated around products too. One might say that products should come to look more like services – in either case, advertising should help us to use worldly things well. That is, whether we are discussing a product or a service, the important ethical work concerns the practice in which the product or service should be embedded within the customer's life, and how an advertisement might help create and sustain this practice. Advertising can help in the practice of the holiday, perhaps by teaching the art of being calm (assuming this is a good), just as it can help in the practice of drinking the whisky, by teaching the art of friendship.

We have thus considered one way of relating to the material object which helps guide us to the good vision which is presented, and how an advertisement can support this. We can now turn to the other way of relating to a physical object: 'using' it in the sense of desiring it in God. As we will argue, an advertisement might teach us to do this, and thereby help us towards the good vision it presents. In the previous chapter we discussed how desiring something in God can help lead us towards God. In this case, the good we are being led towards is the good vision presented by the advertisement. However, as discussed above, an ethical advertisement should ideally articulate its vision in relation to God, orienting our desire explicitly towards God's forgiveness, or his glory or humility or eternity. In the ideal case, we are brought to imagine a composite object of desire: God,

considered under some aspect in the good vision, and the material thing considered as part of this, in God. To explore this via an example, we will return to the first advertisement we discussed in this thesis, the 1959 poster for the Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud.⁵⁰⁸ If we were to update this advertisement for today, what techniques would be used to teach the viewer to love the material object in God? The original advertisement is constructed around a vision of calm. This seems a promising starting point. In Mark 4:39 Christ brings calm: “And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm”. Yet not only does God bring calm; calm is also required to reflect on God. The idea of calm has the potential to form part of a good vision, therefore, if it can be related to finding calm in order to love God, and finding calm in loving God. Furthermore, as we have noted, there is a promising connection with this product: the interior of the car does support the feeling of calm, and the act of driving away from the city to find some mental space might help. What is missing is a prompt or guide for meditating on the product, imagining it in relation to God, combining our desire for its good qualities and our desire for God in one object. We might imagine a video advertisement showing the owner driving the car away from the competitive, cluttered city, heading out into the countryside. A voice might read some poetry, linking the ideal of calm with divine changelessness. For example, the following passage from T.S. Eliot might work, because it refers to the stillness of eternity, but it also discusses how God as The Trinity is at once calm and in a dance. It presents the ideal of graceful movement based on calm – not desirous movement in search of anything, but a kind of dance in the place of rest, based on joy. This might fit well with the image of a slow-moving car, and the man driving with no physical destination, just seeking to find calm.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,

⁵⁰⁸ Ogilvy & Mather, ‘Ogilvy & Mather Classic Ads’.

But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.⁵⁰⁹

This would not be an unusual form for an advertisement. Many car advertisements show footage of the car in motion with a voiceover, sometimes up to a minute long for a television advertisement, or over five minutes for an online video advertisement. The scripts, though, are often uninspiring. For example, one recent advertisement suggests that, in designing the car, the company is “creating a world that responds intuitively to your command” – seeking, presumably, to evoke the idea of fully living out one’s *libido dominandi*.⁵¹⁰

In the reformed Rolls-Royce example, the text would be presenting a better vision of calm than the original advertisement, in that it would be describing the vision in terms of God’s nature. Although it is not explicitly referring the viewer to God, the text is thoroughly informed by Christianity as are all of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. Were the viewer to direct their desire towards this vision of calm, instead of simply the idea of escaping a busy work day, the object of their desire would be closer to a concept of God. We could say that their desire has been educated. The advertisement could go further and refer to God directly. The final line could be: ‘Our God is the still, small voice of calm. Our heart is restless until we find our rest there’. Reformed in this way, the advertisement would be doing more even than the reformed VW advertisement we discussed above. For the ethical VW advertisement presents a good vision, of God’s forgiveness, but does not explain how to use the car to approach the ideal. This advertisement, however, in the way it presents its vision, is also showing the viewer how to ‘use’ the material object, in Augustine’s sense.

⁵⁰⁹ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, London, Faber and Faber, 1945, p. 9.

⁵¹⁰ BMW UK, ‘BMW 7 Series UK TV Advert’, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvZS_s5krwk, (accessed 26 April 2016); BMW, ‘The All-New BMW 7 Series. Official Launch Film’, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eBAGKpf8p8>, (accessed 26 April 2016),.

For the poem, as used in the advertisement, becomes a guided meditation, focusing one's mind on the product, to desire it in God. To see how this works in detail, we can recall the final point we made in Chapter Five. In that discussion we noted that the right way to experience beauty in a created thing is to relate it in one's mind to God, and that there are a number of ways one might do so, thinking of God as maker, or lover, or remembering that the beauty is a glimpse of a transcendent whole which is God. In this case, the poem is making the latter connection: the images of the advertisement are highlighting a certain type of beauty in the object, the quality of calmness, and the poem is prompting the viewer to imagine this quality in its pure, transcendental form. If the advertisement affects us successfully, our desire is focused on transcendental beauty, and we see the beauty of the material object as part of this.

How does this advertisement help the customer towards the good? The advertisement will be effective to the extent it can instil this way of 'using' the product in us as a habit. In the example of the whisky above, the product was used, not as part of the object of desire, but to support a practice oriented to the good of loving a friend in God. In this example, the product is used in being desired in God. In the ideal case, the habit of loving the car in this way becomes part of the customer's life. This habit would be central to a practice – an art – of calm, based around enjoying and desiring the car in God. We can illustrate this ideal case in practice as follows. When we are inside the car, perhaps stuck in traffic, or driving to a remote area, we focus on enjoying the beauty of its calmness. The car embodies this in the quietness of its engine and the thickness of its walls, creating an insulated, still atmosphere inside (noted by David Ogilvy in the original advertisement), and in its stately form and way of moving. As we experience the calmness, we recall some ideas from the poem; either we remember the lines exactly, or we recall the feeling of apprehending a greater vision of calm and stillness, remembering the idea of the still point

of the turning world, the eternal God, somehow above all past and future. We thus relate our experience of calm to our concept of God. We enjoy this calm moment, but because we also know there is a greater calm we are aiming for, we enjoy it in the transferred sense Augustine describes.⁵¹¹ If we do this often, we will have brought the good of calm more often into our life, as much as one can be rightly calm in this life. We will have developed a good relationship to the product, which can sustain a good desire, and give us hope of attaining the good vision.

This scenario, as mentioned, is the ideal case. The reform of the advertisement should be guided by the aim of bringing this about. It is unlikely that watching this advertisement once would get us far, but if it was advertised enough, one might recall the poem when driving, enjoy the calm and think on the stillness of God, and the idea of eternal rest. If the advertisement appeals to us strongly enough, we might find and learn the poem. To be most effective, however, the advertisement, like the examples above, should be part of a campaign, with the cultivation of this habit – the habit of ‘loving one’s car properly’ – as its goal. Many of the ethical techniques discussed above could be adapted to serve this end. Like the Johnnie Walker campaign, one might have a series of advertisements: one could focus, for instance, on the task of finding a moment for a meditative drive in a busy day; another could address the idea of leaving one’s worries behind as one drives away, for a few hours, to higher things. Each advertisement would link to the others by always presenting the same central experience: feeling the calm in one’s car and turning one’s mind to God. Like the Dove campaign, it could have a website which describes the mission in more detail and offers other resources which guide the customer according to the same purpose. Or like the Nike campaign, it could develop a phone ‘app’ which guided the customer in loving their car. One could open the app and

⁵¹¹ “If you go beyond this pleasure and relate it to your permanent goal, you are using it, and are said to enjoy it not in the literal sense but in a transferred sense”. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 47.

listen to different meditations, exploring and teaching different ways of relating to the car in God. To take a different approach to the example above, one could connect the experience of driving the car to the story of the Ethiopian who had an epiphany in his chariot in Acts 8:26-40. In writing these meditations, an advertiser could take inspiration from the Roman Catholic blessing of an automobile:

Lend a willing ear, Lord God, to our prayers, and bless this vehicle with Your holy right hand. Direct Your holy angels to accompany it, that they may free those who ride in it from all dangers, and always guard them. And just as by Your deacon Philip You gave faith and grace to the man of Ethiopia as he sat in his chariot reading the Sacred Word, so, point out to Your servants the way of salvation. Grant that, aided by Your grace, and with their hearts set on good works, they may, after all the joys and sorrows of this journey through life, merit to receive eternal joys, through Christ our Lord. Amen.⁵¹²

In this example, and the discussion of the whisky advertisement above, we have been considering techniques which create longer engagements with the customer. This is the aspiration of any advertising campaign, as opposed to a single advertisement: to increase the influence one might have over potential customers, meeting them at many points, to draw them eventually to purchase what one offers. We have been discussing how an ethical advertisement should seek to form habits in the customer which continue after a purchase. The effort to influence a customer over the long-term does not lack a commercial rationale. Indeed, the advertising industry is already very much concerned with creating customer loyalty. As Svein Ottar Olsen notes in his review of the literature, marketing research has been concerned for almost half a century with how to increase customer ‘involvement’, defined as “the personal relevance or importance of a product category”, measured in terms of the strength of one’s desire (“a person’s motivational state of mind with regard to an object or activity”) in addition to a person’s sense of the

⁵¹² Catholic Online, ‘Blessing of an Automobile’, 2016, <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=198>, (accessed 26 April 2016).

significance, one might say the goodness, of their desire (“an individual’s subjective sense of the concern, care, importance ... and significance attached to an attitude [towards a product]”). As Olsen notes, “involvement as an indicator of motivation has a strong direct positive effect on true brand loyalty”.⁵¹³ Loyalty is measured in terms of the intention to purchase again from the company, and the intention to recommend the product or company to others.⁵¹⁴ As Frederick Reichheld argues in a seminal study, loyalty is directly correlated across a range of industries with profitability and growth, because customers who feel engaged and personally invested become advocates for the brand. “[T]he percentage of customers who were enthusiastic enough to refer a friend or colleague – perhaps the strongest sign of customer loyalty – correlated directly with differences in growth rates among competitors”.⁵¹⁵ That is, deep engagement or involvement leads to loyalty, which makes the customer likely to buy again from the company and recommend it to others. The techniques we have considered in this section to engage customers more deeply and persistently with the product by shaping part of their life around its use, and relating its use to personally important longings, would seem to serve the creation of ‘involvement’ and loyalty. This also seems true for the techniques we considered in the previous two sections: in seeking to engage the desire for the good in conjunction with the desires of the other parts of the soul, one is seeking to engage the full person including their sense of what is important, which, despite the terminological differences, Olsen appears to be arguing is the basis of loyalty.

The potential to cultivate loyalty is therefore a defining strength of ethical advertising, compared to advertising that does not engage as much with important values.

⁵¹³ S.O. Olsen, ‘Repurchase Loyalty: The Role of Involvement and Satisfaction’, *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2007, pp. 316-320.

⁵¹⁴ T.L. Keiningham et al., ‘The Value of Different Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty Metrics in Predicting Customer Retention, Recommendation, and Share-of-Wallet’, *Managing Service Quality*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2007, pp. 361-384.

⁵¹⁵ F.F. Reichheld, ‘The One Number You Need to Grow’, *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 81 no. 12, 2003, pp. 46-47. Keiningham et al. argue that Reichheld’s research is important, but should be combined with other metrics to predict future loyalty behaviour. Keiningham et al., ‘Loyalty Metrics’.

Increasing customer loyalty is a goal all companies seek to attain for commercial reasons, but which could also align with the deep, ongoing engagement required for the pursuit of goods. From the point of view of selling commodities and persuading one's customers to recommend one's company, it is a great prize to generate loyalty, and from the point of view of shaping people's inner lives, which may take months or years, it is important to engage customers deeply and over a long period. We referred at the beginning of this chapter to the two sets of demands which guide and constrain the creation of an ethical advertisement: the commercial demands, which follow from the institutional position of advertising within the economy, as an industry which serves other businesses in their attempt to increase sales; and the ethical demands, meaning what must be achieved in the viewer's soul to educate their desire. The aim of creating loyalty is a point at which these two sets of demands intersect: where the practical requirement to sell goods coincides with the ethical responsibility to help one's customers love the good. If different companies can offer different mediations of the good, and create loyalty to that vision, people can grow within that relationship. The ultimate aim for our institutions, towards which ethical advertising might contribute, is for various companies, working in different ways via their different products and services, to help lead us to and support a love of God.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how an advertisement might serve the education of desire, discussing the theory and practice of particular techniques under three headings. First, we examined what is involved in presenting a good vision. The vision should be of God's goodness under some aspect, and the advertisement should explicitly relate the vision to God. If such explicit mentions of God are not possible, due to commercial reasons or fears, the vision could lead the viewer to an intermediate desire, such as desiring inner

beauty, which is a comparatively good precursor to desiring God. Second, we examined how the appeal to status might be well-used by an advertisement, suggesting that the desire for honour could be co-opted to direct people towards humility, and arguing that Augustine might be sympathetic to this move, as a first step rather than a final end. We also inquired whether sex appeal might be well-used, suggesting that it could lead people to the contemplation of Scripture. We noted in this case, however, that the acute power of the sex drive and Augustine's deep wariness should lead us to be sceptical. Finally, we discussed how advertising might educate desire by shaping the practice of relating to the product in one's life. The product could be positioned as a means within an art, such as the art of friendship, or the beauty of the product itself could be the focus of a meditative art which the advertising campaign inspires and guides, and which continues to educate desire after the advertisements finish.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we have developed an account of desire and the education of desire, and used this to investigate how advertisements work and how they might be improved. Our starting point was that advertising is often criticised. We saw that some of the central criticisms should be taken seriously, as they highlight ways in which advertising has a negative impact on the personal and social scale. We explored the possibility of building a practice of advertising which does not have these negative effects. However, we also went further: we described a purpose for an art of advertising, and a range of positive influences which such an art could have, ordered to the ultimate goal of coming to love God with our whole souls, and our neighbours and the material world ‘in God’.

We have established two essential requirements for ethical advertising. First, to present a truly good vision, and second, to strengthen the link between this vision and the product. Considering a number of existing, successful campaigns, the pursuit of an art of advertising in many ways involves practitioners going further along a route they have already begun. Many advertisements already present a reasonably good vision: the Google advertisement portrays gratitude and friendly love; the Dove campaign promotes a less punitive way of thinking about physical beauty; the Johnnie Walker advertisements show a vision of friendship rising above the concerns of the world. These topics touch on central concerns of Christianity, and the messages of these campaigns are not presented in a way which is at odds with Christianity. What is required is to look more deeply into these visions; for example, to consider the topic of beauty as explored by Augustine and Plato. Such an advertising campaign is an opportunity to shape the desires of many people around an important topic – the three campaigns above have recorded tens or hundreds of

millions of views. If people could be persuaded by Dove, for example, to shift the focus of their desires from, primarily, physical characteristics, to good internal qualities, this would be an important step in the education of desire; it is the shift outlined by Diotima, and similar to that which Augustine describes in his own life, when the Platonists' books prompted him to turn inwards. As noted, there may even be room in such a campaign to explain the phrase 'God is spirit'. The Dove campaign in particular proves that a good vision can be combined with commercial success. As it stands, it presents a reasonably good vision, and has been credited with increasing Dove's revenue by billions of dollars.

The second requirement for ethical advertising, we have argued, is to strengthen the link between the vision and the products or services offered by the company, in order to help the customer love and pursue the good vision over the long run. In this thesis, we have mainly focused on products because this has enabled us to demonstrate the underlying principles. However, as noted in Chapter Six, our investigation has shown us that products and services might be considered from the same principles. In either instance, advertising ethics should design the practice in which the customer should participate, as they use the product or service, and the advertisement should help to create and sustain this practice. The final example we considered illustrated how the 1959 Rolls-Royce advertisement might be updated in this way, to help customers develop a good relationship with the product. We applied Augustine's concept of 'use' to this case: ideally, the customer would experience the calmness in the car, and in this moment, reflect on 'the still point of the turning world'. The advertisement could help to cultivate such a practice with a voiceover which prompted such thoughts, or – as in the multichannel marketing campaigns – creating a series of advertisements to guide viewers in this way.

We concluded that a central strength of this approach to advertising, in commercial terms, is its potential to cultivate customer loyalty. Ethical advertising involves the

customer's personal convictions and most important values and aspirations in their engagement with the advertisement, and the product or service. Loyalty is prized by businesses seeking to increase market share and make profit; it is also necessary for the pursuit of the good, because good desire must be sustained by ongoing practices. Therefore, a company or an advertising agency seeking to make money and do good should turn to theologically guided ethical advertising.

Over the course of establishing this central argument, we have investigated a number of related discussions and developed accounts of relevant concepts and processes. In Chapter Two we drew an account of desire from Plato and Augustine's work, exploring how both authors address the themes of lack and longing, introducing Plato's tripartite division of the soul, and Augustine's emphasis on the conflict in our soul due to the fallenness of our will. We also integrated Augustine's view of the imagination into our account of desire, and clarified his view of the relation between pleasure and desire, and the will and desire. We developed a description of the creation of desire and the role of hope in Chapter Three, using *On the Trinity*. The author knows of no study within Christian ethics which examines the stages of the creation of desire in detail. We described the moment of 'vision' which is actually an act of the imagination; the way we subsequently turn to our own lives, and realise the lack; and how hope forms after this moment, when our minds turn to consider – or simply to feel – whether attaining this object would really be possible. We also challenged Augustine's view that love and hope cannot exist without the other, pointing out a moment in the creation of desire in which love is present before hope has been formed in relation to this object.

In Chapter Four, we clarified three strands of criticism. We analysed Offer's discussion of truthfulness and exaggeration, organising his statements before giving a Christian foundation for the criticism using Augustine's *On Lying*. Furthermore, we

argued that assessments of truth should focus on the vision of the advertisement and the connection between the vision and what the company is selling. We critiqued Galbraith's argument against advertising, along with other critics, clarifying the distinction between needs and desires. Against Galbraith, we argued that desires encouraged by artificial means are not necessarily bad. Finally, we considered Miller and Ward's criticism of consumer culture. Drawing on our account of the creation of desire, we examined how advertising contributes to the symptoms of disordered desire which Miller and Ward rightly lament. This led us to the conclusion that what is needed in consumer society are good relationships to material things, a solution which Miller and Ward propose in the abstract but do not explore in practice.

In the latter, constructive part of the thesis we adopted Aquinas' concept of *ars* as a basis for considering the idea of an art of advertising. We argued that advertising should aim (artificially) to educate desire in its viewers. We explored the elements of such an education. Using Augustine's *Confessions*, supplemented by the *Symposium*, we investigated what it means to orient one's desire towards God, focusing on preliminary states of desire which might support the development of a desire for God. We proposed two criteria for identifying such states: that they are more likely to lead us to God, such as the desire for wisdom; and that they are likely to enrich a later desire for God, such as a desire for spiritual, inner goods. We examined the possibility of integrating all desires into the love of God, considering Augustine's arguments for marriage and Plato's description of ascent of *eros*. We also proposed a method of education – something of a variation of Plato's view – whereby sexual attraction is used as an occasion to point the person towards a better desire. Finally we considered Augustine's distinction between use and enjoyment. We argued that O'Donovan does not adequately describe a disordered state of desire; rather, loving our neighbour as part of a 'project of our need', and with our

ultimate enjoyment in mind is right, when we consider that the need and the enjoyment are shared. Finally, regarding material objects, we concluded that, even though all of creation can be loved ‘in God’, it is sometimes appropriate to do so, and sometimes not, when the material thing is helping us to pursue another good desire.

These discussions laid the groundwork for considering the reform of the practice of advertising. This is an ongoing task; Christian ethicists working on advertising would ideally be in conversation with practitioners undertaking ethically guided experimentation within the industry.⁵¹⁶ In Chapter Six we described some examples to illustrate how this might be done, and to test and refine our principles by applying them to particular cases. We proposed ways in which the vision of an advertisement might be linked explicitly to God, thus prompting people to consider that the forgiveness they are seeing is God’s forgiveness, for example. We also argued, against scepticism that overt religious terminology would not be commercially viable, that advertising might in fact benefit from engaging religion precisely because it is a controversial topic. Turning to the lower desires, we proposed a design for a Swatch watch advertisement which would make humility ‘cool’, turning the search for honour towards a good end. And we suggested that American Apparel posters could draw people in using sex appeal, then – as in our variant on the ascent of *eros* – use this as an occasion to deliver an appropriate line from Scripture. Finally, we looked at how an advertising campaign involving a celebrity, Jude Law, could promote the use of the promoted product within the art of friendship, including good conversation over whisky. This is a case of a product being used not by being loved

⁵¹⁶ The author has attempted some engagement with practitioners, having met during the course of writing the thesis with Jonathan Wise, the founder of Comms Lab, “an organisation on a mission to help advertising agencies become more ethical”, to discuss with him the arguments of Chapters Five and Six, including the suggestions for the reform of the Dove and Johnnie Walker advertisements. Wise responded that, based on his experience as an advertiser, he thought the suggestions were practicable. He said that the growth of mission-driven campaigns in the industry is likely to continue and will require the ability to understand and articulate values. See J. Swift, ‘Comms Lab Launches to Help Ad Agencies Do Good’, *Campaign*, June 19 2015, <http://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/1352234/comms-lab-launches-help-ad-agencies-good>, (accessed 20 April 2016).

in God but by helping someone to love a friend in God. The advertisement educates desire by orienting it towards a good vision, appealing to the desire for status, and encouraging a practice in which one develops a good relationship to the product – a relationship in which one might justifiably hold out hope for attaining the good end.

This argument is significant within Christian ethics because, notwithstanding the discussions of advertising as part of various critiques, the discipline has not developed a field of constructive work on this topic. We have aimed to explore some starting points for a new field in the discipline, the ethics of advertising, considered in the same way as medical ethics or the ethics of war, in which ethicists analyse specific techniques and hope to improve the practice. The ethics of advertising deserves specific attention, and a similar level of effort as the ethics of war or medicine, because advertising is a powerful, global practice primarily concerned with shaping desires, which is a fundamental Christian concern. In making a foray into the topic of constructive advertising ethics, we have raised a number of topics for further investigation by Christian ethicists. One area which stands out for further consideration is the role of sexual desire in advertising. It remains unclear whether Augustine would support our suggestions for using sexual images to lead people towards a good vision, or whether he would argue that the only ethical route is to give up the use of sex appeal. As mentioned, one could explore Christian thinkers on the ascent of love, to reveal more Christian possibilities in this area. One other area that should be further explored is the idea of intermediate desires within a process of education. We have argued that some desires for the happy life – focused on inner goods, or wisdom – are idolatrous but are still an improvement. It would be interesting to hear a response to this from Gregory or Stewart-Kroeker, for example. Stewart-Kroeker examines the pilgrimage motif, but what does she make of a pilgrimage towards developing the desire for God, as opposed to a pilgrimage after one has this desire?

This work also has implications beyond Christian ethics, for economics. Our argument is a demonstration of one way to link theological concerns with the study of the factors that determine production, distribution and consumption of material goods and services. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Galbraith criticises many economists for holding the axiom that “people’s desires should simply be the given data for an economist”, that “he has no need to inquire how these wants are formed. His function is sufficiently fulfilled by maximizing the goods that supply the wants”.⁵¹⁷ On this view of economics, an account of the creation of desire is irrelevant, because one’s interest begins only after desire has been formed; and an account of the education of desire is impossible, because their concept of the good is limited to preference satisfaction. Of course, there are a range of opinions within economics. However, if we are to rebuild the link between economics and ethics, with the aim of economic concerns being guided by theological ethics, a good place to begin is with the major industry in modern capitalism which shapes preferences.

One further implication of this work is that many of the principles we have considered here, and applied to advertising, could be applied beyond advertising to reform other aspects of capitalism. Ideally, products and services, as well as advertisements, serve the education of desire. In this thesis we have examined widely advertised products – cars, whisky, watches, shoes, beauty products – and considered how an advertisement could teach us to use these well. Yet it would make sense to continue this effort and reform the products themselves. For example, one might inscribe a line of the poem above the dashboard of the car, or summarise the good vision on the label of a beauty product.⁵¹⁸ There is even greater potential to educate desire in services. One might design, from a

⁵¹⁷ Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, p. 464.

⁵¹⁸ The author was employed to organise a project along these lines, sourcing honey from the birthplaces of Greek philosophers, including Plato, and including some key insights from each philosopher in a booklet, to read while eating the honey. This product is now available in London – at a very good price. See The School of Life, ‘Philosophical Honey’, 2016, <http://www.theschooloflife.com/shop/philosophical-honey/>, (accessed 6 May 2016).

Christian ethical point of view, the ideal holiday in a Caribbean resort, which could involve many practices aimed at calm, appreciating the good in life and reflecting on ideas about God and thoughts about Paradise. Or, one could design a retail banking service which helped customers reflect on their desires around money. Capitalism as a whole should move to meet true needs instead of mere desires.

In many ways, the advertising industry is well-positioned to become the home of true values within the economy: the place where true goods are understood and promoted to businesses and the public. Advertising is currently seen by many people as the antithesis of this. Yet the creative rooms of advertising agencies should be the focus for theologians seeking to improve capitalism, as these are the places in the modern economy where people are paid to consider longings, and to translate abstract ideals into specific, gripping images. Advertising as it is, indeed, is far from this ideal. Yet we cannot hope to guide it without a constructive, ethical view of what the industry could achieve. Much of the current consideration of the topic seems to leave no room at all, even for the possibility that the practice might be improved. Bauman, for instance, summarises his view:

The yawning gap between promise and delivery is neither a sign of malfunction, nor a side-effect of neglect or the outcome of a mistaken calculation. The realm of hypocrisy stretching between popular beliefs and the realities of consumers' lives is a necessary condition of a properly functioning society of consumers. If the search of fulfilment is to go on and if new promises are to be alluring and catching, promises already made must be routinely broken and hopes of fulfilment need to be regularly frustrated. Each single promise *must* be deceitful....⁵¹⁹

The opinion of theologians, while not as bleak, is often similarly disconnected from any effort to outline specific, possible ways forward. Ward, for instance, concludes *Cities of God* with the following statement:

⁵¹⁹ Bauman, *Consuming Life*, p. 47.

I cannot begin to conceive how I alone can change the economic, the political and the cultural promotion of social atomism. And I am as seduced as the next person by the bright new goods in the tastefully lit windows – the calls to how I should look, should dress, should accumulate, should spend, should protect my own best interests. The theologian’s task cannot be one which provides the solutions. The matrices of power – economic, political, cultural and historical – that brought about and continue to produce alienation, solipsism, incommensurate and unequal differences, are complex. The theologian’s task is to keep alive the vision of better things – of justice, salvation and the common good – and work to clarify the world-view conducive to the promotion of those things.⁵²⁰

The Christian ethicist must go further than this, not only to change practice, but to clarify the real meaning of “the vision of better things” by examining it in relation to concrete cases. We should seek to give people working in relevant practices advice and examples which are as thoroughly thought through as possible. Even so, we must have humility as well as hope. As we have noted, dissatisfaction will always be part of living in the fallen world, receiving hints and glimpses of beauty. If advertisements were to present desirable visions of eternal things, which we have argued that they should do, then the “yawning gap between promise and delivery” will never be closed until the whole world is redeemed. What we can aim to do, as ethicists, is to influence the industry by presenting plausible ways to make ethical and commercially successful advertisements, to reduce the dissatisfaction of frustrated hope, by teaching people to long for good things and cultivating practices in their lives which sustain these desires.

Even if one agrees with these aims, one may find it difficult, after all, to imagine how the truths of Scripture might be promulgated in online videos and posters which advertise material goods. One of the great strengths of the existing advertising industry, however, is its creativity and its willingness to be bold. The mind of a good advertiser is like a good painter or a poet, in that it can bring together great longings with concrete

⁵²⁰ Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 260.

situations, but, unlike many artists, it is situated in a practice which regularly rents large tracts of major cities for its messages, as well as delivering them to people on their phones as they sit in bed. Advertising, and advertisers themselves, are a promising and important target for spiritual education. A future Christian ethics of advertising should focus on the kind of education of desire advertisers themselves should undergo, to be able to lead others in considering goods, and to solve the problem of how to talk about Scripture and moisturiser in the same sentence. Augustine, commenting on the image of Jacob's Ladder in Genesis 28:10-19, describes an ideal of meeting people mid-way in the education of their desire, which we might take, on the one hand, as the vocation of the Christian ethicist, or just as much, the vocation of the advertiser:

On that ladder, therefore, some ascend, others descend. Who are they who ascend? Those who progress toward spiritual understanding. And who are they who descend? They who have the taste and understanding for spiritual things, as far as human beings may, and who nevertheless descend to the level of little ones, keeping to a language suitable to their weakness, nourishing them with milk so that they may become strong enough to take spiritual food.⁵²¹

⁵²¹ Augustine, 'Psalm 119: The Ascents of the Christian', in *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings*, trans. M.T. Clark, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1984, p. 202.

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