OCR H573 | INDEPENDENT REVISION

A* Model Essay

Augustine on Human Nature

Christian Thought

Critically assess Augustine's reading of the Fall as an explanation of human nature.

1,538 response words | Complete annotated PDF | Individual topic edition

What is included

A complete original response, an argument plan, paragraph-level AO1/AO2 annotations and source works for further reading.

A* describes the intended style of this teaching model. This is independently written, not an OCR-marked script or a guaranteed grade.

Use this model to study argument and evaluation, then write your own answer. Do not submit it as your own assessed work.

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Argument plan

Critically assess Augustine's reading of the Fall as an explanation of human nature.

Thesis: Augustine interprets Genesis 3 powerfully as a diagnosis of pride, disordered love and humanity's dependence on grace. His privation account preserves the goodness of creation and explains why sin damages relationships without becoming a substance. However, inherited culpability, biological transmission and a historical fall from original immortality are neither clearly taught by Genesis 3 nor easily reconciled with justice and evolutionary history. Augustine's interpretation is most convincing when original sin names a universally inherited condition, and least convincing when it makes every infant personally guilty for Adam's act.

1. Augustine reads the Fall as a free turning from the higher good of God to lesser created goods.

Counter-argument: A perfectly ordered will's first defective choice remains difficult to explain, especially under divine foreknowledge.

Interim judgement: Disordered love illuminates the narrative's pride and alienation, but privation alone does not resolve divine responsibility.

2. Concupiscence explains the divided will and the damaged relationships depicted after the transgression.

Counter-argument: Augustine's account can treat sexuality and female embodiment as unusually suspect and goes beyond the narrative's own emphases.

Interim judgement: The divided-will analysis is psychologically strong when applied to all desire, not when reduced to sexual transmission.

3. Original sin captures the solidarity and depth of humanity's shared corruption.

Counter-argument: Inherited personal guilt is textually disputed and appears to punish descendants for another agent's act.

Interim judgement: Social and relational inheritance is more defensible than seminal guilt at birth.

4. Grace prevents the Pelagian assumption that moral effort can heal the will unaided.

Counter-argument: Predestination and irresistible grace can make responsibility and divine justice appear arbitrary.

Interim judgement: Grace should be understood as healing and enabling freedom, not replacing human agency.