Nobody likes a moralist. It is right that Christians have moved beyond moralism if by this we mean the habit of reducing faith to sheer obedience. Moralism is always a diluting of religion, a simplification. It is the faith of Pelagius and Kant, not of Augustine and Bossuet. To fall into the habit of moralizing is to separate what belongs together, in this case, love for the good from love for the beautiful. It is an ancient truism that the virtuous person not only does the good, but delights in doing it ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1770) (hereafter CCC). Christians rightly point out that love is at the center of ethics and to love someone is to do them good. How do we know what is good? When philosophers and preachers in the mid-twentieth century proclaimed that we had moved beyond moralism, it was not always clear where they hoped we would land. Remember that when the rich young man asked Jesus how he might obtain eternal life, Christ pointed him to the Ten Commandments. The Gospels certainly deepen our understanding of law, but they do not abrogate it. There is no Christian morality apart from law (CCC, 2055).

As in the recent revelations of clerical abuse of minors, the conse-
quences of liberating ourselves from law can be terrifying. In 2010, in the face of gross misconduct, the Irish government initiated two separate judicial reviews to determine the extent and causes of corruption among the Catholic hierarchy. The Murphy Commission, in particular, investigated the bishops’ handling of allegations of sexual misconduct among priests in the Diocese of Dublin from 1975–2004, which has led to the resignation of several auxiliary bishops of Dublin. Any breach of trust by clergy is occasion for scandal, sorrow, and restitution. But what has caused outrage in the case of Ireland and several other jurisdictions is the way that bishops failed to discipline clergy even when allegations were substantiated. Often offending priests were simply shuffled from one parish to another.

In the case of the Diocese of Dublin, Justice Murphy has pointed to how disregard for canon law among bishops and clergy sheltered repeat offenders and exposed the vulnerable. The report notes how in Dublin “the Church authorities failed to implement most of their own canon law rules on dealing with clerical child-sexual abuse.” Not that Church law was inadequate. “The Commission is satisfied that Church law demanded severe penalties for clerics who abused children. In Dublin, from the 1970s onwards, this was ignored.” It is not the case, in other words, of the law being under or over specified; laws were simply not heeded. Observing what has now become shamefully plain, the report links the neglect of justice to the disrespect of law within the Church more generally: “Canon law, as an instrument of Church governance, declined hugely during Vatican II and in the decades after it.” In countering what may have been an excessive legalism within pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic piety, pastors and theologians from the 1960s on swung wildly in the opposite direction. Some among our leaders did not serve well when they replaced moralism with vague appeals to love and therapeutic approaches to inner healing that disregard the fact of sin and the requirements of justice.

Fruit grows only amidst the shade of leaves; so also love requires the protective wrapping of justice if it is to blossom. St. Augustine
famously said, "Love . . . and then do what you will" (*Commentary on the Epistle of John* 10.7.1). If God is love, why not just have it at that and let each to his own way? After all, the primacy of charity is what distinguishes Christ’s teaching from that of the Pharisees. Augustine was right to say what he did. But if we wish to mouth his words, then we must also think his thoughts. We must relearn also what he knew about the moral life and the relation between law and love. In short, the problem with appeal to love as an isolated command is that it is easily drained of content and filled with unwholesome substitutes. I said above that to love someone is to seek their good—all sane people recognize this. It is how we grasp the difference between the robber and the doctor. Both hold knives, both draw blood; one cuts for the good of their patient, the other for the gold of their victim. To judge the moral difference between the incision in the operating theater and the slash on the back alley pavement you appeal, however implicitly, to some fixed standard, in this case, of health. Health is a genuine good. The pain of the surgeon’s knife, like the pain in our legs after a hard run, can be a good pain when it makes us better. To judge whether a pleasure or pain is good, you have to know what human life is suited for.

But I am moving too quickly. The concept of health already presumes some wider account of flourishing. It is only when you know what something is for that you can judge whether it is good or not. So, what are human beings for, what is their perfection? Let me take some easier examples first. When I ask what a baseball, or a fork, or a cherry tree is for I am asking what is its function. A good baseball is spherical in shape and even in weight. You need no technical knowledge to recognize this. All that is required can be gained from simple experience. You have watched your dad throw a ball; you have played on a team; you tell a good ball from a bad ball because one flies in the direction you send it while the other does not. Its function or purpose, in other words, supplies the standard by which you judge its performance. The same holds true for human beings. We judge what is good for human beings according to their function. The specifically
human function is what philosophy aims to describe. And for Augustine, though not only Augustine, the specifically human functions are all, in one way or another, results of our mind. Reason sets us on a pedestal. Reason raises us above the beasts because it is that which enables us to perform the distinctively human activities like thinking, willing, desiring, joking, and so on.

Now, return to Jesus’s reply. To the rich young man he promised that the reward of following his commands is life. As the second-century Church Father St. Irenaeus (d. 202) wrote: “The words of the Decalogue remain likewise for us Christians” (Adv. Haeres. 4, 16, 4; CCC 2063). The Catechism puts it this way: the law of the Gospel “fulfills, refines, surpasses, and leads the Old Law to its perfection” (CCC, 1967). Law is amplified and law is developed: its meaning is expanded and extended. No doubt the evangelical counsels (CCC, 1973), the beatitudes (CCC, 1717), and the whole of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount unearth hidden meanings of the law. Of these two revolutions in our relation to the law I wish to focus upon the first: how law expands from a written to an unwritten code impressed upon our hearts. We still need laws on paper. But in the New Covenant, law becomes internalized; it is carried within. In the age of the Church, and in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy (Ezk 37: 1–14), the New Law rests not on stones but in the hearts of the faithful through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Christ told the young ruler to keep the commandments, he added also that he must become perfect. What would that look like? Some of us have no doubt known saints. You may be able to think of a noble priest or a kind grandparent who has already achieved great sanctity. To get a comprehensive picture of where we are aiming to arrive, sometimes a map of the city can be a useful supplement to the floor-plan of an individual, though very beautiful, house. As a map of the City of God, there are few better visual guides than The Divine Comedy. We can proceed by asking: what are virtues, and how do they become our own? The Catechism provides this definition: “The human virtues are stable dispositions of the in-
tellect and will that govern our acts, order our passions, and guide our conduct in accordance with reason and faith. They can be grouped around the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance" (CCC, 1834).

Obedience to the law, delight in the good, and right judgments of conscience all require perfection in virtue. As an aid to study, and an illustration of the power of Christian art to synthesize complex ideas, I turn to Dante’s (1265–1321) *Divine Comedy* (c.1308–21). The *Comedy* is a universe unto itself. Our viewing of it must necessarily be selective. I propose that we can helpfully draw from the poem four lessons that illuminate the Catholic moral vision: the pedagogical function of pleasure and pain; the nature of the act of conscience; the doctrine of the mean; and the primacy of love. I turn first to the structure of the *Divine Comedy* as a whole, and then to the geography of Mount Purgatory.

**Pedagogy in the Divine Comedy**

The journey in the *Comedy* proceeds from hell to heaven and passes through purgatory on the way, and Dante devotes a section to each. Any of the poem’s three parts would offer instruction on the moral life, but the second is suited especially to my purposes. In hell there is no hope; heaven contains no struggle; but purgatory, like earth, is a site for progress. Within this finest of all Christian poems, the *Purgatorio* presents an allegory of our ascent through the virtues. The *Comedy* is other things besides—political commentary, historical record, delicate verse—but first of all it is dramatic narrative. Through the poem Dante records the drama of the soul’s choice either for or against its own good. Choose God, and the *Purgatorio* shows us what follows from that decision.

To find the pattern of how the three parts of the poem fit together, we have to know where to look, which means at the least, that we must know what we are looking at. Dante’s *Comedy* is an allegory, or extended metaphor. Put to use within prose or po-
tery it is "the interpretation of experience by means of images." There is a sense in which Dante’s Comedy is literally true. The popes he represents as in hell really were popes; his guide, Virgil, was once a walking Roman; Dante does think there is a spiritual abode called Purgatory, and so on. But the reader is not asked to suppose that Dante had to travel there before he became qualified to tell us about the Mountain. What is most important in this (as every other such story) is what the images mean. The structure and symbols within the poem communicate to us what, by reason and revelation, we know hell, purgatory, and heaven to be like. In other words, though cast in the form of a poem, Dante delivers an argument. Its central images claim to be universal and thus contemporary. Since at least the nineteenth century, the leading German, French, and English Dante scholarship has read Dante as also a philosopher. And so shall I. Images in Dante’s poetry carry claims to truth every bit as much as mathematical signs carry the proofs of a physicist. Argument and artistry intertwine. In the Catholic imagination, noble poetry (like architecture, painting, or music) fulfills its function best when it leads us by means of beauty, however subtly, to a greater love of the true and the good. This is what raises great art from the realm of the purely private. This was also Dante’s view of his work. So, for readers with an interest in their own destiny, the Inferno acts as a solemn warning. Over the entrance to hell is inscribed (Inf. II. 7–9):

Nothing ere I was made was made to be
Save things Eterne, and I eterne abide;
Lay down all hope, you that go in by me.

Passing through the gate Virgil remarks to his stricken companion,

We’ve reached the place I told thee to expect,
Where thou shouldst see the miserable race,
Those who have lost the good of intellect.

(Inf. III. 16–18)
Having rejected the good, in hell all reason is lost, and with it hope. Dante guides us through twenty-four circles of hell not to avenge his enemies but to make clear the calamity of sin. By requiring us to breathe in the stench of the Inferno, by forcing us to watch winds whip the lustful into the air (Inf. V. 31), by enabling us to hear the wail of suicides trapped within mangled bodies they sought to escape (Inf. XIII. 107), images add force to naked appeal. All our decisions count. By setting their effects before our senses, we are made to see with sharper vision the import of choices. God grants what we wish; the Inferno prods us to wish well.

By contrast, Paradiso instructs with caresses and sweet smells. Here we bathe in the warm glow of heaven and taste of the delight of the saints. Arriving at the fourth-sphere of heaven, the circle of teachers, Dante and Beatrice meet St. Thomas Aquinas and eleven other souls. Brilliant in glory, suffused in light, the twelve circle as stars singing music the poet cannot describe (Parad. X. 147). And in the midst of this ringing joy, Dante turns to his readers with this encouragement:

Bide on thy bench now, Reader, and think back
   Upon this foretaste, if the feast in store
   Thou wouldst enjoy ere relish tire and slack;

And if imagination cannot run
   To heights like these, no wonder: no eye yet
   E’er braved a brilliance that outshone the sun.

(Parad. X. 22–24, 46–48)

In the Comedy as in real life, the stench and screams of hell are meant to instill fear of one possible end to earthly life just as the songs and colors of paradise inspire longing for another. That is the first lesson we should take away from Dante. Moral education begins with pleasure and pain. A purely cerebral approach to virtue ignores that we have bodies and treats us like talking heads. This is not to say that pleasure is the highest good, nor is it to reduce all pleasures to the
body; the pleasure of study, for one, is an instance of a pleasure not linked to our senses (cf. Arist. *Nichomachean Ethics* 1153a). It is to affirm, however, that until our will is resolutely settled, until our intellect is firmly fixed, we shall need still to be guided by caresses and blows, constantly reaffirming the association between the good with the pleasant and the bad with the painful. Souls far advanced up the ladder of spiritual progress do report that eventually even pleasure and pain will not count for us. In this life, however, most of us never leave the rod behind, and are likely to start out with it in the next.

In the *Purgatorio* we witness both kinds of appeal. During their climb up the mountain, penitents suffer punishments that root out vice; they feel pleasures that encourage virtue. Note this: to land in purgatory your sins must already have been forgiven, although your love remains to be redirected. What is left is to break down the old habits that led you into sin. Perfection begins in penance. For this reason, Mount Purgatory mirrors moral education on earth.

**Purgatorio and the Ascent of Virtue**

The right use of pleasure and pain is the first lesson that we learn by looking at the structure of the *Comedy*. The second, third, and fourth lessons we take from the geography of purgatory itself. In Dante’s vision, the Mountain rises in the Southern hemisphere of the earth, surrounded by undisturbed waters, and silent in its beauty except for occasional song and the shouts of Alleluias heard each time a soul is freed to heaven. (There is, of course, no singing in hell.)

The Mountain proper begins part way up, at St. Peter’s Gate. You cannot pass through the Gate without an exercise of conscience, our second lesson. Prior to the Gate the Christian walks up three steps, as Dante does in the poem. The steps represent each of the parts of penance: confession, contrition, and satisfaction (*Purg.* IX. 94–102). The scheme of the Mountain, as of Christian
morality more generally, presumes that men and women are born with knowledge of good and evil. Every person has some access to what philosophers from Thucydides and Cicero on have called the natural law. What kind of law is it? Briefly, natural law captures our access to right and wrong. The Catechism defines it this way: “The natural law, present in the heart of each man and established by reason, is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all men. It expresses the dignity of the person and determines the basis for his fundamental rights and duties” (CCC, 1956).

The Church’s recognition of natural law distinguishes Catholic moral theology from that of fundamentalist approaches, religious or secular. It is natural law that adds justice to divine judgment. Since all have access to the truth through natural law, none can escape penance because none has the excuse of ignorance. It is true that the application of this law has varied over time and place, and that our knowledge of its precepts can be obscured through sin and base customs. Still, you do not need the Bible to tell you that killing innocents is wrong or committing treason is shameful. The seeds, even if not always the flowers, of justice are in some sense evident to all, however often we toss them aside. The three steps leading up to St. Peter’s Gate signify human responsibility before the law. Responsibility is the logical correlate of human freedom. It is worth noting the difference between Dante and ourselves on this point. Dante was no determinist. Virgil eulogizes on the subject at length (cf. Purg. XVII–XVIII). In his own epistle to Cangrande (13.25) Dante specifies the Comedy’s allegorical subject as this: “how man, as by good or ill desserts, in the exercise of the freedom of his choice, becomes liable to the justice that rewards or the justice that punishes.”

The whirling drama of the Comedy depends upon this point. Without free will, there is no responsibility; without responsibility, human life is reduced to meaninglessness. Ultimately, if what many among the social scientists tell us is true, that man is the product of blind chance plus dumb matter, social forces added to firing neu-
rons, then choices do not count. Honest punishment vanishes too. As Evelyn Waugh so deliciously satirizes in his dystopian romance *Love Among the Ruins* (1953), turn social scientists into state-paid bureaucrats and you abandon criminals to a far more punishing sentence. Sending sex offenders to camp feel-good might not be a bad idea but punishment must come first. Otherwise, you rob the criminal and the victim of all human dignity: you steal from them the mutual comfort of knowing that the act performed by the criminal was wrong. The criminal with no guilt has no hope of forgiveness; the victim who suffered no injustice has no hope for vindication.

The lesson is this: conscience bears witness to the natural law within. In the poem this is represented by Dante’s steps up to the Gate. His first step, upon a stone of white marble, is an image of the Christian who peers into his conscience, and owns his guilt. Honesty means admitting that all is not well within. The second step is upon a black stone; this symbolizes our mourning for sin. Not only must the pilgrim see his own fault, he must also be sorry for it, that is, desire not to do wrong again, and to amend his ways. The last stone, representing the blood of Christ, and our blood, is red. Of this, Blessed Pope John Paul II has written that suffering takes “salvific meaning,” only when it is joined to the suffering of Christ (*Salvifici doloris*, 1.1). So, in every act of penance three things must occur. We have to recognize that we have done wrong, feel sorry for it, and try to make up for the damage done.

There is more to see. Dante has now nearly passed onto the first cornice; but before he can, there is one last detail to which he must attend. Like the other penitents, Dante meets an angel with a brandished sword. The angel inscribes seven P’s on his head: this anticipates the division of the Mountain as a whole.

Devoutly falling at the holy feet
I prayed him let me in for mercy’s sake,
But first upon my breast three times I beat.
Then did he write with his sword's point, and make
Upon my brow the mark of seven P's;
"Wash thou these wounds within there"; thus he spake.

(Purg. IX. 109–114)

The P's stand for the seven deadly sins (sin in Latin is *peccatum*): pride, envy, wrath, sloth, covetousness, gluttony, lust, each to be wiped away in turn as the pilgrim moves from cornice to cornice. Now, joining the other penitents with a marked forehead, what does Dante see? He enters upon a ledge some eighteen feet wide. Upon this ledge penitents circle the Mountain on their upward ascent. Here, on the first cornice, Dante sees the penitents who are weighed down by pride, bent over with stones upon their back, and reciting the Lord's Prayer. As on every other cornice, penance consists in submission to the opposite virtue. Those who pridefully held their heads high in the world are now doubled over, unable even to look Dante in the face (Purg. XI. 54). They do not meet his eyes. With turned head, what they can see are lifelike reliefs set along the side of the Mountain wall. As they make their slow round, the penitents view examples of humility set in sculptured stone, of which Dante mentions three: the Blessed Virgin, King David, and the Emperor Trajan (Purg. X. 34–99). Each signifies a particular aspect of humility, and the inclusion of a Roman emperor illustrates that even pagans can have a natural knowledge of virtue. They see something on the ground too. Beneath their feet are inscribed lifelike images of pride. Three groups of deterrent examples correspond to the three images of humility seen in sculpture (Purg. XII. 25–66): Lucifer contrasts with the trust of Mary; Saul stands against the joyful self-forgetfulness of David; and Cyrus, king of the Persians, is set opposite of the good Trajan who is remembered for his gift to a poor widow. Lastly, each cornice includes a prayer, a benediction, and a greeting from an angel who will brush away one P from the forehead of the penitent. Dante's steps grow lighter as he scrambles up to the next level (Purg. XII. 116).
There are seven such cornices. From their total organization we come to our third and fourth lessons. On the structure of the Mountain Virgil offers his famous discourse in Canto XVII:

"Love of the Good," said he, "that once let slide
Its proper duties, is restored up there;
There once again the slackened oar is plied.

But if [love] swerve to evil, or pursue
Good ends too hot of foot or slack of speed,
Then the Workman's work His work undo.

Bethink thee then how love must be the seed
In you, not only of each virtuous action,
But also of each punishable deed.

(Purg. XVII. 85–88, 100–105)

The rationale for the division of the Mountain is derived most directly, of course, from Aquinas. But behind and along with him the two earlier sources are Aristotle and Augustine. Dante's adaptation of Aristotle is our third lesson. Upon each cornice, one of the deadly sins is purged, while one opposing virtue is taken on. But what, precisely, defines a vice? What marks our misstep in love? Virgil specifies three possibilities. Love can either pursue the wrong object, "swerve to evil"; or it can pursue a good at "too hot" a speed; or it can be too "slack." Virgil's explanation calls to mind Aristotle's doctrine formulated in the *Nichomachean Ethics* 1106b: "By virtue I mean virtue of character; for this is about feelings and actions, and these admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition." For Dante, following Aristotle, the virtuous person acts and feels according to the rule of the mean. Bravery, in this scheme, stands at the midpoint between cowardice and rashness. The geography of the Mountain manifests this insight. Lower Purgatory purges vices caused by choosing the wrong object. Middle and Upper Purga-
tory purge vices that are caused by choosing the right object in the wrong way. We violate the principle of the mean, in other words, whenever we choose secondary goods in a defective or excessive manner. In short, the seven cornices fall within three groups: vices that are the result of love perverted (pride, envy, wrath); vices that are the result of love defective (sloth); and vices that are the result of love excessively directed toward created goods (covetousness, gluttony, lust).

What Dante takes from Augustine, our final lesson, is the most important of all: that all our vices, as all our virtues, spring from love. Mount Purgatory rises up according to the order of love. In Augustine’s attempt to draw together Plato with Paul he recognized that any Christian synthesis must accept the primacy of love. Early in his career he sought some unifying principle among the virtues identified by Plato; shortly after his conversion he came to believe that Paul had already discovered that love was this principle. What he proposed was that prudence, fortitude, moderation, and justice could all be described as four forms of love directed toward our final end. “As to virtue leading us to the happy life, I hold virtue to be nothing else than perfect love of God.” Accordingly, prudence is love understanding the means to God; fortitude is love bearing all hardships for the sake of God; moderation is love keeping ourselves pure for God; and justice is serving God only (On the Morals of the Catholic Church, 15.25). The primacy of love is affirmed in the Catechism as well when it concludes that the “practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity” (CCC 1827).

Conclusion

Dante’s organization of Mount Purgatory recommends itself not only because of its beauty but also because of the clarity with which his images synthesize classical and biblical traditions of moral philosophy. Simply by looking at the poem’s structure we learn four
lessons central to the Catholic moral vision: the pedagogical value of pleasure and pain; the witness of conscience to the natural law; the doctrine of the mean; and the primacy of love. As Christ’s word to the rich young ruler made plain, there is no Christianity apart from law. Obedience requires more than that we be born again; it calls us even to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, literally to become perfect icons. It is sometimes said that Catholic morality, especially sexual morality, takes a gloomy view of the human condition, that it is afraid of pleasure and obsessed with sin. Some who do not enjoy Dante cite such reasons. I think their reason lies elsewhere. Dante is unlike the modern poets not because his images of hell are grotesque but because he is hopeful and joyful. He is cheery and we tend to be glum. If the pageantry and music of the Divine Comedy appears childlike it is because we find it hard to believe that grown-up creatures like ourselves could really be so happy. The moralism that most poisons us today is not of the sort that cannot lift its eyes from the letter of the law, but the moralism of those who simply cannot find it in themselves to pursue holiness. Above all, what the Comedy teaches us about the Christian life is that there is no perfection apart from penance. Which is why, if we hope for heaven, even earth must be a prelude to purgatory.

Notes

2. Of whose author T. S. Eliot once remarked: “Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them; there is no third” in his Dante (originally published within his Selected Essays) (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 46.
3. As Dorothy Sayers has said in her Introduction to Dante’s Inferno (London: Penguin, 1949), 11.
Croce's disregard for allegory, and his negative influence upon Dante scholarship generally, see Charles Singleton's comments in Journey to Beatrice (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1958), v–vi.

5. Obviously, this is not to endorse every particular judgment on Dante's poem that philosophers have rendered; it is simply to affirm that the Divine Comedy, as other great works of poetry, by its universality opens itself to philosophical debate as such. Incisive criticism of Schelling's view of Dante can be seen, for instance, in Hans Urs von Balthasar's The Glory of the Lord, Vol 5: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 564.


8. There are, of course, innumerable details I am passing over. For one, the angel guarding the gate presents two keys: one gold, the other silver. These signify the two parts of absolution that complete the act of penance: the absolution of sin and the distribution of a penance. The golden key, the costlier (Purg. IX. 124), is the Church's authority to remit sin. This authority is, obviously, a derived authority imparted to the Church by the infinite merits of Christ (CCC 1476). The other key points us to the function of the confessor. This is where skill is required on the part of the priest. As the Catechism relates, in selecting a fitting penance, the confessor "must take into account the penitent's personal situation" (CCC 1460). That means a confessor should discern what the causes were that led the penitent into sin in the first place. Which from among the seven deadly sins lay at the root of this or that particular faulty behavior? Good confessors are always in demand. Everyone wants to see them because, like Fr. Brown of G. K. Chesterton's detective series, the master confessor is the master of human motivations. He is able to see how your individual failings fall along one of the other common fault lines that can run through the human heart.

9. On this see further D. Sayers's notes to Canto XII, 162–62.


11. As the Catechism notes, there are at least two ways that vices can be categorized. They "can be classified according to the virtues they oppose or also be linked to the capital sins which Christian experience has distinguished" (CCC 1866). The classification used by Dante is according to the seven deadly sins. The seven vices of the Purgatorio are the seven chief sins that, through repetition, have become habits (cf. CCC 1876).
Aristotle’s text continues: “But having these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue. Similarly, actions also admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition” (trans. T. Irwin, 2nd ed. [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999]).

“As to virtue leading us to the happy life, I hold virtue to be nothing else than perfect love of God. For the fourfold division of virtue I regard as taken from four forms of love. For these virtues . . . I should have no hesitation in defining them: that temperance is love giving itself entirely to that which is loved; fortitude is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object, therefore ruling rightly; prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it. The object of this love in not anything, but only God, the chief good, the highest wisdom, the perfect harmony” (trans. Nicene Post Nicene Fathers, vol. 4: 48).