

Augustine's Trinitarian Cosmos¹

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PREFACE

This paper was presented to the "God Everyday and Everywhere" Conference the day after I delivered "The Conversion of God in Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*: Being's Trinitarian and Incarnational Self Disclosure" to the "Wisdom Belongs to God" Colloquium. Both papers concern the Divine Trinitarian life, in itself and as the reality of everything else and, therefore, bridge the Conference and the Colloquium. If Being is Trinitarian and Incarnational for Aquinas, then, for him, as much as for Augustine, God is everyday and everywhere. As well as having this characteristic of metaphysical theology in common, Augustine's *Confessions* and Aquinas' *Summa* share structural forms. Both move to God as Trinity from incomplete manifestations of the fundamental Trinitarian configuration of reality. For them both, the totality of the self-differentiation in the divine self-conversion must be revealed step by step. That self-othering, and the co-relative gathering-return back into the originating self, are not seen immediately. The disclosure of real opposition in God, constructing three infinite divine subsistences, "persons," requires the Christian revelation. Nonetheless, because both are Aristotelian in their doctrine of God as self-thinking, they share a philosophical trinitarianism which is common to pagans, Jews, and Muslims, which Dr Diamond's paper at the Conference explicated.²

When writing the two papers, I saw that they are related as the Way Up and the Way Down, more or less in the manner Aquinas understood the ancient law. Heraclitus had declared: ὁδὸς ἄνω

1. This paper was presented on June 22nd 2017 to "God Everyday and Everywhere," the 37th Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, held at the University of King's College, Halifax.

2. Eli Diamond, "The trinitarian structure of Aristotle's living God and its mortal imitations" delivered to "God Everyday and Everywhere" on June 21st.

κάτω μία καὶ ὡυτή (Diels, B60), “The way up and the way down are the same.” Without citing its source, Aquinas quotes the formula with approval at the beginning of the last Part of his *Summa contra Gentiles*: “eadem est via qua descenditur et ascenditur.”

Confronting the inadequacy of the human intellect for “seeing the divine substance in itself,”³ St Thomas tells us we can get to the knowledge we need and desire starting from creatures, from “the things themselves,” because the way up and the way down are the same. There is a common structure at work whether the mind moves from God or from creatures. The starting and ending points differ, but, because of the universal return to source, they too are the same ultimately. The same fundamental figure is discernable and at work in the beginning, the mediation, and the conclusion.

Aquinas finds “the most perfect unity, in God, the highest summit of things,” from this emerges a greater and greater “diversity and variation in things.” So, “the process of emanation from God must be unified in the principle itself, but multiplied in the lower things which are its terms.”⁴ The emanation, or going out, is seen in God in a simple form, the one proper to its nature as cause. The same structure must be visible, opened up and multiplied, in the various creatures which are the end terms of the divine creative activity. This inclusive opening and multiplication is the mediating process. I aim to exhibit this common structure in its downward emanation in “The Conversion of God in Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*” and in its upward movement towards an ever clearer revelation of its fundamental constitution in what follows on “Augustine’s Trinitarian Cosmos.” In consequence, I hope that they will illumine each other and make reading both useful.

3. Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Textum Leoninum emendatum ex plagulis de prelo Taurini 1961. Busa, online *Corpus Thomisticum*, lib. 4 cap. 1: “ad intuendam divinam substantiam in seipsa” and “ex ipsis rebus.”

4. Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, lib. 4 cap. 1: “Et quia in summo rerum vertice Deo perfectissima unitas invenitur; ... ut quantum a primo principio receditur, tanto maior diversitas et variatio inveniatur in rebus. Oportet igitur processum emanationis a Deo uniri quidem in ipso principio, multiplicari autem secundum res infimas, ad quas terminatur.”

"Augustine's Trinitarian Cosmos" is largely devoted to bringing out how, in the *Confessions*, God's Trinitarian life is both his own being and that of everything else in the cosmos. Augustine's Trinitarian God is everyday and everywhere. By way of conclusion, I draw Augustine's Trinitarian understanding of reality into current discussions through the radical and deeply serious criticism of it by a few great French philosophical theologians of the 20th-century. By this means, I point to what most importantly differentiates Augustine and Aquinas, Proclean Neoplatonism as continued by Dionysius and Eriugena. Thereby I raise the question of its necessity, as well as its presence, as a corrective and counterbalance to Augustine in constructing Latin Western philosophical theology and in moving us beyond that.

I. AUGUSTINE'S TRINITARIAN COSMOS IN THE CONFESSIONS

A. AN ITINERARIUM "AB EXTERIORIBUS AD INTERIORA, AB INFERIORIBUS AD SUPERIORA"⁵

In Augustine's *Confessions*, contemplation of the forms of God's Trinitarian life both in Himself and in his creatures, does not begin with God. God's life is the defining form, moving and explaining all the rest, but God himself is the summit of our knowledge for which our vision must be made apt. The Bishop's theological method is like Aristotle's, as explicated by Dr Diamond in *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life*.⁶ God as self-thinking activity moves life and being in Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*, of which Augustine's God is an heir.⁷ Augustine follows Aristotle in not beginning with the

5. Augustine, *Ennarrationes in Psalmos*, CXLV,5: "From exterior things to interior ones, from inferior things to superior ones" as quoted Robert D. Crouse, "Recurrrens in te unum: The Pattern of St. Augustine's Confessions." *Studia Patristica* XIV, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), 389–92 at 390.

6. Eli Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life: The Nature of the Soul in Aristotle's De Anima* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

7. See Edward Booth, *Saint Augustine and the Western Tradition of Self-Knowing* (Villanova: Villanova Augustinian Institute, 1989); idem, "St. Augustine's *notitia sui* related to Aristotle and the early neo-Platonists," *Augustiniana* 27 (1977): 70–132 & 364–401; *Augustiniana* 28 (1978): 183–221; *Augustiniana* 29 (1979): 97–124.

pinnacle through which all the others are defined and located. As with the *De Anima* and Aristotle's theology, the substantial divine activity does not appear until the end of the *Confessions*. Augustine does not use the word "Trinitas" until Libri XII and XIII, the final Books,⁸ although there are many Trinities earlier in the *Confessions*.

A like reserve is maintained by the greatest of the high medieval Augustinians, Bonaventure, who unites the Bishop of Hippo with the Stagirite and the Areopagite. His *The Mind's Journey into God* is the best detailed step-by-step description of Augustine's Trinitarian forms and explains the nature and reasons for the steps. It needs Aristotle to explain human knowing through sense, the place of departure for the journey to God. After Augustine enters to show us our interior life, Dionysius, and, with him, unknown to the Franciscan Minister General, Proclus, are brought in to lift us to the conclusion, *superiora*. We arrive at the mystical darkness through the negations of Plato's *Parmenides* as explicated by his divine successor at the head of the Academy.⁹ Proclus, mediated through Dionysius *On the Divine Names*, is, correspondingly, where Aquinas, Bonaventure's exact contemporary, begins.

8. See Augustine, *Confessiones* 12.7.7: "Deus est una Trinitas et trina Unitas"; 12.9.9: "tibi Trinitate aeterna"; 13.5.6: "in aenigmate Trinitas," "Trinitatem credens Deum," "Ecce Trinitas Deus meus"; 13.11 12: shown in the mind "Trinitatem omnipotentem," "illa Trinitas," "ibi Trinitas"; 13.22.32: "Trinitatem unitatis et unitatem Trinitatis." Generally, my English text is from Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) slightly modified and I give the Latin from J.J. O'Donnell at http://www.stoa.org/hippo/noframe_entry.html.

9. The harmony of Dionysius and Proclus beyond both three and one is attested by Nicholas of Cusa in his *De Li Non Aliud*. See Nicholas of Cusa, *De Li Non Aliud* in *On God as Not-Other*, Translated by Jasper Hopkins, 2nd. ed. (Minneapolis: Authur J. Banning Press, 1983), chapters, 4, 21, 22 & 23.

The human mind moves from more obscure to more luminous mirrorings by three major steps.¹⁰

1. Vestiges or traces, there the Trinity begins to be mirrored as the number, measure, and weight of physical things. The first is reflection of God. God is discerned sensually, in what is exterior to and below the mind.¹¹
2. Image, which shines when mind turns inward and looks at itself: "Enter then into yourself, and see, that your mind loves itself most fervently; nor could it love itself unless it knew itself; nor would it know itself unless it summoned itself to conscious memory."¹²
3. The Trinity is "written" when mind is reformed by grace from above it to look beyond itself, and participate in the vision of the Cherubim. The spiritual creation is Augustine's starting point in explicating Genesis. For Bonaventure, through this elevation, humans rise from image to likeness of the Trinity.¹³

10. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, Latin Text and English (St Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute, 2002), I.2: "Cum rerum universitas sit scala ad ascendendum in Deum ... oportet, nos transire per vestigium, quod est corporale et temporale et extra nos, ... ; oportet, nos intrare ad mentem nostram, quae est imago Dei aeviterna, spiritualis et intra nos, ... ; oportet, nos transcendere ad aeternum, spiritualissimum, et supra nos aspiciendo ad primum principium." Idem, *Breviloquium*, Opera Omnia V (Quarrachi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 2.12.1, p. 230: "creatura mundi est quasi quidam liber, in quo relucet, repraesentatur et legitur Trinitas fabricatrix secundum triplicem gradum expressionis, scilicet per modum vestigii, imaginis et similitudinis" See Wayne J. Hankey, "*Secundum rei vim vel secundum cognoscentium facultatem: Knower and Known in the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius and the Proslogion of Anselm*," *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, edited by John Inglis (Richmond [England]: Curzon Press, 2002), 126-50 at 143.

11. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, I.11: "Primo modo aspectus contemplantis, res in se ipsis considerans, videt in eis pondus, numerum et mensuram."

12. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, III.1: "Intra igitur ad te et vide, quoniam mens tua amat ferventissime semetipsam; nec se posset amare, nisi nosset; nec se nosset, nisi sui meminisset, quia nihil capimus per intelligentiam, quod non sit praesens apud nostram memoriam."

13. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, VII.1: "postquam mens nostra contuita est Deum extra se per vestigia et in vestigiis, intra se per imaginem et in imagine, supra se per divinae lucis similitudinem super nos relucens et in ipsa luce, secundum quod possibile est secundum statum viae et exercitium mentis nostrae."

The similarities are not accidental. Bonaventure was devotedly following Augustine; conversely, Robert Crouse (1930-2011) judged that the *Confessions* "is intended as an *itinerarium mentis in Deum*."¹⁴

In it, the Trinity of God himself, through which all the others exist, are understood, and have power, comes last and is juxtaposed to the human mental Trinity of being, knowing, loving ("esse, nosse, velle").¹⁵ My aim in looking at the lower as well as the higher forms is ontological, or theo-onto-logical. That is, I want to show how God the Trinity is actually constitutive of the being, power, and life of everything and how this constitution happens in the *Confessions* step by step from the bottom up. In these steps, from physical creatures to God by way of the human, the Trinitarian self-relation gets gradually wider. The self-othering enters more and more into self-consciousness both as problem and solution. Step by step, the Trinity becomes more and more self-consciously other directed and inclusive until the rational being comes to know and love the transcendent God in knowing and loving itself. Further, because the God of the Book of Genesis is the Beginning from which and in which all nature comes and is, the human knows and loves itself in and through nature. The highest level of understanding is reached by interpreting the Scriptural account of the creation of the cosmos. All three, God, natural things, the human, share the Trinitarian form, and, of the three, the Divine Trinity is the most completely self-othering. Its life is the complete giving and receiving of the divine essence between three infinite subsistences.

Because God's life is the extremity of self-othering activity, no image from nature or the human is completely adequate to it. This is the common teaching of Aquinas and Augustine.¹⁶

14. Crouse, "*Recurrrens in te unum*," 389.

15. *Confessiones*, 13.11.12.

16. *Confessiones*, 13.11.12 & 13: "Trinitatem omnipotentem quis intellegat? ... longe aliud sunt ista tria (aspects of the human mind) quam illa trinitas, ..." Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Textum Leoninum Romae 1888 editum. Busa, online *Corpus Thomisticum*, 1^o q. 32 a. 1 co.: "impossibile est per rationem naturalem ad cognitionem Trinitatis divinarum personarum pervenire. Ostensum est enim supra quod homo per rationem naturalem in cognitionem Dei pervenire non potest nisi ex creaturis.... Virtus autem creativa Dei est communis toti Trinitati,

The consequence is drawn by Aquinas at the end of *Summa's* Treatise on God, in the "mission of the divine persons," and by Augustine as the conclusion of his entire journey, outward, inward, and upward into God. The greatest possible Divine-human mutuality is necessary if no third thing can adequately connect us: God's being is that by which we are, God's knowing is that by which we know, and God's love is that by which we love. The inverse is also true and is made plain. God's being is our being, God's knowing is our knowing, God's loving is our loving. So Augustine, commenting on God calling the creatures good, writes:

When people see these [good things you have created] with the help of your Spirit, it is you who are seeing in them. When, therefore, they see that things are good, you are seeing that they are good. Whatever pleases them for your sake is pleasing you in them. The things which by the help of your Spirit delight us are delighting you in us.... When someone sees something which is good, God in him sees that it is good.... God is not loved except through the Spirit which he has given.¹⁷

The very last words of the *Confessions* devoted to the Sabbath Rest speak in the same way.

You 'rested the seventh day'¹⁸. This utterance in your book foretells for us that ... we also may rest in you for the sabbath of eternal life. There also you will rest in us, just as now you work in us. Your rest will be through us, just as now your works are done through us. But you, Lord are always working and always at rest. Your seeing is not in time, your movement is not in time, and your rest is not in time. Yet your acting causes us to see things in time, time itself, and the repose which is outside time.¹⁹

unde pertinet ad unitatem essentiae, non ad distinctionem personarum."

17. *Confessiones*, 13.31.46: "Qui autem per spiritum tuum vident ea, tu vides in eis. ergo cum vident, quia bona sunt, tu vides, quia bona sunt, et quaecumque propter te placent, tu in eis places, et quae per spiritum tuum placent nobis, tibi placent in nobis. ... ut, cum aliquid videt homo quia bonum est, deus in illo videat, quia bonum est, ut scilicet ille ametur in eo, quod fecit, qui non amaretur nisi per spiritum, quem dedit ..."

18. Augustine is quoting Genesis, 2: 2–3.

19. *Confessiones*, 13.36-37: "requievisti septimo die, hoc praeloquatur nobis vox libri tui, quod ... sabbato vitae aeternae requiescamus in te. Etiam tunc enim sic requiesces in nobis, quemadmodum nunc operaris in nobis, et ita erit illa requies tua per nos, quemadmodum sunt ista opera tua per nos. tu autem, domine, semper operaris et semper requiescis; nec vides ad tempus, nec moveris ad tempus, nec quiescis ad tempus; et tamen facis et visiones temporales et ipsa tempora et quietem ex tempore."

The result for theological understanding of following Augustine's way up to God in the *Confessions* is the same as following Aquinas on the way down from God to creatures in the *Summa theologiae*: self-othering is essential to self-constitution both in God and in the creature. Further, the fundamental triad Hellenism bequeaths all who become its heirs, pagan and Abrahamic, is seen to hold still: God, the reasoning being, and nature are understood through each other.

B. THE TRINITIES OF BOOK XIII

Augustine names the common Trinitarian structure of the Creator and what God creates when he is expositing Genesis I.1 & 2 in the two concluding Books of the *Confessions*. In the last, he writes:

Here in an enigmatic image²⁰ I discern the Trinity, which you are, my God. For in the beginning of our wisdom which is your wisdom, Father, begotten of your self, equal to you and coeternal, that is in your Son, you 'made heaven and earth'. ... And now where the name of God occurs, I have come to see the Father who made these things; where the 'Beginning' is mentioned, I see the Son by whom he made these things. Believing that my God is Trinity, in accordance with my belief I searched in God's holy oracles and found your Spirit to be borne above the waters. There is the Trinity, my God — Father and Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of the entire creation.²¹

Crucially, the Trinitarian maker makes Himself in all else. Attending to this is not Augustine's aim. Like his disciple Boethius, writing the *Consolation of Philosophy* in a civilization collapsing under barbarian invasion, he worked to raise the mind to fix itself in contemplative union with the stable unmoved heart of reality. It took almost half a millennium from the death of Augustine for John Scottus Eriugena to turn the Christian mind optimistically back to creation. By placing Augustine within the theology of Proclus and the Greek Fathers, especially Dionysius, Eriugena showed how the human

20. Augustine is quoting 1 Corinthians, 13.12.

21. *Confessiones*, 13.5.6: "Ecce apparet mihi in aenigmate trinitas, quod es, deus meus, quoniam tu, pater, in principio sapientiae nostrae, quod est tua sapientia de te nata, aequalis tibi et coaeterna, id est in filio tuo, fecisti caelum et terram. ... et tenebam iam patrem in dei nomine, qui fecit haec, et filium in principii nomine, in quo fecit haec, et trinitatem credens deum meum, sicut credebam, quaerebam in eloquiis sanctis eius, et ecce spiritus tuus superferebatur super aquas. ecce trinitas deus meus, pater et filius et spiritus sanctus, creator universae creaturae."

was the “workshop of all creation.” The Irishman, whom Fr Jean Trouillard calls the first Christian Neoplatonist, exhibited how the divine nothingness as infinite fullness brought all being forth from his own *OUSIA* above being and converted it back to the beginning as end.²² In a unification of the way up and the way down, four hundred years later in his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas added Aristotle to Eriugena’s union of Augustine, Dionysius and Proclus. In this union, Thomas gave Being itself a Trinitarian and Incarnational structure. Thomas patiently demonstrated step by step how, from simple Being, following God’s step by step self-opening, we arrive at Augustine’s Trinity. From out of that Conversion of God upon Himself, the whole complex creation emerges, and, by the same divine Trinitarian self-conversion, is drawn back to Him as end.

This mutual necessity of the way up and the way down for understanding seems intended by Augustine because the whole of the *Confessions* works this way. We understand Augustine’s personal conversion, which is set out in the first nine autobiographical books, through the Biblical Genesis, interpreted in the last two books. Creation is completed by the conversion of what goes out from God back to the good from which it came. Thus, Book XIII is an allegorical interpretation of the beginning of Genesis as the life of the Church, the new creation. Augustine’s personal conversion is part of the return to God of the whole creation, of which St Paul wrote to the Romans.²³ This joins the autobiographical and the exegetical Books into one work, as Henry Chadwick and Robert

22. See Wayne J. Hankey, “*Ad intellectum ratiocinatio*: Three Procline logics, *The Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena’s *Periphyseon* and Boethius’ *Consolatio philosophiae*,” *Studia Patristica* XXIX, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), 244–51 at 249–51; idem, “John Scottus Eriugena,” *Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, edited Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), vol. II, 829–40 (see my Academia.edu site for a more complete version) & idem, “Jean Trouillard: Authentic Neoplatonism in a French Seminary” a preface for the Trouillard Translation Project Website.

23. Romans 8.22-23: “the whole creation groans and labours in pain together until now. And not only they, but we ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Crouse have explained, and I have reiterated elsewhere.²⁴ God's own Trinitarian conversion upon Himself creates and enables both the cosmic and the human triadic conversions and connects them.

For the common Platonism of the ancient and medieval worlds, both pagan and Christian, what is known, and that by which it is known, are correlative, so, for example, imagination imagines images, and ratiocination reasons mathematically, and the one cannot be substituted for the other.²⁵ No one adopts the mutual correlation of the subject and object of knowing more totally than does Augustine.²⁶ Stage by stage through the three main parts Dr Crouse discerns in the *Confessions*, despite and through his sins and resistances, Augustine's mind is growing. He is being purified and strengthened so that he can know and will, more and more adequately, the known and unknown end toward which he is moving, and being moved, even against his will. Fr Crouse wrote: "To see directly the eternal truth, the source of the being and intelligibility of all things, is the final goal of the soul's ascent, a return to a beatitude of which the wayfaring soul has only proleptic glimpses in moments of extraordinary vision."

This triformal scheme of ascent—*exteriora, interiora, superiora*—... defines the major divisions of the *Confessions*. The discussion moves from the phenomenal description of the biography (Books I–IX), to psychology (Book X) and thence to theology (Books XI–XIII). Each of these three divisions is complete on its own level, and each contains within itself the triformal pattern of the whole work.²⁷

Within this structure the Trinities appear. Four of them are found in close succession in the last Book.

24. Crouse, *Recurrrens in te unum*, 391–92; Chadwick, *Confessions*, xxiv: "The last four books make explicit what is only hinted at in the autobiographical parts, namely that 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. It is a favourite Neoplatonic theme, but also, as Romans 8 shows, not absent from the New Testament.... So Augustine's personal quest and pilgrimage are the individual's experience in microcosm of what is true, on the grand scale, of the whole creation."

25. The system is perhaps best explained and illuminatingly illustrated in the Fifth Book of Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae*.

26. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Recurrrens in te unum: Neoplatonic Form and Content in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Augustine and Philosophy*, ed. Phillip Cary, John Doody, and Kim Paffernroth, *Augustine in Conversation: Tradition and Innovation* (Lanham/ Boulder/ New York/ Toronto/ Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books / Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 127–44 at 134–38.

27. Crouse, "Recurrrens in te unum," 390.

In Book XIII, after a reference to the unity of knower and known and the light of knowing, in one of those “proleptic glimpses in moments of extraordinary vision,” which Augustine describes in language he borrows from Plotinus, the word Trinity occurs. Augustine writes:

It remains for the life you have made to be converted to him by whom it was made, more and more to live by the fount of life, to see light in his light,²⁸ and to become perfect, radiant with light, and in complete happiness.²⁹

This takes us back to Book IV, where, in the images from Plato’s analogy of the Cave, Augustine wrote of philosophical books: “I enjoyed reading them, though I did not know the source of what was true and certain in them. I had my back to the light and my face towards the things which are illuminated. So my face, by which I was enabled to see the things lit up, was not itself illuminated.”³⁰ Book IV, and its followers, lead to Book VII, where, by way of the method of introspection learned from the Platonists, he turns and sees this light by which the human mind knows. By Book X, in a passage dependent on Plotinus, he speaks as if he sees face-on to the light. This kind of self-knowledge is also found in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, where mind and its knowledge of itself are discovered to form a Trinity.³¹ Henry Chadwick notes:

28. Augustine is quoting Psalm 35.10.

29. *Confessiones*, 13.4.5: “cui restat converti ad eum, a quo facta est, et magis magisque vivere apud fontem vitae, et in lumine eius videre lumen et perfici et illustrari et beari.”

30. *Confessiones*, 4.16.30: “Gaudebam in eis, et nesciebam, unde esset quidquid ibi verum et certum esset. dorsum enim habebam ad lumen, et ad ea, quae inluminantur, faciem: unde ipsa facies mea, qua inluminata cernebam, non inluminabatur.”

31. Self-conscious knowledge both of and by the divine light is the state to which the *De Trinitate* aims to raise us, but from which its itinerarium keeps falling back. On the way it finds the self-relation of knowing, *De Trinitate*, 15.6.10: “cum mens ipsa qua novimus quidquid nosse nos veraciter dicimus, sibi cognita est, vel se cogitat.” This belongs among the triads of mental powers (memory, intellect, will), where “amans, et quod amatur, et amor” is also found in the *De Trinitate*. In my view, the triad of love governs Books I to III of the *Confessiones*, the cognitive triad governs those from IV to VII and X. For a schematization see Giovanni Catapano, “Le triadi mentali nel *De Trinitate* de Agostino tra conoscenza di sé e pensiero di sé,” *Pensiero e formazione: Studi in honore di Giuseppe Micheli*, ed. Gregorio Piaia and Giuseppe Zago (Padova: Editrice Università di Padova, 2016), 157–70. See note 52 below.

“Plotinus ... on the mystical vision, is emphatic that the light by which the soul sees God is not other than the light of God: ‘This is the soul’s true end, to touch that light and see it by itself, not by another light, but by the light which is also its means of seeing’.”³²

A little further on in Book XIII, as Augustine meditates on the Spirit being borne above the waters, he refers obliquely to the most obscure trace of Trinitarian life in the cosmos. He had spoken of it directly in Book V, devoted to natural philosophy and Skepticism: “[You] have disposed everything by ‘measure, number, and weight’.”³³ Thus, this vestige reappears just before his most theologically adequate description of the Trinity; between these two all the rest of the Trinities in the *Confessions* fall. They occur one after another according to their proper place in the journey of mind.

As measure, number and weight, God is the fundamental structure of every physical thing. Thus, the Holy Spirit is weight, who as love carries Augustine to his rest, just as it carries every physical thing by its relative gravity. There is an elementary lesson in Physics: “A body by its weight tends to move towards its proper place. The weight’s movement is not necessarily downwards, but to its appropriate position: fire tends to move upwards, a stone downwards.” He concludes “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards: we grow red hot and ascend.”³⁴

Augustine’s final writing about the Trinity in the *Confessions* moves back and forth between the human mental triad and God, maintaining simultaneously how useful self-examination is for understanding divinity, and how far distant the human and divine

32. Chadwick, *Augustine’s Confessions*, p. 275, note 6. *Ennead* 5.3.17 (Loeb 5, 135, ll. 34–37): “καὶ τοῦτο τὸ τέλος ἀληθινὸν ψυχῇ, ἐφάψασθαι φωτὸς ἐκείνου καὶ αὐτῶι αὐτὸ θεάσασθαι, οὐκ ἄλλου φωτὶ, ἀλλ’ αὐτό, δι’ οὐ καὶ ὄραϊ.”

33. *Confessiones*, 5.4.7: “qui omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti.”

34. *Confessiones*, 13.8.10: “corpus pondere suo nititur ad locum suum. pondus non ad ima tantum est, sed a locum suum. ingis sursum tendit, deorsum lapis... pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror. dono tuo accendimur et susurum ferimur; inardescimus et imus.” On this passage see Hankey, “Recurrrens in te unum,” 132.

triads are. He begins characteristically, according to the method he says in Book VII he had learned from the Platonists, by sending us, *ab exterioribus ad interiora*, to introspective self-knowledge. He wants humans to:

reflect upon the triad within their own selves. These three aspects of the self are very different from the Trinity, but ... on this triad they could well exercise their minds and examine the problem, thereby becoming aware how far distant they are from it. The three aspects I mean are being, knowing, willing. For I am and I know and I will. Knowing and willing I am. I know that I am and I will. I will to be and to know. In these three, therefore, let him who is capable of so doing contemplate how inseparable in life they are: one life, one mind, and one essence, yet ultimately there is distinction, for they are inseparable, yet distinct.³⁵

Then, taking up the other side, Platonically, or, better, Neoplatonically, he stresses the difference between the human mutable mode of being and understanding and the immutable divine, so humans cannot grasp in triune divinity the relation of the common and the individual, the one and the many, how it-they exist: "marvellously in both simplicity and multiplicity, defined to itself, yet infinite in themselves."³⁶

Augustine never judges that on the way up humans can move beyond traces, images, likenesses and analogies. His faithful disciple Anselm confirms this in the *Monologion*, and the whole logic of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* depends keeping all these as mirrorings.³⁷ However, despite the deficiency of creatures for conveying knowledge of the divine Trinity, it is their being, life and power, and to that we turn.

35. *Confessiones*, 13.11.12: "vellem, ut haec tria cogitarent homines in se ipsis. longe aliud sunt ista tria quam illa trinitas, sed dico, ubi se exercent et probent et sentiant, quam longe sunt. dico autem haec tria: esse, nosse, velle. sum enim et scio et volo: sum sciens et volens, et scio esse me et velle, et volo esse et scire. in his igitur tribus quam sit inseparabilis vita, et una vita et una mens et una essentia, quam denique inseparabilis distinctio et tamen distinctio, videat qui potest. certe coram se est; attendat in se et videat et dicat mihi."

36. *Confessiones*, 13.11.12: "an utrumque miris modis simpliciter et multipliciter infinito in se sibi fine."

37. Anselm, *Monologion*, cap. 63 and following.

C. THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TRINITIES

Before Augustine has any memory of his existence,³⁸ the three-fold structure of the Trinity: measure as life and body, number as sensation and beautiful form, and weight as the instincts which preserve its life, could be discerned as his. Gary Wills helps us to understand how this triad works in Book I, where, just after Augustine's notorious exposure of the viciousness of the jealous infant,³⁹ he speaks of the coordinating unity which sustains the child in and despite its wickedness. Wills writes: "the third endowment of the baby is a coordinating unity in all its different components' actions, the binding together in love that is a prerogative of the Third Person of the Trinity."⁴⁰ So we find of the infant: "You, Lord my God, are the giver of life and body to a baby ... endowed it with senses ... co-ordinated the limbs. You have adorned it with a beautiful form, and, for the coherence and preservation of the whole, you have implanted all the instincts of a living being."⁴¹ This Trinity is our being before what we call 'the age of reason'.

The next Trinity, that constituting a self-conscious child, appears as the conclusion to Book I. This one, with rationality and will evident, emphasizes instinct again. Here the Spirit has the form of the child's love of itself, as the working of God's unity, His love of Himself, in us. Augustine writes: "I existed, I lived and thought and took care for my self-preservation (a mark of your profound latent unity whence I derived my being). An inward instinct told me to take care of the integrity of my senses, and even in my little thoughts about little matters I took delight in the truth. I hated to be deceived, I developed a good memory, I acquired the armoury of being skilled with words, friendship

38. *Confessiones*, 1.7.12: "Hanc ergo aetatem, domine, qua me vixisse non memini."

39. *Confessiones*, 1.7.11.

40. Gary Wills, *Saint Augustine's Childhood: Confessions Book One* (New York: Viking, 2001), 102.

41. *Confessiones*, 1.7.12: "tu itaque, domine deus meus, qui dedisti vitam infanti et corpus, quod ita, ut videmus, instruxisti sensibus, compegisti membris, figura decorasti, proque eius universitate atque incolumitate omnes conatus animantis insinuasti."

softened me, I avoided pain, despondency, ignorance."⁴² Wills' translation of this triad reveals more: "I preserved myself—by an echo of your mysterious oneness."⁴³ This is the point from which Book II departs. Love is that by which we return into the unity, from which, by love, we came forth, *recurrens in te unum*.

The first three Books of the *Confessions* seem to be centered around love. Certainly, Augustine leaves us in no doubt as to what Book II concerns. The rhetorician is at work. The first two paragraphs look like a grammatical exercise in declining and conjugating *amor* and *amare*. Augustine testifies: "I remind myself of my past foulnesses ... not because I love them, but so that I may love you, my God. It is from love of your love that I make my act of recollection."⁴⁴ He goes on in the next paragraph: "The single desire that dominated my search for delight was simply to love and to be loved."⁴⁵ We encounter here perhaps the most paradoxical, and the most fundamental, doctrine of the *Confessions*: what sustains us, even in our opposition to God, and what brings us back to him, is the divine Trinitarian love as constituting our own loving.

For Plotinus, we are drawn back to the One because our being is the One in us—all being depends on unity.⁴⁶ This unity may equally be called goodness or the love of love. The Plotinian notion also is found in these passages of the *Confessions*. By love of God's love, Augustine tells us, he is collecting himself out of his dispersion. He is able to do so because "You gathered me together from the state of disintegration in which I had been fruitlessly divided. I turned from you the One to be lost in the many."⁴⁷

42. *Confessiones*, 1.20.31: "eram enim etiam tunc, vivebam atque sentiebam meamque incolumitatem, vestigium secretissimae unitatis, ex qua eram, curae habebam, custodiebam interiore sensu integritatem sensuum meorum, inque ipsis parvis parvarumque rerum cogitationibus veritate delectabar. falli nolebam, memoria vivebam, locutione instruebar, amicitia mulcebar, fugiebam dolorem, abiectioem, ignorantiam."

43. Wills, *Saint Augustine's Childhood*, 123.

44. *Confessiones*, 2.1.1: "non quod eas amem, sed ut amem te, deus meus. Amore amoris tui facio istud recolens."

45. *Confessiones*, 2.2.2: "Et quid erat, quod me delectabat, nisi amare et amari?"

46. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.1.11 (Loeb 5, 48–51).

47. *Confessiones*, 2.1.1: "colligens me a dispersione, in qua frustatim discissus

For Augustine, while all creation returns to “you, the One,” *recurrens in te unum*, what, on the other side of the teleological circle, the going out, gives existence to all things is the immutable divine will, “which is identical with yourself,” literally, “what you are.”⁴⁸ Henry Chadwick provides here a reference to *Ennead* 6.8, where Plotinus says that God’s will is his substance.⁴⁹ Indeed, the *Ennead* goes on, “He himself is first his will,” so that, as Augustine also says, there is nothing before his willing.⁵⁰ The same *Ennead* brings us back to Book II of the *Confessions*. Plotinus declares of the One that “he, that same self, is loveable and love and love of himself.”⁵¹ High up among the Trinitarian analogies in Book XV of the *De Trinitate*, this doctrine reappears when Augustine understands God as “the Trinity of the one that loves, and that which is loved, and love.”⁵² In the notorious stealing of pears then thrown away of *Confessions* II, Augustine’s love of love draws him into the adolescent life of a little gang. Together with his friends, he commits a minor theft, which, he tells us repeatedly and pointedly, so that we know that the will can only be moved by some good, he would not have committed on his own.⁵³ Ultimately,

sum, dum ab uno te aversus in multa evanui.” I have modified Chadwick’s translation here so as to make it more literal.

48. *Confessiones*, 12.28.38: “cuius voluntas quia id est quod tu, ... quae formaretur per similitudinem tuam recurrens in te unum.”

49. *Confessiones*, 12.28.38 (Chadwick 267, note 25), i.e. *Enneads*, 6.8.21 (Loeb 7, 294–6, l. 13): “Ἡ ἦν βούλησις ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ· οὐχ ἕτερον ἄρα τῆς οὐσίας οὐδέν.”

50. *Enneads*, 6.8.21 (Loeb 7, p. 296, ll. 14–6): “Ἡ τί ἦν, ὁ μὴ ἦν, οἶον ἡ βούλησις; Πᾶν ἄρα βούλησις ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἐνὶ τῷ μὴ βουλόμενον· οὐδὲ τὸ πρὸ βουλήσεως ἄρα. Πρῶτον ἄρα ἡ βούλησις αὐτός.”

51. *Enneads*, 6.8.15 (Loeb 7, p. 276, ll. 1–2): “Καὶ ἐράσμιον καὶ ἔρωσ ὁ αὐτός καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔρωσ.”

52. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, PL 42, 15.3.5: “et per caritatem, quae in Scripturis sanctis Deus dicta est per quam coepit utcumque etiam Trinitas intellegentibus apparere, sicut sunt amans, et quod amatur, et amor” and 15.6.10: “Sed ubi ventum est ad caritatem, quae in sancta Scriptura Deus dicta est, eluxit paululum Trinitas, id est, amans, et quod amatur, et amor.” In Dr Catapano’s list, this belongs among the triads of mental powers (memory, intellect, will) which is number 3 on p. 159. See note 31 above.

53. *Confessiones*, 2.9.16: “solus id non fecissem (sic recorder animum tunc meum) solus omnino id non fecissem. Ergo amavi ibi etiam consortium eorum, cum quibus id feci.” 2.9.17: “Cur ergo eo me delectabat, quo id non faciebam

the good sought in the otherwise irrational act was the mutual love and admiration of friends. It is a need which remains.⁵⁴

Love's love of love reappears at the beginning of Book III, where, although it takes Augustine into the hissing pot of college day lusts, also brings him to the love of immortal truth pursued as philosophy, the love of wisdom. It starts, like Book II, with forms of *amo*. When Augustine was sent to Carthage, "a cauldron of illicit loves," for study, he had not yet been in love and he longed to love. "I sought an object for love, I was in love with love."⁵⁵ He does indeed fall in love, first with his own feelings excited in the false world of the theatre, where, like those chained at the bottom of Plato's Cave, he imprisoned himself to projected images, and, then, while still in the world of illusion, by accident he falls in love with God.

As part of his studies, at the age of 19, he read Cicero's *Hortensius*, taking it up because, for a rhetorician, Cicero was the pre-eminent model. Augustine declares: this book "changed my feelings."⁵⁶ It changed his experience, religious practice, values, and desires: "It changed my prayers, to you yourself, Lord, and created in me different purposes and desires."⁵⁷ Inflamed by philosophy, Augustine repented his vain hopes. In their place was a new, different kind of love, but, here, appropriately, while he is a corporealist, written about in the language of sensuous lust: "I lusted (*concupiscebam*) for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour of the heart." Now, with this pagan book, his conversion begins, and he represents it, in language

solus? ... At ego illud solus non facerem, non facerem omnino solus. Ecce est coram te, Deus meus, viva recordatio animae meae. Solus non facerem furtum illud, in quo me non libebat id quod furabar, sed quia furabar; quod me solum facere prorsus non liberet, nec facerem. O nimis inimica amicitia"

54. *Confessiones*, 4.9.14: "Hoc est, quod diligitur in amicis; et sic diligitur, ut rea sibi sit humana conscientia, si non amaverit redamantem aut si amantem non redamaverit, ... beatus qui amat te, et amicum in te, et inimicum propter te." 6.15.26: "nec esse sine amicis poteram beatus etiam secundum sensum."

55. *Confessiones*, 3.1.1: "flagitiosorum amorum. Nondum amabam, et amare amabam ... quaerebam quid amarem, amans amare."

56. *Confessiones*, 3.4.7: "Ille vero liber mutavit affectum meum."

57. *Confessiones*, 3.4.7: "ad te ipsum, Domine, mutavit preces meas et vota ac desideria mea fecit alia."

Neoplatonists use, as the return to the divine source: "I began to rise up so that I might return to you."⁵⁸ Describing his new love, philosophy, the love of wisdom, which is God, Augustine uses the language of passion: "How I burned, my God, how I burned."⁵⁹

This representation of himself as an erotically inflamed lover of wisdom is not one which Augustine will repent later, indeed, much of the rest of the autobiography in the *Confessiones* is the story, concluding in Book VIII, of how he found the immortal wisdom (*Sapientia*) the *Hortensius* had "excited" him to seek.⁶⁰ However, Augustine's conversion to philosophy created a division in his soul. Although delighted by Cicero's exhortation, "so that his words excited me, set me on fire, and enflamed me,"⁶¹ one thing held back his enthusiasm for philosophy from being total: he did not find the name of Christ there. Having drunk in that name with his mother's milk, he could not be "totally ravished" by any book lacking it.⁶² In consequence, he turned to the "holy Scriptures." These, however, proved unsatisfactory to the tastes of his rhetorically and philosophically sophisticated mind; it lacked a non-literal or incorporeal hermeneutic. Acquiring this belongs to his progress towards an adequately Trinitarian relation of self and other in the movement of the autobiography.

Fr Edward Booth writes of Aristotle's description of God in the *Metaphysics* so as to make the three-fold evident and its end terms equal: "It is, then, in a state of self-equality, with thinking as activity and as object: 'mind thinks itself, if it is what is best, and its thinking is a thinking of thinking'."⁶³ This unification of the

58. *Confessiones*, 3.4.7: "repente omnis vana spes et immortalitatem sapientiae concupiscebam aestu cordis incredibili et surgere coeperam, ut ad te redirem."

59. *Confessiones*, 3.4.8: "Quomodo ardebam, deus meus, quomodo ardebam."

60. *Confessiones*, 8.7.17: "quoniam multi mei anni mecum effluerant — forte duodecim anni — ex quo, ab undevicensimo anno aetatis meae, lecto Ciceronis Hortensio, excitatus eram studio sapientiae."

61. *Confessiones*, 3.4.8: "excitabar sermone illo et accendebar et ardebam."

62. *Confessiones*, 3.4.8: "in ipso adhuc lacte matris tenerum cor meum pie biberat et alte retinebat, et quidquid sine hoc nomine fuisset quamvis litteratum et expolitum et veridicum non me totum rapiebat."

63. Booth, *Saint Augustine and the Western Tradition*, 8. I treat these in my "Self-knowledge and God as Other in Augustine: Problems for a Postmodern

Platonic One-Good and the forms, probably passes to Augustine by way of the triad of the One, Mind, and Soul in Plotinus, and what Porphyry does with these.⁶⁴ Thus, mind's self-knowing takes on a triadic form for Augustine.⁶⁵ Dr Diamond in his *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life* has shown the multiple forms Aristotle's self-thinking God takes in the world he moves. For Augustine, as for Aristotle, the elements of the triad exist in living relation when they are other than absolute mind, its equal object and knowing. Step by step life ascends to that equality through these lower forms.

In gradual stages the *Confessions* opens the self-relation, which the Augustinian Trinity is, so that from which and that to which the activity takes place is wider and wider, and that through which the terms are related comes into consideration. As we have seen, differentiating and unifying consciousness becomes a greater reality in each step as we move from physical measure, number, and weight, to the body, the senses, and the instinct for life preservation of the infant, and, then, to the existence, the self-aware knowing, and the conscious care for its pleasures of the child.

In the medium of will, this self-love becomes the love of loving both given and received. Love's love of loving, is first experienced as the need for others, the mutual lovers who form friendships. When, in Book III, his soul burns with ardour for the divine wisdom which gives immortality only to be found in an incorporeally infinite God, an enormous leap has been made. By a journey lasting a decade, Augustine must discover the real character of what he now loves and seeks to know, and he must become its appropriate lover and knower. To confess before God and us this transformation of himself, the relation of knower and known must now explicitly enter Augustine's consideration.

Augustine cannot understand Scripture because his self is in externals. His ambitious pride and sensuous lust cannot penetrate to the interior where the incorporeal eternal Word has

Retrieval," *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 4 (1999): 83–123.

64. Booth, *Saint Augustine and the Western*, 9–14.

65. Booth, *Saint Augustine and the Western*, 18.

humiliated himself under the conditions of mortal flesh. Cicero's Stoic corporealism cannot supply Augustine with that by which "the sharp point of his mind could penetrate the interiority" of the Scriptures.⁶⁶ In consequence, for almost a decade, Augustine's melding of philosophy and Christ took the form of a Christian heresy, the two warring, universally extended, good and evil bodies of Manichean theology.⁶⁷ He finally escapes this corporealist dualism by an equalization of the knower and known in Book VII. There, by the method of interior self-examination and ascent the Platonists teach, he learns simultaneously that both the human mind and the divine substance are incorporeal. This is the work of Book VII, but there are decisive movements before that.

Book IV begins the transformation of the subjective side, the knower, and attention to the medium, the light of knowledge. There, because of the death of a most intimate friend, his self is expanded. He knew himself in his friend, "another self."⁶⁸ Not yet believing in God's immortal life for his soulmate, when this other self dies, Augustine is overcome by death. Thrown back on an intolerable mortality, Augustine cries: "I had become a place of unhappiness in which I could not bear to be, but I could not escape from myself." This terrible experience is not merely negative.⁶⁹ The self has become central, the thing being questioned, and, the burden of bearing with himself has been doubled with the death of his other. Augustine tells us: "I had become to myself a vast problem."⁷⁰ He now knows himself as "a vast deep,"⁷¹ an unplumbable one, where, in Books X and XI, he will discover the infinite and eternal. Confession, public repentant self-examination, brings experience of a vast, labyrinthine, horrifying *interiora*, which will become the place of the rise to the *superiora* in the exegesis of Genesis.

66. *Confessiones*, 3.5.9: "acies mea non penetrabat interiora eius."

67. *Confessiones*, 5.10.19: "cum de deo meo cogitare vellem, cogitare nisi moles corporum non noveram." 5.10.20: "constituebam ex adverso sibi duas moles, utramque infinitam, sed malam angustius, bonam grandius."

68. *Confessiones*, 4.6.11: "quia ille alter eram."

69. *Confessiones*, 4.7.12: "ego mihi remanseram infelix locus, ubi nec esse possem nec inde recedere."

70. *Confessiones*, 4.4.9: "eram ipse mihi magna quaestio."

71. *Confessiones*, 4.13.22: "grande profundum est ipse homo."

Another mode by which the Trinitarian self-relation of mind expands concludes Book IV. There Augustine turns his attention to the third element in self-knowledge, the activity, the light which joins the knower to the known, knowing. Augustine is reading and teaching the Liberal Arts,⁷² but, remains, like the prisoners at the bottom of the Platonic Cave, entrapped by the images in front of him, images belonging to his quest for an object of love. He ignores the source of his power to know; with his back to the light, "my face, by which I was enabled to see the things lit up, was not itself illuminated."⁷³ Immediately next, at the beginning of Book V, Augustine takes up the same damning inattention of the philosophers, who know, but do not thank God as the light by which they know, described by St Paul in Romans I.20.⁷⁴

Book V starts with Augustine still living outside himself: "You were there before me, but I had departed from myself. I could not even find myself, much less you."⁷⁵ The philosophical method and mentality of the Skeptics which dominate the Book,⁷⁶ ends in the self. He employs their characteristic strategy of balancing whatever can be opposed: sensations, concepts, arguments, passions, structures, against one another so as to prevent coming down on either side and being committed to a truth or a good. Countering Manichean pseudo-scientific fable with current natural science and cultured prejudices against Catholic teaching by Bishop Ambrose's Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation of

72. *Confessiones*, 4.15.30: "omnes libros artium, quas liberales vocant."

73. *Confessiones*, 4.15.30: "dorsum enim habebam ad lumen, et ad ea, quae inluminantur, faciem: unde ipsa facies mea, qua inluminata cernebam, non inluminabatur."

74. *Confessiones*, 5.3.4: "invenientes, quia tu fecisti eos, non ipsi se dant tibi, se, ut serves quod fecisti," & 5.3.5: "obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum. et multa vera de creatura dicunt, et veritatem, creaturae artificem, non pie quaerunt, et ideo non inveniunt, aut si inveniunt, cognoscentes deum, non sicut deum honorant, aut gratias agunt, et evanescent in cogitationibus suis."

75. *Confessiones*, 5.2.2: "et tu eras ante me, ego autem et a me discesseram nec me inveniebam: quanto minus te!"

76. *Confessiones*, 5.10.18: "Etenim suborta est etiam mihi cogitatio, prudentiores illos ceteris fuisse philosophos, quos Academicos appellant, quod de omnibus dubitandum esse censuerant, nec aliquid veri ab homine comprehendi posse decreverant."

Scripture leave him with the self as pivot, isolated, suspended, and turning. Augustine departs from the Manichees, but removal of objections to Catholic faith is not sufficient reason to embrace it. Book V ends with Skeptical fluctuation: not “making a judgment, but rather doubting everything, and fluctuating between all.”⁷⁷

By Book VI Augustine despairs of ever finding the truth,⁷⁸ and, rhetorically, it is dominated by the language of search, of tossing and turning, the frustration of running about in circles.⁷⁹ Augustine cannot remain in this state, where he suffers acute and critical peril.⁸⁰ What would genuine positive movement take? Augustine tells us: “conceiving spiritual substance.”⁸¹ He took the path Plotinus travelled by passing through Skepticism on the way to interiorly known truth. He also judges with the Hellenic philosopher that the only way out of the corporeal self is by the inward experience of the incorporeal substantiality of mind.⁸² Knower and known are equalised by turning to the light, “*luce incommutabilem*” (7.10.16), in which subject and object are constituted. The hinge of the thirteen books of the *Confessions* is the middle of Book Seven.

There, in the very middle of the *Confessions*, by means of the Platonic books, he follows Plotinus’ unity of meditative method and content.⁸³ By it the mutual equality of the three elements of the Trinity constituting the human mind: knower, knowing and known,

77. *Confessiones*, 5.14.25: “itaque Academicorum more, sicut existamantur, dubitans de omnibus atque inter omnia fluctuans.”

78. *Confessiones*, 6.1.1: “desperatione indagandae veritatis.”

79. *Confessiones*, 6.3.3: “ad quaerendum intentus et ad disserendum inquietus erat animus meus”; 6.4.5: “itaque confundebar et convertebar”; 6.6.9: “ad hoc ego tam aerumnosis anfractibus et circuitibus ambiebam”; etc. 6.6.10; 6.8.17; 6.11.18; 6.11.19; 6.11.20; *Confessiones*, 6.16.26: “versa et reversa in tergum et in latera et in ventrem, et dura sunt omnia, et tu solus requies.”

80. *Confessiones*, 6.1.1: “et invenit me periclitantem quidem graviter desperatione indagandae veritatis” & 6.15.25: “vulnus illud meum, quod prioris praecisione factum erat, sed post fervorem doloremque acerrimum putrescebat, et quasi frigidus, sed desperatius dolebat.”

81. *Confessiones*, 5.14.25: “spiritalem substantiam cogitare.”

82. See Wayne J. Hankey, “Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self,” *Augustinian Studies* 32:1 (2001): 65–88.

83. *Confessiones*, 7.9.13: “quosdam platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos”; 7.20.26 “lectis platoniorum illis libris, posteaquam inde

is effected. At that centre, Augustine, as knower and lover, discovers his true nature, and is changed toward it by the only activity which can. Plotinus' guidance is also God's. Augustine learns to know and love God by the knowing and loving in which God knows and loves himself. Augustine testifies that it was "with You as my guide"⁸⁴

that he undertook the inward journey. The Platonist books "admonished me to return into myself, and I did enter into my inner realities."⁸⁵

At this point Augustine begins one of the several accounts in the *Confessions* of ascent to "touching" God. He describes experiential union with incorporeal being, eternal truth, the creator's goodness, immutable happiness, and rest-giving satiety, simple unity, the source which is end. These are the *superiora*. After the first account of the initial anagogy, ascents to "proleptic glimpses in moments of extraordinary vision" are reiterated in different contexts, from different beginnings, in different circumstances, and repeatedly recounted.⁸⁶ The paradigms and language of the accounts are from Plotinus and Porphyry. However, importantly for our concluding

admonitus quaerere incorpoream veritatem, invisibilia tua per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspexi."

84. *Confessiones*, 7.10.16: "intravi in intima mea, duce te."

85. *Confessiones*, 7.10.16. "admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intraui in intima mea."

86. Others begin at 7.17.23, 9.10.23, 10.6.9, 10.40.65. Augustine writes "In the flash of a trembling glance it [our power of knowing and judging] arrived at that which is (peruenit ad id quod est [7.17.23])." In that flash, receiving what Romans 1.20 concedes to philosophy, he saw "the invisible things of God through the what was made (inuisibilia tua per ea quae facta),"but confesses that "I did not possess the strength in the pinnacle of my mind to hold on, and in my weakness I returned to the banal (aciem figere non eualui et repercussa infirmitate reditus solitis)." Things turn out the same in the vision at Ostia. Mother and son sigh, they touch the acme slightly by a moment of total concentration of the heart ("attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis") and then fall back to time and the realm of human noise (*Confessiones*, 9.10.24). We find such essential elements of Plotinian mysticism as transcendence (7.10.16: "supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem"; 9.10.24: "transcendimus"), love (7.10.16: "caritas novit eam"), step-by-step movement through forms of apprehension (7.17.23), union in an instant which carries us out of time (7.17.23: "in ictu trepidantis aspectus"; 9.10.24: "remeauimus ... ad ubi uerbum et incipitur et finitur"), touch (9.10.25: "attingimus aeternam sapientiam"), self-transcendence and self-forgetfulness (9.10.25: "ipsa sibi anima sileat et transeat se et non se cogitando").

reflections, vis-à-vis Plotinus, Augustine intellectualises 1) the ascent, 2) the experience of the Principle, and 3) the self which experiences God.⁸⁷ The Bishop stops at the divine Trinity of self-subsistent Being, Intellect, and Love which reflects and is reflected in the human known in the same way. There is a mental seeing, a mental experience of intelligible non-corporeal realities. Knower and known become one in the activity of knowing.

Augustine does not eschew speaking of the One as the goal. However, his descriptions of that at which he arrives in his inward ascents are not of a radically other beyond intellect, i.e. the One Non-being of the Platonic *Parmenides*, Plotinus and Proclus. Such union at the apex of the last stage of the Plotinian ascent goes beyond Augustine's intellectual NOUS-LOGOS mysticism. However, the contrast must not be made too sharp; besides describing the divine goal as "unum" (12.28.38), Augustine also calls it "id ipsum" (9.4.11, 9.10.24, 12.13.7). Augustine goes with Plotinus to what is, for the pagan, only the penultimate, but his being (esse) has absorbed the self-identity of the One. This indecisiveness or ambiguity also separates him from Proclus and the mysticism of the Eastern Church, and of such Latins as Eriugena, Eckhart and Cusanus. It brings the criticism of Fr Trouillard we shall meet in the last part of this paper.

Augustine testifies at the centre of the *Confessions* that he attained the knowledge of himself and of the divine he needed: "I entered and with the eye of my soul, such as it was, I saw above the same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind."⁸⁸ Illumined by that light Augustine finds a Trinity of eternal being, truth, and love. "The person who knows the truth

87. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Ratio, reason, rationalism (ideae)," in *Saint Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, edited Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 696–702; idem, "Bultmann Redivivus Radicalised: Augustine and Jesus as Heideggerian Existentialists," *The Influence of Augustine on Heidegger: The Emergence of an Augustinian Phenomenology*, ed. Craig J. N. de Paulo (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 259–88 at 282–88.

88. *Confessiones*, 7.10.16: "intraui et uidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem."

knows it."⁸⁹ That is to say, when the metaphor is opened up, the one who knows the truth knows and judges in and by God's self-knowing, even if the mutable and the immutable remain distinct. "He who knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. Eternal truth and true love and beloved eternity: you are my God."⁹⁰ The Trinity of being, knowing and loving, which in Book XIII culminates and defines all the rest, is entered, experienced and described here in the midst of Book VII's Platonic ascent, where the first inward journey is undertaken and reported. After this divine-human Trinitarian expansion and union which concludes the first half of the *Confessions*, the road to the *superiora* is opened.

In Book VIII, the break out of Skeptical suspense in respect to knowledge accomplished in Book VII is reiterated with will. His fixed will to be baptized appears as the completion of his conversion to philosophy recorded in Book III and we return to the Trinity of love first encountered in Book II. Now it is reconstructed with the overcoming of corporeal dualism by the Platonism just experienced as the truth of self and God. He writes again of the same conversion: "having tried to avert my gaze from myself,"⁹¹ "you turned my attention back to myself."⁹² Augustine confesses that it is twelve years since he was "stirred to a zeal for wisdom." Yet he had not preferred her to "physical delights," as the *Hortensius* exhorted, and as he, at least from time to time since he fell in love with immortal truth, desired.⁹³ He goes on to recreate the Skeptical suspense of Books V and VI, this time focusing on his delay and the weakness of will which results from evil habit. The same language recurs.

So "I was twisting and turning in my chain until it would break completely."⁹⁴ "The nearer the moment of time when I would

89. *Confessiones*, 7.10.16: "qui novit veritatem, novit eam."

90. *Confessiones*, 7.10.16: "qui novit eam, novit aeternitatem. caritas novit eam. o aeterna veritas et vera caritas et cara aeternitas! tu es deus meus."

91. *Confessiones*, 8.7.16. "excitatus eram studio sapientiae ... corporis voluptatibus."

92. *Confessiones*, 8.7.16: "retorquebas me ad me ipsum."

93. *Confessiones*, 8.7.16: "conabar a me avertere aspectum."

94. *Confessiones*, 8.11.25: "volvens et versans me in vinculo meo, donec abrumperetur totum."

become different approached, the greater the horror of it struck me. But it did not thrust me back nor turn me away, but left me in a state of suspense."⁹⁵ Along with all the other reappearances in this Book, Manichean dualism comes back in the notion that he is two separate selves with two different wills warring with one another. He must free himself from "those who from the dividing of the will into two in the process of deliberation, deduce that there are two minds with two distinct natures, one good, the other bad."⁹⁶ In fact, he confesses "I it was who was willing and I who was unwilling. I was neither wholly willing nor wholly unwilling."⁹⁷ In truth he is "a single soul wavering between different wills,"⁹⁸ until weight comes from outside: an act of divination using a book of St Paul's epistles.

By this decision, he confesses that God "is converting me to yourself," his own divided will is united, his friend is brought "to apply the same to himself, and to opening up so that he joins in making the good resolution and right intention." This enables the son and his friend together to fill mother Monica with joy.⁹⁹ The lover who was in love with loving has arrived at a community of love with God, himself and his friends.

In the conclusion of the autobiography, Book IX, Augustine and Monica enjoy a "proleptic glimpse" of beatitude together just before her death. Mutually, "they raised themselves with burning affection to what subsists in itself." They reached eternal wisdom, which they "touched in a small degree by a lightening flash of the heart's concentration," and their "souls fell into silent

95. *Confessiones*, 8.11.25: "punctumque ipsum temporis, quo aliud futurus eram, quanto propius admovebatur, tanto amplioem incutiebat horrorem; sed non recutiebat retro nec avertebat, sed suspendebat."

96. *Confessiones*, 8.10.22: "qui cum duas voluntates in deliberando animadverterint, duas naturas duarum mentium esse asseverant, unam bonam, alteram malam."

97. *Confessiones*, 8.10.22: "ego eram, qui volebam, ego, quo nolebam; ego eram. nec plene volebam nec plene nolebam."

98. *Confessiones*, 8.10.23: "animam unam diversis voluntatibus aestuare."

99. *Confessiones*, 8.12.30: "quod ille ad se rettulit mihi que aperuit. sed tali admonitione firmatus est, placitoque ac proposito bono ... inde ad matrem ingredimur, indicamus: gaudet ... convertisti enim me ad te."

union surpassing themselves and self-consciousness.”¹⁰⁰ Is this cosmic self-forgetful interpenetration what happens when the human Trinity passes above and beyond itself to the Divine?

D. AN INFINITE INTERIOR

In Dr Crouse's account, Book X is the part of the *Confessions* especially devoted to the *interiora*: mind thinking about mind. The way up from creatures to God and the way down from God to creatures meet here. On the way to the exegesis of Genesis, Augustine enters mind as common to God and the human; their infinite medium.¹⁰¹ What is positive and what dangerous in this divine – human mirroring, which the common infinity enables, we consider when concluding.

Book X speaks at length of mind as memory, renewing Augustine's earlier discoveries of its profundity: “Great is the power of memory, an awe-inspiring mystery, my God, a power of profound and infinite multiplicity. And this is mind, this is I myself.”¹⁰² Memory's infinite circumference is required for the character of Augustine's confession here, i.e. self-examination in the light of the *superiora*, for the sake of the exposure, repentance, and forgiveness of sin. This cleansing is the requisite of God's dwelling in us by our knowledge of him.

It opens by praying: “May I know you, who know me. May I 'know as I also am known'.”¹⁰³ The “Knowing as we are known”

100. *Confessiones*, 9.10.24 & 25: “erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in id ipsum, ... attingimus eam modice tot ictu cordis ... anima sileat, et transeat se non se cogitando.”

101. See Wayne J. Hankey, “Mind (mens),” *Saint Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, edited Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 563–67 at 563.

102. *Confessiones*, 10.17.26: “magna vis est memoriae, nescio quid horrendum deus meus profunda et infinita multiplicitas. Et hoc animus est, et hoc ego ipse sum.”

103. *Confessiones*, 10.1.1: “Cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum.” On all this see Wayne J. Hankey, “‘Knowing As We are Known’ in *Confessions* 10 and Other Philosophical, Augustinian and Christian Obedience to the Delphic *Gnothi Seauton* from Socrates to Modernity,” *Augustinian Studies* 34:1 (2003): 23–48 at 28–35.

of St Paul's First letter to the Corinthians 13.12, which Augustine is quoting, juxtaposes "then" and "now." "Now we see through a mirror obscurely, then, we shall see face to face." The "then" is eschatological, the last things belonging to the future, "when the perfect is come" (I Corinthians 13.9). In striking contrast, for Augustine, knowing God as he is known by God is a present reality and is actualized in Book X. Augustine's opening repeated *cognoscam* may be taken either as subjunctive or as future indicative, either as a demand, a prayer, or a hope.¹⁰⁴ Augustine did not need to choose, the forms of the subjunctive and of the future indicative being the same. The astonishing result is that, in the self-examination of Book X, the eschatological hope becomes a present reality and its means is the more than human circumference of memory. This self-examination, or exercise in self-knowledge, carried out in the face of God makes *Confessions* X a kind of realised eschatology. J.J. O'Donnell, says of it:

Book X renews the ascent theme. What Augustine learned to do at Ostia he now *does*, in writing this text. This is no longer an account of something which happened somewhere else some time ago; the text itself becomes the ascent. The text no longer narrates mystical experience, it is mystical experience.¹⁰⁵

We might add: what Augustine learned to do from the books of the Platonists, and narrates in the midst of Book VII, he performs in this text.

To be effective self-examination must be undertaken relative to the Divine Law and the repentance must be performed in the presence of the Divine Judge. Indeed, Augustine demands that he judge himself by the divine standard. He is to judge himself by God or, put from the other side, God is his judge: "But I do not sit in judgement on myself' ... You, Lord are my judge."¹⁰⁶ By searching his memory, Augustine finds God within himself and above himself. So he uncovers the infinity of memory, which seems always to astonish him, and he comes to know that he

104. J.J. O'Donnell, *Confessions III, Commentary on Books 8-13* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 154.

105. O'Donnell, *Confessions III*, 151.

106. *Confessiones*, 10.4.6 to 10.5.7: "neque me ipsum diiudico ... Tu enim, domine, diiudicas me."

cannot grasp what he is: "This power of memory is great, very great, my God. It is a vast and infinite profundity. Who has plumbed its bottom? This power is that of my mind and is a natural endowment, but I myself cannot grasp the totality of what I am."¹⁰⁷

Crucially for the necessity of the turn inward, the *superiora* are in mind. Just as he found through introspection the eternal truth, the divine knowing by which humans know, so here he finds what really is in memory. Augustine writes: "what is inward is superior"; "my soul, I tell you, you are already superior" to the body. In it he finds all the skills acquired through the liberal arts, not images but *res ipsas*, the very things.¹⁰⁸ The concepts, the words of God by which things are made, the world understood, and humans communicate across all the differences of time, space, perspective and language are not learned from outside but are recognised and assented to within. Not the sounds by which they are signified in speech, but the very things, "*res vero ipsas*," are already there in memory.¹⁰⁹ We learn by gathering together the scattered images in the memory where we advance to discern inwardly through the things themselves.¹¹⁰ The interior life of mind is not a shadow world but the place of encounter with foundational realities and, on that account, it is where the road upward to God is found. In virtue of reason and its interior world, humans know the invisible things of God. Augustine writes:

Human beings can put a question so that 'the invisible things of God are understood and seen through the things which are made.' ... Moreover, created things do not answer those who question them if power to judge is lost.... The created order speaks to all, but is understood by those who hear its outward voice and compare it with the truth within themselves.¹¹¹

107. *Confessiones*, 10.8.15: "Magna ista vis est memoriae, magna nimis, deus, penetrabile amplum et infinitum: quis ad fundum eius pervenit? et vis est haec animi mei atque ad meam naturam pertinet, nec ego ipse capio totum, quod sum."

108. *Confessiones*, 10.6.9: "melius quod interius"; 10.6.9: "iam tu melior es, tibi dico, anima"; 10.9.16: "nec eorum imagines, sed res ipsas."

109. *Confessiones*, 10.10.17: "res vero ipsas ... iam erant in memoria."

110. *Confessiones*, 10.11.18: "per se ipsa intus cernimus."

111. *Confessiones*, 10.6.10: "homines autem possunt interrogare, ut invisibilia dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciant, ... nec respondent ista interrogantibus nisi iudicantibus, ... immo vero omnibus loquitur, sed illi

The same is true when he comes to the words of Scripture given externally to our ears and eyes, their truth is known by comparing it to immortal truth known within.

In his search for happiness and God here, Augustine reiterates the ascents of *Confessions* VII. Significantly, he starts at the command of the light which is above. Asking of it "What are you saying to me?" Augustine continues: "Here I am climbing up through my mind towards you who are constant above me. I will pass beyond even that power of mind which is called memory, longing to touch at the point where the contact is possible and to be bonded to you where it is possible to be bonded."¹¹²

The search for God is universalized through the desire of humans for happiness. We all seek happiness, "it is known to everyone,"¹¹³ no matter what language they understand. It belongs universally to the human memory: "Since no one can say that this is a matter outside experience, the happy life is found in the memory and is recognised when the words are uttered."¹¹⁴ Not every quest for the happy life is successful. "The happy life is joy based on the truth. This is joy grounded in you, O God, who are the truth, 'my illumination, the salvation of my face, my God'."¹¹⁵ Because "where I discovered the truth, there I found my God, truth itself,"¹¹⁶ Augustine makes another Plotinian ascent to the truth as the Divine mind, the eternal Word: "you are not the human spirit itself. For

intellegunt, qui eius vocem acceptam foris intus cum veritate conferunt." Augustine is quoting Romans 1.20.

112. *Confessiones*, 10.17.16: "dulce lumen. quid dicis mihi? ego ascendens per animum meum ad te, qui desuper mihi manes, transibo et istam vim meam, quae memoria vocatur volens te attingere, unde attingi potes, et inhaerere tibi, unde inhaereri tibi potest."

113. *Confessiones*, 10.20.29: "nota est igitur omnibus."

114. *Confessiones*, 10.21.31: "quam se expertum non esse nemo potest dicere, propterea reperta in memoria recognoscitur, quando beatae vitae nomen auditur."

115. *Confessiones*, 10.23.33: "beata quippe vita est gaudium de veritate. hoc est enim gaudium de te, qui veritas es, deus, inluminatio mea, salus faciei meae, deus meus."

116. *Confessiones*, 10.24.35: "ubi enim inveni veritatem, ibi inveni deum meum, ipsam veritatem."

you are the Lord God of it. All these things are liable to change. But you remain immutable above all things, and yet have deigned to dwell in my memory since the time I learnt about you."¹¹⁷ As a result, he is able to pose this rhetorical question about his search for happiness: "Truth, when did you ever fail to walk with me, teaching me what to avoid and what to seek after I reported to you what, in my inferior position, I could see and I asked your counsel?"¹¹⁸ As the condition of recognising that, now and always, he has God as his guide and his judge, and knows himself as God knows him, Augustine names God as "the truth presiding over all things."¹¹⁹

Thinking is a bringing forth of what is in the self, or known through an inward turn, and, thus, is self-discovery. Equally, memory, as power of the mind, cannot be something absent of which we must go in search. "It is I who remember, I who am mind. It is hardly surprising if what I am not is distant to me. But what is nearer to me than myself?"¹²⁰ Right at the beginning of Book X, when opposing the notion that God lies, Augustine writes: "For what is it to hear you speak about yourself, except to know oneself."¹²¹ Henry Chadwick notes: "Like Plotinus and Porphyry, Augustine understood the Delphic maxim 'Know thyself' as the path to knowing God; conversely knowing God is the way to self-knowledge."¹²²

117. *Confessiones*, 10.25.36: "ita nec ipse animus es, quia dominus deus animi tu es, et commutantur haec omnia, tu autem incommutabilis manes super omnia, et dignatus es habitare in memoria."

118. *Confessiones*, 10.40.65: "Ubi non mecum ambulasti, veritas, docens, quid caveam et quid appetam, cum ad te referrem inferiora visa mea, quae potui, teque consulerem?"

119. *Confessiones*, 10.41.66: "tu es veritas super omnia praesidens."

120. *Confessiones*, 10.16.25: "ego sum, qui memini, ego animus. non ita mirum, si a me longe est quidquid ego non sum: quid autem propinquius me ipso mihi?"

121. *Confessiones*, 10.3.3: "Quid est enim a te audire de se, nisi cognoscere se."

122. *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick, 180, note 1. See Pierre Courcelle, *Connaissance de soi-même de Socrate à S. Bernard*, 3 vols. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1974-75), vol. 1, p. 137, note 109.

Moving along this path to the exegetical Books, and the juxtaposition of the divine and human Trinities in Book XIII, it is worth noting another use of the Delphic command by Augustine, this one in the *Soliloquies*. There, crucially, he unites self-knowledge with the description of man as image and likeness of God in Genesis 1.26: "Who has made the human according to your image and likeness, which he who knows himself recognises."¹²³ So, in dialogue with Reason, Augustine determines that he wishes to know God and the soul, nothing more.¹²⁴ Nothing falls outside these two infinities which mirror one another.

In a brief presentation of the crucial role of self-reflexive subjectivity in Augustine, Dermot Moran writes:

De Trinitate book X specifically addresses the centrality of self-knowledge as the turning point for the conversion of the soul. Self-knowledge is based on an intellectual act that is transparent to itself... the mind knows itself and circumscribes itself. ... Self-enclosure, self-gathering, is the first step towards self-transcendence.¹²⁵

Indeed, self-enclosure, or circumscription, is only possible in virtue of self-transcendence; Augustine's confession as repentance requires knowing himself as he is known, i.e. from the divine perspective. In the very centre of the *Confessions*, God uses Plotinus to enable Augustine to know his own knowing and the Divine unchangeable light, or unchangeable self-knowing, together. Their unity and difference are immediately seen. From then on, culminating in the last paragraphs of Book XIII, the boundary between the divine and the human must constantly be broken down and reconstructed. And so it is, as each of the mystical experiences attest.

And so we are able to return to the *superiora* of the exegetical Books. There the immortal wisdom sought inwardly will match what the eternal Word speaks outwardly, when, in the final three Books, the

123. Augustine, *Soliloquiorum* (ed. St. Maur: Paris, 1836), 1.1.4: "qui fecisti hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem tuam, quod qui se ipse novit agnoscit."

124. *Soliloquiorum*, 1.2.7: "A. Deum et animam scire cupio. R. Nihilne plus? A. Nihil omnino." See *De Ordine*, 2.18.47.

125. Dermot Moran, "Idealism in Medieval Philosophy: The Case of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 53–82 at 63; see Hankey, "Self-knowledge and God as Other": 112–22.

self, which has discovered its own inner depths and its participation in God's eternal present, undertakes the exegesis of Genesis.

The transition to Genesis occurs in Book XI where Augustine seeks the connection between the eternity in which God speaks and creates and the time in which Scripture is written and we understand it. Finding God in Genesis requires that the self's present moment of consciousness is a participation in God's simultaneity and eternity, the *nunc* in which the Beginning is spoken and speaks to create.¹²⁶ The human Trinitarian mind is stretched further because it is the place in which time is known in the eternal now.¹²⁷ Divine eternity and simultaneity are ours as the triform present of mental measurement: "In the soul there are these three aspects of time, and I do not see them anywhere else. The present considering the past is the memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation."¹²⁸ In the *superiora* of the exegetical Books, the immortal wisdom sought inwardly will match what the eternal Word speaks outwardly.

We started our journey by considering the Trinities Augustine explicates in Book XIII. Then, restarting from the bottom, we found the Trinitarian God everywhere and empowering our everyday existences. Our life and that of the cosmos is in God and by God. God is to be discerned, revered and thanked everywhere. But there is another side.

II. CONCLUSION: AUGUSTINE'S TRINITY. THE STRUCTURE OF SALVATION OR THE FOUNDATION OF WESTERN CHRISTIAN ATHEISM OR BOTH

The Latin theological and philosophical tradition was overwhelmingly Augustinian from the Bishop's own time until

126. *Confessiones*, 11.7.9: "dicitur ... sed simul ac sempiternae omnia."
 11.11.13: "non autem praeterire quicquam in aeterno, sed totum esse praesens."
 11.18.23: "ubicumque ergo sunt, quaecumque sunt, non sunt nisi praesentia."
 11.20.26: "tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris."

127. *Confessiones*, 11.27.36: "In te, anime meus, tempora mea metior."

128. *Confessiones*, 11.20.26: "sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam, et alibi ea non video praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio."

the 12th century, and, then, with the Protestant Reformation, on the one hand, and modern philosophy from Descartes, on the other, dominantly Augustinian again. Some critical theologians and philosophers, seeking the origin of the West's divinized humanism which, at home, has become totalitarian atheist secularism or self-worshipping personal liberationist Christianity, find it there. They also find there a foundation of the arrogant and violent imperialism which made global a relation to God, ourselves, and nature destroying the conditions of human life rapidly, and, so far, uncontrollably.

This side of Augustinianism is appropriately a question for us. Second, an Augustinian Trinitarian definition of Christianity which regards Eastern Orthodoxy as at best marginally heretical will not do in the Atlantic region where Eastern Orthodoxy and Coptic Christianity are rising sources of renewal and strength. Third, the Neoplatonic Christianity which was established in the West through Dionysius the Areopagite and John Scottus Eriugena is much more open to dialogue with Islam, increasingly a presence here and elsewhere. Finally, there is the important work of my responder, Elizabeth King, whose own translations and those of the team she leads, are bringing before the English speaking world the thought of the greatest of these radical critics, Jean Trouillard, p.s.s. (1907-1984), who developed an alternative Neoplatonic Christianity deeply open both to Eastern Orthodoxy and to the Far East. The latter is present in substantial Buddhist monasteries in this region, as well as in other forms.

Augustine found in self, world, and God the same fundamental triadic structure. In and through the self known deeply, we find God; in God, we find ourselves more fully known than we know ourselves, better loved than we love ourselves, eternally fully alive. This is how Paul's hope to see God "face to face" and to know "as we are known" is fulfilled. By this theological and philosophical anthropology and cosmology, Augustine gave the Latin Christian spirituality its specific character and determined the fate of Western civilization.

This fate has been the concern of the most serious Western philosophers in the last one hundred years from Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) to George Grant (1918-1988) and James Doull (1918-2001) and of some of the deepest Christian theologians.¹²⁹ One of them, Henri Cardinal de Lubac, s.j. (1896-1991), shared with Fr Jean Trouillard, and his group of radically Neoplatonic French theologians, a diagnosis of Western atheism with its totalitarian humanism, as a development which had its origin in Augustine.¹³⁰ Importantly Fr Trouillard and his fellows also shared an opening to the Orient. De Lubac tells us that the great series of texts and translations, 'Sources chrétiennes', of which he was one of the founders, was "an instrument of *rapprochement* with the Orthodox Churches."¹³¹ There was a *rapprochement* with the far Orient: de Lubac quotes with approval the suggestion that the union of philosophy, theology, and mysticism in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa anticipates "the Indian form of Christian thought."¹³² The Jesuit Cardinal himself undertook an extensive study of Buddhism exploring the relation between selfless love in Buddhism and charity in Christianity.¹³³

Because Fr Trouillard places the problem in Augustine exactly where we have been exploring his theology, I give a little of his analysis here. For him, in seeking to found self-reflexive subjectivity in the divine, the Augustinian tradition projects the finite unto the infinite. Trouillard writes about a foundation of human subjectivity in the divine Trinity after the mode of Augustine. Significantly for this Conference and for many here, with the mention of Hegel, we enter the questions about Augustine which divided James Doull and Robert Crouse. Trouillard writes:

129. What follows is largely taken from my "Jean Trouillard: Authentic Neoplatonism in a French Seminary"; posted on Academia.edu.

130. For more on this see my *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France: A Brief Philosophical History*, Studies in Philosophical Theology (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), 142-51.

131. Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church. Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned His Writings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 94.

132. de Lubac, *At the Service*, 319.

133. Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du Bouddhisme* (1951), *La rencontre du Bouddhisme*

The danger of [the Trinitarian speculations of Saint Augustine] is ... to reduplicate the distinctions inherent in created spirit under the pretext of founding them in the Absolute. One of the weaknesses of the Augustinian tradition is ... not to have understood that in this the requirements of criticism and the necessities of religious life converge in order to liberate Transcendence from all that would draw it back within the Intelligible. Outside of this we would perpetually risk the *quiproquo*, as it results in the Hegelian dialectic where no one is able to say if this is of God, or this is of man, and which plays upon this ambiguity.¹³⁴

Trouillard concludes with a quotation from Proclus on the foundational transcendence of the One.

Fr Trouillard's younger associate Henry Duméry (1920-2012), also occupied with the struggle against atheistic humanism, judged, as Trouillard had, that spiritual freedom for humans could not be secured in Augustinian ontology or psychology but only in an Absolute which was beyond being. A distance between the One and being is essential to the freedom of the Absolute. Fr Duméry also made this point *vis-à-vis* Hegel and his contemporary followers. Providing the proper ground for the liberty and creativity of the finite requires a full criticism of anthropomorphism; Augustine, who descended "to the level of psychologism,"¹³⁵ does not reach this, nor does Hegel reach this. Duméry agreed with de Lubac and Trouillard that Hegel's divine-human dialectic reduces God: "one does not know if, for Hegel, it is God who needs humans in order to speak his absolute discourse or if it is man, who, swelling with pride, tries his hand at reconstructing the divine knowledge."¹³⁶ With a theology where the highest is beyond being, this conceiving of God is unnecessary: "There are no determinations *pre-posed* in the trans-ordinal God; he has no need to conceive in order to perform. Thus the philosopher need not seek the 'divine plan,' still less the psychology, the secret intentions, or the ulterior motives of the Creator. ... From God to the intelligible there is

(1952), and *Amida* (1955).

134. Jean Trouillard, "Pluralité spirituelle et unité normative selon Blondel," *Archives de philosophie* (janvier-mars, 1961): 21–28 at 24.

135. Henry Duméry, *Philosophie de la religion: Essai sur la signification du christianisme*. tome premier: *Catégorie de sujet – catégorie de grâce*, Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), 219.

136. Duméry, *Philosophie de la religion*, 44, note 4.

no transmission of essences, but only derivation of energy."¹³⁷

Together with Trouillard, Duméry points to the Eastern and Western Christian successors of Plotinus in the Proclean tradition, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, John Scottus Eriugena, as offering a corrective to the dangers of the Augustinian unification of psychology and Trinitarian theology. Duméry asserts that the critical philosopher "has also his own word to say":

He will point out ... that to give equal weight to the Trinitarian schema and to the transordinal character of God confuses transcendence itself with its modes of apprehension. ... St Augustine [did not] entirely avoid this confusion. With Scottus Eriugena, and under the inspiration of the Pseudo-Dionysius, it will be necessary to repeat that God is more than Unity and more than Trinity. In no case can he be circumscribed by the intentionality which seeks to grasp him.¹³⁸

In fact from Eriugena on, increasingly, until Protestant modernity, Augustine was united with Proclus, as, for example, with Aquinas, Bonaventure, and other theologians. In that unification, Augustinian psychologism and rationalism was contained and subordinated. This was James Doull's complaint about the medieval Augustine, who for him only wrestled free and became unambiguously Christian with Descartes. In contrast, for Robert Crouse, what Proclus added was already present in the last three books of the *Confessions* where the human is placed within the cosmic creation and redemption. Whether or not that is true as history, it must be true for us.

Once the problems with Augustine are properly understood, the Neoplatonic doctrines of transcendence and of the soul must be reconceived: "Neoplatonic transcendence is not an absence, but an excess of presence, since it is for each spirit its interior home of liberation. It is less an end than a point of departure, less a superior term than a prior state, never participated, always communicated. It is only exterior to us inasmuch as we are exterior to ourselves."¹³⁹

137. Henry Duméry, *The Problem of God in Philosophy of Religion: A critical examination of the category of The Absolute and the scheme of transcendence*, translated Charles Courtney (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 94.

138. Henry Duméry, *Faith and Reflection* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 175, note 15.

139. Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'Âme selon Proclus*. Collection d'études

The significance of the new “Neoplatonic radicalism” of Fr Trouillard and his priestly associates is summed up by Stanislas Breton, c.p. (1912-2005):

What they inaugurated under the appearance of a return to the past was well and truly a new manner of seeing the world and of intervening in it, of practicing philosophy, of comprehending the givenness of religion, both in its Christian form and in its mystical excess; since, and I hasten to add, they reconnected the old West to its Far Eastern beyond.¹⁴⁰

We may speculate that there must be for Fr Jean Trouillard other Neoplatonisms than the pagan and Christian ones he studied and taught.¹⁴¹ The physical confines of the seminaries which he served were just as intellectually and spiritually open as was the abbey of Saint-Médard de Soissons where, under the protection of King Charles the Bald, John Scottus Eriugena constructed his *Periphyseon* and “reinvented the greater part of the theses of Neoplatonism largely forgotten.”¹⁴² Every form of thought is open to subversion from where the Platonic Good, *epekeina*, beyond thought and being, meets Eckhart’s mystical *Grund*. This is almost certainly true of what we have inherited from Augustine, which, after all, has many other forms than those which underlie Western modernity.

anciennes (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), 4–8.

140. Stanislas Breton, *De Rome à Paris. Itinéraire philosophique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992), 154, see also, particularly, 164.

141. On which see Wayne J. Hankey, “9/11 and the History of Philosophy,” *Animus* 11 (2006): 1–26. <http://www2.swgc.mun.ca/animus/Articles/Volume%2011/Hankey.pdf> Posted on Academia.edu

142. Jean Trouillard, “La ‘Virtus Gnostica’ selon Jean Scot Érigène,” *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 115 (1983): 331–54 at 331; reprinted Trouillard, *Jean Scot Érigène*. Études, édition et présentation des textes par Frédéric Berland (Paris: Hermann, 2014), 183.